

performance rests with President George W. Bush and his top officials. They went into Iraq with a “maximalist” mission and tried to pull it off with a minimum application of money and manpower.

Upon his arrival in Baghdad, Bremer immediately fired Baath Party members who had worked for the government, but his single most cited mistake, according to Dobbins, was disbanding the Iraqi army, the institution responsible for keeping order. That, however, was not a Bremer inspiration. An order to that effect had been drafted and cleared through the Pentagon, approved by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, presented to President Bush and his National Security Council, and

even discussed with British officials before Bremer issued it.

When Bremer stepped off the plane in Baghdad, the country was already chaotic. The army had “disintegrated,” and most of its facilities had been destroyed by looting. “It will be endlessly debated whether disbanding a then-absent army and purging an abusive (and incompetent) bureaucracy” contributed to Iraq’s disorder, Dobbins writes. Both decisions should have been more thoroughly reviewed. The bigger mistake was the initial failure to continue paying the demobilized soldiers, to make any effort to reintegrate them into civilian society, and, most important, to recall the best and least politicized of

them to keep order when the country desperately needed it. The CPA should have done better, Dobbins concludes.

The Bush administration grounded its policies in Iraq in the lessons learned from U.S. occupations of Germany and Japan after World War II, according to Dobbins, an author of earlier studies of those and later efforts. But Baghdad wasn’t Berlin or Tokyo. It was much closer to Yugoslavia—economically devastated and plagued with historic sectarian divisions.

It is too convenient, Dobbins suggests, to assign blame for America’s early fumbles in Iraq, which were clearly made in Washington, to a now-defunct organization and a now-retired administrator.

SOCIETY

How Cities Go Global

THE SOURCE: “Cities in Today’s Global Age” by Saskia Sassen, in *The SAIS Review*, Winter–Spring 2009.

To most observers, New York appears quintessentially American; London, British; and Mumbai, Indian. Yet these enormous urban centers represent a new phenomenon: They are global cities, strategic economic spaces that play crucial roles in the international economy.

About 70 global cities, on every continent except Antarctica, provide crucial expertise in insurance, accounting, law, consulting, and programming for firms and ex-

changes operating across national borders. But far from being cookie-cutter copies of one another, they retain unique characteristics that are the sources of their strength. The top-rated cities overall, London and New York, are the leading financial, equity, and banking centers of the world, according to Saskia Sassen, a sociologist at Columbia University. But leadership in starting a business comes from Sydney, and in handling derivatives contracts from Seoul.

Chicago, mired in its past as hog butcher to the world, was once thought to be 15 years behind New

York and London as a global city. But its history, writes Sassen, author of *Cities in a World Economy* (2006), gave it an edge. Its long-standing preeminence as a futures market built on pork bellies and heavy industry required highly specialized financial, accounting, and legal expertise. While New York concentrated on service exports, finance, and trade, Chicago became a leading global financial futures center and provider of specialized services for handling heavy industry, heavy transport, and large-scale agriculture. When the Boeing Company, the world’s largest manufacturer of aircraft, decided it needed to leave Seattle, Sassen says, it never gave New York a thought but moved its headquarters straight to Chicago.

The growth of high-profit corporate service firms and of a high-

income professional class operating in both the national and international arenas fuels a demand for state-of-the-art office buildings, luxury residences, and luxury “consumption spaces.” Households and profit-making firms of more modest income, no matter how healthy they might be for the economy, are displaced. And this trend sets up a fundamental 21st-century urban rivalry: the gentrifiers vs. the displaced.

It’s been more than 30 years since President Gerald Ford turned down New York’s pleas for aid and earned the slightly unfair, if memorable, headline, “Ford to City: Drop Dead.” No one talks anymore about poor, sad, ailing New York—or London, Tokyo, Chicago, Hong Kong, Singapore, even Frankfurt. Everyone’s too busy servicing the international knowledge economy.

SOCIETY

Immigrating to Obesity

THE SOURCE: “Immigration and the American Obesity Epidemic” by Lingxin Hao and Julie J. H. Kim, in *International Migration Review*, Summer 2009.

IMMIGRATION AND THE INCIDENCE of obesity in the United States both started increasing around 1965, but don’t blame newcomers for the nation’s bulging bellies. Without mass immigration, America’s obesity crisis would be even worse.

The average immigrant is slimmer than the average native-born American and stays that way for some 10 years after coming to the

Immigrants to America help the national obesity numbers, at least for awhile.

United States, report Lingxin Hao, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University, and Julie J. H. Kim, a Hopkins Ph.D. candidate. Part of the explanation is self-selection. Migrating from one country to another (even under good conditions) tests even the fittest, and those who take the risk tend to be in good health. And if immigrants get sick, they exhibit what sociologists call the “salmon-bias effect”—they head for home. Moreover, the exercise and nutrition patterns of immigrants stay in place for a few years after they emigrate, giving them an “immigrant advantage” before they embrace America’s fast-food lifestyle.

The typical native-born American male, 5’8” tall, weighs 187 pounds. This makes him officially seriously overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A man of that height should weigh 170 pounds, at most. His immigrant counterpart weighs, on average, 175 pounds. An immigrant woman of average stature (5’4”) is also about 12 pounds lighter than a corresponding native-born woman. Roughly 30 percent of Americans are obese, which is defined as weighing more than 205 pounds for men of typical height, and 180 for similar women. One’s body mass index, the formal measurement of healthy weight, tends to increase until age 60, then level off.

America would be better off if newcomers were inoculated against the national penchant for gobbling fries and shakes in front of the television. A shrewd public-health policy, Hao and Kim conclude, would aim to delay the erosion of the immigrant advantage.

SOCIETY

Damned Either Way

THE SOURCE: “Want to Lose Friends? Make Tough Choices” by Tom Jacobs, in *Miller-McCune News Blog*, July 23, 2009.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT KNEW from personal experience what it was like to be damned if you do and damned if you don’t. “Do what you feel in your heart to be right,” she said, for “you’ll be criticized anyway.” New research suggests she had it right. Elected officials cannot win when they have to choose between bad alternatives.

Given a choice between awarding child custody to either of two equally rotten parents, a judge takes heat no matter what the decision, according to a study conducted by Justin Kruger and Laura M. Kressel of New York University and Jeremy Burrus of Columbia. After students read a summary of a court case in which a judge, who ostensibly had no other choice, awarded custody to the parent who appeared to be the lesser evil, one group was informed of the actual outcome and the other was told the losing parent had won.

In both cases, the students evaluated the judge negatively. Their disapproval of the parents seemed to