


The United States, of course, would concede that she cannot remain the “boss” in the Middle East. Can any member of the Reality-Based Community challenge that conclusion? Washington can still maintain enormous power to affect policy outcomes, but it cannot determine them on its own. Hence, the downside is that, from now on, Washington will need to take into consideration the interests that Iran has in Iraq—but it will also benefit from Iran using her pow-

er to tame her Shiite allies in Iraq. Settling the conflict in the Holy Land will require more concessions from Israel—but it will also make it more likely that Saudi Arabia and other Arab states, as well as the European Union, will be willing to get involved through diplomatic, military, and economic assistance. Syrian (and Iranian) pressure on Hezbollah could certainly help resolve the crisis in Lebanon.

It's quite possible that such a process will be long and exhausting, and, in the

end, it might not bring about successful and stable outcomes. Bush and the neocons may have ignited a geopolitical storm that could take years, perhaps even decades, to calm. But as the United States becomes one of several powers competing for influence in the Middle East, the costs involved in dealing with the aftermath of the storm cease to be an exclusively American problem. And that is an outcome that most Americans can live with. 

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

CHICKENHAWKS ROOSTING

Two facts about George W. Bush now seem incontestable: He has been the neo-conservative chief executive *par excellence*, and he has become a failed president. Bush has led the nation to war in Iraq, branded Iran and North Korea as members of the “Axis of Evil,” and declared in his Second Inaugural Address that America’s security depends on fighting “tyranny” and spreading “democracy” throughout the whole world. In the Middle East, he has often deferred to Israel and steadfastly refused to deal with Palestinian leaders of whom the Israelis disapprove. He is firmly committed to free trade and sees the United States as the “first universal nation,” as shown by his unwavering support for a guest-worker/amnesty bill that would bring 60 million new immigrants to the United States over the next decade. He has presided over a vast expansion of the size and scope of the federal government. All of these policies are firmly rooted in neoconservative doctrine, and there were no more zealous advocates for the invasion of Iraq than the neocons.

As was predicted in these pages, Bush’s embrace of neoconservatism has proved disastrous for his presidency and the country. Iraq has descended into violent anarchy; North Korea and Iran appear committed to developing nuclear weapons; and America’s prestige has plummeted in the Middle East and throughout the world. And voters disenchanted with Iraq, a stagnating industrial economy, and President Bush’s support for mass immigration and big government hand-

ed the House and the Senate over to the Democrats. Bush has steered his presidency and his party right into an iceberg, and the water is rising fast.

But some of the passengers have already pushed their way onto the lifeboats. Several prominent neoconservatives were interviewed by *Vanity Fair* before the election, and they took advantage of the opportunity to blame all the failures in Iraq on the Bush administration, while accepting none of the blame for peddling their crackpot ideas to the credulous. Richard Perle told *Vanity Fair* that “you have to hold the president responsible” and that “I’m getting damned tired of being described as an architect of the war.” Kenneth Adelman, who famously predicted that Iraq would be a “cakewalk,” now says that Bush’s national-security team is “the most incompetent . . . in the post-war era” and that “these are not serious people.” Frank Gaffney told the magazine that “[Bush] doesn’t in fact seem to be a man of principle,” and Eliot Cohen sees failure in Iraq: “I do think it’s going to end up encouraging various strands of Islamism . . . and probably will bring de-stabilization of some regimes of a more traditional kind, which already have their problems.”

Now, the chickenhawks are all upset. In a National Review Online symposium, some of them attacked *Vanity Fair* for being dishonest. Michael Ledeen claimed to have been the victim of an earlier smear piece in its pages. What Mr. Ledeen does not explain is why, if he was convinced of the dishonesty of *Vanity Fair*, he agreed to be interviewed by the magazine in the first place. Indeed,

as Daniel Larison has noted, this is a curious defense to hear from these would-be masters of the universe. Who would trust the neocons to run the world when they are so easily outwitted by a high-end celebrity-gossip magazine?

