

FRONT MATTER

- Bob Chodos 2 Introducing Inroads
 John Richards 4 The reign of Jean Chrétien
 Letter to the editors 7 The ADQ: Real achievement, uncertain future
 Inroads listserv 10 Iraq, North Korea, empire, Plato...

IRAQ

- Bob Chodos 24 Introduction
 Larry Pratt and Leon H. Craig 26 Iraq and hegemony
 with a response from Gareth Morley
 46 Geert van Kesteren: Photojournalist abroad
 Gareth Morley 48 Iraq, state sovereignty and human rights
 with a response from Larry Pratt and Leon H. Craig
 Antoine Robitaille 62 Quebecers: a pacifist people?
 David Tucker 76 Australia's great debate

PAUL MARTIN

- Janice MacKinnon 88 From one ex-finance minister to another

CANADA/U.S.

- Philip Resnick 98 Canada: A different North American society?
 Finn Poschmann 106 America North: A different Canadian society?

LANGUAGE LESSONS

- Linda Cardinal and Pierre Boyer 110 Devolution and language governance in Wales

REVIEWS

- Reg Whitaker 118 George Grant got it wrong
 Donald Cuccioletta 130 Why do they hate US?
 Henry Milner 139 Welcome to the nice barbarian invaders

From Ottawa to Baghdad

WELL BEFORE THE U.S.-LED “COALITION OF THE WILLING” invaded Iraq in March 2003, we had chosen two related themes for this issue of Inroads: Canada-U.S. relations and the impending transition from Jean Chrétien to Paul Martin at the helm of the Canadian government. The decision by the United States and Britain to remove Saddam Hussein by force, and Chrétien’s decision to keep Canada out of this endeavour, did not so much displace these themes as give them a new context. For Chrétien’s choice raised fundamental questions of Canada-U.S. relations, and became one of his government’s most significant actions. In the end, far more of the issue deals with Iraq than originally anticipated, but no less of it deals with the previously chosen themes.

Our Iraq coverage features a detailed examination of the case for the war by two political scientists sympathetic to that case,

Larry Pratt and Leon H. Craig, and by an international lawyer opposed to it, Gareth Morley. In addition, we look at how the war played out in two “distinct societies.” Antoine Robitaille examines the strong opposition to the war in Quebec, while David Tucker explains why the balance of forces in Australia led that country to participate in the Coalition of the Willing. In addition, Iraq and the related question of how to deal with another member of the “Axis of Evil,” North Korea, was a dominant theme of the Inroads listserv over the last six months.

Contributors differed especially over whether pre-emptive action by powerful countries such as the United States is a proper response to “failed states” in the Third World. Excerpts from these exchanges are featured here.

Outside (or at least partly outside) the context of Iraq, political scientist Philip Resnick takes a broad look at the similarities and differences between Canada and the United States, finding that Canadians’ tendency to compromise, emphasis on order and greater willingness to use the state do differentiate them from Americans. Finn Poschmann disagrees, arguing that regional differences within each country are at least as great as the cross-border differences.

On the changing of the guard in Ottawa, former Saskatchewan Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon proposes an agenda for Paul Martin’s new government, expressing the hope that Martin will be a “transformational prime minister” who will re-examine the federal government’s key relationships: with the rest of the world and especially the United States, with the provinces, with western Canada and with Canadian voters. While MacKinnon looks forward, John Richards’s editorial looks back on Jean Chrétien’s decade in power, finding unfinished business in the areas of Aboriginal policy and foreign affairs.

Two major book reviews also deal with this cluster of themes. Reg Whitaker tack-

les five books dealing with various aspects of Canada-U.S. relations, and finds that Canada has more room to manoeuvre in the relationship than is often assumed. The fiscal solvency achieved by Chrétien and Martin, he suggests, has contributed significantly to this level of independence. Donald Cuccioletta, a Canadian who teaches at an American university, wades into nine – mostly highly critical – books about the U.S. published in Canada, France and Britain, in an effort to find the answer to his students’ question, “Why do they hate us?”

In other articles:

- Linda Cardinal and Pierre Boyer turn to Wales to find language policy lessons that can be applied to Canada. Efforts to encourage the use of Welsh are working, they find, because Wales has taken a grassroots approach that involves local actors in language policy.
- Henry Milner finds himself both entertained and disturbed by Denys Arcand’s much-heralded new film *The Barbarian Invasions*.
- Brian Gibb, a candidate for the Action Démocratique du Québec in the last Quebec election, takes issue with Inroads’ treatment of the ADQ in the Summer/Fall 2003 issue which, he argues, underestimates the party’s achievement.

— Bob Chodos

The reign of Jean Chrétien

LAST SUMMER, I WROTE AN ARTICLE FOR the *Annuaire du Québec* on Jean Chrétien's decade-long reign. The first draft was composed on an idyllic afternoon here in East Vancouver. Beyond my kitchen's open windows were scarlet geraniums on the balcony; a background of pines, hemlocks and larches in the garden; blue sky; bees buzzing lazily among the flowers. Chrétien's boast seemed justifiable: maybe Canada is the "best country in the world." Even now, in late autumn, with a prospect of rain and leaden skies, his claim cannot be dismissed out of hand. Better than his adversaries, Chrétien has embodied the common-sense conclusion that Canada is a good place to live.

ELECTORATES IN THREE PROVINCES – Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan – went to the polls in 1990 and 1991 determined to oust the incumbents. The NDP won in all three, and for the first time found itself governing a majority of Canadians, if only at the provincial level.

New Democrats shared none of Chrétien's optimism. Unless social programs became more generous, they intoned, Canada was a disgrace. In British Columbia and Ontario, the NDP sharply increased spending and deficits, ignoring inconvenient evidence: a near-doubling since the 1960s in public-sector share of GDP, continuous federal deficits from 1975 (until 1997), mounting interest costs of public debt, and voter hostility to higher taxes.

For many, the 1993 federal election became a referendum both on the Tories in Ottawa and on their provincial NDP government. Relative to 1988, the NDP popular vote fell by half, and its caucus fell by four fifths. Subsequent elections, both federal and provincial, have confirmed voter mistrust of the party. Only in the two eastern prairie provinces – and perhaps Nova Scotia – can it realistically aspire to office this decade.

