

POST-SADDAM WORLD | ZHAO QUANSHENG

How Iraq is changing the face of Sino-US ties

Although the Middle East is far from both China and the United States, recent developments in Iraq will have a major influence on US foreign policy, as well as Sino-US relations. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December was headline news across the globe.

The world is now focused on the future direction of the US, and what comes next in a post-Hussein era. Any new development in US foreign policy will have a significant impact on the dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region.

Under the administration of President George W. Bush, American foreign policy has shown a strong tendency towards unilateral action, with the war in Iraq serving as a prime example. The US military and its allies entered Iraq last March without explicit authorisation from the United Nations, choosing to ignore the opposition of France, Russia and China – three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. This strong unilateralist foreign policy has brought about concern in the international community.

On the flip side, Washington has demonstrated a willingness to follow a multilateral approach when pursuing other issues. The best example is the North Korean nuclear crisis. With America's persuasion, six-party negotiations were hosted in Beijing last August, bringing together the US, China, Russia, Japan, and North and South Korea. So, just what impact will Hussein's capture have on US foreign policy, particularly in relation to unilateralism versus multilateralism?

The US victory in Iraq may influence policy in either direction. On the one hand, it will

certainly enhance the US hegemonic position in contemporary world affairs. Hussein's capture sends a clear signal to the world on Washington's stance of zero tolerance of any challenge to its leading position. On the other hand, despite the enormous superiority of the US military, the Iraq war has revealed potential weaknesses, with continuous terrorist attacks on US and allied personnel. This has enhanced the forces within the American foreign-policy apparatus, who believe a multilateral approach can better serve US interests.

In the Asia-Pacific region, there has been an impact from the developments in Iraq on the dynamics of Sino-US relations. China itself also has a keen interest in future directions of US foreign policy. For the past few years, Beijing has benefited tremendously from some crucial developments in world affairs, most notably,

the September 11 terrorist attacks and the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These events have effectively reprioritised US foreign policy, removing China as a top "strategic competitor" and "challenger".

Sino-US relations have improved rapidly after the low of the Hainan spy plane incident in April 2001. There has

been a clear sign of mutual need between the US, the only superpower, and China, the rising power. This is reflected not only in economic interdependence with increased bilateral trade and investment, but also in co-operation on a number of strategic issues that are important to both countries – including the North Korean nuclear crisis, the function of the UN in Iraq and the Middle East, anti-terrorist coalition building, and non-proliferation issues, to name but a few.

Despite both sides' need for a mutually beneficial partnership, the potential for conflict and rivalry still remains. The major test lies in a "traditional" threat, namely the Taiwan issue.

In the run-up to Taiwan's presidential election in March, president Chen Shui-bian and his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have increasingly been playing the

independence card. Mr Chen's political gamble has prompted Mr Bush to make an explicit warning against Taiwan's strong moves toward changing the status quo. Mr Bush made a clear promise to Premier Wen Jiabao last month that Washington would oppose any move by Taiwan towards independence.

Clearly, it is in line with the interests of both China and the US to avoid a war over Taiwan,

but it may be necessary to consider the uncertainty of future developments on the island, namely how far Mr Chen and the DPP will push the issue.

There are different voices not only within American society, but also within the Bush administration. A strong pro-Taiwan force, represented by the neo-conservatives, may prefer a permanent separation of Taiwan and the mainland. Therefore, a US-China military confrontation over Taiwan cannot be completely ruled out, even though both sides prefer a peaceful settlement.

Of course, China would not want to challenge the US, but if Taiwan chooses to move towards independence, Beijing will have no choice. This will be a real test of the wisdom of leaders in both Beijing and Washington.

In East Asia, further development of the community-building process was confirmed by the Asean-plus-three summit last October by the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, plus China, Japan and South Korea. In addition to internal problems between key regional players, one important issue is what role the US will play.