Several others claim to have believed that *Vanity Fair* would not publish their burlblings until after the election. Another curious defense. If they did not feel that what they said would be seen as betraying the Bush administration, why would they want their musings kept under wraps until after the election?

Others, such as David Frum, complain that their words have been taken out of context. Oddly, such concerns have never before troubled Mr. Frum, who has made a name for himself smearing paleoconservatives by taking their words out of context.

It is easy to see why Mr. Frum is worried. Frum told *Vanity Fair* that “I always believed as a speechwriter that if you could persuade the president to commit himself to certain words, he would feel himself committed to the ideas that underlay those words. And the big shock to me has been that although the president said the words, he just did not absorb the ideas. And that is the root of, maybe, everything.” Had I said that, I would be worried about others reading my remarks and concluding that I was a vain, arrogant, self-serving knave.

Paleoconservatives have been trying for years to warn other conservatives that the neocons are a deceitful lot who peddle ideas that are more Marxist than conservative and vilify all who disagree with them. Maybe, just maybe, other conser-

vatives will begin to listen after this latest example of neocon treachery.

—Tom Piatak

FORGOTTEN STRIPPERS

In 1994, the Republicans, for the first time in 40 years, took control of both Houses of Congress. In 2000, after some controversy, the GOP secured the presidency. Now, they have lost both houses and look to be well on their way to losing the presidency in 2008. Parties lose when they don't give their supporters what they want. And, while the Iraq quagmire would probably have brought the Republicans down anyway, they could have come a lot closer to retaining some of their seats if they had kept their base happy.

The funny part is that their supporters were very clear about what they wanted, and it would have been easy for the party to give it to them. They wanted an end to the culture created, over the last 50 years, by "activist judges." Our culture has been formed by judge-made rules handed down by the Supreme Court and the state courts. No legislature would have done what they did. No legislature would have removed prayer from public schools and crèches from the town square at Christmas; found a constitutional right to sodomize; protected pornographers and flag burners; facilitated unlimited abortion; upheld affirmative action; interfered with school discipline; and created an infinite number of new rights for criminals. The result is a vulgar mess. The Republicans' supporters—and lots of Democrats—hate it. Is there an easy way to end it?

Article III of the Constitution gives the people the choice: A simple law passed by Congress and signed by the President can remove—or, in the parlance, "strip"—any class of case from the Supreme Court's jurisdiction. That means the Court cannot lawfully interfere with the issue anymore. The stripped issues go to the states to be decided by their legislatures or courts. If the people in Wisconsin want prayer back in the schools, it's back. The same goes for "gay marriage," abortion, pornography, and the rest of the culture-war issues. Over time, the people would recover their culture. The Republicans had the opportunity to deliver a prize beyond price. They just had to grasp it.

Instead, the Bush administration supported strippers to keep the courts out of

Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib but not to stop their cultural incursions. The Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 stripped the courts of the power to hear Guantanamo cases. The Supreme Court, however, in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006) ruled the stripper did not apply to cases already pending. Since almost every Guantanamo detainee was part of a class action, the Bush administration passed the Military Commission Act stripper, this time saying *we really mean it* by specifying that it applied to pending cases. The Military Commission Act of 2006, signed on October 17, 2006, strips American courts of the power to hear any case brought by anyone designated by the President as an "enemy combatant."

But the Bush administration would not support strippers to restore a civil culture. Even after the House of Representatives passed a "gay marriage" stripper (2004) and two Pledge of Allegiance strippers (2004 and 2006), the Bush administration would not support them. None of the House-passed strippers were introduced in the Senate.

Why didn't the Republicans give their supporters what they wanted and end the judge-made culture? The Republicans refused because they are convinced that court bashing is a successful campaign issue. After all, it had won elections for them since 1968. They preferred the issue to the solution. They have lost their souls.

