

and Egypt, who fear that a U.S.-Iranian deal over Iraq might come at their expense.

Who can salvage the American project in Iraq? No one. It is Mission Impossible. The neoconservatives, loath to admit defeat, still insist on an all-out effort. Speaking on NPR's "Diane Rehm Show" in April, Tom Donnelly, a leading neocon strategist and American Enterprise Institute fellow who co-chaired the Project for a New American Century, asserted that it will take twice as many troops as the United States now has in Iraq to win, adding, "The American people want someone to show them that they know how to win this war." And Reuel Gerecht, another AEI fellow, who argued in 2003 that a shock-and-awe campaign in Iraq would speak to the Arabs in the only language they understand, calls for an unrelenting campaign to seize control of the Iraqi capital. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Gerecht said, "The Bush administration would be wise not to postpone any longer what it should have already undertaken—securing Baghdad. . . . Pacifying Baghdad will be politically convulsive and provide horrific film footage and skyrocketing body counts. But Iraq cannot heal itself so long as Baghdad remains a deadly place."

None of that will happen. The U.S. armed forces are already stretched to the breaking point, and there is no political will in the United States to expand the war. Quite the opposite. Yet an otherworldly paralysis seems to have gripped the Bush administration. It can't escalate the war, and it stubbornly refuses to get out. ■

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There are signs that the Bush administration's covert-action program against Iran is becoming both more active and more lethal.

Twenty-two Iranian government officials were killed and the local governor was severely injured in a March ambush carried out by the Iranian opposition group MEK (Mujaheddin-e Khalq) in the Iranian province of Sistan-va-Baluchistan. MEK was armed and supplied by Saddam Hussein and is on the U.S. terrorism list, but its supporters have been liberated from that potential impediment by individually renouncing the group's charter, presumably making them ex-terrorists. They have been trained by U.S. Special Forces and are now carrying out Pentagon-directed operations inside Iran, primarily consisting of intelligence-collection missions targeting suspected nuclear production facilities. The MEK, however, also has its own agenda. It supports Iran's Baluchi minority, primarily Sunni Muslims, in their increasingly violent opposition to the central government.



Meanwhile, America's half-hearted dialogue with Iran over the subject of Iraq is being hampered by Bush administration infighting.

Iraq's Ahmad Chalabi, the former Pentagon favorite, has inserted himself into the process by flying off to Tehran and returning with Iranian proposals that are being discussed in Baghdad with the administration's designated negotiator, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad. Vice President Cheney's office is simultaneously using the discredited Manucher Ghorbanifar of Iran-Contra fame to provide "an independent view" on what is taking place, thoroughly confusing the issue. The Iranians reportedly want to discuss overall U.S. policy towards their country and have allegedly offered a deal on their nuclear program, but Khalilzad is authorized only to discuss Iraq because Cheney opposes any dialogue that might interfere with eventual regime change in Tehran. He is also unfazed by the numerous complaints about the employment of Ghorbanifar, who is considered to be an intelligence fabricator. In any event, President Bush has made a political decision to defer any possible overt military action against Iran until after the midterm elections in November. He has, however, authorized the current covert-action program, described above, which is being conducted primarily by the American military without congressional oversight. Bush has also been restrained by recent internal intelligence estimates of the possible consequences of unilateral action against Iran, which suggest extensive damage to U.S. national and commercial interests around the world.



Sources in Rome report that Michael Ledeen is now being surveilled every time he visits Italy.

The advocate of "creative destruction," and leading American neoconservative occasionally linked to the forged Niger uranium documents used to justify war in Iraq, has a villa in the hills near Rome and frequently travels to Italy to vacation and for meetings. The surveillance is being carried out by the Italian military intelligence service, known as SISMI, acting under the instructions of the minister of defense, Nicola Pollari. That Ledeen is now regarded as suspicious and is being watched by SISMI is particularly ironic, as he collaborated with Italian military intelligence in the early 1980s, a service for which he reportedly received \$100,000. According to one source, the payment made to Ledeen was deposited in a bank in the Bahamas.

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Big Brother Watches Britain

The rights of Englishmen make way for litres and ID cards.

By Peter Hitchens

ONE OF THE ODDEST and most eerily prophetic passages in *1984* finds Winston Smith, unwisely searching for a key to the lost past, entering a sordid alehouse in a proletarian quarter. There he sees an old man, a survivor of former times, trying to order a pint of beer, once the standard English measure. The barman either does not understand him or pretends not to do so. "What in hell's name is a pint? Litre and half-litre, that's all we serve," he says.

England, likewise, has ceased to exist, and its sophisticated currency has been replaced by the standardized decimal dollars and cents of Oceania. In *Brave New World*, the dystopia is different in almost every way, but the drug soma is prescribed in metric grams, and England has also disappeared, this time into a globalized Fordist state, governed by ten world controllers. Mass production and advertising have brought into being the borderless, godless world dreamed of by Karl Marx, in which German and French are dead languages and Trotsky a common surname.

Both Orwell and Huxley, perhaps only half-consciously, recognized that national independence is one of the most important components of liberty and that local, particular culture was an obstacle to arbitrary power. And they were quite right. Their books were until very recently read here in Britain as enjoyable fantasies of the unthinkable. We could shiver as we read them, then put them down with a happy feeling that this was what we had avoided through the luck of our geography and the good sense of our forebears. Only

some colossal, unimaginable catastrophe—Orwell talks vaguely of a nuclear surprise attack, Huxley of the Nine Years War—could connect our gentle, reasonable world with either of these howling nightmares.

Yet in the last few years there have been a number of events and developments in Britain that suggest no such cataclysm is necessary, but that James Madison was correct when he said, "There are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpation."

There is now, for instance, an official campaign in Britain to use the law to abolish traditional English measures—hence the special eeriness of Orwell's alehouse prophecy. A market trader, Steve Thoburn, was filmed secretly by City Hall officials as he sold bananas to his customers in Sunderland, an industrial town in the north of England. They then prosecuted him because he had made the sale in pounds and ounces, rather than in kilograms and grams. There was no question of him giving short measure or of having done anything dishonest. His offense was to continue to use traditional measures, well-known to all his customers, rather than the global ones now preferred by authority. He was quite ready to sell his bananas in kilograms to anyone who asked. But they never did.

Mr. Thoburn was not exporting his bananas to a country that used the metric system, and bananas are not a medicine or a high-technology product whose precise mass might be crucial to a patient's health or an international

space project. His prosecution was part of the forcible imposition of one culture upon another, as is usually done to conquered peoples to remind them of their subjugation or to the people of a revolutionary state who need to be told firmly that there is a new order. The case was taken all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, one of two foreign supreme courts that now outrank the highest tribunals of English law, including Parliament itself. The court, which usually concerns itself with upholding the left-wing liberties of "minorities," unsurprisingly upheld the fine levied on Mr. Thoburn. It is hard to see what the law in a free country should have had to do with such a private transaction. But in an unfree country, that is what the law is for: telling people who is in charge.

Pints of beer, currently spared from this process, will sooner or later suffer the same fate, and the words "litre and half-litre, that's all we serve" will eventually be heard in the proletarian alehouses of England. Those who thought this episode was trivial were like those who do not connect clouds with rain. For in the years that have followed, it has become clear that a deep and worrying change is taking place in the laws and police forces of England.

The difficulty lies in explaining how serious it is without falling into the language of panic. So I shall simply list some developments as dispassionately as I can. We have a Civil Contingencies Act that, once an emergency has been declared, gives the government the power to cancel existing laws, to order citizens to move or to stay where they