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From the Egyptian Crisis of 1882 to Iraq of 2003

Alliance Ramifications of British and American Bids
for « World Hegemony »

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Abstract: This article compares and contrasts the alliance ramifications of the U.S. decision to "go to Baghdad" in 2003 with both the British intervention/occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the British intervention/occupation of Iraq in 1920.

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Comparing and Contrasting Global Hegemonies

In the process of comparing and contrasting the nature of late 19th and early 20th British and mid-20th and early 21st century American “hegemonies,” this article will argue that the contemporary Iraqi crisis can be compared to, and contrasted with, both the 1882 Egyptian crisis and the 1919-1920 British intervention in Iraq. In this regard, the systemic aspects of the US intervention in Iraq in 2003 (in which key US Allies, France and Germany did not participate) can be compared and contrasted with the British intervention in Egypt in 1882 (in which the French did not participate).

Based upon a comparative *geohistorical* analysis of the global ramifications of the pre-World War I intervention in Egypt, as well as the primarily domestic consequences of British intervention in Iraq, the thesis argued here is that US occupation may prove much longer than generally expected at least at the outset of the war. Much as Britain had promised to leave Egypt 66 times between 1882 and 1922—when Britain declared, at least initially, Egypt “independent” (but without formal negotiations)—it is possible that the US might act in a similar fashion, in the assumption that it does not cut its losses and pull out altogether due the nature of the stakes in question.¹ At the same time, however, the US will most likely face even more problems than did the British after 1920, particularly due to the US decision to overturn essentially Sunni predominance that had been established and reinforced by Britain, in support of what the Bush administration has dubbed, “democratic federalism” but which has largely transmogrified into “communitarian chaos.”

Moreover, much as the 1882 Egyptian Crisis led to the collapse of the Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale*, founded in the aftermath of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war, today’s Iraq crisis has

¹ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 90. I first warned that the US presence may prove to be long term, ironically enough on September 11, 1990. See *Scripta Politica*, American University of Paris Vol. VII, No. IV, March 1991. Historian Niall Ferguson, by the way, made the same point, in 2003, thirteen years later. See Niall Ferguson, “Lessons from the British Empire: True Lies,” *The New Republic*, 27 May 2003; Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (Penguin, 2004), 220.

widened the fissures and disputes within the Atlantic Alliance—that have certainly become more acute since the end of the Cold War in 1989-91. In fact, one can date the origin of at least some of these inter-Allied disputes, involving “out of area” military interventions, with the first Persian Gulf war (1990-91). Likewise, the option of “regime change” in Iraq was first considered, but then rejected, by George Bush, Sr., at that time.² US-European relations will prove very difficult to patch back together, unless all sides can find common interests in post-Iraq war circumstances, and if they can agree on the best way to deal with the commonly perceived threat of “terrorism.”

Today’s global geo-strategic constellation of forces involving the US, Europe (in the process of unification), and Japan in relationship to Russia, China, and India represents a mix of the pre-World War I and pre-World War II geo-strategic constellations. In the contemporary situation, the collapse of the Soviet Union appears to parallel the collapse of Imperial Germany following World War I. NATO-EU enlargement into central and eastern Europe can then be compared and contrasted with both French efforts to regain Alsace Lorraine in the 19th century, and to forge a Locarno pact with eastern European states in the 20th century, after the break up of the Czarist Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, but before Soviets reabsorbed the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine. Concurrently, the contemporary Russian-Chinese relationship can be compared and contrasted with the 19th century Russo-German 1887 Reinsurance treaty and the Rapallo pact of the 1920s. Japanese and Chinese rivalry appears to best parallel the late 19th century, but in which China, not Japan, appears to be the more assertive power. Soviet/Russian ties to India in South Asia and outreach to the Indian Ocean appear to parallel Imperial German ties to Italy in regard to the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Iraq today appears to play the role of both late 19th century and 20th century Egypt as central strategic economic focal point in regard to world trade then and control of oil routes now. The key difference is that the US has, thus far, played a much stronger role as a “hegemonic” power in regard to Europe through NATO, while Great Britain tended to play a role as “holder of the balance” between France, Germany, and Czarist Russia in the more “multipolar” 19th century, prior to the formation of the Franco-Russian Dual Alliance, followed by the Anglo-French-Russian Triple Entente.³

² “Should Iraq resort to using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, be found supporting terrorist actions against the US or coalition partners anywhere in the world, or destroy Kuwaiti oil fields, it shall become an explicit objective of the US to replace the current leadership of Iraq.”--National Security Directive 54, signed by George Bush, Sr., January 15, 1991. See also my analysis, in Hall Gardner, ed. *NATO and the European Union: New World, New Europe, New Threats* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), Chapter 16.

