

## OUR VIEW

## Few Friends

Touch virtually any spot on a world map and you're likely to land on country or continent that has a beef with the United States. You can thank President Bush and his our-way-or-the-highway style for foreign policy (foreign diplomacy is an oxymoron for this administration). The Bushies have succeeded in alienating an ever larger swath of the Middle East, whose hatred was stirred by his father's 1991 invasion of Iraq. But hatred of the United States isn't the sole province of the Arab world.

In addition to pissing off scores of Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians and Palenstinians, this administration has soured U.S.-Sino relations, rekindled a feud with North Korea, alienated much of Africa (despite a tacitly sincere commitment to reduce the ravages of HIV/AIDS) and frosted relationships with allies like Germany, France, Russia and America's best friend—Britain.

At no point in history has the world's sole superpower been so lonely, stuck in a conundrum of its own making. By doing everything in their power to reinforce the notion of America as the world's big cheese—and constantly reminding the world of that fact—the Bush administration has either set us up for spectacular success in exporting democracy or a spectacular failure. Right now, with flaring wars and fraying diplomacy, it's the latter.

Why the world hates us is a fashionable topic among think-tank types, foreign policy wonks and journalists. In the Spring 2003 edition of the *International Economy*, Criton Zoakas posited his well-thought out two cents: "Since September 12, 2002, the day President Bush delivered his 'League of Nations irrelevance' speech at the United Nations, the United States has use the Iraq issue as a fulcrum to revamp the way it relates with the rest of the world. The UN has been put on probation, Germany and France into the outer darkness, NATO east of the Oder-Neisse, North Korea in the crosshairs, the al-Saud and Mubarak families on a forced march to perestroika.

"At the same time as the United States reshuffled the world military and political power relations in this way, it also reshuffled world economic relations, a fact largely unnoticed in the excitement of the Iraq debate ... America's critics are facing a far worse problem than a mere 'American empire' that exists only in their imagination. They are facing the possibility of Europe and Japan becoming 'failed states', thus surrendering to the United States the status not of 'sole superpower' but that of 'sole non-failed state.'"

No nation should waste energy trying to be liked by everyone, but every nation deserves respect. And respect is exactly what's lacking in many areas of American foreign relations. Good foreign policy actually starts at home.

When foreigners can watch television and see American inner cities burdened by crime, gangs and violence, when they can read about our arcane, injurious and inequitable hook 'em, and book 'em style of criminal justice, do a Google search on all our maladies (failed war on drugs, high teenage suicide rate, economic caste system, mass murders, pedophilia in the church, the list literally goes on and on), and visit and witness first-hand how this country is divided along millions of lines (race, ethnicity, class, economics, religion, sexual orientation, denomination, disability, urban, rural, liberal, conservative, pro-life, pro-choice and on and on), it erodes America's perceived moral superiority. If this is democracy, some foreigners might say, then we'll keep our anarchy.

Therefore, it's too easy to say we're hated because of our (rapidly eroding) freedoms and (tightly constricted) liberty, because of our (unequally distributed) prosperity and (purportedly representative) democracy. The fuller picture is much more thorny.

We're hated for many reasons. Because of a centuries-long beef between Christian and Muslims. Because American enterprise has pimped the third world of cheap labor and precious resources. Because we've wielded our bully stick of a military too often. Because we tell nations surrounded by enemies not to develop weapons that, we, a nation not circled by rivals, have in abundance. Because our purported compassion isn't always followed by conviction. Because we're not good at making friends.



## Mid-east crisis deepening

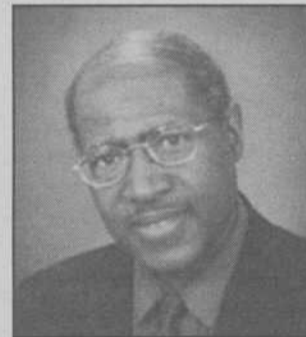
By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

I cannot tell whether these post-Vietnam generations of decision makers occupying the White House are a) ignorant of the lessons of the past, b) caught in the grip of powerful forces out of the political system, c) deluded by the possibilities they see in the unbridled use of American power, or d) all of the above. One thing that I can tell, viewing more than 50 years of violence as the primary method of installing the state of Israel into the region, is that attempting to pacify the Arab countries in the region by force of arms will fail.

The past is an important teacher and causes us to ask whether the American intervention into Iraq has improved or worsened the already existing paroxysm of the Arab-Israeli crisis, the underlying regional problem. This is an important question because it has always been assumed, even in the most optimistic plan — certainly the so-called "Roadmap" — that an important ingredient was the stability of countries in the region and their cooperation in reinforcing aspects of the agreement.

Accordingly, the foreign policy of the Clinton administration attempted to strike positive incentives with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran,



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Iraq, Egypt and other countries in an effort to affect such an outcome. This was one of the primary reasons why its approach to Iraq is not as bellicose.

However, the recent military invasion of Iraq has destabilized that country in its relationship to the primary Middle East problem, in the tension created between its relations with the U.S. and its neighbors. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, he criticized the United States over the Israeli bombing of Lebanon, sensitive to the fact that in the aftermath of its departure, the ruling Iraqi party cannot hope to govern successfully if it alienates Iran and its other Arab neighbors on the fundamental question of Israel's military activities in the region.

So, Israel's massive intervention in Lebanon has rebound consequences for the United States, since it is evidence that Iraq may not be so thoroughly pacified as to

break with its neighbors on the fundamental questions of their own security. As such, it will also complicate the objective of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (speaking for the Bush administration) that "now is the time to create a new Middle East." This sentiment continues the illusion of what can be accomplished with American military power in the region and announces that the administration has not fore sworn the neoconservative plan to create a "New American century" a project to pacify the region militarily. But that will require bringing Iran and Syria into the military equations, which they have been attempting to accomplish.

To be sure, Israel has a right to exist as a sovereign state. The objection to its methods of securing that ex-

istence is the tendency to deploy its superior military power beyond the actual threat that it faces, with the result of wrecking massive havoc and suffering in the wake. This cannot be defended by any principle of self-defense, in a world that has been groping since World War II, toward mutually sustainable actions that require collective security.

Israel's unilateral actions based on its autonomous perceptions of the threat always catch states in the global system — including the United States — in an unsupportable posture of being rationalized after the fact. This method cannot be sustained, as it not only complicates American flexibility and expends material and political resources, but causes such incredible human casualties of innocent

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NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER  
**LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice**  
GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.  
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.  
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
Telephone (702) 380-8100  
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Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association  
and West Coast Black Publishers Association