

The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War. Andrew J. Bacevich. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Preface

1. As a Vietnam veteran: "Vietnam provides the frame of reference within which I interpret much else..." [ix]
2. A professional soldier in the 1970s and 1980s when the military's mission was clear: "to defend the West against the threat posed by Communist totalitarianism." [x]
"... old-fashioned understanding of soldierly purpose." [x]
3. A conservative, but disenchanted "with what passes for mainstream conservatism." [xi]
"... my views have come to coincide with the critique long offered by the radical left." [xi]
4. A diplomatic historian – aware of even presidents as being "constrained... by forces that lie beyond their grasp and perhaps their understanding." [xii]
They "... dance to history's tune." [xii]
"... the limits of human agency." [xiii]

"... my own conservative Catholic inclinations." [xiii]

Introduction

"Today as never before in their history Americans are enthralled with military power." [1]

"... global military supremacy... has become central to our national identity." [1]

"American political leaders have demonstrated their intention of tapping that mastery to reshape the world in accordance with American interests and values. That the two are so closely intertwined as to be indistinguishable is... a proposition to which the vast majority of Americans subscribe." [2]

Conviction that we base our policy on values, that these values represent universal truths. "The preferred language of American statecraft is bold, ambitious, and confident." [2]

"Coming from Bush the warrior-president, the promise to make an end to evil is a promise to destroy, to demolish and to obliterate it." [2]

Belief that America's historical mission begins with destroying the old order revives "a phenomenon that C. Wright Mills in the early days of the Cold War described as a 'military metaphysics' – a tendency to see international problems as military problems and to discount the likelihood of finding a solution except through military means." [2]

Militarism – "manifesting itself in a romanticized view of soldiers, a tendency to see military power as the truest measure of natural greatness, and outsized expectations regarding the efficacy of force." [2]

"To a degree without precedent in U.S. history, Americans have come to define the nation's strength and well-being in terms of military preparedness, military action, and the footing of (or nostalgia for) military ideals." [2]

“... marriage of a militaristic cast of mind with utopian ends” – ‘sanctified’ after 9/11 – Americans’ ability to grasp the significance of this union has been dulled – Bacevich proposes an annulment. [3]

Re: blaming Bush – “... whatever its psychic satisfactions, it is an exercise in scapegoating that lets too many others off the hook and allows society at large to abdicate responsibility for what has come to pass.” [4]

“... a militaristic predisposition was already in place both in official circles and among Americans more generally.” [4]

9/11 “gave added impetus to already existing tendencies.” [5]

Bush as “a player reciting his lines,” not a playwright. [5]

Bacevich presents “a challenge to the orthodox historical context employed to justify those policies.” [5]

Cf. Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War* (1995) – pervasive American sense of anxiety and vulnerability: “national security became the axis around which the American enterprise turned.” [5]

Militarization “‘reshaped every realm of American life... making America a profoundly different nation.’” [5]

When Sherry wrote his book, “a partial liquidation of the national security state appeared to be at hand.” But Bacevich argues that, instead, we have “nestled more deeply into its embrace.” [5]

The NAM (New American Militarism) appeared in reaction to Vietnam, evolved over subsequent decades “in full view and with considerable popular approval” (including military officers, intellectuals, religious leaders, strategists, politicians, purveyors of popular culture). [6]

Military professionals are “bereft of meaningful influence on basic questions relating to the uses of U.S. military power.” [6]

The reaction against the 1960s produced “the militaristic tendencies that have of late come into full flower.” [6]

Bacevich proposes “to bring American purposes and American methods – especially with regard to the role of military power – into closer harmony with the nation’s founding ideals.” [7]

“The marriage of military metaphysics with eschatological ambitions is a misbegotten one.” [7]

“As it concentrates ever more authority in the hands of a few more concerned with order abroad than with justice at home, it will accelerate the hollowing out of American democracy.” [7]

James Madison warned of war producing standing armies, which produce debt and taxes, and domination by the few: “No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” [7]

ONE: Wilsonians Under Arms

False gods of fascism and Marxism: “The consort of hubris was catastrophic.” [9]

Americans contributed mightily to the destruction of these false gods, but beginning with Wilson “nourished their own heady dreams, hardly less ambitious.” [9]

Regarding various constraints on American presidential ambition: “Thus did reality time and again curb Wilsonian enthusiasms.” Yet, “the Wilsonian paradigm... left an indelible imprint on American statecraft.” [10]

Wilson’s vision “sought a world remade in America’s image and therefore permanently at peace.” [10]

“God Himself willed the universal embrace of American principles. Of this, the president was certain.” [11]

“... only the certainty that he was acting as a divine agent, that America’s mission was a providential one” enabled intervention in World War I. [11]

But even then, reflecting a long-standing but still vigorous American tradition, “the resort to arms could for the United States never be more than an expedient, a temporary measure reluctantly employed, not a permanent expression of the nation’s character.” [11]

Today’s revival of Wilsonian ambition and certainty comes with “a pronounced affinity for the sword.” [11]

Constraints fell away with the end of the Cold War. [11]

Reagan as “Wilson’s truest disciple.” [11]

Bush campaigned promising a humble foreign policy, but came to “advert with such alacrity and apparent passion to Wilsonian precepts” – revealing “how deeply they have burrowed into the collective American psyche.” [12]

Bush’s statements are “frequently laced with references to presidential insights into God’s purpose.” [13]

9/11 had very little impact on “the assumptions underlying U.S. foreign policy.” [13]

But the means for achieving these ends are new: military power.

This has had “a heedless, Gatsby-like aspect, a passion pursued in utter disregard of any consequences.” [14]

Virtually no attention has been given to the question whether pursuit of permanent global military superiority may be at odds with American principles. [14]

Regarding America’s drift toward militarism: “the absence of dissent offered by any political figure of genuine stature.” [14]

In previous times, there were such figures (LaFollette, Taft) with “a lively awareness that war is inherently poisonous” and dangerous to democracy. [15]

But our politics “does not accommodate contrarian voices” when it comes to military matters. [15]

“... mainstream politicians today take it as a given that American military supremacy is an unqualified good, evidence of a larger American superiority.” [15]

“... American society itself is increasingly enamored with its self-image as the military power nonpareil.” [15]

NAM manifests itself in different ways:

1. NAM manifests itself “in the scope, cost, and configuration of America’s present-day military establishment.” [15]

First two centuries of U.S. history held to the general principle: “maintain the minimum force required and no more.” [16]

By 1947, e.g., combat capabilities of U.S. forces were “virtually nonexistent.” [16]

This principle has been abandoned. U.S. policy is committed “to maintaining military capabilities far in excess of those of any would-be adversary or combination of adversaries.” [16]

These “massive and redundant capabilities cost money.” Current Pentagon budget is 12% larger than the Cold War years. [17]

That the U.S. “spends more on defense than all other nations in the world together” is “a circumstance without historical precedent.” [17]

However remarkable this fact is, “it elicits little comment” and “is simply taken for granted.” There is no meaningful context within which Americans can question this policy. [17]

“The primary mission of America’s far-flung military establishment is global power projection.” “... defense per se figures as little more than an afterthought.” [17]

There is a “common understanding that scattering U.S. troops around the globe to restrain, inspire, influence, persuade, or cajole paid dividends.” [18]

It is “taboo” even to question whether this has caused antipathy to the U.S. [18]

Military preeminence “affects the collective mindset of the officer corps.” Dominance now constitutes simply a baseline, with overwhelming dominance becoming the goal. “At times, this quest for military dominion takes on galactic proportions.” [18]

2. NAM “also manifests itself through an increased propensity to use force, leading, in effect, to the normalization of war.” [18]

Self-restraint “has all but disappeared.” [18]

“... the tempo of U.S. military interventionism has become nothing short of frenetic.” [19]

Americans have grown “accustomed to” and “comfortable with” the use of force. [19]

Policymakers previously saw the use of force as evidence that diplomacy had failed; they now tend to see “coercion as a sort of all-purpose tool.” [19]

“The American public’s ready acceptance of the prospects of war without foreseeable end and of a policy that abandons even the pretense of the United States fighting defensively or viewing war as a last resort shows clearly how far the process of militarization has advanced.” [19]

3. A “new aesthetic of war”

Old: “armed conflict as barbarism, brutality, ugliness, and sheer waste” – grew out of WWI (Hemingway, Remarque, Graves), and reaffirmed by WWII, Korea, and Vietnam (*Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*).

Two large truths: (1) battlefield as slaughterhouse “that devoured guilty and innocent alike;” and (2) “military service was an inherently degrading experience and military institutions by their very nature repressive and inhumane.” [20]

“Only fascists celebrated war and depicted armies as forward-looking.” [20]

New: War as spectacle. Now “a new image of war” has emerged – “war was becoming surgical, frictionless, postmodern, even abstract or virtual.” [20]

It had become a “spectator sport” for most – even for participants, “the very notion of ‘sacrifice in battle had become implausible or ironic.’” (Ignatieff) [20]

This image of war derived from, meshed with, and seemed to validate “the technology-hyped mood” of the 1990s. In this age, chance and surprise were reduced; “Everything relevant could be known and, if known, could be taken into account;” there were “quantum improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.” [21]

Tommy Franks said commanders “could expect to enjoy ‘the kind of Olympian perspective that Homer had given his gods.’” [22]

“... the reigning postulates of technology-as-panacea had knocked away much of the accumulated blood-rust sully of war’s reputation.” [22]

“... armed conflict regained an aesthetic respectability...” [22]

“... war could offer an attractive option – cost-effective, humane, even thrilling” – war as “a grand pageant, performance art, or a perhaps temporary diversion from the ennui and boring routine of everyday life.” [22]

4. “... an appreciable boost in the status of military institutions and soldiers.” – “Americans fearful that the rest of society may be teetering on the brink of moral collapse console themselves with

the thought that the armed services remain a repository of traditional values and old-fashioned virtue.”

George Will: military as exemplars.

Soldier as national icon, “the apotheosis of all that is great and good about contemporary America.”

Victor Davis Hansen: “‘transcendence at work’” – “‘an elite cohort’ in which virtues cherished by earlier generations of Americans continued to flourish.” [24]

Soldiers tend to affirm “their own moral superiority.” [24]

“In public life today, paying homage to those in uniform has become obligatory and the one unforgiveable sin is to be found guilty of failing to ‘support the troops.’” [24]

Liberals see the military as a venue for promoting social change regarding: race, gender, sexual orientation. [25]

Since Vietnam, “the American elite has largely excused itself from military service.” [26]

“... the revival of Wilsonianism and of military metaphysics has coincided with the demise of the ancient American tradition of the citizen-soldier.” [26]

This is “a remarkable departure.” For the first two centuries of U.S. history, Americans were leery of the threat a standing army posed to liberty; believing in the citizen-soldier as the ultimate guarantor and guardian of freedom, “they accepted a common obligation to share in the responsibility for the country’s defense.” [26]

Emerson’s “embattled farmer” was “the emblematic figure in U.S. military history.” [27]

“As with so many other aspects of life in contemporary America, military service has become strictly a matter of individual choice.” [27]

American elites “have by and large opted out.” [27]

“In an era that exalts individual autonomy above all other values, the state as a practical matter has long since forfeited its authority to command citizens to defend the nation.” [27]

For conservatives (Cheney) and liberals (Clinton) alike, “the decision to serve or to avoid service was a matter of personal choice, devoid of civic connotations.” [28]

A central paradox of present-day American militarism: as U.S. policy has progressively militarized, the gap separating the military from American society has persisted/widened.

