

Read this or George W. Bush will be President the Rest of your Life

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Separation of oil and state

On several occasions I've been presented with the argument that contrary to widespread opinion in the anti-war movement and on the left, oil was not really a factor in the the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq. The argument's key, perhaps sole, point is that the oil companies did not push for the war.

Responding to only this particular point: firstly, the executives of multinational corporations are not in the habit of making public statements concerning vital issues of American foreign policy, either for or against. And we don't know what the oil company executives said in private to high Washington officials, although we do know that such executives have a lot more access to such officials than you or I, like at Cheney's secret gatherings. More importantly, we have to distinguish between oil as a fuel and oil as a political weapon.

A reading of the policy papers issued by the neo-conservatives since the demise of the Soviet Union makes it clear that these people will not tolerate any other country or group of countries challenging the global hegemony of the world's only superpower. A sample — In 1992 they wrote: "We must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even *aspiring* to a larger regional or global role." [1] And in 2002, in the White House "National Security Strategy" paper: "Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States. ... America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed. ... We must deter and defend against the threat before it is unleashed. ... We cannot let our enemies strike first. ... To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively."

As the world has been learning in great sorrow, the neo-conservative world-dominators are not just (policy) paper tigers.

Japan and the European Union easily fall into the categories of potential competitors or potential adversaries, economically speaking. They both are crucially dependent upon oil imports. To one extent or another so is most of the world. The Bush administration doesn't need the approval of the oil companies to pursue its grandiose agenda of world domination, using the vast Iraqi oil reserves as one more of its weapons.

For those who would like to believe that there's a limit to the neo-cons' imperial arrogance, that even the likes of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Bolton, Wolfowitz, Rice, and the rest of the gang would never treat Europe as anything like an enemy, I suggest a look at a recent

article by the former US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, which appeared in the Financial Times of London. In it, the Cheney intimate and current senior fellow at the neo-con citadel, American Enterprise Institute, berates British prime minister Gordon Brown for implying that the UK could have a “special relationship” with both the United States and the European Union (which Bolton refers to as “the European porridge”). Like a hurt lover, Bolton exclaims that Britain has been brought to “a clear decision point. ... What London needs to know is that its answer will have consequences.” The article is entitled: “Britain Cannot Have Two Best Friends”.

Bolton goes on to ask: “Why does a ‘union’ with a common foreign and security policy, and with the prospect of a real ‘foreign minister’ have two permanent seats on the UN Security Council and often as many as three non-permanent seats out of a total of 15 council members? France and Britain may not relish the prospect of giving up their unique status, but what is it that makes them different — as members of the ‘Union’ — from Luxembourg or Malta? One Union, one seat. Mr Brown cannot have it both ways (nor will President Nicolas Sarkozy).”

The Empire has not yet made Europe an ODE (Officially Designated Enemy) like Iran, but, Bolton declares, “If Mr Bush decides that the only way to stop Iran is to use military force, where will Mr Brown come down? Supporting the US or allowing Iran to goose-step towards nuclear weapons?”[2]

Washington’s exquisite imperial mentality, its stated determination to “act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed”, sees “potential adversaries” in China and Russia as well of course. The United States — with hypocrisy breathtaking even for the Bush administration — regularly castigates China for its expanding military budget; and tries to surround Russia with military bases, missile shields, and countries with ties to Washington and NATO.

Moreover, the United States has been competing with Russia for the vast oil and gas reserves of the land-locked Caspian Sea area since the 1990s. The building and protection of pipelines in Afghanistan was in all likelihood a major factor in the US invasion and occupation of that country. And in this case we know that the American oil company UNOCAL met with Taliban officials in Texas and in Afghanistan before 9-11 to discuss the pipelines.[3]

A license to lie that never expires

I touched upon this a year ago, but our much-esteemed leader and his equally-esteemed acolytes continue to use the same argument in order to deflect attention from their deformed child, the War On Terror — the argument being that since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, US counterterrorism policy has worked. How do they know? Because there haven’t been any terrorist attacks in the United States in the six years since that infamous day.

Right, but there weren’t any terrorist attacks in the United States in the six years *before* Sept. 11, 2001 either, the last one being the Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995, with no known connection to al Qaeda. The absence of terrorist attacks in the US appears to be the norm, with or without a War on Terror.

