

What America Must Not Do Now

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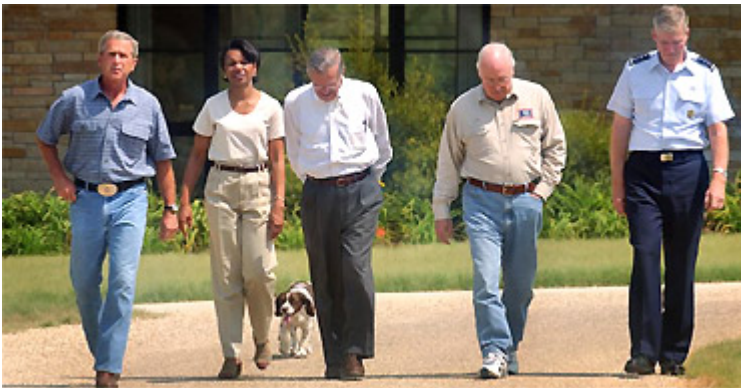
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(Bush, Rice, Rumsfeld and Cheney at their mid-winter conference, Prairie Chapel Ranch, Crawford, Texas.)

This is the winter of neoconservative discontent.

For neoconservatives, the enigmas began to arrive in the weeks, months and years preceding the tectonic shift in the American political landscape that finally took place this autumn. In a virtually infinite cascade of reports, surveys and documentations, America gradually awakened to the fact that the war in Iraq was becoming a war too far.

The war had been built upon fatal neoconservative fantasies about the world and America's perceived destiny to reconfigure it. The neoconservative house of cards had been building in the mind of America for decades – in the doctrines of Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman; in the salon of Leo Strauss and the papers of Jeane Kirkpatrick; in the lamentations of the Committee on the Present Danger and the suspicions of a growing number of passionate ideologues who began to populate the political right; in the Moral Majority and their progeny in a broadening swathe of the Evangelical community. Thus armed, many Americans, far too many, retrenched into an increasingly militant ghetto fueled by fear, xenophobia, self-importance, academic fantasy and religious zealotry.



Never in the course of American events has there ever been such a critical failure of nerve as the war in Iraq. While the horrific genocide of Native Americans did not threaten America's status in a Victorian world that was still largely obsessed by a racist paradigm – the Indian Wars were rationalized as legitimate defense against a militant enemy culture that had attacked our peaceful and unarmed civilian populations. In suppressing the Native Americans, the United States was not performing a pre-emptive procedure, but a reactive one.

The Civil War began to repair the ravages of institutionalized racism, but it was not until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s that America really came to grips with exorcising the demons of racial bigotry, genocide and xenophobia that tormented the collective psyche of her people. While these sordid episodes involved America in a wrenching and traumatic identity crisis, they did not threaten her global status as the bastion of democracy, the storehouse of freedom, the fountainhead of liberty, the source of equality, the hand of justice.

The attack, invasion and occupation of Iraq now threaten to destroy America's global standing like no previous crisis in her history.



There was, of course, a foreboding prelude to the crescendo of chaos now reeling out of Iraq. The rise to power of an un-elected presidency; the abandonment of international law and treaties and peace-making incumbent upon our status as a superpower; the arrogant handling of our relations with China; the appalling dereliction of national security in the run-up to 9/11 and the triumphalist posturing throughout the invasion of Afghanistan – a military intervention that did not achieve its stated objective – the destruction of Al-Qaeda. The failure in Afghanistan prefigured the failure in Iraq. A mission to seek out and destroy weapons of mass destruction would become a mission to rebuild a nation modeled on the state of Texas, where people voted in elections, worked for giant multinational corporations, worshipped the sacred in their houses of the holy and sought to satiate their desires in orgies of consumption of westernized products manufactured by MacDonalds, KFC and Microsoft.