Elites have become more fascinated with military power and the use of force, but “soldiering itself is something left to the plebs.” [28]

Even middle-class Americans “tend to admire soldiers from a safe distance.” [28]

The All Volunteer Force [AVF] “does not even remotely ‘look like’ democratic America.” [28]

Minorities = 42% of Army enlistees – 46% of the civilian population have attended college, 6.5% of enlistees. [28]

Americans cheer the troops like their favorite football team. [28]

Civilian attitude: we don't know you; we admire you; please go away. [28]

"Americans entrust their security to a class of military professionals who see themselves in many respects as culturally-politically set apart from the rest of society." [29-30]

Military officers have their own "well-defined worldview and political agenda," and want a say in formulating policy as well as executing it. They are skilled at bureaucratic warfare, manipulating the media, and playing off executive and legislative branches against each other. [30]

Militarism has wrought a dysfunctional relationship between the brass and civilian political leaders – "one of Washington's dirty little secrets," known to insider players but hidden from the electorate." [30]

"... ongoing process of militarizing the presidency itself." [30]

Recent presidents have found it "politically expedient to blur the hitherto civilian character of their office." [30]

"... outfitting a president in battle dress may be even more effective than wrapping him in the flag." ("... using neatly turned-out soldiers and sailors as extras." [30]

George W. Bush: "the president as warlord." [31]

Americans have obviously accepted their creeping militarism. "Dissent... has been sporadic, marginal, and ineffective." [32]

"... exceedingly narrow range of views deemed permissible." [32]

National status as the world's greatest-ever military power signifies to most Americans "a compelling affirmation of American Exceptionalism." [32]

We are Number One "as measured by our capacity to employ violence." Providential judgment: "the nation changed with the responsibility for guiding history to its predetermined has been endowed with the raw power needed to do just that." [32]

In fact, the NAM "distorts if it does not altogether nullify important elements of the American birthright." [32]

The Old World had been constantly embroiled in bloody disputes, but "the New World was intended to be radically and profoundly new." [32]

The founders knew instinctively that militarism was the foremost threat to self-governance. [33]

"We have chosen to marry the means of the Old World to the ends of the New" – relying on force to spread the American Way of Life.

Max Boot: "'imposing the rule of law, property rights and other guarantees, at gunpoint if need be.'" [33]

In 1956, C. Wright Mills wrote of those in authority positing “an ‘emergency’ without foreseeable end.” [33]

Previously, Americans had viewed war as an interruption of history; today planning, preparing and waging war has become the normal state.

TWO: The Military Profession at Bay

Militarism is “a byproduct of our insistence on seeing ourselves as a people set apart, unconstrained by limits or by history.” [34]

It has grown out of the way arguments about Vietnam worked their way through our politics and culture. [34]

Two forces emerged from Vietnam: (1) demolition of myths about America’s claim to be a uniquely benign great power; and (2) reaction against “the war’s apparent verdict” and the changes encouraged by it. The officers corps aligned themselves with the forces of reaction.

The officers corps were determined to reassert claims to professional status and authority, and engaged in a “comprehensive and sophisticated strategy” to achieve their end. This produced “a remarkable rebirth of American military power.” [34-35]

Unintended consequence: rise of “militarist tendencies antithetical to the well-being of the armed services and incompatible with traditional concepts of military professionalism.” [35]

Victory in the Gulf War vindicated the massive effort of military recovery, dazzled the American people, and overturned a historical judgment that held sway since Vietnam.

In the fifteen years after Vietnam, the military reinvented itself: new doctrines, sophisticated new weapons, more rigorous training and development of leaders, organizational and tactical changes. [36]

This included “a moral component” – salvaging the American profession of arms from the discredit and dishonor that had come upon it in Vietnam. [36]

In the 1970s and 1980s Creighton Abrams became “the subject of “cultlike devotion” in the Army, for his efforts to restore a set of values (such as “candor, selflessness, and empathy for young soldiers”). [38]

In Desert Storm, the military “recovered the dignity and honor lost in Vietnam.” [38]

Abrams made it “more difficult for civilian authorities to opt for war” by making the active army dependent on the reserves. (Total Force Policy). [39]

In Vietnam, the army “had been hung out to dry,” and Abrams resolved ‘never again.’ [40]

The restoration was about status and prerogatives, as well as rebuilding strength – including the ability of the officer corps “to influence national security policy.” [40]

Two requirements for the reform to be successful: (1) restoring the bonds between soldiers and the American people; (2) "shifting the balance of civil-military authority on decisions relating to war and its conduct." [40]

It was believed by the officer corps that the balance had shifted too far in favor of civilian officials. [40]

In this perspective, "Vietnam had demonstrated that when it came to deciding when to go to war and how to fight, civilians were not to be trusted." [41]

Whereas the French had responded to their debacle in Indochina by focusing on how to win guerilla wars, the American military resolved to avoid such wars. [41-42]

They devoted "precious little energy to dissecting the defeat it had just endured," because that would not advance the cause of military revival. Instead, they sought "to devise a definition of modern war more congenial to their own purposes." [42]

This involved overcoming fear of statements and establishing that war could be decisive, and also "delineating war once again as a unique domain falling exclusively within the purview of warriors." [42]

Germany's post-WWI military recovery and Israel's successful wars were examples. But the German experience led to "an appetite for conquest," and Israel's success "did not produce peace and security," but "encouraged tendencies that made peace and security even more remote." [43]

1967 battlefield success "fueled dreams of creating a Greater Israel and resulted in the fateful decision to annex the West Bank." [43-44]

The American military restoration "gave rise to results other than anticipated and in some cases altogether perverse." [44]

The Soviet threat in the 'Central Region' required a very large force with minimal probability of actual warfare. [44]

AirLand Battle doctrine emerged, in which American technological and tactical superiority compensated for the enemy's quantitative advantages. [45]

The mission of defending against the Soviet Union also "could command critically required public support." [45]

The need for modernization to support this doctrine provided the rationale for massive expenditures. [45]

The 'new' doctrine was really a throwback to blitzkrieg, "now dressed up with somewhat longer range, somewhat more accurate, and somewhat more lethal weapons." [46]

Also envisioned was a high level of autonomy for American commanders. [46]

The Weinberger doctrine was an attempt to tie the hands of civilian leadership in committing U.S. forces to any situation where there might be "protracted fighting for peripheral interests." [47]

The Weinberger Doctrine established preconditions for putting troops in harm's way – to insulate the armed services from another Vietnam-like disaster.” [48]

As Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chief, Colin Powell “wanted to see the [Gulf] war neatly concluded with no loose ends and no lingering complications.” Bacevich sees Powell’s dual insistence on a premature ceasefire and Schwarzkopf’s generous concessions to Saddam to be “a monumental blunder.” [50]

Powell capitalized on his “suddenly outsized reputation... to support the military’s institutional agenda, nurturing conditions in which the armed services would be highly esteemed, lavishly supported, and rarely used.” [51]

Given the success of Desert Storm as a “good war,” Powell was determined “to establish Desert Storm as a model for the future rather than as a one-time event.” [51]

To the Weinberger Doctrine principles [vital interests, concrete objectives, and the prerequisite of popular support], the Powell Doctrine added the requirement for an ‘exit strategy,’ and an emphasis on overwhelming force.

The Powell Doctrine aimed to impede future intervention, unless it would ‘look like’ Desert Storm – brief, economical, operationally decisive, and infrequent. [52]

This prevented the collapse of the Soviet Union from triggering “a thorough reconsideration of the size and appropriate role of America’s armed forces.” Thus, “the timing of Desert storm could not have been more opportune.” [53]

“... the United States could not stand down; it could not return to normalcy” – the work of soldiers spread across the world “was unlikely ever to be done.” [53]

“... the idea that the nation’s well-being was contingent upon maintaining an instant readiness to fight two simultaneous large-scale conventional wars... achieved the status of a strategic first principle.” [54]

This justified maintenance of “an enormous Cold War-style defense establishment – despite the absence of any Cold War-equivalent threat.” [54]

This strategy “also promised to make permanent the clout that senior military leaders once again enjoyed within the inner circle of the policy elite.” [54]

This intensified two trends in motion for decades: (1) diminishment of the role of the State Department; and (2) increased influence for generals over “the civilians who were their nominal masters.” [54]

This also “made the use or threatened use of armed force, as never before, central to the American conception of international politics.” [54]

Elsewhere in the West, “skepticism about the utility of force was rising and defense budgets were in free fall.” [54]

Powell and his fellow officers “sold their countrymen on a proposition fraught with unforeseen consequences” – i.e., “... it was the nation’s destiny to remain a military leviathan.” [54]

“... larger questions about just what it was the Defense Department ought to be defending simply never came up for serious discussion.” [55]

“Events of the 1990s made it even more difficult to preserve a clear distinction between the world of the warrior and the world of the politician.” [55]

Politicians intruded more in military affairs, and generals ventured “into the political penumbra surrounding war.” [55]

None of the military operations of the 1990s “conformed to the criteria laid out in the Powell doctrine.” [55-56]

“... because that effort generated a capacity for global power projection surpassing anything the world had ever seen, reticence about how and where to use that power soon went by the board.” [56]

(p. 24, Madeline Albright: “What’s the point of having this superb military... if we can’t use it?”)

George W. Bush’s doctrine of preventive war “buried any lingering notions of the sole superpower exercising self-restraint” – and also ended the officers corps’ illusions that they could curb civilian inclination to use force. [56]

“The result was to raise the prospect of war without end and of a now highly skilled military shorn of its prerogatives and once again fearful of becoming decoupled from the American people.” [56]

Post Cold War and Gulf War: “... not peace and stability but disintegration and disorder.” [56]

The decade between the end of the Gulf War and 9/11: “Ethnic cleansing, genocide, failed states, civil war, terror.” [56]

“U.S forces found themselves pressed to take on a variety of new and burdensome missions.” [57]

With Pentagon budget exceeding \$300 billion annually, “it was incumbent upon the military to demonstrate some tangible return on the nation’s investment.” [57]

1990s national security policy as “a peculiar mix of activism blended with timidity.” [57]

The spirit informing military operations was risk aversion – force protection. Air power and use of proxies (e.g., Somalia) “reduced direct American exposure.” [58]

The cumulative impact of these operations was “to reduce any residual inhibitions that Americans entertained about the use of force.” [58]

The Powell Doctrine was “a dead letter” by the end of the 1990s. [58]

Wesley Clark as example of generals who broke with the previous military consensus and advocated use of limited force as a form of “coercive diplomacy.” [58]

When Milosevic did not respond to mere threats, “the coercive dimension of coercive diplomacy turned out to be more difficult than Clark had anticipated.” [59]

Clark failed both as a strategist and as a battlefield general. [59]

The war in Kosovo “turned out to be far longer, far messier, and far more expensive” than expected. [59]

The military’s attempt to rehabilitate itself began to fall apart in Kosovo, for three reasons: [60]

1. It signaled “an end of the military’s united front on questions of war and peace.” The Powell Doctrine was violated, not by civilian authority, but by General Clark. [60]

“... the lessons of Vietnam, affirmed by the lessons of Desert Storm, had lost their lock-hold on the collective mindset of the American army. [60]

2. Clark’s mishandling of the war “undermined arguments for deferring to the military.” [60]

Civilian Republican strategists, aiming to return to power, were convinced that they were more competent than generals in matters of war. [61]

3. While found wanting by both fellow-generals and senior government officials, Clark became a media commentator – and then a fierce critic of Bush policy – making “a seamless transition into national politics.” [61]

More than any general since McArthur, Clark “embraced naked political partisanship” – trampling over the principle “that the justification for a distinctive profession of arms derives in part from the fact that it inhabits a space apart from and above politics.” [62]

In the 2004 presidential campaign, numerous three- and four-star officers participated on both sides, “apparently oblivious to the way that such activities subverted the identity of the soldier as apolitical servant of the state.” [62]

For senior officers to venture into political affairs invited politicians to venture into military affairs. [62]

The Bush administration completed “the demolition” of the reform project’s results.

