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## **The Costs and Madness of Empire**

**by Richard M. Ebeling**

The costs of the American Empire become clearer with each passing day, as the U.S. government releases information about its various global actions and plans. The latest ones relate to the ongoing Muslim insurgency movement in the Philippines and the outlines for the making of a new Iraq after a victorious war.

On February 20, 2003, the U.S. government announced that it was sending almost 2,000 troops to the southern islands of the Philippines to undertake combat operations against a Muslim extremist group called the Abu Sayyaf. Unlike 1,300 U.S. military “advisors” who were temporarily in the Philippines last year, this new force will remain there indefinitely until the Abu Sayyaf guerrillas are defeated. And they are assigned the specific task of searching and destroying, alongside Philippine military units.

Why are American army, marine, and special-operations forces being sent into harm’s way in a remote part of Southeast Asia? Because, according to Pentagon officials, the Abu Sayyaf is thought to have formed ties with other terrorist groups in the region, and the intervention is meant to send a message that the United States can invade Iraq and simultaneously track down and defeat terrorists anywhere in the world. The long arms of America envelope the entire globe at all times.

In announcing the deployment of U.S. forces in the Philippines, the government did not include any estimate of the financial cost of stationing combat forces and related military support personnel in the surrounding area. Nor did the government suggest how long it might take to eliminate the Abu Sayyaf forces, which are estimated to number around 250–500 men on the island of Jolo. And neither was there any hint of the likelihood of possible American casualties or how much or for how long the United States was willing to ratchet up its military participation if the enemy resisted being defeated.

In the name of demonstrating the American “will” and “ability” to strike anywhere and at anytime in the world, the U.S. government has injected combat forces into an indigenous civil war that has been ongoing in the southern islands of the Philippines for decades. Indeed, Muslim

groups first took up arms against American military forces in the same part of the country a hundred years ago, at the beginning of the 20th century, when the United States was establishing its control over the Philippines immediately following the Spanish-American War of 1898.

How many wives and mothers in America will now constantly worry whether they will ever see their husbands or sons alive or whole again simply so some policymakers in Washington, D.C., can rest easy at night, knowing they have “made a point” to some illusive and ambiguous “enemy” somewhere “out there”?

And even before President Bush has formally announced that he is ordering an American military conquest and occupation of Iraq, the blueprints are being constructed for socially engineering the postwar redesign of the country’s political, social, and economic institutions. The United States will maintain total and unilateral military and civilian control over Iraq, once the war has ended, for at least two years, and in the estimates of some military analysts perhaps for as many as five years.

To ensure that the Iraqi people view the American forces as liberators and not conquerors, immediately behind the combat soldiers will be military personnel who will be distributing food and other essential items. Once Iraq has been “secured,” an American “of stature” will be appointed by the president as “supreme civil authority” to begin the task of reconstructing and redesigning the country into a post-Saddam Western-style democracy. After the Iraqi military, police, and bureaucratic structures have been purged of war criminals and other accomplices of the Saddam Hussein regime, the “cleansed” elements will make up the personnel of the new domestic security and civilian governmental institutions.

The United States will also see to it that no “undesirable” political forces interfere with the American design for the new Iraq. The Kurds in the north of the country will be prevented from declaring their independence, and any groups too closely tied with either Iran or Saudi Arabia will be prevented from wielding any influence or power in the new Iraq. Nor will Iraqi exile groups be permitted to immediately contribute to the redesigning of their own country. They will be allowed only to offer “advice” in a limited capacity to the American supreme military and civilian rulers.

Make no mistake about it: this is global central planning by a “conservative” Republican administration. The central planners in the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department are deciding what is good and right for the 24 million people of Iraq.

Just like Stalin, who decided the fate of numerous ethnic and national groups in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s through heavy-handed top-down rule, the U.S. government, in its own wisdom, will determine whether the Kurds of northern Iraq will be permitted autonomy of some sort. They most certainly will not be allowed independence, for fear that it might undermine the long-time policy of the Turkish government of repressing their own Kurdish minority.

President Bush and his circle of wise men in the administration will decide what type of parliamentary system best fits their conception of the needs of the Iraqi people. They will determine who and what groups may participate in the political processes of their own country, and when and under what terms. They will dictate how the revenues of the Iraqi oil fields will be used for domestic purposes and for defraying U.S. expenses to bring them an American-designed version of freedom.

And it is a sure bet that in operating the oil fields of Iraq and distributing the funds from the oil sales, it will be done purely as a socialist enterprise. That is, the oil fields will be owned and operated as a government entity. There will be as little talk of privatizing the oil fields of Iraq as there is of privatizing Social Security or education by the Bush administration within the United States.

The ancient Greeks said that those the gods would destroy they first drove mad. Those in the upper decision-making echelons of the Bush administration are mad with the hubris of power. They dream dreams of remaking entire regions of the world in their own image. They conceive of peoples and nations as so many pieces on a chessboard to arrange and rearrange according to a shape and design they consider best and desirable. And they have hallucinations that they know better than the multitudes of humanity what is in their best interest.

Madmen also have bizarre ways of seeing connections and conspiracies among people and events where, in fact, none exist. Everyone is seen as being against them and threatening what they hold most dear. And they hear voices that tell them what “history” or “destiny” or “God” dictates they do, and all for the good of others.

When such madmen have political power, the end results have almost always been tragedy and destruction for the millions for whom they claim to want only the best. The United States, it seems, may be the next example of this terrible phenomenon.

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**This article was originally published in February 2003 by The Future of Freedom Foundation.**