

9-21-2003

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Recommended Citation

Atwood, Paul L. (2003) "War IS the American Way of Life," *New England Journal of Public Policy*. Vol. 19: Iss. 1, Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol19/iss1/12>

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War IS the American Way of Life

Paul L. Atwood

The war against terror following the September 11 attack is in keeping with the long history of American foreign policy. Various “doctrines” issued by one president after another since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 are really incremental expansions of that original statement of hemispheric dominance aimed at encompassing the entire globe. The westward expansion to the Pacific coast and beyond to the Philippines, Hawaii, and the interventions in the nations of Latin America are early stages in the development of American hegemony. After intervening in the First World War, Wilson tried to dictate the peace. The rest of the century found a massive build up in military strength with concomitant bellicosity. Setting themselves against a more recent history of global cooperation, key ideologues within the Bush Administration have used the tragic events of 9/11 to set in motion a comprehensive plan for the United States to act unilaterally, without respect for international institutions like the United Nations, to achieve “full spectrum dominance,” that is, total control in all areas, political, economic, and military across the globe.

Our people are decided in the opinion that it is necessary
for us to take a share in the occupation of the ocean . . .
but what will be the consequence? Frequent wars without a doubt.
— Thomas Jefferson.

That which is good for communities in America is good for the
Armenians and Greeks and Mohammedans of Turkey.
— American Board of Foreign Missions, 1881

If we have to use force it is because we are America. We are the
indispensable nation.
— Madeleine Albright

Much ink is expended these days to account for what many believe is a new thrust in the American experience; namely, that the present administration has embarked upon a course of “empire” quite in opposition to the main contours of American history. For many, the ascendance of the United States to global dominance is accidental or serendipitous, quite in contrast to the calculated Machiavellian ascensions of great powers in the past.¹

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This is simply factually wrong. The founders of this nation rebelled against Britain in order to reap the benefits of British empire-building in North America themselves and in short order organized the nascent United States to compete directly with London for dominance in the western hemisphere. What Jefferson called an “empire for liberty” required the loss of liberty for peoples other than privileged Americans. Since the founding, by means of a number of serial changes in “doctrine,” the United States has progressively enlarged the scope of its dominance, extending it literally to the world.

If one were able to step back in time to the beginning of the twentieth century, one would find a very different America. A tiny oligarchy made up largely of ruthless and fantastically wealthy kleptocrats and their political representatives dominated the rapidly expanding industrial order (just as today); a small but growing middle class was just converting to the new religion of consumerism; the farm population was declining rapidly, and a large mass of overworked, impoverished, slum dwelling and unhealthy Americans were stirring in riotous demand of a fairer share of the burgeoning economy.

The patrician oligarchy feared that the “great unwashed” might actually succeed in overturning the established order and so, over the next few decades they stage-managed a “progressive” solution to the nation’s woes. Demands for shorter hours, safer working conditions, better pay and housing, and healthcare had come from the lower orders, but the conservative intelligentsia of the day understood that some of these demands would have to be met. The crux of the matter was how to do so without detriment to the elite’s own political and economic interests.²

The answer, in short, was that the United States should leap onto the stage of global empire, in competition for other people’s resources with Europe’s powers, and establish markets for American products by force. In this way radical redistribution of the local American economic pie could be averted simply by creating a much larger pie. The oligarchs could retain the bulk of the economic power that accrued to them from ownership, and simultaneously make the lives of ordinary working citizens easier, thereby reducing the pressure for more holistic change.

The problem, though we have never really faced it honestly, is that impoverished Americans who had recently been viciously exploited by their American overlords now became, though in a virtually invisible, globally systemic way, the beneficiaries of exploitation themselves.

To shield ourselves from comprehending this we have invented a rigorous ideology that informs us that we have created the most prosperous society in history by virtue of our own industry, creative genius, exceptional history and national character, and system of free enterprise. Thus those who remain “undeveloped,” do not prosper, it is assumed, are mired in poverty because they are lazy or uneducated, lack drive, ambition and a work ethic, or are otherwise benighted. Yet the reality is radically different. A student of mine from Mali put matters most starkly once by declaring to a class, “We have been plundered for five centuries. With what are we to develop? Your development has required our systematic underdevelopment.”

At the dawn of the twentieth century, as the Progressive spirit of the age waxed, faith in progress was virtually universal throughout the West, embracing the certitude that humanity was evolving beyond its primitive, violent past and that the institutions of western civilization — liberalism and capitalism especially — were leading the way and creating the preconditions for future peace and prosperity across the globe. The savagery and carnage of World War I erased such naivete, making way for nihilism or a thirst for vengeance, thus planting the seeds of another round

of global warfare that resulted in tens of millions of deaths, incalculable suffering, and destruction of resources on a gargantuan scale.

Since 1945, despite the establishment of the United Nations with its avowed intent to prevent war, the number of humans dead at the hands of their fellows in armed conventional conflicts around the earth approaches the number killed in World War II. The conventional weapons trade sustains many national economies while weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear, biological, and chemical, have proliferated. If ever unleashed in another global war they will surely extinguish civilization as we know it, if not humanity itself. Few would dispute that far from fulfilling the optimistic predictions, the twentieth century was the bloodiest in human history. The dismal chronicle of the recent era ought to raise exceedingly serious questions — and anxieties — about the twenty-first century to come.

Any serious speculation about the prospects for war or peace in the new century must confront the history and policies of the most potent armed entity ever to bestride the planet. As we enter this new epoch American land, air, and sea forces (and bases to support them) are dispersed across the globe in a projection of power by one nation on a scale unimaginable at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Today the United States is at war in two nations and is actively intervening in many more. American arms patrol all the seas and skies, including outer space. Troops are stationed in force throughout the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central and Southeast Asia where they disturb second-tier powers, Russia and China, and they remain in significant numbers in Europe, Japan, and Korea. In the Western hemisphere, American troops have covertly entered a longstanding civil war in Colombia, while U.S. military liaisons with Latin American militaries are intimate except with Cuba's. With the Pentagon asserting its intention to achieve "full-spectrum dominance," the Bush administration announced its desire to proceed with a resuscitated missile defense program, repudiated the 1972 ABM Treaty, and impeded the ratification of the global landmine treaty. Bush's announced intention to develop new generations of nuclear weapons, even as he demands that other nations must desist from such development, will actually spur their proliferation, and a new arms race with at minimum, both the Russians and Chinese. Meanwhile, second- and third-tier powers will scramble to acquire their own WMD, as Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and perhaps Iran, have already done.

Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, as well as the coterie of neo-conservatives surrounding President Bush, unhesitatingly embrace the term "hegemony" as the U.S. goal for the twenty-first century.³ Thus, the decisions of the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, as it reacts to events, are certain to shape matters of war and peace as the new millennium unfolds.

But there is nothing new in all this except today's global scale. The original thirteen colonies of the U.S. owed their existence to armed violence and their prosperity to race-based slavery, indentured servitude, and ethnic cleansing. Thus the U.S. was conceived and birthed in considerable bloodshed. When the rebellious leaders of the nascent United States made their momentous decision to break from British authority, their primary goal was to replace Britain as the dominant power in North America, including an attempt to annex Canada. U.S. territorial expansion from 1789 to 1854 — from sea to shining sea — was the most rapid and extensive in human history. It was carried out by armed violence with genocidal results.

As early as 1823 the United States announced the Monroe Doctrine and its greater goal of hemispheric jurisdiction, though it as yet lacked the firepower to enforce such an aim. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the prevailing American

ideology of Manifest Destiny emphasized “continentalism” or the right of the United States to dominate the North American land mass. Meanwhile the United States was actively intervening in Central America, enlarging its dominion by forcibly annexing approximately one-third of Mexico, and laying the groundwork for a canal to connect the Atlantic and Pacific.

Having wrested the ports of California from Mexico and the Pacific Northwest from Britain, Washington signaled its desire to contest for sovereignty in the Pacific, embarking on a fateful armed encounter with Japan, invoking the threat of force, and thereby setting in motion events that would ultimately reap the bitter harvest of war in the following century.

The Civil War put foreign policy objectives on hold, but once national unity had been settled, the global industrial and financial preponderance of the United States was attained by 1900. Shortly thereafter Teddy Roosevelt announced his famous corollary to the Monroe Doctrine: the United States would henceforth “police” the Western Hemisphere. Since then, through various mutations, the doctrine has been, in effect, extended to the entire world.

As Jefferson predicted, America’s growing ascendancy in the world markets required greater armed forces and a more active, interventionist and violent stance in global affairs in order to ensure that resources in other people’s lands arrived on American shores on American terms and that their commodity, capital, and labor markets served American corporate interests.

As early as 1853 Senator William Seward, later the aggrandizing Secretary of State who purchased Alaska from Russia, spoke to the growing aims of U.S. foreign policy:

Multiply your ships and send them forth to the East. The nation that draws most materials and provisions from the earth, and fabricates the most, and sells the most of productions and fabrics to foreign nations, must be, and will be, the great power of the earth. ⁴

Later, after the Civil War he added:

The world contains no seat of empire so magnificent as this . . . the nation thus situated . . . must command the empire of the seas, which alone is real empire. ⁵

By 1895 the U.S. had seized much of Samoa, prompting Senator Henry Cabot Lodge to exult as follows:

We have a record of conquest, colonization and expansion unequalled by any people in the 19th century . . . we are not to be curbed now. For the sake of our commercial prosperity we ought to seize the Hawaiian Islands now. ⁶

Lodge’s challenge was quickly taken up; Hawaii was annexed in 1898.

That year the United States would actively seek war with Spain, stating officially that Spain constituted a threat to the hemisphere, and that the goals were to banish the corrupt and brutal Spanish and promote freedom for their colonized peoples in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. But there were those in and about the McKinley Administration with ulterior motives. As Theodore Roosevelt, then undersecretary of the navy, put matters:

I should say that I would welcome a foreign war. It is very difficult for me not to wish war with Spain for that would result at once in getting a proper navy. . . . In strict confidence I should welcome almost any war.” ⁷

TR's strategic desires followed from an emerging central doctrine in foreign policy circles. Like most members of the era's political/economic elite he emphasized the protection of export markets as central to American domestic stability. The American economic engine was creating surplus products far in excess of the domestic market's capacity to absorb them. The solution to this problem seemed clear: open new markets. The war with Spain would give the United States bases in the Philippines, the doorstep to the East, and in the Caribbean to make those waters America's *mare nostrum*. Even Roosevelt's political opponents agreed. As Mark Hanna put matters:

We can and will take a large slice of the commerce of Asia. That is what we want. We are bound to share in the commerce of the Far East, and it is better to strike for it while the iron is hot.⁸

It is often forgotten that TR was a Harvard-trained historian whose written works were fundamentalist panegyrics to American/Anglo-Saxon supremacy and expansionism.⁹ He was at the heart of a coterie of intellectuals within power circles who saw him as their "man on horseback." Together, they formulated strategic, economic, and ideological justifications for renewed American expansion in the late nineteenth century, and these bear significant comparison to related ideas promoted by the ideologues in power today.

Perhaps the rawest, most honest expression of the group's objectives, was made by a political ally of the Roosevelt circle, Senator Albert Beveridge. Speaking of the brutal Philippine War of 1900–02 he uttered the following on the Senate floor:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-admiration. No, he has made us the master organizers of the world . . . that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples. . . . The Philippines are ours forever . . . and just beyond the Philippines lie China's illimitable markets. . . . We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world. . . . China is our natural customer. The Philippines give us a base at the door of the East. . . . It has been charged that our conduct of the war has been cruel. Senators, it has been the reverse. Senators, remember that we are not dealing with Americans or Europeans. We are dealing with Orientals.¹⁰

This remarkable statement encapsulates the prevailing doctrines then gaining currency in American civic ideology and which would characterize the American mind-set to one degree or other until the war in Vietnam of the 1960s occasioned a public (and from the perspective of power, dangerous) and short-lived rethinking of the nation's sense of purpose.

First, there is the renascent idea of Manifest Destiny in which God is presumed to have ordained a special mission for America as the inheritor of Anglo-Saxon civilization to set the agenda for the world. Second, the emphasis on American commercial interests in China (greater East Asia) that will require military and naval bases to protect them. Finally, there is Social-Darwinism and its embedded racism insisting on Anglo-American racial superiority and justifying mass killing of Filipino civilians as racial inferiors standing in the way of "progress."

Years later the slaughter of Filipinos by Japanese troops would serve as one among many justifications for the war with Japan. By then, atrocities committed by Americans in the all but forgotten Philippine War would be erased from the history we teach our children.

The rise of the United States to industrial and financial power had occasioned profound social, political, and economic dislocations in the latter nineteenth century, which, in turn, prompted critical rethinking by older elites as to how to conserve their power, and how to gain power for would-be corporate arrivistes. New difficulties presented themselves: labor strife, urbanization, and the influx of southern and eastern European immigrants with different political ideologies. Most important, domestic consumption could not absorb the surplus created by American productivity, a factor that led inexorably to mass unemployment.

