

America's Dual Mission

Destroy and Rebuild (for a Profit)

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It should not surprise anyone if I feel duty-bound, as a professor of economics, to draw upon my modest expertise in neoclassical economics to look ahead, beyond the impending war against Iraq, and contribute to the nation-building efforts in that benighted country as soon as we have finished destroying it.

About a hundred and fifty years back, Karl Marx had proclaimed that the British have a "dual mission" in India: they were there to destroy *and* rebuild Indian society. First, they must dismantle those archaic institutions that had produced centuries of barbarism and stagnation, blocking her progress to higher forms of economic organization. Once this historical debris had been removed, the British would lay the foundations of a civilized society, duly equipped with property rights, labor markets and an indigenous bourgeoisie. India would then be ready to join the civilized world as a near-equal of European nations.

India proved to be more refractory than Marx had anticipated. As a result, when the British left India, some two hundred years after they had launched their dual mission, it was hard to tell if they were in the first or second phase of their dual mission. Judging from the average height of Indians, which had shrunk by about a quarter of an inch between 1900 and 1950, it would appear that the British were still engaged in downsizing India. In any case, no foreign or native observer could have made the mistake of thinking that in 1947, the year of her independence, India was even close to laying claims of equality with Britain. If this was not bad enough, even before the British terminated their glorious rule, the Indians had plunged into a great paroxysm of carnage, perhaps to announce to the world that they had reclaimed their country, and would run it according to native ideas of just governance. It was a great pity that the ungrateful Indians had forced the departure of their British philosopher-guardians before their education was complete.

Once the sun set on the British Empire, their dual mission fell into neglect. Although the United States inherited the mantle of global power, it would not be free to exercise this power in the service of the dual mission. During this era of the Cold War, when the Soviets were busily seducing the poor huddled masses of Asia, Africa and Latin America with dreams of socialist revolution, the greatest part of the energies of the CIA was spent returning these societies to the sober discipline of military dictatorships or absolute monarchies. This was mostly a thankless task.

Opportunely, these adverse conditions changed in 1991 with the collapse of Soviet power. Once again, the historical conditions were appropriate for Western bourgeoisie to resume their dual mission, interrupted by the Cold War, among the half-breeds of the Periphery. No sooner were the conditions ready than Iraq, the least civilized of the Arab states, offered United States the opportunity to launch the dual mission with great fanfare, with nearly all the nations of the world in attendance. Yet, though United States was

superbly endowed, it was not quite resolved to take upon itself the kinds of risks that attend such great undertakings.

There is not another region of the Periphery where the need for resuming the dual mission is stronger than in the Fertile Crescent, still steeped in obscurantist obsessions and misogynist dreams. When the British gained control over this region in 1917, they understood that the time they had was too short to complete even the destructive phase of their dual mission. As a result, they decided to leave behind a surrogate--a Jewish state in Palestine--who would continue to do their job long after their departure. Once this Crusader state was on the ground, it could safely be trusted to complete the first phase of the dual mission, at least in the neighboring territories.

Israel has discharged its historic duties with serious purpose. But as these things go--and nothing in this region happens in accordance with the natural laws of history--the insertion of Israel has created some problems of its own. It has increased the recalcitrance of some Arab states who arrogantly and blindly presume that they have the right to live by their own archaic laws and traditions, even if this obstructs the forward march of history. It is imperative that these unnatural states should be destroyed.

Although Iraq offered this opportunity as early as 1990, United States was not yet ready--as I stated earlier--to embark on its dual mission. It was still burdened by painful memories of its failed dual mission in Vietnam, which despite massive efforts had reverted to the primitivism of communal ownership and social equality. As a result, after dislodging the Iraqi barbarians from *our* oil fields in Kuwait, the United States lost nerve. It declared victory, and shrank back from the much greater task of launching the dual mission in Iraq and the rest of the region.

It is time now for the Son to atone for the sins of the Father. The Son stands at the head of a coalition--consisting of Zionists, apocalyptic Christians, and assorted corporate interests--that is ready and resolved to renew the dual mission, starting with Iraq, and then moving to Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Pakistan. There is so much destructive work that needs to be executed in these countries; the backlog has been building up for quite some time.