Civilian leadership, exemplified by Rumsfeld, showed little or no deference to the officers corps. Members of the administration “evinced little patience with soldiers who counseled caution or restraint.” [63]

Michael Mann: “the notion of civilian control of the military became meaningless, since civilians were the leading militarists.” [63]

“The crusading spirit to which 9/11 gave rise swept away the last of the barriers that soldiers had so carefully erected to guard against military adventurism.” [64]

Rumsfeld overruled Tommy Franks in planning and executing the war in Afghanistan. The service chiefs were largely excluded from war planning. [64]

Operation Iraqi Freedom was “a radical departure from the past,” and the outcome was disastrous. [64]

Generals schooled in terms of the Powell Doctrine “had nothing to put in that doctrine’s place.” [65]

“U.S. forces were stuck in precisely the sort of situation that senior officers had vowed at all costs to avoid.” [65]

At Abu Ghraib, with reservists in charge, the presence of those reservists – whom Abrams had intended to prevent another Vietnam – became “the source of the greatest shame to befall the Army since Vietnam itself.” [66]

In 2003, General Richard Meyers (chairman of the JCS) insisted that no U.S. forces would be committed to Liberia – three days later, they were ordered in. [67]

The long effort to restore the authority of the officers corps had collapsed. [68]

THREE: Left, Right, Left

Another legacy of Vietnam was the emergence of the New Left, with a sensibility characterized by “skepticism toward authority, disdain for convention, and wariness about American power and its uses.” [69]

To critics, this was judged “a perverse and particularly narcissistic counterculture,” and failure in Vietnam “revealed the full scope of the crisis engulfing the United States.” [69]

“... a wholesale collapse of American nerve.” [69]

To the New Left, Vietnam proved “that the exercise of American power was invariably sordid in intent and lamentable in its impact.” To the critics, it demonstrated “it was the absence of American power and will that invited catastrophe.” [70]

The Right’s “counterrevolution” sought to “repair the political and cultural damage” of the ‘60s and “to restore American power and assertiveness on the world stage.” [70]

Neoconservatism was initially animated by a negative persuasion; they were against “the nihilism, untruths, and sheer silliness” of the ‘60s – joined to anti-communism.” [70]

Neoconservatism did not share the core values of mainline conservatism: “Tradition, ritual, hierarchy, small government, devotion to place, homage to the past.” [70]

“The conception of politics to which neoconservatism paid allegiance owed more to the ethos of the Left than to the orthodoxy of the Right.” [71]

They aimed to transform rather than preserve. “They viewed state power not as a necessary evil but as a positive good to be cultivated and then deployed in pursuit of large objectives.” [71]

“On the Right they hoped to find the opportunity to create that alternative perception of reality necessary for fulfilling their radical aspirations. The essence of those aspirations

was simplicity itself: to fuse American power to American principles, ensuring the survival of those principles and subsequently then propagation to the benefit of all humankind.” [71]

“... one aspect of the neoconservative legacy has been to foster the intellectual climate necessary for the emergence of the new American militarism.” [71]

Norman Podhoretz “did much to create and refine the fiercely combative neoconservative style,” which did not emphasize balance or the careful sifting of evidence, but “the ruthless demolition of any point of view inconsistent with the neoconservative version of truth, typically portrayed as self-evident and beyond dispute.” [72]

Rather than seeing all politics as local, for the neoconservative intellectuals, politics are “cosmic, bound up with the most fundamental questions.” [72]

The arena of politics/culture/morality is a place of no-holds-barred conflict, in which “wisdom does battle against folly, right against wrong, and good against evil.” [72]

“A willingness to compromise suggested a lack of convictions. Fervor, certainty, and contempt for those on the other side, meanwhile, became marks of honor.” [72]

Podhoretz and the other leading neoconservatives “laid the intellectual foundations of the new American militarism.” [72]

“Six propositions summarize the essence of the neoconservative persuasion:” [73]

1. A theory of history: 1930s as a parable conveying “two large truths, applicable in all circumstances and for all time. The first truth is that evil is real. The second is that for evil to prevail requires only one thing: for those confronted by it to flinch from duty.” [73]

European appeasement and American isolationism had allowed the evil of Nazi Germany; WWII could have been prevented. [73]

2. Centrality of power: As only armed might could destroy the Nazi regime, so too only the possession of armed might and willingness to use it could have deterred Hitler. [73]

Diplomacy and appeals to common interest are ineffective. [73]

International law, disarmament, any sense of “international community” are viewed as hopelessly utopian. Thus, disdain for the UN. [74]

“Military power formed ‘the indispensable foundation’” [Podhoretz] of U.S. foreign policy. [74]

Podhoretz viewed McGovern’s 1972 call to “Come Home, America” as “recklessly and irresponsibly catering to a deep-seated popular American urge to turn inward.” [74-75]

3. Sense of Mission: “Alternatives to or substitution for American global leadership simply did not exist.” “History had singled out the United States to play a unique role as the chief instrument for securing the advance of freedom, which found its highest expression in democratic capitalism.” [75]

Neoconservatives despised Jimmy Carter because “pessimism or self-doubt could have no place.” [75]

They were Wilsonians, without Wilson’s “delusions” (e.g., League of Nations). [75]

“Heirs to the tradition of American Exceptionalism, neoconservatives did not doubt that theirs was a nation set apart.” [75]

They sought to bring “Toughness, daring, and resolve” back into fashion.” [76]

4. An appreciation of authority characterized the neoconservative view of the relationship between cultural politics and America’s purpose abroad. [76]

The 1960s saw a curtailment of the influence of traditional sources of authority – with the new radicalism promising utopia but delivering only license, vulgarity, and absence of standards. [76]

The collapse of institutions commanding wide support imperiled democracy and “undermined efforts to fulfill American calling abroad.” [76]

Podhoretz sought to discredit “the various forms of nonsense” emerging from the ‘60s – e.g., multiculturalism, affirmative action, radical feminism, gay rights – the neoconservatives became “forceful proponents of what came to be called ‘traditional values.’” [76]

Here, neoconservatism coincided largely with interests of the established Right. “Only by ensuring order and stability at home and restoring confidence in basic institutions... could the United States fend off the Communist threat and fulfill the historic mission for which it had been created.” [77]

Americans needed “a new nationalism,” reviving their belief in the American enterprise.” [77]

5. Conviction that a dire crisis confronted the U.S. after Vietnam, and failure to resolve it would yield unspeakable consequences. [77]

Crisis has come to be seen as “a permanent condition. The situation is always urgent, the alternatives stark, the need for action compelling, and the implications of delay or inaction certain to be severe.” [77]

If the nation heeds the neoconservatives’ call, salvation; if not, the abyss. [77]

6. The antidote to crisis is leadership. “Among neocons it is an article of faith that men, not impersonal forces, determine the course of history.” [77]

Determination, moral clarity, inspiration are essential “at the top.” [78]

“In a sort of weird homegrown variant of the Fuehrer Principle,” neoconservatives show a hunger for “heroic leadership.” [78]

Many neocons are Jewish; many not. Many are personally religious; many not. "For all of them, however, America is the one true universal church..." [78]

1980 is held to be the year America turned things around. [78]

At the time, though, neocons saw the Reagan era as "a massive disappointment." Especially cooperation with Gorbachev. [78-79]

This became "a perennial source of disappointment. Time and again, the leader in whom they invested such high hopes turned out to be less crusader than politician." [79]

The collapse of the Soviet Union posed a dilemma for neocons: "the dire threat from which the insurgency had drawn much of its energy vanished." [79]

"Without the Cold War,' muttered Rabbit Angstrom, John Updike's famous protagonist, 'what's the point of being an American?'" [79-80]

Neoconservatism enjoyed "a remarkable rebirth" during the 1990s, developing "a vastly more ambitious agenda" – and a second generation (e.g., William Kristol), who sought "to prod the United States into seizing the strategic offensive." [80]

"Neocons aimed to convert the United States into an instrument for fulfilling their own revolutionary dreams." [80]

An "imperial conception of American statecraft" developed, and this "took some getting used to." [80]

In the early 1990s, there was little neocon appetite for new adventures abroad. [80]

Robert Kagan [1991] urged "'the *patient* support of democracy, not forcing change..." [81]

"But to neocons patience does not come naturally." [81]

George Weigel posited "the imperative of reenergizing the cause of 'democratic internationalism' – an approach to U.S. foreign policy based on the old neoconservative precepts of global engagement, assertiveness, and activism backed by military power." [81]

New neocon institutions emerged: [81]

The Weekly Standard, unlike *Commentary*, presented political agitation more than lofty ideas, and had its office in Washington DC rather than New York. For William Kristol, "the perimeter of the Washington Beltway delineated the world that mattered." [82]

Second generation neocons did not define themselves in opposition, but were "advocates of a positive ideological agenda, a theology that brought fully into view the radical implication – in John Judis's formulation, the 'inverted Trotskyism' – embedded within the neoconservative insurgency from the outset." [82]

With American power fully refurbished – as first generation neocons had urged – the second generation "promulgated the notion that the moment was now ripe for the United States to use that power – especially military power – to achieve the final triumph of American ideals." [83]

Five convictions formed the foundation of efforts “to promote a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of military supremacy and moral confidence.” (Kristol/Kagan). [83]

1. “... the certainty that American global dominance is, in fact, benign, and that other nations necessarily see it as such.” [83]
2. U.S. failure to sustain its hegemony would result in bloody, bitter, and protracted global disorder. [84]

Krauthammer: The ‘international community’ is a fiction, and “The alternative to unipolarity is chaos.” The United States’ obligation: “unabashedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them.” [84]

There is no middle ground: either assertion of U.S. power or dangerous chaos. [84]

3. Possession and use of military might is essential to “bring within reach peace, prosperity, democracy, respect for human rights, and American global primacy extending to the end of time.” [84]

The real purpose of military might is not defense or deterrence, “but to transform the international order by transforming its constituent parts.” [85]

Nor was use of force any longer to be a last resort. [85]

War is no longer seen as a scourge, but “became in neocon eyes an efficacious means to serve idealistic ends.” [85]

Clinton’s half-hearted use of power “suggested a defective appreciation of what power could accomplish.” [85]

The Gulf War whetted the appetite for repetition. But the war had “demonstrated that the U.S. military was a superb instrument wielded by excessively timid officers” (especially Powell). [85]

“... promoting the assertive use of American military power became central to the imperial self-definition...” [85]

4. A commitment to sustaining/enhancing American military supremacy. [85]

In the 1990s, military spending remained at Cold War levels, yet neocons assessed it to be completely inadequate and pressed for more. [85]

5. “... hostility toward realism, whether manifesting itself as a deficit of ideals (as in the case of Henry Kissinger) or an excess of caution (as in the case of Colin Powell).” [87]

“Realism was about defending national interests, not transforming the global order.” [87]

To neocons, “the very notion of ‘limits’ was anathema.” [87]

If American ideals are universal, there is a moral imperative to reject any notion of limits or constraints. [87]

Neocons pressed their case throughout the 1990s for “a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity.” (Kagan) [87]

They lobbied persistently and obsessively for the removal of Saddam Hussein. His survival after the Gulf War was seen as evidence of “the cynicism and shortsightedness of the realists.” [87]

They were determined to correct the error. [87]

Liberating Iraq was seen not only as an end in itself, but also “as a means to an eminently larger end.” [88]

It “would affirm the irresistibility of American military might.” [88]

“Not preserving the status quo but promoting revolutionary change...” [88]

Michael Ledeen: U.S. as “the most revolutionary force on earth.” Mao was right in asserting that revolution sprang from the barrel of a gun. [88]

By the turn of the century, the neocons “had transformed themselves into establishment figures.” (*Weekly Standard*, *Foreign Affairs*, American Enterprise Institute, Project for the New American Century, television commentators, newspaper columnists). [89]

They called for increased military expenditures, and advocated the isolation or overthrow of numerous regimes. [89]

Their views attained wide currency, and they “recast the public policy debate about the obligation imposed upon and prerogatives to be claimed by the sole superpower. [90]

“Ideas that even a decade earlier might have seemed reckless or preposterous now came to seem perfectly reasonable.” [90]

These “efforts had done much to create a climate in which it had become impolitic to suggest aloud that publicly declaring the intent to overthrow regimes not to the liking of the United States might be ill-advised.” [90]

Still, the Clinton years were filled with frustration – as were the first eight months of the Bush administration, which seemed too willing to follow the paths of its predecessor. [91]

“9/11 provided the tailor-made opportunity to break free of the fetters restricting the exercise of American power.” [91]

“Neocons attributed 9/11 to a sickness infecting the world of Islam.” [92]

The only way to prevent future attacks was to cure the disease, by “a massive, forced injection of Western liberal values into the Islamic world.” [92]

They argued that the place to begin was Iraq: (1) because Saddam posed a great and growing threat; (2) because after decades of authoritarian rule Iraq was ripe for democracy; and (3) because doing so would “open the door for success elsewhere in the region.” [92]

The “nominally successful U.S. invasion of Afghanistan eliminated any doubts about the ability of U.S. military power to accomplish this.” [92-93]

Kristol, Krauthammer and Kagan argued that regime change in Iraq would yield substantial benefits. [93]

Their reasoning soon found favor with President Bush, who tended to view the global war on terror “through a religious rather than an ideological lens.” [93]

Bush’s National Security Strategy was “a dream come true” for neocons. [93]

“... the doctrines of preventive war and permanent military supremacy were officially enshrined as U.S. policy.” [93-94]

Bush, the born-again Christian, was born again as a neocon. [94]

Frum and Perle: “Looking beyond Iraq, they glimpsed a world of universal peace and freedom...” [94]

Podhoretz viewed the war “as a wondrous opportunity.” [94]

