

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.

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the war goddess, is no softy. Nor should we confuse her critique of the administration's means with a fundamental objection to the War Party's ends.

What does Hillary want? A smarter, smoother, better-planned interventionism, one that our allies find more amenable and yet is, in many ways, more militant than the Republican version—one that “levels with the American people” about the costs of empire and yet doesn't dispute the alleged necessity of American hegemony. As she finds her voice as a would-be commander in chief, it isn't one the traditional Left in this country will recognize. Hers is not the party of Eugene McCarthy but of the neoconservative Wittmann.

“If some Democrats have a modicum of imagination,” Wittmann recently wrote, “they would move to the President's right on national security. Of course, that would require them to take on some of those on the left flank. But, if a donkey is ever to occupy the Oval Office in the foreseeable future, he or she must be perceived as being as tough or tougher than the Republicans on national security.”

The Hillary wing of the Democratic Party is taking “the Moose” up on his bet that they can outflank the Bush administration on the war front, with Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee head Congressman Rahm Emanuel taking the lead by working actively to spike antiwar candidates like Paul Hackett. When Congressman Murtha denounced the war, Emanuel snapped, “Jack Murtha went out and spoke for Jack Murtha.” Not true: he spoke for the majority of Americans, who now oppose the war and want out, and especially for the activist base of the Democratic party, which cheered while the bigwigs sought to distance themselves. What then is his party's position on the central issue of the day? “At the right time we will have a position” on the war, he avers, and yet Emanuel has a position

decidedly in favor of continuing and even escalating the conflict.

Asked recently by Tim Russert if he would still vote for the resolution authorizing war with Iraq knowing that the WMD meme was a crock, Emanuel's answer was an unequivocal “Yes.” His critique of the president's war policy is, like that of many, if not most, Democrats, limited to means, not ends. “There was not a plan” for the war's aftermath, says Emanuel, and all he and his fellows in Congress want is not a reconsideration of our policy but only “a modicum of competency in the management of this war.” Taking up the Kerry mantra, Emanuel urges the president to “level with the American people” about the long hard slog fighting to “win” in Iraq will require—as if some magic blueprint could put a wrongheaded policy right.

Russert pulled his quote-out-of-a-hat trick—“So as long as our troops [are] engaged, we should suspend the debate over how and why, focus on the mission, unite as a country, in prayer and resolve, hope for a speedy resolution of this war with a minimum of loss. God bless America”—and wondered whether this didn't contradict what Emanuel had just said. The answer, a flat “No,” was telling: “In fact, Tim, what I actually believe it's consistent in this perspective. ... I think the president came, as you know, for resolution to Congress. He got that. Second, he asked multiple times for the resources to fight that war. He has got that. What we ask in return is a plan.”

Yet what sort of plan could possibly have prevented the dissolution of the Iraqi state and the onset of civil war? What would have blocked the Iranians from extending their influence into the Shi'ite south of the country and taking over the leadership of the central government in Baghdad? It's true that General Shinseki warned that we would need 200,000 soldiers to manage the occupation. Without radically reducing our

commitments elsewhere, however, such a force is largely imaginary—unless the Democratic plan involves reintroducing the draft. Nothing quite so forthright has come from Emanuel's direction—only vague hopes that somehow the Europeans will come to our rescue.

If the Democratic establishment's stance on the war is at odds with the party's antiwar activist base, then their outright warmongering on the Iranian issue puts the two factions on a collision course. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi—who effectively quashed fellow California Democrat Lynn Woolsey's resolution calling for a withdrawal timetable—has followed the Hillary-Emanuel-DLC party line, while managing somehow to assuage her constituents with plenty of pork and partisan rhetoric. When it comes to Iran, however, she is just as belligerent as the next neocon: Pelosi co-sponsored legislation imposing draconian economic sanctions on Iran and stops just short of calling another war.

