

Why the world says "No!" to war in Iraq

Jim Fetzer

As the Bush political machine continues on its inexorable path toward war with Iraq, the crucial question to bear in mind--what Nicholas Kristov (*The New York Times*, 28 January 2003) calls "the first question"--is this: Will war with Iraq make us any safer? Saddam Hussein's older son, Uday, has promised that, if we attack Iraq, they will make 9/11 look like "a picnic". We should all pause and ask ourselves whether the game is going to be worth the candle. Given a lack of good reasons for going to war and given that national security is rooted in economic security, will this war with Iraq make Americans safer? Because it appears all too likely we are about to open the gates of hell in the Middle East.

The administration's plan to occupy Iraq requires American forces to remain at full strength for months after the war has ended, attempting to hold together a country severely divided between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds, with thousands remaining on location in Iraq for years after, according to *The Washington Post* (17 January 2003). "A primary mission for US forces if hostilities broke out", it reports, "would be to protect the country's oil fields and prevent rival factions from settling scores or grabbing territory." That's a bit ironic, considering that surrounding nations will view an American occupation of an Arab state as part and parcel of its own territorial acquisition with the objective of seizing Arab oil.

In spite of the administration's allegations, al Qaeda and Iraq are unlikely allies. Al Qaeda, after all, represents a fundamentalistic Islamic movement, while Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, is a secular and non-religious state. Saddam has endured

largely by suppressing groups like al Qaeda, who are intent on overthrowing him. It would tend to undermine his own security to provide al Qaeda with weapons it could use against him. Even George Tenet, Director of our own CIA, has testified to Congress that Iraq has not engaged in terrorist acts for at least the past ten years. Attempts to link Saddam to al Qaeda have fallen miserably short and, so far, even the UN inspectors have failed to turn up evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

If anyone here or elsewhere has evidence that links Iraq with al Qaeda, weapons of mass destruction, or 9/11, then they should contact the American government, because that is what Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice have been searching for without success. Even the strongest evidence the US has been able to produce-- that Iraq has tried to buy thousands of high-strength aluminum tubes--has now been questioned by arms experts, since their precise specifications supports their use in making ordinary artillery rockets rather than weapons of mass destruction. This discovery has thereby considerably weakened the administration's credibility. (See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A34500-2003Jan23.html>.)

The latest report from Gordon Thomas (globe-intel.net, 27 January 2003), which has to be confirmed, claims Abu Hamid Mahmoud, Saddam's senior bodyguard, has identified an underground chemical weapons' facility at the south end of the Jadray Peninsula, two underground bunkers with biological weapons in Iraq's western desert, and a Scud assembly area near Ramadi. The timing of these "smoking guns" is extraordinarily suspicious, which suggests that they may be fake. But even if these reports should turn out to be true (which UN inspectors can verify), exact knowledge of their locations ought to be enough to allow the

US to take them out using those precision weapons that we hear so much about.

Indeed, the paradox of the administration's position is that, if we must invade Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, then we have to locate them first; but having located them in order to justify invading Iraq, we can destroy them without invading Iraq! So, if we are going to invade even though we have enough intelligence to take them out without invading, our reasons for invading must be other than those that have been alleged. Which is why it looks to the world as though our intentions are ignoble and debased and motivated by greed.

We may have to attack to discover these weapons because we have to plant them.

That the alleged reasons do not appear to be the real reasons for a US attack upon Iraq has caused consternation around the world. Many of us were astonished at Bush's use of the phrase, "axis of evil", to combine three such different states with three such different attitudes as Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. It is rather puzzling on its face that North Korea, which has acknowledged possessing weapons of mass destruction, should be given diplomatic negotiations, while Iraq, which has not yet been shown to have them, is subject to military attack. But the situations differ in two other crucial respects: North Korea has a formidable, highly-trained military force of more than 1 million under arms, while Iraq is militarily weak but oil rich.

Bush's tendency to sort the world into black and white--"You are either with us or against us!"--has profoundly troubled our allies in Europe, who had hoped that we had long outgrown such adolescent attitudes. "Terrorists are a hundred times more likely to obtain a weapon of mass destruction from Pakistan than from Iraq", one senior European official has now observed. "North Korea is far more likely to sell

whatever it's got. But can we say this in public? Can we have a real debate about priorities? Not with George Bush". He appears to have his mind made up. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/24/international/europe/23ALLI.html?todayshdlines>)

The UN is a collective security arrangement to promote international cooperation and world peace whereby sovereign states relinquish certain rights. No one believes the US is threatened by an imminent attack from Iraq yet, under its Charter, a member state may attack another member state only with Security Council approval if that is not the case. Since we are bound to the UN by a treaty, which has the same status as the Constitution itself as the supreme law of the land, were Bush to attack Iraq without UN sanction, he would be violating his oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and subject to impeachment, articles for which exist in draft form.

(To review them, go to http://www.rise4news.net/Impeachment_Resolution.html.)

Ironically, since Iraq is about to be attacked by the US, it can justifiably attack us!

