

How To End ‘The Wrong War at the Wrong Time’

by Michele Steinberg

“The Iraq adventure was the wrong war, at the wrong time, waged with extraordinary incompetence by the civilian leadership. . . . Success as defined by our civilian leadership three years ago is out of reach,” stated Gen. Joseph P. Hoar (USMC, ret.), the former head of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), at an “informal,” *bipartisan* Congressional hearing called on Sept. 15 by Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), on defining an exit strategy from Iraq.

“[T]here is still the possibility that a stable pro-Western Iraq can take its place in the community of nations,” Hoar added, but, this could *only* happen in the context of a “paradigm-shift [in Washington] that places a major political figure in charge, one who can guide U.S. policy through ratification of the Constitution,” and other major developments in Iraq.

The Woolsey hearing was informal, not by choice, but because her repeated requests to the House Armed Services Committee and to the House International Relations Committee had been turned down, and blocked by the Republicans. But, as the death toll rises for American troops to nearly 2,000 young men and women soldiers, and to uncounted tens of thousands for Iraqis, Woolsey, who was the first in Congress to call on President Bush to withdraw American troops from Iraq, put together a panel of experts to open the discussion of an exit strategy.

It was a panel that is fully qualified to help shape a way out of the Bush/Cheney “perpetual war.” Included were former Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), a Vietnam War hero; General Hoar; Ambassador David Mack, vice president of the Middle East Institute and former Ambassador to the United Arab Republic and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; Anas Shallal, an Iraqi American and Sunni Muslim, founder of Iraqi Americans for Peaceful Alternatives; Dr. Ken Katzman, senior Middle East analyst for the Congressional Research Service, who is also a former CIA officer, with expertise on Iraq and Iran; and Prof. Antonia Chaves, a visiting professor of International Politics and Law at Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

And while Cheney can use threats to control the schedule of House and Senate committees, these cannot silence some Republicans.

One such courageous Republican is Rep. Walter Jones, of North Carolina, the “very conservative” (by his own de-



Former Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), a Vietnam War veteran, told the congressional hearing that “the war in Iraq is beginning to look a lot like Vietnam. . . . I can’t stand by silently while thousands of American soldiers risk their lives—again—for a no-win, no-end war.”

scription) Congressman, who sponsored a bipartisan bill in the House for withdrawing troops from Iraq. Jones attended the Woolsey hearing, where he was applauded by the other House members for his courage.

Some days earlier, on Sept. 12, at the annual policy-makers’ conference of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chas Freeman, who had served under Republican Presidents Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush, decried the lack of discussion in Washington, and told the opposition to “speak out,” in order to restore democracy—in Washington (see *Documentation*).

Break the Silence on Capitol Hill

The Woolsey hearing indicates that more and more policymakers now see that the Iraq war was intended to be a “no win” war—by design.

It is a point that Lyndon LaRouche, founder of *EIR* and 2004 Democratic Presidential primary candidate, had made back in 2002, when Dick Cheney authored the imperial “pre-emptive war” doctrine, known as the National Defense Strategy document. Already, in 2002, LaRouche had called for Cheney to be impeached for violating the Constitutional powers of Congress, around the Iraq War buildup. Then, again, in late July 2005, LaRouche warned again about the perpetual war danger, spotlighting the fact that Cheney has given the order for a war plan against Iran, using nuclear weapons.

In his opening statement, Cleland said, “I agree with my distinguished former colleague and Vietnam veteran, U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel, that the war in Iraq is beginning to look a lot like Vietnam. . . . Now, I am seeing this movie all over again. I can’t stand by silently while thousands of American soldiers risk their lives—again—for a no-win, no-end war.”

And, General Hoar, while praising the U.S. Armed Forces, who “continue to serve with courage and determination at great personal sacrifice,” painted a grim picture of what the United States has done in Iraq, under the “planning” of the Pentagon civilians. Hoar says that Iraq is now a “budding civil war” which the U.S. cannot win “by killing Iraqis. Were this possible, the over 25,000 Iraqis killed already might have been enough.”

