

Graffiti for intellectuals



SIMON SAYS



DECEMBER
24
2007



By Si Frumkin

STRANGELY IGNORED CONSEQUENCE

The recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's decision to cancel its plans to build a nuclear device has resulted in a storm of controversy. Those who question the report include spokesmen for Israeli intelligence, scores of political and foreign affairs commentators, Iranian domestic and foreign opposition groups and those of us who have been taught by historical precedent that evil men often openly share their evil intentions with the world and are not believed until it is too late.

The opponents of President Bush – with very few exceptions – are celebrating the NIE. They see it as a justification of their constant characterization of Bush as a war monger, an imperialist, a puppet of evil forces that are moved by greed and disregard for decency.

They see the NIE as forcing the administration to recognize that its Iran policy is stubbornly based on false premises that have now been exposed as groundless.



It is ironic that the conclusions reached by U.S. and international intelligence organizations on Saddam's possession of WMDs have been attacked by Bush's critics as phony and, in some cases, intentionally inaccurate and that the president has been labeled as a liar for agreeing with their conclusions, but that now the same critics regard the more recent NIE estimates, collected by the same organizations, as reliable guidelines for our foreign policy.

In this debate I am inclined to believe Israeli intelligence and my own common sense. I agree with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak who said on December 4, "It looks like Iran stopped its program to create an atom bomb in 2003 for a certain time, but as far as we know, it has since probably renewed it." It seems to me that if Iran had really relinquished its nuclear weapon program then it would have been willing to allow external inspectors to verify this and so avoid

all of its current political and economic problems that have been created. On the other hand, maybe rational thinking cannot be expected from psychopathic personalities like Saddam Hussein, Ahmadinejad and Kim Jung II. After all, Iraq - like Iran - also banned U.N. inspectors from investigating its nuclear and WMD projects even though they apparently they didn't really exist.

I readily admit that I not in a position to take a position in this debate – time and much more information will show whether the nuclear weapon program was indeed stopped in 2003, and whether it was or wasn't resumed in the 4 years that followed. I am, however, puzzled by the disregard in the discussion of a very significant element: the timing of Iran's alleged decision!

In April 2003, U.S. and British forces launched their ground attack in Iraq and within a few weeks the war was over. Saddam's threats of a "Mother of all Battles" and authoritative predictions international military experts of thousands of allied casualties came to naught. At the time, no one assumed that for years to come, the U.S. still had to face resistance by fanatical factions. The universal expectation was of a peaceful, orderly and tranquil occupation similar to those of Germany and Japan. What was obvious for all to see was that U.S. was indeed a military superpower eminently capable of dealing with its enemies. It had conquered Iraq within a matter of weeks just as it had

defeated the Taliban in Afghanistan – where Russia was stuck for 5 years and from which it had to embarrassingly withdraw. Commentators had a field day speculating about the possibility of attacks elsewhere – Syria, Iran and Libya were among those mentioned – and countries that had not joined the original incursion hurried to send symbolic military units to join the Coalition.

North Korea was giving timid signals of seeking accommodation, several former Soviet republics began flirting with America and Libya openly renounced its plans to build nuclear weapons and opened its facilities to inspections. It is safe to say that in 2003 the countries that had offended America were getting very nervous. And this is precisely the time when Iran allegedly had a change

of heart and made the decision to abandon its nuclear ambitions. We do not know when this became known to the West and whether the leak was a result of superb espionage or an Iranian policy decision to make it known.

The fact is that if the NIE is accurate, that decision was the result of American victory in Iraq and is yet another triumph

of the usually denigrated Bush's foreign policy. The decision to accommodate and placate the U.S. in 2003 had to be a result of the war. We do not know if the decision was reversed during the 4 years that followed and the program was resumed, or if there was no halt at all, but the timing should be an important factor in discussing and evaluating our reaction to the NIE.. ★



SADDAM'S DAMN DAM

by Daniel Pipes, J'lem Post, 11/ 7/ 2007

The surge of U.S. troops in Baghdad is succeeding but deeper structural problems continue to plague the American presence in Iraq. The country's largest dam, 40 kilometers northwest of Mosul, near the Turkish border, spectacularly symbolizes this predicament.

Just after occupying Iraq in April 2003, a report found that Mosul Dam's foundation was "leaking like a sieve and ready to collapse."