If Hillary maintains her lead in the Democratic presidential sweepstakes—and with over \$21 million in the bank, she's way ahead of any potential rivals—and the party establishment effectively strangles insurgent antiwar activism at the grassroots level, an increasingly “isolationist” electorate will be faced with a choice between two interventionist candidates, giving credence to what Garet Garrett, that lion of the Old Right, bitterly observed in 1951:

Between government in the republican meaning, that is, Constitutional, representative, limited government, on the one hand, and Empire on the other hand, there is mortal enmity. Either one must forbid the other or one will destroy the other. That we know. Yet never has the choice been put to a vote of the people. ■

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Mission Improbable

Even the neocons, who long for war with Iran, concede it isn't feasible.

By **Scott McConnell**

THOSE SEEKING INDICATIONS that George W. Bush's "global war on terror" will next target Iran have had much to point to. With little prompting beyond the newly elected Iranian president Ahmadinejad's inflammatory statements about wiping Israel off the map, a robust 57 percent of Americans told pollsters that if diplomacy failed, they would back military action against Iran's nuclear program. (Veteran Democratic pollster Pat Caddell remarked that he had never seen support for military action spike so quickly without a presidential speech or comparable high-level public mobilization.)

If the White House has been relatively circumspect, the War Party punditocracy has been thumping. Fox News host Sean Hannity has been calling the Iranian president whose name few Americans know "the new Hitler of our time"—Saddam no longer being suitable for the role. Presidential hopefuls of both parties are auditioning as tough guys: John McCain asserts that a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable" while Hillary Clinton knocks the Bush administration for "outsourcing" its Iran policy to diplomacy-addicted Europeans. Other parallels to the Iraq run-up abound: the publication of books highlighting lurid accusations against Iran (including the absurd charge that Iran actually plotted 9/11 with Osama bin Laden) and the emergence of Iranian ethnic separatist or exile groups agitating inside the Beltway for American military action. Of course, there are bellicose editorials from *The Weekly Standard* and *Wall Street Journal*.

But the differences are worth noting. The Iraq War was an intellectuals' project, and the neoconservatives pushed it vigorously. Republican resistance was minimal. On Iran today, there isn't the same lockstep momentum. For instance, in early February, the American Enterprise Institute held an event devoted to the Iranian nuclear issue—a packed room, a charismatic right-wing senator (Kansas Sam Brownback) as keynote speaker, panelists who had been championing a hard line against Tehran for years. Representatives of various Iranian exile groups circled the room, while AEI's resident blonde war goddess, Danielle Pletka, presided. And yet no one on the podium could bring himself to say that an American military solution had much chance of successfully resolving the problem.

Brownback, introduced by Pletka as "an activist" and a "true believer," spoke of the steady erosion of human rights in Iran, ticking through the data points about arrests and the regime's rhetorical belligerence. But regime change could not be a military exercise. Brownback called instead for the U.S. to flood the Persian landscape with videos and satellite broadcasts—in effect, a Cold War-type political strategy. As models for change he mentioned Poland's Solidarity and the campaigns of the recently deceased Coretta Scott King. Asked to comment on John McCain's call for military action as the ultimate resort, the senator said, "Change happens from within on Iran. ... I don't see a viable military option."

It's not only Brownback. Robert Kagan, the hawkish neoconservative author and

Washington Post columnist who has the distinction of co-authoring dozens of articles and editorials with *The Weekly Standard's* Bill Kristol, including the original pieces calling for war against Iraq, writes that the likely costs of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities "outweigh the benefits."

That's almost certainly true. While air strikes against Iran would have no assurance of eliminating that country's hardened and dispersed nuclear program, Iran would have many retaliatory cards to play through Shi'ite militias or terrorist groups in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, and the Strait of Hormuz. Unless the U.S. is ready to accept, as an outcome of inconclusive air strikes, oil at \$200 a barrel, many more body bags coming home from Iraq, and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of God knows who, it must recognize the military option is a very poor one.

The neoconservative fallback position, now touted by Condoleezza Rice, is democratic "regime change"—ideological and political subversion of the mullahs' government. But it isn't very promising either. While large numbers (though not necessarily a majority) of Iranians yearn for the end of the mullahcracy, Radio Free Europe-type efforts run smack up against the dominant fact of Iran's political culture: a distaste for foreign meddling that might seem paranoid were it not for Iran's actual history. Few Americans have bad memories of the Shah's dictatorship, but Iranians do: the CIA overthrow of Mossadegh, a flawed but popular elected