

Grand Coalition

The Left and Right can—and should—join together against military adventurism.

By Neil Clark

“WHAT IS LACKING TODAY is a permanent, populist, broad-based political force to challenge the worldview of the serial globalizers and the advocates of endless war. The Peace Party can be that force. The global crisis we face today makes the old Left-Right arguments over public ownership and tax rates irrelevant. Let’s have those debates later, but first let’s get rid of those who threaten us with Armageddon.”

In March 2003, on the eve of the war against Iraq, I wrote in these pages of the urgent need for a permanent Left-Right alliance to challenge the dominance of the warmongers who have gained control of the government and opposition parties on both sides of the Atlantic.

The response to my article, an Anglicized version of which later appeared in the British left-wing weekly *The New Statesman*, took me completely by surprise. I was inundated with e-mails and letters of support and questions as to how such an alliance could be brought about.

The idea for a new Left-Right Peace Party first came to me after attending the big antiwar demonstration in London in September 2002 and then reading an article by Stuart Reid in the *Guardian* six weeks later. Reid, deputy editor of the London *Spectator*, occasional contributor to *The American Conservative*, and self-confessed hardcore paleoconservative, wrote of “feeling a little unloved” after attending the largest antiwar demonstration in Britain’s history. “The organisers boasted that the event had attracted men and women from all walks of life,” he wrote, “teachers, social workers, trade unionists, students and mem-

bers of the Muslim community. There was no suggestion that among the 400,000 or so who turned up there were also soldiers, lawyers, civil servants, gentlemen farmers, quantity surveyors, bookie’s runners, sub postmistresses, self-employed plumbers, or—heaven forbid—Telegraph Group journalists. As far as the organisers were concerned, this was a respectable leftwing gig.” Having marched alongside Stuart Reid and other antiwar conservatives that day, I knew exactly what he meant. It really did seem as if the march’s organizers had been taken by surprise at just how widespread opposition to the war in Iraq was.

Attending the march convinced me that we were witnessing the first, unofficial steps towards a political realignment: the emergence of a cross-party new peace movement, which consisted not just of the usual suspects but of true-blue conservatives and establishment figures too. But how could we make the alliance a reality?

After hours of discussions with like-minded friends from across the political spectrum, a Regime Change UK Conference was organized for May 2003. The conference’s aim was “to unite all those who challenge the world view of the advocates of endless war” and to “discuss ways of achieving democratic, meaningful regime change in the UK.” Over 200 invitations were sent out, but getting prominent antiwar figures from both Left and Right to sign up to our draft declaration did not prove easy. The *Times* columnist and former Conservative MP Matthew Parris wrote to say that although he was interested in our

plan, he didn’t sign joint declarations; Tariq Ali and Harold Pinter both failed to respond. Campaigning journalist John Pilger sent us his best wishes but unfortunately could not attend, as he was out of the country filming, while military historian Correlli Barnett also sent us a generous message of support.

In the end, though fewer than 50 people attended the London conference, it still proved a stimulating event. Among the speakers, veteran peace campaigner Dr. James Thring talked of the illegal nature of the war in Iraq; William Spring, of Christians Against NATO Aggression, spoke on the way both Blair and Bush had misappropriated the Christian message; Adolfo Olavechea, a London-based human-rights activist addressed the need to attract the support of the Britain’s traditional conservative establishment; I spoke of the challenge of countering the disproportionate influence of the war lobby in the British and American media.

We went away in high spirits: at least a start of some sorts had been made. Our spirits rose even higher when we saw that the idea for a new realignment seemed to be gaining support on both sides of the Atlantic. “Those who want to save the country, whatever party they are now trapped in, should begin, now, to consider the formation of a new movement that will give voice to the millions who look from one corner of the House of Commons to another, but can see hardly anyone who understands their fears or knows their needs,” declared Peter Hitchens, the authentic voice of British conservatism, in the *Mail on Sunday* one month later.

Across the pond, websites like Antiwar.com and Counterpunch were also starting to sing from the same hymn sheet. "A few principled leftists realize that they need to broaden the appeal of the movement to oppose the war and that the only reliable allies they can hope for come from the anti-interventionist Right," argued Antiwar's Justin Raimondo. "If the left can ever reach out to this [populist, antiwar] right, we'll have something," was the view of Counterpunch's Alexander Cockburn.

