

**Of Gods and Mortals and Empire**

By William Rivers Pitt

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***"To plunder, to slaughter, to steal, these things they misname empire;  
and where they make a wilderness, they call it peace."  
- Tacitus***

It sounded like two behemoth icebergs colliding in the North Atlantic, but you needed the right kind of ears to hear it. Two immensely powerful forces crashed into each other over the weekend of February 15th, and the resulting thunder has set the world to trembling.

On one side were the people, who took to the streets all across the world by the tens of millions to stand against George W. Bush's push for pre-emptive war on Iraq. The numbers, and the locations, were staggering. More than 100,000 people took to the streets of Sydney, Australia, a nation that has been solidly in Bush's corner on this matter. In Spain, another member of Bush's "Coalition of the Willing," several million protesters took over Madrid, Barcelona and 55 other cities. Italy, another Bush ally, saw over a million citizens take to the streets of Rome. Britain, Bush's go/no go ally of allies, saw over a million people protesting in London. Police there said it was the largest demonstration in that nation's long history.

The Netherlands saw one hundred thousand protesters, as did Belgium and Ireland. There were protesters by the tens of thousands in Sweden, Switzerland, Scotland, Denmark, Austria, Canada, South Africa, Mexico, Greece, Russia and Japan. 500,000 protesters demonstrated in Germany, joined by three members of Gerhard Schroder's cabinet who defied their Chancellor by being there. It was the largest demonstration ever in post-war Germany. Another 500,000 people marched in Paris and 60 other French cities.

The United States of America saw protests from coast to coast in over 100 cities nationwide. New York City was paralyzed by over a million marchers. San Francisco was taken over by well over 200,000 protesters, and Los Angeles saw over 100,000 people take to the streets. Thousands upon thousands joined them in Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami and Seattle.

This was a gathering of ordinary citizens who came together in the streets of the world in an organized event that has no precedent in all of human history. They were brought together by a global word-of-mouth activism rooted entirely in the Internet. Were it not for this planetary connection, no such coordination could have ever taken place. Once upon a time, the world wide web was a realm dominated by dreams of profit and marketing. Those dreams have soured, leaving behind a marvelous network now utilized by very average people who can, with the click of a button, bring forth from all points on the compass a roaring deluge of humanity to stand against craven injustice and ruinous war.

The weekend of February 15th saw this force ram headlong into the will of men who walk in shadow, whose hands wield lightning and steel, pestilence and famine. In their ranks stand Presidents, Prime Ministers, corporate magnates, untouchable billionaires, and the advisors who whisper to them of empire and domination. They are few in number, but life and death flows from their fingertips in freshets and gouts. These men control the armies and navies of great nations, nuclear and chemical nightmares beyond measure, unassailable technological weapons and walls, the financial cords which hold the package together, the water, the air, the oil, the law, and a global media machine by which they can obscure their designs with pleasing lies.

No mere citizen could do what these men in one moment can do with the crooking of a little finger. With a word, they can erase cities, deprive an entire populace of water and light, unleash disease and famine, annihilate the economies of dozens of nations, and imprison forever anyone who dares dissent. These men bleed, they sicken, they die, but in their time of life they can punch holes in the sky large enough to make Zeus wince with envy. Like the

millions who marched, the gathering of such fearful powers into the hands of so few is also without precedent in all of human history.

There was, among the millions who stormed the planet last weekend, a misconception that masked the true reason for their presence in the streets. A great many people believe this looming war with Iraq is about old grudges and oil. There is logic in this; Iraq has the second largest proven stores of precious petroleum in the world, and there is a definite history of malice between House Bush and House Hussein. The truth of the matter is far more broad and deep, belittling all talk of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and even oil. The men who pursue their goals by way of this war have a great many desires on their minds, and once more, they have the will to attain these goals by whatever means is required.

Were the protesters fully aware of whom they faced, a good many of them may well have fled in terror to cower in their homes. One does not lightly bait a bear with such terrible claws.

Does this all sound like some paranoid fantasy? If so, allow me to introduce The Project for the New American Century.