In these prairie provinces, the party has a long tradition of pragmatism. Ironically, it was an NDP government – Roy

Romanow's, beginning in 1992 – that pioneered the major spending cuts required to end the country's protracted deficit budgeting. In this issue Janice MacKinnon, who was Minister of Finance during that government's crucial years of budget-cutting, gives advice to Paul Martin for his incoming administration..

Despite the electoral success of these governments (the Saskatchewan NDP won a fourth term in office in a hard-fought campaign last November), the federal NDP rejected pragmatism and opted for a niche strategy. It has preserved a tight link to public-sector unions, and adopted policies comparable to those of various small left-wing parties in Europe. Given a more conservative Liberal leader in Paul Martin, it may realize a modest recovery. But the die is cast: the NDP is not interested in governing. For Chrétien, all this meant he faced no electoral threat on his left flank.

With the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, Lucien Bouchard underwent an existential crisis. Federalism, he concluded, was incompatible with francophone Quebecers' interests. He resigned from Brian Mulroney's cabinet and formed the Bloc Québécois to promote René Lévesque's option: political sovereignty plus an economic association ensuring free trade with the rest of Canada. In 1993, the Bloc captured more than two thirds of Quebec ridings and became the official opposition. In the 1995 referendum, Bouchard persuaded roughly 60 per cent of francophone Quebecers to vote Yes.

But what did Yes mean? The referendum question was not clear. Many wanted, as the old joke has it, a strong independent Quebec within a united Canada. With the col-

lapse of Mulroney's coalition of western autonomists and moderate Quebec nationalists, there was no prospect of an *entente à l'amiable* if Quebec opted for sovereignty-association. To drive home Quebecers' stark choice – sovereignty *tout court* or the status quo – Chrétien and his lieutenant Stéphane Dion enacted the Clarity Act. There would be no special status, no distinct society and certainly no sovereignty-association.

Like the NDP, Quebec sovereigntists exaggerated the negatives of "the best country in the world." The 2000 federal election and 2003 Quebec provincial election con-



confirmed that only a minority – admittedly a sizable minority – of francophone Quebecers prefer sovereignty to the status quo. By the end of Chrétien's reign, the PQ had lost power to Jean Charest in Quebec City, and the BQ was on the defensive in Ottawa. Still, Bouchard, whose goal was to be president of an independent Quebec and not prime minister of Canada, was Chrétien's most effective opponent over the decade. Chrétien bested Bouchard, but in October 1995 it was by the smallest of margins.

On the right, Preston Manning deserves credit as the first major political figure in Canada to publicize the danger of protracted deficits. He repeated across the country his joke comparing Canadian finances to a man in a hole who continues to dig. If you want to get out of a fiscal hole, he told his audiences, first stop digging. His fiscal conservatism had an obvious regional appeal since he insisted that Quebec and Atlantic politicians were doing much of the digging; they had obtained excessive transfers, paid for by those in the five provinces west of Ot-

tawa. Had he remained within Mulroney's "big tent," there might never have been a Chrétien reign. But he was impatient with fiscal evasions – Tory evasions as much as Liberal and NDP ones. Mulroney failed to attack the deficit with the rigour Manning expected. Midway through the Tories' first term, he founded the Reform Party. In the 1993 election, Manning did to Tories in the West (and the NDP's western caucus) what Bouchard did to Tories in Quebec.

Politics is about more than balancing budgets. Manning spoke little French and was unsympathetic to Quebec concerns about linguistic and cultural survival. Quebecers shunned him, as did Ontario voters who, even if they mistrusted Quebec nationalism, wanted a federal government able to understand Quebec realities.

The dominant Tory leader of the Chrétien era was Joe Clark. As the French say of the Bourbons, Clark learned nothing and forgot nothing. He never learned that by continuing Liberal traditions of patronage and refusing to grapple with the country's finances, Mulroney had alienated large sections of the population. He never forgot that Manning's revolt had ensured Tory defeat. For Chrétien, the bitter quarrels between Manning and Clark meant his right flank was as secure as his left.

The strategies of Chrétien's opponents guaranteed an absence of an alternative to the Liberals. At the very end of Chrétien's reign, faced with the near-certainty of yet another Liberal victory under Paul Martin, Canadian conservatives have finally undertaken the painful compromises required to rebuild a credible national party. Too late to influence Chrétien, they may well render Martin's tenure less secure.

CHRÉTIEN CAME TO POLITICAL MATURITY in 1960s Ottawa, an era of universal cost-shared social programs. Writing in *Inroads* in 2000 about the ideas of Pierre Trudeau and the Liberal Party elite, André Burelle observed, "The disagreements between men of good faith usually start from the premises of their arguments, and not from the logic whereby they reach conclusions." Chrétien has spent his entire professional life immersed in the "premises" of the Liberal Party and the senior Ottawa mandarins overseeing the Canadian welfare state. Among these Liberal premises have been the primacy of Ottawa in matters of social policy, and a certain Panglossian mistrust of critics, especially when they speak in the name of provincial governments.

Chrétien has proved himself a superb tactician, but these premises incline him to dismiss problems until they become full-blown crises. The most important example is the federal deficit. The Achilles heel of the Liberals' cost-shared social programs is that, for decades, Ottawa and the provinces blamed each other for their respective deficits and avoided fiscal redress. As did Mulroney, Chrétien (and Martin) dismissed Manning's forebodings – until the crisis that matured in 1994. That year, several provinces were on the verge of bankruptcy; financial markets responded with hostility to the Liberals' business-as-usual budget; interest rates rose; fear gripped senior mandarins that foreigners might dump Canadian dollar assets. Devaluation of the Mexican peso was an ominous precedent. To their credit, Chrétien and Martin abandoned the waffle of their 1993 Red Book and undertook meaningful spending cuts and program redesign.

Janice MacKinnon, in her advice to Paul Martin, offers a number of proposals – a more mature Canadian agenda for dealing with the rest of the world, a more respectful agenda for the provinces, a sensitive agenda for the West and an agenda of institutional reform designed to lower voter cynicism. Central to this advice is that Martin abandon Chrétien's emphasis on tactics and acknowledge some fundamental problems. I briefly mention one such problem. Aboriginal policy is in dire need of liberation from Liberal "premises," but has yet to generate the necessary crisis in the minds of Liberal mandarins.