The move towards a historic Left-Right realignment, though gathering momentum in cyberspace, was still not reflected in the official antiwar movement. In Britain, Stop the War had done a tremendous job in getting the people on the streets in the two big pre-war demonstrations but under the influence of groups such as the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party seemed reluctant to take the next logical step. The Respect Party, founded by renegade left-wing politician George Galloway in 2004 after his expulsion from the Labour Party also failed to achieve a breakthrough. Instead of pitching his appeal as widely as possible to transcend class, race, and political affiliation, Galloway went for the Muslim inner city—a strategy that provided him with a seat in Parliament at the last general election and a launch pad for a lucrative media career but that failed to make Messrs. Perle, Frum, and Feith lose too much sleep. Last year, though, there were encouraging signs that Stop the War was beginning to grasp the need for a radical departure. The group's chairman, Andrew Murray, wrote to me to ask if I would be able to help find conservative speakers for the antiwar rally planned for that September.

Only bad luck prevented us from pulling it off. Former Defence Minister Lord Ian Gilmour injured his back and was unable to take part; Dr. John Laugh-

land, a regular contributor to these pages, was away on his honeymoon; and Peter Hitchens, although in principle in favor of a new realignment, had reservations about the pro-multicultural nature of the event and its attempt to link the antiwar struggle with the issue of Palestine.

Also in 2005, there was an exciting new development in Boston: the formation of the Anti-War League, with its mission "to mobilize opponents from every corner of the political spectrum against the plans of our Republican rulers for perpetual war." The league, under its energetic organizer Doug Fuda, has plans to set up chapters across America and campaigns not just for the return of U.S. troops from Iraq but for the dismantling of what it calls the "highly centralized war-making power of the federal government." Of similar mind, San Francisco's Stephen Pender, writing in Antiwar.com, argued that the Anti-Imperialist League, which formed in opposition to the U.S. aggression against the Philippines in 1898, could be the blueprint for a new cross-party antiwar movement. "One can begin to see the outlines of a movement in which ordinary persons of conscience from left, center, and right can coalesce around specific issues against the neocons," he wrote.

As we pass the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, it is time to bring all these new, positive approaches and ideas, under the umbrella of one transatlantic organization. In time, the group can extend to other countries and become a truly international antiwar movement, but first and foremost the most pressing task is to reclaim our own democracies as it is our governments, not those of Belgium, Bolivia, or Thailand, that pose the greatest threats to peace. This Peace Party would not be a party in the traditional sense of the term—it would not put candidates forward for public office—but a high-profile pressure group where all opponents

of war would feel at home, regardless of their views on abortion, public ownership, smoking in public places, or capital punishment. Affiliated organizations would be able to keep their own identities and individual programs but would agree to co-operate on a mutually agreed set of common principles.

The principles would, I suggest, be the following: the rejection of all forms of imperialism, whether they fly under a military, financial, or human-rights banner; opposition to the international rule of money power and global corporate governance; support for the rule of international law, national sovereignty, and the principles of the U.N. Charter; opposition to the War Party's attempts to curtail our age-old civil liberties under the pretext of the war on terror; and last, but certainly not least, rejection of war as a method of solving international disputes. For anyone who agreed with most of these points—whether a disciple of Ayn Rand or Karl Marx, Russell Kirk or Tony Benn, Jesus Christ or Mahatma Gandhi, the Dali Lama or Lew Rockwell—the Peace Party would be a home.

"A Left-Right alliance of viscerally antiwar liberals and nationalist America First conservatives will naturally evolve over time as the horrible consequences of this war come home to roost: they will find themselves moving ineluctably toward one another, in program if not in spirit. The only problem is that, by that time, it will be too late," predicted Justin Raimondo in 2003. Of course, it would have been better if an antiwar Left-Right alliance had been forged a long time ago. But with those who planned the disastrous invasion of Iraq, now clamoring for what would be an even more calamitous military confrontation with its more powerful neighbor, it's still not too late for us to make a difference. ■

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Twilight in America

THE BUSH REGIME currently has wars underway in Afghanistan and in Iraq and can bring neither to a conclusion. Undeterred by these failures, the administration gives every indication that it intends to start a war with Iran, a country that is capable of responding to U.S. aggression over a broader front than the Sunni resistance has mounted in Iraq.

