

## Back to the Future

This is the text of a speech given at the Future of Freedom Foundation conference "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy and Civil Liberties" on June 1.]

To listen to the public spokesmen of the War Party, one would think that the 9/11 attacks tore a hole in the space-time continuum and landed us in an alternate universe, a world where World War II never ended ' where Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain, and, most of all, Adolf Hitler, seem not to have died ' where the atmosphere of crisis, of intellectual conformity, and of outright panic that suffuses the air in wartime has been lovingly recreated, like a remake of an old war movie.

There is a reason why they constantly evoke the imagery of that global catastrophe ' hailing the alleged heroism of Churchill, deriding the supposed cowardice of Chamberlain, and promoting the weird cult of Franklin Delano Roosevelt among ostensible conservatives. If you want to start a world war, it seems wise to recall and refit the tactics and maneuvers that led to the last one. And the parallels are striking: once again, a coalition of foreign lobbyists and domestic interests have coalesced around a program of world war. Once again a president has openly signed on to their agenda and is implementing it without regard to either the domestic consequences or the true nature of American interests abroad.

It is a replay of history that, for all its variations and idiosyncrasies, extends to the domestic political scene, where a movement that spans Left and Right has arisen to oppose the policy of perpetual war and the ruthless abrogation of civil liberties. On the Left, all the best instincts of a liberalism that we once thought was lost are being revived: once again we are seeing the skepticism of government and hatred of war that caused Randolph Bourne to declare, in the title of his famous essay, "War Is the Health of the State." This brand of liberal thought was nearly extinguished by the modernizing, managerial statism of the New Deal, which almost made us forget that the Democrats are, after all, the party of Jefferson. This is not to say that the antiwar "netroots" are self-conscious Jeffersonian Democrats ' but they are getting there. In the face of the systematic assault of Bush and his party on the very foundations of our old republic, rank-and-file Democrats and liberals of every description are rapidly recovering their long-lost, anti-authoritarian, antiwar heritage.

Another sort of heritage ' albeit one that is not unrelated ' is being rediscovered on the Right. Since the first Gulf War we have seen the rise of what has come to be called the "Old Right," that is, the pre-World War II conservative ethos of such forgotten figures as Garet Garrett, John T. Flynn, Rose Wilder Lane, Robert A. Taft, and the America First movement. This was a coalition of conservative Midwestern businessmen, libertarians, and old-style liberals who rose in opposition to Roosevelt's drive to war and the more authoritarian aspects of the New Deal.

The America First Committee, founded in the heyday of the Old Right's influence, was, up until the Vietnam War era, the biggest antiwar movement in American history. Culturally, it was a very different sort of antiwar movement from the sort we have today, in that it was driven by conservatives, proto-libertarians, Midwestern progressives such as Sen. Burton K. Wheeler, and liberals of the old school such as John T. Flynn. These people were all united in the fear that we would fight national socialism overseas only to wake up one morning to find ourselves saddled with an "American" version of the same super-centralizing, warmongering, authoritarian regime.

Politically, the demands of the old America First movement find their echo in today's coalition of anti-interventionist critics of the "war on terrorism," particularly its Republican "realist" wing. A recitation of the America First Committee's founding principles gives us a sense of dj vu:

- "1. The United States must build an impregnable defense for America.
- "2. No foreign powers, nor group of powers, can successfully attack a prepared America.
- "3. American democracy can be preserved only by keeping out of the European war.
- "4. 'Aid short of war' weakens national defense at home and threatens to involve America in war abroad."

If we apply this credo to the situation we find ourselves in today, we find that it makes a pretty good summary of anti-interventionism on both the Right and the Left. The first principle of building "an impregnable defense for America" presents, in brief, the "realist" school's primary emphasis on putting the defense of America first, over and above all considerations of "collective security" ' and ruling completely out of order such "idealistic" concepts as spreading "democracy" throughout the world.