It seems clear that an America with a multilateral approach will be a welcome addition to the development of the regional bloc in East Asia. At the same time, China and other members of East Asia may continue to oppose a unilateral-oriented United States.

Zhao Quansheng is professor and division director of comparative and regional studies, and director of the centre for Asian studies, at American University in Washington



WAR PLOTS | SCOTT THOMPSON

Why Saddam was doomed even before 9/11

It was hardly news to hear someone in Washington claiming that the Bush administration had decided to go after Saddam Hussein before the September 11 attacks, with or without evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

But that a former cabinet member – the second-highest ranking – levelled the charges, makes them a little more interesting. True, a treasury secretary is not always "in the loop" on foreign-affairs issues, but somehow Paul O'Neill's story rings true.

He was certainly present for all those early meetings in the White House when the style of the new administration was being set, when the "new guys on the block" were looking for ways to define themselves as "tough guys" despite – or because of – the closeness of the election.

They had lost the popular vote, after all, and won the White House only because appointees in the Supreme Court put there by former president George Bush Sr tipped the balance in their favour.

There were three sets of forces present in the new administration that wanted to see Hussein toppled, no matter what: the neo-conservatives, Vice-President Dick Cheney and President George W. Bush. Each had separate but powerful motives, which were there just as much prior to September 11 as after the event.

The neo-conservatives, led by Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, had, in Mr Bush Sr's administration, managed to push through the labyrinthine Washington process a defining defence policy paper.

It argued for enough American military superiority to stand up to any foreseeable combination of other forces. It also forced through the new idea of pre-emption, something that had never been considered tenable – or acceptable – to the American mind.

Mr Wolfowitz had been defence undersecretary in the previous Bush administration, and became known as the progenitor of the new doctrine. Few people thought of the likely application of its cluster of ideas – until, in fact, 2001, when he and his neo-conservative allies were ensconced throughout the administration.

Early in the present Bush administration, however, it became clear that a trio of neo-conservatives at the Pentagon had highly specific designs on policy and even geography: Mr Wolfowitz, the new undersecretary Douglas Feith, and the old warrior of hardline defence politics, Richard Perle – known as the Prince of Darkness during the Reagan years.

As American Jews with close ties to Israel, they sought to use any excuse to redraw the map of the Middle East in Israel's favour, and this they saw – without a second thought to its

implications – as a decided American interest. They saw Israel as a firm American ally, a democracy in a sea of anarchy. That such a policy would alienate their country from one billion Muslims was irrelevant. That such a policy might seem self-serving, even in some quarters leading to the question of dual-loyalties, they also considered manageable. The gains were just too overwhelming. They just could not resist the temptation.

Why hit Iraq? Hussein had targeted Israel in the earlier Gulf war. After that, Hussein gave a huge bounty to the family of every Palestinian suicide bomber, one of the most profound incentives to potential young martyrs.

More importantly, in the mind of the neo-conservatives, Hussein could readily be destroyed – and once toppled, the tanks that had done the work could roll on, as there were six more target countries, all Islamic enemies of Israel.

Mr Wolfowitz gave the game away in a celebrated interview with *Vanity Fair* magazine in which he observed that weapons of mass destruction was agreed on as the excuse for the war against Hussein as it was the most readily marketable.

Mr Cheney is the self-defined tough guy, the king (or king-maker) in the middle, around whom all other players revolve. Washington insiders all knew that he meant to topple

Hussein from the start. Why? He wanted to show that America could flex its muscles anywhere, hit the target and move on. From the start, he dismissed all arguments against a war to break Hussein as weak. He backed all those, whatever their motives, who were rallying to topple the dictator.

And then there is the president himself. We know how little he knew about foreign affairs; no matter. He knows about family – as anyone whose father was president, whose brother was a governor, and about whose own capabilities there were grave doubts – would know. He knew two things about Hussein: he had tried to kill his father – giving a loyal son an overwhelming and acceptable motive for revenge – and that Hussein was still in power, despite his father's war in 1991, which had only forced the dictator to disgorge Kuwait.