³ See Hall Gardner, “NATO, Russia and Eastern European Security: Beyond the Interwar Analogy,” in *NATO Looks East*, eds. Piotr Dutkiewicz and Robert J. Jackson (Praeger, 1998); Hall Gardner, “NATO Enlargement and Geohistory: Alliances and the Question of War or Peace” in “NATO for a New Century: Enlargement and Intervention in the Atlantic Alliance” ed., Carl Hodge (Westport: Praeger, 2002)

Here, of course, contemporary Europe does not altogether act like 19th or early 20th century France despite its flanking geostrategic position to the Eurasian "heartland". Europe will either be impelled to develop a more autonomous defense and security capability or else remain a loose confederation without a truly Common Foreign and Security Policy. As US hegemony continues to wane *in regard to Europe but not necessarily the Persian Gulf or Asia-Pacific*, the EU will be under pressure to develop a more unified foreign and defense policy, at the same time, a number of internal policy divergences, as well as external pressures, may prevent it from unifying.

Like 19th century France, Europe could look toward forging alternative entente or alliance relationships with either Russia or China or both. At the same time, it is not absolutely clear that Europe—which was essentially divided between the pro-American stance of the UK, Italy and Poland versus the more neutral position of France, Germany and Belgium during the 2003 US-UK intervention in Iraq—can adopt a truly unified Common Foreign and Security policy, as it confronts the question of Turkish membership, and as it deals with China, Russia and Ukraine, among other pressing questions. Continued US efforts to pressure and divide Europe cannot be ruled out.

As the above represent the introductory remarks for a much larger project, the focus of this essay is primarily upon the global alliance ramifications of the British interventions in Egypt in 1882, which led to British isolation from all the major 19th century powers, and then Iraq in 1917, followed by essentially unilateral US-UK intervention in Iraq in 2003, an action which tended to split the Atlantic Alliance. The purpose is thus to compare and contrast three interventions within differing geo-historical constellations, with the recognition of the fact that the past never repeats itself in exactly the same ways—although previous geo-historical systems and structures continue to burden those of both the present and future.

British intervention in Egypt (1882)

The 1882 Egyptian crisis took place within the international "multipolar" context of the quarrels over the Greco-Turkish Frontier, Boer revolt in the South African Transvaal, and the British withdrawal from Kandahar, Afghanistan, not to overlook troubles in Ireland, the issue which most concerned London at the time. The British occupation of Egypt then turned out to be a much longer-term phenomenon than British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone had expected at the time of the intervention, with British controls re-implemented with the advents of both World Wars I and II.

In 1922 Britain declared Egypt formally independent under the rule of King Fouad I, but the country was still subject to four "reserved points." First, the maintenance of the security of imperial communications within Egypt; second, the defense of Egypt against foreign attack; third,

the protection of foreign interests and personnel; and fourth, continued British rule over Sudan. In 1936, the Anglo-Egyptian treaty limited British controls even further. It was then announced that the military occupation would come to an end, yet in 1942, King Farouk was forced by the British to appoint a pro-Allied cabinet, and installed a Wafd ministry in that it was presumed to be pro-Allied in sympathy. (The *Wafd* movement, which was formed in 1918 to gain an Egyptian voice in the international peace conference after World war I, then continued to press for total Egyptian independence from Britain.)

The British military presence was then sustained until the rise of Gamel Abdel Nasser, and the 1956 Suez crisis, in which Britain, France and Israel intervened militarily against the nationalization of the Suez canal, only to be pressured to withdraw forces by Moscow (who threatened to use nuclear weapons against Paris and London) and by Washington, who threatened to cut its support for the pound sterling when the latter came under speculative pressure, in one of the first major Cold War financial crises (a precursor to the crises of the 1990s) requiring IMF intervention—at the end of British hegemony in the region, and the beginning of the American.⁴

British military intervention in Egypt in 1882, of course, did not take place under the pretext of a hunt for Weapons of Mass Destruction, but there certainly was a threat to Europeans living in Alexandria, which was, in part, exacerbated by the show of Anglo-French naval forces. This show of naval power was then followed by an “ultimatum” of the British admiralty, which had only been reluctantly accepted by Gladstone, but which was militantly rejected by the Egyptian cabinet.

The immediate rationale for British military intervention in Egypt was the building up of earthwork defenses that could threaten British warships, following rioting in Alexandria (which had killed 50 foreigners). The Egyptian cabinet’s refusal of the Admiralty’s “ultimatum” to stop building such defenses, which had only reluctantly been agreed to by Gladstone, consequently led the British to attack. This then led to a “short war illusion” in which “the explosion of one or two shells will send all the earthworks to glory, and there will be an end for the moment of the matter.” It was believed that the nationalist, Arabi Pasha, would topple immediately after the shelling, but this failed to be the case.

The initial break down in Anglo-French relations had begun after the purchase of 44% Suez Canal shares in 1875 by Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Gladstone himself predicted in 1877, “our first site in Egypt, be it larceny or be it by emption, will be the almost certain egg of a North African empire, that will grow and grow until... we finally join hands across the Equator with Natal and Cape Town.”⁵ Disraeli, the pro-imperialist Conservative, did not see investment in Suez Canal

⁴ James M. Boughton, “Northwest of Suez : The 1956 Crisis and Suez IMF”, Working Paper December 2000
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.cfm?sk=3899.0>

⁵ Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (Archon Books, 1970), 165-66.