Moreover, Hoar added, “The invasion of Iraq has created a force of thousands of Jihadists in Iraq where none existed over two years ago.” There is a slim chance, that if the Bush Administration completely overthrows the policy it has had since the invasion, that Iraq can be saved—but only by returning to the American System. Hoar proposed: “Developmental projects should put everyone to work who wishes to be employed. Our country has apparently forgotten the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] of the 1930s, in which tens of thousands of unemployed Americans were put to work on public works projects. Construction of sewers, roads, bridges, and buildings are all possible with skilled and semi-skilled Iraqi workers.”

But the time has come for more than just “opposing,” said Representative Woolsey in her opening remarks: With less than 40% of Americans supporting Bush’s handling of the Iraq War, and about 50% favoring a withdrawal of troops, the obligation of those elected officials opposing the war, is to “break the silence on Capitol Hill,” and to put forward policy proposals that will bring peace.

But, under the Bush/Cheney regime, that is almost impossible, noted Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), who reported that she had met, just a day earlier, with Syrian Ambassador to the United States Dr. Imad Moustafa, and found out that the Administration is not meeting with our Arab ambassadors. “There is a communications blackout,” she exclaimed. This is all the more dangerous since Syria knows it is targeted by the Bush Administration.

One hopeful sign is that Representative Kaptur announced that after nine months of work, she has succeeded in a plan to bring in four Arab ambassadors—from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon—who will brief the Democratic Congressmen on their views of what is happening in that region.

The LaRouche Doctrine

But for all its outstanding content, the Woolsey hearing comes up short on a solution—which has, in fact, been there all along, since LaRouche issued, in Spring 2004, his peace plan, “The LaRouche Doctrine.”

In that, LaRouche laid out how *only* if the United States engaged in a full dialogue over *development* of the region, especially through water projects, with Iraq, and all of its surrounding neighbors, could there be a solution. The only way out, LaRouche emphasizes, is the application of the principles of the Treaty of Westphalia, that ended the Thirty Years’ War, in 1648. Based on the Westphalia concept of

seeking to further “the advantage of the other,” a new peace can be born. Again, on Sept. 16, one day after the Woolsey hearings, LaRouche offered his services to meet with the leaders of the nations of Southwest Asia to apply those principles. It is a solution that can work—and it’s the only one on the table.

Documentation

We Pay *More* for Young People To Die, Than To Live

The following exchange between Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.), who served in the Korean War, and former Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), who served in the Vietnam War, occurred during the Sept. 15 hearing convened by Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.) on finding an exit strategy for Iraq.

Rangel: . . . [W]hat supprises me is that there’s no outrage in this country for the young men and women that are there, the 1,800 that have died . . . over 12,000 that are wounded. And the fact that they come from the inner cities and the rural areas, and the Pentagon says with great pride that we are *increasing the bonuses from \$10- to \$20-, and \$20- to \$30-, and now \$40,000* because these people “*want to fight.*”

Now it just seems to me that since they come from the area of the highest unemployment, that if indeed the President was sincere in bringing liberty and freedom throughout the world, and especially in the Middle East, the sacrifice should be made by a broader cross-section of Americans, who believe that that is our mandate. Whether it’s a draft, or whether the President can make an appeal to the children of the CEOs or the Pentagon or the Congress, where everyone would believe that this is a mandate.

But it just seems to me that, when the President says we’re going to stay there until we *win*, and not one day longer—and the whole world knows that we cannot find a military victory, it bothers me that the country is willing to use other people’s children to wait to see what happens politically, and what happens diplomatically. . . .

[T]he taking of life—unlawfully and immorally—when it’s not in defense of you or your country, is probably one of the greatest sins that could possibly be committed. And this would include the tens of thousands of Iraqis, that have committed *no wrong.*

And so, Senator [Cleland], it seems to me that we could really end this war overnight, if we had a draft in this country, where *everybody* had to serve, and everyone had to be placed in harm’s way while we go through this diplomatic procedure.

I'd like to get your views on it, because you and I know, that whatever your motivation was to join the military, your job is not political, it is to kill or be killed. So therefore, they are the patriots, but we are the people that are placing them there.