Early in his ministerial career, Chrétien held the Indian Affairs portfolio. He was the minister at the time of the famous 1969 White Paper that proposed elimination of reserves and complete integration of Indians. Indian chiefs adamantly rejected this option. Ottawa mandarins swung to the other extreme, accepting the chiefs' lobbying for very large transfers enabling bands to organize a parallel set of social services independent of the federal and provincial programs serving other Canadians. Ottawa now provides band councils with more than \$5 billion in annual transfers. This institutional "parallelism" has halted net off-reserve migration over the last decade, but the results are not impressive. The link between good incomes and good education has grown stronger, but only about one third of adult Indians on-reserve have completed high school; 40 per cent of Indians on-reserve rely on welfare.

More than two thirds of all Aboriginals (Indians, Métis and Inuit) now live off-reserve, where incomes and education levels are better, but far from satisfactory. There is

an urgent need to integrate Aboriginals more effectively into the labour force, something impossible without the provinces' active participation in design of better Aboriginal K–12 schooling and welfare policy. The problems are most acute in western Canada: in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, one in seven people, and one in four schoolchildren, are now Aboriginal.

CHRÉTIEN LET THE ABORIGINAL DOSSIER fester for a decade. But it is unfair to conclude on this note. In 1990, when he assumed leadership of the Liberal Party, Canadians described him as "yesterday's man." We underestimated him. He did not overestimate us. He did what was necessary. He obliged Quebecers to put an end to their hesitations between sovereignty and federalism, and Canadians to put an end to two decades of deficit budgeting.

It is now time to move on. It is time for Quebec nationalists to rethink strategy in a manner compatible with Canada's survival as a federation. It is time for Canadian Liberals to accept that Canada is a federation in which the provincial role is crucial. It is time for Canadian conservatives to accept that Canadians do not want a minimal U.S.-style welfare state. It is time for the NDP to sever the umbilical cord linking it to public-sector unions. And, as MacKinnon argues, it is time for Canadians to be less naive about their good fortune. In a world of ideological divisions, of corrupt and often violent "failed states," it is time to play a mature role that requires more of us than the self-righteous rhetoric of "soft power."

— John Richards

The ADQ: Real achievement, uncertain future

Dear Inroads editors,

In your most recent issue (Inroads 13, pp. 75–95), I found it extremely interesting to read the articles addressing the so-called “rise and fall of Mario Dumont’s ADQ.” Having become a member of the ADQ in 1999, and later a candidate for the party during the last provincial election, I am all too familiar with the emotional rollercoaster the party faithful were on during the 18 months leading up to the election.

I don’t think that the electoral results do justice to what the party was able to accomplish, changing the pattern of political debate that has dominated Quebec for the last 30 years. Thanks to the ADQ, scant attention was paid to the national question during the campaign, and as a result a serious revision of the “Quebec model” is now being undertaken by the newly elected Liberal government.

Considering how incredibly robust our electoral system is in resisting the incursion of any third party that puts forth a program straying from the well-beaten path, we did well. Of the three parties, ours was the only

one to increase its popular vote. Again, this is not something that is easily done in a political system that awards a virtual monopoly of political power to the party that garners a majority of seats in the legislature, even though the party in question rarely has an absolute majority of the popular vote. Inevitably within our political system, strategic voting takes place, something Jean Charest seized on when he declared during the televised leaders’ debate that a vote for the ADQ was a vote for the PQ.

Among the three articles, the most pertinent analysis comes from Gary Caldwell. He astutely observes that the ADQ is a party that believes there is a huge ingenuity gap in Quebec. Specifically, the province’s technocratic elite is unable to provide the solutions to Quebec’s social problems, most notably in health care and education.

Jean-François Lisée’s defence of the Quebec model represents the large “political disconnect” between the population at large and those who run the system. Contrary to what Mr. Lisée would have us believe, public finances in Quebec are not sound. At present, there is an accumulated debt of ap-

proximately \$110 billion without any plan in place to reduce it. In addition, as foreseen by the Clair report, the percentage of the province’s annual budget devoted to health care is climbing fast (50 per cent by 2010). The Liberals’ response – to freeze all other expenditures except health care and education – is simply an attempt to postpone the inevitable tough decisions that lie ahead if nothing is done to address the serious problems plaguing the system.

Eric Bédard’s portrayal of the ADQ as a political party lacking in “well grounded, soundly oriented thinking” fails to take notice of what I think will be the party’s lasting contribution in the years to come: a move away from technocratic control by the state toward a real-time computational model based on widespread meaningful participation of a much greater number of citizens in the conception and delivery of social programs.

In brief, problems of organized complexity, like those found in health care and education, cannot be solved by rational analysis alone. Complex systems resist linear solutions because within these systems cause is not proportional to effect. Rather than apply technocratic solutions originating from the command and control centre, it is more effective to multiply the number of centres, thereby increasing the range of responses to common problems and the probability that lasting solutions will be found. Thus, the ADQ proposes to decentralize the conception, administration and financial resources necessary to run social programs to the regions. Over the long term, the distributed intelligence of the newly created network will outperform “the best and the brightest” toiling away in bureaucratic towers.



However, as Mr. Caldwell points out, leading up to and during the election the ADQ did not practise what it preached and placed far too much control of the party in far too few hands. Fortunately, this point hasn’t escaped the membership, which demanded and subsequently received a commission that will tour the province and depose a preliminary report at the party’s next provincial meeting, with proposals to be adopted at the party congress early next year. Already significant change has come about. Mr. Dumont’s longtime political and press attachés have resigned from their respective posts.

Finally, will a thorough “house-cleaning” and refinement of the ADQ’s political platform be enough to catapult it into becoming Quebec’s next generational party? In my opinion, without significant reform to the voting system, meaning the implementation of a proportional voting system, the ADQ will face, at best, an uncertain future. Despite the presence of some very talented and dedicated people who are doing their best to bring some much-needed reform to Quebec’s aging political structures, the first-past-the-post voting system presents an extremely difficult institutional obstacle to overcome.

Will the Liberal government finally get around to modifying an institution that is a veritable vestige of our colonial past, allowing a younger generation to take its rightful place in the political process? Or will it drag its feet, hoping that what could be a formidable force for the future will dissipate and move on to something else? We can only hope for the best.

— Brian Gibb

Iraq, North Korea, empire, Plato...