During the early phase of the war, a US soldier was interviewed by a British journalist. From his background in the mountains of West Virginia, the enlisted man revered the wealth and

prosperity where his small hometown community was replete with the blessings of both a MacDonalds and a Hardees on its main street, while the poor people of Iraq whom he had come to liberate from the grasp of an evil dictatorship had – literally in his mind – “nothing” – nothing whatsoever of cultural worth, merit or value in comparison to the abundance of the American heartland.

In the weeks after the liberation of Baghdad, General Jay Garner argued that the military objectives had been accomplished, but he was shoved off a bureaucratic cliff and replaced by the technocratic satrap, Paul “Jerry” Bremer. Bremer arrived amidst great promise, trailing clouds of glory in the sky over Baghdad. An imported bureaucrat, saturated with inordinate powers in the fond hope that he might become an impressive Mesopotamian ruler, but it did not come to pass.

Upon Bremer’s installation, he ordered the De-Ba’athification program that skewered the heart and mind of the government of Iraq. Modeled as it was on the De-Nazification program that followed WWII, Bremer’s plan spelt the doom of the American project in Iraq. To seal the deal, Bremer then sacked every soldier in the armed forces of Iraq. When Garner protested, Bremer and Rumsfeld held firm. Rumsfeld explained the baffling absurdity by stating that the order for the purifications of the government and the military had come from elsewhere – meaning outside of the Pentagon and beyond his control.

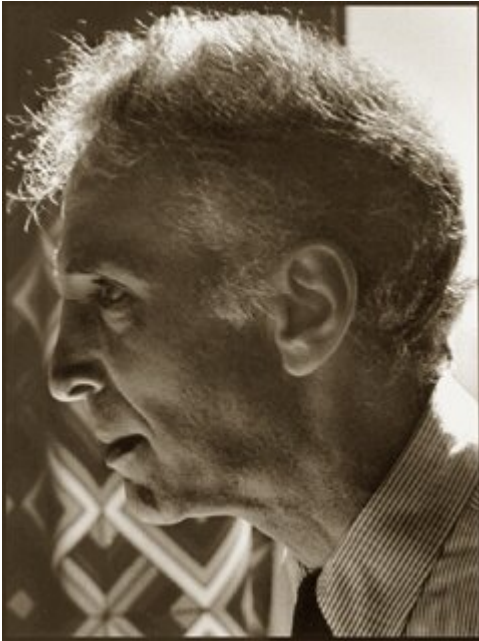


Having achieved little more during his tour of duty than the signal honor of becoming the wrestling champion of the US Navy, Rumsfeld had little experience in dealing with nation building, yet he seemed to have a knack for internecine wrangling – the bureaucratic equivalent of wrestling. The man was a tactician – not a strategist. Uniquely unqualified for the assignments he had been given – although he had devised many of them himself – Rumsfeld steadfastly maintained his iron grip on power throughout the ensuing three and a half years of precipitous decline from Abu Ghraib and Falluja to the Battle for Baghdad that exposed his every failure and led inevitably to the civil war that rages today.

To make matters worse, while Rumsfeld flailed about pursuing a power trajectory of his own devising, it was not in fact he who had Bush’s ear. Rather, it was a more intimate circle of Circes: Condoleezza Rice, Harriet Miers, Karen Hughes and Laura Bush. All of these women have been identified as emotionally fixated on the president’s personal magnetism; his peculiarly muscular masculinity and his god-fearing Christian character. With the Bush White House functioning like a pioneer version of Shakespeare’s Macbeth with three witches and a lady aching for infinite powers, George and Laura Bush have cast their hellish spells against their Axis of Evil – Syria, Iran and North Korea. Today, North Korea – against all the most strenuous efforts of the MacBush White House – has nuclear weapons. Iran is on the threshold of joining the nuclear club, while Jim Baker (the Macduff of the piece) assisted by Lee Hamilton (Malcolm) and the other members of the Iraq Study Group have singled out Syria as absolutely essential for any positive resolution of the deeply problematic war in Iraq.