Cleland: . . . You pointed out something that has bothered me, and that is that now *we're paying more money for young men and women to die, than to live.* I think we have to be very careful about that. I happen to believe in the concept of the citizen soldier, which is why I volunteered for Vietnam, and why I was in ROTC, and those kind of things. There was a draft over our heads in my generation, but I figured it was my responsibility to take my place in the line. It was a moral choice to do that, and a tough choice. And, I paid a price for it.

That draft does not hang over the heads of the young men and women of this generation. I have often wondered about, where's the anger, where's the passion out there, when their young friends, most of whom, that I have come across, are just good young men and women who would like an opportunity, and see the military as that. . . .

Fifty percent of all the casualties come from rural America. *Fifty percent of the casualties in Iraq come from rural America*—part of our country that probably has the least opportunity for jobs and investment in higher education. So, there is a disproportionate sharing . . . and we're seeing the American military, and the civilian leadership at the Pentagon want to pay more and more for people to "re-up." I understand that a Special Forces sergeant will get \$130,000 to re-up. That's moving very closely to a mercenary force—kind of an American foreign legion! You have the total disconnect—and it's all volunteer, and they're paid big money to go wherever we send them, for whatever cause. . . .

That's not America. That's not the American military; that's not the American way. We should examine this at another time, because there is a powerful disconnect here, between the sacrifice that is being made now, and those who are getting the tax breaks. Those who are getting the most tax breaks are not sending their young men and women to war in Iraq. . . .

And, I happen to think, and one of the reasons I'm here for plugging an exit strategy, that it is immoral, *immoral*, and violates the right to life for these young men and women, to send [them] into combat, without a strategy to win, and without a strategy to get out. And it is immoral, and that's exactly where we are. The President calls that, "staying the course." I call it, immoral. . . .

I supported, believe it or not, the concept of moving to an all-volunteer force, at the end of the Vietnam War, in '73, when President Nixon could not go to the Congress and re-up it, because the draft had been so abused. I knew it was. . . . So, I supported the concept of the all-volunteer force because, [among other things], you will limit the power of any future President or Congress, to commit this country and its troops to an open-ended war, because sooner or later, you're going to run out of people, and that's exactly what we're facing now.

There is no way we can maintain the occupation of Iraq at the current level. There's no way we can "stay the course." We're throwing in almost everybody that is able-bodied in the Guard and Reserve, and now we realize we need the National Guard down in . . . Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana. So, we have committed our Reserves, and our bottom-line defenses, all in this so-called war in Iraq; but that's not where the terrorists are! They're using that as a training ground, to go in to other places. The al-Qaeda is morphing into 60 different countries. . . . In the Guard, recruiting is down 43%. . . . Reserves, now they are going into the *inactive* Reserves . . . people who are 50 and 60 years old; they're sending them to Iraq! This is insane. . . .

[T]here was no strategy to win. There was a strategy to take out Saddam Hussein, and a strategy to occupy the oil fields. That's the only strategy that there was. Let the 25 million people just go, fire the [Iraqi] Army, disband every element of the social structure in Iraq. Now, we're living in the mess that we created. That is generating more terrorism, that is creating more insurgents. . . .

[Our soldiers] are attacked by people they don't even know. There's not even a name for them. We just call them "insurgents," and that's whoever blows me up—today. And then, what blows you up—an "IED." You know, the Army, just like the Marine Corps, comes up with all kinds of nomenclatures—if it happens, it must have a nomenclature. "IED," improvised explosive device. What in the world is that? In Georgia, we call that a homemade bomb. So, here's the biggest, most-strike, capability the United States has ever maintained, and we're bogged down in Baghdad, and in Iraq, with people we don't even know, attacking us with weapons that our youngsters can't even hardly name.

Now, that is immoral. Anybody that wants to talk about "right to life," I argue that those young men and women out there have a right to life, and one of the ways that we can maintain that, is to have an exit strategy that brings them home.

'Speak Out' and Restore Life to Our Democracy

On Sept. 12, extraordinary commentary was given by two of Washington's most accomplished diplomats in the Arab and Islamic world, Hon. Charles Freeman, the former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and Dr. John Duke Anthony, president and CEO of the National Council of U.S.-Arab Relations, who spoke at the closing panel of 14th annual conference of the Council, entitled "Restoring Arab-U.S. Trust in a Time of Turbulence and Reforms." Both speakers spelled out a time of tragedy for the United States, in which the present Adminis-

tration has failed the American people abroad, with its adventurous policies, and at home, as demonstrated by the devastation of the Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina.

