

Off the U.S. Goes to Save the World (Again)

Lisa Pope
Editorials Editor

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be...

—Winston Churchill

The language of war. It's out there, teasing your mind and disturbing your subconsciousness. The phrases float unbidden to the surface of your thinking and lodge like whispering irritants: Churchill's oratory and Thomas Paine and FDR and Patrick Henry and Admiral Nelson... Sometime you're not sure what war they're from or even if someone actually said them (could have just been a movie). But they hang on stubbornly, like ghosts: "I have not yet begun to fight," "Give me liberty or give me death," "These are the times that try men's souls," "We shall fight in the hills..." And, as hard as you try, they keep getting mixed up in any rational thought about the war.

For a war is not just a war anymore: it is a link in a chain stretching back hundreds and thousands of years. It is "Veni, Vidi, Vici," William the Conqueror, Napoleon, Paul Revere, Gettysburg, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Flanders Field, Iwo Jima, Sergeant York, The Cliffs of Normandy, The Fall of Saigon. Honor! Courage! Heroism! Glory! Larger than life drama, even in defeat. Is there need for that larger-than-life quality? A need to cast ugly and brutal events into mythology or a type of national religion? I think so. It masks reality and softens hard facts. "Dead upon the altar of his country" sounds so

better than just "dead." Even though that's what you are. Dead.

The mythology seemed to have waned in recent years here in the United States. Vietnam was bad and G.I. Joe was passé and sitting around discussing the horrors of "Platoon" was much more fashionable.

"Nicaragua is another name for Vietnam," cried the bumperstickers. And people discussed sanctions very solemnly and boycotted Olympic games and protested at embassies and worried about "The Day After" and thought "the next one will annihilate us all."

U.S. Policy May Have Larger Implications

Salem Ajluni
Guest Writer

The combined effects of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the U.S.-led war to reverse Iraq's move will have profound destabilizing consequences for the region and for the U.S. for years—if not decades—to come. Much depends on how the current war proceeds and how the antagonists prepare for and produce a peace after the hostilities end. Whatever the outcome of the shooting war, the region will never be the same. Let us consider some possible scenarios and their effects on the people of the region and on Americans.

If the U.S. and its allies are able to militarily prevail in a relatively short period of time, they will still have to contend with the dislocations wrought by crisis. On the one hand, the Iraqi population, regardless of what sort of government remains in Baghdad, will surely be hostile to the forces that destroyed large segments of the countries' infrastructure such as elec-

tricity, water treatment, roads, ports and the oil-pumping and refining capacity. Animosity among Iraqis will be especially pronounced if there is a heavy loss of life whether civilian or military; every Iraqi soldier—like every American soldier—has a family that will grieve his loss at the hands of the "enemy." Economic and social life will have been severely disrupted, many will be wounded physically and mentally, and a massive reconstruction effort will be necessary.

Furthermore, U.S. forces will be required for an indefinite period to protect the Arab governments in the Gulf which assisted in the destruction of Iraq. If the U.S. and its Arab partners assist in the reconstruction effort, and no large loss of life occurs, fences may be slowly mended especially if there is simultaneously U.S. and western support for just solutions to other regional problems such as Israel's occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian land, and the Kurdish people's rights in Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

If the U.S. is not able to prevail in a relatively short time, the animosity of the region's peoples—including the peoples of the states allied with the U.S.—will surely grow. Even if it is assumed that heavy Iraqi civilian casualties have not and will not occur, popular regional opinion will be mobilized enough to threaten the stability of governments friendly to the U.S. This is already underway as the mass demonstrations in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen and Jordan in the past few weeks have shown. This could bring reinforcements of volunteers to Iraq and/or Kuwait to thwart U.S. military forces. Iran has had to turn away some number of Pakistani volunteers seeking to cross Iranian territory in order to assist Iraq. In such a widened war, U.S. forces may pay a heavier price in terms of lives lost. In such a case the post-war outcome would be far less predictable, for the ensuing instability may lead U.S. leaders to maintain their forces in the region where they will be seen by many as an occupying force.

a good war—to take its place proudly alongside The War Between the States and WW II. We saved the Union and the Western World—now it's on to the Persian Gulf. So it's liberty, freedom and rally around the flag boys. It's blitz them, neutralize them, liberate them. "We support the troops" is heard so frequently that it starts to roll off the tongue like a national incantation. And in the flurry of words, I am reminded of a different, more sobering recitation: "Theirs not to make reply/ Theirs not to reason why,/ Theirs but to do and die." The real language of war.

Whether the U.S. prevails militarily or not, there are other dynamics which have been set into motion, the outcomes of which may be explosive. Prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait there were approximately two million workers from other countries (Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, India) employed in the two countries, most of whom have since returned to their countries. In addition, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have expelled tens of thousands of workers from Yemen and Jordan and Palestinians from the occupied territories. Not only have these workers lost their incomes and, in many cases, their savings, but they returned to countries where unemployment is already a severe problem. They can neither support themselves nor their families as they used to do. The social and political problems of such a process are severe enough. Add to this a continued U.S.-led destruction of Iraq or a U.S.-led force stationed in the Gulf to maintain an embargo on Iraq or to protect the other Gulf Arab states, and the political response in those countries may be devastating.

The immediate ramifications of this war for Americans is the loss and potential loss of life of many young people. Those killed and wounded in this war will be from poor, disproportionately non-white and working-class families. A large percentage—perhaps a majority—of those stationed in the Gulf volunteered for the armed services because they saw it as one way, maybe the only way, to economic betterment in an economy which has been producing fewer and fewer decent jobs and more and more poverty. In the longer term, the effects of combat conditions on the mental health of Gulf veterans—not to mention the physically wounded—will be with us for a generation to come. Many will no doubt end up in poverty as many Vietnam veterans have. One need only be reminded that 30 percent of America's homeless are Vietnam veterans. These are the results we

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