Co as a financial investment or even commercial speculation, but as a “political transaction, and one which I believe is calculated to strengthen the empire.”⁶

By 1875, both Britain and France had begun to interfere more overtly in the governmental affairs and financial administration of Egypt. Britain and France began to act as controllers of finance and had seats in Egyptian ministry by 1878. By 1879-80, following a secret pact in 1879, Britain and France had forged an ill-defined political economic condominium over Egypt in which the Khedive was to recognize that only England and France had rights of influence in Egyptian affairs and that secretly excluded third European powers (particularly Germany and Russia) from acting in Egypt.⁷ The exception was the Ottoman empire: Even though Egypt was technically still under the suzerainty of Ottoman Sultan, the Egyptian Khedive (who was chosen by the Sultan) had relative autonomy.

The secret Anglo-French controls continued to anger Egyptians, and had already resulted the first army mutiny in 1879, followed by the second in 1881. An insurgent movement of “Egypt for Egyptians” began to grow, fuelled by a triad of “nationalist,” constitutional-democratic, as well as “pan-Islamic,” ideologies. These three groups were angered by the fact that foreigners were free from taxation and had the right to trial in consular courts, for example; some foreigners were earning significant salaries, while the great mass of Egyptians (fellaheen) lived in poverty.

The liberal anti-colonialist Gladstone had been reluctant to intervene, but found himself with few options. As he did not initially work closely with the Ottoman Sultan, his hope for Ottoman intervention failed; at the same time, it remained unclear whether Britain could really accept the regional ramifications of Ottoman intervention. The French themselves were opposed to Ottoman intervention, as this would affect their own interests in Tunis and elsewhere, in areas traditionally under Ottoman suzerainty. Britain itself certainly saw the importance of Egypt as the “life line” in India and world trade—as well as to hegemonic control over much of east Africa.

Ironically, it was not the British, but the French, under the leadership of Prime Minister Leon Gambetta, who had initially pushed for a joint Anglo-French show of force, but without consulting the other major powers or even the Ottoman empire. It was then France who did a sudden about face and sailed its warships home following a change in cabinets from that of Gambetta, who suddenly resigned on January 31, 1882, to that of Charles Freycinet.

The new French Foreign Minister Charles Freycinet had wanted a show of force (a position which enraged the Egyptians), but to concurrently engage in diplomacy. While Freycinet opposed an occupation of all of Egypt, he supported the possible option of controlling the Suez Canal alone,

⁶ Winfried Baumgart, *Imperialism* (Oxford University Press, 1982), 23.

⁷ Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (Archon Books, 1970), 163. For an Ottoman perspective, see Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

in providing back-up support for the British military intervention. Then Deputy George Clemenceau, and other radical republicans refused, however, to vote credits for an intervention to safeguard the Suez. Clemenceau argued that a policy of abstention was not necessarily humiliating, but for France to send troops that would pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the British, and that would only serve the British advantage, represented a "policy of humiliation par excellence."⁸

In particular, on 20 July 1882, in the Chamber of Deputies, Clemenceau questioned whether the government had taken significant precautions as to precisely how France (along side the British) would go into Egypt, precisely what it would do there and under which conditions would it exercise its options, and most importantly, how it planned to exit: "Have you taken safeguards? Have you made with your allies a plan for entering, for intervening, and then exiting? I want to know how you will go into Egypt, what you will do there, and under what conditions you will exercise your actions, and most importantly how you will exit! If much easier to enter than to exit!... If you are going to let yourselves follow England in order to re-establish the *status quo*, it will result in an indefinite occupation, and for me, an inevitable war with England. I do not want to take such risks, I absolutely refuse, in such conditions, to authorize such an intervention in Egypt."⁹ Thus, from Clemenceau's point of view, even intervening alongside England would ultimately lead into political conflict with England—in that the two would not be able to agree to same objectives.

In Clemenceau's perspective, and against that of the Freycinet government, France's entente with England was doomed whether or not France intervened along side England in Egypt. England was not herself moving into protect just the canal (even though all of Europe and England itself had interests in the Suez canal), but was attacking Alexandria. In his perspective, England was seeking to control all of Egypt, if not all of east Africa; in the process, London would likewise demand to control the special interests of the French, which were mainly located along the Nile.

Furthermore, it was not clear that a "limited" intervention as argued by the Freycinet government in order to "protect" the Suez was absolutely necessary in the first place, and secondly, whether such an intervention might ultimately lead to a larger and even more expensive engagement/ occupation. If, for example, French troops were under orders to guard the Suez Canal only, and if English troops needed assistance, and if France did not then help out, this

⁸ "Mais la politique qui consiste a envoyer des soldats français monter la garde sur le canal de Suez, avec défense absolue de pousser des pointes au-delà d'un certain perimetre, alors même qu'ils seraient attaqués, et tout cela pour le plus grand avantage de l'Angleterre, voila ou est, selon moi, la politique de l'humiliation a laquelle, pour ma part, je me refuse énergiquement a souscrire." Cited in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Clemenceau* (Fayard, 1988), 208.