The day also saw, for once, the link between foreign policy and domestic concerns made vividly, as Dr. Anthony took note of the increase of poverty in America since last year, of the rise in homelessness, and in the neglect of the elderly poor. He asked if it is not indeed arrogant, for the United States to demand “democracy” from Arab states, while demonstrating a neglect of its own people that is rarely seen in Arab family culture.

We excerpt below the speech by Ambassador Freeman, and will be covering more of the important speeches from the conference, when transcripts become available.

Chas Freeman

Once again, I have been honored by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and stand before you to offer a few thoughts on where we—Americans and Arabs—are, and where we may go from here. I speak for myself alone, not for any organization with which I am affiliated. I speak because I believe U.S.-Arab relations matter greatly to my country and because, unlike many in Washington, I do not believe in diplomacy-free foreign policy and have a healthy regard for what is now derided as “reality-based analysis.”

Our relations with the Arabs and with Muslims generally are at a historic nadir. All of us, Americans or Arabs, who are present want to do something about this. But what? We must start with an honest appraisal of where we are.

My country’s tragically misguided lurch into militarism after 9/11 has already cost us more on the broader international stage than anyone could have imagined. In the span of a single Presidential term of office, four years, we have forfeited the international esteem that once undergirded our global influence. We have lost the admiring deference to our leadership of allies and friends alike, without gaining the respect of our enemies and adversaries. Once seen as the reliable champion of a generous and just international order based on the rule of law, the United States is now widely viewed as an inveterately selfish spoiler in international organizations and a scowflaw in international affairs. Once seen as the last, best hope of humankind, the United States is now, according to many polls, more feared than admired in a lengthening list of countries. We are much the weaker for all of this.

Nowhere is this dismaying reversal in foreign views of my country more advanced than in the Arab and Islamic worlds. The mutual estrangement of Arabs and Americans is driven by the consequences of ill-considered U.S. policies in Iraq, the Holy Land, Afghanistan, and at home. It is exacerbated by hypocrisy, irresponsible passivity, and an absence of forceful leadership on the Arab side. Adverse trends in



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American-Arab relations in turn poison American relationships with the broader world of Islam. Different policies and approaches on both sides will be needed to regain the enormous amount of common ground we have lost. More artful and articulate explanations for policies that are fundamentally mistaken will not do the trick.

The Occupation of Iraq

The Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq has cost my country its international reputation, many lives, and hundreds of billions of borrowed dollars. It is severely eroding both the structure and the professional competence of our army. It has destroyed the Iraqi state and destabilized and desecularized Iraqi politics, while expanding the regional power and influence of Iran. It has catalyzed violent struggles, verging on civil war, between Iraqi Arabs and Kurds, between Arab Sunnis and Shi’ias, and among Shi’i factions. It has generated at least three separate but loosely coordinated insurgencies in Iraq. The occupation, which seemed like the solution, has become the problem.

Our occupation in Iraq is drawing youth from throughout the Islamic world into attacks on Americans, by some estimates multiplying our enemies ten-fold. By a process of Darwinian natural selection administered by the very competent officers and men of the U.S. Army and Marines, we are creating an ever fitter cadre of enemies, expert in urban warfare, bomb building, and the military choreography of the ambush. We have transformed Iraq from a reliable supplier of oil to the U.S. and other markets, into an unreliable one. The Iraq conflict and its side effects have contributed to raising energy prices to levels that are beginning to take a serious toll on our economy.

Our inability to prevail on the battlefield in Iraq has underscored the limits of our military power and emboldened our enemies. Now Hurricane Katrina has shown how little we have learned about how to deal with the consequences of

large-scale traumatic events. The suffering of New Orleans has earned us the pity of the world and the scorn of our enemies. It invites renewed attempts by extremists to mount spectacularly deadly attacks on our homeland.