A more recent, still-classified report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concludes that "The dam is judged to have an unacceptable annual failure probability." More explicitly, the corps finds the current

parts of Baghdad (population 7 million) would come under 5 meters of water.

The Army Corps estimates the flood would kill a half-million people immediately, while the after-shocks, such as power outage and drought, would kill many more. (Not coincidentally, Iraq was the site of Noah's Ark.) It would likely be the largest human-induced single loss of life in history.

Many Iraqi officials, unfortunately, exhibit a cavalier attitude toward these , further exacerbating the problem. They reject as unnecessary, for example, the Army Corps recommendation to build a second dam downstream as a back-up.

Yet, were a catastrophic failure to take place, who would be blamed for the unprecedented loss of life? Americans, of course. And understandably so, for the Bush administration took upon itself the overhauling of Iraqi life, including the Mosul Dam. Specifically, the U.S. taxpayer funded attempts to shore it up by with improved grouting a cost of US\$27 million. The Special Inspector General for Iraq

Reconstruction has, however, judged these efforts mis-managed and ineffective.

Massive Iraqi deaths would surely spawn conspiracy theories about American malevolence, inspiring epic rage against the U.S. government and creating a deep sense of guilt among Americans themselves. Yet, this blame and remorse would be entirely misplaced.

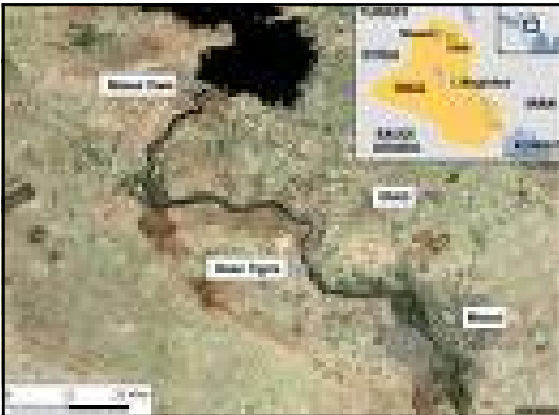
Saudi and other Arab aid – not U.S. monies – funded what was originally called the "Saddam Dam." A German-Italian consortium headed by *Hochtief Aktiengesellschaft* built the US\$1.5 billion structure in 1981-84. It had a primarily political goal, to bolster Saddam Hussein's regime during the Iran-Iraq war. The dam, in other words, had nothing to do with the United States – not in funding, construction, or purpose. Nonetheless, misbegotten American policy has made

it an American headache.

Saudi and other Arab aid – not U.S. monies – funded what was originally called the "Saddam Dam." A German-Italian consortium headed by Hochtief Aktiengesellschaft built the US\$1.5 billion structure in 1981-84.

Mosul's dam replicates a myriad of lesser problems in Iraqi life that have landed in the lap of Americans (and, to a much lesser extent, their coalition partners), such as provisioning fuel and electricity, working schools and hospitals, a fair political and legal system, and an environment secure from terrorism.

Since April 2003, I have argued that this shouldering of responsibility for Iraq's domestic life has harmed both Americans and Iraqis. It yokes Americans with unwanted and unnecessary loss of life, financial obligations, and political burdens. For Iraqis, as the dam example suggests, it encourages an irresponsibility with potentially ruinous



probability of failure to be "exceptionally high." A senior aid worker calls the dam "a time bomb waiting to go off."

Mosul Dam, formerly known as Saddam Dam (Arabic: Sadd Saddam) is in danger of collapse. That's because the dam was built on unstable bedrock of gypsum that requires a constant infusion of grout to prevent the foundation from eroding and the giant earthen wall from collapsing. Over the years, engineers have pumped into

Massive Iraqi deaths would surely spawn conspiracy theories about American malevolence,

the foundation more than 50,000 tons of a bentonite, cement, water, and air mixture. As the Washington Post explains, "Twenty-four clanging machines churn 24 hours a day to pump grout deep into the dam's base. And sinkholes form periodically as the gypsum dissolves beneath the structure."

Despite these efforts, the dam's condition continues to deteriorate, raising the prospect of its complete collapse. Were this to happen with a reservoir full of water, predicts Engineering News-Record, "as much as 12.5 billion cubic meters of water pooled behind the 3.2-km-long earth-filled impoundment [would go] thundering down the Tigris River Valley toward Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. The wave behind the 110-meter-high crest would take about two hours to reach the city of 1.7 million." In addition,



Mosul Dam, formerly known as Saddam Dam (Arabic: "Sadd Saddam") is in danger of collapse.

consequences.