⁹ George Clemenceau, French Chamber of Deputies, 20 July 1882.

scenario would strain relations even more—since the two sides did not possess the same strategy or tactics.

The Freycinet government argued that France could protect the canal without directing entering into an “occupation”; French parliamentary opposition counter-argued that France’s intervention could lead to unforeseen events (battles with local forces, for example, or the need to obtain supplies and fresh water) that would possibly draw France into “annexation, conquest, a protectorate, whatever words one wants to choose.” Clemenceau, furthermore believed that the proposed intervention of Turkey (if would really take place) might further complicate the situation, as it appeared unclear how Turkey might act upon intervening. Here, however, the Ottoman empire was reluctant to be seen by the Arab/Islamic world as doing the dirty work for the British and French.

After the 11-12 June 1882 riots in Alexandria, an international conference of the European powers (Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, Italy) was convened in Constantinople, as a remnant of the near defunct Concert of Europe. Yet the Ottoman Sultan failed to participate under criticism that he would be considered a lackey of the Western powers. The Sultan’s ambassador in London, however, secretly proposed that the Sultan could come to an arrangement with Britain to the exclusion of France; Britain would be given exclusive control and administration over Egypt on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, and the Sultan would reserve for himself only those rights that the Ottoman empire already possessed. Gladstone refused the offer, but didn’t get support from the French either. Efforts to obtain international support and *legitimacy* failed.

In effect, it was an alliance of non-interventionists—and those who opposed halfway measures and who would only counsel intervention if the British and French were truly prepared to go all the way (*a l’outrance*)—who opposed French intervention. As the French fleet sailed away, British warships remained to bombard to coastline of Alexandria on July 11, 1882. The historical irony is that it would be the Liberal anti-imperialist Gladstone, and not Disraeli, who would be the one to hatch the largely unexpected egg of intervention followed by permanent occupation despite his efforts to avoid imperial actions. (In fact, Gladstone’s substantial investments in Egypt soared by 40% as a direct result of his decision to invade the country.¹⁰)

Britain then began a full-scale invasion in August, which was heavily criticized by members of the House of Commons, including Lord Randolph Churchill, and other members of the House who had established a “fourth party” of independent British Conservatives. On August 15, 1882, William Lehman Ashmead Bartlett, blasted the Gladstone government, for example, in the House

¹⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (Penguin, 2004), 218. Today’s parallels of personal profiteering point to Bush Administration links with oil firms and major companies like Halliburton.

of Commons: "The House condemns Her Majesty's Government for their neglect and mistakes which have brought about the War in Egypt, and especially for the bombardment of Alexandria without a landing force sufficient to have saved lives and property, and considers that Foreign Policy of the Government has alienated the Allies, and weakened the influence and power of the country... The real difficulties and problems of this Egyptian crisis are but beginning... you will have to settle the future of Egypt. You will have to decide the control of the Suez Canal and here you will encounter ambitions more resolute and unscrupulous and forces more potent than the arms of Arabi, or than the opposition of the Ottoman government... . No one will envy the Cabinet the task of settling the various claims and rights which they have in view--- the Sovereignty of the Sultan, the power of the Khedive, the aspirations of the Egyptian people, the rights of the bondholders, and... the interests of the British empire.... Is Egypt already impoverished and drained by usurious engagements to be further saddled, when she can least bear them, with charges arising out of these losses?"

Ashmead Bartlett then outlined four blunders of British policy as causes of the war:

1. Neglect of, and contempt for, the "undeniable rights" of the Ottoman Sultan (even in recognition of its human rights abuses);
2. The vain attempt to engage in joint action with an unreliable France, "whose interests are divergent from our own—that is, if we go one step beyond the internal financial administration";
3. The indifference to the efforts of the Egyptian Chamber and people after self-government and lessened taxation;
4. Lack of foresight in foreseeing dangers that were "patent to everyone else."

After the British intervention in Egypt, on 10 August 1882, Gladstone belatedly worried that "... an indefinite occupation" of Egypt would be "against the principles and views" of the British government, "and the pledges that they have given to Europe," as well as the "views... of Europe itself." Gladstone's reservations appeared justified in that England found itself increasingly isolated, while France looked to establish new economic and security ties with Czarist Russia, further alienating, if not "encircling," Imperial Germany, after the formation of the Dual Alliance.

In spite of its own intervention in Tunis and Indo-China in the same time period as the British intervention in Egypt, the French largely refused to acquiesce to Britain's control of Egypt until the formation of 1904 Entente Cordiale. Significant progress on the Egyptian debt was really made only after the 1904 Anglo-French entente, however, even though the 1904 international agreement itself brought with it "only further disillusion," in that the "real cause of (British) difficulties was not international discord, but the false and insecure basis of our position in

Egypt.”¹¹ The 1904 Entente Cordiale represented a *quid pro quo*: French recognition of British control over Egypt in exchange for British recognition of French hegemony over Morocco—to the dangerous exclusion of Imperial Germany, which likewise sought its own “place in the sun.”