He argued that the invasion of Iraq would “set off a benevolent domino effect throughout the entire region.” [95]

Iraq was seen merely as a way station, “an interim objective facilitating the ever more aggressive use of U.S. military power.” He believed the U.S. would need “to topple five or six or seven more tyrannies in the Islamic world.” [95]

“... a new species of imperial mission for America.’ He relished the prospect of ‘some kind of American protectorate over the oil fields of Saudi Arabia.’” [95]

“... an incandescent moral clarity.” [95]

“Waging preventive war to overthrow recalcitrant regimes and free the oppressed – this had become the definitive expression of America’s calling.” [95]

“As always, crisis loomed. As always, Americans faced a choice as stark as it was clear-cut. As always, neocons saw the way out: through war, the United States might yet save the world, and in doing so might also save itself. In America’s future loomed the prospect of one, two, many Iraqs, and the future at long last appeared bright.” [96]

FOUR: California Dreaming

“the New American Militarism draws much of its sustaining force from myth – stories created to paper over incongruities and contradictions that pervade the American way of life. The exercise of global power by the United States aggravates these incongruities.” [97]

Americans want to feel secure, yet we face “a heightened sense of vulnerability.” [97]

Americans see themselves as idealists, yet foreign intervention has fueled anti-Americanism. [97]

Americans believe in democracy, yet the divide between rich and poor grows wider. [97]

These incongruities lead Americans to “concoct stories to make such truths more palatable.” [97]

Popular culture has served “to contrive a sentimentalized version of the American military experience and an idealized image of the American soldier.” [97]

These stories “create an apparently seamless historical narrative of American soldiers as liberators... [and] divert attention from the reality of U.S. military policy” (imperial policing). [98]

They sustain “the willingness of American soldiers to shoulder their frequently thankless and seemingly endless burdens...” [98]

Above all, they function as “a salve for what remains of the American conscience” – sustaining popular belief that we are “bringing peace and light to troubled corners of the earth rather than pushing ever outward the perimeter of an American empire.” [98]

Until recently, “Americans did not rely on myths to understand soldiers or to justify U.S. military policy.” [98]

At least through the 1950s, no gap existed between the armed services and American society. Members of the elite, e.g., served. Nor was there any need “to conjure up reassuring explanations of what members of the armed forces were doing and why. [98]

The rotation of citizen-soldiers through the ranks and the leavening presence of veterans throughout American society obviated the need for myths, indeed, made it all but impossible to idealize war or military service.” [98]

Podhoretz and Elvis served, “not because they had imbibed militaristic fantasies, but because their understanding of citizenship included a responsibility to contribute to the nation’s defense.” [98]

All that changed with Vietnam. The tradition of the citizen-soldier virtually ended, and many were persuaded of the futility of war. [99]

Whereas Jimmy Carter resigned himself to the country’s post-Vietnam funk, Reagan had the political skills to exploit it. “... a fictionalized version of the American military tradition was integral” to Reagan’s election and presidency. [99]

“More than anyone else, he deserves the credit for conjuring up the myths that nurtured and sustain present-day American militarism.” [99]

Carter’s political ineptitude “stanching the anti-military currents to which Vietnam had given rise and produced the first inkling of movement in the opposite direction.” [100-101]

His Crisis of Confidence speech [July 15, 1979] was both heartfelt and partially prescient, but “completely misconceived.” [101]

In the face of post-Vietnam economic woes, and recognizing that continued reliance on imported oil would distort U.S. strategic priorities, Carter “summoned his fellow citizens to change course, to choose self-sufficiency and self-reliance and therefore true independence – but at a cost of collective sacrifice and lowered expectations.” He posited the fundamental problem as a collective turning away from traditional American values (work, family, community, faith) toward an emphasis on self-indulgence and consumption.” [101]

Carter saw a historical turning point: continue pursuing ‘a mistaken idea of freedom,’ or choose “‘true freedom,’ which Carter described as ‘the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values.’” [101]

This choice would determine how the U.S. would deal with its growing reliance on foreign oil. Energy dependence threatened both national security and economic well-being. [101]

He proposed a cap on oil imports, investment in alternative energy sources, increased spending on public transportation. [101]

But he put central responsibility directly on the American people, calling for patriotic sacrifice in the form of reduced energy consumption. [102]

“... nowhere in his speech did he identify a role for the U.S. military.” The crisis was internal, not external, and its resolution required spiritual and cultural renewal, rather than deploying armed force to create a world order accommodating our dependence on material resources from abroad. [102]

“He sensed intuitively that a failure to reverse the nation’s energy dependence was sure to draw the United States ever more deeply into the vortex of Persian Gulf politics.” [102]

In 1979, oil imports were 43% of annual consumption, and the U.S. had only a minimal military presence in the Persian Gulf. Twenty-five years later, the figure is 56%, and “the energy-rich regions of the world... have absorbed an ever-increasing amount of attention by the American military.” [102]

Whereas fifty years ago, proximity of the Communist threat determined the stationing of U.S. forces abroad, “Today, increasingly, the profile of the American military presence abroad corresponds to the location of large oil and natural gas reserves.” [102]

Carter was strategically prophetic, but fundamentally misread his fellow countrymen. His call for lowered expectations met with little positive response, given the American propensity to define itself in terms of growth [Garry Wills], and his political adversaries exploited that fact. [103]

These adversaries, Reagan primary among them, “offered a different message, not of a need to cut back but of abundance without end. Economic expansion could be limitless, “without moral complication or great cost.” [103]

Failure of the Iranian hostage rescue mission, even though very small in scale, had a seismic impact both politically and “on the nation’s collective psyche.” [103]

Questions were raised as to the readiness of U.S. forces. [104]

“It did, however, change the political atmospherics, persuading large numbers of Americans that any recurrence of such a calamity was simply unacceptable. Something needed to be done.” [105]

“... this least militaristic of recent presidents inadvertently created the conditions for the militarization of U.S. policy that was to come.” [105]

Carter, Annapolis graduate and nuclear submariner, “seldom spoke at length of American military power. Nor did he make it a habit of publicly paying tribute to the American soldier.” [105]

Reagan spoke to and about soldiers frequently. “This message was integral to the Great Communicator’s overarching political strategy.” [106]

“In ‘Morning in America,’ the imaginary movie with which Reagan beguiled himself and his supporters, soldierly ideals and exploits offered a trove of instructive and inspiring anecdotes.” [106]

He offered “a sanitized version of U.S. military history and fostered a romanticized portrait of those who made it” – as a means of “rallying support for his broader political agenda.” [106]

Reagan reinterpreted Vietnam as “a noble cause.” “The soldiers who fought it had been denied the chance to win and the honor due them.” [107]

Support for the troops replaced actual service with them “as the new standard of civic responsibility” – “a notably undemanding” standard. Anyone choosing military service was designated patriot, hero; other citizens only needed to affirm that designation. [108]

The achievements of WWII soldiers were not mythic, but real; Reagan’s remembrance of them was “suffused with nostalgia.” [108]

Reagan-era massive increases in military spending contributed to lifting the armed services out of their Vietnam-induced doldrums. [108]

Recruitment/retention improved, as well as readiness and modernization. Quality of recruits also improved. [109]

Military recovery and change in popular attitude toward the armed forces offered proof to Reagan that America was “standing tall.” [109]

“Thus did military might – rather than, say, the trade balance, income distribution, voter turnout, or the percentage of children being raised in two-parent families – become the preferred measure for gauging the nation’s strength.” [109]

After the Beirut bombing, “Showering soldiers with praise and celebrating soldierly values provided a neat device for deflecting attention from blunders directly attributable to the White House. Reagan understood the political utility of this device and exploited it to the hilt.” [110-111]

A transformation of previous attitudes toward the armed services is evident in Hollywood films of the Reagan era (“celluloid adaptations of various Reaganesque motifs”). [111]

An Officer and a Gentleman (1982): “Service in the military, the film implied, was a worthy aspiration. It offered a way to be *somebody*.” [111]

Virtually no attention is paid “to what the U.S. Navy actually exists to do.” [112]

“Politics saturates the entire *Rambo* saga, packaging for the screen the Vietnam revisionism that figured so prominently in Ronald Reagan’s military mythmaking.” [112]

“... soldiers embody honor and love of country but find themselves obliged to fight on two fronts:” (1) against America’s enemies, and (2) contending with oily, conniving politicians. [112]

“Stallone and his collaborators absorbed and played back (thereby validating) perceptions about Vietnam and attitudes regarding soldiers that coincided neatly with the views and agenda of Reagan and his collaborators.” [113]

Top Gun (1986) “offered a glittering new image of warfare especially suited to America’s strengths” – no messy ambiguities; military life invested with hipness. [113]

“... its alluring images and pounding sound track is made to order to affirm an emerging consensus about the importance and purposes of American military power.” [114]

Top Gun challenged three then-prevailing ‘truths’ and substituted three new truths that others in the worlds of politics, journalism, and entertainment then further refined and repackaged – so that by the end of the century, all three had taken root in the American imagination. [114]

1. Hygiene: The battlefield is no longer a filthy, stinking place (mud, blood, lice, rats) with a consequent emphasis on stress and deprivation. “Now... Order, crispness, and a palpably cool sensibility characterized the world of the modern warrior.” [114]
2. A “heightened emphasis on technology” pointed to “the emergence of a new and distinctive American way of war.” [115]
 - a. America’s decisive edge would be in technology and “a peculiar talent for organizing technology.” [115]
3. *Top Gun* promulgated a conception of politics congenial to this newly reconfigured formulation of U.S. military power.” [115]
 - a. Maverick “inhabited a world that permitted little room for uncertainty.” [115]
 - b. History, interests, motivation, etc., did not figure in explaining how the world worked. There were good guys and bad guys, and all that matters is for the good guys to triumph. [115]

These films created “a second competing narrative” to the Vietnam-induced narrative. [116]

The military techno-thriller genre of fiction also emerged, making their contribution to mythology. [116]

Tom Clancy and his imitators have a standard plot, which “bears the imprint of an identifiable worldview... informed by a well-developed appreciation for U.S. military power.” [116]

The world is a dangerous, threatening place, with implacable enemies, and our survival is due “to the skill, honor, extraordinary technological aptitude, and sheer decency of the nation’s defenders.” [117]

Reagan demonstrated that “genuflecting before soldiers and playing to the pro-military instincts of the electorate wins votes.” [117]

Clinton “perpetuated the use of soldiers as political props.” [117]

Clinton (1992) “had to assure a majority of the American voters that he shared in the now-prevailing admiration for those serving in the armed forces.” [118]

Bush and Powell “had capitalized on their just-refurbished prestige to preempt serious debate” about basic policy in the post-Cold War era. [119]

“Any reassessment of basic policy might have undermined the status quo, which the generals were determined at all costs to preserve.” [119]

Clinton signaled his support of this posture. Calling for any assessment of the implication for democracy of organizing statecraft around permanent military supremacy would have entailed great political risk. [119]

In his major foreign policy speech during the campaign, Clinton conveyed “three reassuring messages:” [120]

1. He would not only maintain, but enhance U.S. military strength. [120]
2. He indicated a clear willingness to use force. [120]
3. He expressed great respect for members of the armed forces, recalling an Arkansas event he had organized as Governor to honor Vietnam veterans. [120-121]

FIVE: Onward

The USA is and has always been “a deeply, even incorrigibly, Christian nation.” [122]

“Well before 1776, Americans claimed for themselves a pivotal role in the panoramic drama of salvation” achieved through Christ. [122]

Covenant, Chosen People, New Jerusalem, a city upon a hill. [122]

Present-day America, even though unaware of or rejecting its Christological antecedents, give “almost automatic support for this doctrine of American Exceptionalism” [122]

“From the age of Winthrop to the age of George W. Bush, an abiding religious sensibility has informed America’s image of itself and of its providential mission.” [122]

Contemporary evangelicals felt keenly the cultural crisis triggered by Vietnam and the ‘60s. Among them, “the reaction to Vietnam as a foreign policy failure and to Vietnam as a manifestation of cultural upheaval converged with the greatest effect.” [123]

They assumed the stance of church militant “to reverse the nation’s perceived decline.” [123]

This involved “Abandoning their own previously well-established skepticism about the morality of force,” and “articulated a highly permissive interpretation of the just war tradition.” [123]

“... they developed a considerable appetite for wielding armed might on behalf of righteousness, more often than not indistinguishable from America’s own interests.” [123-124]

Some evangelicals “looked to the armed services to play a pivotal role in saving America from internal collapse.” Military as a bastion of the values required to save the nation from perdition: respect for tradition, appreciation for order and discipline, willingness to sacrifice for the common good. [124]

“Militant evangelicals imported religious sanction to the militarization of U.S. policy and helped imbue the resulting military activism with an aura of moral legitimacy.” [124]

Tangled relationship between Christianity and war: “Christians historically have slaughtered their fellow men, to include their fellow Christians, in breathtakingly large numbers.” [124]

The wars of the twentieth century revived “tendencies toward Christian pacifism.” [124]

By the end of the Vietnam War, “official Washington could no longer count on the leaders of mainline churches to offer their automatic endorsement...” [124]

Traditionally, “American evangelicals had cultivated a robust anti-war tradition” and “had tended to take a dim view of soldiering.” [125].