Selected and edited from the Inroads listserv by Bob Chodos

WITH THE INVASION OF IRAQ, THE WAR ON TERRORISM, AND tensions in the Korean peninsula, the Inroads listserv was frequently preoccupied with questions of war and peace in the spring and summer of 2003. On several occasions, exchanges went beyond the specifics of the situation at hand to engage eternal political questions: empire, tyranny, democracy, sovereignty. The first such exchange was initiated in April when Gareth Morley discussed the invasion of Iraq in the context of the “Westphalian” system of states with equal and more or less absolute sovereign rights (for more on Iraq and Westphalianism, see Gareth’s article beginning on page 48 of this issue).

From: Gareth Morley

... Which brings us to the big problem with Westphalianism: it is the tyrant and ethnic cleanser’s friend. From a certain point of view, it seems like the craft unionism of those with state power. Why, then, do so many without state power, especially in the Third World, cling to it? What would the population of Africa say if the U.S. and U.K.

decided to send in the marines to overthrow Mugabe? Or what would the average Latin American, without any sympathy for Communism, think if the United States did that to Castro? Some émigré groups would applaud, but the vast majority would react just as Arabs have to the war for regime change in Iraq.

To adapt an old legal phrase, the man on the Lima omnibus is against war for regime



Plato contemplating the regime in North Korea would have a lot of catching up to do, but I am confident that he would not find Kim Jong Il and the Communist Party of North Korea credible stand-ins as “philosopher kings” establishing a Platonic ideal of justice. — Reg Whitaker

I’ll leave it to others (for now) to discuss what is wrong with imperialism as a solution to the problems with Westphalianism, and whether there is a Third Way which avoids both.

Gareth Morley is a lawyer living in Vancouver.

From: John Richards

Gareth,
You conclude your last posting with the question that has made the Iraq War

change. Why is there this support for Westphalianism among people who do not directly benefit from it? Partly because recognition under the Westphalian system was a relatively recent, and important, development for formerly colonial countries. Partly because of the advantages of stability. Partly because sovereignty is a necessary if not sufficient condition for democratic self-rule. But mostly because the alternative presented is war at the sole discretion of the president of the United States. In other words, imperialism.

into a “world” war: “What is wrong with imperialism as a solution to the problems with Westphalianism?”

The Iraq War has become a world war in the sense that politically conscious elites across the world have been seized by the potential implications in a way that they were seized by the implications of the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, or of the rise of Soviet power a decade later. This war forcefully resurrects, as you rightly argue, questions about the legitimacy of the post-World War II institutions set in place to buttress

The Inroads listserv began operating in September 1997, as a means to link readers of the journal and others interested in policy discussion. With about 120 subscribers, it offers one of the few chances for people of diverse views to grapple with social and political issues in depth.

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national sovereignty.

Gareth, you insist that “the man on the Lima [Clapham] omnibus is against war for regime change,” that his good sense inclines him to favour the Westphalian principle of national sovereignty. According to the latest polls, Gareth, you are wrong. Yes, the man on the Clapham omnibus may have faith in national sovereignty, but his faith is faltering. Why? On too many recent occasions, Westphalianism has turned out to be, to use your words, “the tyrant and ethnic cleanser’s friend.” If you allow that they are a random sample of the English, current polls suggest about 60 per cent of passengers on the Clapham omnibus now favour regime change in Iraq – though a few months earlier, only a minority did. Quite clearly, riders on the bus are seized by a

Riders on the bus are seized by a multitude of dilemmas. Is the Wilsonian doctrine of the right of nations to self-determination still relevant? Was the dismantling of European empires a step toward progress?

– John Richards

multitude of dilemmas. Is the Wilsonian doctrine of the right of nations to self-determination still relevant? Was the dismantling of European empires a step toward progress? Can newly sovereign states, with some economic aid, achieve convergence of living standards with the privileged minority in industrial societies? Should they get off at the next stop, or stay on the bus in the hope of learning the answers?

Passengers on the bus may feel reassured in their faith if they limit discussion to east and southeast Asia. Leave aside the Stalinist

regime that has starved its citizens in North Korea. Liberated from Japanese tutelage, South Korea has prospered. Liberated from the venal European colonial tentacles stretching inland from the coastal cities – and from the equally venal Maoist hordes of the cultural revolution – hundreds of millions of Chinese have prospered under communist-managed capitalism over the last quarter century. Likewise, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore have realized economic and political progress that serve to justify the post–World War II institutions of the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, GATT/WTO, etc.

But the passengers’ certainties have been jolted by two very bumpy stretches of the road. One is the failure of most Muslim states – from Algeria to Indonesia – to achieve reasonable living standards and stable civic institutions. Hopeful exceptions here are Malaysia (as mentioned above) and Turkey. The other is the tragedy of civil war, AIDS and stagnant incomes in sub-Saharan Africa.

None of the questions troubling riders on the Clapham omnibus have easy answers. Almost certainly, satisfactory answers entail massive violation of national sovereignty, either by imperial nations acting unilaterally or by multilateral agencies.

In his major New York Times article (January 5, 2003), Michael Ignatieff noted that “the nationalist nation-building project” in former colonies had all too frequently led to tyranny or chaos. “The age of empire,” he wrote, “ought to have been succeeded by an age of independent, equal and self-governing nation-states. But that has not come to pass. America has inherited a world scarred not just by the failures of empires past but also by the failure of nationalist movements to create and secure free states – and now,



suddenly, by the desire of Islamists to build theocratic tyrannies on the ruins of failed nationalist dreams.”

John Richards is co-publisher of Inroads.

From: Gareth Morley

John has certainly got to the heart of things. “Regime change” in Iraq is important because it (implicitly) raises the question of whether the anticolonial revolutions of the 1940s–1960s (already anticipated in the UN Charter and the post–World War II institutions) should be reversed (not, perhaps, in every case, but for most of Africa and the Muslim world at least).

John puts the argument bluntly. With the exception of a few newly industrializing countries, the postcolonial regimes blew it. They have failed to deliver material progress, interethnic unity or political liberty. There needs to be a counterrevolution. The idea of juridically equal nation-states must be dispensed with. States that degenerate into either chaos or tyranny, says Ignatieff, lose their right to be independent.