The situation in the Pentagon involves questions that have rarely arisen in America.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are split over the administration's policies and some are speaking out. "This is not Desert Storm", one of the Joint Chiefs is reported to have

told Rumsfeld. "We don't have the backing of other Middle Eastern nations. We

don't have the backing of any of our allies except Britain and we're advocating a

policy that says we will invade another nation that is not attacking us or invading

any of our allies." According to a report from Doug Thomas of *Capitol Hill Blue*,

Rumsfeld was enraged and has told the Chiefs to fall into line or find other jobs.

Bush even considers opposition to his war policies by Pentagon officers as acts

of treason (http://www.capitolhillblue.com/artman/publish/article_1587.shtml).

As though these developments were not extraordinary enough, concern about war in Iraq has led to growing resentment of arbitrary exercises of US power in Britain, suggesting that the firm support provided by Prime Minister Tony Blair might be subject to change. Under the parliamentary system, a loss of confidence in Blair could lead to a change in governments, which depends upon maintaining support in Parliament. Although the ruling Labor Party has a massive majority and the opposition party leaders tend to share his attitude, if war were to occur without UN support, even Blair could be in trouble, especially since the US appears more and more to be aiding and abetting the Israelis in suppressing the Palestinians.

"People in American don't understand that Blair is a rather lonely figure within his own party and within the country as a whole", Michael Grove observes in *The Times of London*. "Anti-Americanism is a real force here and a growing one" (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A43665-2003Jan15.html>).

Worldwide resentment of US hypocrisy appears to be increasing. "In promising democracy to Iraq, Bush is dealing with devalued American moral currency", reports Haroon Siddiqui. "Most inconveniently, regime change in Baghdad is not part of UN Resolution 1411, the ostensible basis of all current American activity. Even if it were, the idea of killing Iraqis to give them democracy does not hold much appeal" (*The Toronto Star*, 26 January 2003; www.thestar.com).

According to columnist William Safire, there is a force of around 600 al Qaeda (called "Ansar al Islam" and led by Arabs trained in Afghanistan) situated in Kurdistan, a region of Iraq near the Turkish border (*The New York Times*, 27 January 2003). That suggests to me, to remove the threat, we ought to send in our special forces and kill them. Instead, we are planning to carpet bomb Iraq,

especially Baghdad, one of the world's oldest cities, with 800 cruise missiles in a 48 hour period. This strategy, called "Shock and Awe", is supposed to leave the Iraqis stunned and defenseless. Taking out 600 terrorists with 800 cruise missiles hardly sounds cost-effective. But it will probably leave the whole world in shock and awe (<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/25/1042911596206.html>).

There are even rumors that the United States of America is considering the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Iraq. The very thought is stupefying. "If the US dropped a [nuclear] bomb on an Arab country, it might be a military success, but it would be a diplomatic, political, and strategic disaster", said Joseph Cirincione, Director of Nonproliferation Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington (*Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 2003; www.latimes.com).

And that is not to even broach the moral or the religious dimensions of wanton destruction on such a terrible scale. Once the genie is let out of the bottle, then we can never, ever again, condemn the use of nukes against us on moral grounds.

During his most recent visit to Duluth, Congressman Jim Oberstar (D-MN), known as a man of integrity, confirmed that America could be at war in Iraq by late February but that North Korea actually presents more of a threat. As the *Budgeteer News* (19 January 2003, p. A1 and A8) has reported, "Clearly the president is bent on moving toward a war with Iraq", Oberstar said. "The cost will be enormous. It's estimated in the range of \$270-plus billion. (And) the cost of staying in Iraq will probably be a trillion dollars". When this expenditure for a war with no apparent justification is factored into present budget projections, moreover, its effects are truly staggering.

"New government data show that the federal government's budget shortfall has

grown sharply in the past few months", according to *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/25/national/25BUDG.html?todayshdlines>). With revenues shrinking and expenditures for homeland security and for the military growing, the budget deficit for 2003 is now expected to run anywhere from \$200 to \$300 billion, even before taking into account the cost of the war. Democrats are predicting that, if Bush's new tax cuts--which reduce revenues by another \$670 billion over 10 years--are passed, the government should expect to run deficits up to \$1.7 trillion by 2011. Add another trillion for Iraq and we can kiss Social Security, prescription drug, and health care reforms goodbye--possibly forever.

Lawyers know very well that, when the facts are on your side but the law is not, you argue the facts. When the law is on your side but the facts are not, you argue the law. In the case of Iraq, neither the facts nor the law are on the side of the US government. In spite of its best efforts, the Bush administration so far has simply not made its case. Even if new evidence were to disclose the existence of weapons of mass destruction, that might justify destroying those weapons, but not invading a sovereign state. And those who are willing to disregard the evidence and violate international law should pause to consider the devastating economic consequences right here at home. We need regime change in America at least as much as in Iraq.

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, served as an artillery officer in the US Marine Corps. He believes this administration has lost its way and is compromising the principles upon which this country was founded. Many of his earlier columns are archived and available on-line at <http://www.assassinationscience.com>.