

### Viewpoint EILEEN E. PADBERG



## IRAQ QUANDARY

The president's war is very much our own.

It is hard not to want to write about the war that is going on in Iraq. Everyone has weighed in at some level. I have mixed feelings about "war" in general, as do most women that I know – whether they are Republicans or Democrats. That's not to say that we don't support the president or our troops. We do.

As I am forced to dwell on the war in Iraq, here are my thoughts:

I fear that making it possible for Americans to view the war in all its "glory" – from the movement of the troops to retired generals explaining the strategies of the troop movements (who would have guessed there were so many retired generals?) – is not a good thing. Our troops are trained for the emotional difficulties of war, we citizens are not. I fear that providing television coverage 24/7 allows the war to become entertainment and as the war drags on, it will become another reality TV series – only very real and very deadly.

I applauded Colin Powell as he prodded the members of the United Nations to live up to their

responsibilities. The United States acted in good faith, asking the United Nations to force Saddam Hussein to comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding that Iraq disarm. "Lay down your weapons of mass destruction or we will do it for you" was our collective message. Therein started a power struggle and what the president calls "hide and seek." But, alas, the United Nations failed in its own leadership test; after failing time and time again, the United Nations wanted to give Saddam just one more chance. Would they be so patient with a child's misbehavior?

There is no doubt that Saddam's own people would applaud his demise, although we haven't seen a lot of examples of that yet. Saddam is a coward, not a leader – that defines anyone who would hide behind women and children. He has refused to abide by the United Nations resolutions, incurring sanctions that threatened to starve his own people. What an ego. What a jerk.

While I do not believe that the United States has

provided clear and decisive evidence that Saddam Hussein and the other maniac, Osama bin Laden, are connected – other than they are both inhuman and vicious – their dual demise would be a very good thing.

The United States is now at a crossroads. We need a national discussion to determine exactly what our role is going to be. On the one hand, we cannot afford to be reactive – with Iran and North Korea gathering nuclear weapons, we must have a solid plan. How are we going to deal with this "regime change" in other countries? What is America's role in the new order? On the other hand, are we really going to set ourselves up to be the judge and jury of the many despots who rule parts of the world? We can't play this role only when it suits us; if we decide that we will rid the world of leaders who starve and kill their own people, then we need to take that role seriously, because we are going to be very busy.

The Arab world has long competed with the West.

*Continued on page 19*

### PADBERG

*Continued from page 16*

In the Middle Ages it was the Arab world that dominated; for the past 500 years it has been the West. There is a great deal of mistrust about American motives in the Arab world. And when we talk about liberating Iraq it is important to remember that this is a nation with no experience with democracy. As President Bush has indicated, when the United States made the decision to lead the effort for "regime change," we also made the decision that we would stay and help rebuild and restructure Iraq – at least a two-year effort.

I support the president, but I do not have to like it. I support the troops and defend the right of peo-

ple to be critical of the government. Moreover, I am highly insulted when people are shouted down in opposition or support of the war. This is the very nature of freedom. It eludes me how a "peace" march can turn into a brawl. It just defeats the purpose.

I can't help but think that had we done it right in the first Gulf War, we would have saved ourselves the loss of American and coalition lives, international outrage and the more than \$75 billion that could be spent building up America instead of tearing down Iraq. I only hope that this time we do it right.

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