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Until Peace Breaks Out: 50 Reasons Why America is 'Over There'

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UNTIL PEACE BREAKS OUT

Fifty Reasons Why

AMERICA

is

"Over There"

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UNTIL PEACE BREAKS OUT
Fifty Reasons Why America Is "Over There"

by

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War and Peace. Few of us have slept well lately, and we've had that socked-in-the-stomach feeling over the Persian Gulf War. Today there are some empty chairs in many family circles. To those families we should extend our love, sympathy, prayers, and humanitarian aid which has long been the hallmark of American voluntarism.

Scanning the print and electronic media over the past few months, this writer has chronicled 50 reasons why we are "over there." They really do all add up. We need to know that, to avoid cruelly punishing ourselves and others with false guilt. We will still have some frustration to work through—to keep us from being literally sick at heart. The medical term for that is "CNN Syndrome."

Lest we Americans develop a national schizophrenia over "Operation Desert Storm," here is Wartime Economics 101. Let's start with a volley of reasons that have been frequently cited.

We're "over there": (#1) to preserve "truth, justice, and the American way;" (#2) to shelter Kuwait from aggression; (#3) to protect the interests of America's friends in the Middle East; (#4) because Iraq's leader is an international Al Capone; (#5) because Iraq with nuclear weapons would endanger the entire world; (#6) to protect those oil fields and oil company investments; (#7) because a big spike in oil prices threatens our economy; (#8) and to create that elusive "new world order."

Is there some truth to each of those points? Yes, and summed up they are probably ample reasons to send our finest into battle. However, there are many other reasons. All are related; some are
more compelling than others. Together they join into a compelling mosaic.

Although domino theories have been less popular recently with the thaw in the Cold War, consider this sequence of events. (#9) A major oil cutoff would surely hobble Japan and energy-inefficient Europe. (#10) As major trading partners, their economic implosion could throw our economy into a freefall, jeopardizing jobs.

(#11) It is in our national and international interest to assure a stable flow of oil from the Persian Gulf at reasonable prices. American troops could be rotated into the Persian Gulf for years.

(#12) Congress decided after Vietnam that a standing military through a draft was too expensive. Hence, the call-ups of Guard and Reserve units. Did Congress publicize this huge shift in policy, or notify those whom it would affect the most? My sources say, "Definitely, yes."

(#13) We would like to have these fine people back right away, but we cannot simply withdraw and cross our fingers that there will be no more such crises. We have embarked on a course that will require collective resolve, diplomatic savvy, and mega quantities of manpower and equipment.

Additionally, (#14) the loss of control of the oil fields in the Persian Gulf could shake the foundations of the international banking system. Why? There are scores of oil-importing, underdeveloped countries which owe tens of billions of dollars to overexposed major banks.

(#15) A sharp, sustained increase in crude oil prices, and those nations may not be able to service their debts. The world's biggest and most vulnerable banks would take a significant broadside.

(#16) If the banks are pushed to the edge, those who suffer won't just be bank stockholders. We, all of us, our enterprises, and our loved ones could also suffer, at least temporarily, due to financial deflation and confusion.

The plot thickens. (#17) A year before the invasion of Kuwait, and at two Arab summits, Saddam Hussein argued that by combining the OPEC quotas of the two countries, he could force oil prices up to
$30 a barrel, double his development budget and still pay off his war debts in four years.

(#18) In the process, he would expand his coastline from 37 miles to 225 miles and wind up with a deepwater port. All he had to do was take over Kuwait to whom he owed $18 billion in loans from the Iran-Iraq war. His options were clear. He could repay the loan or he could rob the bank.

(#19) Egypt's President Mubarek has told a U.S. Senator recently that Saddam once took him aside and proposed a military coalition of Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Jordan to pool their weapons and carve up Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

(#20) On another occasion, Saddam offered Yemen two of Saudi Arabia's southern provinces. He once told Jordan's King Hussein that he could have the western port of the Saudi Peninsula.

(#21) What happened in Kuwait is a threat to the entire Arab world right now. Later, it could become a threat to the rest of the globe.

(#22) History can be a good teacher here. In 1938, Germany gobbled up neighboring Czechoslovakia; the West did nothing. A year later, much stronger, Germany began its invasion of Poland, followed by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, and threatened Great Britain. If only we and they had dealt with Germany early on.

(#23) What would happen if Iraq develops a monopoly on Persian Gulf oil? It could hold captive the world's economy and severely affect industrial output. By that time, it could stifle the coalition's military power and will to resist.

(#24) Is war about cheap crude oil? No, it is about heading off the terrible misuse of oil power. We have not sent nearly 500,000 Americans to the Persian Gulf just to hold oil prices at $20 a barrel.