Mr O'Neill may not have grasped the inner subtleties of the motives. But he knew a war plan when he heard it. All that was lacking was a pretext – and when the Twin Towers came down, the war plan went up.

Scott Thompson was an assistant to the US secretary of defence from 1975 to 1976, and served as an assistant secretary of state in the Reagan administration. He is a professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Massachusetts

China – North Korea's wary protector

China wants the Korean peninsula to become the next venue for the kind of surprising progress in halting the spread of nuclear weapons that was made recently in the Middle East with Libya and Iran.

Beijing confirmed this week that it had offered aid to North Korea but declined to confirm a Japanese press report that US\$50 million had been promised. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said he did not believe the aid was conditional on Pyongyang agreeing to take part in another round of talks hosted by China to defuse simmering North Korean nuclear tensions.

But US officials say that China now has critical leverage over North Korea because it supplies some 90 per cent of the fuel needed by the impoverished state, as well as a majority of other aid, including food. America and its allies cut off free shipments of oil after North Korean officials reportedly confirmed to the United States in 2002 that Pyongyang had a secret programme to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons, despite a pledge in 1994 to freeze nuclear activities.

China has been trying for months to arrange a second round of six-party talks with North Korea. The negotiations also involve the US, South Korea, Japan and Russia. An initial

CROSSROADS



Michael Richardson

round ended inconclusively in August. The Chinese government needs stability in Northeast Asia to continue its rapid economic growth and modernisation. It knows that if North Korea has nuclear weapons and the ballistic missiles to deliver them, it may prompt Japan, South Korea and Taiwan to also acquire such weapons, justifying the move as a deterrent. That could create an extremely dangerous nuclear arms race in Asia.

Iran agreed in December to suspend its once-secret programme to enrich uranium and allow stricter international inspections of its nuclear facilities. A day later, Libya announced that it would voluntarily give up weapons of

mass destruction and allow inspections. The greatest danger now is that North Korea may already have one or two nuclear weapons, be seeking more and may use them or threaten to do so, or sell fissile material, know-how or even nuclear bombs to a terrorist group.

Libya agreed to disclose and dismantle all nuclear, chemical and biological programmes; limit its missiles to a range of less than 300km; and open the country immediately to inspections to verify its compliance.

This is what the US says it wants from North Korea: disarmament of weapons of mass destruction that is irreversible and verifiable, starting with nuclear weapons. Only when Pyongyang agrees to do this in the six-party talks will Washington agree to outline what could be provided in return by way of a security assurance, aid and other things demanded by North Korea.

However, North Korea has ruled out copying Libya's disarmament policy, promising only to "freeze" its plutonium-related nuclear activities centred on Yongbyon town – where it has several nuclear facilities – "as a starting point for denuclearisation", in exchange for compensation.

North Korean officials reportedly told an unofficial delegation of US experts who visited

Yongbyon last week that the country has no clandestine programme to enrich uranium, even though one member of the delegation had been present when a senior North Korean official admitted it during a meeting in 2002. The US experts are due to present their report on what they saw in North Korea and their conclusions about the state of its nuclear activities to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in Washington on Tuesday.

China has indicated publicly that it is not convinced North Korea has a programme to make highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons. But Beijing's view may change as US and European officials use information provided by Libya and Iran to uncover the international network of suppliers and middlemen that allowed both countries, and North Korea, to accumulate the hi-tech equipment needed to build nuclear weapons.

If and when that happens, Chinese pressure on North Korea to follow the Libyan example will increase.

Michael Richardson, a former Asia editor of the *International Herald Tribune*, is a visiting senior research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. The views expressed in this article are those of the author

ASIA BEAT



MACAU

Harald Bruning

Cultural revolution

In a move that will hopefully produce tangible results, the government-run Macau Cultural Institute has declared 2004 the Year of the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of Macau.

