

Refusing Battle:

The Strategic Alternative to Persistent Warfare

Douglas Macgregor

Armed Forces Journal, March 2009 Edition

“Sir, I am deeply concerned about Iraq. The task you have given me is becoming really impossible... if they (Sunni and Shia) are not prepared to urge us to stay and to co-operate in every manner I would actually clear out... At present we are paying eight millions a year for the privilege of living on an ungrateful volcano out of which we are in no circumstances to get anything worth having.”

Winston S. Churchill to David Lloyd George, PM, 1 September 1922

Despite the seriousness of the present economic crisis, the greatest danger to the future security of the United States is Washington’s inclination to impose political solutions with the use of American military power in many parts of the world where Washington’s solutions are both unneeded and unsustainable. President Obama must arrest this tendency by making pragmatic and methodical changes to the goals of American military strategy. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, America’s military action has already produced disastrous consequences for U.S. national security interests; namely,

- The expansion of Iranian regional power in Iraq¹ and the Middle East,²

- The alienation of Turkey,³ the Middle Eastern State with the most powerful military establishment in the region,
- The erosion of Pakistan’s fragile cohesion with dangerous implications for all of Central and Southwest Asia,⁴
- A more vulnerable Israeli State,⁵
- A global anti-American backlash,⁶ and,
- Declining American economic performance.⁷

The Bush legacy in foreign and defense policy presents President Obama with a stark choice: Will we continue to pursue global hegemony with the use of military power to control and shape development inside other peoples’

societies? Or, will we employ our military power to maintain our market-oriented English-speaking Republic, a Republic that upholds the rule of law, respects the cultures and traditions of people different from ourselves and trades freely with all nations, but protects its sovereignty, its commerce, its vital strategic interests and its citizens? This essay argues for the latter approach; a strategy of conflict avoidance designed to make the United States more secure without making the rest of the world less so.

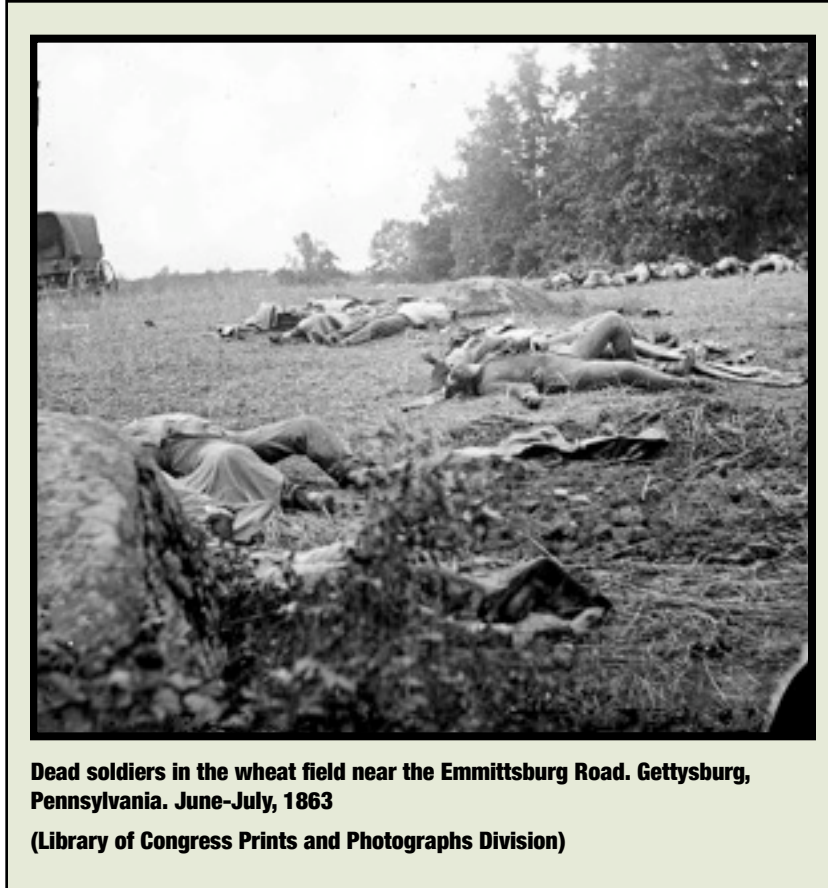
For Americans who’ve lived in a world with only one true center of military, political and economic gravity – the United States – changing how America behaves inside the international system is not an easy task.⁸ Since 1991,

Americans have become so accustomed to the frequent use of American military power against very weak opponents they seem to have lost their fear of even the smallest conflict's unintended consequences.