More significantly, in the six years since 9-11 the United States has been the target of terrorist attacks on scores of occasions, not even counting anything in Iraq or Afghanistan —

attacks on military, diplomatic, civilian, Christian, and other targets associated with the United States, in the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific, more than a dozen times in Pakistan alone. The attacks include the October 2002 bombings of two nightclubs in Bali, Indonesia, which killed more than 200 people, almost all of them Americans and citizens of their Australian and British war allies; the following year brought the heavy bombing of the US-managed Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, the site of diplomatic receptions and 4th of July celebrations held by the American Embassy; and other horrendous attacks in more recent years on US allies in Madrid and London because of the war.

When the Bush administration argues that the absence of terrorist attacks in the US since 9-11 means that its war on terrorism has created a safer world for Americans ... why do I doubt this?

The past is unpredictable

As the call for withdrawal of American forces from Iraq grows louder, those who support the war are rewriting history to paint a scary picture of what happened in Vietnam after the United States military left in March 1973.

They speak of invasions by the North Vietnamese communists, but fail to point out that a two-decades-long civil war had simply continued after the Americans left, minus a good deal of the horror which US bombs and chemical weapons had been causing.

They speak of the “bloodbath” that followed the American withdrawal, a term that implies killing of large numbers of civilians who didn’t support the communists. But this never happened. If it had taken place the anti-communists in the United States who supported the war in Vietnam would have been more than happy to publicize a “commie bloodbath”. It would have made big headlines all over the world. The fact that you can’t find anything of the sort is indicative of the fact that nothing like a bloodbath took place. It would be difficult to otherwise disprove this negative.

“Some 600,000 Vietnamese drowned in the South China Sea attempting to escape.”[4] Has anyone not confined to a right-wing happy farm ever heard of this before?

They mix Vietnam and Cambodia together in the same thought, leaving the impression that the horrors of Pol Pot included Vietnam. This is the conservative National Review Online: “Six weeks later, the last Americans lifted off in helicopters from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon, leaving hundreds of panicked South Vietnamese immediately behind and an entire region to the mercy of the communists. The scene was similar in Phnom Penh [Cambodia]. The torture and murder spree that followed left millions of corpses.”[5]

And here’s dear old Fox News, July 26, reporters Sean Hannity and Alan Colmes, with their guest, actor Jon Voight. Voight says “Right now, we’re having a lot of people who don’t know a whole lot of things crying for us pulling out of Iraq. This — there was a bloodbath when we pulled out of Vietnam, 2.5 million people in Cambodia and Vietnam — South Vietnam were slaughtered.”

Alan Colmes’ response, in its entirety: “Yes, sir.” Hannity said nothing. The many devoted listeners of Fox News could only nod their heads sagely.

In actuality, instead of a bloodbath of those who had collaborated with the enemy, the Vietnamese sent them to “re-education” camps, a more civilized treatment than in post-

World War Two Europe where many of those who had collaborated with the Germans were publicly paraded, shaven bald, humiliated in other ways, and/or hanged from the nearest tree. But some conservatives today would have you believe that the Vietnamese camps were virtually little Auschwitzes.[6]

Has the conservative view of Vietnam post-US withdrawal already hardened into historical concrete? “The agreed-upon historical record”, to use Gore Vidal’s term?

The way of all flesh, the way of all wars

In 1967 and ’68 I was writing a column of a type very similar to this report, only it wasn’t online of course; it was for the Washington Free Press, part of the so-called “underground press”. In looking over those old columns recently I found three items whose relevance has not been dimmed by time at all:

(1) [From the Washington Post, 1968]: “It has never been clearer that the Marines are fighting for their own pride, from their own fear and for their buddies who have already died. No American in Hue is fighting for Vietnam, for the Vietnamese, or against Communism.”[7]

[Make the obvious substitutions and we have: No American in Baghdad is fighting for Iraq, for the Iraqi people, or against terrorism. And how many of today’s warriors can look around at what is happening in Iraq and convince themselves that they’re fighting for something called freedom and democracy?]

