

# Is Failure Now an Option?

In “Thirteen Days,” the Kevin Costner film about the Cuban Missile Crisis, Gen. Curtis LeMay grimly tells JFK, when word arrives that the missiles are going

operational, “Mr. President, you’ve got a problem.” JFK replies, “No, general. We have a problem.” And so we do.

As readers of this magazine know, *TAC* was started in 2002 to give voice to a more traditional American conservatism as opposed to what we believed was the corrupted Beltway version. To no issue was more space devoted than our opposition to war on Iraq.

Should we go to war, we warned, we will occupy Baghdad, but we will have inherited our own Lebanon, our own West Bank. We will earn the hatred of Arabs for attacking an Arab nation that did not attack us, did not threaten us, and did not want war with us. From Morocco to Malaysia, imams will preach *jihad* against the United States.

We did not need a Downing Street memorandum to discern who was behind this war and had plotted it long before Sept. 11. In our cover story in early 2003, “Whose War?”, we named names and laid it all out, chapter and verse. And because we spoke the truth about the neocons’ war, *National Review*, in a cover story, branded three of our senior editors and four of our contributors “Unpatriotic Conservatives” who hate America.

Two years have now elapsed since the War Party had its way. And everything we warned against has happened; everything we predicted has come to pass. But the question now is not whether one opposed the war before March 2003, but

where we go from here. How does the United States avoid what appears to be the real possibility of a defeat in Iraq and a disaster for this nation?

Senators Biden and Hagel say “we are losing” the war. That is inexact.

What is happening is that we are not winning. The policy is not working. The war is not winding down as it was in Vietnam from 1969 to 1973, when U.S. casualties fell to zero, all U.S. troops came out, and the POWs came home.

While U.S. forces prevail in every battle, the “metrics,” as Donald Rumsfeld memorably called them, all point in the wrong direction. U.S. casualties are back where they were in the bloody months before the election. Enemy attacks grow in sophistication and lethality. Casualties among Iraqi police and army are at the highest levels of the war. Support for the war in the United States is crumbling. Half the nation now believes it was a mistake and half thinks it time to start bringing the troops home.

The American people appear to believe that whether Iraq is or is not democratic is not worth 1,700 dead, 10,000 wounded, \$200 billion gone, and the prospect of interminable losses of blood and treasure. Americans are willing to pay a price to give Iraqis a chance to build a free society but believe that, ultimately, the Iraqis themselves are going to have to fight for that future if they wish to keep it.

What the American people do not realize—because President Bush has not told them—is the price of American failure in Iraq.

If America loses this war, her position in the Persian Gulf will be imperiled. Anti-American Arabs and Muslims will have inflicted a defeat on the world’s last superpower more dramatic than the one Afghan rebels inflicted on the Soviet Union that brought that empire down. Every U.S. friend in the region will be at risk. Iraq would probably collapse in civil war, with Shi’ites and Kurds fighting to retain the independence they have.

The impact on oil prices would be devastating. Every ally of this country would have to question the value of that alliance. George W. Bush would be marked down by history as a failed president and his democracy crusade written off as childish Wilsonianism.

Our politics would be as poisoned as during the McCarthy era and the Vietnam days of LBJ and Nixon. Republicans would be attacked for having dragged us into war on the basis of lies, while those who argued for early withdrawal would be blamed for having undercut the troops and caused defeat.

Before March 2003, the fact that Iraq was a dictatorship did not matter to us. But after our investment in blood and money, if Iraq reverts to an anti-American dictatorship, it will mean an historic defeat for this nation and a disaster for George W. Bush. That was the risk he took, for himself and for us, when he listened to the sirens’ calls of the neocons who will soon be making their way back to their think tanks and looking for a new horse to ride. ■

[brussels builds a monster]

# Europe's Living Dead

Resurrecting the EU Constitution could mean socialism for the continent.

By Peter Hitchens

LONDON—You might have thought that creating a constitution without a country was like building the roof first and the walls afterwards. But that is the way the architects of the New Europe like to proceed, and surprisingly often, it almost works. For various reasons, the political elites of this messy, fractious continent have been so anxious to construct their Union that they have ignored the way their strange structure creaks and shudders in the slightest wind, muttering, “It may be a mess, it may be costly, but it’s worth it.”

We will return to why they think it is worth it (they are wrong), but first let us sum up the state of things in Old Europe 65 years after the tragic fall of France and 190 years since the far from tragic Battle of Waterloo, in which Britain managed once again to frustrate European unity.

The planned Constitution was dealt a terrible blow by the voters of France and the Netherlands, who surprised and angered their rulers by decisively rejecting it in twin referendums. They were not supposed to do this. Referendums in Europe are quite unlike the proposition votes in the U.S., where the people tell the government what to do. Here they are designed, timed, and worded by governments in the hope that the people will endorse what their rulers want. This is why they are banned in modern Germany. Adolf Hitler made frequent use of

plebiscites to confirm his actions, and the device is still viewed with suspicion by many thoughtful Germans. The problem with this is that, since their political, academic, and media elites are wholly committed to the European idea, German voters have never had any way of expressing their strong doubts about the abolition of their currency and their sovereignty.

So, in a way, the French and Dutch have knowingly broken the rules because they have no other way to speak about what deeply concerns them. Their rejection is important precisely because it is a true reflection of a real misgiving. When this has happened in smaller, more easily frightened nations—the Irish Republic and Denmark—they have simply been told to go and do it again until they come up with the right answer, which they eventually do. But France and the Netherlands are founder members of the European Union, who have done well out of it and are simply not supposed to behave in this way. And both are stiff-necked, proud peoples who, if told to vote again, will simply produce an even louder “no” than before. Technically, the constitution ought to be dead. Technically, these rejections cannot be overcome. But if you believe that the juggernaut of European supranationalism can be halted by a little democratic resistance, you will believe anything.

The EU is determined to turn itself into a new type of state, never before seen on the planet, and its leaders believe it can wriggle round this problem given time and will. France’s President Jacques Chirac and Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, both widely despised at home and almost certainly doomed as leaders of their countries, are frantically trying to revive the limp cadaver of the Constitution. Their main argument is that the voters of France and Holland did not really know what they were doing or intend to produce this result. It is said that they were showing how much they loathed Jacques Chirac (which they were), or how sick they are of the growth of intolerant Islam in their midst (which they are), or how discontented they are with the levels of unemployment (which they are).

The one thing that would certainly kill it without hope of resurrection would be a third “no” from the voters of Britain. A vote was promised by Tony Blair before the last general election. Were it to be held, it would, without doubt, produce the most resounding rejection of all. Since they were tricked into joining the EU in a shamelessly rigged and dishonest referendum in 1975, most of the British have longed for a chance to show their resentment against a project that has brought them no good and a great deal of harm. However, it now seems to have been cancelled.