The second principle, of "a prepared America," prefigures not only the Republican "realist" perspective, but also that of the "national security Democrats" who criticize the Bush regime's lack of focus on the specific threat of al-Qaeda, as opposed to the diversion of regime-change in Iraq.

The third principle is really the essence of the Old Right's critique of the war-in-Europe, statism-at-home program of the Roosevelt administration ' and it also anticipates the paleoconservative and libertarian fear of what Lew Rockwell has so trenchantly described as "red-state fascism." The America Firsters clearly saw the link between war abroad and creeping socialism and authoritarianism at home ' a connection that our fake "conservatives" of the Rush Limbaugh-Ann Coulter school just don't get. Conversely, a growing number of liberals, including Democratic Party activists, do get this connection and are gradually ' or, in some cases, rapidly ' moving toward what might be termed a libertarian position.

The concept of "aid short of war" doesn't really translate into the contemporary idiom, having to do with aid to beleaguered Britain during the blitz, but in general it does relate to the larger issue of "collective security" ' another concept that today's conservatives embrace wholeheartedly, and which was anathema to their much wiser ancestors.

The America First group also declared in its founding statement that its purpose was "to urge Americans to keep their heads amid rising hysteria in times of crisis" ' a sentiment that, unfortunately, not many conservatives (or liberals, for that matter) shared on 9/11. While all around them the liberals and pro-Communist leftists were calling for intervention in the European war, these conservative realists of yesteryear resisted the urge to jump on the war bandwagon. As Hitler's armies overran Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Belgium, Holland, and then turned on their former allies the Soviets, the America Firsters kept their cool and analyzed the crisis in terms of what would serve our distinctly American interests, rather than emotional attachments to the embattled British ' or any nonsensical idea that we would have to fight the Germans over there or else battle the Wehrmacht in the streets of Des Moines.

In our own time, the analogue to Pearl Harbor is, of course, the 9/11 attacks, and, it's sad to say that all too many so-called libertarians ' not to mention conservatives ' succumbed to the hysteria. In a speech [.mp3] given to a special Cato Institute donors conference held on Sept. 20 of that fateful year, Cato bigwig Tom G. Palmer attacked what he called the "blame America" response to the attacks that, he claimed, was coming from the American Left and some sectors of the Right. He spent most of his time during his 11-minute talk going after straw men, such as an editorial by Robert Kaiser in the Washington Post, which, in typical woolly-headed liberal fashion, tried to link the attacks to our failure to sign the Kyoto Accord. Palmer somehow linked this to former libertarian John Gray's indictment of the free market, although the connection between Gray's economic views and 9/11 is vague, if not nonexistent. Palmer then turned his sights on the attacks themselves, and here is where he lost his head and succumbed to hysteria.

He described the attacks as "an attack upon civilization itself" ' to hear him tell it at the time, none of this had anything to do with American foreign policy. It was all about our character as a people. The twin towers of the World Trade Center were, to his mind, "the perfect target for our enemies" in that they are (or were) symbols of commerce and prosperity ' supposedly the objects of Osama bin Laden's unrelenting hatred and the real reason for the attacks.

Oddly, Palmer made no reference to the Pentagon, which, as we all know, was also hit ' and this was truly the crowning shock of that dramatic day, that the epicenter of American militarism and our foreign policy of global intervention proved to be so vulnerable. The sight of Pentagon employees running in panic for safety was surely one of the most memorable images of 9/11, one that the citizens of Washington, D.C., would not soon forget. Yet Palmer didn't mention this at all, perhaps because it undermined his "they hate us because we're so rich and fabulous" thesis, the very myth pushed by President Bush ' and, now, Rudolph Giuliani ' against all the evidence to the contrary.

As Ron Paul has pointed out to Mr. Giuliani, our wealth and our freedom (or, now, the remnants of it) had nothing to do with the terrorist attacks carried out by al-Qaeda ' it was "blowback" from the Middle East that was a direct consequence of our interventionist foreign policy. Palmer might say ' or, rather, he might have said at the time ' that this was just another "leftist" variation on the "blame America" analysis of 9/11, but it is based firmly on the old conservative ideas that one has to take responsibility for one's actions and that actions ' along with the ideas on which they're based ' have consequences.

