

## Foreign Policy

### **SIGNIFICANCE (OR LACK THEREOF) OF THE MIDDLE EAST:**

*Excerpts from Edward Luttwak, The Middle of Nowhere, Prospect Magazine, May 2000*

....Humanitarians should note that the dead from Jewish-Palestinian fighting since 1921 amount to fewer than 100,000-about as many as are killed in a season of conflict in Darfur.

Strategically, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been almost irrelevant since the end of the cold war. And as for the impact of the conflict on oil prices, it was powerful in 1973 when the Saudis declared embargoes and cut production, but that was the first and last time that the "oil weapon" was wielded. For decades now, the largest Arab oil producers have publicly foresworn any linkage between politics and pricing, and an embargo would be a disaster for their oil-revenue dependent economies. In any case, the relationship between turmoil in the middle east and oil prices is far from straightforward....And global dependence on middle eastern oil is declining: today the region produces under 30 per cent of the world's crude oil, compared to almost 40 per cent in 1974-75. In 2005 17 per cent of American oil imports came from the Gulf, compared to 28 per cent in 1975, and President Bush used his 2006 state of the union address to announce his intention of cutting US oil imports from the middle east by three quarters by 2025.

The ... greatest error repeated by middle east experts of all persuasions,... is also the simplest to define. It is the very odd belief that these ancient nations are highly malleable. Hardliners keep suggesting that with a bit of well-aimed violence ("the Arabs only understand force") compliance will be obtained. But what happens every time is an increase in hostility; defeat is followed not by collaboration, but by sullen non-cooperation and active resistance too. It is not hard to defeat Arab countries, but it is mostly useless. Violence can work to destroy dangerous weapons but not to induce desired changes in behaviour.

.... The scientific and technological and cultural backwardness of the lands of Islam generates a constantly renewed sense of humiliation and of civilisational defeat. That fully explains the ubiquity of Muslim violence, and reveals the futility of the palliatives urged by the softliners.

That brings us to the mistake that the rest of us make. We devote far too much attention to the middle east, a mostly stagnant region where almost nothing is created in science or the arts-excluding Israel, per capita patent production of countries in the middle east is one fifth that of sub-Saharan Africa.... Saudi Arabia's 27m inhabitants also live largely off the oil revenues that trickle down to them, leaving most of the work to foreign technicians and labourers: even with high oil prices, Saudi Arabia's annual per capita income, at \$14,000, is only about half that of oil-free Israel.

The middle east was once the world's most advanced region, but these days its biggest industries are extravagant consumption and the venting of resentment. According to the UN's 2004 Arab human development report, the region boasts the second lowest adult literacy rate in the world (after sub-Saharan Africa) at just 63 per cent. Its dependence on oil means that manufactured goods account for just 17 per cent of exports, compared to a global average of 78 per cent.

Moreover, despite its oil wealth, the entire middle east generated under 4 per cent of global GDP in 2006-less than Germany. Unless compelled by immediate danger, we should therefore focus on the old and new lands of creation in Europe and America, in India and east Asia-places where hard-working populations are looking ahead instead of dreaming of the past.

### **UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

*Excerpt from Victor Davis Hanson, The World's New Outlaws, National Review Online, 3 December 2013*

The American custodianship of the postwar world for the last 70 years is receding. Give it its due: The American super-presence ensured the destruction of Axis fascism, led to the eventual defeat of Soviet-led global Communism, and spearheaded the effort to thwart the ability of radical Islam to disrupt global commerce in general and Western life in particular. American military power and bipartisan proactive diplomacy also brought back Japan and Germany into the family of nations and allowed their dynamism to be expressed through economic rather than military power. It protected the territorial integrity of smaller and weaker nations. It guaranteed open seas, free commerce, and reliable and safe global transportation. Without a free-market U.S. economy, NATO, and American military power there would have been no globalization.

