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**Preface to *The Failure of America's Foreign Wars***  
**by Jacob G. Hornberger**

*The following is the preface to **The Failure of America's Foreign Wars**, published by The Future of Freedom Foundation in 1996.*

The twentieth century has been the era of the social engineer. Regardless of the labels the social engineer has chosen to use at various times and in different places—communism, socialism, fascism, Nazism, social liberalism, welfare statism, interventionism, one-worldism—they all have added up to the same thing: individuals and society are to be reshaped and designed according to the specifications of the social engineer.

The presumption is that individuals—left to themselves, in peaceful and free interaction with their fellow men—will create social outcomes less desirable and more harmful than if society is made to conform to the pattern the social engineer has constructed for it. The social engineer claims to know the “real needs” of the people far better than those people themselves. He is confident that he understands the “real causes” of human problems and conflicts much better than most people because those people are misguided by ignorance or blinded by their own narrow, selfish interests.

And the social engineer is positive that he knows the “real” or “better” solutions to the difficulties and tragedies of the human condition, in comparison with the solutions individuals might find within themselves and in voluntary agreement, compromise, and association with their fellow men.

Since men in society often choose to act and associate in ways different from how the social engineer thinks they should, the engineer turns to the state as the vehicle to make people conform to his plan for them. Through the power of the state, the social engineer tries to remake the institutions of society, redirect human behavior, into channels he thinks are better, and redistribute the social outcomes into the patterns that he considers to be superior.

In its more brutal and comprehensive form, social engineering has led to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany and the Gulag in the Soviet Union. In both these societies, the individual

was stripped of all human autonomy and personal dignity. In the Western countries, it has led to extensive economic regulation, income redistribution, the undermining of the traditional institutions of civil society (the family, freedom of association, community-oriented self-help), and moral paternalism by the state. Here, too, the individual's sense of personal independence and moral responsibility have been weakened, as the state and its bureaucracies have asserted authority over increasing corners of everyone's life.

In a century dominated by the vision of the social engineer, it should have come as no surprise that international relations and global conflicts would be influenced by the same ideas that guided the domestic affairs of the nations of the world. Both the Russian revolutionary vanguards of the bright, new, communist future and the German racial purist of the National Socialist new order in Europe could not stop themselves at their own borders. Marxian ideology required the reshaping of the class relationships in every society around the world. Nazi doctrine required the hierarchical subordination of inferior peoples to a master race.

America, too, had its global calling, according to the social engineers. America should not merely be a "beacon of freedom" that would be, through its allegiance to its traditional principles of individual liberty and a free, self-governing society, an example and a model for multitudes of others in other lands living in tyranny and yearning to breathe free. No, this older, nineteenth-century conception of America's contribution to the betterment of the world was discarded in the twentieth century. According to Woodrow Wilson, it was to make the world safe for democracy; according to Franklin Roosevelt, it was to give the world a New Deal; according to every president since World War II, it was to supply "leadership" and to be a global policeman in the name of the "free world" against totalitarian tyranny.

The social engineers thrust America into the global bonfires of the insanities. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were sacrificed on the altar of two world wars and several regional conflicts in the name of world peace. Traditional American freedoms were restricted or sometimes lost in the name of national security. The honest, hard-earned wealth of millions of Americans were taxed away and consumed in military combat, war preparedness, and foreign-aid giveaways to socialist and interventionist governments and to third-world despots willing to declare their loyalty to the West for the right price.

In the name of "freedom," the U.S. government trained the secret police of other countries in the fine art of surveillance interrogation—techniques that many governments in those countries then used against their own citizens and in matters having nothing to do with "fighting communism." The U.S. government overthrew other governments and gave moral sanction to the assassination of foreign leaders and the execution of the "politically unreliable." In the name of the "free enterprise," the U.S. government subsidized public works projects, financed nationalized industries to various parts of the world, and participated in compulsory land redistributions.

In the eyes of the social engineers, all of these policies were necessary at the time and essential for the fulfillment of America's active participation in the world. Peoples in other lands did not realize that their backward traditions and institutions were breeding grounds for the enemies of global freedom. They had to be coerced into new ways for their own good and that of the rest of the world. Foreign governments would not follow American global leadership and had to be threatened or bribed to do so. Many Americans were too ignorant to understand that the only way to fight communism was to foster mild socialism and welfare redistributivism—and that their incomes would have to be taxed to pay for these farseeing, progressive policies.

Even now, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism, the American social engineers continue with their calls for American globalism. Before, America had to be actively involved politically and militarily in the world because, it was argued, there was no other major power to stand up to the Soviet threat. Now, when the Soviet Union is gone, it is argued that America is the only “superpower” left on the face of the earth and that the world needs the United States to provide political and military leadership to prevent regional conflicts and global chaos. It seems that no matter how much the world may change, the social engineers can always unearth new rationales for their continuing desire to meddle in other people's affairs, whether at home or abroad.

It is time to commit the social engineer and his meddling mentality to the dustbin of history. Social engineering at home has long shown its moral and practical bankruptcy. Woodrow Wilson's New Freedoms, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, Harry Truman's Fair Deal, John F. Kennedy's New Frontier, and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society did not make America a freer country, a more just society, or a more prosperous nation. Their planning schemes and interventionist programs politicized American society, diminished the freedoms of the American people, perpetuated poverty, and created new political favoritism.