But the 21st Century is no time for the leaders of the United States to make uninformed decisions regarding the use of force or to engage in desperate, end-game, roll-of-the-dice gambles.⁹ Recent events in the Caucasus involving Russia and Georgia may simply be a foretaste of what is likely to happen during the 21st Century in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America where the ancient practice of encouraging one ethnic group to dominate others as a means of securing foreign imperial power is breeding new conflicts.¹⁰ These conflicts are likely to resemble the Balkan Wars of the early 20th Century, except that fights for regional power and influence will overlap with the competition for energy, water, food, mineral resources and the wealth they create.¹¹ In many states like Iran and Turkey, states with proud histories, huge populations under the age of 30 and appetites for more prominence in world affairs,¹² the influx of wealth from the energy sector will also support much more

potent militaries and, potentially, more aggressive foreign policies too.¹³

In this volatile setting, direct American military involvement in conflicts where the United States



Dead soldiers in the wheat field near the Emmittsburg Road. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. June-July, 1863

(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

itself is not attacked and its national prosperity is not at risk should be avoided. Otherwise, American military involvement could cause 21st Century conflicts to spin out of control and confront Americans with regional alliances designed to contain American military power;¹⁴ alliances that but for American military intervention would not exist.¹⁵ It is vital the United States not repeat the mistakes of the British Empire in 1914: over-estimate its national power by involving itself in a self-defeating regional war it does not need to fight and precipitate its own economic and military decline.

Avoiding this outcome demands new goals for American military power and a strategic framework that routinely answers the questions of purpose, method and end-state; a strategy in which *American military action is short, sharp, decisive and rare.* Such a strategy involves knowing when to fight and when to refuse battle.

Refusing Battle

On 24 June 1863, the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia – 74,000 strong – completed its crossing of the Potomac River and pushed northward into Pennsylvania toward the town of Gettysburg. However, six days later, when Robert E. Lee, the Confederate commander, arrived in front of Gettysburg he discovered to his dismay that a much larger and better equipped Union Army – 115,000 strong –

confronted him in strong defenses on the high ground above the town. As an officer of engineers, Lee knew what this development meant for his army; his troops would have to attack uphill while the Union troops poured rifle and artillery fire into them.

Fortunately for Lee, his opponent opted to immobilize himself in defensive positions. The Army of Northern Virginia was not yet decisively engaged. Lee still had options.

Lee could move his army away from Gettysburg placing it between the Union Army and Washington D.C., an action likely

to draw the Union Army out of its strong defensive positions to attack and eliminate the danger Lee presented to Washington. Such a fight would occur on terms more favorable to Lee, increasing the likelihood of yet another Southern victory. A major Confederate victory on Northern territory would almost certainly have resulted in Lee's occupation of Washington, DC; maybe even Southern Independence.

Flush with their victory at Chancellorsville seven weeks earlier, Lee and his troops were spoiling for a fight and they got the one they did not want or expect. After repeated charges and the loss of thousands of men, Lee retreated Southward over the Potomac without interference from the Union Army, but Lee lost a battle that cost the Confederacy the war.

Lee should have refused battle. Had he done so, he would have kept his army and its capabilities intact until he could achieve a position of advantage and with it more favorable conditions for the employment of his force.

When word reached Britain on 1 August 1914 of Germany's mobilization for war, Winston Churchill recorded that of the Cabinet "*At least three-quarters of its members were determined not to be drawn into a European quarrel unless Great Britain was herself attacked, which was*

unlikely."¹⁶ The members knew the English Channel and the massive Royal Navy made a German offensive against Britain not only unlikely, but impossible.

However, Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, a man



Winston Churchill and Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1909
(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

who spoke only English, seldom left England and was contemptuous of foreigners; reached a different conclusion. He believed moral obligations dictated British intervention to save her historic enemy, France, from defeat. While England's drinking classes sang the jingoistic ballad made popular during the Boer War,¹⁷ "*We've got the men, we've got the ships, we've got the money too,*" Grey warned the House of Commons, "*If France is beaten... and if Belgium fell under the same*

dominating influence, and then Holland and then Demark... the most awful responsibility is resting on the government in deciding what to do."¹⁸

The argument was specious. Germany's war aims had nothing to do with Britain or the states mentioned.¹⁹ It mattered not. Grey's emotional appeal to patriotism, and fear worked.

When Field Marshal Sir Herbert Kitchener, the newly appointed British Minister of War told the cabinet its decision to go to war with Germany and Austria-Hungary meant the British Empire would have to maintain an army of millions, the war would last for at least three years and that it would be decided on the continent--not at sea; the cabinet ministers were astonished.²⁰ For reasons that seem incredulous now, Britain's political leaders including Sir Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, believed a war with Germany would be short, and that the Royal

Navy--not the British and French armies, would decide its outcome in a great sea battle with the German surface fleet. The possibility that Britain's very small, professional army could not sustain a war with Germany and Austria for more than a few months, that Germany would decline to fight on Britain's terms (at sea) and that the war on land would consume Britain's national wealth, did not seem to occur to most of the cabinet members until Kitchener made his presentation.²¹

How could the British leaders have been so misguided in their assumptions? The British interpreted the world that existed beyond Britain's global imperial power structure in ways that flattered their self-image of limitless money and sea-based power.