As the U.S. domestic population grew, pressure rose from below for redistribution of the nation's vast wealth, taking the form of demands for higher wages, shorter working weeks, the abolition of child labor, and health and safety guarantees. This critical welter of problems induced a flowering of ideas and theories from across the social and political spectrum. Rather than undergoing a radical redistribution of wealth, the nation's elites determined to enlarge the United States' share of global markets.

Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier thesis provided one rationale for expansion beyond U.S. continental borders. In the midst of the worst economic depression to have struck the United States (1893–97), Turner argued that the western frontier had long served as a safety valve to reduce popular social and political discontent by allowing migration to new lands, and he stressed that the final closing of that frontier (1890) required new outlets for American energies, a "commercial frontier" across the Pacific.¹¹

This argument flowed naturally into the theories being put forth by Brooks and Henry Adams, scions of the presidential family, who argued that the decay of American civilization was at hand unless the course of empire continued its westward trajectory. Brooks believed he had found the key to history in the westward progress of "world civilization" from ancient Greece and Rome to Britain and the United States. To avoid historically inevitable decay, the United States must continue this movement on into the Pacific. According to Adams, only the "valor" of the American soldier could protect against the "law of civilization and decay."¹²

Inevitably such ideas percolated in military strategic circles as well. In his classic, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, Captain (later Admiral) Alfred Thayer Mahan rooted his prescriptions for the expansion of the American navy in response to the economic dislocations then widespread. The expansion of industry had caused the United States to grow out of its domestic market. New outlets for the consumption of American production, and new sources of raw materials, would have to be found. Colonial possessions, which might provide bases for battle-ships, would serve as the necessary stepping-stones to the markets of Latin America and Asia. Such colonies existed, ready-made for the taking, in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. A canal through the Panamanian isthmus would provide the strategic link for American naval domination of the Atlantic and Pacific.¹³

Social Darwinism was the perfect fertilizer as these ideas took root. Arising precisely at the moment when industrialization was radically altering western society and leading economic thinkers to advocate imperial expansion, Social Darwinism sought to extend Darwin's new theories about the struggle for life in the biological sphere to human society on a global scale and contributed to the idea that the Anglo-Saxon or Germanic "races" were inherently superior. We are accustomed to believe that Nazi ideology provided the provenance of such notions. But consider the statement made by General Arthur MacArthur, father of General Douglas MacArthur, and first governor-general of the occupied Philippines: "America's wonderful thrust

into Asia was the destiny of the magnificent Aryan people.”¹⁴

All of these theories, rooted seemingly in the objective facts of history, pro-pounded by pedigreed scholars, seemed as siren songs to Roosevelt, Cabot Lodge, Secretary of State John Hay, and others anxious to project the United States into the club of great powers.

Hay is remembered chiefly for articulating the Open Door Policy that envisioned free access to the markets of greater East Asia to all western powers and Japan. On the surface, the policy seemed to be fair and equitable. By this time, however, the productive capacity of the United States exceeded most of its rivals combined, and Wall Street was steadily undermining Britain’s financial supremacy. The ability of the United States to out-compete the other great powers economically meant effectively a closed door for them in China and they knew it. That is why all opposed the Open Door, especially Japan, a rising Pacific power that had emerged suddenly, fearful that western imperialists who had already subjected much of Asia to their rule would set their sights on Nippon. Like Germany, Japan burst upon the international scene in the late nineteenth century, throwing the world system into disarray.

Japan’s emergence as a military power capable of thwarting western goals in East Asia stemmed from Commodore Perry’s armed incursion in the 1850s, an epochal event that so frightened the Japanese shoguns that they set aside their differences in order to strengthen the imperial throne. Subsequently, Japan underwent rapid modernization. A feudal power in 1855 at roughly the stage of development of thirteenth-century England, Japan had achieved near parity with western powers by 1905 after its stunning defeats of China in 1895 and Russia in 1904. Thus, Washington’s Open Door in Asia faced no greater challenge. Even before the turn of the century, the American navy was drawing up plans to war with Japan, plans that would be refined right up to 1941.¹⁵

China itself showed signs of rejecting western designs. In 1900, the Boxer Rebellion broke out among students enraged over western exploitation of China’s weakness. Most European powers, and the United States and Japan, dispatched troops to quell the anti-foreign riots. This armed “police action” was the cause of profound resentment toward westerners, which would be an important factor in the success of the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949.

In the lead-up to World War I the United States exerted its declared hegemony over the Western Hemisphere, established military and naval bases in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and launched numerous armed interventions throughout the Caribbean including Mexico, Nicaragua, Honduras, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. In 1904 President Teddy Roosevelt dispatched ships and troops to sever the province of Panama from Colombia, which was demanding more money from Washington for rights to build a long-sought inter-oceanic canal. Domestic opposition arose to TR’s executive fiat. Said Teddy: “I took the Panama Canal. Let Congress debate.”¹⁶

When the Mexican Revolution threatened American investments (American companies owned or controlled 80 percent of Mexico’s mineral deposits, including oil), President Wilson declared, “I will teach them to elect good men,” and ordered the bombardment of Vera Cruz.¹⁷

In 1914 the European great powers went to war with each other largely over whether Germany would emerge as the dominant continental power and threaten the positions of Britain, France, and Russia. This contest between Europeans brought American trade and the Open Door into focus for American policymakers. Wilson declared the United States officially neutral. But his executive order requiring American businesses to act evenhandedly toward belligerents did not have the full

force of law. Most American businessmen preferred to trade equally with both sides in the European war, but the dominant British navy blockaded German ports, effectively halting American trade with the Triple Alliance. Unable to blockade Britain and France, the Germans began to sink British merchant ships carrying American goods.

Meanwhile most large American banks were extending credit and loans to the British and French to cover the costs of their American imports, and the United States government was loaning considerable sums to the British Exchequer. American shippers were also violating the neutrality policy by secretly loading contraband aboard ships bound for Britain.

Since American trade with Germany had vanished, the United States had a vested interest in the Allied side of the war. Should Britain lose the war it could not repay its loans or credits. Meanwhile a German victory portended long-term closure of European markets on terms not amenable to the Open Door policy. Though Wilson's official position was to stay out of the war, pressure increased on him to side with Britain and France. When the Germans sank the British passenger liner *Lusitania*, loaded with banned and decidedly un-neutral ammunition in 1915, with the loss of 128 American lives, the slogan "freedom of the seas" became the war cry of American hawks. Though Germany drew back and stopped attacking British ships, it could not long allow unimpeded British access to American goods. When Germany resumed submarine warfare in the spring of 1917, the *casus belli* desired in the most politically influential U. S. circles had been achieved.

