

Hillary the Hawk

The Democrats' Athena only differs from Bush on the details.

By Justin Raimondo

WHEN "THE MOOSE" TALKS, Democrats listen—just like the Republicans did when he was flacking on their behalf. And the Democrat listening the closest to this Trotskyist-turned-neoconservative is Hillary Rodham Clinton, supposedly the leader of the party's far-left wing.

With his reputation for giving good quote, "the Moose," a.k.a. Marshall Wittmann, formerly John McCain's communications director and now a bigwig at the Democratic Leadership Council, is a legendary character in Washington circles. Once a member of the Trotskyist Spartacist League and an officer in the Young People's Socialist League, Wittmann, like many admirers of the Red Army's founder, moved rightward during the Reagan era and eventually wound up as the Christian Coalition's political director. From this strategic vantage point he jumped on McCain's Straight Talk Express—and then jumped ship entirely, falling into the arms of the DLC and landing, as always, on his feet.

From Leon Trotsky to Ralph Reed to Hillary Clinton is a long, torturous road to follow, yet the chameleon-like Wittmann—who styles himself a Bull Moose progressive in the tradition of his hero, Theodore Roosevelt—has navigated it expertly. Wittmann's new role as Hillary's unofficial Rasputin is perfectly suited to her current political needs. Eager to overcome her reputation as the leader of the party's left wing, Hillary is "repositioning" herself, in modern parlance, as a "centrist," i.e. a complete opportunist. She could have no better teacher than Wittmann, who from the

pulpit of his "Moose-blog," advises her to "seize the issue of Iranian nukes to draw a line in the sand." While paying lip service to multilateralism, she should "make it clear that while force is the last resort, she would never take it off the table in dealing with the madmen mullahs and the psychotic leader of Iran."

This advice was proffered on the morning of Jan. 18. By that evening, when Hillary gave her scheduled speech at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, it had clearly been taken to heart: "I believe that we lost critical time in dealing with Iran," she averred. Accusing the White House of choosing to "downplay the threats and to outsource the negotiations," she disdained Team Bush for "standing on the sidelines."

"Let's be clear about the threat we face now," she thundered. "A nuclear Iran is a danger to Israel, to its neighbors and beyond. The regime's pro-terrorist, anti-American and anti-Israel rhetoric only underscores the urgency of the threat it poses. U.S. policy must be clear and unequivocal. We cannot and should not—must not—permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons." To be sure, we need to cajole China and Russia into going along with diplomatic and economic sanctions, but "we cannot take any option off the table in sending a clear message to the current leadership of Iran—that they will not be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons."

Wittmann celebrated his apparent success in influencing the Democratic presidential frontrunner by exulting that "the Moose has a mind meld with Hillary."

Taking the opportunity to rally the shrinking but strategically placed pro-war wing of the Democratic Party around a "united front," he staked out for her a position in favor of "multi-lateral action, if possible, but unilateral action, including military options, if necessary, against the growing Iranian nuclear threat."

Hillary's newfound centrism isn't completely insincere. Her bellicose interventionism has a history: it was Hillary, you'll recall, who berated her husband for not bombing Belgrade soon enough and hard enough. As Gail Sheehy relates in *Hillary's Choice*:

Hillary expressed her views by phone to the President: 'I urged him to bomb.' The Clintons argued the issue over the next few days. [The president expressed] what-ifs: What if bombing promoted more executions? What if it took apart the NATO alliance? Hillary responded, 'You cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?' The next day the President declared that force was necessary.

Together with Madeleine Albright—who famously complained to Colin Powell, "What good is it having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?"—Hillary constituted the Amazonian wing of the Democratic Party during the years of her husband's presidency. Her effort to outflank the Republicans on the right when it comes to the Iran issue is a logical

extension of her natural bellicosity.

Hillary is nothing if not consistent: in her floor speech to the Senate during the debate over the resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, she declared, “the facts that have brought us to this fateful vote are not in doubt”—a statement she has never acknowledged regretting. Particularly endearing to the War Party, she framed her “aye” vote in terms of the classic neoconservative myth of Bush I’s betrayal:

The first President Bush assembled a global coalition, including many Arab states, and threw Saddam out after forty-three days of bombing and a hundred hours of ground operations. The U.S.-led coalition then withdrew, leaving the Kurds and the Shiites, who had risen against Saddam Hussein at our urging, to Saddam’s revenge.