Britain should have refused battle and sought strategic conditions more favorable to the effective use of Britain's considerable, but still limited military and economic resources. Instead, Britain joined a regional conflict turning it into a world war;

interest alone consumed half of British government spending by the mid-1920s.²²

Britain fought a war that cost the British people their national power, their standard of living, and, in less than twenty years--their empire. Had anyone in London's leadership stopped to seriously examine what outcome (end-state) it was they wanted to achieve with military power (purpose) and what military capabilities (method) were at their disposal to do so, it is doubtful they would have reached the decisions they did.

The lesson is a straightforward one: When national military strategy fails to answer the questions of purpose, method and end-state, military power becomes an engine of destruction not just for its intended enemies; but for its supporting society and economy too! Regardless of how great or how small the military

commitment, if the price of victory is potentially excessive, then the use of force should be avoided. After all, the object in conflict and crisis is the same as in wrestling; to throw the opponent by weakening his foothold and upsetting his balance without risking self-exhaustion.²³

This strategy served FDR well during the years leading up to and including World War II.²⁴ FDR

concluded it made no sense to challenge the German war machine on its own terms. That was a job FDR left to Stalin. Instead, FDR avoided German strength and moved his forces through North Africa and Italy waiting for the combined effect of massive Soviet offensives and Anglo-American bombing campaigns to weaken the Nazi grip on Europe to the point where France could be invaded. When American and allied forces stormed ashore at Normandy, the strategic outcome in Europe was effectively decided.

But even when conflict is forced upon the United States as it was in World War II or Korea in 1950, there are still opportunities to halt on-going, inconclusive military operations before they consume America's military, economic and political reserves of strength. This was Eisenhower's rationale for ending the Korean Conflict in 1953. Unfortunately, chief executives like Eisenhower are rarer than hens' teeth.

Before committing to military action, political and military leaders must always measure what they might gain by what they might lose. Even when wars are won and the victorious military achieves total military domination of its opponent – the case in both Iraq and Afghanistan – the population of the “defeated” country may not submit to the victor's demands, particularly if the victor insists on garrisoning his troops in the defeated population's territory. If the foreign military presence provokes local hostility, (and it usually does), the result will be more fighting--not stability. These are all good reasons for the United States to end conflicts on



President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower and Sgt. Virgil Hutcherson, Squad Leader, Co. "B", 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd US Infantry Division, eat dinner in Korea. December 4, 1952

(Dwight D. Eisenhower Library)

a war Britain, along with France and Russia would lose until the manpower and industrial might of the United States rescued them from defeat in 1918.

Britain's human losses were staggering; one in sixteen British men between fifteen and fifty, or nearly 800,000 died. Paying for Britain's victory in World War I led to a ten-fold increase in Britain's national debt. Paying the

terms the defeated party can accept and disengage U.S. forces; even when the terms may not meet all of America's security needs. What militates against this line of reasoning is the delusion of limitless national power and the unhealthy condition of national narcissism that thrives on it.

The Johnson Administration's decision to intervene with large-scale conventional forces in Vietnam rested on this delusion. Even worse, LBJ subscribed to the idea that whatever military action the American government initiated, it was inherently justified on moral grounds, even if, as in the case of Vietnam, the military action turned out badly for the United States.²⁵

Tragically, LBJ's wish-based ideology made retreat from inflexible and irrational policy pronouncements impossible when they no longer made sense.

Wish-based ideology is dangerous because it imagines a world that does not really exist; the kind of world described in 1992 by the late, Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, where the U.S. Armed Forces are employed to "*punish evil doers*,"²⁶ or Ambassador Madeleine Albright's idea that armed forces not engaged in fighting should export democracy-at-gunpoint. Not only has this ideological thinking and behavior since 1991 failed to create stability around the world, it has made the United States and its allies less secure. Understanding why means

leaving the 20th Century's wars of ideology behind.

The United States and Europe spent most of the 20th Century coping with the forces of nationalism and social change unleashed by the French Revolution and Karl Marx's mock scientific theory of history as the systematic unfolding of a predictable, dialectical process. The Bolsheviks, later called communists, tried to unite the two in an attempt to perfect human society through force of arms at home and abroad.

Fascists were ideological opportunists who borrowed from the right and the left seeking to

violence to its utmost limits and rejects the deliberate employment of military means to achieve anything less than the opponent's complete annihilation – what Stalin and Hitler called "*victory*."

Such war aims are not limited to changing the opponent's policy stance to create the basis for a new, *status quo* all sides can support. The aim of total war is to replace the defeated government and its supporting society with ones subservient to the victor's. It is the mentality that created the Warsaw Pact. This mindset is dangerous and incongruous with the strategic interests of the American people and the realities of the 21st Century. Political and

military leaders who talk and think in these terms should be rejected. The disproportionate use of military force and the unlimited political aims it supports will not protect or safeguard American interests or the interests of our allies.

In the 21st Century, the "*total victory*" construct as it equates to the establishment of Western-style governments and free market economies subservient to the United States is

counterproductive. In the Middle East, as well as in most of Africa, Latin America and Asia "*damage control*," not "*total victory*," is the most realistic goal for U.S. national military strategy.