Palmer and some others at Cato ' including Brink Lindsey, their trade analyst ' took this critique of the so-called blame-America Left and used it as a bludgeon against the antiwar movement. While Palmer never openly endorsed the invasion of Iraq (he expended his energy smearing Antiwar.com instead), Lindsey did. Based on the utterly wrong idea that the 9/11 attacks were "an attack upon civilization itself," a number of alleged libertarians took up the cause of Bush's war to "transform" the Middle East as the only way to "drain the swamp" of Islamic radicalism and eliminate the alleged security threat to America once and for all. Ron Bailey, in the pages of Reason magazine, even undertook to construct a theory of libertarian Trotskyism ' the idea that "libertarianism in one country" could not long survive and that, in order to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our progeny, it is necessary to launch a worldwide effort to export the American system at gunpoint.

In the broader world of opinion, longtime liberals caved in and cowered in fear as the War Party strode triumphantly over the political landscape, with

many liberals meekly endorsing the invasion of Afghanistan as just retribution for the attacks. Their congressional wing gave the president a blank check, which he naturally cashed immediately ' and which we are still paying for today, in spite of the liberals' belated attempts to rein Bush in. In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, both parties jumped on the pro-war bandwagon, and any attempts to question the rationale for war were denounced as unpatriotic at best, pro-terrorist at worst, and certainly examples of the "blame America" attitude condemned by Tom Palmer in his talk to the Cato moneybags. After all, was this not a war on behalf of "our civilization" against evil men who hate us, not for anything our government has done, but simply because we exist?

This hysteria, in retrospect, has certain darkly comic aspects, especially when we look at the pronouncements of certain high-profile intellectuals and bloggers who signed on to Bush's war ' indeed, who egged on the War Party to unprecedented heights of folly and hubris ' and who are now recanting, denouncing the very president they once valorized as a heroic figure. Andrew Sullivan epitomized the hysterics of the War Party when he suggested that the anthrax sent to various news outlets and the offices of two senators were certainly the work of Saddam Hussein and that this justified the dropping of a couple of nukes on Iraq.

Gee, it's a good thing he wasn't in any position to implement his proposal of nuclear holocaust as retribution for an attack that had nothing to do with either Saddam Hussein or the hapless Iraqi people, otherwise Iraq would today be a molten puddle of glass ' but this is a perfect example of the temper of those times, of the witless hysteria that permeated the intellectual atmosphere, in which people were allowed to get away with such over-the-top exclamations of outrage and emotionalism, which encouraged the War Party to launch what Gen. William E. Odom has rightly called the biggest strategic disaster in American military history, the invasion and occupation of Iraq by American forces.

The intellectuals lost their heads, and that there were some ostensible libertarians among them should come as no great surprise. The modern libertarian movement has always been plagued by a certain pro-war element: it was true during the Cold War era and is even more true today, when the hysteria level has reached fever pitch and the careers and incomes of so many policy wonks ' particularly here, in the Imperial capital ' are dependent on going with the flow and remaining "respectable" even at the cost of their intellectual integrity. The reasons for their capitulation to war hysteria are not entirely mercenary, however, or due only to a lack of intellectual integrity. A lot of it was and is based on real fear, on the fear that ' as Palmer put it while the ruins of the World Trade Center were still smoking ' we must "resolve not to allow that to be the fate of our civilization itself."

While, in retrospect, it seems slightly absurd to believe that al-Qaeda could destroy American civilization, or even overthrow the U.S. government, you have to remember that certain people are very prone to hysteria in a crisis. The emotional fallout of 9/11 had a big impact on these types and seemed to validate the worst fears and doubts of even the most committed libertarian.