The U.S. lacks sufficient conventional capability to prevail in such widespread conflict. The U.S. also lacks the financial resources. Iraq alone has already cost several hundred billion borrowed dollars, with experts' estimates putting the ultimate cost in excess of one trillion dollars.

Moreover, Bush's belligerent foreign policy extends to regions beyond the Middle East, with the administration recently declaring election outcomes in former Soviet republics "unacceptable."

These "unacceptable" outcomes are those that do not empower parties aligned with the U.S. and NATO. Russians view the Bush regime's "democracy programs" for Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus as an effort to push Russia northward and deprive it of warm-water ports. Russian leaders speak of the "messianism of American foreign policy" leading to a new cold war.

An article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* concludes that the Bush regime "is openly seeking primacy in every dimension of modern military technology, both in its conventional arsenal and in its nuclear forces." The article suggests that the U.S. has now achieved nuclear superiority and could succeed with a pre-emptive nuclear attack on both Russia and China. Considering the extreme delusions of the neoconservative warmongers, the publication of this article will encourage more aggressive assertions of American hegemony.

The article has "had an explosive effect" in Russia, according to former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar. The fact that Russia's nuclear missiles are no longer seen to be sufficiently robust to serve as deterrents could dangerously unleash restraints on the neoconservatives' proclivity to impose their will on the world. The authors of the *Foreign Policy* article write that America's nuclear primacy positions us "to check the ambitions of dangerous states such as China, North Korea, and Iran." Neocons, of course, never see their own ambitions as dangerous.

The Bush administration has committed America to a foreign policy that means years of wars and likely pre-emptive U.S. nuclear attacks against other countries. How will Americans pay for the decades of war that the neocons are fomenting? The Afghan and Iraqi wars are being financed by the Chinese and Japanese, whose loans cover our budgetary red ink. Can U.S. nuclear primacy succeed in forcing the indefinite extension of this financing as a form of tribute? Can the neoconservatives subdue the Islamic Middle East with nuclear weapons without endangering the flow of oil?

We might have nuclear primacy, but we no longer have economic primacy. The U.S. economy has been living on debt. In 2005, American consumers overspent their incomes for the first time since the Great Depression. The rising trade deficit is cutting into economic growth. Middle-class jobs for Americans are being lost to offshore outsourcing and to foreigners brought in on work visas. Salaries in the jobs that remain are being forced down. *Business Week's* Michael Mandel compared starting salaries in 2005 with those in 2001. He found a 12.7 percent decline in computer-

science pay, a 12 percent decline in computer-engineering pay, and a 10.2 percent decline in electrical-engineering pay.

Economist Alan Blinder, a former vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve, estimates that 42-56 million American service-sector jobs are susceptible to offshore outsourcing. Whether or not all of these jobs leave, U.S. salaries will be forced down by the willingness of foreigners to do the work for less.

By substituting cheaper foreign labor for American labor, globalization boosts corporate profits and managerial bonuses at the expense of workers' pay. We are seeing the end of the broadly shared prosperity of the post-World War II era.

Americans at the lower end of the income scale are being decimated by massive legal and illegal immigration that has dramatically increased the labor supply in construction, cleaning services, and slaughterhouses.

With incomes flat or falling and prices rising, increased taxation to finance the neoconservatives' wars of aggression is not in the cards.

The Bush administration, with the support of both political parties, preaches democracy to the world while ignoring it at home. Polls show that Americans are opposed to open borders and amnesties for illegals. But a government willing to dictate to the world is willing to dictate to its own citizens. We are witnessing the American citizen's loss of his voice and the rise of concentrated power. The primacy that the neocons are seeking over the world will prevail over the American people, too. ■

Paul Craig Roberts was assistant secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. Copyright Creators Syndicate, Inc.