

A policy worth backing

Bush administration's support of Sharon's withdrawal plan an overdue move



NICHOLAS DAVIS

On April 14 President Bush embarked on a major shift in U.S. policy by formally backing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan for withdrawing Israeli forces from Gaza and all but five settlements of the West Bank. This shift was long overdue.

"I reiterate our steadfast commitment to Israel's security and to preserving and strengthening Israel's self-defense capabilities," the president said, "including its right to defend itself against terror."

Bush's words are right on the money. The United States can no longer remain on the fence regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

It seems that not a week goes by without images of debris, ambulances and blood-stained streets gracing our television screens, as the daily news reports that another terrorist attack, targeting innocent Israeli citizens, has occurred.

It's time to be blunt. The reason the Road Map for Peace, a multi-national plan for achieving peace in the region, will never take hold is that the Palestinians are not willing to compromise.

Many people remain frustrated about the whole dilemma, throwing up their hands and spouting off, "it's just too complicated." True, but frankly, many people really don't understand the background of the conflict and thus wish to remain neutral.

However, the history is crucial to understanding the significance of Sharon's plan.

In 1948, the United Nations voted to give Israel statehood neighboring a Palestinian state. Israelis were delighted, but the Arabs had nothing to celebrate. They viewed the United Nations as biased and rejected the decision since the Palestinian people claimed all the land was theirs.

Subsequently, the newly-formed Israel state received an announced visit by many disgruntled Arab states including Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq. Their goal was not to simply intimidate Israelis but to "push the Jews into the sea."

Israel defeated the attackers, and many Palestinians fled their homes to reside in the territories captured by Jordan and Egypt: Gaza and the West Bank. Following the battle, Jordan and Egypt murdered and expelled every Jew in their areas and other Arab countries did the same.

Several elements merit attention here. First, contrary to popular Palestinian myth, Israel didn't treat Arabs in the brutal fashion that

Arab states treated Jews. Second, Egypt and Jordan maintained Gaza and the West Bank for 19 years and never once proposed making the area, inhabited mostly by Palestinian refugees, a Palestinian state.

Flash forward to 1967. Egypt and Syria mobilized troops along the border of Israel and terrorist attacks on Israelis increased as the armies grew. All the while, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Algeria supplied the mobilizing Arab countries. Recognizing the writing on the wall, Israel launched a preemptive attack on Egypt, marking the beginning of what became known as the Six Days War.

Israel was victorious and increased its territory, encompassing the West Bank and Gaza.

Now Sharon's plan grants the land to the Palestinians to foster the development of an independent state and peace. Still, Palestinians and Arab leaders scoff at the proposal. Why?

It's because Palestinians still wish to reclaim all property lost in the 1948 war and gain all the territory in the West Bank.

Again, this only shows how irrational and hardnosed the Palestinians are. Israel gained the lands through self-defense and improved them. They have no moral obligation to give any of them back, even though the United Nations claims it has legal obligations to do so. Either way, one must not disregard the fact that had the Arabs been a little more tolerant, perhaps things would have turned out differently.

Here's the question people should ask themselves: Had Egypt, Jordan and Syria succeeded in the Six Days War, would they have given back the land or, at the very least, conceded a portion to the Israeli's? Absolutely not.

Regardless, the Palestinian opposition to the plan isn't surprising and neither is the Arab world's chiding of the United States.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei stated, "He is the first president who has legitimized the settlements in the Palestinian territories, we as Palestinians reject it, we refuse it."

Yassar Arafat, a known terrorist, claimed the peace process would be dead if the United States assured that Israel could keep key West Bank settlements. And the Jordanian King, Abdullah II, cancelled a meeting at the White House.

Nevertheless, this opposition shouldn't sway Americans from taking a definitive stance on the issue. Israel should be commended for its efforts to reach peace and Bush made the right decisions of breaking from the precedence set by past administrations of simply keeping quiet. A clear message must be sent, especially during the war on terror, that obtaining peace in the region is clearly up to the Palestinians, for at this point Israel is pulling its weight and the United States must ensure it remains protected.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major. Graphic by Will Lloyd



MAIL CALL

Assassinating terrorists could save American lives

In response to an April 28 mail call:

Wake up, Tim. Terrorists don't care what "rights" we give them. Do you really think they take into consideration what the U.N. does or does not allow before they act? They operate without regard for whatever pipe-dream international law the U.N. concocts. I guarantee you that, given the opportunity, Islamic terrorists wouldn't hesitate to pull the trigger on anyone they feel is causing them trouble, be it a foreign leader or a religious figure. The only thing keeping President Bush safe from harm is the fact that he has one of the best security forces in the world. I suppose the terrorists are welcome to try whatever tricks they have up their sleeve to harm our country, but we can't handicap ourselves in our response to their attempts. I in no way support a terrorist's "right" to harm our President, but, unlike you, I'm also not blind enough to think that they need someone's permission to try it. I say level the playing field on the assassination issue, and save some American lives.

