

# The fuel that stokes the fire

USAmerica's enemies within

Shortly after US troops marched into Baghdad in the spring of 2003 Iraqi citizens pillaged their nation's capital. Somewhat later, Donald Rumsfeld, the current US Secretary of Defense, commented that pillaging is a common event in the wake of fallen, abusive governments. This remark was apparently made in justification for his department's own lack of foresight in correcting for the inevitable. The Iraqi national museum was stripped clean, and many Iraqi national archives were destroyed. The consequent shame that many Iraqi people must have felt, while they watched their citizens rape their nation on world-wide television, was likely profound.

Though it took only a few weeks for the pillaging to subside, if only for the reason that there was nothing left to pillage, the stripping apparently continued. Unfortunately, for the United States government, the Bush administration, and the USAmerican people; rather than Iraqis stripping other Iraqis of their belongings, ancient history, and public records, it was Iraqi male prisoners being made to disrobe, don themselves with women's underwear, and perform nude before USAmerican prison guards. Surely, it was the turn of USAmericans to hide their face.

Before the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq, the free world's leader in the victory against communism was largely viewed as an innocent victim acting in its own self-defense. This image was enhanced when many Afghans rejoiced that the Taliban political scourge was finally brought to an end. Unfortunately, no satisfactory political arrangement has yet been found to replace the Taliban, and the conditions that preceded them have in many ways returned.

While driving Osama bin Laden into mountainous caverns along the Afghan-Pakistani border, everyone was told that what was to follow would be a long, murky, and secretive war against a widespread, unrelenting, and vicious enemy. Within months of the Taliban fall talk of another major confrontation was in the air, and somewhat later billions of US dollars worth of US armour and munitions, as well as many tens of thousands of US troops, began amassing along Iraq's southern border. Today, there are

bombs exploding in Istanbul, Riyadh, Bali, Karachi, and Madrid. Moreover, US unpopularity in the Muslim and much of the Western world is at an all time high. This is to say nothing of Israel's continued aggression, border theatrics, and domestic political stalemate.

Mr. Bush, there is nothing murky or secretive about your war. It's making world headlines everyday! Rather than silencing Osama bin Laden you have amplified his message many times, and the world is sick of hearing it!

Colin Powell once stated that the only land the United States has ever claimed in the Middle East is that in which its fallen heroes have been buried. Perhaps Secretary Powell does not consider the vast oil reserves that lie beneath the sands of Iraq as part of the land it now occupies. Or perhaps he feels that USAmerica's debt to the Middle East is forever wiped clean with each dollar paid to an Arab monarch when US citizens fill up at a gasoline station in the United States. Certainly many USAmericans must be confused about whether their nation's soldiers have fallen in the name of freedom and democracy or fossil-fueled manifest destiny. Just how many Iraqis have found it difficult to believe anything but the latter is, of course, difficult to say.

Blowing oneself and another up, be it with homemade bombs strapped to one's belly, guided missiles launched from attack helicopters, or precision bombs dropped from high-flying aircraft is hardly the way to end already widespread hatred. Moreover, it is difficult to engage in constructive solutions with so much destruction going on around you. Fortunately, there are those, who can feel the pain, but have somehow managed to escape the hatred, and are thus both motivated and desirous to see the destruction end. Unfortunately, the success of these people in finding satisfactory compromise can only be as good as the popular will of the nations who support the governments that propagate the destruction.

The presidential administration of Ronald Reagan, whose death the world mourns this week, drew the curtain on a postwar era that ushered USAmerica onto the world's political stage. Unfortunately, President Reagan's successors were unable to achieve that for which much of the world had hoped when the Soviet Union was finally dissolved -- effective world government.

The first real opportunity to achieve this end was squandered, when the

former President Bush circumvented the United Nations in his effort to win allied support to force Iraq to surrender Kuwaiti oil wells. History provided the United States with a second crack at establishing a new world order, when Osama bin Laden's colleagues of conflagration brought the Twin Towers of New York to the ground, in what was probably the largest single heap of urban rubble and ash since the bombings of Tokyo and Dresden toward the close of World War II. Unlike his father, however, not only has the current President squandered an important historical opportunity, but he is leaving no united international legacy upon which the next president of the United States can effectively build.

The current administration's contempt and nearly complete disregard for the United Nations and world opinion have made the very institutions in which USAmericans most pride themselves targets of mockery and scorn the world over. What the current Bush administration has accomplished in this regard is to highlight what has made it so difficult for the United States to shed its imperial image during the past decade and a half -- the United States' undaunted support of Israeli arrogance and both nations' long standing, flagrant disregard for UN resolutions with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Unfortunately, even with the current US administration on the chopping block, what President Bush's front-running presidential contender has promised with regard to the Middle East sounds like more of the same. Certainly the rationale is obvious. In a close presidential race both sides are courting swing voters, powerful political minorities, and wealthy special interest groups. Among these latter are, of course, the USAmerican Jewish community, who finds it difficult to separate politics from religion, West Jerusalem from Washington, and Tel Aviv from New York; powerful agricultural lobbies, whose preference for lavish government subsidies at home has compromised world prosperity overseas; and USAmerica's oil industrialists, who regularly profit from sudden surges in oil prices and environmental destruction in the name of even greater domestic fuel consumption. On the horizon loom high interest rates that both the world and the US will find difficult to pay for, as USAmericans waddle through life pretending to be Japanese sumô while the majority of the world remains undernourished.

USAmericans who pride themselves in US world leadership need to get a grip on reality and view clearly the world they are exploiting. For if

USAmericans want what is good for USAmerica to be good for everyone, and thus secure USAmerica's future in the world, it must put an end to the gluttony and the ruinous special interests that are abusing USAmerica's good name in their own self-interest. Osama bin Laden has surely ignited the fires of hatred, but the fuel that is stoking their spread is USAmerican made.

Both Mr. Kerry and President Bush Jr. recently fell from their bicycles. That one or both might learn from their spills that there is more to steering world democracy than simply pedalling down well-worn domestic national paths.

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