Waged under the slogan "to make the world safe for democracy," World War I catapulted the United States to the forefront of power. Very little in the way of democracy resulted, however. Taking advantage of Germany's economic collapse after the war, vengeful Britain and France saw to the occupation of German territory and saddled their erstwhile enemy with enormous reparations. Feeling humiliated and embittered, German war veterans formed the nucleus of what would become the Nazi party.

Russia, meanwhile, devastated by the war, turned to Leninism, and then descended into civil strife. Hoping to strangle the Bolshevik infant in its cradle, Britain, France, the United States, and Japan dispatched troops to take the side of counterrevolutionaries — a fact all but forgotten in the United States but well remembered in Russia. This armed intervention in Russia had the effect of tightening the grip of totalitarianism on that nation. Faced with aggression from outsiders, control of the Soviet state devolved to the most ruthless of the Bolsheviks vying for power: Stalin.

Japan, too, resented its treatment after the war. Both the United States and Britain tried to force it to accept a second-class military status in the hope of averting Japanese expansion into East Asia. Such tactics reaped the reverse. In 1932 Japan invaded and annexed Manchuria and for the remainder of the decade progressively took control of China's eastern coast and French Indochina. Japan's announced goal was a "Monroe Doctrine for Asia,"¹⁸ and this came directly into conflict with the Open Door policy that envisioned untrammelled American access to East Asia's vast resources, markets, and labor.

Japan's attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor has become the legendary paradigm for the "American way of war," which asserts that the United States goes to war only when the overt assaults and crimes of others leave no alternative. Yet the historical record shows clearly that the Roosevelt Administration had undertaken measures that left Japan with effectively two choices: to accept permanent

subordinate status in the international arena or to go to war with what Admiral Isoruko Yamamoto, the architect of the Hawaiian strike, called a “sleeping giant.” When ordered to plan the attack on Pearl Harbor, he told his superiors that, if successful, the surprise attack might buy Japan some time, but that Japan could not win a long-term war with the United States. The best outcome to be expected would be the destruction of the threatening American fleet, an opportunity to strengthen defenses around the empire, and a subsequent negotiated settlement.¹⁹

We now know that the decryption system known as “Magic,” radio direction finders, and wiretaps on spies in Honolulu provided ample evidence of Japan’s intent to strike at Pearl Harbor. Indeed “War Plan Orange,” the U.S. naval plan for war with Japan devised early in the twentieth century, anticipated that Pearl Harbor would be the key to victory — for either side. Moreover, Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew, through his system of spies, learned early in 1941 of Japan’s secret plan, and numerous naval officers of the highest rank warned President Franklin Roosevelt that his measures, including moving the Pacific Fleet from California to Hawaii, and the subsequent oil and steel embargoes, and finally the ultimatum presented to Japan to quit Indochina in the summer of 1941, were ineluctably leading to war. As FDR said, “Sooner or later the Japanese would commit an overt act against the United States and the nation would be willing to enter the war.”²⁰

American cryptographers had successfully decoded Japanese diplomatic ciphers allowing Washington to know that Tokyo had decided on a course of war after negotiations had broken down. Thus, on November 27, 1941, a full ten days before Pearl Harbor, Secretary of War Henry Stimson issued an official “war warning” to all Pacific commanders: “The United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act . . . undertake no offensive action until Japan has committed an overt act.”²¹

The real issue is why FDR and his cabinet desired war with Japan — and Germany.

Neither Germany nor Japan, nor both combined, had the remotest chance to invade the United States and subject it to their rule. Most Americans seemed to appreciate this; on the eve of Pearl Harbor polls showed that 80 percent of the population was opposed to entering the war. The recent Battle of Britain had demonstrated Nazi weakness clearly. If Hitler had failed to cross thirty miles of the English Channel how could he cross the Atlantic Ocean to attack the continental United States?

On Wall Street, however, the temperature was very different. The financial elite perceived serious threats but they were not military in nature. Both Germany and Japan’s autarkic empires would shut out the free access of American capital and goods to their markets. As the United States struggled to recover from the Great Depression, Volkswagens would be sold throughout the Reich, not Chevrolets; meanwhile Japan was simultaneously closing the open door in East Asia.

As Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau put matters: “The Germans will form a sort of overall trading corporation and what are we to do about our cotton and wheat?”²² Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long said: “If Germany wins this war and subordinates Europe every commercial order will be routed to Berlin and filled under its orders somewhere in Europe rather than in the United States.”²³ A major lord of Wall Street, Bernard Baruch spoke for many:

Germany does not have to conquer us in a military sense. By enslaving her own labor and that of the conquered countries, she can place in the markets of the world products at a price with which we could not compete. This will destroy our standards of living and shake to its depths our moral and physical fiber, already strained to the breaking point.²⁴

Baruch's point was seconded by Thomas Lamont of the First National City Bank:

Under a Hitler victory we should find ourselves in the midst of a country-wide depression so deep and so prolonged as to make the worst of the last ten years here look like a happy and bountiful time.²⁵

Fortune magazine editorialized:

With a population of more than 400 million China is the biggest single potential market in the world. A strong China, able and willing to protect the principle of the open market in the Far East, would be worth billions of dollars to the United States.²⁶

The United States entered WWII last and used its naval and air power primarily. Thus the U.S. suffered the fewest military casualties, and unlike its closest allies as well as its enemies, endured no combat or devastation on its continental territory. Indeed, at war's end the United States was far richer than when it entered, and because all the other great powers had spent themselves, it emerged as the dominant power on the planet.

Immediately, however, the specter of mass unemployment surfaced. Even before the end of the war in 1944, Charles Wilson, former chief of General Electric and FDR's wartime production czar, had worried about what to do about sixteen million GIs returning to civilian life. Would breadlines await them? War production had ended the Great Depression, but it had absorbed only a fraction of those formerly unemployed. Most young would-be workers had gone into military service. Wilson's answer was a "permanent war economy."²⁷ But for that a permanent enemy would be required.

Thus, yesterday's ally rapidly became the new threat. Though the Soviet Union had undergone the most extensive devastation in the history of warfare — over twenty-five million dead, seventy thousand cities and towns utterly destroyed, transportation and agriculture crippled — Americans were bombarded with propaganda to the effect that Moscow was taking over the world. In fact, communist propaganda did call for worldwide revolution, but the revolt of the so-called "third world" was not directed from Moscow. Communist agitation and upheaval in Vietnam and Korea, and incipient anti-colonial struggles across the planet, were a response to centuries of European (and Japanese) misrule, and to the post-World War II recognition that the Europeans were finished as empire builders.

