

Where are the WMDs?

By ILIAS CHRISSOCHOIDIS

It's official as death: Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction. One-thousand Americans and as many as 25,000 mostly civilian Iraqis have been slaughtered on the altar of empty egos in Washington, D.C.

One hundred and fifty billion dollars (only a fraction of the projected cost) have been snatched from our future to oil armies of consultants, squadrons of lobbyists, and regime-cementing companies.

Let alone the ecological disaster from depleted uranium ammunition or burning oilfields or lack of sanitation. Let alone the damaged health of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, the maimed children, the sick American soldiers and the world disgust that invading a sovereign state has generated.

What really matters is the big boy's mantra "mission accomplished." Accomplished indeed: Pandora's Box is now open again.

Of all the evils unleashed to the world, however, the most horrid is this: Man defeated his humanity. Man ignited war, when dialogue (even a clandestine one) was still possible. Man broke the law and destroyed partnerships-in-principles to forge opportunistic alliances with bought-out states. And man abused power, manipulated evidence and pretended false emergencies to justify a decision taken years ago. That this "man" is America's leadership makes us all partners in crime.

It is not that we had no clue about the crime. Here at Stanford alone, we had been warned about such plans as early as fall of 2001. Hans von Sponeck, a former U.N. assistant secretary, gave a passionate presentation on Anglo-American efforts to tighten the rope around Iraq's neck. And months before last year's invasion, Robert Fisk predicted with amazing accuracy the events we are experiencing now.

How is it that a British journalist could foretell developments that the mighty American government proved incapable of contemplating? The answer is simple. Fisk is an independent journalist, whereas the case for invading Iraq was made by lobbyists for certain industries and one foreign state.

It was a superb weapon of mass distraction: from the administration's inability to capture Osama bin Laden; from a souring economy and an alarming unemploy-

ment record; from exploding deficits; and from efforts to yield even more power and wealth to the only minority who has never suffered in the history of this country.

Mind also that Fisk resides in a country where the press still observes certain standards. By contrast, American mainstream media have turned from bullies to bears in their coverage of the current administration.

So much so that some of them have publicly apologized. Too late, too crappy. The American couch citizen has by now formed distorted views about Iraq, if not of many other countries.

One wonders if the official report on weapons of mass destruction will deliver a shock of truth to America's flag patriots.

But it should do something to us here at Stanford. Our university has been so strongly linked with the current administration that any taint on its record affects our image. Many of us speculated on President Hennessy's use of Teddy Roosevelt in his Orientation week speech. Was it a gesture of support or of disapproval for the current U.S. president?

To be sure, it was not neutral. And understandably so. Stanford, both as a community and a research university, has a lot at stake. Prominent members of its faculty are serving an administration that in the best of cases has created a monster in the Middle East and in the worst has showed incompetence in handling international policy, humanitarian crises and even military operations.

We may perhaps discount the lobbyist wing at Hoover Institution. But it becomes an embarrassment to claim as our flesh and blood the iron lady who poses as liberated descendant of black slaves and acts as Cinderella to the household of Texan millionaires.

Whatever the outcome of the Nov. 2 election may be, we will have to spend time and effort clearing our image of these associations.

Admitting the colossal failure of American civil institutions to resist a reckless administration and prevent the humanitarian disaster in Iraq is a first step in the road leading back to our souls.

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