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## Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

University of Massachusetts Boston, [padraig.omalley@umb.edu](mailto:padraig.omalley@umb.edu)

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# Editor's Note

*Padraig O'Malley*

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This issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* was conceived during the hot, slow days of early August when Saddam Hussein's marauding armies swallowed Kuwait. Contributors made revisions to their manuscripts while President George Bush committed the United States to protecting Saudi Arabia's oligarchy (read "oil for the West"), requiring a military buildup in the harsh sands that was larger than anything of its kind since World War II. The admen in the Pentagon came up with the catchy little logo Desert Shield. Repeated calls by the coalition of nations, led by the United States, for Saddam Hussein's withdrawal from Kuwait went unheeded. Comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq followed, and in November, after the congressional elections, President Bush made war all but inevitable when he doubled the United States' land forces from 200,000 to 400,000. When the machinery of war is in place, it creates its own dynamic; the sheer size of the machinery becomes a catalyst for its use. We were, in the words of one observer, making the world safe for feudalism.

As the country prepared for war, manuscripts were almost ready for copyediting. We will leave it to the historians to place the war in its proper context. Suffice it to say that President Bush's decision-making process, at first slowly and then with gathering momentum, closed off both his and Hussein's options. Negotiations, the saving of face, the elaborate rituals of subterfuge, the subtle nuances in communiqués that nations have used since time immemorial to mitigate the ferocious appetites of their self-interests, were not merely abandoned, they were contemptuously dismissed. It was not a time for the faint of heart. We were reminded, ad nauseam, of Karl von Clausewitz's adage that war is merely the continuation of politics by other means, an observation that loses much of its cogency when the weaponry of war — with its capacity to deliver awesome levels of annihilation — changes the meaning of war itself. But this was macho stuff, Bush versus Hussein, the perceived wimp versus the acknowledged bully, Good versus Evil. For George Bush it was a time to take full measure of himself, an occasion, he hoped, to join the elite company of the few presidents who, in his own words, "[were] destined to change the course of history." He, too, would embrace his test by fire, reach for the sanctuary of "a splendid misery." On this reading of the lips there would be no stuttering about-face.

When war finally came, shortly after the last corrections to manuscripts were made in early January, it was packaged as entertainment. Desert Shield became Desert Storm — a

*Padraig O'Malley is a senior associate at the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, University of Massachusetts at Boston.*

video carnival, a midseason reshuffling of the TV schedule, an occasion for communications technology to do its thing, a drama brought to the public through the medium of sports analogies, demanding the concentration the average sports event requires. We had instant replays, a you-are-here camaraderie. We followed the paths of the Scuds, cheered for the Patriots, and kept score. We had live living room entertainment that robbed war of its inhumanity because it robbed it of its brutality. Ironically, we saw less violence and death during television's coverage of the Gulf War than we would have seen on the network programs it displaced.

Smart bombs, cruise missiles, M-1A1 tanks, LAV-25 armored cars, MLRS rocket launchers, Apache attack helicopters, Tomahawk missiles, A-6E attack planes, F-117 Stealth bombers, F-111s, F-15s, F-16s, B-52s, AWACs, Phoenix missiles, TOW missiles — their incredible technological capabilities enthralled us. After a while, the saturation bombing of Iraq threatened to become boring when repetition robbed it of meaning; ratings began to fall, the audience became impatient. The sheer numbers of sorties flown — up to 3,000 a day for 44 days — were beyond comprehension, and we bought willingly into the new conventional wisdom that these weapons of destruction had guidance systems so sophisticated and so precise in their targeting that they could discriminate between military and nonmilitary sites, that civilian casualties were accidental and, given the massive scale of the air campaign, almost incidental. The biggest threat to the air campaign, we were told, came from the scope of its enormous deployment: at any given time there were more bombers, reconnaissance planes, special-duty craft (as in football, the new weapons have special teams for special purposes) stacked over Iraq waiting to accomplish their missions than are stacked over New York and Los Angeles airports at peak flying hours.

But what gave this war its special appeal and the seal of public approval was the virtual absence of U.S. casualties. A bomber here or there was shot down; but more personnel were killed by accident or friendly fire than by the enemy. No body bags (or should I use the euphemistic “human-remains pouch”?). No grisly footage of death and dying, of shattered limbs and lost lives; no suffering here; only sanitized, optimistic gung-ho and bloodless belligerence received the stamp of the censor's approval, and when the ferocity of the competition for rating points exceeded the ferocity of the real war, anchors and TV reporters became cheerleaders — getting access to the top brass got in the way of getting at the truth.

By the time we went to typesetting, the war was over. Yes, Saddam was run out of Kuwait and the emir is back, looking for enemies to punish, the growing calls for the rudiments of democracy in his country (and when I say “his country,” it means exactly that) swelling the ranks of the enemy. Yes, Saudi Arabia is secure, and one day Saudi women may yet be allowed to drive. Yes, the United States is welcoming home its boys and girls, its heroes and heart throbs, who were in the desert, they said, because they had a job to do, because they were proud to be American.

