

Unnecessary Wars or Not

Former President Jimmy Carter attacked President Bush at the Democrats' Convention for starting an 'unnecessary' war in Iraq. What Liberals, like Carter, and Isolationists on the Right call 'unnecessary,' historians will say was inevitable. What historians put into clear context, many Americans blur with raw emotion. Yet, the honesty of the anger and pain for what seems like unnecessary suffering is compelling, even if isn't convincing. The American Experience is a tale of tragic wars, not unnecessary wars.

The Vietnam War appears unnecessary because America lacked the Will to win. Some say we could never have won militarily, but they are wrong – militarily. Vietnam was just a waste. The War of Northern Aggression, ACW I, seems tragic because some political solution should have been possible. But, frankly, no political compromise could balance the competition between national and state's power. Power determines rights and rights were part of identity. Only one government could rule. The Indian Wars were terrible for their genocide, but two cultures were incompatible and could not co-exist. Only one culture could rule. Still, World War I is the bitterest pill in memory.

World War I is remembered by mocking its justification, "The war to end all wars" and "The war to make the world safe for democracy". The politicians chose strategies to 'bleed' nations. The Generals obliged and slaughtered their own troops using old tactics against deadly, new technologies. Yet, WWI was an inevitable conflict, even if the butchery was not.

The electoral choices could not keep America out of WWI. President Woodrow Wilson ran on the slogan, "He kept us out of the war" and promptly took the Nation to war in 1917. Historians write that 1912 candidate Roosevelt would have gotten America in the war in 1916 and candidate Debs in 1920 (and the war would have lasted that long to include us). The bare fact is that America was too powerful a world power to be left alone. Neither side in WWI could afford for the other to have America tip the balance for victory. Imperial Germany screwed up more than Imperial Britain in making Americans choose sides.

Furthermore, WWI was not just a bloody abortion of politics. The struggle for World Order, especially defeating totalitarianisms, is important. WWI begat WW II. WWII begat WWIII. The punitive peace of WWI gave grievances for WW II. WWII stopped Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. WWII opened half a continent to a Soviet Empire with a globalist ideology to challenge the West. The post-WWII order was actually another conflict, the Third World War, the Cold War.

Much of what made WWI seem like such folly was the failure of Wilson's idealism. The ideas were wonderful. But America lacked the will and the power to make good ideas work. Wilson over sold trusting Americans on the prospects for peace. When Europe was incapable of living up to the purpose of American idealism, the rebuke was bitter. Today's disdain for the Iraq War is comparatively mild, but ominously familiar.

President Bush promises a free, democratic Iraq will rise where freedom and democracy have never existed. Even the concept of a country called 'Iraq' is an artifice less than a century old. In Iraq, country means less than tribe and religious faction. In Iraq, the religion of the majority has no understanding of individual rights and equal rights for minorities.

The future of Iraq, like the recent war, has a historically correct context different from the politically correct spin of either party.

The war to rid the world of Saddam Hussein, free Iraq, and deny Islamist terrorists a base and resources was inevitable and necessary. Furthermore, killing Islamists who came to Iraq to kill Americans is a strategic plus. The 'anger' that creates in the Muslim world is anger that has, is, and will be there – regardless.

The occupation of Iraq may create a nation-state for a time being. The post-Occupation Iraq may collapse, over time, into civil war, dictatorship, or theocracy. The American people need a 'heads up'. One day in the future, American forces may have to 'liberate', read 'break', Iraq again. Or, some other country that becomes an Islamist threat.

The future for these punitive expeditions, strikes, invasions and occupations will be decades. The context for WWIV, the Global War against Islamist Terrorism, is an ideological struggle which could spin out of control as a clash of civilizations – unless the West unilaterally surrenders first.

WWIV fights totalitarianism – and is a necessary war.

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