A change of course is needed, and quickly. The Bush administration needs to hand back responsibility for Iraq's ills, including and especially the Mosul Dam. More broadly, it should abandon the deeply flawed and upside-down approach of "war as social work", whereby U.S. military efforts are judged primarily by the benefits they bring to the defeated enemy, rather than to Americans. ★

The U.S. intelligence report that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program four years ago hit the Israeli government like a bolt from the blue. The immediate implication is that the United States is not going to use military force against the Iranian nuclear industry. The line put forth by the Olmert government has collapsed, and Israel, which had hoped that Bush would take out Iran before he leaves the White House, is now alone. For the last two years, Olmert has been repeating a single mantra: Iran may be threatening to destroy Israel, but it is a threat to the whole world, and Israel should not play a major role in the fight against Iran; we should let the world do the work.

But the world does not hurry to fight for Jews. The Allies did not fight the Germans because of Auschwitz, and the British and



French did not fight Egypt in 1956 because it had closed the Suez Canal to Israeli

ships. The United States did not fight in Iraq because Israel was afraid of Saddam Hussein. The United States might have fought Iran were Israel a strategic asset in the Middle East that needs to be defended, or in order to prevent a regional conflagration, if not a world war. These scenarios have been ruled out by Olmert's foolish policies. Israel has ceased to be an asset and has become a burden

following its failure in the Lebanese War, when it was faced with a few hundred Hizbullah terrorists, and following its refusal to an American request to attack Syria. And because Israel argued from



every possible platform that Iran is the world's problem, the world will now decide how it wants to deal with this problem.

Had Israel announced that it would attack Iran and destroy its nuclear industry at any price and by whatever means necessary if by a certain date the free world had not done so, then a U.S. attack might have been a possibility, as the United States sought to avoid a regional war that might follow an Israeli attack. But after the Lebanese War, Israel is no longer a useful player in the war against the evil axis, and

therefore Israel may end up being made useful in a different way; for instance, Israel may end up being an excuse, a legitimate reason to destroy Iran after Iran uses its nuclear arms against Israel. Until that time, Israel is the currency being used by the West to placate the Moslems for the catastrophe in Iraq. Olmert went to Annapolis to surrender and shortly afterwards President Bush betrayed him with the publication of the intelligence assessment.

Recently a contest was held in England to determine the joke most typical of British humor. The following story won: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson goes on a camping trip. After a good dinner and a bottle of wine, they retire for the night, and go to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes wakes up and nudges his faithful friend.

"Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

"I see millions and millions of stars, Holmes," replies Watson.

"And what do you deduce from that?"

Watson ponders for a minute.

"Well, astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of

planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three.

"Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are a small and insignificant part of the universe. What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes is silent for a moment. "Watson, you idiot!" he says. "Someone has stolen our tent!"

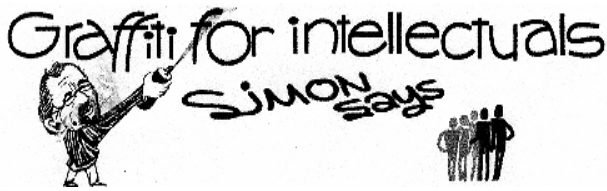
This is what has happened to us. We have been so mired in analytical dialectics and reasoning that we have neglected to see the obvious. We have been so busy trying to convince the world that Iran is threatening the entire West, that we have neglected to prepare for the more reasonable possibility that we will have to fight alone. Olmert has been so busy trying to prove that he did not fail in the Lebanese War that he has ignored what the



whole world knows: that Israel was defeated and that this disaster caused a drop in Israel's stature and value on the world exchange. Ehud Barak is so busy threatening to begin a large military operation in Gaza that he has neglected to begin it, though such a move must precede any attack in Iran. Lieberman is so busy issuing threats that he has fallen asleep at his strategic post and not noticed that we were left alone. And Tzippi Livni is so busy obsessing about withdrawing from Judea and Samaria and thinking about her beautiful friendship with Condoleeza Rice that she has not noticed the poison Rice has prepared for Israel – the poisonous intelligence report claiming that Israel's fears of Iran are mere paranoia. All of the above



are busy with their own business and do not see the simple, obvious picture: In 2009, Iran will have nuclear weapons and our tent is gone. Israel will have to fight alone; but not with its current leadership. ☆