New Goals and New Directions

America's experience since 2001 teaches the strategic lesson that in the 21st Century the use of



President Lyndon B. Johnson greets American troops in Vietnam, 1966
(Still Picture Branch, National Archives at College Park)

fuse together society's classes inside mass movements of radical nationalism.²⁷ The failed utopian projects resulting from both European ideologies turned the 20th Century world into a battlefield littered with the ruins of great civilizations. Communism and fascism exalted territorial conquest and occupation; a form of total warfare that pushes

American military power, even against Arab and Afghan opponents with no navies, no armies, no air forces and no air defenses--can have costly, unintended strategic consequences.²⁸ Put in the language of tennis, the use of American military power since the early 1960s has resulted in a host of “*unforced errors.*” Far too often, national decision-making has been shaped primarily by the military capability to act, not by a rigorous application of the purpose/method/end-state strategic framework.

Decision-making of this kind explains why *Operation Iraqi Freedom* never had a coherent strategic design. The capability to remove Saddam Hussein was enough to justify action in the minds of American leaders who assumed that whatever happened after Baghdad fell to U.S. forces American military and civilian contractor strength would muddle through and prevail. It’s also why U.S. forces were kept in Iraq long past the point when it was clear that the American military and contractor presence in Iraq was a needless drain on American military and economic resources.²⁹

The superficial thinking informed by a fanciful view of American history and international relations that gave birth to the occupation of Iraq is not a prescription for American prosperity and security in the 21st Century.³⁰ The recently announced military doctrine known as “*persistent warfare,*” is a case in point.

Persistent Warfare advocates the use of military power to change other peoples’ societies through

American military occupation.³¹ It’s a dangerous reformulation of Thomas Jefferson’s advocacy for the bloody excesses of the French Revolution summed up in his slogan “*until all men are free, no man is free.*”³² Fortunately for the American people, President George Washington rejected Jefferson’s enthusiasm for an American alliance with Revolutionary France, an alliance that would have invited the destruction of the new United States. “*Twenty years’ peace,*” Washington argued in 1796, “*combined with our remote situation would enable us in a just cause to bid defiance to any power on earth.*”³³

Washington understood the importance of making prudent choices in national military strategy at a time when the economic and political development of the United States was extremely fragile. Today, America’s economic woes along with the larger world’s unrelenting drive for prosperity³⁴ creates the need for new choices in national military strategy. The most important choice President Obama must make is to reject future, unnecessary, large-scale, overt military interventions in favor of *conflict avoidance*; a strategy of refusing battle that advances democratic principles through shared prosperity--not unwanted military occupation.

This strategy does not change America’s policy stance on Islamist terrorism. The exportation of Islamist terrorism against the United States and its allies must remain a permanent red-line in U.S. national military strategy. Governments that knowingly harbor terrorist groups must

reckon with the very high probability that they will be subject to attack. However, Long-term, large-scale American military occupations even to ostensibly train indigenous forces to be mirror images of ourselves are unwise and should be avoided. Iranian interests gained prominence in Baghdad because Tehran’s agents of influence wear an indigenous face while America’s agents wear foreign uniforms and carry guns. And Iran will remain the dominant actor in Iraq so long as it maintains even the thinnest veil of concealment behind the façade of the Maliki government and its successors.³⁵

As a declaratory goal of U.S. military strategy, conflict avoidance is not merely a restatement of deterrence or a new affirmation of collective security. It is a policy stance that stems from a decent regard for the interests of others; regardless of how strange and obtuse these interests may seem to Americans. It is an explicit recognition by Washington that no one in Asia, Africa, the Middle East or Latin America wants American troops to police and govern their country, even if American troops are more capable, more honest, and provide better security than their own soldiers and police. The question for Americans is how to translate the goal of conflict avoidance into operational strategy – what the United States will do if *it is not compelled to fight*?

Conflict avoidance would appear to require action on several different levels. First, conflict avoidance requires that America continue to maintain the military power to make a direct assault on U.S. and allied security interests

unthinkable and, then, pursue peaceful relations with the peoples of the world so the danger of war involving the world's great military powers is reduced and contained. America already has a surplus of military power for this stated

utilization of increasingly constrained resources.³⁶ More specifically, the 1947 National Security Act reached block obsolescence years ago.