The Democrats, if they get the White House in 2008, will have the power to pass some strippers themselves. Will they? At first glance, that seems about as likely as Bin Laden converting to Catholicism. Democrats opposed the Military Commission and Detainee Treatment Act strippers and the House "gay marriage" and Pledge of Allegiance strippers, so one might expect them to continue opposing such actions. Indeed, on the House floor, they called strippers "unconstitutional," "immoral," "discriminatory," and "dangerous nonsense." They have argued for the last 50 years that the Supreme Court is the ultimate arbiter of what the Constitution means. Indeed, they have obtained better results from the Court than they ever could have hoped to get from an accountable body. They opposed strippers intended to end school busing in 1972. They opposed strippers to restore school prayer in 1979, 1982, and 1985, although polling data consistently reports that around 75 percent of Americans support prayer in public schools.

The Democrats, however, may surprise us. They might do some selective stripping—like rolling back some of the President's civil-rights intrusions. To do so would be popular with their base and with some conservatives who believe that, thanks to such measures as the Bush administration's USA PATRIOT Act, we are losing our liberties. Historically, Democrats have not hesitated to use strippers: FDR, early in his presidency, signed the Norris-Laguardia Act (1934), which stripped federal courts of the power to issue injunctions in labor disputes. Will they try to repeal the Guantanamo strippers? Probably not. When they are responsible for conducting the war, they won't desire judicial interference any more than the Republicans do.

Sen. Charles Schumer, chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, intends to make the Democrats a majority party again: "We must make sure the middle class has a strong voice in Washington." Trouble is, November 7 exit polls showed Democrats are the party of extremes: in wealth, income, and education. For example, they ran strongest with high-school dropouts and those with graduate degrees. They have a definite problem with ordinary people. And, of course, religious people. Why not pick up the ball the Republicans dropped and pass a school-prayer stripper? It would greatly discomfit the Republicans. The middle class would like it. It would be a start.

—William J. Quirk

THE NEXT ABORTION BATTLE

Abortion opponents in South Dakota had a simple message for voters in the mid-term election: Vote what you know in your heart is right. More than 148,000 people heeded the call, voting to retain a state law that banned virtually all abortions in South Dakota. Their numbers, however, amounted to just 44 percent of the electorate.

What had been the nation's most restrictive ban on abortions died as the final votes were tallied in the early morning hours of November 8. Supporters of the ban—which was passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Gov. Mike Rounds earlier in 2006—hoped it would send South Dakota on a collision course with *Roe v. Wade*. But a majority of voters called off the assault.

The outcome in South Dakota serves

as a sobering benchmark for the pro-life movement. The state is among the most socially conservative in the nation, and, if abortions can't be banned in South Dakota, pro-lifers face a long march to reach their goal of eradicating abortion in the United States.

Despite the defeat, pro-lifers in South Dakota aren't waving any white flags. In the days following the election, supporters of the ban pondered their next move, and there will almost certainly be another attempt by pro-life lawmakers to restrict abortion during South Dakota's 2007 legislative session.

The South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families [*sic*], which fought to overturn the ban, succeeded by splintering off enough voters who oppose abortion but also believe there should be exceptions. The ban in South Dakota contained no explicit exceptions for women who are victims of rape or incest. Supporters of the ban tried to counter voters' concerns with two arguments. They argued that a life, even one conceived through rape, is still an innocent human being who deserves protection under the law. They also pointed out that the ban still allowed women to use emergency

contraception if they thought they might be pregnant.

The Sioux Falls *Argus Leader*, the state's largest newspaper, commissioned a poll two weeks before the election. The poll foreshadowed the election results, finding a ten-percentage-point margin between those who supported the ban and those opposed to it. The same poll asked those who opposed the ban whether they would support ending abortion if a law contained clear exceptions for rape and incest. Fifty-six percent who opposed the ban in its current form said they would support a measure that included such exceptions.

When lawmakers navigated their abortion bill through the legislature, they beat back several attempts to add exceptions to the law. They argued exceptions—particularly a broadly interpreted exception for women's "health"—would do nothing to stop abortion on demand.