Now licking their broken egos in the aftermath of a punishing election that saw them lose their precious majorities in both houses of Congress, Bush and Cheney are hard at work on a plan for reprisal, revenge and the simultaneous redemption of their stricken presidency. In a paper published in Swedish, Daniel Ellsberg warns against the ongoing preparations for a major air war against Iran. Writing in Stockholm where he had just been presented with the Right Livelihood Award (sometimes referred to as the alternative Nobel Prize) Ellsberg beseeches the potential whistleblowers of the US military and intelligence establishment to come forward and release top secret documents revealing Bush and Cheney's plan to attack Iran. Ellsberg believes that the plan of attack will involve nuclear weapons that could be launched by either the US or Israel, both of whom have amassed firepower in the Persian Gulf. It is obvious that nuclear missiles could easily be launched at Iran from either US or Israeli submarines in the Gulf without violating the airspace of any other sovereign nation. Ellsberg calls for the members of NATO to abandon the US-dominated alliance in the immediate aftermath of any such attack.



(Daniel Ellsberg)

Ellsberg is clearly right to remain concerned for it is now abundantly evident that Bush and Cheney are still suffering from their imperialist delusions. Deeply embedded in their joint denials of reality, Bush and Cheney are now beneath depression. Defeated at the polls by the people they sought to defend, they are desensitized to rational discourse.

With the repudiation of their presidency – and everything they stand for – by the likes of Jim Baker, Edwin Meese and Robert Gates, Bush and Cheney still wield considerable executive power. Even though more than 90% of the American people believe that we should change course in Iraq, and 90% of the Iraqi people want the US to leave and take their bases, their troops, their diplomats, their spies and their massive embassies with them, Bush and Cheney are determined to stamp their impact deeply and indelibly on the cradle of civilization.

Isolated in their soundproof chambers in the West Wing, Bush and Cheney are poring over papers, documents and power-points outlining the most aggressive military assault in the history of the universe – the nuclear devastation of all of the technological targets in Iran. A move so bold, so decisive that it would split history in twain, a crowning achievement for American neoconservatism, a reaffirmation of US military superiority and a permanent monument to ward off the pusillanimous attacks of Al-Qaeda – a carpet-bombing of Iran will produce a forest of mushroom clouds like the majestic coda to Kubrick’s masterpiece, *Dr. Strangelove* – to wit: “Victory” in the mind of Bush the Younger and Cheney the Elder.

One month ago, the first reports of a top-secret session convened at the Brookings Institution emerged. The secret seminar was orchestrated by Haim Saban, an Israeli-American billionaire who is one of the leading champions of the Israel-First Lobby. Saban has been a generous patron of the Clintons and the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) as well as the Brookings Institution, where he established the Saban Center for Middle Eastern Affairs. According to reports now leaking out of Washington, one month ago the Saban Center hosted a conference that was attended by Avigdor Lieberman, the new and controversial Israeli Deputy Prime Minister for Strategic Affairs, a post newly created by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to bolster his increasingly unpopular government on the hard

right. Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni and Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres informed the seminar attended by the Clintons and leading members of the Bush administration.

Coming amidst a cluster of problems for the Bush and Olmert governments, the content of the secret Saban seminars has not been made public, but it stands to reason that the rising influence of the Shia in the Middle East was a major theme. Iran is the political epicenter of Shia culture, and Seymour Hersh and Daniel Ellsberg have issued a series of papers documenting the advanced planning by the US and Israel for a concerted attack against the hard technological targets in Iran.

At the same time as the secret Saban seminar was unfolding at the Brookings Institution, Daniel Ellsberg was in Stockholm to receive the alternative Nobel Prize for his work in making the public aware of the mistakes of their governments. During his stay in Stockholm, Ellsberg published his paper calling for a new era of whistleblowing in the US in order to make the public aware of the dangerously advanced planning for a joint US-Israel nuclear attack on Iran.

Against this horrifying backdrop, the neoconservatives have their well-established fifth column inside of the newly ascendant Democratic Party. The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) is the right-leaning faction of the party that has long supported the Iraq War and its political undercurrent of neoconservatism. The founder of the DLC is a man named, Al From, who proclaims his zealous enthusiasm for Zionism and openly criticizes Islam in general as riddled through and through with Jihadism. To date, Mr. From has never voiced any concern for the violations of the human rights of the Palestinians that are now so obvious in a barrage of reports from the Middle East.

