

The End of the Affair

Obama and the Antiwar Movement

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As the euphoria of the Obama cult builds toward a climax and the pundits declaim the advent of Something Big, it's the small changes that concern me, particularly those that touch directly on my job, which is to sniff out the War Party wherever it is presently burrowed. The election of Barack Obama has been the signal for many of them to migrate like fleas from the carcasses of the campaigns they attached themselves to and hop on the warm body of the new administration, which presents a rather large target. It's a new day, and in the age of Obama, the War Party's battalions are [massed](#) on the ostensible Left. Now that's the kind of change I can believe in.

Ah, yes, the small changes, particularly the ones that concern me personally: those are what I'm really interested in, quite naturally, and the biggest change – and I have to say it comes as a welcome relief – will be in my targets. Instead of having to deal with all those [tiresome neoconservatives](#) with Republican leanings, I'll be dealing with a whole new crowd. Of course, a lot of veteran neocons will turn up, particularly at the fringes of the incoming administration, but the real core of the War Party's strength will be in the State Department, with [Hillary Clinton](#) lording over a [new nest](#) of [neocon hatchlings](#), albeit of the social-democratic variety. In alliance with the “humanitarian” interventionists, whose shtick is sending troops to places like [Kosovo](#), [Darfur](#), [Congo](#), and [Burma](#), this new, reinvented War Party is ready and willing to open up several new fronts in our [endless](#) “war on terrorism,” with potentially cataclysmic consequences for America and the world.

The War Party's [decisive influence](#) in the Obama administration is going to be [rolled out](#) on Monday, so that even the most craven Obama-bots on the Left will be left wondering who and what they voted for. [Hillary the hawk](#) at State, [Bush's warlord](#) Robert Gates at Defense, and [Gen. Jim Jones](#) – who wants to station U.S. troops [in the occupied territories](#) under the rubric of NATO! – as national security adviser to the president. Yes, antiwar voters took a chance on Obama, reasoning that anything would be better than [four more years](#) of Bushian belligerence, yet now they discover to their chagrin that the dice are loaded.

The same old crowd that brought us the invasion of Iraq is back, if not in full force or purest form, then at least in worrying numbers and high positions. The cries of “[betrayal](#)” are already being [heard](#). The response from the Obama cult among the liberal landed gentry, in particular the ones who own choice pieces of editorial real estate in the nation's top newspapers, was [delivered](#) by E. J. Dionne from his perch at the Washington Post:

“In electing Barack Obama, the country traded the foreign policy of the second President Bush for the foreign policy of the first President Bush. That is the meaning of Obama's apparent decision to keep Robert Gates on as defense secretary and also to select Hillary

Clinton as secretary of state.”

This delights Dionne, even as it depresses those anti-interventionist voters who thought they had an ally in the White House. His message to us is clear enough:

“The truth about Obama’s worldview was hidden in plain sight in his most politically consequential foreign policy speech. Antiwar Democrats cheered Obama for addressing a rally against the Iraq war in Chicago’s Federal Plaza on Oct. 2, 2002. His opposition to the war was a major asset in his nomination struggle with Clinton.

“Obama did indeed denounce the impending war as ‘dumb,’ ‘rash,’ and ‘based not on reason but on passion.’ But in retrospect, the speech may be most notable for other things Obama said that separated him from some in his antiwar audience.”

In short: screw you, buddy, and you better get used to it.

Amid all the talk about the reentry of the Republican “realists” into the circle of power in Washington and the hosannas to the [rising influence](#) of [Brent Scowcroft](#), one has to remember that this is the same gang that brought us [the first Gulf war](#) and George H. W. Bush’s “[New World Order](#).” It was a war to keep [the emir of Kuwait](#) on his throne, one that started after the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, gave Saddam Hussein [the green light](#) to cross the border with his troops. Out of the slaughter of that war [arose](#) the tide of anti-American radicalism that [fueled](#) al-Qaeda’s [recruiting](#) and rationalized the [stationing of our troops](#) in Saudi Arabia. We had both feet in the quagmire, in Bush I’s day; we just weren’t up to our necks [quite yet](#).

Scowcroft and his friends are valorized by Washington’s cocktail party peaceniks for not going all the way to Baghdad and toppling the regime. These people are conveniently forgetting the dicey origins of that war, its official rationale – wasn’t it James Baker, who crowed “[Job, jobs, jobs](#)” in an argument of unsurpassed vulgarity? – not to mention the [horrific slaughter](#) of the Iraqi “army,” which at that point was mainly boys and old men with few arms and even less willingness to fight. The first Iraq war [paved the way](#) for the second and the current occupation, as the Clinton administration [took up](#) the anti-Saddam campaign and sponsored the [Iraq Liberation Act](#), which [set](#) the whole disastrous process in motion and led us to the present moment.

Dionne goes on to note that Obama [said](#) “I don’t oppose all wars” “not once but five times.” Dionne praises Obama for mentioning all the “good” wars, singling out the liberals’ two favorites – [World War II](#) and [the Civil War](#) – as well as “the battle against terrorism after the attacks of Sept. 11.” This latter phrase is indistinguishable from George W. Bush’s multi-generational twilight struggle, which Obama will continue, albeit on a different battleground, namely [Afghanistan](#) and [Pakistan](#). So don’t worry, all you hawks out there: this isn’t the end of the good times!

Dionne’s point, however, is this:

“Obama’s national security choices are already causing grumbling from parts of the antiwar left, even if Obama made clear six years ago that while he was with them on Iraq, he was not one of them.”

If you “progressives” are now feeling like someone who’s been kicked out of bed before dawn, on one pretext or another – “Boy, was I drunk last night! I don’t remember a thing!” –

well, then, you can't say you weren't warned.

Well, somebody was drunk, though it probably wasn't Obama. After all, he's not the one who hooked up with someone he thought was cool, only to wake up with... [Brent Scowcroft!](#)

NOTES IN THE MARGIN

Dionne mentions the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) as the Obama administration's source of talent and a key player in the policymaking apparatus currently being assembled. Go [here](#) for my take on CNAS. Shorter version: kind of [like](#) the Project for a New American Century, except different...

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