Hillary would have occupied Iraq a decade earlier, riding into Baghdad at the head of her troops like Pallas Athena descending on the Trojans, striding boldly into what Gen. William E. Odom has described as “the greatest strategic disaster in our history.”

Hillary hails the 1998 bombing of Iraq, ordered by her husband, which killed thousands of Iraqi civilians, and recounts the official mythology promulgated by the Bush administration: “[T]he so-called presidential palaces ... in reality were huge compounds well suited to hold weapons labs, stocks, and records which Saddam Hussein was required by UN resolution to turn over. When Saddam blocked the inspection process, the inspectors left.” As we now know, there was nothing even approaching WMD in those palaces, and Iraq had been effectively disarmed at that point. In late February or early March, Scott Ritter, then a UN arms inspector, met with then-U.S. ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson. Ritter was told to provoke an incident so

the U.S. could finish bombing by the start of the Islamic New Year holiday.

Hillary, however, didn’t let any inconvenient facts get in her way. She boasted that it was under a Democratic administration that the U.S. “changed its underlying policy toward Iraq from containment to regime change” and took credit for the bright idea of putting Ahmad Chalabi, convicted embezzler and known liar, on the U.S. payroll. Her speech reads like a *Weekly Standard* editorial, reiterating each of the War Party’s talking points—the bio-weapons fantasy, the links to al-Qaeda gambit, the phantom nuclear arsenal: “This much,” she maintained, “is undisputed.”

What is undisputed these days is that the entire rationale for war was based on trumped-up evidence of Iraq’s alleged transgressions, but Hillary is unrepentant: “No, I don’t regret giving the president authority because at the time it was in the context of weapons of mass destruction, grave threats to the United States, and clearly, Saddam Hussein had been a real problem for the international community for more than a decade.”

But there was no threat to the U.S. and Hillary knows it. What’s more, her hard-core constituency knows it, and they are becoming increasingly alienated from—even actively hostile to—their putative presidential frontrunner over this issue. Their anger is stoked by evidence that Hillary has imbibed the same neocon Kool-Aid that has intoxicated the Bush administration and blinded it to the failure of its policies in Iraq.

On a trip to Iraq during which 55 people—including one American soldier—were killed by suicide bombers, Hillary was merrily chirping that the occupation was “functioning quite well” and that the surge of suicide attacks indicated that the insurgency was failing. Security was so bad that the road to the airport was impassable, and the Senate delegation had to be transported to the Green Zone

by military helicopter. They dared not venture out into the streets of Baghdad.

The disconnect between rhetoric and reality, between the antiwar views of Hillary’s left-wing base and the militant interventionism of Wittmann and the DLC crowd, finally forced her to come to grips with the contradiction—or at least to appear to do so. This occurred not in a public speech but in an e-mail sent to her supporters in which the trouble she is in is acknowledged in the first sentence: “The war in Iraq is on the minds of many of you who have written or who have called my office asking questions and expressing frustration.” Chances are, these callers were expressing frustration not only with the policies of the Bush administration but with her own complicity with Bush’s Middle Eastern agenda of seemingly endless aggression.

She falls back on the old “there are no quick and easy answers” ploy to give an aura of thoughtfulness to a dishonest and constantly shifting position on the war. While insisting that we should not “allow this to be an open-ended commitment without limits or end,” she reassures the War Party by distancing herself from John Murtha and others who want an orderly withdrawal in a relatively short time: “Nor do I believe that we can or should pull out of Iraq immediately.” She hails the elections as the signal that we can start the withdrawal process sometime “in the coming year,” but not completely: we must leave behind “a smaller contingent in safer areas with greater intelligence and quick strike capabilities”—a tripwire, in short, in the form of permanent bases.

This goes beyond anything the Bush administration would ever admit, even as it starts building those facilities—14 “enduring bases” across Iraq. The White House has been cagey about this, preferring to speak in vague generalities: we are not supposed to notice that construction was begun prior to any agreement with

the Iraqi government. With Hillary signing on to this plan for a permanent military presence in Iraq—in effect, a shadow occupation—the debate over U.S. policy in the region is settled.