But now some lawmakers are mulling how rape and incest exceptions could work. Would, for example, a woman need to file a police report claiming her pregnancy was caused by rape or incest before being allowed to obtain an abortion? Would there need to be an arrest

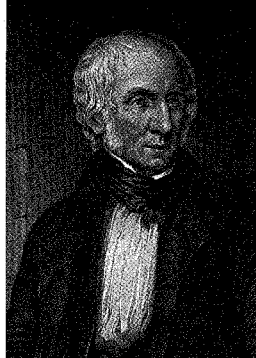
or prosecution? Or could a woman simply show up at the state's lone abortuary in Sioux Falls and claim she was raped? And, if such exceptions were in state law, could there be constitutional challenges under the Equal Protection Clause?

These are murky issues. But there's a good chance that some South Dakota lawmakers will take them on. If a law emerges with rape and incest exceptions, it won't please everybody in the pro-life community, but it could please a majority of voters. Of the 814 pregnancies that were terminated in South Dakota in 2004, only a small handful are thought to be the result of rape or incest.

How would abortion supporters react? They weighed their options carefully when the first ban passed. They could have taken the well-trodden path to court. But after deliberating, they chose to take their case to the voters, mindful that, if the people upheld the ban, they could still seek refuge in the judiciary.

Faced with a law that contains rape and incest exceptions, abortion supporters would probably not repeat the process of collecting signatures and referring the issue to votes. The effort and ensuing campaign were expensive, costing both

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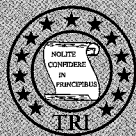


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sides millions of dollars. What's more, they would probably lose in Round Two, if the polls are to be believed.

Most likely, they would take it to the judge. And pro-lifers in South Dakota would be back on the road to the Supreme Court.

—Jonathan Ellis

RUMMY REDUCED

Had President George W. Bush fired Donald Rumsfeld a month before, rather than a day after, November 7, the Republican Party could have retained control of both houses. Still, doing it late is better than not doing it at all. Rumsfeld was a liability and an embarrassment, the embodiment of all that went wrong in Iraq and a major culprit for much of it. He disregarded sound military advice, ruled by intimidation, and made grave strategic mistakes. To his credit, Rumsfeld developed a viable conceptual blueprint for a leaner, meaner 21st-century military. To his disgrace, he then got it bogged down in a distinctly mid-20th-century, labor-intensive, open-ended mission, a war based on flawed assumptions and unrealistic expectations.

The departure of the longest-serving secretary of defense in American history was not lamented even by his erstwhile neoconservative associates, who were quick to claim that he was not really one of them. Messrs. Perle, Frum, *et al.*, nimbly shifted from asking "How do we win?" to "Who screwed up?"—and the culprits were supposed to be in the White House and the Pentagon. But Rumsfeld's betrayal by Neocon Central was well deserved. He could not have been unaware that he was surrounding himself with riffraff of dubious integrity and uncertain loyalty.

In 2001, Rumsfeld made Richard Perle chairman of the Defense Policy Board—a position Perle had to resign in March 2003 after it was revealed that a venture-capital firm in which he was managing partner stood to profit from the Iraqi war. Another favorite, Douglas Feith, was crafting "intelligence" from whole cloth. Their Straussian mind-set was evident in Paul Wolfowitz's now famous *Vanity Fair* admission that, in seeking justification for war against Iraq, "for bureaucratic reasons we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on."

They and Rumsfeld joined forces to

construct an Iraqi pseudoreality many years before the war, notably through the Project for a New American Century, founded in 1997. There was no proof, then or later, that Iraq had WMD capabilities; but Rumsfeld's zeal on this subject bordered on fanaticism, memorably exemplified in his 2002 Beria-like quip that the failure of U.N. arms inspectors to find weapons of mass destruction "could be evidence, in and of itself, of Iraq's non-cooperation."