With the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942) a process of engaging the world in order to transform it had commenced, and the Cold War accelerated this process. [125]

Billy Graham as anti-Communist and “forthright defender of the American Way of Life.” He supported building up the U.S. military arsenal and the use of force in both Korea and Vietnam. [126]

“... authoritative assurances that the United States was doing the Lord’s work.” [126]

Conservative Christians saw the ‘60s as “a nation turning away from God,” which sent them into political opposition. “The old-time religion became the new counterculture.” [126]

They saw anti-war sentiment and disparagement of the armed services as indicative of the dangerous path America was taking. [127]

Jerry Falwell (1969): The GI fighting in Vietnam as “a champion for Christ.” [127]

“... military weakness and anti-militarism itself were also symptomatic of the nation’s larger moral affliction.” [128]

Falwell: “A political leader, as a minister of God, is a revenger to execute wrath upon those who do evil. Our government has the right to use its armaments to bring wrath upon those who would do evil by hurting other people.” [128-129]

Many evangelical writers of the '70s linked domestic moral corruption and diminishing military strength as dual indicators that the U.S. was "in an accelerating spiral of decline." "Only a comprehensive program of moral and cultural renewal could stave off disaster." [129]

"... the solution was self-evident: it was necessary to rebuild America's defenses while also reviving traditional values, the one being all but synonymous with the other." [130]

Linkage was posited between (a) revival of U.S. military power, and (b) "the nation's fulfillment of its larger providential mission." [130]

"... desirability of a resurgent America seeking dominion." [131]

Michael Lienesch: "'a crusade theory of warfare,'" which took precedence over the established just war tradition. [131]

"God was literally on America's side, and He had empowered Americans to act on His behalf." [131]

Scriptural citations were found for striking the first blow. [131]

"... in their advocacy of preventive war, Christian conservatives were merely a little ahead of their time." [132]

"... many evangelicals view the requirements of U.S. national security in the here-and-now and the final accomplishment of Christ's saving mission at the end of time as closely related if not indistinguishable." [132]

National security and eschatology converge in Israel. U.S. conservative Christians "have an obsession with the Jewish state." [132]

Premillennial dispensationalism sees in Israel's founding in 1948 a sign that the end days are fast approaching. [132]

The distinctive Israeli strategic style (conception and use of military power) "has colored conservative Christian thinking about these same subjects." This "has altered the terms of religious discourse about war and the use of force in ways that have contributed to the militarization of U.S. policy." [133]

Because of its geopolitical situation, it can be reasonably argued that Israel is prudent to put its trust in military force, with a premium placed on early offensive action – and consequent disregard for the just war tradition. [133]

American evangelicals "insist upon the unqualified righteousness of Israel's military actions," including its disregard of just war reasoning. [134]

This "created loopholes in the just-war tradition." For countries "designated for special roles in God's program of salvation – the usual rules do not apply." [134]

"Wittingly or not, a militant Israel is advancing the cause of a militant, even militaristic Messiah not at all shy about using the sword to complete His saving mission." [134]

“To support Israel ‘cannot, by definition, ever be incompatible with the will of God.’” (Merkely) [134]

Armament as not simply a providential matter, but a religious imperative. [134]

“In 1980, Ronald Reagan, although twice married, an indifferent parent, and an irregular churchgoer, presented himself to evangelicals as one who understood their message and embraced their cause.” He told Falwell that he expected the near approach of Armageddon. [136]

Reagan did little to repay evangelicals for their support with regard to social issues, but his “increases in defense spending, his emphasis on patriotism and appreciation for soldiers, and his counteroffensive against the ‘evil empire’ all found favor with the Religious Right.” [136]

“... millions of believing Christians provided the core political constituency on which Reagan could count to support both his overall military build-up and even his most controversial national security initiative. [137]

Catholic and mainstream Protestant opinions on matters related to war and peace “come in various shades of gray – the implication being that making moral judgment was a complex and difficult matter. In contrast, evangelical discourse emphasized black-and-white.” [137]

The debate over SDI involved more than questions of cost and technological feasibility; it “was a reassertion of national innocence” – reaffirming “America’s uniqueness among all the world’s nations and among all nations in history.” [138]

American Exceptionalism: innocence, invulnerability, uniqueness. [138]

Evangelicals saw SDI as “a powerful symbol of deliverance.” (Loveland) [138]

The tacit alliance between evangelicals and the armed services paralleled that of evangelicals and the GOP. [138]

The military recognized “the potential benefits of making common cause with conservative Christians.” [140]

Evangelicals “... gained respect and influence within the armed forces” because of their support for the military. [140]

May, 1972 – West Point confers an honor on Billy Graham. [140]

The military was out of step with society; with evangelicals, they found “a group that marched to a drumbeat not unlike their own.” [140]

Traditional values as “the moral terrain that Christian conservatives and the U.S. Army shared (or fancied that they shared) in common.” [140]

‘Now the officer corps shed its Episcopal coloration, the change having less to do with religious conversion than with recognition that the relationship between the U.S. military and American civilian elites had changed radically.’ [141]

Significant increase also occurred in the number of evangelical chaplains. [142]

Many evangelicals astutely recognized that “the problem was not the preserve the military from contamination from without but to prevent soldiers from becoming too distant from the American people.” [145]

Following 9/11, evangelicals “reverted almost immediately to their old bellicosity.” [145]

“The Manichean worldview to which many evangelicals subscribed reasserted itself.” [145]

“... old lines in which Islam now substituted for Communism.” [145]

Evangelicals “revived their accommodating interpretation of just-war theory and thereby put their imprimatur on the so-called Bush Doctrine.” [145]

Just-war theory became “not a series of stringent tests but a signal: not a red light, not even a flashing yellow, but a bright green...” [145]

“The result was ironic: in the developed world’s most devoutly Christian country, Christian witness against war and against the dangers of militarism became less effective than in countries thoroughly and probably irreversibly secularized.” [146]

“Thus did fervent followers of Jesus Christ become the Americans ‘most ready to sing the battle hymns of the republic and to support warfare in its name.’” (Martin Marty) [146]

SIX: War Club

“The aim of preventive war is... to kill, quickly and efficiently... The only acceptable standard of performance is a first-round knockout.” [147]

But “war has time and again proven itself to be all but ungovernable.” – “Present-day U.S. policymakers are undaunted by that historical record.” [147]

George W. Bush: “we are redefining war on our terms.” [148]

The “high priests of U.S. national security strategy” – “bright young civilian academics eager to put their stamp on public policy” – are Bacevich’s description of post-WWII policymakers who advanced a strategy for the use of force in pursuit of national interests, while averting a third world war. [148-149]

After Vietnam, much of this edifice collapsed, but “the project’s guiding spirits set out in pursuit of a still bolder aim” – i.e., a “military revolution, promising a quantum leap in the effectiveness of American arms.” [149]

“It is belief in the imminence and potential of this revolution that imbues the Bush Doctrine with the appearance of plausibility.” [149]

Bernard Brodie judged that the atomic bomb had changed the nature of military planning: from how to win wars, to how to avert them. [149]

“How to derive from that insight specific guidelines of use to policymakers was the tricky part.” [149-150]

Preventing war would require “realism, dispassion, and cool-headed analysis.” [150]

Previous standard American practice had treated strategy as ancillary to the actual conduct of war – more or less as campaign planning. [150]

The prior strategic principle – bringing maximum destructive power to bear – was now “politically counterproductive and morally unconscionable.” [150]

Brodie proposed an alternative principle, subordinating war to strategy – *threatening* force to persuade would-be adversaries, making the actual use of force unnecessary. [150]

This involved civilian control of strategy, with influence devolving “to those equipped with the appropriate analytical tools.” [150]

“Henceforth, tweed should tutor khaki.” [151]

Brodie sought to counter both proponents of “unworkable schemes for global disarmament” and “to keep in check the LeMays who were hankering to incinerate Moscow.” [151]

“... to restore order and rationality to a world turned upside down by the invention of nuclear weapons.” [151]

“Defense intellectuals” at the RAND Corporation: “a circle of mathematicians, economists, and political scientists (Brodie, Charles Hitch, Herman Kahn, John von Neumann). [151]

They were secretive and hidden from view. “By comparison, the curia of the Roman Catholic Church seemed a model of openness and transparency.” [151]

They “came to wield great influence, without the burden of actual responsibility.” [151]

Bacevich argues that Brodie’s Doctrine “rested on an utterly false premise: Hiroshima had not, in fact, robbed violence of its political utility.” [151]

This was realized at the time, but not acknowledged. The actual purpose of the endeavor was not really to prevent nuclear war, but “to perpetuate the advantage that had accrued to the United States as a consequence of Hiroshima and to use those advantages to advance vital American interests, without triggering World War III.” [152]

“... high-level intellectual combat” occurred among “the high priesthood” at RAND, Harvard, M.I.T., the University of Chicago, with the issue being “the honing of alternatives, trade-offs, and risks, concerned and evaluated in a context of political uncertainty and rapid technological change.” [152]

Albert Wohlstetter was “the dean of American nuclear strategists. His initial contribution was a basing strategy, “ostensibly demonstrating that a Soviet attack could destroy virtually the entire U.S. long-range bomber force before it even got off the ground.” [152]

He concluded that “‘strategic-retaliatory-force vulnerability’ was ‘the problem of nuclear war.’” [152]

Vulnerability became “an obsession and eventually a fetish.” [152]

Wohlstetter judged American complacency to be the central problem. The Soviet arsenal was becoming sufficiently formidable that it was not certain that American retaliation could succeed – and thus deterrent effect was lessening. [152]

In fact, the balance of force favored the U.S., but worries of a ‘bomber gap’ and a ‘missile gap’ “conjured up something akin to a grave national emergency,” which JFK used to maximum political impact. [152]

Wohlstetter advocated a move “from mere deterrence toward a more activist posture, with enhanced American ability to fight.” [153-154]

This would require a wider range of military capabilities, and a consequent increase in defense spending – and “a blunt willingness to carry it out.” [154]

“... safety lay in devising more effective ways of actually using force.” [154]

Deliberate and carefully controlled action opened up “a host of new and potentially viable options.” [154]

This turned the trajectory of American policy down the path that would result four decades later in the argument for preventive war. [154]

Herman Kahn sought to devise “‘more reasonable forms of using violence’” (1960), to salvage something of Clausewitz’s view of war. [154]

A first attempt was to derive a new logic of war, incorporating precepts from economics and game theory. [154]

Abandoning thought of winners and losers, war was seen as a form of bargaining, convincing the enemy “that ending the war on your terms served *his* interests.” [155]

In the nuclear era, limited wars would not be grand crusades, but would be “fought for finite purposes and in cold blood.” [155]

Wohlstetter thought that wars of attrition would advantage the West, with its greater economic resources. [155]

Pentagon officials in the Kennedy administration began “to assimilate and implement the rigorous, meticulously cerebral approach” to war advocated by Wohlstetter. Robert McNamara’s thinking about Vietnam drew heavily on the precepts of limited war. [156]

The results were disastrous. The Vietnamese communists “did not subscribe to American theories of limited war,” and were not fighting for a compromise settlement. They also were far more willing to die for their cause. [156]

Fred Kaplan holds that Vietnam revealed that the entire project of these defense intellectuals was “useless as a guide to action,” with its concept of force pure abstraction. [157]

Other than Daniel Ellsberg, however, there was no acknowledgment of this by the strategists themselves. [157]

Wohlstetter “feared that Vietnam might induce a populist challenge to elite control of strategy” – leaving the American people less inclined to defer to ‘the best and the brightest.’ [158]