Stalin sought to take advantage of imperial decline more to foster traditional Russian foreign policy aims, most particularly national security, than to spread the true faith of communism. While the Red Army occupied eastern and central Europe, this was a result of having successfully waged war against the Nazi juggernaut. The Soviets occupied this territory for exactly the same reason that the United States occupied Western Europe and all of Japan.

Though the Yalta Accords at the end of World War II had effectively assented to a division of Europe in keeping with military realities, Washington, employing Churchill's phrase, began to assert that Stalin had drawn an "Iron Curtain" across Europe, and that he had to be "contained." As soon as the dust of WWII had settled, the mass media began to assault the public with doomsday scenarios of Soviet launched nuclear missiles falling on Washington, even though the United States was the sole atomic power, and most intelligence studies insisted that Stalin was almost ten years away from acquiring nukes.²⁸

The notion that it was moral opposition to communist totalitarianism that ani-

mated American policy is widely held, but that idea is contravened by the fact that throughout the Cold War, Washington overthrew democracies and filled the vacuums with brutal dictatorships every bit as criminal as anything to be found in the communist world. And Stalin's presumed intransigence is called into question by the facts that he withdrew Soviet troops from Iran, Manchuria, North Korea, and Austria in line with wartime agreements, hardly the actions of someone bent on global domination. Rather Stalin's power, while great, was still limited by the vastly superior power of the United States as the history of containment proved, and his actions were those of a ruler cannily, if savagely, preserving what he possessed.

Clearly, the Soviets attempted to exploit popular revolutions wherever they could. But Washington was also intervening across the planet and on a much greater scale. The wars in Korea and Vietnam were not orchestrated in Moscow or Beijing, and the aid given to U.S. client regimes in Seoul and Saigon dwarfed the contributions of the so-called communist monolith.

The deeper crisis facing American supremacy was the devastation of the global capitalist economy engendered by the war. U.S. policy faced a four-pronged threat: that the ruined nations of capitalist Europe — both friend and former foe — would revert to the sort of economic nationalism of the prewar years; or that postwar impoverishment would gain support for socialists and communists and that might lead to accommodation with the Soviets, that both Europe and the Asian rim could not buy American goods owing to their lack of dollars; and finally that the European colonies were in revolt and threatening to take themselves in independent directions.²⁹

Dealing with these problems would require outlays of U.S. tax dollars that might dwarf the cost of the war itself and impede domestic recovery.

The central goal of postwar U.S. policy became the economic and financial reconstruction of Germany as the new axis of an integrated European market for American goods and services and a similar program for Japan in East Asia, which would grant Japan management rights over the very empire it had just lost, but under American supervision. As then U.N. ambassador John Foster Dulles put it: "a healthy Europe" could not be "divided into small compartments." It had to be organized into "an integrated market big enough to justify modern methods of mass production for mass consumption." Having challenged the United States and Europe's empires both Germany and Japan would now become junior partners in "America Inc.," sharing in the benefits of a global economy while uniting to thwart the opposition of communists and economic nationalists.³⁰

Just as the key to the American victory in World War II had depended upon allied access to the fuel upon which all industrial and military production and deployment had depended, so postwar policy increasingly focused upon control of oil. As the State Department's Petroleum Division put matters even before the war ended, oil was "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history."³¹

The following year, State Department position papers reaffirmed this position:

Our petroleum policy is predicated on a mutual recognition of a very extensive joint interest and upon control . . . of the great bulk of the petroleum resources of the world. . . . US-UK agreement upon the broad, forward-looking pattern of the development and utilization of petroleum resources under the control of nationals of the two countries is of the highest strategic and commercial importance.³²

Inclusion of Britain in this condominium was actually somewhat disingenuous

since the British Empire was collapsing as a direct result of the war, and Washington was playing Rome to Britain's Athens. Indeed, American oil policy was aimed at controlling wartime allies as well as enemies. As James Forrestal, shortly to be named the first Secretary of Defense, put matters in 1947, "whoever sits on the valve of Middle East oil may control the destiny of Europe."³³ The next year George Kennan, architect of the anti-communist policy of containment and State Department chief of policy planning, wrote that "U.S. control over Japanese oil imports would help provide 'veto power' over Japan's military and industrial policies."³⁴

The Truman Doctrine of 1947 purportedly sought to declare war on communism but effectively globalized the Monroe Doctrine in support of traditional goals. An early draft of Truman's message read as follows:

Two great wars and an intervening world depression have weakened the (capitalist) system almost everywhere except in the United States . . . if, by default, we permit free enterprise to disappear in other countries of the world, the very existence of our democracy will be gravely threatened.³⁵

What Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson feared was a return to self-contained, exclusive economic blocs that would freeze out American enterprise. Whether that took the form of Stalinism, state socialism, economic nationalism, or Arab nationalism made little difference. What official Washington meant by "free enterprise" was freedom for American corporations and financial institutions to penetrate the markets of the world on American terms. Obviously that would limit, at the very least, the freedom of others.

Fearing that such language would make the policy appear "like an investment prospectus" the final draft of the Truman Doctrine was retro-fitted to emphasize the global threat of communism.³⁶

Yet the cost of reconstructing ruined economies and taking on the financial burdens in Greece and Turkey from Britain were an enormous drain on the U.S. budget, especially in the continuing absence, despite the Marshall Plan, of Europe's ability to buy from American producers.

Then, in 1949, the near simultaneous shocks of the Chinese Communist Revolution and the earlier than predicted Soviet atomic bomb success altered Washington's plans. Though genuine China experts emphasized the tensions between the Chinese communists and Stalin, and insisted that China posed no threat to the United States, and though the Soviets did not have the strategic forward bases to conduct atomic air assaults on the United States, the Truman Administration's response stimulated the hysteria that was beginning to sweep the nation and wrought the utter reorientation of U.S. foreign policy. Militarization, unprecedented in American history, became the order of the day.³⁷

The Soviet A-Bomb was predictable. Considerable evidence exists to conclude that one of the major factors in the decision to use the Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had as much to do with sending a clear message to Stalin as to the Japanese. Stalin was shocked by the atomic bombings. He now had at hand *prima facie* evidence that the Americans could be as ruthless as himself. Certainly, the Soviets drew a clear conclusion from the vaporization of the two cities, and they then pulled out all the stops in their own scientific establishment to meet the United States on its own nuclear terms.³⁸

Ironically, in the name of meeting what it claimed was a deadly threat, Washington's policies toward the Soviets induced them to create the far graver threat

of being able to wreak nuclear annihilation upon the United States, a threat which nearly came to reality on more than one occasion, and which still exists in the form of Russia's formidable nuclear arsenal.

