

## Steps toward democracy

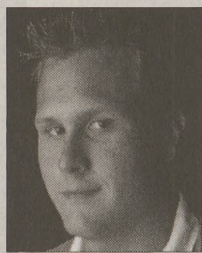
Progress made in Iraq should not be overshadowed by partisan bickering

With all the raw, venomous bile that has found its way into this election year, it is easy for reality to be perverted by passion. On the subject of Iraq, it is incredibly dangerous to allow toxic partisan sentiment to contaminate the national debate. The situation in Iraq is at a pivotal point, with distinct grounds for optimism. Success, however, demands the unity of an informed American public, instead of a reckless, daily assault on a president during a time of war.

Never before has the issue of national security been so politicized during an election season. Liberals have tried relentlessly to erode Bush's credibility for using America's resources to amputate a gangrenous limb from a troubled part of the world. While Bush-bashers across the globe join hands in a furious attempt to disgrace the president before November, hyperventilating over conspiracy theory after conspiracy theory, something important is happening in the Middle East. Something with much greater implications than whether Saddam Hussein had huge stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction or ties to al-Qaida.

The British newspaper, The Sun, reported recently that while being grilled by investigators, deposed Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein admitted he "misjudged Britain and America's resolve to smash his grip on Iraq," that he was counting on United Nations' bickering on WMDs to save him and that he was "surprised" when the Coalition did actually attack.

Libya, shortly after witnessing America's resolve and overwhelming military action in Iraq, surrendered its nuclear weapons program, ending years of successful concealment



SCOTT MONK

from U.N. inspectors.

Syria is now frantically trying to improve diplomatic relations with the United States.

Pakistan has been one of America's greatest allies in fighting terrorism.

Saudi Arabia, after years of apathy and inaction, has been shaken out of its complacency by recent terrorist attacks within its borders and, brandishing a newfound sense of urgency, is starting to act forcefully in helping the Coalition hunt down terrorists.

All of these Middle Eastern countries have something in common. To differing degrees, they have all been captive to the same culture of backwards logic and political disillusionment that creates a fertile breeding ground for terrorist ideology. Were democracy to take hold in this turbulent part of the world, however, its openness and political accountability would be antidotal to the culture of fear and secrecy that terrorist groups thrive in.

This complex backdrop underscores how crucial a victory in Iraq is. No one has ever confused Bush with the Great Communicator, in whose footsteps he follows, but like former President Reagan, he is a tireless visionary with the resolve to get things done. Regardless of how inept the Bush administration has been in conveying to the American public just how key the Iraqi battlefield is to the overall War on Terrorism, they did one thing right: This administration insightfully recognized going into Iraq that if it could only get a foothold in the region, and establish a thriving democracy, it would be a lot more effective in spreading democracy's seeds throughout the Middle East than trying to implement de.

Americans should not fool themselves any longer regarding the enemy. If obtained, terrorists will not hesitate to use weapons of mass destruction on American soil. In a January 1999 interview, when asked if he was acquiring WMDs, Osama bin Laden responded: "If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty."

With the future of U.S. society at stake, many Americans are left wondering how this country is so divided that its citizens cannot come together on an issue of this magnitude. Ed Koch, former mayor of New York City, articulated this frustration best in a column for the World Tribune, lamenting: "It is shocking to me that Americans, in a time of war ... will attack their own country, sapping its strength and making its enemies stronger."

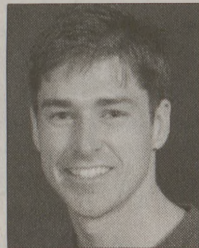
Foreign terrorist elements have been streaming into Iraq by the truckload to resist the democratization of Iraq. They fully realize how detrimental a democratic Iraq is to their cause, and it is time Americans do too. The front-line of the War on Terrorism is now on the other side of the world. Better there than on American soil.

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## Legislation forces students to cheat or be left behind

Cheaters never win. Or at least that's how the old adage goes. But what happens when a paltry piece of legislation serves to place such an egregious burden on a person or group that cheating becomes a necessity at some point?



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Fox News reported that some 200 teachers in California were caught helping students cheat to perform better on the newly-required standardized tests. This problem wasn't isolated, and experts claim that the No Child Left Behind bill has placed an enormous amount of pressure on teachers.

Without a doubt such behavior must not be tolerated but, sometimes, when the amount of insubordinate behavior is this great, there is a need to investigate a possible source aggravating this problem.