(#25) Our young men and women are there to keep Iraq from controlling two-thirds of global oil reserves and (#26) from using that control to blackmail the industrial world possibly with nuclear weapons. (#27) The case for fighting now is, frankly, that Iraq will be militarily, politically, and geographically harder to fight later.
What we are doing is a pragmatic attempt to maintain access to the oil on which the world depends. It is nothing less than an effort to sustain the well-being of billions of people including Americans.

We import half our oil, but even achieving self-sufficiency would not fully protect us from war in the gulf. Our prosperity is heavily linked to countries that are heavily dependent on Mid East oil.

If the price were all that mattered, we could rely on the marketplace. Even for producers, excessively high prices don't maximize profits. They drive away buyers by promoting conservation and inducing new oil production.

The trouble is that Saddam doesn't merely want to become king of the world's oil. His ambitions are to dominate the Arab world and to turn Greater Iraq into a global military power. His is the 4th largest military which spent $50 billion in the last decade. His military equals the size of all the other Arab Countries combined.

Would he dole out oil at favorable prices to countries that delivered nuclear or military hardware? Modern warfare can deplete a country's treasury in record time. In 1870, an early prototype of a machine gun was demonstrated to a South American ruler. The machine gun was called by Engels "the ultimate weapon." It mowed everything down, but the ruler refused to buy it because "if I fire it for 15 minutes, it will empty my Treasury."

With his treasury rebuilt, would he finance more terrorism by stopping oil shipments sporadically to coerce Western support for his agenda? Might he decide that oil at $50 a barrel suited his politics, even if it's not profit maximizing?

We now know the answers: Nothing less than force can expel him from Kuwait, the only country in the Gulf that had a refinery that could process jet fuel. Today, Saudi Arabia has to supply the U.S. military in the Persian Gulf with imported jet fuel.

Sanctions don't have a history of forcing invaders out of conquered territory. Sanctions don't
restrain a leader who protects his military first while sacrificing his civilian population.

(#42) Sanctions did impose a great toll on the United States. They gave Iraq time to heavily fortify Kuwait so that any ground assault would be all-the-more difficult and costly.

(#43) Appeasers haven't done their homework. Anything less than defeat for Hussein would soon have the Arab world back under his thumb. (#44) Those nations would be suing for peace with the biggest bully on the regional playground, and he would soon become more bold, reckless, and unpredictable.

(#45) We cannot fight everybody's war. Any American president would be impeached for trying that. Therefore, we have to fight only those wars in which we have a vital national interest. (#46) Where a ruthless aggressor is involved, peace leads to a bigger war later.

(#47) We now know that there can be no trusting any deals Iraq's leader makes under diplomatic pressure. (#48) Such false trust would be an appeaser's peace, fated to erupt later in a sucker's war.

(#49) America is not a warmongering nation but rather a cautious trustee of our planet. Only the United States is strong enough to be the guardian of justice. As President Bush has stated, "Such is the price of leadership." (#50) We desire so much to live in a world where fighting will not be necessary. The leader of Iraq does not view things that way.

The term "wartime economics" may seem to be a contradiction. The language of war is compulsion, victory, defeat, survival, destruction, violence, waste, tactics, assault, defense, fear, and patriotism. The language of economy is voluntary action, gain, loss, creating, producing, peaceful work, industriousness, commerce, free trade, and consumer sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the economy cannot thrive except under peaceful conditions. The very foundation of our economic lives--our freedom of choice to manage our individual, business, and national affairs--is a direct result of sustained peace in our time.
Which Way to the Front?

There may not be any quick and painless ways for the allied coalition to win the war in the Persian Gulf. To some extent the coalition members were unwitting partners in creating Iraq's fortress in the first place.

Iraq's aircraft and tanks are Russian- and French-made. Italy designed Iraq's nuclear reactor. Those chemical plants were constructed by Germany. U.S.-made computers, dual-use chemicals, and U.S.-grown food flowed into Iraq for many years. The British engineered Iraq's underground aircraft bunkers.

For the allied coalition to expect a painless solution to the Persian Gulf War is inconsistent. We did this to ourselves—all the coalition countries did. It is much like the situation of the young man who, as he stood before the judge to be sentenced for bumping off his parents, pleaded for mercy because "After all, your Honor, I'm an orphan, you know."

This isn't the first time; history does repeat itself. We've all criticized General Custer's charge in 1876. But where do we suppose the Indians assembled at Little Big Horn obtained all those rifles? From gun-running Americans.

What about those peace demonstrations today? Across the nation, some would burn their flags. They can burn their flag if they want to; it won't look good on their resume.

Theodore Roosevelt was right on target in observing that, "The man who loves other countries as much as he loves his own stands on the level with the man who loves other women as much as he loves his own wife."