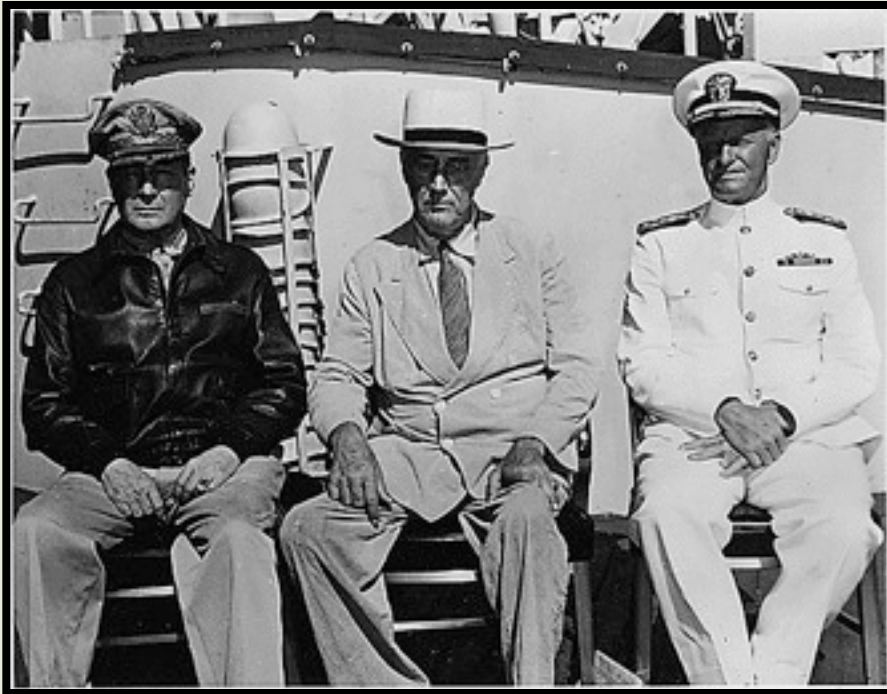
Second, conflict avoidance balances the need to make the

Roosevelt (FDR) had no intention of declaring war against Germany on behalf of another state including Britain. He would not make President Woodrow Wilson's mistake and commit millions of Americans to an ideological crusade that promised no tangible strategic benefit to the American people. Put more bluntly, FDR would not commit political suicide for Winston Churchill.³⁸

Between 1939 and 1942, FDR resisted Churchill's considerable powers of persuasion, providing only the assistance Britain needed to survive and nothing more. When Hitler turned on the Soviet Union, Hitler's closest ally until June 1941, FDR reasoned he could afford the time to build up American strength while the Nazis and Communists exhausted themselves in an ideological war of mutual destruction.

Even after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, FDR declared war only on Japan. FDR had no intention of declaring war on Germany if it could be avoided. It was Hitler who – in an essentially romantic gesture of solidarity with Japan unanimously opposed by the German General Staff – declared war on the United States.

In the Caucasus, a region where political structures are closer in character to the Maffia organizations of Al Capone than Jeffersonian democracy, it makes no sense for the United States and its European allies to extend security guarantees. Russia's security interests in many of the states that border it are legitimately paramount. American interests in these regions shrink to insignificance next to Russia's.



General MacArthur, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Admiral Nimitz in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. July 26, 1944.

(Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)

purpose. American nuclear power is overwhelming and any state or sub-national group that contemplates the use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies understands that nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in general have "return addresses" on them with ominous consequences for the user. American conventional military power is no less impressive when it is employed within an integrated, joint framework that exploits capabilities across service lines.

What America lacks is an efficient and effective organization of military power for the optimum

United States secure against the danger of making the rest of the world less so. Instead of defining events around the world as tests of American military strength and national resolve, and rather than dissipating American military resources in remote places to pass these alleged tests,³⁷ the United States should define its role in the world without feeling compelled to demonstrate its military power. Otherwise, the United States runs the risk that other states, not the United States, will dictate America's strategic agenda.

Though as privately pro-British as his cousin President Theodore Roosevelt, President Franklin

Whereas Russia's proximity to Georgia and Ukraine ensure Russia's ability to effectively and efficiently apply military power, the United States and its allies are no more able to guarantee Georgian or Ukrainian security than Britain could guarantee Poland's security against Nazi and Soviet military intervention in 1939. In Eastern Ukraine beyond the Dnieper River and the Crimea where the population is unambiguously Russian in language, culture and ethnicity, it would be folly to think that a guarantee of NATO military assistance would be interpreted as anything, but a threat.

Third, when the United States confronts crises and conflicts, the U.S. armed forces should be committed on terms that favor the United States where the use of military power can achieve tangible strategic gains for the United States. As Sir Winston Churchill argued in 1909, "*It would be very foolish to lose England in safeguarding Egypt. If we win the big battle in the decisive theater, we can put everything else straight afterwards. If we lose it, there will not be any afterwards.*"³⁹

American military interventions have routinely violated this line of reasoning. In Vietnam, American military assistance failed for many reasons, chiefly because the Saigon government was thoroughly corrupt, and indifferent to the security of its own people. All the military might at America's disposal, whether or not the North Vietnamese military enjoyed sanctuaries in neighboring states, was never enough to rescue the incompetent South Vietnamese

government from its eventual conquest by North Vietnamese communists.