In those dark days right after Sept. 11, 2001, the antiwar movement ' and, by extension, the libertarian movement ' contracted considerably. Against the overwhelming tide of pro-war opinion, that giant tsunami of self-righteous belligerence, very few could stand ' but stand they did, confident in the knowledge that, once the emotionalism of the moment washed over them, they would be proven right in their opposition to the War Party's agenda. In the meantime, however, the warmongers were in the saddle, and they used their political preeminence to take us a long way down a road we have since had good reason to regret traveling.

If we can liken the 9/11 attacks to the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and analogize the capitulation of all too many otherwise sensible conservatives and libertarians to the America Firsters who decided, at that point, to pack it in, disband their organization and abandon their long-standing opposition to overseas interventionism, then we can see how this was replicated in our own day. Insofar as the War Party's methods are concerned, intellectual (and even physical) intimidation and shameless fear-mongering are among the weapons in their arsenal, and, in this sense, the War Party is little changed. Today, however, in terms of its composition, we are talking about a horse of a different color.

As America teetered on the brink of entering World War II, Charles A. Lindbergh gave a fateful speech that did more damage to the America First movement for peace than all the propagandistic efforts of the pro-war groups he named in Des Moines that day. In his oration, the great aviator and American hero sought to define who and what had brought us to the point of no return:

"The three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt administration.

"Behind these groups, but of lesser importance, are a number of capitalists, Anglophiles, and intellectuals who believe that the future of mankind depends upon the domination of the British empire. Add to these the Communistic groups who were opposed to intervention until a few weeks ago, and I believe I have named the major war agitators in this country."

As Hitler was rampaging throughout Europe, bent on enslaving and exterminating the Jewish people wherever his minions met them, it is no wonder

that a great many American Jews were plumping for war, and Lindbergh said as much. However, where he crossed the line ' and gave the War Party a very effective bludgeon with which to beat him and America First ' was when he went on to say the following:

"Their greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government."

I agree with John T. Flynn, a member of the America First national committee and a leading light of the Old Right, who was furious upon hearing Lindbergh's remarks: in a letter to Lindbergh he wrote that although the responsibility for the tactic of smearing opponents of war as anti-Semites should be brought home to Jewish leaders, "this is a far different matter from going out upon the public platform and denouncing 'the Jews' as the war-makers. No man" ' said Flynn ' "can do that without incurring the guilt of religious and racial intolerance."

In spite of this faux pas, Lindbergh's speech is a perceptive albeit flawed analysis of the War Party, its methods, and its various components. If we take it as our baseline, we can see where the analogy between World War II and what the neocons call World War IV begins to break down. In our own time, the foreign interests described by Lucky Lindy no longer include either the British or the Communists ' and as for the Jewish people, the overwhelming majority of Jews oppose the Iraq war and no doubt view a potential conflict with Iran in the same skeptical light.

The War Party, today, is an amalgam of elements that include foreign interests ' notably the pro-Israel lobby, which has taken the place of the Anglophiles as one of the chief pillars of the interventionist leadership. Smearing peace advocates as "anti-Semites" has indeed been a recurring theme of the new war propaganda ' especially when war critics point out that this campaign to "transform" the Middle East through military force has served Israeli and not American interests. What is notable, however, is that American Jews have not been taken in by this propaganda, and they remain opposed to the militaristic foreign policy of this administration, perhaps more so than any other single ethnic group in America.

The War Party is now reduced to its core elements. They don't have the over 60 percent of the American people who think the Iraq war was a mistake, and they certainly don't have the Brits, who abandoned their prime minister on account of his subservience to the War Party's agenda. Even a number of neocon intellectuals, including Francis Fukuyama, have jumped ship. The War Party today consists of three main groups: the ultra-nationalist faction of the GOP that profits politically from our policy of perpetual war, the military-industrial complex that profits economically, and Israel's lobby in the U.S., which uses its considerable leverage in American politics to keep us embroiled in the Middle East.

