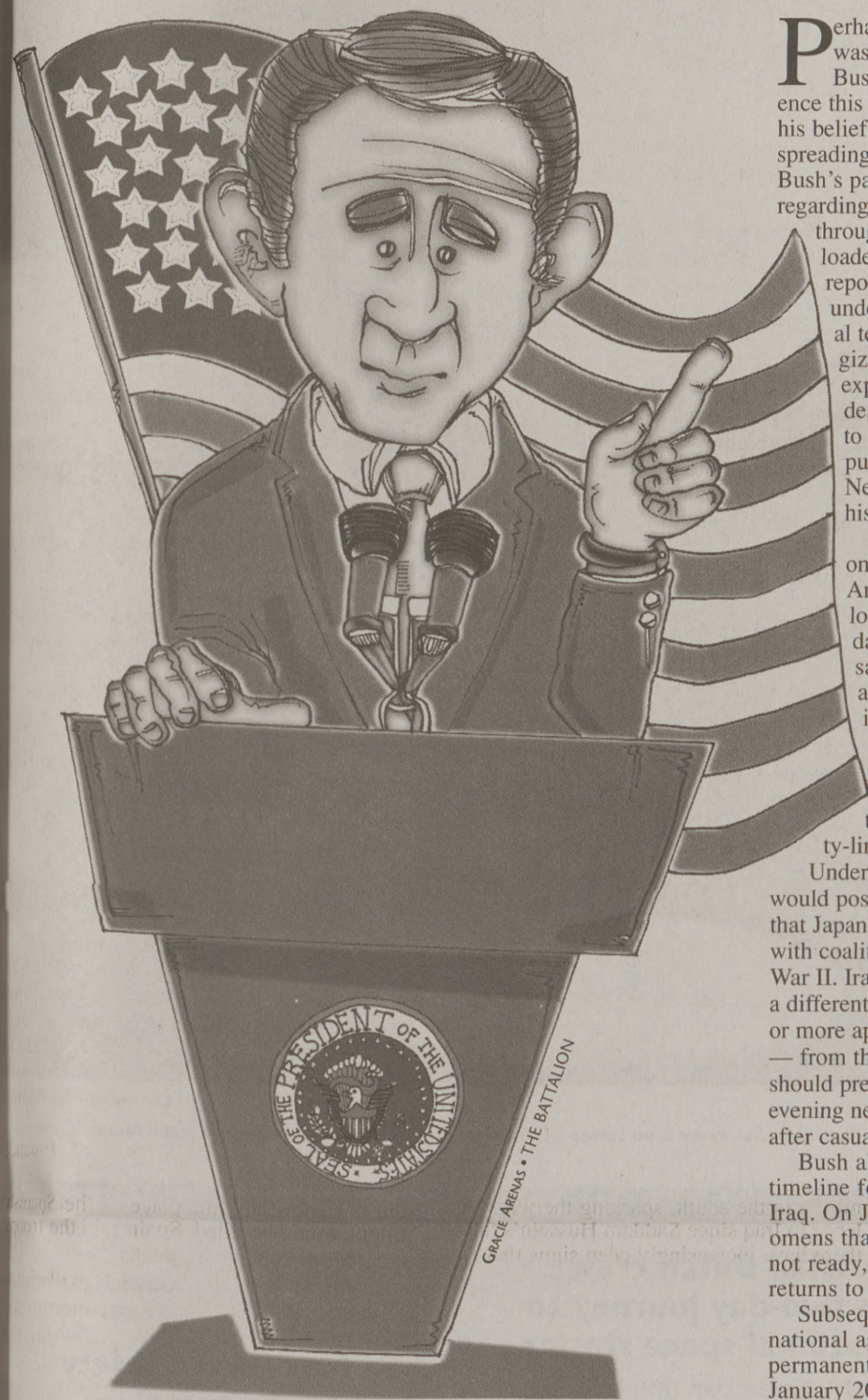


Staying the course

Bush address expressed need to continue fighting in Iraq, but at what expense?



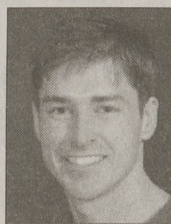
Perhaps noticing support was waning, President Bush held a news conference this past week to reiterate his belief in the mission of spreading democracy to Iraq. Bush's passion and conviction regarding the war shined through despite numerous loaded questions that reporters launched to undermine the president on national television, asking him to apologize for the 9-11 attacks, further explain the weapons of mass destruction misinformation and to comment on his declining public approval ratings. Nevertheless, the president held his ground.