In contrast, the world that Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, Stalin and his successors, and bin Laden and the Islamists envisioned was quite a bit different. Regional enclaves would have their own laws and protocols overseen by local hegemony immune from global scrutiny.

### **IS THE UNITED STATES' ECONOMY INCAPABLE OF SUSTAINING INTERVENTIONS & ALLIANCES?**

*Excerpt from Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of Great Powers, 1987*

Once their productive capacity was enhanced, countries would normally find it easier to sustain the burdens of paying for large scale armaments in peacetime and of maintaining and supplying large armies and fleets in wartime. It sounds crudely mercantilistic to express it this way, but wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth. If, however, too large a proportion of the state's resources is diverted from wealth creation and allocated instead to military purposes, then that is likely to lead to a weakening of national power over the longer term. In the same way, if a state overextends itself strategically-by, say, the conquest of extensive territories or the waging of costly wars-it runs the risk that the potential benefits from external expansion may be outweighed by the great expense of it all-a dilemma which becomes acute if the nation concerned has entered a period of relative economic decline. The history of the rise and later fall of the leading countries in the Great Power system since the advance of western Europe in the sixteenth century-that is, of nations such as Spain, the Netherlands, France, the British Empire, and currently the United States-shows a very

significant correlation over the longer term between productive and revenue- raising capacities on the one hand and military strength on the other (*xv-xvi; First Vintage edition; see also p. 539*).

Summary of other points made in his book:

There have been a few times in recent centuries, when one powerful European state was trying to dominate Europe. Spain and Austria were under one (Habsburg) monarchy in the early 1500s, which was also ruling southern Italy, as well as the wealthy Spanish American empire. They fought France, Britain, the Dutch, Sweden, and various German states. This struggle lasted off and on from 1521 to 1659. The second major attempt at European domination was that of Louis XIV of France. This took place from 1701 to 1713. France and Spain fought Britain, the Netherlands, and many German states. The third major attempt was by revolutionary France, from the 1790s until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. France during those wars fought Britain, Austria, Prussia (a very powerful German state), and Russia.

One major theme stands out in each of these phases: the power of a coalition. Each Great Power trying to dominate Europe, was opposed by a coalition of smaller, weaker states. But when these states united into a coalition, their economic and military power was much greater than the Great Power that they fought. Even later attempts (Germany in World War II, and the USSR against NATO) show the power of economic strength in a coalition.

The economic strength of wartime opponents is very important, as it reflected not only the ability to manufacture ships and weapons, but the ability to pay for them, as well as the armies and navies that used them. These wars could easily cripple an economy. Using the Habsburg rulers of Spain and Austria as an example, one campaign in Germany in 1552 cost the Emperor Charles V 2.5 million ducats—ten times the royal taxes from the American silver mines. In 1557, both France and Spain were forced to declare bankruptcy. The Armada that sailed from Spain to attack England in 1588 cost 10 million ducats (by then, royal taxes of American silver were 2 million ducats a year). In 1596, and again in 1607, Spain defaulted on its debt, which was now 100 million ducats, and two thirds of royal revenues were going to pay the interest alone on this debt.

### **Criticisms:**

1. Kennedy's idea that the strongest economies usually win major wars, suggests the construction of alliances and coalitions. It is not simply "What country has the wealthiest economy?" but "Who can weave together the wealthiest coalitions?" But as soon as we start asking this second question, in addition to calculating the strength of the US economy, we also can take into account the EU (part of the NATO alliance), as well as Japan and South Korea, our allies in the Pacific.
2. His analysis (published in 1987) of current rising and falling powers was flat out wrong. He saw the US as falling faster than the USSR was, but still spoke of a bipolar world (a world with two Great Powers) for the future.
3. He realized that US military spending has gone down since the 1950s (in terms of percentage of overall GDP), but didn't explain how US military spending would still drain the US economy. He insisted on seeing the US as an overextended Great Power, but not as a leader of a very wealthy coalition.