The Adlai Stevenson Moment
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An analysis of the causes for war in Iraq and probable consequences published in a condensed version in the New York Times.

Pundits and officials in Washington have dubbed Secretary Powell's case for war against Iraq in the UN Security Council an "Adlai Stevenson Moment." In 1962, Ambassador Stevenson presented the Security Council with incontrovertible proof that the Soviet Union, a nuclear super power, was installing missiles in Cuba 90 miles off shore and threatening to upset the world's "balance of terror."

That "moment" had a purpose: containing the Soviet Union, preserving the balance of terror and peace. This "moment" had a different purpose: war. President Bush rejects containment. The reasons are unclear. Weapons of mass destruction have not been found in Iraq by UN inspectors, and even if it had them, Iraq could be contained. The USSR was contained, and eventually it collapsed of its own weight. Saddam Hussein contained remains a pariah in the Middle East, contained by his neighbors, as well as the "international community." Under attack by the US, his long suffering people become a greater object of sympathy in the world and he an object of some support in the Islamic world. As the Director of Central Intelligence has acknowledged, Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, if he has them, only become a threat if Iraq is attacked.

Some speculate that the purpose of this eager war is seizure of Iraqi oil fields. However, Iraq's oil production, already in disrepair, could be set back in a chaotic post war Iraq with many claimants to the oil. Other oil producing states of the Gulf could be destabilized.

Some speculate that the motive for war is evangelical Christian - an attempt to provoke Iraqi retaliation against America's nuclear "ally," Israel, bringing on Armageddon and the second coming. Others with evidence to back them speculate that the motive is ultra religious Zionism and, more specifically, a strategy developed by the Israeli Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies and right wing Zionist think tanks and arm chair strategists in Washington. Christian fundamentalists join them. They repudiate the two state land for peace formula of the United Nations in Palestine and envision a greater Israel, "regime change" in Iraq and a Jordan, Turkey, Israel axis to "roll back" Syria. These fantasies might be dismissed out of hand, except they bear finger prints of civilian advisors to the President, including Vice President Cheney, Richard Perle, Chairman of the Defense Policy Board and Douglas Feith, Under Secretary of Defense. They may explain why the Bush Administration supports the Sharon government's illegal colonization of the West Bank and Gaza, apparently rejecting the two state, land for peace formula of the UN. Thus, the Bush Administration threatens war in Iraq while waging it by proxy in Palestine.

Still others speculate that the Bush Administration will always need another war to divert public attention from failure of the last. To say the least, the outcome of the "last" war, Afghanistan, is in doubt. Osama Bin Laden is apparently free; warlordism has been restored. People of that benighted country are attacking their latest invaders. And then there are the other wars: Yugoslavia, Somalia, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, innumerable strikes and invasions - Sudan, Libya, Haiti, Cuba, Laos, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia. One must go all the way back to World War II to find an unqualifiedly successful war, unless one counts the invasions of Grenada and Panama.

However persuasive these reasons for war with Iraq are for Mr. Bush, they satisfy few observers outside his circle of civilian advisors and the right wing strategists and

religionists in Washington. But there is at least one additional purpose for this war which is war itself - war for the sake of war, to demonstrate the Bush Administration's commitment to its' newly declared doctrine of strategic preemption. The trouble with this purpose - and doctrine - is that it simultaneously justifies preemptive war by all countries and invites some to deter US aggression with their own weapons of mass destruction. (The Bush hawks see nothing anomalous about threatening to use weapons of mass destruction against countries because they have weapons of mass destruction.) North Korea shows the way. The isolated Hermit Kingdom is a greater threat than Iraq and could be taking advantage of President Bush's preoccupation with Iraq to develop more nuclear weapons. But North Korea is of less concern to the President than Iraq. Evidently, the Bush Administration is deterred by North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (37,000 American troops are also hostage to the North). Or could it be that North Korea has no oil and is of little interest to the Christian and Zionist fundamentalists beating his war drums? The conundrum continues.

Iraq's government is the same Baathist regime aided by the Reagan Administration and Donald Rumsfeld when it used chemical weapons of mass destruction in its' bloody preemptive war against Iran. (I first became acquainted with this regime in 1976 when its' minions tore toenails from the feet of my driver, a Kurd, in Baghdad apparently for having been insufficiently forthcoming during a periodic interrogation). What has changed to suddenly make this infamous regime with which we have already waged one war a lonely casus belli of Bush II?