To mark this, the institute has

launched the slogan: "Preserve the identity of Macau, value our cultural heritage", and published a desk calendar featuring 12 historical buildings, such as the early 20th century Caixa Escolar edifice that combines neoclassical Chinese influences and art deco with Moorish traces.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of a law which forms the legal bedrock of the conservation and revival of Macau's historical patrimony. The law was enacted by one of the most dynamic – and politically, most controversial – governors in Macau's 400-year history as a Portuguese enclave, Rear-Admiral Vasco de Almeida e Costa.

The legislation, which had been bitterly contested by certain business circles, stopped the onslaught of the massive 1980s development boom on Macau's unique architectural heritage – part of which had already been destroyed in previous decades.

While heritage preservation is nowadays seen as something positive by most Macau residents – because it promotes tourism and embodies the city's unique identity – there are starkly divergent views on how far the

conservation efforts should go. Francisco Vizeu Pinheiro, a local Portuguese architect and chief convener of the Nishikaze cultural interchange initiative, heads a group of activists fighting for the preservation of old Taipa village, the site of the former Yec Long Firecracker Factory. Mr Pinheiro fears that the authorities' development plans for the area announced last year could destroy some 43 per cent of the factory site's original area.

"Heritage is not negotiable," insists Mr Pinheiro, who wants the old firecracker factory to become an "original theme park" to remind visitors of the fact that Macau was still in the 1960s the world's leading producer of pyrotechnics. He maintains that because of the government's revised urban development plan for the area, "the historical village of Taipa Island and its unique environment is in great danger".

The Nishikaze (meaning "west wind" in Japanese) initiative also wants the government to respect "buffer zones" between new urban development and cultural heritage areas to protect the latter's historical landscape and "classic ambience".

Heritage preservation in Macau is

inevitably bedeviled by hard facts, such as the extreme scarcity of land, a high population density and incessant pressure from infrastructure, business and property developers to cater to the perceived needs of residents and tourists.

Frank discussions between urban planners, business and neighbourhood representatives, architects and activists are the best way to strike an acceptable balance between the often conflicting interests of urban renewal and heritage preservation. However, all parties involved need to bear in mind that its cultural heritage is Macau's number two asset – after its casinos.

SEOUL

B. J. Lee

University challenge

A part-time lecturer at a top private university in Seoul is the latest whistle-blower to expose mounting problems at South Korean

universities. The German language tutor shocked many by revealing corruption and incompetence at his establishment.

According to a letter he posted on the school's website, professors in the department embezzled research grants that were supposed to go to assistants and conspired to hire incompetent staff who sweet-talked their way in.

The claims may just be malicious talk from a discontented academic who unsuccessfully tried to land a full-time job at the university. An investigation by authorities will determine the veracity of his statements. But education experts believe the accusations more or less reflect the reality of the troubled system.

South Korean colleges face numerous problems. Their academic standards are falling and graduates have difficulty finding and performing well in jobs because of the inadequate education they have received. Professors often neglect their research and lecture duties and instead indulge in school politics or seek government or corporate jobs. None of South Korea's universities rank among the world's top 200.

But to get into the universities, particularly the good ones, students have to study day and night to pass the

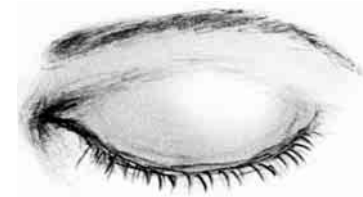
competitive entrance exam. The competition is so tough that some who are rejected by Seoul National University, the best in South Korea, are often accepted by elite US universities such as Harvard or Stanford.

But once in college, South Korean students have little motivation to study hard. In many cases, professors fail to guide or inspire them because of outdated teaching skills or lack of knowledge. As a result, they lose out to graduates from foreign colleges in the competition for jobs.