He feared the odd coalition of old school officers (‘all or nothing’) and antiwar radicals that might come to “view force as something to be employed with considerable reluctance and only when truly vital national interests were at stake.” [158]

After Vietnam, the generals’ aim was reactionary (“to revive traditional conceptions of conventional war while erecting barriers to the actual use of force and restoring their own prerogatives”), but Wohlstetter’s aim was “genuinely radical” – to invent new methods of waging war that would facilitate the use of force. [158]

Wohlstetter supported ballistic missile defense systems because the protection they would provide would permit/encourage the U.S. to use its forces offensively. [160]

Protection, in his view, “required the ability to eliminate threats before they fully developed.” [160]

“Precision attack” was “the key conceptual breakthrough” in the development of “a distinctive new concept of warfare.” [161]

“Making force less wasteful and its effects more predictable held the promise of enhancing American striking power,” opening up “whole new vistas for the application of force.” [161]

“At a minimum it promised to make war more readily available as an instrument for advancing U.S. security objectives.” [161]

“Discriminating offensive strategies.” [162]

In a 1988 report, *Discriminate Deterrence*, Wohlstetter posited “revolutionary changes in the nature of war,” enabling the use of “violence for political purposes.” [162]

“Bringing force to bear to thwart plausible aggression.” [162]

“Deterrence had now collapsed into war fighting.” [163]

Wohlstetter welcomed the 1990-1991 Gulf War as a chance to demonstrate that a quick, decisive, economical victory could be achieved with the U.S.’s new arsenal. [163]

Indeed, Desert Storm was quickly declared “a watershed in the history of modern warfare.” [14]

“Yet that victory actually solved very little.” [164] Wohlstetter recognized that true victory would have required “the installation in Baghdad of a suitably liberal alternative to the existing tyranny.” [164]

This was the final piece of logic pointing toward a strategy of evolving war: “*by their very existence dictatorships constituted an unacceptable threat.*” [164-165]

The only certain response to the problem of vulnerability was “to bring despotic regimes into full compliance with ‘American norms.’” [165]

Wohlstetter believed that “precise and discriminatory U.S. military capabilities now made a policy of regime change feasible.” [165]

Andrew Marshall was a long-time Pentagon strategist who was a true believer “in military activism as the antidote to American vulnerability and in the imperative of enhancing the utility of force, by extracting the full measure of advantage from the technologies involved in Desert Storm.” [166]

It was Marshall who coined the phrase, “*The Revolution in Military Affairs*” [RMA], and he was confident that “he had deciphered the true nature of that revolution.” [166]

By the mid ‘90s, RMA “had established itself among specialists as the authoritative frame of reference within which the debate over the future of warfare unfolded.”

The “earlier revolution of 1945” when war had appeared obsolete was overturned; RMA “promised war a new lease on life.” [166]

But Marshall realized that Desert Storm represented only the beginning. “Military revolution ... took time to mature and required far-reaching, expensive, and frequently painful institutional change.” [166]

Marshall believed the U.S. to be in “a new interwar period,” comparable to the ‘20s and ‘30s. [167]

Marshall had a threefold agenda: (1) “spell out in great detail the full implications of the RMA”; (2) build a consensus among policy elites on behalf of fundamental military reform; and (3) “whittle away at the resistance to such reforms from soldiers chary about giving up old habits and routines that seemingly worked well enough.” [167]

“The essence of the RMA was to move war out of the industrial age and into the info age.” [167]

Traditional “large, heavy, and replaceable” armies were to be replaced by lean, nimble, smart ones. [167]

Marshall posited two further implications: (1) long-range precision weapons coupled with command-and-control systems will soon dominate warfare; and (2) the information dimension becomes central. [168]

Protecting one’s own system and degrading the enemies’ becomes pivotal. [168]

The battlefield will become transparent, and protracted struggles will become a thing of the past. [168]

Speed, capacity, and durability of computer networks will matter more than the size of your arsenal. [168]

This vision “captured the imagination of the small community of people... who attend to such things.” It “both drew upon and affirmed the zeitgeist of the 1990s.” [168]

This was postindustrial, postmodern war. “Mankind had embarked upon an age in which technology promised very rapid change, while also bringing total mastery of the human environment more closely within reach.” [169]

Globalization needed an enforcer, Thomas Friedman argued, and the RMA would enable the U.S. to play that role without disrupting the flow of goods, capital, people, and ideas across borders. [170]

The new vision of the soldier was no longer essentially masculine. [170]

It also seemed to herald “a more humane approach to warfare.” And the U.S. “wished to see itself as a benign, liberal, and progressive hegemon.” [170]

“... the RMA was one expression of a larger effort to formulate a new vision of the world itself and of America’s proper place in (and astride) that world.” [170]

Many of these prominent ideas of the 1980s now “appear preposterously foolish” (New Economy, Globalization, End of History). [171]

“... irrational exuberance was by no means confined to the stock market.” [171]

“... speculation, fueled by the intoxicating vapors given off by successive American triumphs...” [171]

So, too, with regard to thinking about war, “exuberance created expectation that became increasingly uncoupled from reality.” [171]

“War’s ancient power of seduction was reasserting itself.” [171]

Churchill, “‘the romance of design’” – i.e., the “perfect weapon.” [171]

“The ideas embodied in the RMA kindled enthusiasms that blurred the distinction between actually existing U.S. military capabilities and mere aspirations.” [171]

E.g., “‘full-spectrum dominance.’” [171]

And relying on “‘shock and awe’ to stun the enemy into submission.” [172]

“... but in the eyes of many military professionals, the technological package known as the RMA threatened their soldierly way of life...” Thus, soldiers resisted. [172]

Bush campaigned on a pledge to push forward with the RMA, and Donald Rumsfeld proceeded to attempt to do so. But by 9/10/2001, “military transformation appeared to be dead in the water.” [172-173]

But Bush’s decision to pursue a Global War on Terror [GWOT] “boosted the RMA’s stock”

In planning the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz relied on the ideas of Wohlstetter and Marshall, and ignored “the risk-averse inclinations of the officer corps.” [173]

Richard Perle explicitly attached the war in Iraq to Wohlstetter’s vision of war. [174]

Not only in design and execution, but also in rationale and scale of ambition, Wohlstetter’s vision was implemented in Iraq. “Above all, in engaging in a war of choice against Iraq, the Bush administration signaled that the United States no longer felt itself constrained when it came to the use of force. This ultimate rejection of the conventional wisdom was also the ultimate expression of all that Wohlstetter had wrought.” [174]

Bacevich: "The enterprise launched as an effort to forestall war by reinventing strategy ended up providing a rationale for war launched in a spasm of strategic irrationality." [174]

SEVEN: Blood for Oil

Classifying the GWOT as WWIV "fits the events of September 11 and those that have followed into a historical trope familiar to almost all Americans." [175]

But this is "an exercise in sleight-of-hand," serving to tacitly endorse "the ever more militaristic cost of U.S. policies." [176]

It also "effectively absolves the United States of accountability for anything that went before." [176]

Beyond militarism, "the rising tide of American bellicosity" can only be explained by "the ultimate in U.S. national interests, which is the removal of any obstacles or encumbrances that might hinder the American people in their pursuit of happiness ever more expansively defined." [176]

"A set of revised strategic priorities emerged in the '80s and '90s, "centered geographically in the energy-rich Persian Gulf but linked inextricably to the assumed prerequisites for sustaining American freedom at home." [176-177]

A "convergence between predispositions and interests." [177]

The fundamental danger of this convergence is that 'WWIV' will necessarily be followed by WWV, WWVI, etc. [177]

In understanding the Cold War, "the American people, encouraged by their political leaders, have shown a demonstrable preference for clarity rather than nuance." [177]

The meta-narrative posits (1) the Cold War (in which we were unambiguously triumphant), followed by (2) a brief (1990-2001) interval, followed by (3) our post 9/11 era which is expected to replicate in broad outline the first chapter, if we "again rise to the occasion." [178]

Bacevich argues the need for "a different and messier parsing of the recent past." [178]

The Cold War itself "occurred in two very distinct phases." [178]

1. 1945-1963: Soviet American competition that could have produced an actual WWII; [178]
2. After the Cuban missile crisis (1962) and Washington's acquiescence in the erection of the Berlin Wall (1961), there emerged "recognition of a vital common interest" which yielded a more predictable, stable relationship, "characterized by careful adherence to a well-established set of routines and procedures." [178]

The second phase provided "opportunities for massive stupidity:" U.S. in Vietnam, Soviet Union in Afghanistan. [178]

"Crucially, the key developments hastening the demise of the Soviet empire came from within." [179]

Soviet ineptitude and the courage of dissidents explain the demise of the Soviet Union more than the 1980s reconstitution of American military power. [179]

Retold more accurately, this narrative “possesses little capacity either to illuminate or to instruct” us in the post 9/11 world. [179]

In fact, “the real World War IV began in 1980, and Jimmy Carter of all people declared it.” For a decade (1980s) World Wars III and IV were parallel, not sequential, “with the former overlaid on top of and therefore obscuring the latter.” [179]

Carter thrust the Persian Gulf “into the uppermost tier of U.S. geopolitical priorities.” [180]

From 1945-1979, our policy had been to ensure stability and access, but with minimal U.S. military involvement.” [180]

FDR, 1945, meeting with Saudi King Ibn Saud – U.S. would guarantee Saudi security, Saudis would provide U.S. preferential treatment in exploiting oil reserves. [180]

The military principle was economy of force, with only an occasional, brief, show of force: “a low profile and a hidden hand.” [180]

Covert action (1953 overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran) and use of surrogates (the British, the Shah, and private contractors) was preferred to direct use of force.” [180-181]

The Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan “left this approach in a shambles.” Carter concluded that a “great context for control of the region had been joined.” [181]

The U.S. claimed a central role in determining the course of change in the region. Thus, the Carter Doctrine that any outside attempt to gain control in the region would be “regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States,” and would be “repelled by military force, if necessary.” [181]

Each of Carter’s successors “has expanded the level of U.S. military involvement and operations in the region.” [181]

“The overarching motive for action was the preservation of the American way of life” – and this involved the “unimpeded flow of oil.” [182]

Carter had realized that his call for sacrifice and lowered expectations had been politically disastrous. [182]

“What Americans wanted for themselves and demanded from their government was freedom, defined as more choice, more opportunity, and above all greater abundance, measured in material terms.” [182]

Carter effectively renounced his own “vision of a less materialistic, more self-reliant democracy.” [182]

No effective grand strategy emerged, however. Rather, policymakers reacted to crises as they occurred. [184]

In large part, this was due to the fundamental incompatibility of two competing U.S. interests: [184]

1. Dependence on Middle East oil entailed vulnerability; [184]
2. American commitment to the security and well-being of Israel. Understanding how Israel fit in the larger struggle “proved to be a perplexing problem.” [184]

Hostage Rescue Mission: “Carter sprinkled the first few tidbits of American military power onto the floor of the desert, where they vanished without a trace.” [185]

Reagan’s preoccupation with WWII. [185]

Reagan, 1983: “Our country has never started a war.” [185]

In fact, “U.S. military practice had always favored offensive action.” [186]

Reagan’s entire presidency “was situated on the seam between one world war that was winding down and a successor war, already begun but not yet fully comprehended.” [186]

Results of Reagan-era forays into the Middle East were mixed. Ability to project power into the region was enhanced. But “his initiatives also emboldened the enemy and contributed to the instability that drew his successors more deeply into the region.” [186-187]

There were four occasions when the U.S. used force in the region during Reagan’s presidency: (1) insertion of ‘peacekeepers’ into Lebanon, and the subsequent Beirut bombing (1982-1983); (2) clashes with Libya, culminating in missile strikes (1986); (3) the ‘tanker war’ (1984-1988), with U.S. forces committed to protect the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf; and (4) assistance throughout the 1980s to the Afghan ‘freedom fighters.’ [187]

Reagan’s efforts to weave a comprehensive rationale for these diverse actions “tended to be another exercise in mythmaking.” [188]

The actions were justified “in terms of ideals rather than interests.” [188]

Very disparate threats “morphed into a single conspiracy.” [189]

But rapid withdrawal of the Marines from Beirut, favoring Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War, the illegal sale of weapons to Iran’s Islamic Republic – “Such opportunism made a mockery of Reagan’s windy pronouncements regarding America’s role as peacemaker...” [189]