And yes, the truth is beginning to surface. Perhaps 100,000 Iraqi soldiers died, as many more Iraqi civilians were made homeless, and thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed. Meanwhile, a United Nations mission recently returned from Iraq described conditions there as being “near apocalyptic.” Allied bombing has reduced Iraq to what the mission termed “a preindustrial age.” All power-generating facilities and plants that run on electricity have been crippled. There are no effective communications or transportation services. The breakdown of water-purification and sewage-treatment facilities has created

immediate threats of cholera. In Baghdad, water supplies are at less than 10 percent of prewar levels. Food supplies, we are told, are “critically low, and prices subject to hyperinflation.” We have demolished Iraq’s infrastructure, creating biological hazards every bit as lethal as the biological weapons with which Saddam had promised to devastate us. The UN report warns of epidemic disease and famine if massive life-supporting needs are not met.

While we were proofreading, civil war devastated Iraq. Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south rose up against Hussein, doing what Bush himself had incited them to do when he urged Iraqis to rid themselves of the tyrant. When they tried to do just that, the United States pulled back. Moral outrage at Hussein’s atrocities was replaced with concern about the “Lebanonization” of Iraq, the fragmentation of the country into ethnic and religious enclaves that would add to regional instability and compromise geopolitical abstractions. At last Saddam fought “the mother of all battles,” but it was against his own people; at last he unleashed a biological nightmare, bringing instant death to thousands of Kurds and Shiites. The United States stood aside, not quite sure what it wanted: an insurrection that would topple Saddam, but not so strong that it would lead to the dismemberment of Iraq. The administration’s silence was a subterfuge of complicity encouraging Saddam to continue his mad slaughter. Where now the president who sent a million and a half troops into the desert to “stand up for what’s right and condemn what’s wrong”?

As we go to press, up to 1.3 million Kurdish refugees who fled their homes in the face of Saddam’s pogrom cling to the barren mountain terrain on Turkey’s borders. Without food, shelter, medicine, clothing, drinking water, they cry out in bewilderment and beg for help. And, of course, the help will come — enough, that is, to expiate the guilt we feel for abandoning them (for are we not a good and compassionate people?), but not enough to address their desperate needs and just demands. Rather than hundreds of thousands dying of disease, cold, and starvation, only tens of thousands will die. But what the hell.

*Newsweek* quotes a senior state department official: “Probably sounds callous,” he says, “but we did the best thing not to get near the Kurdish revolt. They’re nice people and they’re cute, but they’re really just bandits. They spend as much time fighting each other as central authority. They’re losers.” They are, in other words, trash for the garbage heap of history. I mean, let’s face it, when you’re number one you always have to keep your eye on the big picture, the geo-stuff.

And who is there to say “My God, what have we done?”

In “Touched by Fire: Readings in Times of War,” Shaun O’Connell draws us into the eerie atmosphere that pulled this country into itself in the late fall and early winter, when thoughts of war provoked hard questions and when, for a time, doubt became the stuff of eloquence. But in six months, all that is behind us, and it is the new fashion to berate as appeasers the men and women in Congress who pleaded for sanctions to be given more time. Even honor is a devalued currency with a floating exchange rate in the marketplace of partisan politics. And no one yet questions what appears to be a willful negligence: a strategy for winning the war but none for dealing with its aftermath. Must the emperor always wear no clothes?

So on to publication. Perhaps in the meantime the emperor should find himself a tailor.

In “Public Benefit and Private Interest: Chronicles of the Hyde Park Paper Mill,” Jeffrey Lindenthal details the plant’s first protracted shutdown and the efforts to reopen it. “The public policy implications of this case,” he writes, “concern the Hyde Park community,



the city of Boston, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Given the mill's long-term ability to provide stable jobs, a permanent plant closing would have major economic repercussions.'

Efforts to reopen the mill also focused attention on environmental policy issues relating to the state's solid waste disposal crisis. Besides sharply delineating the difference between private interests and the public good, Lindenthal's article focuses attention on the lack of coordination among the city's economic strategies, promulgated by the Economic Development Industry Corporation, and the state's economic and environmental policies. He also raises important policy questions regarding the role of unions in an era of deindustrialization, especially in the state's older cities and towns, and the responsibilities of corporations to the communities that are home to their employees.

Even with its "happy ending," the Hyde Park saga leaves room for blame on all sides. The mill closed in December 1987, reopened in April 1989, closed in June 1989, and reopened yet again in September 1990. In the end, the plant reopening was fortuitous rather than the culmination of the efforts of a coherent public policy: Lindenthal's article is a case study of missed opportunities, a public policy agenda that was long on rhetoric and short on specifics, and of how the external economies of production and consumption continue to be subordinated to the more immediate economies of the marketplace.