Most of the proponents of this counterrevolution are still a bit uneasy with spelling it out in its full clarity. They prefer to

What would the average Latin American, without any sympathy for Communism, think if the United States did that to Castro? Some émigré groups would applaud, but the vast majority would react just as Arabs have to the war for regime change in Iraq.
– Gareth Morley

talk of weapons of mass destruction and violations of Security Council resolutions. But the illogic of these arguments was always evident: Iraq

clearly represented no security threat to the United States and the chief diplomatic goal of the Bush administration was to ensure that Iraq was not presented with concrete demands it might comply with.

I will accept John’s description of the failure of many of the postcolonial states. Nor do I seek to join in some resentful left nationalist demonology of the United States of America. My most basic objection is moral. War necessarily involves killing innocent people. When we engage in a war, even if we scrupulously try to avoid unnecessary death, we deliberately kill combatants (who may be morally innocent conscripts) and we foreseeably kill noncombatants. Pacifists have a point when they question whether any political objective can justify this. Non-pacifists recognize a moral right to kill the morally innocent in direct response to aggression: if we are acting in self-defence, then even if we are the cause of those deaths, we are not morally responsible for them. In a just war, the state collectively exercises our individual right of self-defence.

But a war for regime change is a different moral proposition. Those who initiate it cannot deny responsibility for the inno-

cent deaths it causes. Honest advocates of the war on Iraq (i.e. those who do not claim it was in self-defence) argue that the deaths and misery caused by the war, however unfortunate, are of a lesser magnitude than the deaths and misery that the Ba'ath regime would have continued to inflict if it had been left in power. I question whether the non-omniscient can really know these magnitudes. After all, we do not know how long the Ba'ath regime would have remained if domestic forces had been given free rein. We also don't know all the consequences of Anglo-American intervention: the result may be an even more oppressive theocratic regime.

Even if we did know that the balance of suffering would be greater without intervention, only a utilitarian would conclude de-

My most basic objection is moral. War necessarily involves killing innocent people. When we engage in a war, we deliberately kill combatants and we foreseeably kill noncombatants.
– Gareth Morley

finitively that intervention was justified. Non-utilitarians normally deny a moral symmetry between acts and omissions: the deaths and suffering caused by the war are the responsibility of the war makers in a way that death and suffering caused by the Ba'ath regime would not be the responsibility of the West if it decided not to intervene.

The moral calculus is made more difficult by the assumption that well-motivated imperialism would work. It ignores the possibility that “liberal interventionism” is just the latest avatar of the technocratic social-

engineering hubris that caused so many disasters in the twentieth century.

From: Reg Whitaker

Some reflections set in motion by Gareth's thoughtful explorations of Empire:

Part of the difficulty in assessing American intentions and objectives is surely that the rhetoric expressing America's role in the world is deeply deceptive, and that this is just as often self-deception as it is an effort to conceal American strategy from the eye of the hostile Other. Sometimes one can distinguish between the two, and sometimes one can't.

The prewar language of WMDs, threats to global security, links to 9/11 and Al Qaeda was no more than the deliberate deceptions of diplomacy designed to achieve a tactical goal: UN sanction and a wide coalition to share the costs of war. In this it failed, and so was quickly discarded for regime change, for which the quickest justification was that the human rights violations of the Saddam regime were so grave as to demand immediate foreign invasion. None of this needs to be taken very seriously, and it does not appear to have been so taken by the U.S. policymakers themselves. One of the casualties of this process has to be the credibility of the U.S. and British intelligence agencies, shamelessly and cynically manipulated to produce “evidence” to justify ends that had little to do with the ostensible grounds for war.

However, when we turn to deciphering these ultimate goals, U.S. intentions become murkier, not least to themselves. When Bush rabbits on about bringing democracy to the Arabs, he is speaking in familiar Wilsonian language – the uncritical, self-righteous, zealous language of the missionary and the bearer

of the White Man's Burden to raise up the lesser breeds. Behind this is of course the idea of American exceptionalism, the City on the Hill, the beacon to mankind. Nothing new here – it is a long tradition of messianic delusion, but it has always contained a strong measure of self-delusion. Faced with the alien world of Islam and a history that has diverged sharply from western experience for well over a millennium, the simple-minded certainties of an American mission to remake the world in its own image is predictably delusional, bound to come to grief, probably sooner rather than later.

But there is something new added into this heady mix: the unchallenged military power of the world's only superpower. The quick and easy military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq have convinced Bush administration strategists that unilateral action is expeditious and, given their own self-evaluation, virtuous. George Washington warned against entangling foreign alliances – George Bush has demonstrated, to his satisfaction at least, that global hegemony can be achieved without having to become entangled with foreigners.

What is most troubling about this conjuncture of power and purpose is that it is indistinguishable from the maxim that might is right. The Sophist Thrasymachus in *The Republic* made the argument that justice is the interest of the stronger. The Sophist Bush argues that the strong are strong because they are just. Which amounts to the same thing.

Reg Whitaker is professor of political science at the University of Victoria, distinguished research professor emeritus at York University and a member of the Inroads editorial board.



JAN NARVESON BEGAN A SECOND EXCHANGE in early September by calling the list's attention to a *New Yorker* article about North Korea.

From: Jan Narveson

I trust you have all seen the current *New Yorker* (September 8), with its amazing article about North Korea by Philip Gourevitch. It's a must! The story could have been written by Plato (whose classic depiction of tyranny in the later pages of *The Republic* applies in full force).

Few things are more popular than Bush-bashing, but I ask anyone to read this article and honestly deny that North Korea's government is, with no qualifications whatever, evil.

Jan Narveson is professor of philosophy at the University of Waterloo.

From: Reg Whitaker

Coming from a philosopher, I am surprised to find Jan's assertions logically muddled.

That Gourevitch on North Korea could have been written by Plato, “whose classic depiction of tyranny in the later pages of *The Republic* applies in full force,” is odd, to say the least. Plato was hardly damning an existing tyranny, but constructing a city in the mind that he believed would fully embody the ideal of justice. Jan and I, and I suspect, pretty much everyone else, would find an actual city ruled by philosopher kings a grisly nightmare. But Plato did not, and he was not “depicting a tyranny” – he was detailing what he took to be an ideal. Plato contemplating the regime in North

Korea would have a lot of catching up to do, but I am confident that he would not find Kim Jong Il and the Communist Party of North Korea credible stand-ins as “philosopher kings” establishing a Platonic ideal of justice. On all counts, the Plato reference fails to make sense.