Nor have America's global meddling and foreign interventionist adventures made the world free or secure. Woodrow Wilson's intervention in World War I helped to create the conditions for the old order in Europe to be replaced with communism in Russia, fascism in Italy, and eventually Hitler and Nazism in Germany. Franklin Roosevelt's intervention in World War II replaced Nazi tyranny with Soviet domination and terror in half of Europe; and it substituted Japanese imperialism in East Asia with the communist conquest of China as well as Marxist regimes in half of Korea and Vietnam. Having helped create the conditions for communist victory in those land, the United States then found itself fighting two bloody wars in Asia in the post-World War II era—against the very tyrannies its earlier intervention had helped to bring to power. In both the Korean and Vietnam wars, the communists prevailed against the American social engineers and their sophisticated “fine-tuning” conceptions of “limited war” and “controlled escalation.”

And so far in the new post-Cold War era, the social engineers continue to try to make the world over in their own image through military intervention in Panama, the Middle East, Somalia, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. In Panama, one corrupt regime was merely substituted for another, although one more to the liking of the people in Washington; in the Middle East, an undemocratic government was reestablished in Kuwait, and the same tyrant continued rule in Baghdad after American airpower successfully killed thousands of unfortunate Iraqi soldiers and civilians; Somalia has returned to the same clan conflict that prevailed before U.N. intervention under U.S. military leadership; in Haiti, a brutal regime has been replaced by another, headed by a mentally unstable closet Marxist; and in the former Yugoslavia, the United States and its European allies bomb those they label aggressors and send tens of thousands of their military forces to Bosnia as “peacemakers” in a conflict that is grounded in centuries-old animosities between ethnic and religious groups who possess no refined notion of individual liberty, private property rights, or the Western idea of the rule of law.

The social engineer’s typical response is to argue that the outcomes were better than if America had remained in its archaic isolation of the past and that the social engineers have always meant well—that they had “good intentions. It’s just that things got out of hand—or that other peoples and governments would not go along with the peace plan—or that the wrong people were in charge—or that they had not had enough of other people’s money to make it turn out all right—or ...

Of course, we can never know for certain what would have happened if the United States had not undertaken the foreign interventionist path it followed in the twentieth century. That always must remain speculative “what if” history. But it is no different from any retrospective evaluation that any of us makes in deciding, as best we can, whether we have made the right choices and followed the best courses of action—when we take stock of the things we’ve done and try to decide whether there are things we can learn from our past actions so as to not make the same types of mistakes in the future.

If the British had not been convinced that Woodrow Wilson would finally bring America into the First World War, isn’t it possible that the belligerents might have settled from some type of compromise peace in 1916 or early 1917? Perhaps, then, we would have been saved from the scourge that followed from the successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia at the end of 1917. Perhaps the post-war conditions in Germany would have been significantly different, possibly preventing Hitler from coming to power.

If Churchill had not worked so hard for American intervention in the Second world War, and if Franklin Roosevelt had not been so driven to bring America into the war, isn’t it possible that there might have been a compromise peace signed in the summer of 1940? Yes, it would have left Hitler in power in the center of Europe for the time being, but, maybe, the Nazis would have been able to avail themselves of their original “final solution” to the “Jewish problem,” which was

to expel the Jews in Europe to Madagascar. Even as barbaric as that would have been, would it not have been a better “solution” than the reality of the death camps? And if Hitler still had then turned east against his partner-in-crime—Stalin—and attacked the Soviet Union, might not, maybe, the two totalitarian giants have exhausted and destroyed themselves, leaving the door open for the peoples occupied by both the Nazis and the Soviets to eventually free themselves? If Roosevelt had been more willing to find a compromise with Japan in 1941, isn’t it possible that the attack on Pearl Harbor might never have occurred? Yes, any such compromise in East Asia probably would have left Japan in a strong position, but such a compromise might have ended the Japanese war in China; and, maybe, China, not reduced to that state of political and economic chaos as actually existed in the period right after 1945, might not have been conquered by the Chinese communists under Mao Zedong.

Who can say with any high degree of certainty that this “alternative history” would have been impossible or worse than the one actually experienced? The fundamental delusion of the social engineer is his unswerving confidence that he knows how to set the world right, regardless of the expense to others or the consequences for society as a whole. The twentieth century had demonstrated what a fantasy his belief really is.

This century of the social engineer is coming to an end. Another century is right before us. It is time to change course. It is time to find our way back to the path of individual liberty, limited government, and nonintervention in both domestic and foreign affairs. The Future of Freedom Foundation exists to help in this endeavor to return America back to its original noninterventionist roots.

The essays in the present volume, *The Failure of America’s Foreign Wars*, critically evaluate the path the United States has followed over the last century. They explain the ideas that have drawn America into numerous wars and conflicts around the world and analyze the disastrous consequences that have resulted from these foreign adventures. And they articulate an alternative vision of a foreign policy more consistent with the premises of a free society. Most of the essays originally appeared in the pages of The Future of Freedom Foundation’s monthly publication, *Freedom Daily*. They have been brought together in the hope that they can assist in bringing about that freer and better world that can be ours in the twenty-first century.

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