Rumsfeld was equally wrong in his conviction that U.S. troops would be greeted as liberators by the Iraqis. His initial plans, providing for only 30,000 U.S. troops in Iraq three months after the invasion, were followed by assurances to Jim Lehrer that "There is no question but that they would be welcomed. Go back to Afghanistan, the people were in the streets playing music, cheering, flying kites." He was also wrong in his expectation that a government led by someone such as Ahmed Chalabi would be able to take swift control and that, faced with defeat, the fighting remnant of Saddam's loyalists would surrender, assimilate, or be destroyed. Rumsfeld was not only wrong, he was seen to be wrong: The lean and mean force that so swiftly took Baghdad was far too light to occupy, secure, and defend the country after the war.

The deeper problem with Rumsfeld has less to do with Iraq than with his global vision. He remains an advocate of NATO expansion into Russia's backyard in Georgia and the Ukraine, and he still favors an antimissile defense system built on assumptions that are both politically and technically flawed. The 1999 "Rumsfeld Report" stated that this system was needed because "a number of countries with regional ambitions do not welcome the U.S. role as a stabilizing power in their regions and . . . they want to place restraints on the U.S. capability to project power or influence into their regions."

Eight years and over 3,000 American soldiers' lives later, Rumsfeld still doesn't understand that the pursuit of global hegemony—for that is what the unrestrained projection of power is all about—will doom America. A "doctrine" that demands the capability to project power everywhere and all of the time cannot be sustained economically, physically, or culturally, because the threat is limitless, and the commitment, open-ended. No man who succumbs to this dangerous obsession should be allowed to head

the Pentagon.

Rumsfeld's firing heralds the endgame in Iraq; it will be messy, and the accompanying score settling in Washington will not be for the faint of heart.

—Srdja Trifkovic

CURTIS CATE, R.I.P.

We were deeply saddened to learn that one of this magazine's longest-running contributors, Curtis Cate, passed away on November 16. Born on May 22, 1924, in Paris to American parents, Mr. Cate was educated in England at Winchester College and Magdalen College, Oxford, and studied Spanish at Harvard and Russian at France's School of Oriental Languages. He served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army during World War II and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

As a journalist, Mr. Cate worked for the *New York Herald Tribune* and served as an editor for the *Atlantic Monthly* for 11 years. His freelance work has appeared in countless newspapers and magazines. He was also the author of several books, including *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: His Life and Times* (for which he was given the *Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Aéro-Club de France*); *George Sand: A Biography*; *The Ides of August: The Berlin Wall Crisis*; *The War of the Two Emperors: The Duel Between Napoleon and Alexander—Russia, 1812*; *André Malraux: A Biography*; and *Friedrich Nietzsche*.

Mr. Cate's final *Chronicles* piece, a "Letter From Berlin," appears in this issue. He will be sorely missed.

—The Editors

OBITER DICTA

Our poetry this month is provided by **Robert Beum**, who resides in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Dr. Beum's poems and essays have appeared in the *Sewanee Review*, *National Review*, the *Christian Century*, *Prairie Schooner*, and the *Southwest Review*, among others. His most recent books are *Classic European Short Stories* and *Modern British Essayists*.

Our cover is a reprise of the July 1991 cover, by renowned artist **Warren Chappell**.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson** and **Nicholas Garrie**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University. Mr. Garrie, who works in a variety of media, hails from Rockford.

Two Oinks for Democracy

In the year 2000, many conservatives, with or without holding their noses, turned out to vote for George W. Bush. One of the Republicans' strongest selling points during the campaign was Governor Bush's oft-repeated declaration that his administration would not engage in nation-building experiments. After eight years of President Clinton's busybodying in the Balkans, where he capped his folly by launching an unjustifiable war against what little we had allowed to survive of Yugoslavia, George Bush's pronouncements fell upon conservative ears like rain on the parched desert floor. Hopes were confirmed by his promise to name Colin Powell as secretary of state.