While liberals and conservatives blamed China's march to communism on Moscow, the reality was that the corrupt rule of Washington's client, Jiang Jieshi (then called Chiang Kai-shek) provided the vacuum which Mao Zedong readily filled. The communists had resisted the Japanese fiercely while Jiang's troops confined their military activities to plundering their fellow Chinese. Communists rode to power in China on the crest of popular support, and as a result of Chinese conditions, not because puppet-masters in the U.S.S.R. orchestrated events.³⁹ The sudden withdrawal of all of northeast Asia from the global capitalist system seriously derailed Washington's reconstruction plans for Japan, which required access to the region's resources and markets, just as it did before World War II.

There was fear that renewed government subsidies of military industries would siphon capital away from research and investment in the civilian sector, but advocates of the new emphasis won support by appealing to the public anxiety already created by the "Communist threat."

Thus the newly created National Security Council soon issued one of the most pivotal documents in the annals of U.S. foreign policy: *National Security Memorandum No. 68* (NSC 68). Arguing that a quantum leap in military spending might distort the Soviet-bloc economies to the point where they would develop military hardware over consumer goods, "guns over butter," and thereby foster internal upheaval, NSC 68 called for a tripling of the U.S. military budget, accompanied by parallel tax increases, the reining in of labor, reduction of social welfare spending, and greater propaganda measures domestically to build public consensus for a heated up Cold War.⁴⁰

There was, however, one significant problem. The fiscally conservative Congress balked at the enormity of the appropriations requested. Two months later relief arrived. In the deathless words of Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "Thank God! Korea came along and saved us."⁴¹

Korea had been divided by agreement between Washington and Moscow at the end of World War II, with plans for reunification to be decided in future. As was the case in China, matters were complicated by the fact that indigenous Korean opposition to Japanese rule had been led by the communists. Thus communists believed they had a right to establish the postwar government. Anticommunists, led by the American client Syngman Rhee were equally determined to reunify Korea on their terms, and until the war began had to be restrained by Washington from attacking the north.

Only weeks before the war began, Secretary Acheson had written Korea out of the United States "defense perimeter," but now the North Korean "invasion" of their own country was touted as evidence of the growing Soviet-led communist menace to the free world. Washington declared it and organized the UN "coalition" to drive the northerners out of the south, but once that had been achieved General Douglas MacArthur went beyond his mandate, crossed into the north, and indicated his intention to drive the communists from power altogether. This had the inevitable effect of drawing China into the war, and the world stood at the brink of another global conflagration. When, in 1953, an armistice was signed, over 3 million Koreans were dead, more than 50,000 U.S. soldiers had been killed, and the political boundaries of the nation were exactly what they had been when the war began. But South Korea was now safe for massive American foreign investment.⁴²

Similar patterns of communist and nationalist resistance to the U.S. agenda appeared throughout what the west liked to call the Third World. Ho Chi Minh turned toward communism as a direct result of having lived under French capitalism, as predatory and parasitic a system as any “ism,” and because, when he looked to American aid at the Versailles peace conference in 1919, he was shown the door, as he would be in 1946 when he appealed to President Truman for recognition of Vietnamese independence. Moreover, the Vietnamese revolution was impelled primarily by nationalism not communism.⁴³ Throughout the former European empires, the real problem for Washington was de-colonization. Sometimes the movements were communist but often not. Nationalism and the movement toward “non-alignment” were equal threats, though anti-communism provided the ideological cover for Washington’s global military response to any and all emerging movements that might frustrate the overall goal of a unitary, integrated, American-managed world-system.

Thus, in the name of anticommunism, the newly minted Central Intelligence Agency, violating the congressional mandate that had created it and domestic and international law as well, overthrew the parliamentary government in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954. In that year, Vietnam was divided, supposedly temporarily, in order to allow nationwide elections, but, since the CIA knew that Ho Chi Minh would easily win, the division was really to buy time to prevent Ho from achieving his movement’s goal of independence and national unity. In fact, Washington moved to prevent national elections and invented a new state, South Vietnam, and pretended that it was the choice of a majority of Vietnamese.⁴⁴

Throughout the 1950s the United States also intervened covertly to thwart the rise of Arab and Muslim nationalism, particularly Nasserism, a strategy that backfired by inadvertently promoting Islamic fundamentalism.

In 1961, the CIA worked to overthrow the popularly elected government of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo; attempted the overthrow of Castro in Cuba in the same year, which pushed him even closer to the Soviets and led to the nearly apocalyptic missile crisis in 1962; overthrew in 1963 the government of Ngo Dinh Diem, which it had originally installed; aided the military overthrow of an elected government in Brazil in 1964; succeeded in overthrowing Sukarno in Indonesia in 1965; and invaded Vietnam in March and the Dominican Republic in April of that year; assisted in the right-wing overthrow of the constitutional government of Greece in 1967; and aided generals in Chile, only one of two democracies in Latin America, to overthrow the legitimately elected government of Salvador Allende in 1973.⁴⁵

Despite efforts in the mid-1970s by Congress to rein in such activities on the part of American intelligence agencies, this pattern continued in Africa and in Central America during the 1980s, and on up to the present day, a full decade after the fall of communism. New enemies appeared as soon as the old ones departed.

The origin of the current crises in Afghanistan and Iraq can be traced back to European imperial adventures in these countries, and particularly the division of the former Turkish empire by Britain and France after World War I, but once the United States displaced the old empires it, too, turned to intervention throughout the Arab and Muslim world.

Forgotten today is the fact that the very first profits American oil companies derived from the Middle East came from Iraq.⁴⁶ After World War II, as noted, Washington sought to supplant British dominance in the region and largely succeeded. In 1955, the Eisenhower Administration agreed to anchor the Bagdad Pact, an informal alliance of the United States, Britain, and the four western-dominated nations of

Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Pakistan. In 1957, the Eisenhower Doctrine made the agreement formal by declaring America's intent to arm these nations and defend the region against "outside aggression." The United States was responding to the rising tide of Arab nationalism and efforts by Arab regimes to throw off western dominance by seeking closer relations with the Soviet Union.