The power of the ultra-nationalists in the GOP is rapidly waning, as the appeal of the cult of George W. Bush is practically nil. Blowhards like Giuliani and Sean Hannity aside, the "red-state fascist" ideology underlying this political trend has been discredited, not only by the war but by its own inner contradictions. The Republicans are supposed to be the party of smaller government, lower taxes, and individual rights, and yet, as Ron Paul has pointed out, these people have lost their way: we have Republicans spending like drunken sailors, no tax relief in sight, and a party that views individual rights with the jaundiced eye of Torquemada during the Inquisition. The party of individualism, free markets, and the right of the people to remain free of government coercion has been transformed into an organization whose main platform planks seem to be the glories of groupthink, the alleged "right" of big oil companies to exploit foreign resources on the American taxpayers' dime, and the moral necessity of torture.

That some Republicans remember a time when this sort of Bizarro World conservatism did not rule the roost is doubtless a factor in the decline of the ultra-nationalists, and it is fertile ground for Ron Paul to garner support and make the case for a return to ideological sanity. The libertarian critique of neoconservatism is no longer restricted to the people sitting here in this room: as Victor Gold, a longtime GOP operative and deputy speechwriter to Barry Goldwater, put it in his recent book, *Invasion of the Party Snatchers*, the neoconservatism of such avatars of the War Party as Irving Kristol is:

"Merely a recycled model of the old liberal politics that led to the decline and fall of the Democratic Party in the 1960s: a fiscally irresponsible, ever-expanding federal government presided over by an imperial executive imbued with a messianic view of America's right to 'democratize' the heathen; or, as Irving's neocon son William, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, prefers, our moral duty to 'actively pursue' policies leading to Woodrow Wilson's dream of a 'benevolent global hegemony.'

"Translated from the neocon: Today we own Washington, tomorrow the world."

The ultra-nationalists are closely aligned with the second component of the War Party, which is the military-industrial-"national security" complex: it is, after all, the moneymaking branch of the War Party, the treasury, as it were, that funds the rest of the apparatus. Pro-war think-tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, the Center for Security Policy, and other neocon outfits get a great deal of their money from those who profit from our foreign policy of relentless aggression and the burgeoning "9/11 industry." And you can see that this is part of the personal style of many of the most

prominent warmongers, notably Richard Perle ' whose business dealings and ideological concerns have always worked in perfect harmony ' and Rudy Giuliani, whose company, Giuliani Partners, has a very dubious record (and major profits) in this area. But this is just the icing on the cake: the real meat and potatoes of the military-industrialists is in the constant demands, by both parties, to build an ever-bigger U.S. military machine, one that costs more than the next 10 military budgets on the planet combined.

Chalmers Johnson, in his brilliant trilogy on the origins and development of American militarism, has described this as an "empire of bases," and he does a great job of explaining how it works, politically and economically. Suffice to say here that this base-building, weapons-making, extravagantly expensive apparatus is, of course, all funded out of the U.S. Treasury, and its rapid expansion ' with almost no opposition in the U.S. Congress ' serves the class interests of a rising sector of the elites that derives its income directly or indirectly from administering, maintaining, and expanding America's overseas empire.

In considering the makeup of the War Party, circa 2007, we have to examine the key role played by its third component, which is the Israel lobby. Referring back to Lindbergh's speech, the first thing to be said is that Israel has taken the place of Britain as the most powerful foreign interest goading us into war. As professors John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt put it in their taboo-busting study of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*:

"The U.S. national interest should be the primary object of American foreign policy. For the past several decades, however, and especially since the Six Day War in 1967, the centerpiece of U.S. Middle East policy has been its relationship with Israel. The combination of unwavering U.S. support for Israel and the related effort to spread democracy throughout the region has inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion and jeopardized U.S. security. This situation has no equal in American political history. Why has the United States been willing to set aside its own security in order to advance the interests of another state?"