In summary, Britain’s essentially reluctant unilateral intervention in Egypt had at least six global ramifications or largely unexpected consequences:

First, was long term British occupation, involving the “reconstruction” of Egyptian society (involving massive debt) by the Earl of Dufferin and then Sir Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer). France and Germany seeks concessions from Britain through Caisse de la Debt (forerunner of IMF)

Second was the 1882 rupture of the post-1871 Anglo-French *Entente cordiale* plus British isolation from Germany, Austria, Russia, and Italy. Anglo-French split had been initiated with the British purchase of Suez Canal shares in 1875. (The Suez had been completed in 1869, after work started in 1855.) Bismarck played the “baton égyptienne” and the French colonial card against Britain until the formation of the 1887 Mediterranean Accords.

Third was the 1881 Renewal of the Three Emperors League (Germany, Austria and Czarist Russia), and 1882 Formation of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy) which was aimed primarily at France. This was followed by 1892 Franco-Russian Military Convention and 1894 Dual Alliance, after Germany dropped its 1887 Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1890

Fourth was the 1887-88 Britain forged Mediterranean Accords with Italy and Austria-Hungary (allies of Imperial Germany) in part, in order to secure its position in Egypt. In 1887-1888 there was the failure of Drummond Wolff negotiations to obtain international agreement to withdraw British forces.

Fifth was the ongoing Great Game in Afghanistan and the rise of pan-Arab, constitutional-democratic and pan-Islamic movements (in the Sudan and elsewhere). The latter was ironically assisted by the completion of the Canal in 1869, which made it easier for Islamic pilgrims to travel and communicate. Between 1881 and 1885, Muhammad Ahmed al-Mahdi led a successful revolt against Egypt in the Sudan. General Gordon was killed in Khartoum in 1885. The British defeated the rebels in 1898 and set up a protectorate over the Sudan.

¹¹ George A.L. Lloyd, *Egypt Since Cromer* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 20. By making a deal with France over Morocco freed Britain from problems with the European bondholders and the international Treasury of the Ottoman Debt. As a result, by 1914 Britain was fully in charge of Egypt at little or no cost to itself; it had brought most of East Africa under British control from Egypt outwards, and had made friends with France against Germany in the process.” *And the Apologists for the Iraq War Think Their Critics Are Living in the Past?* Paul W.Schroeder 3-01-04: News Abroad <http://hnn.us/articles/3816.html>. For details of the Egyptian debt crisis, see also Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1907), 11 and M Rifaat Bey, *The Awakening of Modern Egypt* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947)

Sixth, was Anglo-French confrontation in the Sudan in 1898, as the French sought to control a sphere of interest over West Africa and Britain sought control from the Cape to Cairo.

Seventh were continuing steps to isolate and exclude a rising Germany—particularly following the 1904 Anglo-French entente (based upon a *quid pro quo* exchange of French recognition for British claims in Egypt with French claims in Morocco). The 1904 Anglo-French entente likewise helped to protect the Canal and stabilize Egyptian finances, but not conclusively.

Eighth was Imperial Germany's efforts to counter its isolation and "encirclement" through militarization of its naval program as well as burgeoning support for pan-Islamic movements in the 1905, 1911 Moroccan crises, in the Ottoman empire, and elsewhere... The Berlin-Baghdad-Basra railway was designed, in part, to compete with the Suez canal.

British Intervention in Iraq (1917-1920)

British intervention in Iraq in 1919 took place in the context of the collapse of Imperial Germany, and an acrimonious Anglo-French partition of the Ottoman Empire, in which Iraq was carved out of three Ottoman provinces Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. Britain also intervened in Afghanistan at this time, not to overlook US, French and British intervention in the Bolshevik revolution, the often overlooked "lost" war. British strategic interests in Iraq included "imperial communications with India, and protection of both Iraqi and Iranian oil fields" but "without assuming the costly and onerous burden of directly governing the volatile population."

On the 19 March 1917, Britain came to "liberate" Baghdad from the Ottomans as proclaimed by Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude: "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.... O people of Baghdad remember that for 26 generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavored to set one Arab house against another in order that they may profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her Allies, for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen... in realizing the aspirations of your race."

Yet, despite this promise, and public propaganda in support of formal democracy and "constitutionalism," Britain chose a largely authoritarian approach to the new Iraq, through the creation of a "constitutional," yet hereditary, Hashemite monarch in 1921. King Faysal was consequently backed by British agents T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and Gertrude Bell, and crowned to the tune of "God Save the Queen" as there was no Iraqi national anthem at the time.

(Faysal had been dethroned by the French in Syria and had never set foot in Iraq.) Three political parties were then organized in 1921; yet each had essentially the same political objective: Independence. The British generally supported Sunni factions against Kurds and Shi'ites.