DECEMBER
24
2007

NON- PROFIT ORG.
U.S.POSTAGE
PAID
STUDIO CITY CA
PERMIT NO.62

Southern California Council for Soviet Jews publication
(affiliate member of Union of Councils for Soviet Jews)
P.O.Box 1542, Studio City, CA 91614 (web: www.sifrumkin.com)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Fax: 818-766-4321
Phone: 818-769-8862
Esfrumkin@roadrunner.com

www.sifrumkin.com

A SECOND LOOK AT ROMNEY By Mona Charen, 12/14/2007

Pretty much every election year since I can remember, a complaint has arisen that goes like this: "Why are we stuck with these awful choices? In this vast country of highly successful individuals, why don't any of the best people run for president?"

Some years evoked more howls than others, and admittedly, 1976 really did present two underperformers, as did 1996. So let's pause to notice the fact that this year we have some exemplary choices.

Fred Thompson is an excellent man who is running a refreshingly substantive campaign. John McCain has demonstrated not just personal courage (which is admirable enough) but the courage of his convictions. And Rudy Giuliani achieved a seemingly impossible task in transforming America's largest city.

But no one running is more impressive than Mitt Romney. It was his speech on religion in American life that caused me to take another look at him. Until then, I confess that I saw him as a sort of robo-candidate: smooth, articulate, but perhaps a little opportunistic and possibly even insincere. The religion speech cast a new light on him.

The question as to whether someone's religious convictions are a fit subject for public scrutiny is not as simple as it sounds. It's too pat to say, "There should be no religious test for public office and there's the end of it." If a candidate were, say, a fundamentalist Mormon like Warren Jeffs, or a Scientologist, that would be an obstacle. But the mainstream Mormon Church has enough of a track record in producing excellent Americans that the particularities of its doctrine are by now a matter of purely scholarly interest. No one thought to raise objections to Mormonism when Mo Udall ran for president, nor

even when Mitt's father, George, made a bid. The Senate majority leader is a Mormon and this fact causes not a flicker of interest on the part of his colleagues. Besides, Mitt Romney served as governor of Massachusetts. If anyone felt Joseph Smith's brooding presence during that time, they haven't mentioned it.



What Romney's religion speech demonstrated was not so much his devotion to his own faith (though he declined to run away from it) as his understanding and embrace of America's civic religion. In his telling, that civic religion amounts to a commitment to religious liberty as well as to broadly shared religious values. "It is important to recognize," he said, "that while differences in theology exist between the churches in America, we share a common creed of moral convictions. And where the affairs of our nation are concerned, it's usually a sound rule to focus on the latter -- on the great moral principles that urge us all on a common course. Whether it was the cause of abolition, or civil rights, or the right to life itself, no movement of conscience can succeed in America that cannot speak to the convictions of religious people." Romney went on to paint America as the golden mean between the empty cathedrals of Europe and the violent jihadists of the Islamic world. It was a masterful performance.

But then Romney has been masterful in everything he has attempted. It is not insignificant

that this cum laude JD/MBA graduate of Harvard guided Bain Capital to become a hugely successful private equity investment firm and rescued Bain & Company from financial collapse. Romney was brought in to save the 2002 Winter Olympics when the games were mired in scandal and \$379 million in debt. Romney was able to turn the situation around completely so that the games actually turned a \$100 million profit instead. (He also gave back his salary.) That's not slick, that's substance.

When Mitt Romney took office as governor of Massachusetts, the state had a \$1.2 billion deficit. Four years later it was in surplus. He boasts that fourth and eighth graders in Massachusetts achieved the highest scores in the nation in reading and math, though they were doing so before he became governor as well. But his program of assessment, merit pay for good teachers, English immersion and a focus on math and science may have helped keep them at the top.

It is difficult to find any significant weakness in Romney. He is refreshingly articulate, exceedingly well prepared and self-disciplined, clearly an excellent manager with both private and government experience, happily married with a large, supportive family, and well within the mainstream of conservatism on every major issue. His nomination would not divide the base.

He is just the sort of candidate people complain that they never get. ●