Mearsheimer and Walt spend the rest of their 5,000-word essay answering this question, which boils down to the very effective tactic of smearing any and all opposition as "anti-Semitic." Or "objectively anti-Semitic," in the Stalinesque phrase of Ryan Sager ' the alleged "libertarian" who now supports Rudolph Giuliani, the most authoritarian Republican candidate in a field of neocon shills and barking, pro-torture maniacs. By conflating the government of the state of Israel with all Jews everywhere, ideologues of Sager's ilk try to control the terms of the debate and thus keep a lid on any inquiry into how and why U.S. foreign policy has become so distorted.

The Lobby's record of uninterrupted victories is due in no small part to their hegemonic grip on the policymaking process: Congress, in the view of Mearsheimer and Walt, is practically "Israeli-occupied territory," to borrow a trenchant phrase from Pat Buchanan. "The bottom line," say Mearsheimer and Walt, "is that AIPAC, which is a de facto agent for a foreign government, has a stranglehold on the U.S. Congress. Open debate about U.S. policy towards Israel does not occur there." Mearsheimer and Walt also detail the efforts of the Israel lobby to gin up a war with Iraq, and furthermore document the current attempt to replicate their "success" in the case of Iran. And while the Lobby's efforts alone would not have been enough to lure us into the Iraqi quagmire, without the Lobby we almost certainly would have refrained from launching that futile crusade. While the efforts to get us involved in Iraq were relatively low-key, the campaign to target Iran as the next candidate for U.S.-sponsored "regime change" is the occasion for the Lobby to brazenly flex its political muscle. One example: a provision in the recently-passed Iraq war funding bill that would have required the president to come to Congress before attacking Iran was stripped from the final version, at the Lobby's insistence.

Like the British in the run-up to U.S. involvement in World War II, the Israelis have set up an extensive propaganda and covert action operation in the states, a network that has a hand in policing the media, academia, and the two major political parties to make sure that Israel's interests are served ' and, more than that, to ensure that no substantive debate over the premises of American foreign policy ever takes place. This network has penetrated not only the top echelons of the U.S. government and its policy-making apparatus, but also the opinion-making elite networks represented by the major think-tanks and the mainstream media, which are under tremendous pressure to conform to the Lobby's party line. In much the same way as the Soviet Union was exempt from too much scrutiny or criticism by the major media when we were allies with "Uncle Joe" Stalin in World War II, so Israel enjoys the same immunity in the name of an unspoken but ruthlessly enforced form of political correctness.

The entire neoconservative-Bushian project of exporting "democracy" to the Middle East, starting but not ending with Iraq, was launched to advance Israeli interests in the region: all the palaver about "democracy" has been merely a thin veneer of ideological cover for a geopolitical ploy to take the pressure off of Israel, beleaguered as it is by hostile forces on every side and a demographic problem that only gets worse as time goes on. The "Clean Break" policy paper, prepared for then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by a number of U.S. policymakers, including Richard Perle and former Pentagon policy honcho Douglas Feith, details the rationale behind "regime change" in Iraq as a way to neutralize Syria, ensure Israeli domination of Lebanon, and pave the way for an open confrontation with Iran. With Netanyahu primed to succeed Ehud Olmert as the next Israeli prime minister, he will take office with nearly every element of the "Clean Break" plan either accomplished or ready to be implemented.

When it comes to Iraq, George W. Bush made a fool of himself with his declaration of "mission accomplished" ' and yet that assertion has the ring of truth about it when it comes to the Lobby's role in provoking the conflict. In unleashing the dogs of war in the Middle East, the Lobby certainly has accomplished its mission of advancing its version of Israel's legitimate interests in the region. The only problem is that America's interests have been ill-served ' and, perhaps, irreparably damaged for many years to come.