America's decision to garrison Iraq after its initial goals of

and peoples – Kurds, Turks, Iranians, Saudi, Sunni or Shiite Arabs – struggling for power inside Iraq.⁴⁴ These realities explain why the Bush



Russian Tanks in South Ossetia, Georgia. August 8, 2008
(Associated Press)

removing Saddam Hussein and eliminating WMD were achieved, added little--if anything; of strategic value to American security, but the presence of so many conventional American forces did present America's enemies in the Muslim World with an opportunity they would have otherwise missed:⁴⁰ the chance to directly attack U.S. forces, damage American military prestige and exhaust American economic resources while strengthening their own.⁴¹ By the beginning of 2008, the most serious unanticipated outcome of this exposure was a monthly bill of twelve billion dollars⁴² to maintain U.S. forces in support of a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad that was and is effectively tied to Iran.⁴³

Meanwhile, the United States military has become a co-belligerent for the various factions

Administration is reluctant to remove large numbers of troops from Iraq; the current *status quo* is not merely fragile, it will not survive the withdrawal of U.S. military power.⁴⁵

In consideration of what to do next about Afghanistan's rapidly deteriorating situation, current discussions in Washington are dominated by people who advocate increasing force levels, and plunging these forces into Pakistan's tribal areas. Yet, a more sober analysis suggests the real problem with Afghanistan resides in Kabul, another corrupt and ineffective government unworthy of American military support.⁴⁶

The key questions missing from discussions in Washington D.C. about Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001 include: Where is the legitimate government that asked for help from the United States in defeating the internal armed

challenge to the government's monopoly of control over the means of violence and political power? Legitimacy is not exclusively a function of elections.

Treating conflict avoidance as a declared strategic goal should give pause to those in Washington who think counterinsurgency is something American military

global influence, but the deliberate use of American military power to bring democracy to others in the world under conditions that never favored its success has actually weakened--not strengthened American influence and economic power.⁵⁰



Barack Obama during his visit to a US military camp in Kuwait.
(Getty/AFP)

Legitimacy is also defined by a government's competence to win and hold power in ways that benefit American and allied interests.

Where are the organized indigenous forces defending the legitimate government that must conduct the operations? While U.S.-provided training, equipment, and advisors can significantly improve a partner state's capabilities, there must already be an indigenous force to equip, indigenous fighters to train, and a senior leadership echelon to advise. And, the costs of long-term U.S. military assistance should be realistically assessed. Had any of these questions been raised and accurately addressed within the purpose/method/endstate framework, it is doubtful American military action would have followed the course it did after 9/11.

forces should seek to conduct.⁴⁷ For outside powers intervening in other peoples' countries as we have done in Iraq and Afghanistan, so-called counterinsurgency has not been the success story presented to the American people. Making cash payments to buy cooperation from insurgent groups to conceal a failed policy of occupation is a temporary expedient to reduce U.S. casualties, not a permanent solution to secure stability.⁴⁸

Conclusions

One of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers, Lord Salisbury told his colleagues in the House of Commons "*the commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcass of dead policies.*"⁴⁹ Salisbury's words should resonate strongly with Americans today. America's scientific-industrial base and the military power it supports give American policies and interest

It is crucially important that choices among competing resource allocations in defense be illuminated by a much clearer perception of their likely strategic impact. Strategy and geopolitics always trump ideology and military action is not merely a feature of geopolitics and statecraft, it's the employment of it.

The choices the next President makes among various military missions will ultimately decide what national military strategy America's military executes.⁵¹ Of the many missions he must consider, open-ended missions to install democracy-at-gunpoint inside failed or backward societies along with unrealistic security guarantees to states and peoples of marginal strategic interest to the United States are missions America's military establishment cannot and should not be asked to perform.

Today, the United States' share of world gross national product (GNP) is roughly 32% of the world total, substantially less than its 49% share of just forty years ago. Yet the United States, like the British Empire one hundred years ago, continues to lead the world in the creation of wealth, technology and military power. And, thanks to American naval and aerospace supremacy, America retains the strategic advantage of striking when and where its government

dictates, much as Britain did before World War I.

But like Britain's resources in 1914, American resources today are not unlimited. Years of easy tactical military victories over weak and incapable nation-state opponents in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq have created the illusion of limitless American military power. This illusion has assisted the Bush Administration and its generals in frustrating demands from Senators and Congressmen for accountability;⁵² allowing politicians and generals to define failure as success and to spend money without any enduring strategic framework relating military power to attainable strategic goals.⁵³

The result is both an unnecessarily large defense budget of more than \$700 billion dollars and military thinking that seeks to reinvigorate the economically disastrous policies of territorial imperialism. Unchecked, the combination of these misguided policies will increase the likelihood the United States follows the path of Britain's decline in the 20th Century. Though Britain was not defeated militarily in World War I, Britain squandered its blood and treasure on a self-defeating war with Germany in 1914 along with a host of imperial experiments in the aftermath of World War I; all of which were, political, military and economic disasters for the British people. A strategy of refusing battle that routinely answers the questions of purpose, method and end-state in the conduct of military operations is the best way for the United States to avoid following in the footsteps of the British Empire into ruin.

