



The Clinton Administration came close to achieving an Israeli/Palestinian agreement, but Arafat overplayed his hand. Israel will accept, or can be coerced into accepting, that deal again, but not unless it receives something in return. A number of countries threaten Israel's security and Iraq is one of them. Removing the Hussein regime and the Iraqi threat would, with enough pressure from the U.S., bring Israel back to the bargaining table and willing to accept the arrangement it was willing to take a few years ago.

Meanwhile, Iraq is a more secular society with the perfect strategic location for the U.S. facilities currently in Saudi Arabia. Relocation of our military facilities out of Saudi Arabia will increase the likelihood that the Saud regime survives.<sup>9</sup>

The author of the Atlantic Monthly piece went into much greater detail, and he was not sanguine about the prospects for success.<sup>10</sup> But, his thesis provides a much better explanation for war with Iraq. And, the war must be unilateral. Appeals for multilateral support would have been futile, both because Israel lacks significant support among nations other than the U.S., and because the relocation of U.S. military bases to Iraq would certainly be opposed by Russia and China, at least publicly. Unfortunately, Saddam Hussein is simply "in the way".

In my view, the war on terrorism is, indeed, really a war on Islamic Fundamentalism. Putting aside equities favoring one side or the other in such a conflict – as both have grievances that are to some extent legitimate – the conflict is inevitable. The only question is how many lives it will consume. World War II was also inevitable and consumed 50 million lives. If, "pre-emptive" action – conducted in good faith and with a bona fide commitment to rehabilitation of Iraq – might ultimately avoid a conflict potentially as terrible as World War II, it is action that is morally justifiable and should be attempted. We must, however, keep in mind that just as in 1914, such a conflict might escape our control.

Again, I very much enjoyed your article and would appreciate any comments you might have on my views.

/s/

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the prospects for the Saud regime are almost the mirror image of the results of World War I, which caused the fall of governments. Given increasing pressure from Islamic Fundamentalists, the future of a moderate government in Saudi Arabia is iffy, at best.

<sup>10</sup> While I am confident that we will prevail militarily, I fear that our post-war experience in Iraq could prove comparable to England's experience in Palestine prior to 1948.

simply Hitler's megalomaniac dream. It was an economic necessity. Germany and England were the two countries in Europe that were not agriculturally self-supporting. The difference is that England had an empire to exploit, while Germany - even without the burdens of the Treaty of Versailles - faced trade deficit problems in perpetuity because of its need to import food. Modern Germany does not threaten the peace not because it is not a totalitarian state; it is not a totalitarian state that threatens the peace because it has a First World economy and no economic incentive for war.

I have heard it said that Iraq is the "Germany of the Middle East" with a hard-working population that values education and economic development. Given what I believe to be our true objectives, Iraq is the proper country to conquer and change, but only if we are prepared to facilitate sufficient capital investment to establish a diverse, successful, First World economy. This will be more expensive (in real dollars per citizen) than was Germany, because Iraq's economy is starting from a much lower base. It will also be more difficult than was Germany because the Iraqi society is heterogeneous with deep-seated ethnic animosities. Success in rehabilitating Iraq is by no means certain. It is, however, worth the effort because of the potential upside benefits. The question is whether we are willing to make the necessary effort.

This brings me to your last point favoring multilateral diplomacy over unilateral action, and this is probably the one point on which you and I disagree.

I do not believe that the war against Iraq has much, if anything, to do with Saddam Hussein, UN Resolutions or Weapons of Mass Destruction.<sup>7</sup> Just as the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia had little to do with the assassination of Ferdinand, the basis for the war proffered to the public is disingenuous at best.

Having said this, however, I support the war if we are truly committed to rebuilding Iraq and bringing it into the First World. This may be a very rare occasion in the history of civilization when pre-emptive conflict is justified.

