

Arrogance leads way in America during war

By Roland F. Chase

Thirty-five years ago, when the United States was becoming more and more enmeshed in Vietnam, Sen. J. William Fulbright published a trenchant analysis of where we went wrong, entitled "The Arrogance of Power."

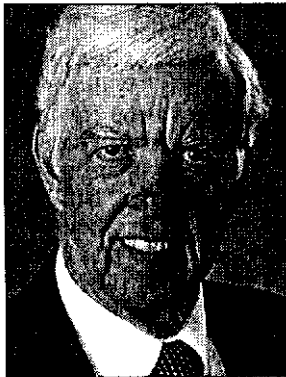
He defined the arrogance of power as "the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission." He argued, in effect, that because the United States was overwhelmingly powerful, our leaders believed our intervention in Vietnam was therefore just, and that our responsibilities as a great nation gave us a universal mission to rid the world of communism.

We seem to be going down that road again, although now the intervention has turned to aggression — an unprovoked attack on Iraq — and our mission is to rid the world of terrorism.

President George W. Bush has left no one in doubt that he intends to attack and destroy the present government in Iraq. In my lifetime, I have never experienced such a drumbeat for war. We were always proud that our nation never attacked any other country. We had even changed the name of our "War Department" to the "Defense Department" to show our commitment to be peaceful unless attacked. Even in Vietnam, we saw ourselves as coming to the aid of an ally, South Vietnam, which was attacked by Viet Cong.

But now Bush misses no opportunity to label Saddam Hussein as an "evil" man, and of

Guest view



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course down through history, one of the ways of arousing a populace to a war-like fever is to demonize the enemy. They are not like us. They are evil.

We would not initiate war, of course, if we were weaker or Iraq was stronger. But because we are so strong and Iraq is a pushover, we will do it. Again, the arrogance of power.

One of the main problems is understanding the logic of the president's position. The initial rationale was part of the war on terrorism, and the president has striven mightily to connect Iraq, with its totally secular version of Islam, with al-Qaida, driven by virulent fundamentalism. There doesn't seem to be any but the remotest connection between them, while there is a far more

direct connection between al-Qaida and one of our allies, since most of the terrorists involved in the Sept. 11 attacks were from Saudi Arabia.

The president tried to tie Iraq to terrorism by coming up with an "axis of evil," which also included North Korea. But since then, North Korea has made known to the world that, yes, it is developing nuclear weapons, and what are you going to do about it? Bush says: "Well, with North Korea we are going to talk. But not individually — only with other countries involved, too."

I applaud the president's approach on North Korea. But why not apply the same approach to Iraq? I suppose the obvious answer is that North Korea has no oil. I do not like to think that is the answer, because it smacks of cynicism, but it is very difficult to see any other reason for such widely disparate approaches, a monomania about war in the case of Iraq and a willingness to be exceedingly patient toward North Korea.

The president says nothing about oil, of course. He says he is convinced that Iraq has or is developing weapons of mass destruction, and he insists that the burden is on Iraq to prove that they do not have them. As

lawyers know, it is very difficult to prove a negative. That's why if a criminal defendant says he wasn't present at the scene of the murder, the burden of proving his alibi is on him, not on the prosecution.

The United Nations has 200 to 300 inspectors in Iraq, with jeeps and helicopters and 24-hour-a-day unannounced access to virtually any site in the country. So far they have found nothing to substantiate the president's claims. Of course, that doesn't mean Iraq has no stockpiles of banned weapons hidden away; we just haven't found them yet.

So why not give the inspectors more time? Why is the president so frantic about hurrying the attack? Why not wait, indefinitely if necessary, to avoid what is truly evil, an unnecessary war? Iraq is not getting any stronger. There is certainly no way it can use its hidden weapons while the inspectors are combing the country.

The answer seems to be that this country is arrogant with power. We don't need to wait and inconvenience our troops sitting

out there on the desert. The peaceful path takes too long; let's get it over with.

And so the handwriting seems to be on the wall. There will be war, with or without the support of most other nations. There will be war because we will attack. We are so strong; we can do it: the arrogance of power.

Here's what I see as the likely results of Bush's policy on Iraq:

- Substantial loss of life (some American, many Iraqis) and massive destruction of the infrastructure in Iraq.

- Exponential increase in the number of terrorists recruited throughout the Arab world, particularly in Pakistan.

- Severe and long-lasting anti-American backlash throughout much of the world, resulting in attacks on Americans everywhere, including business men and women, embassy employees, missionaries and tourists.

- Weakening of the United Nations and other international bodies.

Finally, there is the moral argument. If we believe, as many Americans profess, that we can support only "just wars," how can we seriously say that, at this point, we have a right to attack Iraq? What are we going to say to the victims if we go ahead and rain bombs on Iraq and never do find any weapons of mass destruction there? Oops, sorry?

There may be circumstances — though I cannot conceive of them — when we should initiate an attack against another country, but if such circumstances exist in the case of Iraq, Bush has yet to reveal them. That leaves only one explanation for launching a war against Iraq now: the arrogance of power.

2/10/03