More pertinent than classical analogies, and more troubling, is Jan’s assertion that “few things are more popular than Bush-bashing, but I ask anyone to read this article and honestly deny that North Korea’s government is, with no qualifications whatever, evil.” Let’s assume for a moment that it is useful to accept the proposition that the North Korean regime is unqualifiedly “evil.” Why the implied either/or proposition about “Bush-bashing”? If one admits the evil of the Korean regime, does this somehow invalidate criticism of the Bush regime, or, with prejudice, “Bush-bashing”? How are the two connected logically? If the one is unqualifiedly “evil,” is the other therefore unqualifiedly “good”? This looks to me like an elementary error in Logic 101.

Finally, I find the insistence on the attribution of absolute evil to particular regimes or movements a rather pointless enterprise as political analysis. It is fine to make such an attribution as a moralist. But where does it take us in a world where, as Max Weber argued persuasively, people who hold positions of power have to obey an ethic of consequences, rather than an absolute ethic? So what if the North Korean regime is evil? Does that mean the United States should launch a war to change the regime, even if this leads to nuclear attacks and the deaths of even more millions than have starved as a result of the regime’s evil policies? Does it mean that a negotiated settlement with the regime is doing a deal with the devil, and

must be resisted and replaced by more violent options?

The Nazi regime was pretty irredeemably evil, and I agree that World War II was, broadly, a just war. But not everything done to combat the Nazis was just, simply because the cause of defeating the Nazis was just. The firebombing of Dresden and Hamburg was excessive, a brutal act, reckless of the harm to tens of thousands of civilian noncombatants who perished in hideous ways. The evil of the other side in no way sanitizes the evils done by our side.

Finally, the attribution of evil stifles analysis in another way. We have seen this in regard to terrorism. Yes, 9/11 was an evil act. But when “evil” is used to silence analysis of how terrorism arises, and thus how it can best be combated, those who lay claim to be the warriors against terrorism simply get a blank cheque to do as they please, without moral accountability. Those who do evil rarely think of themselves as doing evil, and to counter them we have to understand how they see themselves and how they justify their own actions, and not view them as cartoon-like cardboard villainous figures with black hats. The North Korean regime, however appalling, is the end product of a great deal of history, including a savage war from 1950 to 1953 that killed millions of human beings, most of them undeniably at the hands of “our” side, which had the technology and firepower to wreak more havoc than the demented social engineers of the North Korean Communist Party. Any response to the current regime has to take into account history and context, and the specific consequences of various options. Replacing analysis with assertions of “evil” is worse than useless – it may well be pernicious.



From: Jan Narveson

Reg Whitaker has completely misunderstood my reference to Plato. I was not saying that Plato would hold up Kim Jong Il as a philosopher king, but as a model tyrant. His egomania, his utter contempt for his people and his immersion in private entertainments which he denies to everyone else are just the sorts of things Plato predicts.

As to Bush, my point was a simple one: there is every reason to accept the proposition that North Korea’s government is, without qualification, evil. It has managed to do absolutely no good, and huge harm, to its people, as well as constituting something of a danger to a great many others. Saying this does not mean that we should launch a war on it, although the regime’s behaviour could very possibly make that the only rational option. Nor, of course, am I justifying firebombing Hamburg or Pyongyang. And, finally, I do not see why attributions of evil should silence analysis. Indeed, they invite it: How on earth did this happen? What can we learn that might possibly be

Kim Jong Il’s inferential interest is to hang on to absolute power, as long as possible. Will he lose this by starting an atomic war with somebody? The obvious answer is: Yup. Absolute power doesn’t get you very far if you’re dead.
— Jan Narveson

of use in preventing further such horrors?

Reg seems uninterested in the fact that the “savage war” in Korea was initiated and continued by the North Koreans, against a South Korea that had absolutely

no military intentions against it, nor even any capacity to carry any such out if it had them. It is the history of the place, which Mr. Gourevitch is so enlightening about, that is precisely what confirms the attribution of “evil” to it.

As to what is useful and useless: it is odd to trumpet the view that it doesn’t really matter whether the other guys are good or bad. Maybe that’s what too much political science does to people, Reg.

From: Philip Resnick

North Korea is certainly no model society and we don’t need the New Yorker or Jan to tell us that. But North Korea has its own finger on the nuclear trigger and, as Jimmy Carter was quoted as saying, could bring down hundreds of thousands if not millions of South Koreans, were war to be unleashed on the Korean Peninsula. So what do outside powers like the United States do? Prattle on about the Axis of Evil? Get involved in another neoconservative-inspired way to make the world safe for American-style “de-

mocracy”? Or start recognizing that the world is a complicated place, and that the United States cannot remake it in its own image? You would have thought there were some lessons to be learned from Iraq!

As for Plato on tyranny, it seems to me, if I recall his Seventh Letter correctly, that he himself was prepared to play philosophical counsellor to the tyrant of Syracuse, and after he had fallen out with the tyrant barely escaped back to Athens alive. So I would not rush to invoke Plato in the matter of tyranny – or democracy, for that matter, of which he was no great fan (see Book 8 of *The Republic*). But then, come to think of it, neither are the Bushites, any more than was

It is odd to trumpet the view that it doesn't really matter whether the other guys are good or bad. Maybe that's what too much political science does to people.

— Jan Narveson

Leo Strauss, who was the philosophical guru for so many of the neoconservative intellectuals in their ranks.

Philip Resnick is professor of political science at the University of British Columbia.

From: Jan Narveson

Phil's facts are importantly wrong. *Read the damn article*. The best information is that North Korea now has at most two small atomic bombs – not the megatonnage class that could inflict “hundreds of thousands” of casualties. What will it have in the future, if unchecked? That is obviously the question, but Phil totally ignores it. He treats

the case as “nuclear or not.” That is not the issue. The issue is “minor nuclear now, major nuclear in future maybe.”

Given that that is the correct estimate of the situation – which we have every reason to believe that it is – then the question is, How and why would North Korea use its atomic weapons if it ever did? That is not so easy to answer, apart from one not unimportant thing: that North Korea's dictator – who is, not to mince words, an absolute dictator and an absolute tyrant while he's at it – will use those weapons if and only if he sees it to be in *his own* maximal personal interest to do so. Like all tyrants (see Plato again), Kim Jong Il's inferential interest is to hang on to absolute power, as long as possible. Will he lose this by starting an atomic war with somebody? The obvious answer is: Yup. Absolute power doesn't get you very far if you're dead.