There is, though, a loose coherence. All four actions occurred in the Greater Middle East; none are intelligible except in relation to America’s growing dependence on imported oil. And however conclusive the near-term outcome may have seemed, the actual results were anything but, and all four “pointed toward ever-deepening American military engagement.” [190]

The entire U.S. national security apparatus “began to reorient itself.” [190]

A new consensus emerged “that the challenges posed by the politically volatile, energy-rich world of Islam were eclipsing all others.” [190]

Given the imperative of meeting American popular expectations for greater abundance (which required oil), and the political consequences of failing to do so (see Carter), there was a perceived need “to put the United States in a position to determine the fate of the Middle East.” [190-191]

Wohlstetter had argued as early as 1981 for forces, bases, and infrastructure in the Persian Gulf. [191]

“Dominance was the aim.” [191]

“The prize was mastery over a region that leading members of the American foreign policy elite... had concluded to be critically important to the well-being of the United States.” [191]

The initial assumption, that the problem demanded a military response, was “never thereafter subjected to serious scrutiny.” [191]

Reagan’s most lasting contribution lay in a “comprehensive effort to ramp up America’s ability to wage World War IV.” [191]

Elements of this contribution: Upgrading Carter’s Persian Gulf intervention force to a full regional headquarters, U.S. Central Command; conversion of Diego Garcia into a major forward support base; large stocks of equipment loaded on ships in the Gulf; construction/expansion of bases in several countries; negotiation of overflight rights with several nations; refinement of war plans and exercised in the desert environment; cultivation of numerous client states through arms sales and training programs. [191-192]

By the end of Reagan’s presidency, “the national security bureaucracy was well on its way to embracing a highly militarized conception of how to deal with the challenges posed by the Middle East.” [193]

Through the 1980s, Iran was perceived as the main problem, with Iraq considered possibly part of the solution; in the ‘90s, Iraq supplanted Iran as the main U.S. adversary. [193-194]

Regarding Desert Storm: “Out of that demonstration of American military prowess, no new world order emerged, but the war saddled the United States with new obligations from which there came yet more headaches and complications.” [194]

Saddam’s suppression of Kurds and Shiites led to the declaration of no-fly zones, with routing U.S. combat patrols of Iraqi air space and punitive air strikes (which continued for twelve years). [195]

The new policy of containment necessitated the presence of substantial U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. [195]

George H.W. Bush bequeathed this situation to Clinton, along with U.S. forces in Somalia, and “the so-called peace process.” [195]

“Clinton was unable to extract from this ambiguous legacy much of tangible value.” [196]

The speedy withdrawal from Somalia after the 1993 Mogadishu firefight, affirmed to many in the Arab world – including Bin Laden – that the U.S. would fold, if challenged. [196]

The Clinton administration was forced into “a reactive posture,” sustaining “a series of minor but painful and painfully embarrassing setbacks/bombings at Riyadh (1995) and Dhahran (1996); attacks on Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies (1998); and the attack on the USS *Cole* (2000). [196]

The U.S. response was “innocuous,” and “accomplished next to nothing.” [196-197]

“... no one in the Clinton White House had a clear conception of what it was that the United States needed to do and to whom.” [197]

And the collapse of the peace process at Camp David “gave way to a new cycle of Palestinian terror attack and Israeli reprisals.” [197]

“An alienated Arab world convinced itself that the United States and Israel were conspiring to humiliate and oppress Muslims.” [197]

But the Clinton administration’s insistence on “describing the adversary as disembodied ‘terrorists’ robbed those events of any coherent political context.” [197]

Like his predecessors, “Clinton refused even to concede that the violence directed against the United States might stem from some plausible (which is not to imply justifiable) motivation.” [197-198]

But bin Laden had “outlined his intention with impressive clarity.” His campaign of terror was designed “to destroy the 1945 compact forged by President Roosevelt and King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud.” [198]

Opposition to U.S. presence in the region had “a history ‘fraught with ambiguity,’” which “exposed the underside of American Exceptionalism.” [198]

For decades the U.S. had pursued its own concrete interests in the region, with little regard for how its action affected others or for potential future difficulties. [198]

Out of expediency, the U.S. had aligned itself with “arbitrary, corrupt, and oppressive” regimes.” [198]

Our policy “had not been the handiwork of innocents.” [198]

And bin Laden’s campaign “emerged at least in part as a response to prior U.S. policies and actions, in which lofty ideals and high moral purpose seldom figured.” [198]

“Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton were each in fact waging war and building toward a larger one. But a coherent strategy for bringing that war to a successful conclusion remained elusive.” [199]

Bin Laden had a weak hand, but played it skillfully, whereas U.S. policy was “riddled with contradictions” – and so the overall U.S. position deteriorated. [199]

“For its first eight months in office, the second Bush administration essentially marked time.” [199]

“Bush’s foreign policy prior to 9/11 hewed closely to the lines laid down by his predecessor.” [200]

Then bin Laden initiated the war's third phase, exposing "the acute vulnerabilities of the world's sole superpower." [200]

Bush's "spontaneous response" was to see the events of 9/11 "not as vile crimes but as acts of war," thus acknowledging openly "the existence of the conflict in which the United States had been engaged for the previous twenty years." [200]

"When committing the United States to large-scale armed conflict, presidents historically have evinced a strong preference for explaining the stakes in terms of ideology, thereby distracting attention from geopolitics. Americans ostensibly fight for universal values rather than sordid self-interest." [200]

From 1980 through September, 2001, universal values did not figure prominently in the formulation and articulation of U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf. Geopolitics trumped values, with the dominant issue being oil. [200-201]

Bush's "epiphany," his "conversion to the church of Woodrow Wilson" was "a smokescreen." [201]

Bush's invasion of Iraq "can be said to possess a certain bizarre logic" – "As part of a larger campaign to bring the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice, Operation Iraqi Freedom made no sense at all and was probably counterproductive. Yet as the initial gambit of an effort to transform the entire region through the use of superior military power, it not only made sense but also held out the prospect of finally resolving the incongruities bedeviling U.S. policy." [201]

The war was, in part, "an exercise in military repositioning" – removing forces from Saudi soil while maintaining them in the region to prevent any disruption in oil supplies. [201]

This would leave us "well positioned to create a new political order in the region." [202]

"A Middle East pacified, brought into compliance with American ideological norms, and policed by American soldiers could be counted on to produce plentiful supplies of oil and to accept the presence of a Jewish state in its midst." [202]

This was conceived as "a great crusade." There are two factors which explain the gullibility of the American people in accepting it: [202]

1. Self-induced historical amnesia [Armitage: "History starts today."]. [202]

9/11 had rendered all that had gone before irrelevant; thus, there was no interest in understanding how the modern Middle East had come into existence, and the U.S.'s role in its evolution.

2. "The progressive militarization of U.S. policy since Vietnam... had acquired a momentum to which the events of September 11 only added." [202]

"Furthermore, the aura that by 2001 had come to suffuse American attitudes toward war, soldiers, and military institutions had dulled the capacity of the American people to think critically about the actual limits of military power." [202-203]

This was especially true of Bush's inner circle, the self-described Vulcans, who held a vision of the U.S. as being so powerful that it did not need to make compromises or accommodations with any other nation. [203]

"Their confidence in the competence and bravery of the American soldier and in the effectiveness of American arms was without limit." [203]

"On the far side of World War IV, a time which we are not presently given to see, there await others who will not readily concede to the United States the prerogatives and the dominion that Americans have come to expect as their due." [203-204]

"The ensuing collision between American requirements and a noncomplicit world will provide the impetus for more crusades. Each in turn will be justified in terms of ideals rather than interests, but together they may well doom the United States to fight perpetual wars in a vain effort to satisfy our craving for freedom without limit and without end." [203]

EIGHT: Common Defense

Mencken on "'neat, plausible, and wrong'" solutions to problems. [205]

There is no simple antidote to the military metaphysics to which we have fallen prey. [205]

Judging the NAM to result from the Will of God or from the Venality of Wall Street is to engage in ideological delusion. [206]

"Rather, the new American militarism is a little like pollution – the perhaps unintended, but foreseeable by-product of prior choices and decisions made without taking fully into account the full range of costs likely to be incurred." [206]

The environmental movement provided the "different consciousness" needed to enable Americans "to see the natural world and their relationship to that world in a different light," and to realize that "Different policies and practices could staunch and even reverse the damage." [206]

Pragmatists negotiated "a compromise between economic needs and environmental imperatives." [206]

"Restoring a semblance of balance and good sense to the way that Americans think about military power will require a similarly pragmatic approach." [207]

"Several decades after Vietnam, in the aftermath of a century filled to overflowing with evidence pointing to the limited utility of armed force and the dangers inherent in relying excessively on military power, the American people have persuaded themselves that their best prospect for safety and salvation lies with the sword." [208]

"'Global power projection'" is a commonplace, a phrase whose sharp edges have been worn down through casual use, has become a normal condition, taken for granted, with no plausible alternatives seriously considered. [208]

“Such a definition of normalcy cries out for a close and critical reexamination.” The surprises and failures of the Iraq War “make clear the need to rethink the fundamentals of U.S. military policy.” [208]

But “a meaningful reexamination will require first a change of consciousness, seeing war and America’s relationship to war in a fundamentally different way.” [208]

The rich tradition of American pacifism and disarmament “are principled views that deserve a hearing, more so today than ever.” Advocates of these views serve the common good by discomfiting the majority. “But to make full-fledged pacifism or comprehensive disarmament the basis for policy in an intrinsically disordered world would be to open the United States to grave danger.” [208]

Bacevich’s proposal to abate present-day militaristic tendencies rests on ten fundamental principles: [208]

1. Heed the intentions of the Founders, who both appreciated the need for military power and maintained “a healthy respect for the dangers that is posed.” [208-209]

Nothing in the original American compact even hints at any such purpose or obligation “to employ military power to save the rest of humankind or remake the world in its own image.” [209]

The Preamble of the Constitution “situates military power at the center of a brief litany of purpose enumerating the collective aspirations of ‘we the people’” – *provide for the common defense*.

“... the growing predilection for military intervention in recent years has so mangled the concept of common defense as to make it all but unrecognizable” (Bush 41 in Somalia, 1992; Clinton in Kosovo, 1999; Bush 43 in Iraq, 2003). [209]

The beginning of wisdom “lies in making the fundamental statement of intent contained in the Preamble once again the basis of actual policy.” [209]

The purpose of this nation’s existence “centers not on global dominance but on enabling Americans to enjoy the blessings of liberty.” [209]

From the invasion of Cuba in 1898 to the Iraq War, “policymakers have acted as if having an ever larger perimeter to defend will make us safer or taking on burdens and obligations at ever greater distances from our shores will further enhance our freedoms.” [209]

2. The remedy will be to revitalize the concept of separation of powers. [210]

Generally, “the impetus for expanding America’s security perimeter has come from the executive branch.” [210]

The Constitution confers on Congress the power ‘to declare War,’ but legislative abrogation of responsibility has eviscerated Article I, Section 8, Clause ii. [210]

“Congress has failed – indeed, failed egregiously – to fulfill its constitutional responsibility for deciding when and if the United States should undertake military interventions abroad.” [210]

“... legislators should insist upon a strict constructionist definition of war...” [210]

“The decision to use armed force is freighted with implications, seen and unseen, that affect the nation’s destiny... Such decisions should require collective approval in advance by the people’s representatives, as the Framers intended.” [210-211]

3. View force as a last resort, which “requires an explicit renunciation of the Bush Doctrine of preventive war.” [211]

Arrogating to the U.S. prerogatives not allowed other nations subverts international stability, and thus American security. [211]

The U.S. “should return to a declaratory policy more consistent with its own established moral and religious traditions, with international law, and with common sense.” [211]

Three elements to such a policy: [211]

- A. The U.S., like every nation, reserves the right to act in its own self-defense, unilaterally if necessary. [211]
- B. The U.S., like every nation, will not tolerate behavior posing a proximate threat to itself or its citizens (which would have applied to the Taliban in 2001, but not to Saddam Hussein in 2003). [211]
- C. Acting in conjunction with other nations of good will, the U.S. “will respond with appropriate military force to wholesale violations of human rights, to instances of widespread suffering, or to looming threats endangering international peace and comity.” [211]

This “*would not* permit the United States to claim for itself alone the responsibility of serving as the world’s conscience.” [211]

