

An olive-branch patriot's case against George Bush

By **WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

A CLOSE examination of the eagle on the presidential seal reveals the paradoxical legacy handed down from the founding fathers. In its right talon, the eagle holds an olive branch, the symbol of peace. In the left, he clutches a bundle of arrows, a symbol of war.

My study of American history leads me to believe that the founders placed the olive branch on the right because they felt that peace is always preferable. But I know too well that there have been chief executives in our past who preferred war.

President Bush is among those who would have us transform the national symbol into a hawk that refuses to loosen its grip on the arrows.

What disturbs me about the

Bush administration is the cavalier manner in which it not only committed our nation to the war in Iraq and the self-righteousness with which it prosecuted the war without the full consent of the American people, but also the way it usurped the U.N.'s authority to rebuild that war-torn country.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, Mr. Bush chose to view the world in black and white terms: You're either a terrorist bent on our destruction, or willing to go along with us and be our friend.

Ignoring NATO's offer of almost *carte blanche* assistance, Mr. Bush insisted on total freedom of action. Pre-emption, we were told, not containment, was the only feasible strategy in the war on terror. At the same time, Mr. Bush refused to make any effort toward a Middle East peace process that might have

defused some of the anti-American sentiment in the region as he sought to dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Diplomacy has been a charade over the last year. The administration repeatedly ignored multilateral efforts for peace, further distancing itself from the U.N. Congress, swayed by the rhetoric of pre-emption, forfeited its constitutional authority to declare war, giving Mr. Bush a resolution to use unrestrained force against Iraq.

Despite the thousands who descended on the capital to voice their opposition to the war before it began, Mr. Bush, with smug self-assurance, told us that the anti-war demonstrators didn't "have an effect on him," dismissing the peace movement as anti-patriotic and "insulting to those U.S. soldiers and reservists serving abroad."

It was bad enough that the U.S. went to war without U.N. sanction and that our troops are still searching for the weapons of mass destruction that were supposedly the reason for launching the war.

But now the U.S. has again imposed its will on the international community. We've pushed through the Security Council a resolution allowing the U.S. and Britain to govern Iraq for at least a year despite the concerns of France and Russia.

As an American who believes in olive-branch patriotism and international cooperation, I resent Mr. Bush's flag-waving rhetoric steeped in a hawkish foreign policy, his arrogant suggestion that those who oppose war are any less American than he is, and the lack of humility and diplomacy in his leadership.

While the U.S. may be the

only superpower, it is struggling with soaring budget deficits. How does Mr. Bush hope to raise the \$100 billion it may cost to rebuild Iraq if he can't tap the U.N. and its members?

Just as foolish is Mr. Bush's expectation that he can rely on the U.N. for diplomatic or military efforts in trouble spots like Saudi Arabia or North Korea if he continues to ride roughshod over the concerns of other Security Council members.

Let's hope that Mr. Bush will soon learn to respect the feelings of all Americans, not just those who support his foreign policy, and the subtleties of international diplomacy — or this country will eventually pay the price for his irresponsibility. ★

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