In any case, if North Korea literally starts the next war, as it did the first one, then it is going to get plastered, to be blunt about it, and Kim Jong Il has had it. In order for this to happen, of course, somebody has to be ready to respond in the appropriately massive way, and at present this will be the U.S. It is in Kim Jong Il's great interest to have lots of intellectual pundits around the world, like many on this list, take a head-in-sand anti-American view about everything, in hopes that the mass of world opinion against them will make it likely that the Americans will not, after all, take the steps necessary to enable them to make the massive response I am suggesting would be forthcoming to such an attack.

Now, one way to evaluate the situation is to say, well, if there were no threats from outside, then Kim Jong would dismantle his armies and become a nice guy. Uh, huh.

Read the article and see if you can believe that.

Phil presumably has an easy solution to this. Let's hear it.

As for Plato, apparently it is a mistake to make classical references to this group of readers. Kindly note that I did not “rush” to “invoke Plato” on anything, other than his specific portrait of the tyrant. Assignment: *read* the appropriate parts of *The Republic* on *that* point, okay? I'm sorry to have assumed that most of the participants on this list are up with the better among the students in my intro political philosophy course on such matters.

From: Philip Resnick

I have no instant pocket solution to North Korea's nuclear posturing, but I note that the United States, having walked away from direct negotiations with North Korea some years ago, and having, under the Bush administration, included North Korea in the triad of evil, is not an innocent when it comes to the current crisis. Jimmy Carter, no fan of North Korea, said as much.

I happen to teach *The Republic*, including the relevant passages about tyranny and democracy, and don't need Jan's condescending suggestion that I read them. I don't happen to find Plato's portrait of tyranny as convincing as what Montesquieu has to say about despotism in *The Spirit of the Laws*. And I do think it worth repeating that Plato seemed perfectly happy to sidle up to tyrants, as in the case of Syracuse, when he thought it might help him advance his philosopher-ruler gambit. In other words, much as with Heidegger, one has every reason to challenge the real-life political judgement of philosophers – another reason, to

agree with Reg, why philosophers, and I suspect, the subscribers to this list, should not be given the keys to the kingdom.



FINALLY, JOHN RICHARDS PROVOKED A third exchange in late September by citing a Gallup poll taken in Baghdad.

From: John Richards

I am interested in the reaction of others on the listserv to the Gallup poll released last week.

Gallup went to great lengths, so their spokesmen claim, to select a truly random sample of Baghdad residents. This is, they claim, the first truly representative sampling of Iraqi opinion. The survey was conducted in late August and early September.

Here are some results:

- 62 per cent think ousting Saddam was worth any hardships they have personally endured since the invasion.
- 47 per cent think the country as a whole is worse off than before the invasion, as opposed to 33 per cent who think it in better shape.
- 67 per cent believe Iraq will be in better condition five years from now than before the invasion, as opposed to 8 per cent who expect it to be worse off.
- 61 per cent have a favourable view of the new Iraqi Governing Council.
- 50 per cent think the U.S.-led occupying authority is doing better now than two months ago, as opposed to 14 per cent who think it is doing worse.

This has been a tough summer for Iraqis: first war, followed by sabotage of infra-

structure and guerrilla attacks organized by the remnants of Saddam's army and by Al Qaeda. Despite these hardships and despite an instinctive mistrust by many of American intentions, Baghdad citizens seem to favour the invasion by a ratio of nearly two to one.

Surely this poll is an important piece of evidence in support of U.S. and U.K. insistence before the United Nations that pre-emptive war was here justified. A regime must be truly foul and oppressive for nearly two out of three citizens to prefer what Iraqis have undergone relative to the status quo ante.

The survey was conducted in Baghdad only, a city within the Sunni-majority region of the country. If the survey had been conducted across Iraq – in the Shi'ite south and Kurdish north as well – the pro-invasion percentage would probably be higher than 62 per cent.

Opinion polls are, as the saying goes, snapshots at a point of time. Iraq does not yet possess a stable government enjoying a reasonable measure of legitimacy among its citizens. Far from it. It will require much work by public-spirited Iraqis, by the Americans and – hopefully – by other countries, to achieve what the majority of Iraqis want and deserve.

Disturbing as the ravages of Saddam's army and Al Qaeda are, probably the greater danger facing Iraqis is that Americans may succumb to the lure of isolationist pacifism, a well-meaning but sentimental view of the world that prevails in much of Europe – and Canada. If in 2004 the Democrats adopt an antiwar stance and Americans decide not to “stay the course,” the Iraq invasion may yet become a tangled web of unintended consequences comparable to U.S. intervention in Vietnam or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

From: Frances Abele

I am sure that Gallup went to great lengths, but how could they overcome the problem that those opposed to the U.S. intervention and critical of the foreign military presence in their country are likely to be systematically less willing to have these views recorded “officially” than people with the opposing view? (Why should they trust the person administering the survey?)

And the usual questions about sample surveys: What was the refusal rate? How did they conduct the interviews (telephone, door to door, voters' list)? What, exactly, were the questions? And what was the margin of error? The first and second of my questions gesture toward likely sources of error, given the conditions in Iraq now.

Before we build an analytical house on the survey, in other words, I would like to know more about its factual foundations.

Frances Abele teaches public policy in the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University in Ottawa.

WENDY WATKINS POSTED A LINK TO A *Washington Post* article about the Gallup poll. The article noted some of the poll's other findings: that most Baghdad residents considered Baghdad a more dangerous place to live than before the invasion, and had a generally unfavourable view of the United States and President Bush.

From: Anthony Westell

Putting aside questions about the validity of the poll, I find the results unsurprising. There was never any question about Saddam's horrific regime. Nor in my mind is there any doubt that the world is a better

place without him. But can the happy ends justify the dishonest means? The issue is who decides when a regime can be overthrown. Can the United States overthrow any regime of which it disapproves? Because that argument would be unsustainable, the U.S. and the U.K. had to invent the threat of WMD.

Anthony Westell is a journalist and author living in Toronto.

From: Philip Resnick

As the article in the *Washington Post* that Wendy Watkins cites would suggest, much about the poll that John Richards cites remains highly debatable. This alone makes me wonder why he feels so compelled to embrace its findings and why, for good measure, he feels the need to put the knife into isolationist pacifists with their sentimental views who, according to him, dot the landscape in Europe and in Canada.