In 1958 the British-sponsored Iraqi monarchy was overthrown by a military coup comprised of nationalist and Pan-Arab officers led by General Abdul Karim Qassim, who announced his intention to nationalize Iraqi oil, establishing relations with the Soviets, and set in motion an informal coalition of states that would ultimately become the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. At that time, Allen Dulles, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, cited the situation in Iraq as "the most dangerous in the world today."⁴⁷

The CIA then began to cultivate relations with the Iraqi Ba'ath party, known to be violently opposed to Qassim. Saddam Hussein, then a youthful Ba'athist, attempted to assassinate Qassim. Thus, the CIA was instrumental in assisting Hussein in his rise to power through the ranks of the Ba'ath until he became president of Iraq in 1979 when his first action was to murder all of his presumed opponents.⁴⁸

While Islamic fundamentalism in its present form came into existence as a protest against European meddling and westernization, it received a mighty boost when the United States re-installed the hated Shah in Iran by overthrowing the parliamentary government of Premier Mossadegh. The Shah's regime suppressed traditional Shiite Islam brutally with a secret police force trained by the CIA and promoted western style modernization. It even went so far, in the mid-1970s, as to allow the army to fire on Shiite women demonstrating to wear the banned *chador*, or Islamic head-dress, killing dozens and thereby setting off the firestorm that ultimately led to the Islamic Revolution.⁴⁹

To contain the spread of Shiite fundamentalism, Washington found it expedient to curry favor with Saddam Hussein of neighboring Iraq (whom it had assisted to power in the first place), encouraging him to go to war with Iran, and providing him with much military hardware and other forms of support. Donald Rumsfeld, then President Reagan's special envoy, even met with the dictator in 1983 and gave him a warm handshake and the go-ahead.⁵⁰ When Saddam used chemicals provided him by American companies to make poison gas and then used it on Iranians and Kurds within Iraq itself, the international community condemned this savage crime. But the first Bush administration refused to join in and worked to protect his regime right up until he crossed his erstwhile patron by invading Kuwait.⁵¹

Propaganda was employed to win the American public's support for war with Iraq in 1990, including the impersonation of a Kuwaiti nurse by the Kuwaiti foreign secretary's daughter, who claimed to have seen Iraqi troops slaughtering infants when she hadn't even been in Kuwait during the invasion. This grotesque and mendacious publicity stunt was orchestrated by the public relations firm Hill and Knowlton, with deep connections to the current administration. It is telling that when Iraqi troops committed genuine atrocities in Iran and against Iraqi Kurds, these received virtually no notice in the American press, at least not until later *after* Saddam had been demonized.

At any rate, the first Gulf War was no contest, and Iraq was driven from Kuwait easily. Rather than overthrow Saddam at that time, the first Bush administration realized that the untimely removal of Saddam would quickly lead to the disintegration of Iraq and quite likely to a Shiite takeover of much of the nation, while the Kurds would opt for independence, thereby inflaming Turkey's, Iran's, and Syria's

Kurds. In other words the entire Middle East would have been further destabilized.

The Bush administration would have preferred Saddamism without Saddam, but in the absence of a strongman it could trust, it settled for the devil it knew — one whose brutality could be counted upon to keep Iraq intact. The result was twelve more years of Saddam for Iraq.

When a United Nations team visited Iraq immediately following the war it found its infrastructure, including water systems, sewage systems, electricity grids, and hospitals in an “apocalyptic condition”— this was devastation induced by the American bombing.⁵² Once one of the more developed of Third World nations, Iraq collapsed suddenly into one of the poorest. Recently discovered Defense Intelligence Agency documents show that U.S. military planners knew clearly that the destruction of Iraq’s civilian infrastructure would lead inexorably to mass epidemics of extremely serious diseases and that the absence of an Iraqi capability to treat them would lead to widespread death and suffering. The conclusion is inescapable. Washington wanted mass civilian deaths and casualties.⁵³

Beyond that, in short order Washington imposed a comprehensive sanctions regime that over the next few years, led to the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five. The Clinton administration, in a bid to undermine criticism, appeared to soften the sanctions through the “oil for food” program. But it was utterly predictable that Saddam would sabotage it by keeping oil revenues to reward his closest allies and allowing ordinary Iraqis quite literally to starve. Even the UN itself, ostensibly the initiator of the sanctions, released reports indicating that the effects on the Iraqi people contravened the UN Charter and the Geneva Convention. The toll on ordinary Iraqis was so terrible, the UN estimated 1.7 million Iraqi civilian deaths as a result of sanctions, that the former Assistant Secretary General of the UN, Dennis Halliday, and many other top officials, resigned in protest saying: “the policy of economic sanctions is totally bankrupt. We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and as terrifying as that.”⁵⁴

In 1999, seventy members of Congress appealed to President Clinton to lift the sanctions and end what they termed “infanticide masquerading as policy.”⁵⁵ Later, when asked about the deaths of so many Iraqi children, Clinton’s Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, declared on American national television that she thought it “worth the price” and earned the bitterness of much of the Islamic world.⁵⁶

Even before the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, President Carter declared that the Soviets were threatening the entire region, and he therefore enunciated his own version of American foreign policy doctrine by asserting “Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁵⁷

The CIA had been working with the Pakistani Interservices Intelligence Agency (ISI) to recruit approximately 50,000 Islamic mujahideen (including Osama bin Laden) from across the Muslim world to enter that nation to undermine its pro-Soviet regime. These Islamists committed acts of terror against civilians, including blowing up buildings and aircraft in Afghanistan and in neighboring Soviet republics. No American officials called them terrorists then. Instead they applied the Orwellian appellation “freedom fighters.”

President Carter’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, put matters baldly: “We didn’t push the Russians to intervene but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.” On the day the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan Brzezinski exulted: “Now we can give the U.S.S.R. its Vietnam War.”⁵⁸

Later, when it became apparent that the mujahideen had turned against their American benefactors, Brzezinski was asked whether he regretted having brought anti-American terrorists into existence. His answer was stark: “What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of central Europe and the end of the Cold War?”⁵⁹ Stirred-up Muslims indeed! The Taliban soon after gave safe haven to bin Laden and he then used Afghanistan as a base to launch terrorist attacks against U.S. targets, most particularly the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

There is considerable evidence that plans to attack both Afghanistan and Iraq had been formulated in the Bush White House prior to the events of 9/11. Just nine days after 9/11, key members of the Defense Policy Board, many of whom had served in the Bush I administration, wrote an open letter to George W. Bush arguing:

Even if evidence does not directly link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Failure to undertake such an effort will constitute an early and perhaps decisive surrender in the war on international terrorism.⁶⁰

Well before Bush was even “elected” a radical plan to exert global hegemony had been put forth by a group calling itself the *Project for a New American Century* (PNAC), the main elements of which have been put into motion, and which constitute the most comprehensive revision of American foreign policy since NSC-68. PNAC resembles nothing so much as the aggressive posture undertaken by Washington at the turn of the last century. Indeed, the Bush administration’s current objectives far surpass the Cold War blueprint in scope and the national resources that will be necessary to secure them.

