

After the War

“Though the object of being a Great Power is to be able to fight a Great War, the only way of remaining a

Great Power is not to fight one.” So wrote British historian A.J.P. Taylor in 1961.

All the 20th century empires forgot the lesson and all perished of wounds suffered in Great Wars: the Ottoman, Russian Austro-Hungarian, and German empires in World War I, the Japanese in World War II, the French and British the morning after.

Comes now the turn of the Americans. Guided through the Cold War by conservative statesmen like Eisenhower and Reagan, America rejected Churchillian romanticism and, even in the face of horrors like the butchery in Budapest in 1956, refused to risk the Great War. But now a triumphalist America has begun to behave like all the rest.

If Providence does not intrude, we will soon launch an imperial war on Iraq with all the “On-to-Berlin!” bravado with which French *poilus* and British Tommies marched in August 1914. But this invasion will not be the cakewalk neoconservatives predict. More likely, it will be the “bloody mess” of which Tony Cordesman warns.

Yet America will not be defeated by an Arab pariah state with an obsolete air force, a dozen 400-mile missiles, a population a tenth of ours, an economy 1% of ours, and neither satellites nor smart bombs.

Indeed, all 22 Arab nations have a total GDP smaller than Spain’s. None can defeat us, and any that resorts to a weapon of mass destruction invites annihilation. And before any hostile Arab or Islamic regime can acquire an atomic weapon, the War Party wants

to exploit this window of opportunity to smash them all.

But what comes after the celebratory gunfire when wicked Saddam is dead? Initially, the President and War Party will be seen as vindicated by victory and exhilarated by their new opportunity. For Iraq is key to the Middle East. With Iraq occupied, Syria will be hemmed in by Israeli, American, and Turkish power. Assad will have to pull his army out of Lebanon, so Sharon can go back in and settle scores with Hezbollah. Iran will be surrounded by U.S. power in Turkey, Iraq, the Gulf, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Arabian Sea.

This is the vision that intoxicates the neoconservatives who pine for a “World War IV”—a cakewalk conquest of Iraq followed by short sharp wars on Syria and Iran. Already Israel is tugging at our sleeve, reminding us not to forget Libya.

What is wrong with this vision? Only this: Just as Israel’s invasion of Lebanon ignited a guerrilla war that drove her bloodied army out after 18 years, a U.S. army in Baghdad will ignite calls for *jihād* from Morocco to Malaysia.

Pro-American regimes will be seen as impotent to prevent U.S. hegemony over the Islamic world. And just as monarchs who collaborated with Europe’s colonial powers were dethroned by nationalists in Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Tripoli, Teheran and Addis Ababa, pro-American autocrats will be targeted by assassins.

A burst of gunfire could convert Jordan, Afghanistan, or nuclear-armed Pakistan into an enemy overnight.

And with Israelis generals blabbing about pre-positioned U.S. weapons and Bibi Netanyahu listing for Congressional committees all the Arab nations we must attack, Al Jazeera does not need shoe-leather reporting to let Islam know on whose behalf America has come to crush their armies and occupy their capitals.

Once in Baghdad, how do we get out? If the Kurds rebel to create a nation, will U.S. troops help Turks crush them? If the House of Saud falls, will it be succeeded by social democrats or Bin Laden’s fanatics?

To destroy Saddam’s weapons, to democratize, defend, and hold Iraq together, U.S. troops will be tied down for decades. Yet, terrorist attacks in liberated Iraq seem as certain as in liberated Afghanistan. For a militant Islam that holds in thrall scores of millions of true believers will never accept George Bush dictating the destiny of the Islamic world.

With our MacArthur Regency in Baghdad, Pax Americana will reach apogee. But then the tide recedes, for the one endeavor at which Islamic peoples excel is expelling imperial powers by terror and guerrilla war. They drove the Brits out of Palestine and Aden, the French out of Algeria, the Russians out of Afghanistan, the Americans out of Somalia and Beirut, the Israelis out of Lebanon.

Twelve years ago, this writer predicted that George Bush’s Gulf War would be “the first Arab-American War.” The coming war will not be the last. We have started up the road to empire and over the next hill we will meet those who went before. The only lesson we learn from history is that we do not learn from history. ■

[no u-turns allowed]

Now Entering Imperium

The Old Right knew something about the temptations of Empire—and that “there is no security at the top of the world.” **By Justin Raimondo**

JUST AS GULF War I was a watershed issue for conservatives—with some, notably Pat Buchanan, dissenting, on the grounds that the throne of Kuwait “is not worth the life of a single American soldier”—Gulf War II is shaping up as yet another defining moment in the history of the American Right. Only this time, it isn’t just about Iraq. The whole of the Middle East is in our sights—that is, if we take seriously the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Advisory Board (DPAB), chaired by neoconservative foreign policy guru Richard Perle.

DPAB’s infamous “briefing” that called for an American invasion of Saudi Arabia and the seizure of the oil fields shook U.S.-Saudi relations and elicited fierce denials from the White House and expressions of horror from Riyadh. Rand Corporation analyst Laurent Murawiec, in his Power Point presentation to an assembly that included Henry Kissinger, former defense secretaries Harold Brown and James Schlesinger, Newt Gingrich, Thomas Foley, and a number of retired high-level generals and admirals, exhorted his audience to embark on a campaign of outright conquest:

“Iraq is the tactical pivot—Saudi Arabia the strategic pivot—Egypt the prize.”

One has to ask: are these people crazy?

In Murawiec’s case, the manic tone may be attributed to his previous membership in the cult of Lyndon LaRouche from 1973–86. But there’s more to it than that.

According to the *Washington Post*’s account of the reaction to the briefing, of all that distinguished company only Kissinger had the presence of mind to raise any objections. That such a lunatic idea could be casually bandied about and even endorsed by some in this administration is ominous evidence that U.S. foreign policy is in danger of becoming dangerously unhinged.

That such a radical idea could be propagated by ostensible conservatives shows how far the divisions that opened up during Gulf War I have widened. In his syndicated newspaper column for November 16, 1990, Pat Buchanan summarized the credo of those on the Right who weren’t going along with King George’s “New World Order”:

“Most of us ‘neo-isolationists,’ a disparate, contentious lot, are really not ‘neo’ anything. We are old church and old right, anti-imperialist and anti-interventionist, disbelievers in Pax Americana. We love the old republic,

and when we hear phrases like ‘New World Order,’ we release the safety catches on our revolvers.”

The “old right”—who and what was that?

Today, a popular misconception of conservatives equates them with militarists: the Cold War and the belligerent yapping of such journals of conservative opinion as the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review* have certainly contributed to this image. But it wasn’t always so.

The conservative movement of the 1930s, on up through the early 1950s, was, as Buchanan puts it, anti-imperialist and anti-interventionist. The biggest peace movement in our history was not the Mobilization to Stop the (Vietnam) War, but the America First Committee, organized by prominent conservative businessmen and publicists in 1940. Writing in the conservative press of the time, such writers as John T. Flynn, Frank Chodorov, *Chicago Tribune* publisher Robert W. McCormick, and Garet Garrett inveighed against foreign entanglements and warned that with war would come the end of the Old Republic. On the subject of the Old Right, today’s (neo)conservatives and their liberal first cousins are in complete agreement: both dismiss the America Firsters out of hand, usually smearing them in the process. In any case, the Left-Right consensus seems to be that

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