If burning the flag is "symbolic speech," and protected under the First Amendment, why couldn't it also be "symbolic aid and comfort to the enemy"—an act of treason under Article III, Section 3 of the same Constitution? Inquiring minds want to know.

"What have you done for liberty?" said William Jennings Bryan nearly a century ago. "If nothing, what can freedom mean to you?"

Alas, war hath no fury like non-combatants. To this writer, it makes little sense for the sheep and
lambs to be signing petitions and waving placards in favor of "vegetarianism," if the wolves don't care.

That's about as schizophrenic as the group of 875,000 who demonstrated for Earth Day last year in New York City and Washington, D.C., leaving behind 161.3 tons of garbage. Really.

Some day, we are told, the lion will lie down with the lamb. Fine. We should be the lion, just in case that lamb turns out to be another wolf in sheep's clothing.

History tells us that aggressors throughout the ages have advanced in the face of weakness and retreated in the face of strength. Always. It may feel good to sing the whining lyrics of "Give Peace a Chance," but it doesn't accomplish much at all toward a genuine, lasting peace that comes through victory over evil.

It is precisely at times of national stress and anxiety that a renewal of faith and purpose is required. America remains an inspiration to millions; but ingratitude, misunderstanding, even hatred may have to be endured. You see, "Liberty means responsibility," said George Bernard Shaw. "That is why most men dread it."

It was the Old Testament prophet, Daniel, who recounted handwriting on the wall that was interpreted to warn an earlier ruler of Iraq, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, that he was running out of time. President Bush, as the leader of the free world, is now delivering that same message to Saddam Hussein.

Our President deserves the support of all Americans. True, the last chapter hasn't been written yet, but the good guys are going to win. World War III has not started. The present military action in the gulf will avert World War III.

Those wonderful men and women, now serving in the Persian Gulf at great personal and economic sacrifice, "won't be back 'til it's over, over there."

Consider this haunting mandate from yesteryear by John Quincy Adams: "Posterity--you will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it."
Today, our American expeditionary force goes forward into battle, and we are armed with fifty reasons plus Thomas Jefferson's watchword, "Eternal vigilance is the price of peace."

Yet, even today, there are so many unanswered questions. Even the first and well-known verse of our National Anthem, penned by Francis Scott Key, ends with a question mark:

Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

If we are patient enough, Mr. Key provides us the answer in his fourth and final stanza:

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand

Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!

Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land

Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.

Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,

And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.'

And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Truly, the Star Spangled Banner is still a comforting and inspiring symbol. It is comforting to know that the flag is still there, still whole, still preserving. "Let it rise! Let it rise! 'Til it meets the sun in his coming," said Daniel Webster. "Let the earliest light of the morning gild it, and the parting day linger and play on its summit."
Let’s get personal; what about you? Do you know of a better flag to wave? What will you do in support of that American expeditionary force in the Persian Gulf? Will you show the flag? If so, then three cheers for both you and the red, white, and blue! Put out more flags. Let the bands play. Sing to the flag. Sing about it. Take a stand.

Let’s fly the flag as a symbol of our national unity. Doesn’t it stand for the best that is in us? Does it not stand for our greatest achievements, our fondest dreams? What about all the great men and women who have given us our heritage? Aren’t the truly great events of our past and present embodied in our flag?

The following poem, published recently in The Daily Citizen, is a fitting summary of this monograph on war and peace. It was written by Pam Nannie for her godson Paul Bunn who is serving in the Persian Gulf.

No matter where Americans are,
No matter what they do,
Our thoughts are in the Middle East,
With brave Americans like you.

There’s a few say "Nothing’s worth fighting for,"
But the majority disagree,
Cause if our forefathers believed that way,
None of us would be free!

So while we all want and pray for peace,
Most realize it just can’t be,
Until all the dictators of this world
Are brought to their knees.

So, Hurrah! For our people in the Gulf!
We want the world to see
If it weren’t for people like you
Soon no one would be free.

It’s time, all Americans stand together,
And keep our country strong,
And keep Old Glory waving high,
‘Til the last American’s home.

So we wish our troops all God’s speed,
And we’ll all pray it won’t be long,
Until this war is over,
And our people are safely home.
Finally, as a benediction, let's consider the prayer once delivered by former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, Peter Marshall:

God of our Fathers, whose Almighty Hand has made and preserved our Nation, grant that our people may understand what it is they celebrate.

May they remember how bitterly our freedom was won, the down payment that was made for it, the installments that have been made since this republic was born, and the price that must yet be paid for our liberty.

May freedom be seen not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to please to do what is right.

May it ever be understood that our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else. May our faith be something that is not merely stamped upon our coins, but expressed in our lives.

To the extent that America honors Thee, wilt Thou bless America and keep her as Thou hast kept her free, and make her good as Thou hast made her rich...

(And all the people said, "Amen.")