I have to point out that the views of the Israel lobby and those of most American Jews are poles apart, and this has been one of the big problems of the Lobby, especially recently. Jewish Americans are sick and tired of having some war-crazed loon, who believes that Israel must eternally confront its enemies militarily and without benefit of nuance or negotiation, represent the interests of Israel in America. The Lobby's claim to speak for American Jews is a lie, and one that is fast coming unraveled, as more and more Americans ' many of them true friends of Israel ' are dissenting from the extremist views of their so-called "leadership."

The repetition of the World War II scenario ' an alleged "Islamofascist" danger, the demonization of war opponents as fifth columnists and probable anti-Semites, the attempt to scare the populace into going along with the most intrusive and authoritarian measures in the name of "national security" ' has been pretty successful. All the elements, as I have noted, are there, but there's just one problem. There's no equivalent of Hitler.

Oh, yes, of course we've heard for years how the latest target of the U.S. government ' from Manuel Noriega to Slobodan Milosevic to Saddam Hussein, and right up to the present day, with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran ' is the modern-day incarnation of Hitlerian evil. Yet none of these rather louche characters quite measures up to the real thing.

Hitler commanded the mightiest war machine of his time: his armies decimated Europe, thrust into Eurasia, and nearly took the British isles. None of these other characters even come close in terms of representing a credible military threat. At least back in the 1930s, the War Party could make a credible case that the Axis powers posed a threat to the continental U.S., and certainly to the other Western democracies, but does anyone seriously believe that Iran is about to invade France and occupy Paris? Or that Saddam Hussein was a threat to anyone outside of Iraq?

This is really the Achilles heel of the War Party ' the alleged "threat" supposedly looming over our heads, like a nuclear sword of Damocles, is a fraud, and has been exposed as such by the complete absence of those infamous "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. The entire rationale for the invasion and occupation of a country that had never attacked us was centered around the existence of nascent Iraqi nukes, which the Iraqi dictator was planning to pass off to various terrorist groups, who would then hit the United States. This turned out to be pure malarkey: in lieu of any real evidence of a danger to the U.S., the War Party simply made it all up. And people are mad about it, which is why the administration's efforts to paint a similar picture as far as Iran is concerned is meeting with some pretty stiff skepticism. These people are utterly discredited when it comes to making such allegations. The debunking process ' in which, I am proud to say, Antiwar.com played a major role ' has been enough to hold them off, at least so far.

These are the dog days of the War Party; their cadre is deserting them in droves, the public hates their guts, and members of their own party ' I refer, of course, to the Republican Party ' are rising in rebellion, if only out of fear of the public's wrath. The investigation into their shenanigans has hardly begun with the indictment and conviction of Scooter Libby, and the prospect of jail time for a few more of the War Party's leading figures cannot fill them with anything other than trepidation. The American people are waking up, and their awakening has been rude in the extreme and is bound to get ruder with each passing day as the "surge" yields a higher casualty rate and the Iraqi insurgency plays havoc with our pretensions to being the New Rome.

Yet the War Party still has a few cards to play. The trump card is held by the president of the United States, who is, sadly, the commander in chief and has the power ' ceded to him by a complacent and complicit Congress ' to launch a war on his own authority. George W. Bush could, at any moment, launch an attack on Iran that would spark a regional war ' the consequences of which would be unimaginably grave, not only for the peoples of the Middle East but for Americans as well. Whether he is unbalanced enough to do it depends, one supposes, on many factors, one of which is the personality of a man who seems, at times, to be not quite in control of his own presidency. It also depends on the amount of pressure that the War Party can exert.

The future, as always, remains a dim shadow, and yet of one thing we can be fairly certain: the War Party's tireless effort to recreate the conditions leading to World War II have been dealt a significant setback. Six years ago, the day after 9/11, World War IV ' as the neocons like to call it ' seemed inevitable. Today, there are many factors militating against it, not the least of which is rising public opposition to our foreign policy of perpetual war. And for that we must all be grateful. So let us keep our fingers crossed and our polemics dry ' and trust in the gods to guide us through this latest, darkest chapter in the struggle against war and for liberty.

## About the Author

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