

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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Rushing the issue

President Bush's deadline for Iraqi sovereignty comes too early to succeed

The countdown has begun for returning sovereignty to Iraq. However, as the months fly by, the Iraqi people do not seem to be increasing their capacity to govern themselves effectively. Arguably, the only things increasing are the death toll of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi cooperatives and the hostilities among the three main factions: Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis. This has led many to question the high administration's adamancy for returning sovereignty by June 30.

This decision is not only premature, but dangerous. First, the United States has already fallen behind schedule in laying the groundwork for the transitional government because officials pompously presumed the Iraqis would embrace a democratic government with open arms. To the officials' surprise, a substantial number of Iraqis view the idea of implementing democracy unacceptable. In fact, many Iraqi politicians are hostile to the idea.

This opposition has dumbfounded U.S. officials. After all, it is crucial that the Iraqis view their government as legitimate, or stability in the region will become a figment of the imagination. Democracy was the ideal method of choosing leaders for the interim government, but now many officials remain scratching their heads strenuously trying to conjure up another method to meet the deadline.

Secondly, it's nearly impossible to establish the sense of security and trust that is vital to a democratic electoral system while bombings occur daily. U.S. News and World Report reported, "When bombs are exploding killing 50 people per day, it's a tough sell to announce where 500 to 1,000 polling stations will be."

Nevertheless, obtaining cooperation among the religious sects and ethnic factions appears to be the real threat to the future Iraqi government.

For instance, intense debate is transpiring between Islamic and secular Iraqis over religion in the constitution. Islamic extremists are establishing Islam as the official religion of Iraq, while the secularists oppose it. Whatever the decision is, no one will be entirely satisfied.

In a country where factions distrust each other even more than the U.S. officials, equal leadership and representation within the new government are critical for stability. Of course, there is no easy way to resolve this dilemma. The Kurds have pro-



NICHOLAS DAVIS

posed a presidency consisting of a three-leader figure representing each of the main factions. But the Shiites, being the majority, desire a single presidency because odds are one of their kind will be elected.

Americans cannot relate to this predicament. When was the last time vehement debate transpired over a president's religious affiliation? Most Americans could arguably care less, and even if some did disagree with a president's religion, they would be able to overlook it.

This is not the case in Iraq. If just one of these factions suspect they are being shortchanged they may refuse to recognize the interim government. And this translates into one thing: chaos.

It can take years, if not decades, to cultivate a culture within a country that is conducive to a democratic system, especially in Iraq, where the population is used to a dictator.

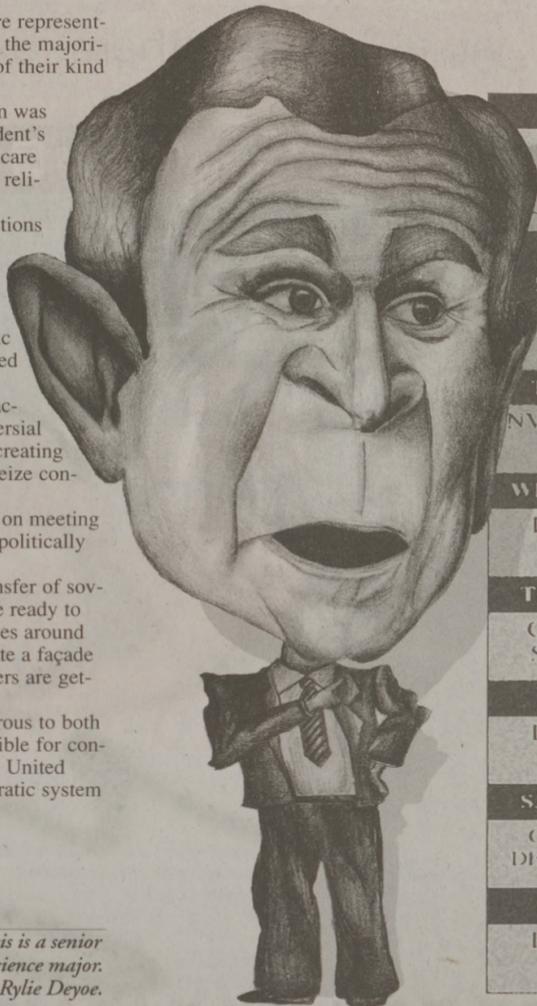
What happens if sovereignty is returned and the factions refuse to cooperate on one of the many controversial issues? The whole country could fall apart, possibly creating a power vacuum for some savvy person or group to seize control with our soldiers stuck in the middle.

Nevertheless, President Bush remains unwavering on meeting his deadline, which is not only foolish, but plausibly politically motivated.

It's doubtful that Bush is pushing for the swift transfer of sovereignty because he truly believes the Iraqi people are ready to govern themselves. Most likely, his motivation revolves around taking the spot light off of a controversial war to create a façade that everything is improving and that American soldiers are getting closer to coming home.

Such an action is not only shortsighted, but dangerous to both the Iraqi people and our soldiers who will be responsible for controlling any conflicts that arise. Bush must realize the United States will face tremendous consequences if a democratic system established in haste fails.

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WEEK AT A GLANCE
MONDAY DAY OFF
TUESDAY INVADE IRAQ
WEDNESDAY DAY OFF
THURSDAY CAPTURE SADDAM
FRIDAY DAY OFF
SATURDAY CREATE A DEMOCRACY
SUNDAY DAY OFF

RWU white scholarship conveys racial ignorance

Whether a comfort or a reason for alarm, diversity supporters should be aware that Texas A&M is not the only school gaining media attention for affirmative action protests.