The NCLB bill sailed through both houses of Congress, garnering a majority of support. Now that the implementation phase has ventured into the spotlight, problems have arisen, eluding that this piece of legislation is doing the exact opposite of its intended purpose. Not only is it leaving children behind, it is destroying entire school districts and their integrity.

The bill expands the federal government's role in education. That is, if states opt to take federal dollars to aid public schools, strings are attached. These strings are in the form of a number of measures designed, in theory, to increase a school's accountability to their students.

For example, annual testing that places significant emphasis on math and reading is required, with an overall goal of bringing all students up to the state-set proficiency level by 2014. Such is a task that Forbes Maga-

zine dubbed "insane" because "no amount of accountability, incentives and super duper teaching can possibly get all kids in any sizeable school up to 100 percent proficiency by 2014."

This also means schools that have a high level of students not only passing the tests but scoring exceptionally well, can still be labeled as failures even if five percent of the students fail.

A school failing to meet the requirement two years in a row must offer students the choice of attending other public schools. Schools failing the requirement three years in a row must provide private tutoring to students, and schools perpetually failing face a governmental takeover.

Rightly so, the bill also requires every teacher in core content areas to be "highly qualified" in the subjects that he teaches.

Some of the requirements sound commendable but, much like communism, this Utopian idea doesn't work when implemented. This is because of one simple reason: It fails to account for a student's desire to learn.

It doesn't matter how "highly proficient" a teacher is. He could be a miracle worker hold a doctorate degree in the subject he teaches, or offer private tutoring sessions free of charge, and still a portion of students would fail the standardized tests.

Should such failure signify a teacher is not doing his job effectively? No, but under the NCLB bill it does.

Instead, it should illuminate that many children these days, especially those unfortunate few from lower socioeconomic classes whose parents could care less about their child's success, have no desire to perform well on these tests. Why should they? Often such students, see no value in a high school education, and without proper parental guidance they will continue on the same dilapidated path leading to a disenfranchised life.

Teachers cannot be required to instruct uninterested students and assume the role of quasi-parent to ensure that test scores rise. As it is, teachers are underpaid for their labor, and many already dip into their own salaries to ensure their students have the proper supplies to complete their lessons.

If an education bill stacks the deck against teachers, something must give. When test scores are the gold standard in measuring success and the requisite for allocating

school funding, the measurement will usually be met. If that means breaking a few rules along the way, that's precisely what will happen.

So before subjecting these busted teachers to jail time or hefty fines, perhaps the media's focus should redirect itself on the bill fueling such debauchery.

This affront to the education system displays one thing: Americans need statesmen as representatives, not self-interested power-hungry actors willing to pass legislation, without reading it fully, simply because they long for another chance to get their name or face on TV.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major.

## The Battalion regrets column

In response to Nick Davis' June 30 column.

On Wednesday, June 30, The Battalion published a piece by Nicholas Davis entitled, "Intolerance is the answer." This article was an assault on Islam and the Muslim community and constitutes hate speech. The hatred it promoted endangers not only the Muslim community but also thousands of international students of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

Mr. Editor, perhaps you cannot relate to the anxiety in which the Muslim community is living these days. Hate crimes against Muslims more than doubled across the United States last year. In Texas alone, there have been numerous incidents. Only a few days ago, a homemade bomb exploded in the mailbox of a Spring, TX mosque, nearly harming children who were close by. In April, death threats were left on the answering machine of an El Paso Mosque. Earlier in the year, three Muslim-owned businesses were torched in San Antonio. The list of incidents is actually quite extensive, even if not well reported and publicized. Non-Muslim people of foreign origin have also become victims of hate crimes either because they were perceived to be Muslim or Arab or were targeted as foreigners per se.

Unfortunately, some of the responsibility for violence and threats of violence against law-abiding individuals and communities must be laid at the feet of those who shape public opinion. We believe careless reporting and editorial judgments

have validated pre-existing prejudices and accentuated fear and hostility that could lead to harassment. To us, this is not an issue of political correctness; we are actually concerned for the safety of our friend and families—as it would be for anyone else in our position, this is serious business.

We do not need to lecture you on the responsibility that comes with the exercise of free speech. As journalists, you are well aware of your responsibilities. However, a serious lapse in judgment did take place when The Battalion allowed the publication of hate speech that creates an atmosphere ripe for physical harassment of Muslims and Arabs.

Sincerely,

Zahir Latheef  
President, Muslim Students' Association

### Editor's Note:

The Battalion acknowledges that the June 30, Nicholas Davis column, "Intolerance is the answer" was inflammatory and insulting to the Muslim community. The Battalion regrets publishing the column.



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