Paul Sims
Class of 2006

expect? Hiring 400 more faculty members will not have an impact on current students.

The administration could really make an attempt to improve to quality of everyday life on this campus. One way to do this would be to improve the railroad situation. No, moving the tracks does not seem possible right now, but some of you may have noticed that some trains move on through at 45 mph while others crawl by at 2 mph. This is because the trains are either stopping to let another train pass or are starting from a stop. The University could push for the double track to be moved north or south or both and we would never have to see a 2 mph train again. I said "quick," because if we can lay tracks across the country in a couple of years, why can we not lay one mile in a couple of weeks?

Another do-it-now idea would be to fix the ultimate campus eye-sore, Ross St. Fix Ross and make all of it one-way with the right lane buses only. Any driver will tell you that it can take up to 15 minutes for that half-mile. By fixing it this summer, and using the bus lane idea, maybe Bus-ops can actually afford to lose the old buses since they will need less buses and drivers for the Ross St. routes.

Ben Jelley
Class of 2004

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

D.C. march a victory for abortion advocates

President target of demonstrators' wrath

Last weekend, I along with more than 1 million other supporters of reproductive freedom marched through the streets of Washington, D.C. This march, held in a country which has historically told women to sit down and shut up, was history-making. Sunday's "March for Women's Lives" was the largest single march in U.S. history.

Most striking about the crowd was its diversity — mothers, daughters, a promising number of sons and fathers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and their grandchildren, who were black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Methodist, Catholic, Jewish and so on. The protesters greatly differed from the estimated 200 protesters who lined the streets. One can only imagine how this group, predominantly white males, felt when thousands of proud women marched by, demanding that men keep their laws and their misogynistic values off women's bodies.

Most memorable, perhaps, were the countless slogans. Some were funny ("Let the Real Buses Decide"), some angry ("Hey Bush, Cut Off My Reproductive Rights and I'll Cut Off Yours!") and some simply to the point ("Trust Women").

It is funny how two words can embody an issue which has for decades divided our country. With a decision that so profoundly affects the life of a woman, how can we not trust women? How can Americans defer to legislatures and executive offices consisting of men who will never be pregnant and who have no business in another person's choice of whether or not to bear a child? Becoming a mother changes every aspect of a woman's life. Should not such a deep and permanent decision be hers to make? Women can be trusted to make the right decisions. There is no one better qualified.

In the words of Sandra Day O'Connor, "The destiny of the woman must be shaped to a large extent on her own conception of her spiritual imperatives and her place in society." With this in mind, these activists marched for a common goal — that for every pregnancy, the woman be willing and the child wanted. It is a goal we should share as a nation, but will never be reached with the



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

agenda of the current administration.

Attempting to prohibit abortion in the early terms of pregnancy while not allowing comprehensive sex education in schools is impractical. Unfortunately, it is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the absurd and hypocritical policies put forth by the White House. This anti-choice president enjoys spouting rhetoric about the value of potential life but has apparently forgotten about many. He

has made cuts to Head Start, after-school services, low-income housing, school lunches, the Child's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid and federal child-care funding. This administration has consistently scaled back public funds for family planning, although more than one-third of American

women of reproductive age rely on these services. Likewise, through the Global Gag Rule, Bush has cut all funding for global reproductive health programs which accept private funds to provide abortions. Studies have shown these cuts have actually spurred more abortions by preventing access to safe and reliable information and healthcare.

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"Never again," shouted Whoopi Goldberg, clutching a clothes hanger, a sad reminder of what happens when we do not give women a safe alternative to motherhood. "We are not here just for ourselves, but for women around the world," Ann Richards declared. In countries without elective abortion, a woman dies every six minutes from injuries caused by unsafe abortion. "We cannot go back," Gloria Steinheim cried.

And in the name of our daughters and granddaughters, we will not. The message sent to President Bush was clear: Roe will survive, freedom will live and women will never again be second-class citizens.

John David Blakley is a sophomore political science major.

Tuition, fee increases don't benefit current students

The administration of this school has some lofty and admirable goals for the future. But, as a current student, I feel a bit neglected with the state of things. The tuition and fee increases are all said to be necessary for growth and improvements, but which of those improvements can the students paying those fees now