Last November, Atlantic Monthly magazine published an insightful article that articulated a basis for war with Iraq. The author, whose name escapes me at the minute, obviously is well connected with sources in the State Department and the Pentagon.<sup>8</sup> Briefly stated, his thesis is that the "war on terrorism" is a war on Islamic Fundamentalism, and while we will ultimately prevail, the war on terrorism could be "won" at lower cost - both monetarily and, more importantly, in human lives - if issues fueling the growth and popularity of the Islamic Fundamentalist movement can be resolved.

Two of the most significant such issues are the continuing Israeli/Palestinian dispute and the presence of U.S. military facilities in Saudi Arabia, an Islamic society, in close proximity to some of Islam's most holy sites.

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<sup>7</sup> Certainly it has little to do with oil. Iraq's reserves are comparable to Saudi Arabia's and although consumers might benefit from lower energy prices, the companies in the energy business would not. Capital investments in exploration, production and refining are based on oil at \$18 to \$21 per bbl. With no post-war restrictions on production and the need for hard currency to fuel its post-war economy, Iraq will produce as much as physically possible. If, as a result, the price of oil falls to \$5 to \$12 per bbl., which it might, the energy industry cannot begin to even earn costs of capital on existing property, plant and equipment. I have friends in the oil field service industry who tell me that the "rig count" is the lowest it has been in 10 years, notwithstanding high prices, because exploration and production companies have stopped all capital investment in anticipation of a post-war fall in oil prices to a level below that at which they can make a profit.

<sup>8</sup> I believe this to be true because the author's analysis was corroborated by a friend of mine, a retired senior military officer, as part of a policy analysis he wrote at the Pentagon years ago. His question to me - with a note of shock and alarm in his voice - was, "Where did you get this?"

civilized war in history in terms of results accomplished and lives lost. Even where it might be in our best tactical interest to do so, we are not – at least currently – leveling Iraqi cities in order to minimize our military casualties.<sup>5</sup> If we were to adopt the ethical standards prevailing only 60 years ago, the Iraq war is one we could win any time we choose to, even without employing nuclear weapons. And, were we to do so, our victory would cost very few American lives.

Perhaps the most important decision of the Twentieth Century was the decision of the Allies to rebuild Germany and Japan as modern economies without macroeconomic incentives for territorial conquest. It is this decision that has essentially eliminated the prospect of war among the nations of modern Western Europe.<sup>6</sup> The cost of that decision, largely borne by the U.S., was staggering.

Bush has said that we will rebuild Iraq, and that is certainly what we will need to do if the war is to have served any long-term beneficial purpose. For unless we rebuild Iraq – or, more accurately, totally restructure its economy so that it is not entirely reliant on petroleum reserves for whatever prosperity it might enjoy – all of the blood shed in the current conflict will have been in vain. I do not think the American people fully appreciate what a commitment to “rebuild” Iraq will cost and I am concerned – based on statements to the effect that we are avoiding damage to infrastructure in order to limit rebuilding costs – that our government intends a rebuild “on the cheap”.

There seems to be a prevailing view that national conduct depends almost entirely on form of government, and that all we need to do is to facilitate a representative democracy in Iraq and repair what was destroyed during the war and all will be right with the world. That is the mistake we made at the end of World War I. We installed the Weimar Republic, but did nothing to address the fundamental macroeconomic issues that Germany faced. “Lebensraum” was not

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<sup>5</sup> During the Gulf War, Iraq claimed that we had deliberately targeted civilians when one of our weapons hit a civilian facility. George Bush Sr. fumbled through a denial. Had I been in his position, I would have had photos of Hamburg, Dresden, and Tokyo available at the press conference and simply would have said, “Any claim that we are targeting civilians is preposterous. We are well aware of methods of targeting civilians. We targeted civilians during World War II and if we were to choose to do so now, this is what Baghdad would look like.”