I happened to oppose the Iraq war, and John obviously supported it. Most people lined up on one side or the other – nothing very surprising in a political world where differences, especially on matters of profound moment like peace and war, are the norm. The question I want to pose is: Are people prepared to be swayed from their beliefs, when hard evidence seems to point in the opposite direction?



There was never any question about Saddam's horrific regime. But can the happy ends justify the dishonest means? Can the U.S. overthrow any regime of which it disapproves?
– Anthony Westell

For example, when Baghdad fell and the statue of Saddam was toppled, I was prepared to ask myself whether I might not have been wrong after all. It seemed, at first blush, that Saddam's regime had fallen like a house of cards and that Iraqi public opinion might well be rallying in support of the Coalition. Maybe the hawks and the so-called liberal imperialists had really called it right after all. But

before too long, it turned out that the toppling of Saddam's statue with American troops pulling the strings had not been quite the rerun of the fall of the Berlin Wall that pro-Coalition spokesmen were suggesting. And as the weeks and months have gone by, it has been evident, to all but the most jaundiced observer, that the Coalition occupation of Iraq is going poorly, and that opposition is simmering above and below the surface.

Why does John, who is very quick at casting aspersions at “isolationist pacifists with their sentimental views,” not have a look into his own mirror? Was his support for the war entirely justified? Might it just be that this was not the right time or place for the United States and Britain to throw international law to the winds in the pursuit of some ulterior strategic objectives? Ideological blinkers too often prevent us

from confronting hard truths that run against our preconceived positions. I'm afraid that John has just provided us with a vivid example of this.

From: Bob Chodos

Yes, Saddam's regime was nasty, and I'm prepared to acknowledge that Iraq is better off without it, although what will replace it is still by no means clear. I'll even concede that the opinion poll John cites indicates that most Iraqis are, on the whole, pleased with the changes that have so far taken place. But I still question whether that is enough to justify a military intervention. There are lots of countries in the world that have nasty governments – lots of places

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where opinion polls, if they could be taken, would indicate support for military intervention to get rid of their regimes. Should the United States intervene in all those places? The Bush administration itself implicitly recognized that the bar for military intervention needs to be set higher than an oppressive regime or favourable opinion polls by invoking a probably bogus and certainly exaggerated threat against the United States to justify the Iraq war. What, then, is the bar? If the U.S. intervention in Iraq was good and right because Saddam's regime was nasty and oppressive, where else should interventions be taking place? I would be

interested in seeing supporters of the war engage these questions.

Bob Chodos is managing editor of Inroads.

From: John Richards

My reference to a poll indicating that nearly two of three in Baghdad thought the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam was worth any hardship they had suffered prompted some interesting responses from others. Thanks.

The article in the Washington Post adds some additional results from the poll. For example, only 3 in 10 have a favourable view of the Americans. Intuitively, that seems about right. U.S. officials may have sinned by omitting this result from their briefing notes, but does that sin gainsay the point I made in my original posting? I think not. The poll provides evidence that the ancien régime was sufficiently foul that the U.S.-led invasion has improved the lives of Iraqis.

Phil Resnick asks why I feel “so compelled to embrace its findings.” The answer is obvious. If we are to transcend purely ideological debates based on prior conclusions – something he accuses me of indulging in – we need empirical evidence. One relevant piece of evidence, I submit, is evidence on attitudes among those whose country has been invaded. Public opinion is not the only criterion by which to gauge the war, and any poll provides an imperfect answer. Nonetheless, a questionable 62 per cent is better than ideological speculation.

I think Bob Chodos and Tony Westell pose the hardest questions. Bob asks, “There are lots of countries in the world that have nasty governments – lots of places where opinion polls, if they could be taken, would

indicate support for military intervention to get rid of their regimes. Should the United States intervene in all those places?” Or as Tony puts it, “There was never any question about Saddam's horrific regime. Nor in my mind is there any doubt that the world is a better place without him. But can the happy ends justify the dishonest means? The issue is who decides when a regime can be overthrown. Can the United States overthrow any regime of which it disapproves?”

In mid-20th century, an optimism prevailed in what, for want of a better expression, we call the “third world.” European imperialism was crumbling and new sovereign states emerged. At the beginning of the 21st century, that optimism has borne fruit in some places, notably many countries in southeast Asia and in China. However among the countries of the Muslim world from Indonesia to Morocco and among those of sub-Saharan Africa, much of the fruit has been bitter. Many of these countries have governments whose corruption, inefficiency in provision of basic education and health services, resort to internal violence and failure to respect civil liberties are effective barriers to development. Iraq was among the worst, as Tony acknowledges. But, as Bob says, there are many others.

What bothers both of them – and me – is the rules of the game. I do not interpret U.S./U.K. invasion as “dishonest,” although there is a passionate debate about the extent of legitimacy awarded to the invaders by the dozen UN Iraq resolutions since 1991. What is starkly posed by this war is the crisis of confidence in international institutions. No one has good answers at this point to Bob's and Tony's questions about rules to govern the legitimate use of force.

Pax Americana is not the ideal answer, but in several instances over the last decade U.S. unilateralism was a better answer than the impotence manifested by the United Nations. The United States disposed of Milosevic, for example, where the Europeans merely dithered. In case after case, the UN failed to confront truly “nasty governments” – Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Congo, North Korea and, of course, Iraq.

Hopefully, there are some benign answers that allow us to minimize resort to war. The World Bank and other aid agencies are far more attuned to the problems of governance than a decade ago, and there is much interest in tactics to link aid to progress by host governments on matters of governance. The jury is still out, however, as to whether aid tied to governance will provide much of an incentive for corrupt governing elites to change their ways.

Another benign answer is a world trade agreement in which the wealthy countries significantly lower trade barriers against the products of the world's poorest. Failure at Cancun does not suggest rapid progress via this route.

The most depressing of international problems lie in sub-Saharan Africa. The combination of corrupt, ineffective governments and AIDS opens the possibility of a 21st century for Africa analogous to the 14th century in Europe. The most plausible answer to Bob and Tony is that in most African countries with “nasty governments” the United States will not intervene; the United Nations will not intervene; no one will intervene. For the foreseeable future, life expectancy in these countries will decline and economic poverty will persist more or less unchanged. ■