As has been true of all great powers in history, the U.S. will at times need to resort to force. But this should be reluctantly, after careful deliberation, with modest expectations of what will be accomplished and “a lively appreciation of the surprises and disappointments that almost inevitably flow from any armed conflict,” and “wary of claims of military necessity being used to compromise on civil liberties.” [212]

4. Corollary of the third principle: Enhance U.S. strategic self-sufficiency – “take prudent steps to limit the extent of U.S. dependence on foreign resources.” [212]

Since the onset of the Cold War, we have been persuaded that our well-being requires the guarantee of unencumbered access to the world’s resources, with challenges (real or imagined) to that access eliciting military response. [212]

For decades, this notion has provided an infinitely elastic rationale for sticking America’s nose in other people’s business.” [212]

Our 'need' for oil "has sucked the United States ever more deeply into the politically and culturally alien world of Islam." [212]

That dependence on foreign oil is America's Achilles heel has been evident for over thirty years, yet we have taken no meaningful action to reduce that dependence. [212]

Future historians will be puzzled by "how a problem of such self-evident seriousness induced such an unserious response." [213]

The failure of American political leaders "to make even the semblance of a meaningful effort... must rank as the signal failure of American statecraft over the past half-century." [213]

5. Organize U.S. forces explicitly for national defense – which "implies jettisoning the concept of 'national security,'" which has been employed as "a device to justify everything from overthrowing foreign governments to armed intervention in places that most Americans could not locate on a map." [213]

Shed unnecessary obligations. Capable allies should defend themselves. Troops stationed abroad should be brought home when no immediate need for their presence exists. [213]

Threefold aid of drawing down U.S. overseas garrisons: [214]

- A. Reducing the likelihood of being dragged into conflicts in which our interests are marginal, at best; [214]
- B. Allowing us to choose where we will engage our forces, rather than handing that decision to others; [214] and
- C. Treating allies as partners rather than vassals. [214]

With regard, e.g., to NATO, sharing responsibility will necessitate sharing authority. [214]

Bacevich recalls George Washington urging that Americans establish their relationship with the world "on terms conducive to the well-being of the republic, steering clear of the ambitions, rivalries, interests, humors, and caprices of other nations." [214]

A call for "restoring American freedom of action." [214]

6. Devise an appropriate gauge for determining the level of U.S. defense spending. [214]

Bacevich proposes that we "peg U.S. expenditures in relation to what others are spending" – e.g., to "match the next two lavishly spending powers combined would assure U.S. military capabilities not only far in excess of any potential adversary but also in excess of any remotely plausible combination of adversaries." [215]

7. Enhance alternative instruments of statecraft: Increased attention to soft power, "the ability to influence rather than merely coerce and to build rather than merely demolish." [215]

A “credibility problem that vastly complicated American statecraft” results from the poor job the U.S. does of communicating its message – partially resultant from the State Department being “perpetually underfunded, understaffed, and ... marginalized.” [216]

The U.S. “trails almost all other developed nations in terms of per capita assistance to the developing world,” yet spares nothing in developing new weapons. [216]

In military matters, “Americans accept mismanagement as just part of the cost of doing business.” [217]

“... when the issue is a military one, money is no object.” [217]

“When it comes to developing new weapons, profligacy is the rule;”
when it comes to finding diplomatic missions or development programs,
parsimony reigns.” [217]

In order to be effectively engaged with the rest of the world, “it needs a highly competent agency to coordinate and manage U.S. diplomacy.” [217]

Countering our negative image in the world, solving the riddle of development and investing in the solution are “of far greater importance to the long-term well-being of the United States than is the fielding of a new armored vehicle or the development of the next-generation fighter jet.” [217]

8. Revive the moribund concept of the citizen-soldier.

The All Volunteer Force has an “ethos more akin to that of the French Foreign Legion” than to earlier generations of American citizen-soldiers.” [218]

They are “highly trained, handsomely paid professionals who (assuming that the generals concur with the wishes of the political leadership) will go anywhere without question to do the bidding of the commander-in-chief.” [218]

“Ours is now an imperial army. Through hard-won experience it has acquired... the wherewithal appropriate to the sort of primitive expeditions and constabulary obligations that the management of an empire entails.” [218]

Post-Cold War military encounters have produced “a new mindset” evident in this officer’s statement: “‘With a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are here to help them.’” [218]

“An imperial America will have need for military officers with just the right touch when it comes to meting out fear, violence, and money to pacify those classified in former days as wags. But those citizens who prefer an American republic to an American empire ought to view the changes under way in the U.S. armed forces as worrisome.” [218]

A republic safeguards itself against militarism by ensuring that “the army has deep roots among the people.” [218]

“A people placing responsibility for natural defense in the hands of ‘a special class’ render themselves ‘unfit for liberty.’” [218]

The ideal relationship between the armed forces and democratic society is symbiotic, each nourishing the other. This implies intimacy, and requires rotation of citizens into the army and renewing it, and returning veterans renew civic life.” [219]

As professions, AVF warriors “have little interest in nurturing a close relationship with civilian society.” [219]

In-and-out rotation lacks utilitarian value, and today’s military leaders “are untroubled by the extent to which the armed services have become anything but representative of that society.” [219]

We need “mechanisms that will reawaken in privileged America a willingness to serve as those who are less privileged already do.” [219]

Persuading sons and daughters of the elite to serve “will elevate the risk of domestic blowback if interventions go awry.” [220]

Veterans returning to elite places in society “will help to counter unrealistic expectation about what wars can accomplish and what they cost.” [220]

9. Reexamine the role of the National Guard and the reserve components. [220]

“... it is in this underappreciated quarter of the larger military establishment that part-time soldiers keep the embers of that tradition alive.” [220]

They have been increasingly called upon “to serve as a quasi-fulltime backup for the ever-lengthening roster of expeditions that regulars start but prove unable to finish.” [220]

As a basis for long-term policy this is doomed to fail because it is not sustainable. [220]

It will exhaust the willingness of reservists to offer continual service, and will lead to a recurrence of incidents such as Abu Ghraib. [220]

That National Guard should be returned to its original purpose: “a trained militia kept in readiness as the primary instrument for community self-defense” – where ‘community’ refers “not to Kosovo and Iraq but to Kansas and Iowa.” [221]

“... we need more citizen-soldiers protecting Americans at home even if that means fewer professional soldiers available to assume responsibility for situations ahead.” [221]

10. Reconcile the American military profession to American society. [221]

The officer corps has tended to cultivate *separateness* from society, and, from the beginning, American society “evinced a pronounced ambivalence about the very existence of a standing army and the career soldiers who led that army.” [221]

West Point is physically and psychologically remote; it stands to the military profession as the Vatican stands to the Roman Catholic Church. [221]

“Implicit in this approach has been the conviction that the soldierly ethic ought to be nurtured within the ramparts, since beyond lies temptation and sin.” [221]

Officers pursue advanced studies, e.g., at separate War Colleges rather than at Universities, and they live in ‘forts’ that serve “no military purpose as such... apart from delineating a largely self-contained existence.” [222]

The fiction that “war and politics constitute two distinct and separate spheres” has become “pernicious.” [222]

The military profession must embrace two fundamental truths: [223]

- A. “... war is the handmaiden of politics, not its co-equal and certainly not its arbiter.” [223]
- B. Harmonizing war with American and international politics “requires efforts to bind the military profession to the ‘outside world’ rather than vainly struggling to keep that world at bay.” [223]

“... binding the officer corps more closely to society will have the ancillary benefit of reducing the likelihood of the armed services running amok or engaging in politically irresponsible behavior.” [223]

Practical implications: [223]

- All officers should earn a bachelor’s degree at a civilian university. ROTC should be “the mechanism for recruiting potential officers, identifying undergraduates who possess the necessary attributes and screening them for actual service.” [223]
- The service academies should then provide “a common process of socialization and a common introduction to the precepts of the military profession” for *all* candidates. [223]
- Advanced study “on matters related to politics, strategy, and related disciplines ought to take place in a context that encourages free inquiry, accommodation, diverse opinions, and promotes interchange across the civilian-military divide – i.e., at a University. [224]
- The academic community will need to “build a substantial capacity for research and teaching in matters related to politics, war, and strategy.” [224]
 - o “... participation of the Left in rejuvenating higher education on matters related to national defense is crucial. Few things are more important to promoting a critical appreciation of the dilemmas facing the United States as a military superpower than to induce the Left to recognize that, like it or not, war remains part of the human condition and central to the human experience and hence eminently worthy of study.” [224]

“In a valedictory marking his withdrawal from public life, George Washington pointedly advised his fellow citizens to be wary of ‘those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of

government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.” [224]

Cultivating military power for its own sake and indulging in the ambitions to which it gave rise were “alien to the entire conception of the New World.” [225]

At the time (1796), “antipathy toward war and a skepticism of armies were... hardwired into the American self-identity.” [225]

Now, though, Europe and the U.S. have reversed roles. [225]

The twentieth century found Americans fostering illusions “that through the determined exercise of its unquestioned military dominance the United States can perpetuate American global primacy and impress its values on the world at large.” [225]

If the U.S. persists in these expectations, “then America will surely share the face of all those who in ages past have looked to war and military power to fulfill their destiny.” [225]

The NAM developed as “a reaction to profound disorientation and collective distress. [225]

“The ailments were real, but the remedy turned out to be toxic.” [226]

We have developed “an addiction at least as harmful as the condition it was intended to cure.” [226]

“There can be no recovery without first acknowledging the disease.” [226]

Afterword

The Bush Doctrine refers to preventive war, not preemption. [227]

“Moral and legal objections aside, preventive war makes sense only if it works – that is, it if yields enhanced security at a reasonable cost.” [227]

The Bush administration’s belief “stemmed from its confidence in U.S. military power.” The assumption was that “the unparalleled capabilities of America’s armed services made preventive war plausible.” [227]

The invasion of Iraq put these assumptions to the test, and this “has demonstrated conclusively that the president has badly misread what the U.S. military can and cannot do.” [227-228]

In several ways the Bush Doctrine’s defects have been exposed: [228]

1. **Effectiveness:** “Preventive war demands a quick kill” – an exemplary message that resistance is pointless. [228]

In Iraq, “the enemy refused to follow our script.” Our armed forces “have been tied in knots by 10,000 to 20,000 insurgents armed with weapons dating from the 1940s.” [228]

The rhetoric of ‘victory’ is “intended for domestic consumption.” The only real solution lies in the political process. [228]

Iraq has shattered the 'mystique' of U.S. forces, and has provided potential adversaries "with a template for how to fight the world's most powerful military to a standstill." [228]

"The reputation of power is itself power," and its deflation has diminished U.S. influence and power. [229]

2. Depth: It has become clear that the U.S. does not possess the staying power to sustain a policy of preventive war. [229]

The administration made a deeply flawed assumption that existing force would suffice. [229]

The core issue is that the U.S. has "too few soldiers doing too many things," and "the average American shows little inclination to offer up a son or daughter to fight that war." [229]

There is a "mismatch between the administration's declared ambitions and the troops available to pursue those ambitions." [230]

3. Generalship: Lieutenants, captains, and colonels know their business, but the performance of three and four star generals has been mediocre. [230]

Tommy Franks's strategy in Afghanistan failed to capture/kill bin Laden and destroy Al Qaeda, leaving an incomplete "low-level war that may become virtually perpetual." [230]

In Iraq, Franks "misread the political implications of removing Saddam," and so there was no planning for 'Phase IV.' [231]

Ricardo Sanchez inherited the mess Franks left behind. "His mission was clear: snuff out the insurgency. Instead, Sanchez fueled it." [231]

Failing to grasp the nature of the problem, he set U.S. forces on an erroneous course of an aggressive strategy to disarm the insurgency before it could gain momentum. This alienated ordinary Iraqis and emboldened the insurgents. [231]

"A doctrine of preventive war requires the forces engaged accomplish their mission swiftly, economically, and without leaving loose ends. The generals employed to implement the Bush Doctrine have not delivered those results." [231]

4. Professionalism: To maintain public support in a democracy "for what is essentially a policy of aggression," forces must acquit themselves with honor, "thereby suppressing questions about the war's moral justification." [232]

Abu Ghraib undermined the liberation narrative, as did credible allegations of widespread detainee abuse. [232]

Unprofessional behavior is “far from rare,” and “the chain of command seems determined to turn a blind eye to this growing problem.” [232]

“The American officer corps once professed to hold sacrosanct the principle of command responsibility. No more.” [232]