It is of the utmost importance to note that the new dual mission promises to be different. When the British and French initiated the destructive phase of their dual mission some two hundred years ago, their work proceeded slowly, since their firepower was not sufficiently developed at the time. It took the French nearly 50 years, from 1820 to 1870, to kill half the population of Algeria. The British faced a more difficult task in India; they simply did not have the firepower to terminate half their population. As a result, they put in place a variety of policies that would produce an abundant harvest of famines, managing to kill off millions. Still, their kill rate was too slow to match the French record in Algeria.

The new dual mission led by the Bush-Blair crew can finish its demolition job much faster. The destruction which the British and French took decades to accomplish can now

be completed in mere days, even hours. Indeed, if the Bush-Blair crew were not moved by humanitarian concerns, they could depopulate all of Iraq in a few minutes. This would have the further advantage of converting the dual mission into a "singular" mission, since there would be no rebuilding to do, at least for a couple of hundred years. Instead, they plan to implement a strategy of "shock and awe," which depends on the simultaneous delivery of hundreds of cruise missiles to produce the effect of the Hiroshima bomb without producing its human casualties. As the Iraqis watch the missiles coming in, they will be seized with mind-blowing awe, a sight they will treasure for the rest of their shortened lives. And when the missiles hit their targets with pin-point accuracy, exploding into a thousand infernos, the Iraqi awe will swiftly be converted into shock.

The Iraqis who survive their ordeal of "shock and awe" will, of course, quickly queue up for surrender to American tanks, drones, robots, or any moving object made in USA. Once the rites of surrender have been completed--and televised to prime-time American audiences--the Iraqis can return to their homes, if these haven't been reduced to rubble, and wait with baited breath, but without water and electricity, for the second phase of the dual mission, for the benefits of peace and democracy to start pouring in. I suspect that the wait may be long.

Historians of technology will tell you that technology rarely advances at the same rate on all fronts. Thus, while the technology for completing the destructive phase of the dual mission has made impressive progress in the past decades, the rebuilding technology has yet to catch up. At the press of a few buttons on ships stationed thousands of miles away, we can dismantle simultaneously--and almost instantly, if we are so inclined--all the power stations, bridges, sewage treatment plants, and water purification plants in Iraq that survived the first Gulf War. On the other hand, we are still a long way from inventing automated plants which can build power stations, bridges, sewage treatment plants, and water purification plants at the press of a button. The Pentagon has commissioned MIT and Stanford University to design robots that will be able to rebuild a country's civilian infrastructure from the rubble of those that are destroyed by bombs and cruise missiles. There is a further problem. Rebuilding of the slow kind requires money--tens of billions of dollars--given the dramatic success with which we are likely to execute the first phase of the dual mission. Where will this come from at a time of rapidly escalating budget deficits, when the demands of the rich for tax cuts have not yet been fully satisfied?

There will be many in the administration who will be tempted to revise their thinking on the dual mission. "If we can be so effective in the first phase, do we need to undertake the second phase?" Under the circumstances, it is doubtful that any money will be quickly forthcoming. We cannot count on oil revenues either, since Saddam may choose to go down in a blaze--the blaze of the burning oil fields. And if we turn to our allies, they are likely to decline. Most likely, they will say, "This dual mission is yours, Imperial Highness, not ours."

Where will the Americans find the money to start rebuilding the new, free, democratic, post-war Iraq? We could, of course, draw down the nearly \$5 billion in economic and military assistance we have provided to Israel for several decades now, especially since a

democratic Iraq will have eliminated the imminent peril from Iraq's yet-to-be-developed nuclear arsenal. But perish the thought! A Congressman proposing to sacrifice *that* sacred cow would instantly put his political career in jeopardy. Thankfully, we do not have to take recourse to any radical measures. The rebuilding of Iraq can begin without offending Israel.

