

Lessons of the Gulf War

by Murray N. Rothbard

Every war supplies us with lessons we must learn. There were the lessons of Munich and the lessons of Vietnam. It is not too early for us to learn the lessons of the Gulf War, lest we lose the peace.

1. **War is Wonderful.** We have learned at last that war is glorious, war is wonderful. As they said about the Spanish-American war, this was a "splendid little war." Our war effort from now on can be so high-tech that no American need die in one ever again. Three times as many American soldiers died in accidents in the Gulf before the war began than during the actual fighting. Deaths among enemy soldiers and civilians are solely the fault of the Evil Enemy.

From now on, the only opponents of an American war will be traitors, yellow-bellies, Commies, neo-Nazis, and anti-Semites.

War is also a great unifier. Petty domestic problems, such as taxes, deficits, banking crises are forgotten in the great uplifting current that brings back to America a sense of unity, of belonging, of common national purpose. Those who grumble at that unity are traitors and yellow-bellies.

2. **Don't Let Them Surrender.** Too many times Americans have won a splendid war only to lose the peace. One problem is the end game, the whole problem of surrender, who we accept surrender from, on what terms, etc. During the Gulf War we approached perfection by not letting them surrender. First, we set the goal of "unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait." When Iraq accepted these terms, we complained that they didn't accept reparations, they weren't clear about coming out with their hands up, and besides, we wanted to hear it from Saddam himself. When Saddam himself complied, we raised all the above objections, and we kept bombing, or "pounding." (Hey guys, how about coming up with a synonym for "pound"? If I had a dime for every time the media used "pound," I'd be a very rich man.)

And then, when they obviously began to withdraw, we said: "*That's not 'withdrawal' (good); that's 'retreat' (bad).*"

Demanding "unconditional surrender," as we did in World War II, was great, but again we got bogged down in end-game problems. Clearly, the best strategy for the end game is never to accept any surrender at all. Let's just keep "pounding" the enemy *till nobody moves*. Let's keep it simple and clear-cut. Or to use the common American slogan of divine impatience: "Let's get it over with," or "let's finish the job." If we pound until we kill them all, until nobody moves, then we won't have to worry anymore about "losing the peace." The peace will be ours forever, the job will be finished forever.

To put a more rigorous twist on the old song:

We'll be over, We're comin' over, And we won't be back Till there's *nothin'* over there.

3. Take Over the Media. We did a great job, in the Gulf War, in censoring, curbing, and confining the media. The media lost us the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The media are a bunch of traitors, yellowbellies, etc. The media injure American morale. The media prattle about "gathering the news," and "giving us the truth." What they don't understand is that only the president deserves the truth. All public truth helps the Enemy.

The American people, thank goodness, now hate the media, with their subversion and their prying questions. The media are a bunch of individualists who won't go along with the program. Now we must finish the job. The federal government must take over the media. Issue licenses, certificates of convenience and necessity, to all media people. And if they don't knuckle under and show proper respect to the president and his officers, just pull their licenses.

What, you say this would violate the First Amendment? Rubbish. We do it now with radio and TV; the FCC can pull their licenses at any time. All we'd have to do is have the FCC show some spine. And the much-reviled Alien and Sedition Acts were never declared unconstitutional. The Supreme Court will follow the election returns.

The objective should be for all the media to be, in effect, agit-prop arms of the president and the federal government. They're mostly at that point already. Let's finish the job.

4. Abolish Congress. Congress is a pain in the neck, a bunch of quibblers and fusspots who accomplish nothing, who only obstruct and delay (sometimes) the plans of the president. As neoconservative theorists have instructed us, the president embodies in his person the entire national and public interest. The president represents each and every one of us. But Congressmen are only bogged down in petty, narrow concerns of each district or state. So let's get rid of Congress; let's finish it off.

Or rather, let's have a constitutional amendment that abolishes elections, which are at best an expensive drain on the taxpayers, and

replaces them with the best and wisest men and women appointed by the president and replaceable at his will. Then he could get the best counsel for the national interest, free of partisan, political considerations.

5. Let's Get Rid of Political Parties. We keep praising the "two-party system" without realizing that there is nothing in the Constitution that mandates parties, two or whatever. The Founding Fathers hated parties, which they called "factions." Parties are divisive, they cripple American unity, and they cost the taxpayer money by requiring elections. Besides, the Republican Party will never again lose a presidential election, and since we will get rid of Congress anyway, why not face reality? Let's combine both parties into one glorious party, call it the Democrat-Republicans, as under Jefferson, or maybe Republican-Democrats to reflect current realities. Then we'd all be united, and any disagreements could be ironed out *within* a one-party framework.

If anyone suspects that there's something dictatorial or un-American about a one-party system, think nothing of it. There is ample precedent; America had a one-party system (Democrat-Republican) from about 1815 to 1827. No one suffered; in fact, it is called by historians the Era of Good Feelings. No problem.

6. Let's Make George Bush President for Life. Everyone knows that elections are too darn frequent, forcing our leaders to turn away from their great leadership at the helm of state to worry about our petty concerns. And besides, it's expensive for the taxpayer. So we can simply make George Bush president for life, and then, when he dies or retires, we can have a glorious Democratic-Republican convention, to select his successor. What could be more truly democratic?

7. Free Up the President. If Lessons 1 to 6 were put in place, our president would then at last be free, free of the crippling restraints of Congress, of elections, and of the yellow-bellied, traitorous, etc. media. With Congress and the media united in service to the president, he would be free to unify the nation, he could write laws in the form of his own executive decrees, he could set his budget and levy his taxes (and cut the capital gains tax, by God). He would also be free to run his New World Order abroad, to obliterate the Enemy for, say, \$100 billion, and then spend another \$100 billion to rebuild the enemy lands. War and reconstruction contractors will be happy and prosperous, and this will provide plenty of jobs and keep America prosperous as well. The president will get 98-percent approval rating in the polls, which can serve as a scientific substitute for messy and grubby elections.

Some carping critics (the 2 percent yellow-bellies, etc. above – and there are always a few rotten apples in every glorious barrel) might claim that we would lose our freedom and that the president would be a dictator.

But that would be the biggest lie of them all. For we must always

remember that the president represents us, that in the deepest sense the president is us and that we are the president, and that therefore when the president is set free and is unrestrained, we are all free.