<sup>6</sup> Given your interest in Eastern European history, I would be particularly interested in your views on my analysis of James Riddleberger’s oral history, which can be found - together with the Riddleberger transcript – on my web site, <http://scott-juris.blogspot.com>.

Riddleberger, of course, knew Adolph Hitler and spent the first two and a half years of the War (September, 1939 until December 1941) in Berlin. He spent the War years in London working on diplomatic and economic plans for the occupation of Germany and the reconstruction of Europe. Although he did not attend the meetings at Yalta, he was at all of the meetings at Potsdam except for the private meetings among Truman, Churchill and Stalin.

Among other things, Riddleberger talks at length about the vigorous support of the Treasury Department under Harry Dexter White and Henry Morgenthau of a plan favored by the Soviets to essentially destroy Germany permanently by flooding all the mines, destroying all bridges, factories and dams (including a dam that would have flooded large parts of the city of Vienna) and making the German nation into a “goat pasture.” Dexter White and others in the Treasury and State Departments, of course, were later accused of being Soviet agents. Notwithstanding the legal merits of those charges, there were certainly a number of high-ranking individuals in these departments, both appointed and among the career staff, who were very sympathetic to the Soviet point of view.

I draw two conclusions:

First, history might judge that the greatest threat posed by such individuals was not the loss of U.S. technological (such as nuclear) and political secrets, but the adverse consequences that would have resulted had their views on German occupation and European reconstruction prevailed.

Second, the Morgenthau Plan further evidences the vastly different moral values of that time. Certainly a similar proposal today with respect to Iraq would be seen as a war crime, as it would - by design - result in the unnecessary death of large numbers of non-combatants.

discussed below, I have reason to believe may to some extent pre-date even the Gulf war), the link to 9/11 is much less direct and the timing not particularly critical.<sup>2</sup>

Your fundamental point, of course, remains valid. It is extremely difficult – essentially impossible from any rational perspective – to predict the course or scope of an armed conflict once it has begun. And, World War I was a terrible conflict that cost millions of lives. But, I take issue with your claim that it was the first “total war.” And, while it redrew the political map of Europe, precipitated the fall of the Romanoffs, the Habsburgs, and the German Kaiser, and put a final end to Turkish imperial aspirations, I would not necessarily blame the war for the eventual Nazi government in Germany. That was a failure of the peace, as the Treaty of Versailles did nothing to address the underlying macroeconomic issues that drove Germany to war in 1914. Both these points are relevant to the current Iraq conflict.

World War I featured the use of poison gas by combatants on both sides, but at least on the Western Front was fought on fairly conventional terms. Although the Germans used the “Paris Gun”, in general the combatants did not indiscriminately target the civilian population. And, previous recent Western European conflicts had also generally limited “collateral damage” to the extent possible (although, prior to the development of food preservation technologies in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, armies had to rely on plunder from residents of captured territories for food).

Regardless of what may have transpired previously, I think World War II clearly stands as the first truly total war. It is fascinating to me how prevailing moral standards have changed so drastically in the past 60 years. The bombing of population centers of little military significance was an accepted practice, even in countries being “liberated.” Faced, for example, with the need to take St. Lo in France, and realizing that house-to-house, urban warfare would result in substantial Allied casualties, we simply sent hundreds of B-17s and reduced the city to rubble with little regard for the consequences for the French citizens.<sup>3</sup> The famous fire bombing raids on Hamburg, Dresden and the Japanese cities each inflicted more civilian casualties than either of the Atomic bombs used at Hiroshima or Nagasaki. But these well-known raids were simply representative of hundreds of other routine bombing missions that took God knows how many civilian lives.<sup>4</sup>

Our conduct of World War II stands in stark contrast to our conduct in the Gulf War and our current conduct of the Iraq War. The current conflict can be seen as the most efficient and

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the lack of a demonstrable link between Al Qaeda and Hussein is a primary basis on which many base their view that the war is not justified.