Endnotes

- ¹ The 2005 parliamentary elections were won by the most hard-line, pro-Tehran Shiite fundamentalist parties, who have ruled Iraq ever since. Iran has close relations with the ruling Islamic Da'wa Party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, headed by Shiite cleric Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, whose party was founded by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1982. Also see Patrick Cockburn, "Iraq: Violence Is Down – But Not Because of America's 'Surge.' If fewer US troops and Iraqis are being killed, it is only because the Shia community and Iran now dominate," *Independent.co.uk*, 14 September 2008.
- ² Marc Lynch, "Why U.S. strategy on Iran is crumbling," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 January 2008, page 1. Also see James Glanz and Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. and Iran Find Common Ground in Iraq's Shiite Conflict," *New York Times*, 21 April 2008, page A2.
- ³ Yigal Schleifer, "Why Turks no longer love the US. Secretary Rice arrives Friday to defuse tensions over Kurdish rebels in Iraq." *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 1, 2007.
- ⁴ Graham Allison, "After Musharraf, And Now The Deluge," *The Boston Globe*, 22 February 2008, *Opinion page*. Rami G. Khouri, "A Legacy of Lies and Delusion," *Daily Star*, 10 Dec 2008, page 1. Also see, Arnaud de Borchgrave, "An existential crisis," *Washington Times.Com*, 15 September 2008.
- ⁵ Ron Tira, "Breaking the Amoeba's Bones," *Strategic Assessment*, Jaffee Center for Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, Autumn 2006. Yo'av Qeren, "From the Quagmire into the Pit," *Ma'ariv*, 28 July 2006. The Islamic Da'wa Party of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has called for all Muslim countries to cut off diplomatic relations with Israel and to cease all public and behind-the-scenes contacts with it. Large demonstrations have been staged against Israel in Mosul, Baghdad and the holy city of Karbala.
- ⁶ Daniel Dombey and Stephen Fidler, "US pays price in power for Iraq role," *The Financial Times*, March 18 2008 19:19 | March 18 2008 19:19. Also, see Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire, Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005), 25-29. Also, see Daniel Byman, "Al-Qaida at 20: From Obscurity to Infamy," *SLATE Magazine*, 11 August 2008, page 19.
- ⁷ Liz Rappaport and Justin Lahart, "Debt Reckoning: U.S. Receives a Margin Call," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 March, 2008; Page A1. Also, see Jeannine Aversa, "Federal budget deficit swells in first 5 months of fiscal year as spending outpaces revenues," *Associated Press*, 12 March 2008.
- ⁸ China is set to overtake the US next year as the world's largest producer of manufactured goods, four years earlier than expected, as a result of the rapidly weakening US economy. Peter Marsh, "China reverting to form as the world's workshop," *The Financial Times*, 11 August 2008, page 17.
- ⁹ Farreed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), page 43.
- ¹⁰ Mark Almond, "The West Would Be Wise to Stay Out. Plucky Little Georgia?" *Counterpunch*, August 9/ 10, 2008.
- ¹¹ Miriam Elder, "President Dmitry Medvedev said that Russia should unilaterally claim part of the Arctic, stepping up the race for the disputed energy-rich region," *Reuters*, posted 3:20PM BST 17 September 2008.
- ¹² For an assessment, consult Omer Taspinar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition*, (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2004). Also, see Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey Finalizes Threat Paper," *DefenseNews.com*, 3 April 2006.
- ¹³ Sudha Ramachandran, "Turkey offers oil pipe lifeline to India," *Asia Times Online Ltd.*, 27 February 2008.
- ¹⁴ Catherine Philp, "Nato plan for rapid-reaction force to counter Russian aggression," *Times on Line*, 19 September 2008, posted 09:30 GMT.
- ¹⁵ Nicholas Kralev, "Russia Urged To Halt Arms To Iran, Syria: Moscow irked by Tel Aviv's Georgian sales," *The Washington Times*, 10 September 2008, page 1.
- ¹⁶ Quoted by Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, (New York, NY: Doubleday Books, 1995), page 202.
- ¹⁷ Robert Lloyd George, *David and Winston, How the Friendship Between Lloyd George and Churchill Changed the Course of History*, (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2205), page 107.