Recently, one of the DLC's premiere agents, a political consultant named Jeremy Rosner published a paper titled, "What we must do now." Unsurprisingly, Mr. Rosner prescribed a national security agenda based on an expansion of the already vast US military which is alarming enough, but the right-leaning political consultant went further to advocate hawkish US military intervention in favor of "democracy" throughout the world as the cornerstone of our foreign policy. Earlier this year, Rosner was a co-author of the DLC textbook, *With All Our Might: A Progressive (sic) Strategy for Defeating Jihadism and Defending Liberty*. Driven by an engine fuelled with Islamophobia and fear of all things Muslim, Rosner urges the Democrats in the 110th Congress to spend as much floor time on his robust national security agenda as on domestic issues. In other words, Rosner wants the Democratic members of Congress to spend as much time and energy on re-enforcing their credentials on an interventionist national security agenda as on: the minimum wage, balancing the budget, protecting the social security system, the environment, civil rights, constitutional democracy, prisons, healthcare, education and taxation - combined.



In spite of his shrill warnings about the urgent need to strengthen the Democrats' claim to national security a recent poll by World Public Opinion has just demolished Rosner's dire and deeply flawed admonitions. From the latest findings, it is now perfectly clear that the American people do not support the national security policies of the Republicans and their clones in the DLC, nor do they support the threat of "regime change" as a tool of diplomacy.

According to the results of the latest polls, the American people believe that the Bush-Cheney administration's policies have been overly aggressive and worse: they have made it

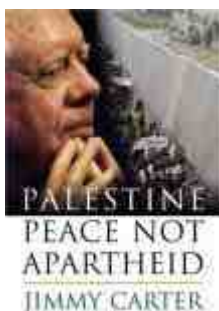
more likely that other nations will acquire weapons of mass destruction. By a margin of two to one, American voters believe that the overly aggressive threats of military intervention uttered by Bush and Cheney are bad for US security. By a margin of five to one, Americans believe that the US should be talking with nations that appear to be threats to our security. On this last point, the vast majority of Americans agree with the findings of the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group as opposed to the practices of the Bush-Cheney White House and the right-leaning think-tanks that populate the Potomac and feed the Democratic and Republican neoconservatives from the supporters of AIPAC and its stellar agent, Richard Perle, to the DLC and their ilk including Al From and Jeremy Rosner.

Into this collision of ideologies, the heavens have opened, and a ray of light has burst forth from the center of the galaxy. A former president has just launched a book brimming with hope for the Middle East, the world at large and America's leading role in the future. Former President Jimmy Carter has just published what will almost certainly be remembered as his most important work: *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*.



Carter is much more than the typical former American president who retires to a life of luxury basking in massive fees from huge multinational corporations and dealing in arms – ala the late Ronald Reagan, the late Gerald Ford and George Bush the Elder. Independently wealthy, Carter has spent the past twenty-six years since leaving the White House in the construction of a model for all former presidents to come. In America, Carter personally worked as a carpenter building homes for low-income families. In a whirlwind career as a freelance diplomat, Carter has made agreements with North Korea that led to the cessation of their nuclear weapons program in the 1990s – an agreement that was abandoned in high pomp by the Bush-Cheney White House in a debacle that led directly to the detonation of Kim Jong Il's first nuclear bomb in North Korea this autumn. In Haiti, Carter negotiated a peaceful resolution to a vicious internecine conflict. In countless elections all over the world, Carter has observed polling procedures to ensure that world class standards are enforced granting the peoples in many countries their right to vote in elections and to consent to the governments that purport to represent them.

Boldly treading where no previous president of America ever dared to tread, Carter has tackled the Israel Lobby in his latest book. Urging Americans to seek balance in their relations with both sides in the Israel-Palestine crisis, Carter has broken the barrier against criticizing the policies of the government of Israel – a case that he describes simply as, “apartheid.”