Growing numbers of South Korean students are, therefore, choosing foreign universities over local institutions. So much so that even many middle or elementary school pupils study abroad, leaving with their mothers, while their fathers stay behind to work. Small universities in provincial areas have been severely affected by falling enrolment numbers – a trend exacerbated by the country's declining birth rate. Some provincial schools are only half full. Larger schools in cities are better off.

But if the misconduct alleged at the private Seoul university continues, they too will face empty campuses.

THE INNER EYE



Jean Nicol

Great expectations

Individuals manipulate each other and cultures perpetuate themselves using some of the same very subtle social tools. One method is through expectations. What people expect of each other is often so well hidden in the individual's personal or cultural sense of self-interest that both parties remain blissfully unaware of their own attitudes – until such time as an expectation is not met. And even then, the psychological dance that follows – and which touches on virtually every sphere of an individual's life – often takes place entirely at a subconscious level.

It has long been known that one person's expectations with regard to another's behaviour come to act as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. The most quoted example of this Pygmalion effect is, perhaps, where teachers are given the impression at the beginning of a term that some students are high achievers, when in fact they were chosen at random. In this case, staff tend to perceive these children as more intellectually aware and autonomous.

As one would imagine, Pygmalion-effect children also win the affection of their teachers, who seem to teach with more warmth the students about whom they have been fooled into having more favourable expectations. Yet, counter-intuitively, and for reasons psychologists are still trying to figure out, high-performing control-group children (who are not specifically expected to do well, yet do so) do not receive the same warmth and attention. This leads to the bewildering and worrying conclusion that while expected achievements are rewarded in children, unexpected intellectual performance is met with actual discouragement – albeit unwittingly.

At the level of cultures, adults differ in what they anticipate (and therefore foster) in children. For example, in one classic study that compared mothers of five-year-olds, Japanese women expected children to master skills related to preparation for adulthood relatively early. The expectations of Americans, on the other hand, showed greater emphasis on peer-group adaptation.

The power of expectation has also been observed in the unintentional influence judges wield on jurors, how business people affect their employees and how health-care workers unintentionally manipulate their patients – not to mention how psychologists unconsciously create self-fulfilling prophesy effects with respect to their research participants.

Of course, psychologists, of all people, should know all about expectancy effects. And they do. That is one of the many reasons they work with animals instead of people. But, as strange as it may sound, even the humble laboratory rat is not immune to the expectations of the researcher. They, too, appear to abide by the hypothetical expectations of their masters – and tactfully produce the very results expected.

As Bertrand Russell pointed out as far back as 1927: "Animals studied by Americans rush about frantically, with an incredible display of hustle and pep, and at last achieve the desired result by chance. Animals observed by Germans sit still and think, and at last evolve the solution out of their inner consciousness."

Russell's psycho-philosophical commentary tells us as much about his views of the respective cultures of America and Germany and about his sense of humour as it does about expectancy effects on animals. But he did have a point, which does have a replicable basis. In one experiment conducted by renowned expectancies researcher Robert Rosenthal, (from whom I stole the Russell quote), psychology students were told that their experimental rats had been inbred for intelligence. In subsequent experiments they handled their animals more gently – and watched them more intently – than did other experimenters, who were told their rodents were notable only for their rat-like stupidity.

Meta-analysis – a fashionable area of number crunching that looks at the entire body of research literature on a given topic – confirms the power of expectations in general and a range of very specific Pygmalion effects, too, including effects on pupils' IQ test performance.

We know, then, that the effect holds wide-ranging sway in human relations. What we do not know in any usable detail, however, is exactly what cocktail of verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the parent, teacher or judge, for example, creates the effect, nor precisely how that translates into a change of behaviour in children, jurors and the like. Maybe if we all expect a breakthrough...

Jean Nicol is a psychologist specialising in issues of cultural identity and change in an era of globalisation
everydaypsychologist@yahoo.com