

War Without End

by [Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.](#)

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George Bush, famous for outlandish claims that have no bearing on reality, has outdone himself by claiming that the problem with Vietnam was that the U.S. withdrew its troops rather than fighting harder and longer.

In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he didn't say how long the U.S. should have stayed, but he did claim that the reason for the bloodshed in Cambodia, and the prison camps in Vietnam following withdrawal, was not the war itself, but the failure to continue the war without end.

Presumably, then, if Bush were president for life back then, we would still be in Vietnam, the draft would still be in place, and the bloodshed would have continued for decades.

My, what a vision! You might think this is madness. In fact, it is the *reductio ad absurdum* of a particular worldview that he and his friends have adopted.

Along the same lines, a few years ago, William Bennett, the former drug czar turned hyper-gambler, said that we shouldn't have abandoned alcohol prohibition. It was working just fine. And after it was repealed, drinking went up. Had we stayed the course, he said, we would be a healthier and more moral society.

Many on the left say we should not have abandoned the 55mph speed limit. Things were going just fine. The repeal has made our roads less safe and increased people's dedication to the car and made us more

dependent on foreign oil.

Maybe we shouldn't have backed away from 90% income tax rates. Now the rich get richer, as less of their earnings are tossed to the wind.

Maybe we can do the same about the wage and price controls as during Hoover's and FDR's New Deals – why the heck did we abandon the war on low prices? The same goes for wage and price controls under Nixon in the early seventies – why did we just walk away from the war on high prices?

For that matter, let's go back to the Civil War, especially given the numbers of Confederate flags that still fly outside rural homes south of the Mason Dixon line. The military occupation and anti-insurgency was going well, and what did we do? We cut and ran, and left a whole region to languish in racism and hate.

It's interesting how those who believe in force as an article of faith eventually go the whole way, believing that the lessening of force is never the answer, and that all the problems in the world call for one and only one answer: ever more scary threats of violence. Force, for this crowd, is the great organizing principle of society, the answer to all existing problems now, in the past, and in the future. It becomes for them the overriding social and political salve, and there are no considerations that can possibly refute this contention.

We saw the extreme result of this mentality in the Soviet Union, which pursued the path of force for 72 years, and blamed all existing failures not on socialism but on the failure to impose this system without any misgivings or regrets. A dictator with ultimate power can impose such a system until the whole of society crumbles into a heap, and still not be willing to face the errors of his ways. Force is an article of faith. To embrace freedom means to concede the limits of power.

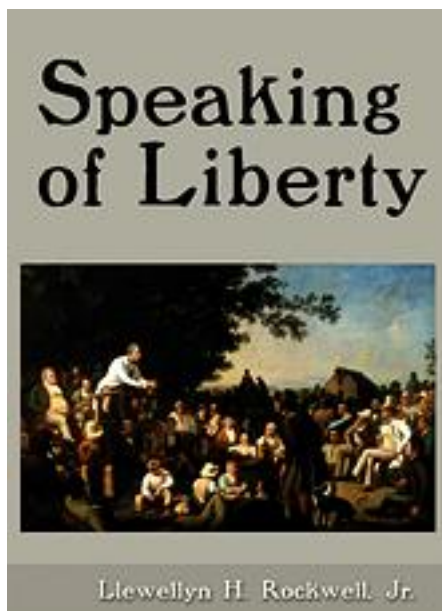
In the case of Vietnam, there would have been no such thing as the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia had the U.S. not embraced Pol Pot. In the same way, al-Qaeda got its start during the Cold War because the U.S. saw the radical Islamicists as anti-communist allies. The extremists in Afghanistan were once seen as glorious freedom fighters. Their training camps, guns, and furnished caves were provided courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer.

So it is in Iraq today. After the U.S. overthrew Saddam's government, the plan was to jump-start a new central government under U.S. control. That's when the fighting started. What group would control it? There is no answer to that question, even today. The U.S. has always thought the Shiites should run the show, religious law and all. But that plan hasn't worked out.

On the day that Bush delivered his speech about the coming dawn in Iraq, 15 Americans died in combat. Another 11 were seriously wounded from a suicide bomb. On the Iraqi side, 154 died and another 175 were wounded. The death parade marched through Baiji, Baghdad, Tikrit, Iskandariya, Hawija, Flaifel, and Tal Afar. The mayor of al-Kharba was assassinated.

This was in one day! Now, to the critical question that vexes all political and social science: why? I don't mean the proximate cause. I mean the ultimate cause. If you are Bush, the answer comes as a matter of faith: these unruly people need more force. When that doesn't work, the answer is additional force. When that doesn't work, we need more force still. And so on, war without end.

There is no refuting these claims since the matter of cause and effect requires a slightly complicated set of deductions. It is the same with all matters of government control. It was prohibition of the alcohol trade, not alcohol itself, that generated violence. It was price controls, not the market pressure for high and low prices, that caused economic problems. It was the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit that made criminals out of 100% of drivers, not the normal propensity to want to get where you are going at a reasonable speed.



And so it is with Iraq. The desire to get rid of the foreign military occupier is a universal feature of political history. To recognize the failure of force is to admit that the state cannot accomplish all that it claims it can accomplish. It is to admit the big lie. Doing so requires humility, a willingness to own up to mistakes, a desire to face reality and to think about the long term. These are traits that the state and its managers do not possess in large

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supply. Witness: George Bush.

No, Iraq will not blossom like a rose garden the day after U.S. troops leave. There will be bloodshed, and how much we cannot know. But the critical thing is that these people will be governing themselves, and the critical thing that prevents progress today – the presence of the foreign occupier – will be gone. The solution is imperfect, to be sure, but it is better than the opposite of turning the entire world into a prison camp run by the U.S. government.



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