Carter's book is nothing less than a fell stroke timed at precisely the right moment in world history. A new bipartisan consensus is taking shape in the US Congress, and many more are recognizing the need for a new approach in the Middle East including a concerted attempt to

settle the poisonous dispute between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Americans are well aware that their government has a long record of favoring Israel over the Palestinians. In vote after vote in the United Nations, the United States stood alone to veto resolutions condemning Israel for the violation of the human rights of the Palestinians. Americans, being a more religious people than those of other western nations, appear to accept a fundamentalist foreign policy when it comes to Israel.

Few Americans are aware of the vast discrepancy in foreign aid. Israel receives more foreign aid from the US than any other nation on earth, and much of it is eventually translated into the acquisition of military hardware and ordnance making Israel the most heavily armed nation in the Middle East. No effort has been made by the United States to balance its aid to Israel with equal amounts of aid to the Palestinians. If the US did have a balanced policy vis a vis Israel and Palestine, the path to peace might have been much shorter. Carter makes these points and many more in his book.

The people of America are far ahead of their leaders in government and the media who populate an Orwellian colony separated from the rest of the nation by a mysterious Beltway - a Yellow Brick Road that segregates them from the people they purport to serve. Enconced in an Emerald City now headed by a reckless and unstable Wizard who is orchestrated by a man standing behind a curtain who delivers baffling pronouncements in support of ideological extremism, the US ship of state is rudderless, leaderless and lurching between the perils of Scylla and Charibdis - neoconservatism and its ancestor- a self-destructive atavism that reaches backwards through a troubling past colored by racism, sexism, slavery and the genocide of the Native Americans.

Disillusioned with the disastrous delusions of the Bush-Cheney Era, the American people seek a new pathway forward toward the ideals that are the ideological bedrock of their nation: constitutional government, democracy, civil rights, voting rights, equal rights and human rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

What America must not do now is to cave in to the fears of the neoconservatives in the White House, the DLC or the governments of other nations who are obsessed with their fears of aliens, immigrants, others who are different, who speak different languages, worship in different rituals and come from exotic locations.

America must never again pre-emptively and unilaterally seek out monsters to destroy in foreign lands for, in doing so, she has abandoned international law, violated international systems of justice and provoked the creation of myriads of weapons of mass destruction in the nations she fears most deeply.

Hoist on his own petard of neoconservatism, George Bush will forever twist in the whirlwinds of history as the negative role model for the impudent presidency, and Jimmy Carter will forever reign supreme as the positive model for the American presidency in its most sacred role - peacemaker.

Going forward from the neoconservative nightmare, America must not:

Support pre-emptive war;

Torture, assassinate or abuse prisoners;

Subordinate its foreign policy to the military or

Fear negotiations with any nation, group or individual in pursuit of peace, justice and the rights of humanity.

Final observations after gazing into a glass darkly

George Bush and Dick Cheney are in the throes of designing their endgame in Iraq. They are now known to be considering a surge in troop levels in order to launch a bloodbath in Baghdad where a battle is raging for control of the city. This plan is predicated on their weakening ability to control the press and media perception of events taking place in Baghdad. The surge should be repudiated for the folly that it is. In what were deemed to be the late stages of the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger conceived of the carpet-bombing of South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in an attempt to conceal the fact from the American people that the war on the ground had been lost. This tactic is folly, and it would be throwing away the lives of American soldiers in pursuit of partisan political objectives.

That Bush and Cheney's advanced military planning for a nuclear attack against Iran via Israel has not been halted suggests that this may well be their Plan B - an event so stupendous that the press and media can only report it as a devastating assault against Islamism. This strategy is predicated entirely on Islamophobia, the subconscious animus to any and all members of a religion or culture - an act that can only be accurately described as an atavistic atrocity of the first magnitude.

America cannot risk gambling away its residual standing in the world in ways that would only satisfy the broken political egos of two deeply detested politicians: George Bush and Dick Cheney.



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