

Editors' Note

“Unipolarity and U.S.

hegemony will be around for some time,” declares Barry Posen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Exactly how long will likely depend on the grand strategy the United States adopts. Posen maintains that U.S. military command of the commons—land, sea, air, and space—has enabled the Bush administration to pursue a strategy of “primacy.” Posen argues, however, that despite its overwhelming military superiority, the United States will continue to encounter military resistance in so-called contested zones such as Somalia in 1993 and Kosovo in 1999. He contends that the inability of the United States to establish command in these areas suggests that, in the near to medium term, Washington may have greater success in meeting its foreign policy goals by adopting instead a strategy of selective engagement.

Daniel Byman of Georgetown University tackles the increasingly salient issue of establishing democracy in Iraq following the U.S. ouster of Saddam Hussein. Byman explores some of the daunting challenges ahead, among them: creating the conditions necessary for the transition from dictatorship to democracy, addressing the deep divisions among Iraq’s various ethnic and religious communities, and preventing countries such as Iran and Turkey from meddling in Iraq’s internal affairs. Byman is hopeful about the prospects for introducing democracy to the Iraqi people, provided the United States and other occupying powers are able to stabilize the country and guarantee its security—tasks that will require the continued presence of approximately 100,000 high-quality U.S. and coalition troops in the country for years to come.

Can international humanitarian assistance organizations that provide refugee relief truly claim to be impartial? What happens when such agencies—knowingly or not—offer succor to militants dispersed among refugee populations receiving humanitarian aid, becoming in effect “tools of conflict”? Sarah Kenyon Lischer of Sweet Briar College argues that although humanitarian relief may be neutral in intent, “the effects of the humanitarian actions always have political, and sometimes even military, repercussions.” Lischer discusses the political conditions that increase the likelihood that humanitarian aid will exacerbate conflict. She proposes ways in which relief organizations can leverage their resources to influence the actions of the various parties, cautioning, however, that in some cases “the least harmful outcome” might be the total withdrawal of humanitarian assistance.

Richard Eichenberg of Tufts University examines the role of gender in shaping attitudes toward the U.S. use of military force. Eichenberg suggests that two factors explain why men and women have different opinions about military action: the reasons

given for the use of force and the likely consequences of such action. Eichenberg finds that although women are generally less likely to support overt military operations—and tend to be more sensitive to the prospect of civilian and military casualties—“[they] are not uniformly pacifist, nor are men uniformly bellicose.” Eichenberg considers some of the implications of his research for two issues currently on the national political agenda: the war in Iraq and the war on terror.

The issue closes with an exchange between Michael Desch of the University of Kentucky and several critics of his article “Democracy and Victory: Why Regime Type Hardly Matters,” published in the fall 2002 issue of IS. In the first of three responses, Ajin Choi of Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea, presents evidence to counter Desch’s claim that democratic allies are no more likely than nondemocratic allies to be victorious in wartime. Choi attributes the greater effectiveness of alliances comprised of democracies to two factors: the role of veto players and the transparency of democracies’ political institutions. David Lake of the University of California, San Diego, contends that Desch’s research design does not provide a fair test of the relationship between democracy and success in war. Dan Reiter of Emory University and Allan Stam of Dartmouth College argue that Desch’s decision to slash the number of cases under examination skews his results. Desch replies to their critiques.

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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