After the establishment of the monarchy, the next step was the signing of a treaty of alliance with Britain (signed on Oct. 10, 1922), which was to last 20 years. The Iraqi press, however, opposed the Treaty, thus making it nearly impossible for the Constituent Assembly to ratify the Treaty (until 1924), while British press protested the costs of the occupation. A constitution was signed in 1925; the 1926 Treaty of Mosul (accompanied by a repression of the Kurds) divided oil concessions among the British, French and Americans.¹²

Under the new constitution, the King could by-pass parliament, and issue orders to fulfil treaty obligations with Britain. Much as was the case with Egypt, Britain appointed advisors to oversee Iraqi foreign policy and military. According to T.E. Lawrence in April 1921, King Faysal deemed "The people of Iraq as not fitted yet for responsible government... If he is left at the mercy of the local people in all things there will be a disaster. He will require British help sometimes against his own people, and he hopes his opinion on permanent garrison will be taken eventually."

It had taken more than one year for the British to suppress the 1919-20 uprising in which some 6,000-10,000 Iraqis were killed, as compared to an estimated 450-500 British and Indian soldiers; the overall intervention cost \$40 million pounds, a significant sum criticized in the press. The 1920 *Thawra* (insurrection), which was primarily tribal and uncoordinated, had affected one-third of the Iraqi countryside outside the major towns, with only isolated attacks in Baghdad and other urban areas. It was characterized by attacks on rail and communication systems, local assaults and the looting of buildings and property.¹³ Shi'ites formed an alliance with the Sunni Sharifians led by the Faysal. Ultimately, the Shi'ite rebellion led the British to put Sunni and Ottoman officers in power—a fact which led to the tensions between the Sunnis and Shi'ites today.¹⁴

The Kurds likewise began to revolt in 1919, and were supported by the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which envisioned an autonomous Kurdish state; yet the latter proved impossible with the revival of Turkish nationalism after World War I, and Turkish claims to oil-rich Mosul. The British had to drive the Turks out of Iraqi territory and then seek to integrate the Kurds into an artificial Iraqi state by force. The British used RAF air power to repress the insurrection; it has been alleged that Britain used chemical weapons in 1920, as well in the early and mid 1920s.

¹² For background on the oil question, and the close post-World War I relationship between the Americans and British, see Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928* (London: Ithaca press, 1976).

¹³ Stanley Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq 1900-1950* (Oxford University Press, 1953).

¹⁴ Yitzhak Nakash, "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* July/ August 2003.

Direct British intervention in Iraq consequently lasted more than a decade. Britain finally recognized Iraqi formal independence in June 1930; the treaty called for a close Anglo-Iraqi alliance and bound Iraq to "formal and frank consultations" in all matters of foreign policy. Britain retained Royal Air Force (RAF) bases (granted in October 1932) near Basra and west of the Euphrates, but these forces "shall not constitute in any manner an occupation, and will in no way prejudice the sovereign rights of Iraq." This treaty, valid for 25 years, was to come into effect after Iraq joined the League of Nations in 1932. King Faysal's death in 1933, however, then opened up a period of greater political instability characterized by numerous *coup d'états* that resulted in British re-intervention in 1941 in the effort to crush a pro-Axis coup. Shiite rebellions took place in the south between 1935 and 1936.

Between 1921 and 1958, more than fifty governments came into power after 1936, many of these governments were the result of military coups. There were at least three major Kurdish uprisings in the north between 1922 and 1932. Frequent instability would consequently lead to a tradition of "strongman" rulers in the later decades, culminating in the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

British and American Interventions in Egypt (1882) and Iraq (2003)

Much like the British in 1917-1920, the US also promised the liberation of the Iraqi people: As President George W. Bush stated to the people of Iraq April 4, 2003: "The government of Iraq, and the future of your country, will soon belong to you...We will end a brutal regime... so that Iraqis can live in security. We will respect your great religious traditions, whose principles of equality and compassion are essential to Iraq's future. We will help you build a peaceful and representative government that protects the rights of all citizens. And then our military forces will leave. Iraq will go forward as a unified, independent and sovereign nation that has regained a respected place in the world."

In the contemporary circumstances, the immediate justification for US intervention on grounds of "pre-emption" (but which was, in reality, an act of *preclusion*) was that the Iraqi regime had purportedly been building Weapons of Mass Destruction. Moreover, once having deployed roughly 200,000 troops in the vicinity, as Henry Kissinger argued at the time, it was very difficult for the Bush administration to back off without losing face, and without likewise losing the support of regional allies.¹⁵ In this regard, in both Egypt in 1882 and Iraq in 2003, it appeared that the very

¹⁵ Henry Kissinger, "The End of NATO as We Know It?" MSNBC News, February 10, 2003.

nature of the military deployments helped *impel* the intervention, despite ongoing diplomatic maneuvering and posturing.

In both Egypt (1882) and Iraq (2003) there was likewise a long history of tensions, with domestic pressure groups pushing for intervention. Mismanagement by the Khedive, regional wars in Ethiopia and the Sudan, control of the Suez "life line," protection of English interests, thwarting French or German influence, human rights concerns, rights of English and European property holders, and perhaps most importantly debt collection, were the key issues in 1882. Here, US demands for access to Persian Gulf oil, and control of sea lines of communication appears to parallel British demands to control the Suez "lifeline".¹⁶ British opposition to Arabi Pasha and Egyptian nationalism appears to parallel neo-conservative demands for "regime change" in Iraq. Massive debts of both Egypt and Iraq certainly form a common "bond" between the two eras, although it can be argued that military intervention may have augmented those debts and costs considerably in both cases.