(2) Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, was the man most responsible for “giving, controlling and managing the war news from Vietnam”. One day in July 1965, Sylvester told American journalists that they had a patriotic duty to disseminate only information that made the United States look good. When one of the newsmen exclaimed: “Surely, Arthur, you don’t expect the American press to be handmaidens of government,” Sylvester replied, “That’s exactly what I expect,” adding: “Look, if you think any American official is going to tell you the truth, then you’re stupid. Did you hear that? — stupid.” And when a correspondent for a New York paper began a question, he was interrupted by Sylvester who said: “Aw, come on. What does someone in New York care about the war in Vietnam?”[8]

(3) The US recently completed an operation in the III Corps area of South Vietnam called “Resolved to Win”. Now, a new operation is being planned for the same area. This one is called “Complete Victory”, which should give you an idea of how successful “Resolved to Win” was. I expect that the only operation standing a chance of success will be the one called “Total Withdrawal.”

Libertarians: an eccentric blend of anarchy and runaway capitalism

What is it about libertarians? Their philosophy, in theory and in practice, seems to amount to little more than: “If the government is doing it, it’s oppressive and we’re against it.” Corporations, however, tend to get free passes. Perhaps the most prominent libertarian today is Texas Congressman Ron Paul, who ran as the Libertarian Party’s candidate for president in 1988 and is running now for the same office as a Republican. He’s against the war in Iraq, in no uncertain terms, but if the war were officially being fought by, for, and in the name of a consortium of Lockheed Martin, Halliburton, Bechtel, and some other giant American corporations, would he have the same attitude? And one could of course argue that the war is indeed being fought for such a consortium. So is it simply the *idea* or the *image* of “a government operation” that bothers him and other libertarians?

Paul recently said: “The government is too bureaucratic, it spends too much money, they waste the money.”[9]

Does the man think that corporations are not bureaucratic? Do libertarians think that any large institution is not overbearingly bureaucratic? Is it not the nature of the beast? Who amongst us has not had the frustrating experience with a corporation trying to correct an erroneous billing or trying to get a faulty product repaired or replaced? Can not a case be made that corporations spend too much (of our) money? What do libertarians think of the exceedingly obscene salaries paid to corporate executives? Or of two dozen varieties of corporate theft and corruption? Did someone mention Enron?

Ron Paul and other libertarians are against social security. Do they believe that it’s better for elderly people to live in a homeless shelter than to be dependent on government “handouts”? That’s exactly what it would come down to with many senior citizens if not for their social security. Most libertarians I’m sure are not racists, but Paul certainly sounds like one. Here are a couple of comments from his newsletter:

“Opinion polls consistently show that only about 5 percent of blacks have sensible political opinions, i.e. support the free market, individual liberty and the end of welfare and affirmative action.”

“Given the inefficiencies of what D.C. laughingly calls the ‘criminal justice system,’ I think we can safely assume that 95 percent of the black males in that city are semi-criminal or entirely criminal.”[10]

Author Ellen Willis has written that “the fundamental fallacy of right libertarianism is that the state is the only source of coercive power.” They don’t recognize “that the corporations that control most economic resources, and therefore most people’s access to the necessities of life, have far more power than government to dictate our behavior and the day-to-day terms of our existence.”[11]

NOTES

[1] “Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999”, New York Times, March 8, 1992, p.14, emphasis added

[2] Financial Times (London), August 2, 2007

[3] BBC News, December 4, 1997, “Taleban in Texas for talks on gas pipeline”

[4] Joseph Farah, editor of the conservative WorldNetDaily (worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=56769), August 6, 2007

[5] Mona Charen, National Review Online, July 20, 2007

[6] Search Google News: <bloodbath iraq vietnam> for more examples

[7] Washington Post, February 20, 1968, article by Lee Lescaze

[8] Congressional Record (House of Representatives), May 12, 1966, pp. 9977-78, reprint of an article by Morley Safer of CBS News

[9] National Public Radio, Morning Edition, August 9, 2007

[10] Atlanta Progressive News, June 3, 2007
(www.atlantaprogressivenews.com/views/0024-views.html)

As far as I can determine, Paul does not deny that these remarks, and others equally racist, appeared in his newsletter, but he claims that a staff member of his is the author of those remarks.

[11] Ellen Willis, Dissent magazine, Fall 1997

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