This issue contains two articles on public higher education, both particularly timely in light of the further draconian cuts in state expenditures in this area. In "Social Investment in Massachusetts Public Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis," Clyde Barrow contrasts state expenditures on public higher education in Massachusetts with such expenditures in sixteen other states that are Massachusetts's major competitors in such fields as high technology, finance, biomedical research, ocean resource development, and manufacturing. His data indicates that, in almost every category, investment in public higher education in Massachusetts ranks below average when compared to national standards, and generally ranks near the bottom when compared to its major competitors. Indeed, until 1988 nearly every revenue stream available to the commonwealth's public higher institutions showed a below-average performance. Moreover, increases in tuition and fees per full-time equivalent student — a systemwide average increase of 50 percent from fiscal years 1988 to 1991 — put the state's colleges and universities among the most expensive public schools in the United States and leave UMass/Amherst and UMass/Boston among the "top 5 percent in terms of student cost at public institutions in the nation." When you factor in the ruinous cutbacks in state appropriations for public higher education that have occurred in the last three years, the below-average performance becomes a mediocre one.

Other studies indicate that, on average, at the national level, every dollar invested in higher education results directly in the addition of nineteen dollars on the lifetime personal income of each college or university graduate. Massachusetts's current public higher education policies, therefore, are egregiously shortsighted and highly detrimental to the future of the state's economic well-being — something which policymakers either ignore cavalierly, pointing to the Harvards, the MITs, and the BUs, or simply do not understand. Alone among the industrial states, Massachusetts has failed to recognize that public higher education is one of the keys to continued economic strength. Surveys increasingly find that for postindustrial economies it is not *tax rates* but *tax expenditures* on social capital, especially higher education and physical infrastructure, that are the important factors in sustaining a favorable business climate.

Throughout the nation in 1988, state appropriations to public higher education averaged

slightly more than 8 percent of total state and local expenditures. By contrast Massachusetts appropriations to public higher education accounted for only 5.5 percent of total state and local expenditures. This means that Massachusetts ranked forty-eighth in the country with respect to the budget priority it assigned to public higher education. Since the last reporting of nationwide data, appropriations to the commonwealth's colleges and universities have fallen to 4 percent of total state and local expenditures — nearly one-half the national average — meaning that Massachusetts now assigns a lower priority to public higher education than any state in the nation. Given the current political climate in Massachusetts, this is unlikely to change. For a state that proudly pointed to higher education as the wellspring for the pioneer high-tech industries that were at the vanguard of the “miracle” years, current public higher education policy is at best irresponsible and at worst self-destructive.

The second education piece is John Whittaker's “The Impact of the State Constitutional Convention of 1917 on State Aid to Higher Education in Massachusetts.” An amendment adopted at this convention put an end to a long period of direct state appropriations to support the development of private colleges. After 1917, only educational institutions that were agencies of state government received state support. The amendment intended to resolve the intense debate over the use of public funding for private institutions — which were perceived by the emerging Catholic community as being “Protestant” colleges — and the absence of such funding for strictly Catholic private schools.

The amendment indirectly laid the groundwork for later expansion of the state system of public higher education. Ironically, in view of the situation in which we find ourselves today, the state provided substantial support and encouragement, as early as the 1890s, for the further development of industry through direct grants to those institutions of higher education within the state, including MIT, which were conducting research and instruction in science and technology. In the 1980s, however, among the seventeen states cited in Barrow's study, “every state except Alabama and Massachusetts has at least one public university classified Research University I (the top ranking) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.”

Randy Albelda's aptly titled “Tax to Grind” raises important questions on the issue of unequal personal taxation of single-parent families in Massachusetts. Current personal exemptions for single-parent heads of household result in a higher tax burden for their families. Moreover, heads of households, defined as single filers, must apply a lower no-tax threshold than do joint filers, even though single-parent head-of-household families also are composed of two or more persons. Albelda suggests reforms to correct these inequities, but we should not hold our breath — in Massachusetts the political will to alleviate social inequities is less than crusading.

In “Regional Planning and Land Use Localism: Can They Coexist?” Scott Bollens investigates the interplay between regionalism and parochialism with respect to regional and state land use planning programs. His survey of over 300 Cape Cod residents concerning the creation of a regional land use regulatory commission leads him to conclude that “citizen acceptance of a regional planning strategy. . . will be attractive in ‘special areas’ with complex environmental and management qualities.” Such “special areas” have core characteristics: “the inability of existing local authorities to achieve their goals for the area, resulting in frequent management conflicts between jurisdictions; lack of an overall framework for the region as a whole; [and] user conflict between preservation and development because of the area's high resource value.”

Finally, Leonard Bushkoff's “The Father/Mother” vignette, chronicling his move from

“a smug Detroit suburb to mid-Cambridge shabbiness” as “the troubled sixties turned into the confusing seventies.” The counterculture for most of us now exists only in the form of dim memories of a time when the promise of America lost its spiritual luster. That generation is now shaping our future, still groping for a beacon that will renew the promise, that would truly herald the progress of “a kinder, gentler nation.”

And that, in the end, may be the real tragedy of the Gulf War. We were not kind or gentle, and we may not even have known what we were doing. “War,” wrote Thomas Mann, “is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.”