I suspect that many, if not most leaders in the Arab world would privately agree with the very negative assessment of American intervention in Iraq that I have just given. Some, I know, have spoken candidly to our President about Iraq, Israel, and the parlous state of American relations with the broader Islamic world. Candor, not fawning evasion and the hypocritical concealment of sincere differences of opinion, is the mark of true friendship. And it is in that spirit that I say to our Arab friends here today, if you do not express your views and advocate your own interests, do not be surprised if they are insouciantly ignored and trampled upon. . . .

It is particularly important that our Arab friends speak candidly to us about Iraq and Iran. The best outcome still possible in Iraq, it now seems, is a Shi'a-dominated state with a largely autonomous southern region heavily influenced by Iran, and a Kurdish region independent in all but name. Such an Iraq may or may not contain U.S. garrisons and bases. The United States has not clarified its intentions. No one has demanded that it do so.

Some of the same people who neo-conned the United States into invading Iraq are now arguing for an attack on Iran as a means of ensuring that it does not eventually acquire nuclear weapons. If these outcomes in Iraq and courses of action against Iran would serve the interests of the Arabs, then Arabs need only remain silent. If they would not serve Arab interests, as I believe they would not serve the interests of the United States, then Arabs must speak out to help the United States and the international community come up with alternatives to them that would better serve our interests, or suffer the consequences.

In Iraq, the problem is not now—if it ever was—weapons of mass destruction, bad government, or even terrorism; it is the occupation. The occupation generates the very phenomena it was intended to cure. In that respect, the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq has come to have much in common with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. In Iraq, as in Palestine, ending the occupation is the prerequisite for reversing the growth of terrorism and restoring peace.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Not long ago, many Arabs took obvious pleasure in seeing a few thousand Israeli settlers in Gaza suffer the same sense of powerlessness and dispossession that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have experienced over the years. It is all too easy to forget that the Israeli withdrawal was unilaterally imposed by the Israeli military on Israelis and Palestinians alike. It was not agreed with the Palestinians as part of a peace process and it has no clear implications for any other part of the occupied territories. It seems likely, in fact, that the people of Gaza have exchanged occupation by Israeli colonists and

soldiers not for freedom, but for a state of siege, in which their access to the outside world will continue to be controlled and perhaps severely restricted by their Israeli neighbors. . . .

As long as the United States continues unconditionally to provide the subsidies and political protection that make the Israeli occupation and the high-handed and self-defeating policies it engenders possible . . . neither Palestinians nor Israelis will have personal security . . . [and] Israel will not find the acceptance by its Arab neighbors that was offered at Beirut in 2002. Moreover, the violent confrontation could at any moment, as it did in the past, spread its murder and mayhem well beyond the region. . . .

The extremism and terrorism bred by the continuing injustices and crimes against humanity in the Holy Land thus continue to take their toll in places as remote from the Holy Land as Britain, Thailand, Nigeria, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, an American-led military operation to apprehend the perpetrators of 9/11 and to punish those Afghan Salafis who had given them shelter, has now taken on a seemingly eternal life of its own. No one can now say when or what might allow the United States to disengage from combat against the once discredited but now resurgent Taliban. As in Iraq and Israel, the occupation is becoming the cause of the very problems it was meant to resolve. If one recalls that the objective of al-Qaeda and its extremist ilk has been to drive the United States and the West from the Dar al-Islam so that they can seize control of it, the growing antipathy to the American presence is sobering.

Systemic Breakdown in American Democracy

Finally, a couple of necessary observations about the American home front. I have recited a daunting list of policy challenges. . . . We have a political system premised on the notion of competition between two parties an adversary process in which one party criticizes and proposes alternatives to the policies of the other. This system has clearly broken down. Patriotism is confused with silent acquiescence in the policies proposed by our leaders. Policies that should be the subject of active debate are accepted without a word of protest by a gullible public. Those who know better say nothing, even when they can see the country being led into disaster. The opposition party not only does not oppose, it does not propose alternatives, either because it has no ideas or because it lacks confidence in those it has been too timid to advance. This is not just a political problem; it is a systemic breakdown in American democracy.

What can and must be done in these circumstances? None of you would be here at this late hour of the day if you did not care deeply about the issues I have been discussing. I appeal to you. Those of you who are Arabs, lend us your ideas for how to lead ourselves out of the dilemmas we now face. Those of you who are American, speak out. Reaffirm your patriotism by restoring life to our democracy!