CODY SAIN

Earlier this month, the College Republicans at Roger Williams University in Bristol, R.I., created a "White Scholarship Award" to protest affirmative action and similarly similar awards given to people of other races.

Although it is well within their rights to create such a scholarship, it has been done in poor taste and evidences a pathetic understanding of the purposes of race-based scholarships and affirmative action.

Despite what many opponents of affirmative action would have everyone believe, America is still far from the days when racism and other forms of prejudice do not exist. The days of segregation and violence toward minorities are still embedded in the recent memories of most American citizens. They are things that cannot be forgotten.

Examples of prejudicial behavior aren't hard to find. Recently, a METRO police officer in Houston was discharged after verbally assaulting an Ethiopian taxicab driver on Feb. 9. According

to Click2Houston.com, the officer, whose comments were recorded on tape, said things such as, "Let me tell you something (expletive); we don't need your kind. You need to go back to your country." Unquestionably, racism (and extreme nationalism) influenced the officer's comments.

The fact remains that America hasn't recovered from the injustices committed before and during the civil rights movement. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other minorities are still discriminated against. Some are still living in poverty and poor conditions and are barely surviving on minimum-wage jobs. For many of these people, their goal is to survive, not to succeed. Often, the only opportunities they have to break free from this generational poverty are through race-based scholarships and affirmative action programs. The White Scholarship Award mocks their plight.

The RWU College Republicans are missing the point with this scholarship. The reason such scholarships are considered racist while other race-based scholarships are not is

twofold. First, there is a deadly and painful historical connotation to the phrase "whites-only." To many, this conjures up images of segregation. Memories of violence such as the Watts Riots (both in 1965 and 1992) create

even more pain, even for those not directly involved. Thus the scholarships appear to be extremely regressive.

Secondly, whites have always been dominant in colleges; whether the RWU College Republicans intend to, they are perpetuating this dominance by protesting the means in which minorities are given the opportunity to attend college.

The scholarship was RWU student Jason Mattera's idea. Ironically Mattera, who is Puerto Rican, was awarded a \$5,000 minority scholarship from the Hispanic College Fund. However, The Associated Press reported that he still believes "scholarships should be given out based on merit and need." Mattera's thinking must have been different when he applied for the minority scholarship he received.

Some people will assert that someone in an

"The days of segregation and violence toward minorities are still embedded in the recent memories of most American citizens. They are things that cannot be forgotten."

MAIL CALL

Republicans ignore other Biblical lessons

In response to John David Blakley's Feb. 27 column:

As a Christian first and a Democrat second, I applaud Mr. Blakley's article about religion and politics. I don't understand how some people support the GOP only because it is perceived to be the party for Christians. It's hypocritical for Bush and other Republicans to support some biblical teachings and reject others. Jesus emphasized the importance of helping the poor, yet GOP monetary policies have created the worst recessions in history: The Great Depression and the current economic slump that caused 2.6 million people to lose their jobs, less people to have healthcare and more Americans to live in poverty. Bush's massive tax cuts for the wealthy are devastating the middle and lower classes and creating a permanent elite class. I can't comprehend how Bush and other

Republicans can be so focused on portraying themselves as good Christians by opposing abortion and homosexuality, but can completely disregard the suffering created by their economic policies. While Bush and the GOP rack up hundreds of millions of dollars for his 2004 campaign, millions of Americans are living on the street starving. Bush and his cronies should stop being so hypocritical and help the majority of Americans, not just the rich.

David Johnson
Class of 2004

Bush faces as many roadblocks as Nader

In response to Matt Younger's Feb. 26 column:

First of all, while Ralph Nader's candidacy is an unexpected curve, it is highly unlikely that it will be a factor to the extent that it was four years ago. While I respect Nader's ideals, my practical side

will keep me from voting for him, and this will probably be the case for most other Democrats. Thinking that he will draw the kind of numbers he previously did is merely wishful thinking.

As far as Kerry's voting record is concerned, most pundits and politicians agree that when you have been in the U.S. Senate for as long as Kerry and have cast as many votes as he has, it is likely that your record will give the appearance of "flip-flopping" as context and times change.

Younger also seems to be under the impression that President Bush will not have his share of roadblocks. He said that "Explaining the war in Iraq is perhaps Kerry's biggest obstacle." I think one could say the same for Bush, as he will have to explain to the American people a pre-emptive war based on questionable evidence. The bottom line is that Bush is not invulnerable, it will be a very close race, and we will see who has the most roadblocks in November.

James Close
Class of 2004

Hotard Hall epitomizes the Aggie spirit

In response to Carrie Pierce's Feb. 24 article:

I have noticed a pattern here over the past year. People go to football games and do not stand the entire time, or they leave early or they may not even go at all. In the days following, The Battalion is flooded with letters from disgruntled students and alumni who scoff at the poor pride of the current Aggies.

If you have ever written a letter to The Battalion about the disintegrating Aggie Spirit, or if you have ever read letters on this subject and have agreed with it, I am asking you to consider this: When there was poor attendance at the Kansas game, Hotard was there. Where people were sitting down, Hotard was still standing. When people complain about the lack of "Howdy!" they hear about campus, Hotard is continuing that tradition. The administration is planning to turn

Hotard Hall into faculty offices, and during the renovations we will all lose some of our Aggie Spirit. For all of those Aggies who have ever complained about the waning Aggie Spirit, now is our chance to conserve what is left. The student body president, Matt Josefy, has asked those concerned with Hotard to write an e-mail to him, of any length, so he can know how the student body feels on this matter. He can be reached at sbp@tamu.edu.

Victoria Montemayor
Class of 2007

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net