Some conservatives, including several of us at *Chronicles*, were disturbed by the men of evil omen who assisted the campaign and were likely to play a major role in a Bush administration: the sinister Richard Perle and his bumbling apprentices, Paul Wolfowitz and Doug Feith; the naive and inexperienced Condoleezza Rice; and, worst of all, the dark lords of the Republican Party, Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld's management style and commitment to high-tech warfare had, even then, made him an object of suspicion to experienced military men.

As everyone knows, our suspicions turned out to be justified—in spades—and, six years after George Bush's inauguration, we are bogged down in a deepening civil war in Iraq and a conflict in Afghanistan that more and more reminds us of why the Russians had to leave. Though it would be bad manners to say so to the President, Governor Bush has been proved right. The government of the United States has no mission or mandate to rebuild other nations in its own image, and our two little experiments have proved to be a disaster for the miserable laboratory rats we are forcing to run the maze of post-American democracy and international human rights.

Much of our criticism of the President's foreign policy has been made on the level of principle: Preemptive wars, inherently wrong, would eventually justify the militarization of American life and the final destruction of our constitutional order. Reconstruction abroad would inevitably justify reconstruction at home. But the "Just Argument" (borrowed without apologies from Aristophanes' *Clouds*) has been shouted down by the Unjust Argument, which has stolen the clothes and assumed the appearance of justice. Many otherwise decent conservatives now mistake the American Greatness propaganda of *National Review* and the *Weekly Standard* for authentic American patriotism, and they interpret any principled criticism as a sign of cowardice and disloyalty. If we wish to persuade our friends, we can no longer speak as Christians or old-school republicans and patriots, and we shall have to abandon the high ground of morality, law, and the Constitution and descend into the political mire to wallow with the demon-haunted swine, grunting hosannas to American imperium without ever lifting their snouts from the trough. Once we get accustomed to the company—and

the smell—we are ready to ask the only question these people, who have so seriously misled the President and his party, are willing to entertain: What's in it for us?

The President's advisors do not like history, because, like Greek tragedy, it teaches all the wrong lessons. During the Cold War, the United States invested a great deal of energy and money into putting Germany and Japan back on their feet, staving off the Soviets' reach into Southern Europe, and setting up pro-American social democracies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We certainly achieved our objectives in Germany and Japan, though at the price of creating serious economic rivals; Greece was rescued from the jaws of Stalin, and CIA support for Christian Democrats and Socialists kept Italy firmly within our orbit. The assassination of Salvador Allende in the course of a capitalist coup, while not the cleanest operation the CIA has ever undertaken, had salutary effects that are enjoyed by most Chileans to this day. To multiply instances might seem unpatriotic, though I am not moralizing. Our successes, clean as well as dirty, all have something in common. With the exception of Japan, all these countries were populated by European Christians who maintained or at least remembered traditions that included the rule of law, hard work, self-restraint, and the political participation of the responsible classes. Japan was a civilized and disciplined country that had been absorbing many Western political and legal concepts since the Meiji restoration (1868).

By contrast, our experiments in Vietnam, most of Latin America, and Africa foundered on the rock of non-European populations whose legal, political, and social traditions were not very compatible with our own. In Vietnam, we murdered President Diem and overthrew his Christian and pro-Western regime under the delusion that Asian Buddhists would repel the communists by offering a nonrevolutionary socialist alternative. In El Salvador, we opposed both communists and Catholic rightists in order to promote an American socialist professor who had little support among his own people. But why go on enumerating our failures—in Rhodesia and Nicaragua, for example, where American policies unintentionally led to the installation of communist regimes? Yes, there are fluctuations, but the good news, for those who savor the taste of reality, is that Danny Ortega is back and, failing a CIA coup, will soon be joining Hugo Chavez's alliance against America. Ortega had tried, twice before, to return to power, but this time, the road was smoothed for him by Donald Rumsfeld, who also installed the far more dangerous Nancy Pelosi into the House Speaker's chair.

Any effort to build a stable regime friendly to U.S. interests will have to construct its programs on a population that has some understanding of the West and some institutions—religious or