If we knew then what we knew now, Hillary avers, Congress “would never have agreed” with the decision to go to war, but she forgets her previously expressed “undisputed” certainty that Saddam possessed and posed a grave threat. She complains that the administration did not act to gain international support, but it did go to the UN and made every effort to give the invasion a multinational gloss. She berates the Bush administration for failing to “level with the American people”—as if they would have gone along with it had they known that the American presence would be widely detested. She hectors the White House and Rummy for not heeding the advice of General Shinseki that as many as 200,000 troops would be necessary to occupy Iraq—as if that wouldn’t have caused a great many second thoughts in those who otherwise supported the war. She has called for more troops to be sent—even as she holds out the prospect of reducing the American presence “in the coming year.”

The president, Hillary charges, does not have a “plan” for “concluding and winning” the war. Disdaining “a rigid timetable” for withdrawal, she calls for devising “a strategy for success”—without defining what a victory would look like. When push comes to shove, her position is the same as the administration’s, albeit with minor modifications: we’ll leave when we’re good and ready and not a moment sooner.

This is not likely to assuage her core constituency—or, indeed, the rest of the country—which is increasingly opposed to continuing the war; the only red meat she throws at her base is a sharp rebuke to the Bushies for “impugning the patriotism of their critics.” Don’t mistake criticism for “softness,” she rails: Hillary,

A likely consequence of U.S. military action against Iran would be the unleashing of an unprecedented wave of suicide-bombing attacks.

In all the countries bordering the Persian Gulf there are considerable Shi’ite minorities that the Iranians have been covertly organizing to facilitate attacks in the event of war. Iran’s fifth column would be well-placed to conduct operations against pro-American Arab regimes as well as against U.S. bases. Recently, an Iranian terrorist group training suicide bombers warned that it will target American and British bases in Iraq if Iran is attacked by the U.S. or Israel. Mohammed Ali Samadi of the Martyrdom Seekers, who teaches a seminar on suicide bombing at Tehran’s Khajeh Nasir University, boasted of already having hundreds of suicide bombers and 1,000 more in training. Another professor and former Revolutionary Guard, Hasan Abbasi, has written that suicide bombers are all the “nuclear weapons” that Iran needs. After a recent seminar, 50 students, inspired by the speakers, signed up to become suicide-bomber trainees.



During Jordanian King Abdallah’s recent visit to Washington, the king urged the State Department and the National Security Council

to strengthen moderate President Mahmoud Abbas’s standing in Palestine’s post-election political environment. Both State and the NSC were receptive, as this was the policy favored by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, but Vice President Dick Cheney’s national security adviser John Hannah objected. He told the Jordanians that Abbas had been weak and ineffective and could not serve as a useful counterweight to an extremist Hamas government. Hannah, a former deputy director of an AIPAC-funded think tank, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argued that the U.S. should not do anything to support the Palestinian Authority, letting it collapse on its own, providing a valuable object lesson to the Arabs and leaving Israel more secure than ever. The Jordanians were appalled at the profound ignorance revealed by Hannah’s comments and were left wondering what the U.S. policy really is.



There is increasing speculation that tension between the United States and Iran, ostensibly based on concerns about nuclear weapons,

might actually be fueled by Iran’s campaign to exert pressure on the U.S. dollar. Iran intends to open an oil-trading bourse on March 20, which would compete with the existing bourses in New York and London where nearly all oil is traded. The existing arrangement is denominated in dollars, which forces Europeans and nearly all other purchasers of oil to maintain large dollar reserves. The Iranian bourse will be denominated in euros and will make it possible for many central banks around the world to get rid of their dollars, possibly leading to a sharp drop in the currency’s value. Many central banks have already expressed their concern over large dollar holdings due to fears over volatility, i.e. that the currency is due for a dramatic downward adjustment because of unsustainable U.S. trade and government deficits. Venezuela, another major oil producer, has also indicated that it is interested in future oil trades being denominated in euros to reduce its dependence on the dollar economy.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.