

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Page Assistant:
 Salena De La Cruz

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Unilateral reconstruction

As the war winds down and the rebuilding ensues, voices from around the world can be heard offering their respective visions of a new Iraq.

From their summit in Athens on April 17, European Union leaders called for a "central role" for the United Nations, "including in the process leading toward self-government for the Iraqi people."

The foreign ministers of eight Middle Eastern countries — all of Iraq's neighbors, plus Egypt and Bahrain — echoed that sentiment at their meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia the next day.



DJ Fuller

Meanwhile, **No holds barred** in Iraq itself, tens of thousands of protesters hit the streets of Baghdad, demanding a speedy removal of coalition troops and the establishment of an Islamic state.

From this cacophony of voices, a consensus has emerged: The United States is not to monopolize the rebuilding process in order to shape a new government in its own interests.

Yet this is precisely what the Bush administration intends to do. America will rebuild Iraq the same way it invaded it — unilaterally. The architects of the reconstruction are the same men who orchestrated the destruction, and they are unlikely to change strategies midstream.

The Defense Department, though the war is all but over, will remain the dominant influence in Iraq long afterwards. Never mind talk of the United Nations; even the State Department is being squeezed out of the reconstruction to make room for a select group with special connections to the national security establishment.

Jay Garner, head of the rebuilding process, was hand-picked for the job by Defense Secretary Don-

ald Rumsfeld, who sat with him on inquiries into the threat of ballistic missile attacks on the United States; both are proponents of a missile defense system. Garner is also connected to the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a militaristic think tank stacked with retired officers. On JINSA's board of directors: Richard Perle, who was appointed chairman of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board by Rumsfeld, a position he recently resigned amid controversy over his lunch with a Saudi arms dealer, among other things.

Philip Carroll, who will oversee oil operations, is a former Shell Oil CEO who also served on the Greater Houston Partnership, a business lobby among whose members was Halliburton, the company with which Vice President Dick Cheney is now so infamously associated. Carroll left Shell in 1996 to run Fluor — one of the handful of companies invited to bid on the lucrative Iraq reconstruction project — until last year.

The company that won that contract, Bechtel, has its own ties to the highest echelons of the defense community. Jack Sheehan, a senior vice president with the company, is a retired Marine Corps general who serves on the aforementioned Defense Policy Board; former executives include Reagan's secretaries of state and defense, George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger. Bechtel was to oversee the construction of an oil pipeline between Iraq and Jordan back in 1983, when Saddam Hussein and the United States were still on good terms. The facilitator of this deal, which eventually fell through, was none other than Rumsfeld, who negotiated privately with Hussein in Baghdad during a two-year stint as special presidential envoy to the Middle East.

Because of the overwhelming influence of the Defense Department on the rebuilding process, it is unlikely that the new Iraq will accommodate the interests of its people or of the international community, when they conflict with those of the U.S. right-wing national securi-



Steve Baggs Emerald

ty establishment. The neoconservative branch of the Bush administration will actively shape Iraq according to its own preferences.

For evidence of this, we need look no further than the Iraqi National Congress, a former exile group that has returned to wield its influence on the newly liberated country. Its leader, Ahmad Chalabi, rejected by the State Department as having virtually no support within Iraq — he has been away for 40 years — has been embraced by the Department of Defense. U.S. Spe-

cial Forces thus provided transportation and training for Chalabi's personal militia upon his arrival in Kurdish-controlled territory in February, and continue to do so.

From these unfolding events, it seems highly likely that Chalabi is being groomed to play a large role in the forthcoming provisional government, though he claims this is not the case. If he indeed accedes to power, he will owe both his position and his newly rebuilt country to the Department of Defense. I wonder, then, where

his allegiance will lie?

Whatever we think of Operation Iraqi Freedom, let us not indulge in the kind of self-congratulatory myth making that such appellations very deliberately promote. The people of Iraq, though liberated from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, will not taste meaningful self-direction for a very long time.

Contact the columnist DJ Fuller at djfuller@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Letters to the editor

Recommended reading

David Icke, in his books (www.davidicke.com), including his most recent "Alice in Wonderland and the World Trade Center Disaster," describes in a similar way as Gerry Spence, who wrote "From Freedom to Slavery," how most of the human race has been submissive to destructive forces of government and corporate tyranny. Both tell how, like sheep, we would easily trade in our freedom out of fear of our "wolves" for protection only to empower a more dangerous master.

Icke uncovers the forces closer to us than a cave in Afghanistan behind Sept. 11, 2001, and examines the war on terrorism. Since this book was written, 500-1,000 Middle Eastern people have been taken to prison in Southern California who were only trying to cooperate with a new regulation requiring them to

register with immigration authorities. They were regarded as terrorists. The immigration and naturalization services would give no reason for the arrests.

We have a moral/social responsibility to get informed and do all we can to protect all people's rights and civil liberties. Regardless what side of issues you take, such as the USA PATRIOT Act, I urge everyone to read his book with an open mind. You may or may not agree with him; however, I think this book and his other writings are too essential to not consider. "Brainwashed" by George Harrison, and my songs "Phoenix Rise" and "Wake up!" also speak loud and clear.

Ceila Levine
 Eugene

Bush is playing a dominating game of dominoes

President George W. Bush on Sunday lent insight to the next "game"

he intends to play: dominoes. Greeted by reporters upon arrival at the White House, the president was asked of his concerns about Iraq's neighbor to the northwest: Syria. Stating his knowledge of Syria's possession of chemical weapons, the president went on to say, "First things first — we're in Iraq now."

"First things first." His advisors must have cringed at the premature divulgence of his next task for our young men and women in uniform. Having fought as a nation and lost so many thousands of young lives in Vietnam ostensibly to prevent the falling dominoes of communism, the administration appears to be setting up its own dominoes in the Middle East, hoping they'll fall in the direction of democracy.

The late pacifist minister A.J. Muste is quoted as observing that "the problem after war is with the victor. He thinks he has just proved that war and violence pay. Who will now teach him a lesson?"

The road home was supposed to

have been through Baghdad. Is it now through Damascus? Or Tehran? Or Pyongyang?

With Iraq successfully "liberated" and the world rid of a brutal despot, the American public must not rest satisfied in the belief that the "war on terrorism" has ended. The president himself has warned of a "long and difficult" struggle. He should know: He's setting up the dominoes.

Todd Huffman
 Eugene

Hate comments not representative of Christian faith

I am writing with regard to the article concerning hate mail that was received by ASUO officials ("Religious, racial hate mail infiltrates ASUO," ODE, April 9). I am a Christian, and reading the abhorrent comments made by someone claiming to speak on behalf of all Christians deeply upset and angered me.

I am not writing to criticize you

for printing the article; it was good journalism and it is your job. The reason I am writing is because people like this who make such sickening and hateful statements against other human beings must be rebuked, as they not only defame the name of Christ and Christianity, but also of humanity.

Because to the God I serve, humanity is the most precious thing. I, as a Christian, do not believe in that kind of hate, and neither does any true Christian because hate is not the heart of Jesus. A true Christian is a follower of Christ, the same Christ who said, "This is my command: Love one another" (John 15:17). No Christian I know believes otherwise, and on behalf of all true Christians, I condemn the statements of hatred and bigotry that were made by someone who professes the name of Christ.

Katie Hopkins
 sophomore
 international studies
 and geography