It is furthermore interesting to note—and does not seem entirely accidental in geohistorical terms—that, British intervention in Afghanistan was followed by intervention in Egypt (and then the Sudan), much as the US-led intervention in Afghanistan in 1991 was soon followed by intervention in Iraq in 2003. In this regard, both British and US actions followed an interesting pattern. In the late 19th century, Great Britain had intervened in Afghanistan in 1878-1880 to counter Russian pressures and to protect India, in what Rudyard Kipling had called the "Great Game" followed by intervention in Egypt in 1882. The USA indirectly intervened in Afghanistan against Soviet influence in the period 1979-1988, and then directly in December 2001, not so much against Russian influence, but to prevent the Taliban from destabilizing Pakistan, and from harboring Al-Qaida, followed by intervention in Iraq in 2003.

Moreover, much like their 19th century British counterparts, who pressed for intervention in the Sudan, contemporary American neo-conservative "jingoists" have threatened to intervene elsewhere: Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan have been unofficially mentioned as possible options for US military intervention. In addition, the entrance of China and other actors into the global strategic arena has meant Rudyard Kipling's Anglo-Russian "Great Game" of Afghanistan of the 19th century has transmogrified into the "Great Game of Go" in the 20th-21st centuries.

Likewise, with interesting parallels to contemporary "neo-cons," in 1879, the balance of press of opinion was evidently critical of jingoism; yet by 1882, the majority of press opinion shifted

¹⁶ What oil in Iraq is today, so the Suez was then. More than 80% of the traffic going through the canal was British— indeed 13 percent of Britain's entire trade went through the canal..." Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (Penguin, 2004), 218.

toward a pro-imperial stance, in regard to the perceived "threat" of Egyptian nationalism.¹⁷ Here, the population in Great Britain had experienced nothing close to September 11 (except perhaps the killing of General Gordan, later in 1885 in the Sudan, see below), but came to support British colonialism.

Other noteworthy parallels include the fact that British intervention in Egypt in 1882 was followed by the failed quest of the Egyptian Khedive Ismail Pasha (1863-1879) to acquire a regional empire in its unsuccessful (1875-1879) war with Abyssinia (Ethiopia), and with Egypt's subsequent withdrawal from the Sudan. US intervention similarly followed the Iraq's invasion of Iran (the brutal decade long "war of cities") and then Kuwait in August 1990, an action in part intended to force up the price of oil and repay Iraqi war debts. Needless to say, the lost wars of Egypt of the late 19th century and that of Iraq in the late 20th century has resulted in the formation of two completely "failed states"—as lost wars, corruption, international speculation, plus the collapse of cotton prices after the US Civil War in the case of Egypt, and lower than desired oil prices, following the Iran-Iraq war, in the case of Iraq, helped to bankrupt Egypt then, and Iraq today.

Following military intervention, the US has, much like Gladstone spoke of "Egypt for the Egyptians", accordingly spoken of "Iraq for the Iraqis" but the darker realities appear to indicate a long term pre-occupation with, and occupation of, Iraq due to its fragile internal social and political instability, lack of adequate police and national self defense forces, and massive debts due to international creditors and regional states. This is true even though in 2004 Paris Club members reduced roughly 80% of Iraq's \$40bn in debt owed to its members out of roughly \$120bn (or more, including reparations claims owed to other states, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.)¹⁸ *Much as was the case for Egypt in the late 19th century, the issues of debt, reparations claims, as well as the ownership of Iraqi oil fields, will remain issues of contention within Iraq as well as with vested interests outside Iraq, making long term US-EU-Russian-Chinese political-economic cooperation even more difficult.*

¹⁷ Edward Grierson, *The Death of the Imperial Dream* (Garden City, NY: 1972), 99-120.

¹⁸ The Paris Club agreed to write off a portion of Iraq's debt in three stages. The first 30 percent, amounting to \$11.6 billion, is to be written off unconditionally. A second 30 percent reduction will be delivered "as soon as a standard International Monetary Fund program is approved." A final 20 percent reduction will be granted "upon completion of the last IMF board review of three years of implementation of standard IMF programs." Zaid Al-Ali, "The IMF and the Future of Iraq" 08 December 2004.

<http://usa.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/11850/>

See also debates demanding a write-off of all "odious debts." *Jubilee Iraq News*

<http://www.jubileeiraq.org/>

Somewhat similar to 19th century France, in which Charles Clemenceau and other radical Republicans opposed French intervention in Egypt to “pull the chestnuts out of the fire” for the British, Franco-German opposition to US/UK military intervention in 2003 somewhat similarly indicated an unwillingness to divert European resources to the Persian Gulf, when an expanding European Union needed to concentrate on the political and security/defense needs of its new membership and when it was unclear what advantages the Americans would grant once the US seized power in Iraq. Contemporary France and Germany thus refused to get bogged down in an imperial adventure at the same time that the EU has begun to absorb new eastern European members, plus Malta and Greek Cyprus,¹⁹ thus achieving *hegemony* over many former Soviet spheres of security and interest.