The tragedy of September 11 belatedly brought terrorism to the attention of the Bush Administration and gave the President a "mission," in his word. But war against Iraq, at least without sanction of the international community, invites more terrorism. Every time the President uses the expression, "war", he confirms that the US and its Zionist ally are at war with Islam, as Omar Bin Laden claims. War can become a state of mind which produces war. War with terrorism produces world war since terrorism is an international phenomenon - and of infinite duration. World war then enables the Bush administration to label suspects "combatants", seize them where it can and detain them where it chooses without judicial redress and, according to a report in the Washington Post, with resort to torture.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. I commenced the first in depth Congressional study of terrorism as Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on the Collection and Production of Intelligence in 1978. That year long study led to the Comprehensive Counter Terrorism Act of 1979 introduced in the Senate with a warning of "spectacular acts of mass disruption or destruction." The Act authorized Presidential management of government at all levels for control of terrorist acts and liberalized standards for electronic surveillance to prevent them. The statement explained that "terrorism is increasingly becoming an international phenomenon as terrorist groups have formed various connections across national borders. ..... what has emerged is not a terrorist international, in which a terrorist group in one country typically acts on behalf of a foreign group or power; rather it is an international terrorist scene ...... in which groups from different countries offer each other training, financial and operational support, and safe havens."

By waging "war"against an international phenomenon, takes the bait. The enemy is a criminal, not a nation worthy of war by the United States of America. The enemy deserves to be hunted down and brought to justice. The Bush Administration rewards him. Osama Bin Laden becomes another Saladin fighting for Islam against the infidels. The enemy is a fanatic, but this enemy is not a fool. 19 men armed with box cutters did not expect to bring America down. Only America can do that. Terrorists of the politically motivated sort expect a reaction. The Bush Administration is obliging, undermining the US economy, the solvency of the US Government, US relations with other countries and the civil liberties which made America strong, secure and an example to the World. Gavril Princip, the Serb nationalist

who assassinated the Austro Hungarian Archduke and his wife in 1914, did not expect to bring down the Austro Hungarian Empire. He and his conspirators expected a reaction. The Empire obliged. It reacted with an ultimatum to Serbia, bringing on World War I and its own demise.

Ambassador Stevenson remembered that War. France lost a quarter of its men between the ages of 18 and 30. He remembered the aftermath. President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points set the ground rules for the post war Paris peace conference. Margaret MacMillan in her epic story of the conference, "Paris, 1919", tells of President Wilson's trip by train at night from the port of Brest to Paris. Families lined the tracks the entire distance, heads bared in respectful silence, seeking to glimpse the train as it passed through the night bringing the American President and hope for a better world. The Republican Old Guard defeated that hope. World War II followed, as Woodrow Wilson predicted. After World War II, Democrats and moderate Republicans, Adlai Stevenson and Dwight Eisenhower, defeated the Republican old guard and created the United Nations and a new world order which contained the Soviet Union, controlled the strategic arms race, preserved peace and restored hope.

The President, Vice President Cheney and most of their civilian advisors, the new old guard, haven't tasted war. They are quicker to volunteer the lives of America's young in war than they were their own when their time came during the Vietnam War. In the words of the Vice President, they had "other priorities." Ambassador Stevenson and President Kennedy sought to wage peace and, following Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, strengthen the international order that would contain the Soviet Union and preserve peace for all peoples and for all time. America stood tall.

Terrorism requires a multi dimensional response, including cooperative efforts to address the widening gap between the "haves and the have nots," as Ambassador Stevenson put it, the horrible conditions in which most people the world over struggle to survive. These are fertile grounds for terrorists to till. It requires an American government which again wages peace, not, always, war. A good place to start is Palestine. The political discourse is strangely barren of a once familiar commitment to waging peace. The President's 2003 State of the Union Address and the Democratic response did not mention Israel's colonization of the West Bank and Gaza and the uprising of Palestinians defending their homeland.