Overall, the speech had only one purpose: to articulate that America shall stay in Iraq "as long as necessary and not one day more." Though this message shows conviction, it raises a red flag concerning long-term implications, the most salient being that U.S. soldiers will occupy Iraq for years to come, but not as soldiers; they will be more like authority-limited policemen.

Under ideal circumstances, this would pose no problem. After all, recall that Japan and Germany cooperated with coalition forces following World War II. Iraq, however, has been cut from a different cloth. Given the assistance — or more appropriately the lack thereof — from the Iraqi people, Americans should prepare themselves for countless evening news reports citing casualty after casualty of U.S. soldiers.

Bush also laid out the conservative timeline for the transition of power in Iraq. On June 30, despite all the clear omens that the political environment is not ready, the sovereignty of Iraq returns to the Iraqi people.

Subsequently, elections for a national assembly that is to draft a new permanent constitution will occur in January 2005. Then, finally, by Dec.



NICHOLAS DAVIS

15, 2005, Iraqis will elect a permanent government, an event the president claimed "will mark Iraq's transition from dictatorship to freedom."

Of course, U.S. troops will provide the security for this transformation. As the president explained, the Iraqis need Americans there to fight off the enemies of freedom.

However, Americans should question how long that will take.

The president acknowledged that the attacks are perpetrated by three main factions: Islamic extremists, terrorists infiltrating from other countries and remnants of Saddam's regime.

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But this million-dollar question remains: How can U.S. soldiers discern an extremist, a loyalist or a plain old Muslim terrorist from the democracy-loving, "peaceful" Iraqi Muslims? The harsh truth is that they can't.

As mentioned before, Iraqi people provide negligible assistance to troops, and the enemy is undistinguishable from peaceful citizens. Translation: A secure Iraq is unattainable unless the Iraqi people help their liberators identify the enemies of freedom. Without that assistance from Iraqis themselves, U.S. soldiers must patiently wait around to catch a bullet or fall victim to a suicide bomber before the enemies become clearly identifiable.

"None of these acts are the work of a religion; all are the work of a fanatical political ideology," Bush said.

Truly, everyone wants to believe that, but until cooperation becomes evident, America's motto should be, "Oh yeah, prove it."

If the president intends to keep the soldiers in harm's way for years, even after the election of a permanent government and with only limited authority, some changes must occur. For example, if terrorists continue to slip through the border, the president must send more American forces to quell the threat or contact the respective governments of the extremist countries and demand compliance in patrolling their own borders.

"Failure in Iraq would be unthinkable," Bush said. This is true. Hopefully, the president will take a harsher stance against the opposition to prevent unnecessary American casualties.

Throughout his speech, the president did everything to keep from implying that Iraq is a hotbed for chaos. Nevertheless, when sovereignty transfers and the three contentious factions assume control Americans should realize that, at anytime, the interim government might fall victim to gridlock, perhaps leading the way to civil war; America will have even more years in Iraq.

Some may scoff at this, but the assertion is not far-fetched.

Clearly, America must stay the course for, as the president proclaimed, retreat would only empower the terrorists and "every enemy of America in the world would celebrate, proclaiming our weakness and decadence and using that victory to recruit a new generation of killers."

Bush seems to be an honest man who truly believes in the mission this country has embarked on. His resolve remains unwavering, and his determination for success deserves applause. Nonetheless, Americans must prepare for a long arduous stay in Iraq and, unless some drastic changes transpire in that region, many more soldiers will be lost.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major.

Kerry's Iraq policy relies too heavily on global assistance

America doesn't need U.N. blessing to do right thing

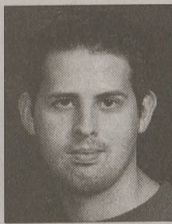
In an often misquoted proverb, John Heywood wrote in 1546, "Would ye both eat your cake and have your cake?" As Heywood was implying, the truth is that in some situations, you can't have a thing both ways — and recent remarks by Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry regarding the war in Iraq seem to suggest a failure to understand this concept. He believes that America should continue the war in Iraq, but that we should also have international support in doing so.

This belief is in direct opposition to what the majority of the international community has said for the past two years regarding Iraq — it wants to stay out. Kerry needs to realize that Iraq is either the right thing to do — as he said in his vote to go to war last year — or that it's not, regardless of the global community's involvement.

Doing the right thing is often a lonely course of action, and it should never require the validation of others. Kerry, however, seems to want other countries to hold his hand and tell him that being in Iraq is OK. "Never has the United States of America been held in as low a regard internationally as we are today," Kerry told NBC's "Meet the Press" last Sunday. "We're not trusted, and this administration is not liked."

But why should the United States care if it's liked? Does that have any bearing on whether what this nation does is right? While Kerry would never come out and say that international validation is a prerequisite for American decision-making, his desire to bring in U.N. and NATO forces into the Iraqi reconstruction seems to suggest exactly that.

