



End of an Empire

“Dictatorships start wars because they need external enemies to exert internal control over their own people” — Richard Perle¹

The spectacle of war, especially a largely one-sided war from which the viewers at home have no risk, does distract people, as Goering also knew.² And Americans do need distraction, what with the government proposing³ to:

- **cut \$475 billion** over 10 years off programs that benefit the **poor** and **middle-class** and
- give away **\$516 billion** or more in **tax cuts** to the **richest 1%** while
- the deficit goes up **\$1,900 billion**, \$400 bn this year alone, and on top of that there is the
- cost of the **Iraq War** at **\$74.7 billion** for 6 months as a minimum “down payment”⁴

Meanwhile the country is falling down the standings in everything that matters — longevity, health, fairness in general — and topping them on war and inequality. (See over for details.)

The theorists behind the war on Iraq claim to be shaping a “**New American Century**.”⁵ They are **wrong**. This crime against humanity represents the flailing of a doomed regime. The killing of Iraqis is a distraction not only from the US government’s appalling policies at home but also from the fact that, compared with the rest of the world

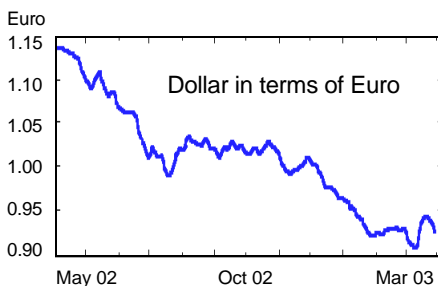


the US is weaker than ever

In 1945, the US had half the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁶ In 2001, the US had less than a third; adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), only 21.2%.⁷ Counting the EU as it soon will be, enlarged to 28 countries, the 2001 top five in GDP/PPP are:

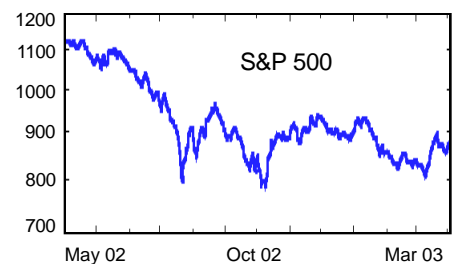
European Union	\$10,711 billion
United States	\$9,906
China	\$5,506
Japan	\$3,445
India	\$2,546

China and India are both growing fast — between 6% and 10% a year. At this rate, China would become the biggest economy in the world by 2020; it will certainly take longer than that, but the trend is unmistakable.



Meanwhile the **dollar is sinking**. The chart at left shows the dollar’s fall against the Euro over the last year.⁸ Already OPEC has been discussing pricing oil in Euros instead of dollars, which would make oil more expensive in the US if the dollar continues to fall.⁹ The US **trade deficit** is the highest ever (**\$435.2 bn** in 2002).¹⁰ Our international debt has gone from zero to **\$2.5 trillion** in fifteen years.¹¹

And don’t forget that the stock market, especially the Nasdaq, collapsed, taking many people’s pensions with it; the broader S&P 500 index (see chart at right) is still slipping.⁸ The US is not looking like a very good investment. Money talks, and it has learned to walk.



¹At American Heritage Institute, 3/25/03; *Nation*, 4/3/03 ²snopes.com/quotes/goering.htm ³Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, cbpp.org ⁴CBS 03/25/03 ⁵See newamericancentury.org ⁶Mark Harrison, ed., *The Economics of World War II* ⁷World Bank ⁸yahoo.com ⁹opec.com ¹⁰AP 2/20/03 ¹¹*Nation* 9/23/02

We have to learn to live with the rest of the world

The American system is simply not working

Aside from efforts to end affirmative action,⁹ remove environmental protections,¹⁰ deregulate overtime,¹¹ jail refugees,¹² maintain a climate of fear and shred the Bill of Rights, the government doesn't want us to know that:



- the US is **25th** in **life expectancy** at birth¹³
- the US is **1st** among developed nations in percentage of **poor people**
- the US is **31st** in avoiding **infant mortality**
- the US is **1st** among developed nations in **inequality**
- the US is **22nd** in **doctors** per capita, although **1st** in **spending** on healthcare
- the US is **last** among developed nations in **foreign aid** per capita
- the US is **1st** in **arms sales** and **military spending** (over half of all world spending)

The litany goes on and on. Americans work more hours than Europeans, and get shorter vacations. The US is the only developed country without a functioning health care system that everyone can afford. We have more people in jail, we execute people (which Europe regards as barbaric), and at the same time the US government

- *refuses* to join the **International Criminal Court**
- *refuses* to join in global efforts against **global warming**
- *refuses* to join the rest of the world in banning **landmines**
- and in general *refuses to act as a global citizen*



This isn't working. In the 1940s, we were confident enough to set up international institutions, especially the United Nations; in 2001–3, to the foolish glee of Richard Perle¹⁴ and others,¹⁵ we effectively destroyed them. Paradoxically,

this is a tremendous opportunity

The old order is manifestly failing on every level, both internationally and at home. That means it will be replaced — Perle and company are right about that — but it's not clear what will replace it, so ***we have a choice***.

We can carry on with our **failing experiment in militarism**, making our people poorer while hiring mercenaries to attack anyone who disagrees with us (already we have 30,972 non-citizens in our armed forces¹⁶). We can start yet more wars, creating conditions of hatred that fuel even more. We can become a **feudal society** of aristocrats and peasants, with corporate CEOs making millions and working people scuffling to get by. Or:

We can correct our mistakes. We can

- **withdraw** from Iraq and the rest of the Middle East and stop talking about invading **Syria** and **Iran**¹⁷
- work for reconciliation and **peace** between **Israel** and **Palestine**
- move away from the oil economy and work to **save the environment**
- **change** our domestic **priorities** to benefit not corporations but people
- recognize that the people in the rest of the **world** are our **family** not our enemies
- leave **peacekeeping** to UN forces, including Americans, even under foreign command
- help to **rebuild** the international order, accept the **global consensus** on landmines, carbon dioxide emissions, labor laws and children's rights, and sign up to the International Criminal Court, for a start



⁹NY Times, 4/2/03 ¹⁰NY Times, 3/22/03 ¹¹AP 3/27/03 ¹²SJ Mercury 3/19/03 ¹³UN Human Development Report, 2002 ¹⁴Spectator 3/22/03 ¹⁵Wash Post 3/22/03
¹⁶SF Chronicle 4/4/03 ¹⁷Newsweek 08/11/02 This flyer & more are posted at wordsontheweb.com/Peace/Iraq.html. Volunteer labor. Pete Shanks, 04/07/03

The peace movement has never been more important