The Project for the New American Century, or PNAC, is a Washington-based think tank created in 1997. Above all else, PNAC desires and demands one thing: The establishment of a global American empire to bend the will of all nations. They chafe at the idea that the United States, the last remaining superpower, does not do more by way of economic and military force to bring the rest of the world under the umbrella of a new socio-economic Pax Americana.

The fundamental essence of PNAC's ideology can be found in a White Paper produced in September of 2000 entitled "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century." In it, PNAC outlines what is required of America to create the global empire they envision. According to PNAC, America must:

***\* Reposition permanently based forces to Southern Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East;***

***\* Modernize U.S. forces, including enhancing our fighter aircraft, submarine and surface fleet capabilities;***

***\* Develop and deploy a global missile defense system, and develop a strategic dominance of space;***

***\* Control the "International Commons" of cyberspace;***

***\* Increase defense spending to a minimum of 3.8 percent of gross domestic product, up from the 3 percent currently spent.***

Most ominously, this PNAC document described four "Core Missions" for the American military. The two central requirements are for American forces to "fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars," and to "perform the 'constabulary' duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions." Note well that PNAC does not want America to be *prepared* to fight simultaneous major wars. That is old school. In order to bring this plan to fruition, the military must fight these wars one way or the other to establish American dominance for all to see.

Why is this important? After all, wacky think tanks are a cottage industry in Washington, DC. They are a dime a dozen. In what way does PNAC stand above the other groups that would set American foreign policy if they could?

Two events brought PNAC into the mainstream of American government: the disputed election of George W. Bush, and the attacks of September 11th. When Bush assumed the Presidency, the men who created and nurtured the imperial dreams of PNAC became the men who run the Pentagon, the Defense Department and the White House. When the Towers came down, these men saw, at long last, their chance to turn their White Papers into substantive policy.

Vice President Dick Cheney is a founding member of PNAC, along with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Defense Policy Board chairman Richard Perle. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz is the ideological father of the group. Bruce Jackson, a PNAC director, served as a Pentagon official for Ronald Reagan before leaving government

service to take a leading position with the weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

PNAC is staffed by men who previously served with groups like Friends of the Democratic Center in Central America, which supported America's bloody gamesmanship in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and with groups like The Committee for the Present Danger, which spent years advocating that a nuclear war with the Soviet Union was "winnable."

PNAC has recently given birth to a new group, The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, which met with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in order to formulate a plan to "educate" the American populace about the need for war in Iraq. CLI has funneled millions of taxpayer dollars to support the Iraqi National Congress and the Iraqi heir presumptive, Ahmed Chalabi. Chalabi was sentenced in absentia by a Jordanian court in 1992 to 22 years in prison for bank fraud after the collapse of Petra Bank, which he founded in 1977. Chalabi has not set foot in Iraq since 1956, but his Enron-like business credentials apparently make him a good match for the Bush administration's plans.

PNAC's "Rebuilding America's Defenses" report is the institutionalization of plans and ideologies that have been formulated for decades by the men currently running American government. The PNAC Statement of Principles is signed by Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, as well as by Eliot Abrams, Jeb Bush, Bush's special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, and many others. William Kristol, famed conservative writer for the Weekly Standard, is also a co-founder of the group. The Weekly Standard is owned by Rupert Murdoch, who also owns international media giant Fox News

The desire for these freshly empowered PNAC men to extend American hegemony by force of arms across the globe has been there since day one of the Bush administration, and is in no small part a central reason for the Florida electoral battle in 2000. Note that while many have said that Gore and Bush are ideologically identical, Mr. Gore had no ties whatsoever to the fellows at PNAC. George W. Bush had to win that election by any means necessary, and PNAC signatory Jeb Bush was in the perfect position to ensure the rise to prominence of his fellow imperialists. Desire for such action, however, is by no means translatable into workable policy. Americans enjoy their comforts, but don't cotton to the idea of being some sort of Neo-Rome.

On September 11th, the fellows from PNAC saw a door of opportunity open wide before them, and stormed right through it.