The Senate study of terrorism in 1978 was triggered by the election of the Likud to power in Israel in1977. Prime Minister Menachem Begin and other Likud leaders declared that ancient Judea and Samaria, the West Bank, were part of greater Israel. Israel's objectives, it seemed, had become those of religious Zionists. The religious claims of Israelis and the secular claims of the Palestinians to their homeland, freedom and legal rights were irreconcilable. The Likud began systematically promoting colonization of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. It was creating the "facts on the ground" that would make peace impossible on the UN formula of the United Nations then supported by the United States. Since that time, this US subsidized Israeli colonization has produced a Jewish population of about 376,000 in the West Bank and Gaza. Road blocks, curfews, a new Berlin wall have combined to cause a hopelessly disconnected, ungoverned, desperate Palestinian community of which little more needs to be said because even the American mass media gives attention to the Israeli occupation.

As early as 1976, all the major Arab governments in the Mideast and Yassir Arafat, then headquartered in Beirut, privately agreed to the UN two state formula for peace, in other words the boundaries of Israel preexisting the 1967 war with minor adjustments and some provision for the refugees. All agreed, that is, except the government of Iraq. By 2001, even Iraq supported this formulation when put forward by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

The holdout was, and remains, Israel. Sinai accords, Camp David, Wye Plantation, Oslo - there never has been a true "peace process," only temporizing while the Likud created the facts on the ground that would make peace impossible.

The US subsidized Israel's defiance of the only formula for peace and helped arm its colonization of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel also annexed the Golan Heights of Syria which it invaded in 1967 after attacking the American spy ship, USS Liberty, off the Sinai coast a day earlier, killing 34 Americans, to prevent the US from discovering its' plans to invade Syria. At least, that is the explanation of Admiral Thomas Morer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the reconnoitred attack against the Liberty first by Mirage jets and then torpedo boats. (My wife and I trailed the Israeli troops into the Golan Heights; our photographs record evidence of what in another time and place would be called "ethnic cleansing.")

Ordinarily such defiance of the United States, let alone an attack, invites sanctions, even war. This attack was hushed up and ascribed to a "mistake" something for which the Israeli military is little noted. Instead, Congress has increased financial support to Israel. The strategy of the religionists and neo conservatives apparently supported by President Bush includes support for greater Israel and rejection of the land for peace formula of the United Nations and the United States in the past. Prime Minister Sharon exaggerated little when he, reportedly, assured his Cabinet that he "controls" America.

America is widely seen as subsidizing Israeli terror in Palestine while purporting to fight terror in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Palestinians, lacking Apache gun ships, use their bodies to deliver weapons against civilian and military targets. They have only their worthless lives to lose, and martyrdom to win. The US goes along, putting at risk the lives of Americans while alienating people every where. Islamists win recent elections in Turkey and Pakistan. Chancellor Schroeder exploited his opposition to Mr. Bush's war to win in the recent German general election. South Koreans expressed their opinion of President Bush in the recent, upset election of Roh Moo Hyun who defies Bush to seek accommodation and dialogue with North Korea. The laws of unintended and inadvertent consequences begin to kick in. The Bush Administration can coerce or cajole governments to support war or abstain from voting in the Security Council. But democracy, propagated by the United States, gives people a say. Governments are ephemeral

Adlai Stevenson was representing a different America and government in the UN Security Council in October, 1962. Vietnam was in the future. America's President challenged Americans to ask what they could do for their country, not what their government could do for them. The New Frontier of Kennedy would be followed by the Great Society of President Lyndon Johnson and a war - on poverty. Crony capitalism was in the future. America had faults, but it was addressing them. Today's triumphalism notwithstanding, America is far more dependent on imported oil than it was 40 years ago. The US must import almost $2 billion every working day to finance its' unsustainable and growing current account deficit. The emperor's clothes are showing signs of wear - except for its' arsenal of questionable utility and great cost. The President's rush to war is already roiling financial markets and sending the dollar down. The federal budget has plunged from surplus to deficit at the fastest rate in history.

In an Adlai Stevenson Moment, the Bush Administration would present proof of Saddam Hussein's deployment of weapons of mass destruction, support the United Nations, its' inspectors and international containment of Iraq under Hussein. Members of the Security Council and other nations would not have to be cajoled or coerced into going along. The "international community," for which this Administration still presumes to speak, would join the United States, as it did in October, 1962 when the US was waging peace.
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