<sup>3</sup> I have a vague recollection of having read at one point that Germany decided not to defend Paris or Rome because of the certainty that doing so would result in those cities being totally destroyed. I thought that both were declared “open cities”. But, I recall neither the source of this view or its veracity, so I could be wrong.

<sup>4</sup> The files containing the documents of the Allies target selection bureaucracies have recently been declassified and reading them is chilling from a contemporary perspective, particularly those related to bombing raids late in the war when victory was assured and the number of legitimate military targets was limited. They read as if the bureaucracy was often simply trying to schedule missions to kill as many civilians as possible. This is not to ignore the substantial debates over the ethics of our strategic bombing campaign that did take place, but overall the difference between “then” and “now” is astonishing.

To a large extent, of course, area bombing during World War II - including the use of the Atomic bomb – can be understood as a necessary consequence of imprecise targeting technology. We now can target weapons within meters, rather than only within hundreds of yards (at best) or a couple of miles (at worst), as was the case 60 years ago. In fact, I think that targeting has become so accurate as to largely render nuclear weapons obsolete. I question whether we would ever use nuclear weapons (except on a very limited basis for a very few extremely hardened targets) in a conflict with another major power, simply because they are no longer necessary. I no longer think that mankind faces the thermonuclear extinction of the species, as we feared for so many years.

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Via Electronic Delivery

2 April 2003

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RE: Lessons of Past Wars

Professor Mason:

I very much enjoyed your article in the recent edition of NUVO, Lessons of Past Wars. Personally, I have refrained from writing about the Iraq war because the "conventional wisdom" on both sides is so hardened. Your contribution to the debate was unique and refreshing.

I had not previously thought of the war from a WWI perspective. You identify some haunting parallels. I have a few comments that I would like to share.

Certainly, Austria-Hungary was under pressure from Serbia given Serbia's gains in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. And, while Dimitrijevic was not head of state, his ambitions were eerily similar to those of Saddam Hussein.<sup>1</sup>

As for the chain of events, however, I had always thought that Serbia's rejection of Austria-Hungary's ultimatum was substantive, based on Serbia's (quite reasonable) refusal to give Austria-Hungary the unilateral right to demand removal of (unnamed) Serbian officials or to allow Austria-Hungary to participate in Serbian proceedings against organizations hostile to Austria-Hungary.

Also, I have never seen the resulting war as the inevitable result of pre-existing alliances. Austria-Hungary timed the service of the ultimatum carefully – "gamed the system", you might say – to catch Poincaré, and Viviani of France "out-of-pocket" on their way back from Russia and, therefore, unable to coordinate with Russia or affect its response, and to catch William II of Germany not yet back from Norway. As a result, Russia acted predictably and William's efforts in late July to retract Germany's commitment to Austria-Hungary came after "the train had already left the station." If France and Germany had had the opportunity to timely intervene, war might have been avoided. In contrast, I do not think that the intervention of third parties had, or could have had, any effect on our decision to go to war with Iraq.

I do not think Austria-Hungary believed itself "impotent" to respond to the Ferdinand assassination. Its adversary was Serbia, not an elusive terrorist organization. Austria-Hungary knew of Serbia's ambition to acquire the Slavic regions of Austria-Hungary. I believe Austria-Hungary wanted to precipitate (pre-emptive) war with Serbia while Serbia was still recovering from the Balkan Wars (even though it had been successful in those conflicts). The assassination provided a convenient excuse. Austria-Hungary was looking to go to war with Serbia as soon as possible. While I think that the US intended war with Iraq at some time (an intention that, as

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that both in Balkans in 1914 and the Middle East currently there was peripheral involvement by a non-governmental ethnic organization with a strong leader. Dimitrijevic, as "Apis", headed the secret "Union or Death" society (the "Black Hand"), while Bin Laden heads Al Qaeda. The difference, of course, is that the link between the "Union or Death" society and Austria-Hungary was more direct than any known links between Bin Laden and Hussein.