- ¹⁸ Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the coming of the Great War*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), page 907.
- ¹⁹ Major General J.F.C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War 1789-1961*, (New York, NY: Minerva Press, 1961), pages 153-154. For a contrarian view on pre-1914 Germany, see Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, pages 208-209.
- ²⁰ David Fromkin, *A Peace to end all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), page 83.
- ²¹ To his everlasting credit, Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, resisted war with Germany until the last possible moment.
- ²² Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and The Lessons For Global Power*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), page 320.
- ²³ B. H. Liddell-Hart, *Strategy*, (New York, NY: Meridian Press, Second Revised Edition, 1967), page 24.
- ²⁴ Norman Gelb, *Ike and Monty: Generals at War* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, In.1994), 330-331.
- ²⁵ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1992), Pages 432-433.
- ²⁶ Secretary of State Les Aspen, in response to a question concerning the use of America's armed forces in the post-Cold War world. *Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 1992.
- ²⁷ William J. Bossenbrook, *The German Mind*, (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1961), page 425.
- ²⁸ Tim Kilbride, "Coalition Completes Aerial Bomb Blitz of Al Qaeda Sanctuary," *American Forces Press Service*, 22 January 2008.
- ²⁹ Thomas H. Henriksen, "Security Lessons From the Israeli Trenches: A half-century of counterterrorism," *Policy Review*, No. 141, Hoover Institute, February-March 2007, pages 34-35.
- ³⁰ Christopher J. Coyne, *After War: The Political Economy of Exporting Democracy*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), page 126. Coyne does an excellent job of dismantling the popular myth that the American military reshaped Japan and Germany in America's image.
- ³¹ Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Petraeus Doctrine," *Atlantic*, October 2008.
- ³² Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2004), 347-248.
- ³³ James MacGregor Burns and Susan Dunn, *George Washington*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), page 86.
- ³⁴ Peter Marsh, "China reverting to form as the world's workshop," *The Financial Times*, 11 August 2008, page 17. China is set to overtake the US next year as the world's largest producer of manufactured goods, four years earlier than expected, as a result of the rapidly weakening US economy
- ³⁵ *Patrick Cockburn*, "Who's Really Running Iraq?" *CounterPunch*, Weekend Edition, August 2/3, 2008.
- ³⁶ David E. Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons: The Evolving Roles of Ground Power and Air Power in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2007).
- ³⁷ Eric Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), page 274.
- ³⁸ Peter Clarke, *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire. Churchill, Roosevelt and the Birth of Pax Americana*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), Page 15.
- ³⁹ Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the coming of the Great War*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), page 823.
- ⁴⁰ Rich Lowry, "The Chiefs' Shame. Pentagon Bungling On Iraq," *New York Post*, 15 September 2008, page 3A.
- ⁴¹ Charles J. Hanley, "American Airstrikes In Iraq Rise Above '06 Total," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 6 June 2007, page 3.
- ⁴² Paul B. Farrell, "America's Outrageous War Economy! Pentagon can't find \$2.3 trillion, wasting trillions on 'national defense,'" *MarketWatch*, 28 August 2008, page 13.
- ⁴³ Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Iraq Takes Aim at U.S.-Tied Sunni Groups' Leaders," *New York Times*, 22 August 2008, page A3.
- ⁴⁴ Amit R. Paley, "Strip of Iraq on the verge of Exploding. Kurds Extend Role Beyond Autonomous Borders, Angering Arabs," *Washington Post*, 13 September 2008, page A3.
- ⁴⁵ Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Iraq Takes Aim at U.S.-Tied Sunni Groups' Leaders," *New York Times*, 22 August 2008, page A3.

- ⁴⁶ Simon Jenkins, "Fall Back, Men, Afghanistan Is a Nasty War We Can Never Win," *London Sunday Times*, 3 February 2008, page 1. Sarah Chayes, "The Other Front," *Washington Post*, 14 December 2008, Outlook section, page B01.
- ⁴⁷ Edward N. Luttwak, "Counter-insurgency as Military Malpractice," *Harper's Magazine*, February 2007, 33-40.
- ⁴⁸ Sam Dagher, "Will 'Armloads' of US Cash Buy Tribal Loyalty? The US policy of paying Sunni Arab sheikhs for their allegiance could be risky," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 November 2007, page 1. Also, see Lauren Frayer, "US accidentally kills 9 Iraqi civilians," *Associated Press*, 3 February, 2008, 11:10 PM EST.
- ⁴⁹ Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), page 56.
- ⁵⁰ George Jahn, "Few things are as they seem in Tehran," *Associated Press*, 30 August 2008.
- ⁵¹ Robert Komer, "U.S. Defense Strategy," in Joseph Kruzal's *American Defense Annual*, (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1987), page III-9.
- ⁵² Jeff Zeleny, "Senate Leader Criticizes Performance of Joint Chiefs Leader," *New York Times*, June 15, 2007.
- ⁵³ George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), page 54.

About the Author

Colonel (ret) Douglas Macgregor is a decorated combat veteran, an author of four books and a PhD. Macgregor is currently the lead partner with Potomac League, LLC, an intellectual capital brokerage and consulting firm based in Reston, Virginia. Macgregor's concepts from his groundbreaking books on transformation, Breaking the Phalanx (Praeger, 1997) and Transformation under Fire (Praeger, 2003) have profoundly influenced thinking about transformation inside America's ground forces. Macgregor's newest book: Warrior's Rage: The Battle of 73 Easting, will be published by the Naval Institute Press in Summer 2009. In it Macgregor explains how the failure in 1991 to finish the battle with the Republican Guard along the 73 Easting led to Iraq's second major confrontation with the United States in 2003 resulting in two hollow "victories" and the tragic blood-letting that continues today in Iraq.

Potomac League, LLC
Reston, Virginia