



Do the B-2 Stealth Bomber and other high-tech weapons turn war into a spectator sport?

ated with mass mobilization. But in the United States, conscription ended more than a quarter-century ago. The Vietnam War, Ignatieff adds, “widened the gulf between civilian and military culture.” And for advanced societies, even the economic impact of war has much diminished. “In times past, wars could bankrupt societies, and economic constraints were a fundamental limit on the length and ferocity of conflict.” Today, America’s \$290 billion annual defense outlay is only three percent of its gross domestic product.

With “nothing ultimate” at stake in virtual war, Ignatieff contends, the democratic legislature’s check on the executive’s war-making powers becomes very important, as a way of clarifying the war’s purposes. In the Kosovo conflict, however, military operations were “unsanctioned and undeclared” by Congress or other national parliaments. Yet “the decay of institutional

checks and balances . . . has received little attention,” he says.

“Hidden in abstractions such as human rights” is “the potential for self-righteous irrationality,” Ignatieff warns, and for “a host of unwinnable wars.” There are, after all, “substantial” limits, “mainly self-imposed,” on the use of military power for such missions, that limit what can be achieved—the democracies are unwilling to take up an imperial burden. “The language of human rights easily lends itself to the invention of a virtual moral world peopled by demonized enemies and rogue states, facing virtuous allies and noble armies.” Those who support humanitarian interventions, he concludes, must pay close attention in each case to “the question of whether, by intervening, we end up destroying what we tried to save.”

Fighting Bio-Terrorism

“Bad Medicine for Biological Terror” by Andrew J. Bacevich, in *Orbis* (Spring 2000), Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1528 Walnut St., Ste. 610, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102–3684.

Fearing a biological Pearl Harbor, the Clinton administration has embarked upon a crash program that includes vaccinating more than two million soldiers, sailors, and pilots against anthrax. But the effort is running into highly publicized resistance—and rightly so, says Bacevich, director of Boston University’s

Center for International Relations. He contends that the effort is as misguided as the government’s bomb-shelter mania of the 1950s and early ’60s.

More than 300 protesters-in-uniform—insisting that the vaccine is unsafe and its long-term effects on health unknown—have refused

The Path Not Taken

In *The Nation* (May 8, 2000), Kai Bird, the author of *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy & William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (1998), contends that those on the left who oppose humanitarian interventionism have forgotten the New Deal's vision of the American role in the world.

Sadly, in our determination to oppose nuclear brinkmanship and other idiocies that marked Washington's foreign policy for 44 years (1945-89), we have forgotten our basic radical principles and the common-sensical path not taken at the end of World War II. Most Americans have no memory of the designs Franklin Roosevelt's New Dealers had for postwar American foreign policy. Human rights, self-determination and an end to European colonization in the developing world, nuclear disarmament, international law, the World Court, the United Nations—these were all ideas of the progressive left. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were initially conceived as vehicles for internationalizing the New Deal.

the mandatory inoculations or left the military to avoid them. Many of the “refuseniks” are experienced pilots, field-grade officers, and combat veterans.

Though it pooh-poohs their complaints, says Bacevich, the Pentagon “has entrusted the manufacture of anthrax vaccine to a single firm of dubious reputation” (BioPort Corporation, of Lansing, Michigan), and Pentagon officials, including qualified medical professionals, privately acknowledge that the efficacy of the vaccine is open to question. It was developed in the 1950s not to protect against inhalation of anthrax spores but rather to safeguard tannery workers who risked contamination through the skin from handling the hides of anthrax-infected animals. “Some of the same Pentagon officials who today insist upon the safety of the anthrax vaccine,” Bacevich observes, “have themselves [in the recent past] suggested a link between the vaccine and Gulf War illness.”

Even if the vaccine does work against anthrax, Bacevich says, terrorists could select from a large array of other potent pathogens, including smallpox, botulism, bubonic plague, and the

Ebola virus. “Indeed, U.S. intelligence agencies believe that Iraq and North Korea are already developing the capability” to use smallpox as a weapon. And why, he asks, would terrorists target U.S. military bases rather than any of the much “softer” and readily available alternatives, such as the New York subway system?

In any event, the “biological Maginot Line” defense is bad strategy, Bacevich avers. The Clinton administration should instead issue a clear threat “to retaliate massively” in response to any biological (or chemical or nuclear) attack by terrorists, not only against the terrorist organizations themselves but against any regime that gives them direct or indirect support.

A “sense of proportion” is needed, Bacevich contends. “Fixating on the problem of fending off a biological calamity—a danger that has existed virtually unnoticed for decades—enables policymakers to avert their eyes” from larger questions, he says, such as the feasibility and costs of fulfilling the administration’s ambitious goal of making the world “peaceful, democratic, and respectful of human rights and free enterprise.”

How Ideas Rule the World

“The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations” by Daniel Philpott, in *World Politics* (Jan. 2000), Bendheim Hall, Princeton Univ., Princeton, N.J. 08544.

The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the era of religious wars in Europe and brought into being the modern system of sov-

ereign territorial states. More than 350 years later, argues Philpott, a political scientist at the University of California, Santa