



In the 2000 election, Al Gore won 50,999,897 popular votes against George W. Bush's 50,456,002, but the Electoral College vote went 271 to 266 in Bush's favor.

The Founders were not hostile to popular election of the president, Glenn says. But they feared that the concerns of small states would get short shrift if popular majorities could be formed chiefly from the populous states and big cities of the Northeast. They deliberately devised the Electoral College system to favor candidates "who made broad appeals to all parts of the country and across the inevitable small state–large state, rural–urban, and agricultural–commercial conflicts of interest," Glenn notes. Though the country is more urban now, the basic conflicts remain.

Even so, how can the existing system be more democratic? Because with a direct national popular vote, says Glenn, anyone with a sufficiently large following—including not only governors of large states but movie stars,

rock musicians, ethnic partisans, and assorted others—would be tempted to run. "The reason is that 15 percent, 30 percent, or even five percent might win." Many proposed schemes for reforming current practice provide for a runoff if no candidate gets at least 40 percent. But the existing system "already consistently gives us winners with more than that," Glenn points out, and runoffs, as France has shown, usually attract fewer voters because disappointed followers of excluded candidates stay home. By forcing serious candidates to assemble popular majorities in the states, he says, the Electoral College encourages—and usually produces—greater voter support behind the eventual winner. "This makes democracy more broadly representative, more consensual, and hence more governable."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Now, America the Imperial?

A Survey of Recent Articles

On one thing, at least, advocates and opponents of war in Iraq can agree: The conflict has momentous implications for America and its place in the world.

Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center at Harvard University's Kennedy

School of Government, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* (Jan. 5, 2003), describes war in Iraq as "an imperial operation that would commit a reluctant republic to become the guarantor of peace, stability, democratization, and oil supplies in

a combustible region of Islamic peoples stretching from Egypt to Afghanistan. A role once played by the Ottoman Empire, then by the French and the British, will now be played by a nation that has to ask whether in becoming an empire it risks losing its soul as a republic.”

Backers of the war envision America’s enthusiastically taking on the imperial role in the Middle East and elsewhere for many decades. Columnist Charles Krauthammer, who in 1990 proclaimed America’s “unipolar moment” in the world, now sees that moment stretching into a “unipolar era,” in which the United States uses its unrivaled dominance to advance democracy and to preserve peace in “every region” of the globe. Successfully managing the threat posed by Iraq and other rogue states with weapons of mass destruction, he writes in *The National Interest* (Winter 2002–03), requires “the aggressive and confident application of unipolar power rather than falling back, as we did in the 1990s, on paralyzing multilateralism.”

But critics see an America that’s misguided and on the road to ruin, shortsightedly destroying the very international system it did so much to build up over half a century. Tony Judt, director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, writing in *The New York Review of Books* (Mar. 27, 2003), calls it “a tragedy of historical proportions that America’s own leaders are today corroding and dissolving the links that bind the U.S. to its closest allies in the international community.”

The likely result of that wreckage, adds David C. Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, writing in *World Policy Journal* (Fall 2002), will be “a fundamental delegitimation of American power.” And once lost, “the aura of legitimacy,” which required “years of patient labor” to achieve, will be “very difficult to regain.”

The “revolutionary” reorientation of U.S. foreign policy since the terrorist attacks of 9/11—toward “the acceptance of preventive war and the rejection of multilateralism”—runs counter to “fundamental values in our political tradition,” Hendrickson argues. The doctrine that unbounded power is a menace is as old as Western civilization: “In

thought and experience, resistance to universal empire is coeval with the history of civil liberty.”

Yet Lawrence F. Kaplan, a senior editor at *The New Republic* (Mar. 3, 2003), contends that the reorientation is squarely in the liberal tradition of Woodrow Wilson—“the Wilson that pledged to make the world safe for democracy and vowed that America would ‘spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness.’” That tradition, Kaplan writes, “was passed down from generation to generation—from Harry Truman . . . to John F. Kennedy—before being put to rest in the jungles of Vietnam.” Now it’s being revived by conservative George W. Bush.

In adopting a strategy of preventive war, however, argues Jack Snyder, a professor of international relations at Columbia University, America may well learn the same lesson as earlier imperial powers: that the preventive use of force was counterproductive “because it often sparked brushfire wars at the edges of the empire, internal rebellions, and opposition from powers not yet conquered or otherwise subdued.” Fearful of America’s great power, weak states “may increasingly conclude that weapons of mass destruction joined to terror tactics are the only feasible equalizer,” Snyder warns in *The National Interest* (Spring 2003).

Given America’s past reliance on relationships with military rulers and autocrats in the region, observes Fouad Ajami, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, few Arabs in Iraq and neighboring lands are likely to greet the American effort as “a Wilsonian campaign to spread the reign of liberty in the Arab world.” Nevertheless, he writes in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.–Feb. 2003), America’s great power “can help tip the scales in favor of modernity and change in the region.” There need be no apologies for U.S. “unilateralism,” says Ajami. “The region can live with and use that unilateralism.”

Ignatieff believes that a war on Iraq will oblige the United States to take on “the reordering of the whole region” and “stick at it through many successive administrations. The burden of empire is of long duration, and

democracies are impatient with long-lasting burdens—none more so than America.”

And there may be the rub, says Krauthammer. How long the “unipolar era” lasts “will be decided at home. It will depend

largely on whether it is welcomed by Americans or seen as a burden to be shed. . . . The choice is ours. To impiously paraphrase Benjamin Franklin: History has given you an empire, if you will keep it.”

Hiroshima Revisited

“A Score of Bloody Okinawas and Iwo Jimas’: President Truman and Casualty Estimates for the Invasion of Japan” by D. M. Giangreco, in *Pacific Historical Review* (Feb. 2003), 487 Cramer Hall, Portland State Univ., Portland, Ore. 97207-0751.

Is an end finally in sight to the controversy over the motivation behind President Harry Truman’s decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945?

Looking back on that fateful decision, Truman said he had been advised that an invasion of Japan might mean up to one million Americans dead or wounded. Revisionist historians have scornfully dismissed that and similar statements as *ex post facto* rationalizations, unsupported by archival evidence. They charge that Truman’s decision was based on a combination of racism and crass strategic calculation—an assertion that caused a national controversy in 1995 when curators at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum planned to incorporate it into a special exhibit on the *Enola Gay*. But a wealth of documentary evidence supporting Truman’s assertion has recently been discovered at the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, reports Giangreco, an editor at *Military Review*.

It’s long been known that former president Herbert Hoover wrote a memo for Truman in May 1945, based on secret Pentagon briefings, warning that an invasion could result in 500,000 to one million American deaths. Those figures implied total casualties of two to five million. Historian Barton J. Bernstein has maintained that there’s no proof Truman ever saw the memo.

The newly unearthed documents show that the president not only read the memo, says Giangreco, but “ordered his senior advisers each to prepare a written analysis before coming in to discuss

it face to face. None of these civilian advisers batted an eye at the casualty estimate.”

At a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on June 18, Truman heard the participants come at the question another way—by examining the ratios of Americans to Japanese killed in recent operations (1 to 2 for the Okinawa campaign, for example). They used these ratios, Giangreco says, to suggest “how battle casualties from the much larger Japanese and U.S. forces involved in the first of the two lengthy invasion operations on Japanese soil might play out.”

Admiral William Leahy, Truman’s chief of staff, said the U.S. casualty rate on Okinawa had been 35 percent, and “that would give a good estimate of the casualties



New evidence supports the view that President Harry S. Truman dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima after he was told that up to one million Americans would die in an invasion.