Man up, you doves

Sure, now everyone’s against the war in Iraq. Next time we’ll let the old folks do the deciding.

STOP BLAMING George Bush. “He lied to us.” “He tricked us.” Suddenly everyone — Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, all of my friends — is claiming to have been a dove who was bamboozled by the cleverness of our president. When “American Idol” drops to a 30% approval rating, I predict you all also will claim that Paula Abdul outsmarted you into watching two hours of karaoke each week.

Most Americans can’t locate Britain on a map, but I’m supposed to believe that back in January of 2003, everyone became an honorary member of the Council on Foreign Relations and followed the details of reports of yellowcake from Niger? I don’t think so. Even now, I’m pretty sure that if the Cheesecake Factory put “Yellowcake from Niger” on the menu, people would order it.

If all of you did experience some kind of weird, momentary interest in the minutiae of foreign policy around that time, why didn’t it lead you to Google “other scary nations with apocalyptic weapons”? Then maybe you’d have concluded four years ago that possession of — or desire for — nuclear weapons doesn’t trigger automatic invasion. Otherwise, we’d also have invaded Iran, North Korea, Pakistan and Russia. And every nation’s army would be here.

If you are so easily duped, what if Bush had concocted a convincing story of fissile material entering France? Would you have stood idly by as he invaded Paris? Maybe I should have used Venezuela in that hypothetical. Or maybe China. You can see why this game is hard.

Or are you instead arguing that Bush misled you about the ease of turning Iraq into a shiny, happy, minority-protecting, representational democracy? And that you were willing to sacrifice American and Iraqi lives to achieve that goal because you simply cannot live in a world with a brutal dictator like Saddam Hussein? And that you were unaware of Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, North Korea’s Kim Jong Il, Sudan’s Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir, Uzbekistan’s Islam Karimov or Myanmar’s Than Shwe? Again, signing on to any war should come only after at least one Google search.

Man up. You wanted to invade Iraq. So did 29 Democratic senators. Remember after 9/11 when you put tiny flags on everything you owned? When Bush’s sudden popularity was endangered by his delay in invading Afghanistan? Do you remember how, because of your fear, you wanted to make sure we vanquished all our enemies? And the biggest targetable enemy anyone could muster was a left over from the early 1990s who invaded a wimpy, tiny nation that sold the U.S. lots of oil? Col. Moammar Kadafi thanks Saddam Hussein every day for that move.

---

YOU WANTED blood, and now you want to forget you wanted blood. In your desperation to be strong, you were weak. America has always been a war-happy nation, and until we take responsibility for that — instead of blaming these bad leaders we somehow randomly keep electing — we’re going to keep killing and being killed unnecessarily.
So here's the plan. We take war-making out of our hands. From now on, if we want to attack another country, we outsource it. I know we've tried this with NATO and the United Nations, and in the end, they've had the same problem as the Justice League: If Superman is spoiling for a fight, he doesn't care whether Aquaman and the fish lobby give him the go-ahead. If not, Mrs. Paul will just be serving Freedom Sticks for a while.

That's why I'm going with old people. You'd think that cranky people who can no longer be drafted and spend all day watching CNN hoping for something to happen would have us marching on Tehran tomorrow. But they don't. Every poll has shown that Americans over 65 are the most opposed to the war. So we put the senior citizens in charge of war, let kids head up environmental policy and have middle-aged people run the economy. People 18 to 34 will continue the fine job they're doing choosing our TV shows.

Give this a chance. Even if it doesn't prevent any wars, at least it will give the old people something to do instead of asking me if I'm going to have a baby. Seriously. It's like they're freaked out that birth control means the world won't go on after they're dead.

--

jstein@latimescolumnists.com