According to PNAC, the primary goal of U.S. policy must be to prevent the rise of any power that could challenge U.S. supremacy. That includes the economic and military potential of the European Union as well as the former communist giants. PNAC’s military goals stress the ability of the United States to act alone and to conduct “preemptive” attacks on various “enemies,” without recourse to the UN. These are the essential tenets of the so-called “Bush Doctrine.”

In 1992, Paul Wolfowitz, then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, objected to the outcome of the first Gulf War, wherein Saddam Hussein was allowed to remain in power. Wolfowitz drafted a defense policy guidance document calling for continued intervention throughout the region to “access vital raw materials, especially Persian Gulf oil.” Rejected by the first Bush administration as too “radical,” the document nevertheless became the template for PNAC.

In 1998, eighteen prominent neoconservatives, including Wolfowitz, Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, John Bolton, James Woolsey, and Richard Perle wrote President Clinton calling for the immediate removal of Saddam Hussein and the implementation of much of Wolfowitz’s original plan. Again this proposal was rejected.

But upon George W. Bush’s ascension to the presidency, most among this neo-conservative coterie became prominent members or advisers of his administration. In 2000, PNAC published its comprehensive blueprint for the radical revision of U.S. policy and strategy toward the larger world, and the total reorganization of U.S. armed forces, effectively rejecting multilateral cooperation in favor of what amounted to a call for unilateral global hegemony by the world’s only superpower.

The proposal called for entirely new missions for U.S. forces, including a

dominant nuclear capability and new types of nuclear weapons, sufficient combat forces to fight and win multiple major wars at once, and “constabulary” forces to supplant the United Nations. The plan also foresaw “a network of ‘deployment bases’ or ‘forward operating bases’ to increase the reach of current and future forces.” The report itself complained that the process of accomplishing this transformation was “likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event — like a new Pearl Harbor.”⁶¹

Then on September 11, 2001, that catalyzing event occurred, and within hours members of the Bush administration were scrambling to take advantage of the “opportunities” that the tragic attacks afforded. As National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice put the matter:

An earthquake of the magnitude of 9/11 can shift the tectonic plates of international politics . . . the international system has been in flux since the collapse of Soviet power . . . this is a period not just of grave danger but of enormous opportunity . . . to create a new balance of power that favored freedom.⁶²

In his State of the Union address of January 2002, Bush accused Iraq of being part of an “axis of evil,” which included Saddam Hussein’s bitter enemy, Iran, and North Korea and declared that the United States was ready for “preemptive action.” Bush stated flatly that Iraq had five hundred tons of chemical weapons, including sarin and mustard gas, 25,000 liters of anthrax, 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin, and 30,000 prohibited warheads, many of which Saddam was prepared to give to terrorist groups. He also asserted that Iraq had attempted to purchase uranium from Niger for its proscribed nuclear weapons program.⁶³

On February 4, 2003, the chief UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, announced that there was no evidence of Iraqi mobile bioweapons labs, no other WMD production, and no evidence of links to Al Qaeda. The very next day, in a dramatic speech to the United Nations, Secretary of State Colin Powell made a total of twenty-nine claims about Iraq’s ties to terrorists, its weapons programs, various violations of UN requirements, and the claim that Saddam had “the wherewithal to develop smallpox.”⁶⁴

The following month the United States launched all-out war on Iraq. Since then, not a single claim made by the Bush Administration has been substantiated. On October 2, seven months after the occupation of Iraq, CIA weapons expert David Kay told congressional intelligence committees that “We have not yet found stocks of weapons,” and as of this writing none have been found.⁶⁵

In December 2003, a six hundred-page joint report issued by both congressional intelligence committees on the intelligence failures in the wake of the events of 9/11 cited dozens of nations that had given aid or haven to Al Qaeda. Conspicuously absent from the list was Iraq.⁶⁸

The Bush administration’s claims have been false all along. Saddam’s regime, cruel and despotic as it was, posed no threat to the United States or to its neighbors and had no links to terrorism, though the assault on Iraq’s Muslims has now made that nation a new recruiting ground for Al Qaeda. The crucial question remains: what were the *real* reasons for this war?

White House and Pentagon strategic planning documents closely follow the PNAC template. The real aim is to be found there. Massive re-organization of the U.S. military, new weapons, including “bunker-buster” nukes, strategic bases in the Middle East from which to carry out proposed operations against other nations, especially Iran and Syria, which have been threatened in much the same way as Iraq, and to assert firm control over the region’s oil reserves.

As the twenty-first century opens, the United States finds itself at war in two countries, with troops stationed in one hundred and thirty other nations. In the case of Iraq, the early public optimism following in the wake of the rapid removal of Saddam has given way to diminishing support for the continued occupation as a mounting insurgency in that country continues to take the lives of American soldiers and Iraqi civilians every day. Although the Bush administration continues to insist that it is motivated by democratic, humanitarian, and security concerns, that seems belied by the fact that the first places occupied and defended by U.S. troops as they took Iraqi territory were the oil facilities and banks and not the hospitals, electric power plants so vital to the well-being of ordinary Iraqis, and the museums containing the most ancient artifacts reflecting the history of western civilization. Recent polls indicate that the majority of Iraqis see the American forces as occupiers and not liberators as evidenced by the handpicked Iraqi governing council, sweetheart multi-billion-dollar contracts that have been awarded without bid to the administration's closest corporate allies, and statements indicating that Iraq's oil resources are to be privatized and sold to the highest bidders who undoubtedly will be mostly American.

As this article goes to press the Bush administration is under heavy criticism for mounting American casualties and is making noises about the need to speed up the transfer of power to Iraqis, though the United States faces the daunting problem of preventing any of the leading factions among the majority Shiites from gaining the greatest share. According to a CIA operative who trained the Afghan "freedom fighters" to fight the Soviets in the 1980s, for every mujahideen killed by Soviet troops at least a half-dozen of his family members immediately took up arms in revenge. "Sadly this same rule probably applies in Iraq." He added:

There were two stark lessons in the history of the twentieth century. No nation that launched a war against another sovereign nation ever won. And every nationalist-based insurgency against a foreign occupation ultimately succeeded.⁶⁷

Troop morale among U.S. forces is declining, enlistments and re-enlistments among all troops but especially Reserves and National Guard units are rapidly dropping, and Bush is quietly filling draft-board positions across the country. If the most influential voices within the administration are to be taken seriously, the president's re-election and four more years of power are likely to result in the expansion of what they like to call the "war on terror" but is, in fact, a great deal more than that, the consequences of which cannot yet be predicted but are certain to be tragic. Z

Notes

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