Supporters of his plan for Iraq may argue that this is not an issue of needing moral support, but a more pragmatic



MIKE WALTERS

approach to the present struggle to keep order in Iraq. "Removing that 'Made in America' label can send a message to Iraqi military and police that it's time to do their jobs — not because America is telling them to, but because the world stands ready to help them secure a stable Iraq," Kerry said.

However, it's a valid criticism that the Iraqi military and police aren't doing their jobs now. It's clear to everyone that the present security existing in Iraq is largely the work of American troops. However, if Iraqis want to police themselves and be responsible for their own security, they have to match that desire with the work and the manpower it takes to do so. The presence or absence of American or international troops is independent of Iraqis lining up words with actions.

“Doing the right thing is often a lonely course of action, and it should never require the validation of others.”

"The idea that somehow if there were a U.N. flag instead of a coalition flag, that these thugs would not be attacking, is ... just a little bit naive," National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice told ABC's "This Week." Believing the insurgents would have a more pleasant attitude toward U.N. rather than American troops ignores the fact that insurgents bombed the U.N. building soon after the official fighting ceased.

Further, is the world really "standing ready to secure a stable Iraq" as Kerry said? Spain, one of the few countries that had committed troops to Iraq, announced Sunday the immediate removal of its forces. Though Spain claims that its decision is the result of the United States not bringing the United Nations in to help, this is a weak excuse. When a country decides that war is moral and deserving of sending their sons and daughters into, then it doesn't matter who else is there. This is clearly not a vision that Kerry shares.

Like many other countries, Spain lacks the moral courage required to properly identify evil and commit to the destruction of it. It's quite natural for Kerry to want the support of the international community, but the sad fact is, for the time being, America may be quite alone in fighting terrorists abroad.

"Our diplomacy has been about as arrogant and ineffective as anything I have ever seen and I think if you ask people all around the world, I think that is exactly what they would tell you," Kerry told "Meet the Press."

If he calls U.S. diplomacy ineffective because America doesn't have more international support in Iraq, he may be right, but if a country refuses to believe that regime change is a good thing, there is nothing Americans can say to force them to face the facts. Saddam and his sons slaughtered thousands in their dictatorial rule of the nation, and their removal gives Iraqis a chance for freedom that they haven't had in decades. As for its reputation of arrogance, well, if doing the right thing — even when it means doing it alone — is now called arrogant, America should never fear calling itself that.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major.

MAIL CALL

Campus debate on Iraq war today is between 'the ignorant and the zealot'

In response to Nicholas Davis' April 14 column and an April 15 mail call:

As an Aggie studying abroad this year, I found it extremely appalling that A&M students are subject to such ignorance and blatant inhumanity in their daily reading. Mr. Branagan's and Mr. Davis' respective articles highlight an unsavory reality at our great University: the campus debate today is between the ignorant and the zealot. Present in each piece were a slough of fallacies, factual errors and a ubiquitous ethnocentrism.

Mr. Branagan began his letter by labeling Davis a "cowardly liberal." This is humorous I'm sure to those who read Davis' article. Aside from the blatant misnomer, this ad hominem is all too common these days in the media where people attempt to discredit an idea based upon moral, religious, political, et al. beliefs. Apparently it works in reverse for the "noble" George Bush. I'm at a loss for understanding the use of that term unless in reference to divine right. But, certainly, nobility is stronger than being a cowardly liberal (one point for Branagan). Branagan then buttresses his argument further by describing the terrorist threat — another label thrown around carelessly — as the force of darkness. Are we talking about Bruce Campbell movies? Branagan then lets us see a bit of his own darkness when he suggests he would rather see dead Iraqis over dead Americans by liberating Iraq into the ground. This is making me nauseated, so I'll state the facts.

Although there is much to question concerning why Americans are in Iraq, why we weren't better prepared for post "shock and awe," and how this will adversely affect our domestic economy in the midst of tax cuts (Reaganomics didn't work the first time around), we are in Iraq whether we like it or not. Branagan is correct in asserting that we must now stay the course. We helped create this mess, and as we were taught as children we must now lead the cleanup! For the record, a stable, credible and economically sound Iraq will be an important pillar in a region where "terrorism" is engendered by unemployment, political marginalization and current U.S. policy making — all issues we must address in order to fight "terrorism," even if it means "cowardly liberals" and "noble" Republicans holding hands together.

Thank goodness we are finally going to ask the United Nations to help out. This will be George Bush's true test of "nobility": admitting mistakes and asking for help to correct them.

Johnathan Stever
Class of 2004

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