Bush released on September 20th 2001 the "National Security Strategy of the United States of America." It is an ideological match to PNAC's "Rebuilding America's Defenses" report issued a year earlier. In many places, it uses exactly the same language to describe America's new place in the world. Recall that PNAC demanded an increase in defense spending to at least 3.8% of GDP. Bush's proposed budget for next year asks for \$379 billion in defense spending, almost exactly 3.8% of GDP.

In August of 2002, Defense Policy Board chairman and PNAC member Richard Perle heard a policy briefing from a think tank associated with the Rand Corporation. According to the Washington Post and The Nation, the final slide of this presentation described "Iraq as the tactical pivot, Saudi Arabia as the strategic pivot, and Egypt as the prize" in a war that would purportedly be about ridding the world of Saddam Hussein's weapons. Bush has deployed massive forces into the Mideast region, while simultaneously engaging American forces in the Philippines and playing nuclear chicken with North Korea. Somewhere in all this lurks at least one of the "major theater wars" desired by the September 2000 PNAC report.

Iraq is but the beginning, a pretense for a wider conflict. Donald Kagan, a central member of PNAC, sees America establishing permanent military bases in Iraq after the war. This is purportedly a measure to defend the peace in the Middle East, and to make sure the oil flows. The nations in that region, however, will see this for what it is: a jump-off point for American forces to invade any nation in that region they choose to. The American people, anxiously awaiting some sort of exit plan after America defeats Iraq, will see too late that no exit is planned.

All of the horses are traveling together at speed here. The defense contractors who sup on American tax revenue will be handsomely paid for arming this new American empire. The corporations that own the news media will sell this eternal war at a profit, as viewership goes through the stratosphere when there is combat to be shown. Those within the administration who believe that the defense of Israel is contingent upon laying waste to every possible aggressor in the region will have their dreams fulfilled. The PNAC men who wish for a global Pax Americana at gunpoint will see their plans unfold. Through it all, the bankrollers from the WTO and the IMF will be able to dictate financial terms to the entire planet. This last aspect

of the plan is pivotal, and is best described in the newly revised version of Greg Palast's masterpiece, "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy."

There will be adverse side effects. The siege mentality average Americans are suffering as they smother behind yards of plastic sheeting and duct tape will increase by orders of magnitude as our aggressions bring forth new terrorist attacks against the homeland. These attacks will require the implementation of the newly drafted Patriot Act II, an augmentation of the previous Act that has profoundly sharper teeth. The sun will set on the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The American economy will be ravaged by the need for increased defense spending, and by the aforementioned "constabulary" duties in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Former allies will turn on us. Germany, France and the other nations resisting this Iraq war are fully aware of this game plan. They are not acting out of cowardice or because they love Saddam Hussein, but because they mean to resist this rising American empire, lest they face economic and military serfdom at the hands of George W. Bush. Richard Perle has already stated that France is no longer an American ally. As the eagle spreads its wings, our rhetoric and their resistance will become more agitated and dangerous.

Many people, of course, will die. They will die from war and from want, from famine and disease. At home, the social fabric will be torn in ways that make the Reagan nightmares of crack addiction, homelessness and AIDS seem tame by comparison.

This is the price to be paid for empire, and the men of PNAC who now control the fate and future of America are more than willing to pay it. For them, the benefits far outweigh the liabilities.

The plan was running smoothly until those two icebergs collided. Millions and millions of ordinary people are making it very difficult for Bush's international allies to keep to the script. PNAC may have designs for the control of the "International Commons" of the internet, but for now it is the staging ground for a movement that would see empire take a back seat to a wise peace, human rights, equal protection under the law, and the preponderance of a justice that will, if properly applied, do away forever with the anger and hatred that gives birth to terrorism in the first place.



Tommaso Palladini of Milan perhaps said it best as he marched with his countrymen in Rome. "You fight terrorism," he said, "by creating more justice in the world."

The People versus the Powerful is the oldest story in human history. At no point in history have the Powerful wielded so much control. At no point in history has the active and informed involvement of the People, all of them, been more absolutely required. The tide can be stopped, and the men who desire empire by the sword can be thwarted. It has already begun, but it must not cease. These are men of will, and they do not intend to fail.

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