The solution to our predicament comes from neoclassical economics, such as our better undergraduates in economics are expected to master before they graduate from college. Let me explain, drawing upon my modest expertise in economics, how the time-tested principles of neo-classical economics can be employed to rescue Iraq's post phase-one economy. Our bright senior in economics knows, *a la* Heckscher-Ohlin theory of international trade, that a country's comparative advantage lies in making the best use of its most abundant resources. When their markets are left free, every country will--and should--export products which make the most intensive use of their abundant resources. All that we need to do then is to review quickly the most abundant resources that are likely to become available in post-war Iraq. It is an ill wind that blows no good. It is, therefore, unlikely that the most high-tech war that is about to be unleashed on Iraq will fail to create some quite lucrative opportunities for Iraqi entrepreneurs. The first place to look for these opportunities is in the rubble of post-war Iraq.

Improbable as this may sound, Iraqis are likely to find their most valuable opportunities in the bombed-out sites, both military and civilian. I think I am not being overly optimistic when I assume that United States will be generous--maybe, even to a fault--in dispatching its arsenal to chosen targets. Almost certainly, the dispatched arsenal will include daisy-cutters, micro-wave bombs, cruise missiles, and anti-tank artillery shells laced with depleted uranium. As a result, once the war is over, we can reasonably expect that Iraq will possess an abundant supply of empty warheads, precision-guidance systems, and other assorted bomb and missile parts. The post-war government in Iraq should assign its best engineers to collect, grade, and recondition its war debris for export. In order to prevent this lethal material from falling into the wrong hands--such as the two remaining members of the axis of evil--I am quite sure that the United States military will be eager to snap up the Iraqi exports.

A second potent source of post-war opportunities will be presented by the human casualties of the war. According to one UN estimate more than 1.3 million Iraqi children under the age of five will be at risk of death from starvation during and after the war. If we assume that 10 percent of these children will die in the immediate aftermath of the war--a fairly conservative estimate--they can serve as an invaluable source for body parts. I recommend that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) should make arrangements to deliver thousands of refrigerated containers to all parts of Iraq to ensure that the children can be frozen as soon as they die. Once this program comes into operation, no American children have to die needlessly because of unavailability of fresh body parts.

War tourism offers a third set of opportunities for Iraq. I admit it is a new concept, but that should not prevent the Ministry of Tourism in Iraq from exploring its potential for

generating export revenues. I do not doubt that once the war is over, there will be a considerable interest in the capitals of most Third World countries, and especially the Arab countries, to evaluate the magnitude of the damage that the Americans are capable of inflicting at short notice on any country. The first cohort of war tourists will consist of the heads of states, their ministers, generals, wives, and other hangers-on. Imagine the sobering effect this tourism will have on these visitors. I am sure that the whipping-boy theorists of the Iraq war will strongly support this new tourism, and they might even persuade the Pentagon to subsidize this cost-effective way of promoting US hegemony. Perhaps the officials of France, Germany and Belgium can also be persuaded to join this tourist crowd.

I will list one more opportunity that the war is almost certain to create: making commercial use of the depleted uranium left behind by American artillery. According to a scientific paper in the *Iraqi Journal of Medicine* (Spring 1995), several Iraqi hospitals reported sudden elevations in the rates of cancer remission--even in advanced cases--in the months following the first Gulf War. Upon investigation, the scientists found that all these hospitals were located in areas that were close to the scenes of battles, and enjoyed very high levels of radiation left from the use of depleted uranium shells by the US military. The Iraqi Ministry of Health should capitalize upon this finding, and invite multinationals to set up cancer treatment facilities that will take advantage of the uranium radiation that is sure to be gifted to Iraq by the new war. It is important, however, that these multinationals use only local doctors and nurses to staff these facilities.

I am sure that if I gave my economic thoughts freer rein, I could come up with several additional ways of finding economic opportunities in the wreckage of the Iraqi economy, the debris of dams and powerplants, the maiming and mutilation of the Iraqi people. The modest proposals that I have offered should demonstrate to the Iraqi people that they should not despair at the thought that the constructive phase of America's dual mission in Iraq may be stalled by burning oil fields, the need to provide additional tax breaks to the richest Americans, or the growing budget deficit. They can start rebuilding their economy from the wreckage of war itself. And for this they should be eternally grateful to Americans far having advanced the arts of war to the point where they sow seeds of hope in the midst of destruction. No Jhengiz, no Halaku, no Attila, no Tamburlane ever offered half as much to mankind.