Franco-German opposition to war in Iraq was not only due to principles of “war as a last resort” (in French President Jacques Chirac’s words) but also due to an unwillingness to engage in the clearly foreseen long term political, military, economic—and, I might add, moral costs of occupation, which the French had evidently experienced in Algeria in the 1960s. (In supporting the Americans, the UK seemed to overlook what Britain itself had experienced in both Egypt in the late 19th century and Iraq in the 20th). Fears of alienating France’s Arab and Moslem population may have played a role as well, not to overlook the fears that intervention would bring with more, not less, terrorism, in Europe.

The US did threaten to cut France, Russia, and China out of Iraqi oil concessions, that had been granted under the regime of Saddam Hussein, and to concurrently reduce the heavy Iraqi debt load owed to many of the same creditors, at the same time that the US government granted only US multinational companies most of the major reconstruction contracts. Much as British actions in Egypt in 1882 isolated Britain and tended to alienate Imperial Germany, Czarist Russia, as well as France, in the late 19th century, which was characterized by a greater degree of multipolarity, US policies in regard to Iraq additionally risked isolating Russia and China, should NATO-EU enlargement, plus the US military presence in Iraq (and elsewhere) been regarded as “isolating” Russia, China or both, and possibly cutting out their claims to oil reserves.

These two cases of intervention in key strategic-economic centers of global impact (affecting world trade in the case of Egypt in 1882 and global oil supplies in the case of Iraq) in very different eras appear to indicate that practical issues tend to surpass ideology. Bill Clinton, whose anti-imperial perspective can best be compared to Liberal British Prime Minister Gladstone, was able to stay out of direct military intervention in Iraq. Bill Clinton had engaged in economic and

¹⁹ Ironically the British presence on Malta and Cyprus are the two examples used by Clemenceau, in his debates at the National Assembly in 1882, to sarcastically illustrate the falsity of Britain’s claims that it would only stay “provisionally” in Egypt.

military “containment” (the “double containment of Iraq and Iran) and engaged in at least two *coup d’etat* attempts in 1995 and 1996, but pulled out of the plotted coups at the last moment.²⁰

After being pressed by Congress for “regime change” with the passing of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, the Clinton administration engaged in an intensive bombing campaign in 1998 of Iraqi military infrastructure, but refused to go farther. By contrast, George Bush Jr. appeared more willing to intervene—unlike his more prudent father who had reluctantly engaged forces with international support in 1990-91, and who then refused to go to Baghdad to occupy the country. The neo-conservative movement supported President Bush Jr. in regard to Iraq, much as English “jingoists” had supported British Prime Minister Disraeli, and then pressured Gladstone (who had personal interests in Suez affairs as well).

Contrasting British and American Interventions in Iraq (1917)

As previously pointed out, British experience in Iraq after World War I perhaps provides a better analogy than that of Egypt of 1882, in terms of the domestic socio-economic crisis (as well as the question of oil), although the international situation and geostrategic constellation of major powers at the time was very different.

By contrast with British intervention in Iraq in the 1920s, today’s conflict may, however, prove even more difficult to repress, due to availability of small arms and dual use technology, and due to the nature *asymmetrical* modes of warfare, and what I have called suicidal “hit but not run” tactics—assuming there is a continuing will to resist the “occupation” forces.²¹ Rather than Weapons of Mass Destruction, the US finds itself confronted in a war confronted with weapons of conventional destruction, in which US forces are not well prepared.

Late 19th early 20th century British imperialism in Egypt and South Africa had been characterized as “race and bureaucracy” by Hannah Arendt. Britain gave Sunni Moslem Arabs precedence over Kurds and Shi’ites, and worked behind an authoritarian leader, King Faysal. By contrast, the US, has thus far appeared to be radically undoing the system of social stratification forged by Great Britain, by, at least initially, excluding all members of the Ba’ath party from all

²⁰ The first coup was “planned” in 1994-1995 by the Iraqi National Congress (generally favored by the Defense Department), but the Clinton Administration refused to back it by military intervention; the second coup was better organized in 1996 by the Iraqi National Accord (generally favored by the CIA), but failed as Saddam’s intelligence found out about the plot and executed the plotters. See Liam Anderson, Gareth Stansfield *The Future of Iraq* (Palgrave, 2004), 95-96. See also Robert Baer, *See No Evil* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002).

²¹ See Hall Gardner, *NATO and the European Union: New World, New Europe, New Threats* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). Introduction and Chapter 2.

positions of authority, including teaching positions (and not by excluding *only* those leaders of the Baa'th party who had been accused of war crimes).

The new form of 21st century American hegemony or imperialism thus risks being stigmatized as "communitarian federalism" as opposed to "democratic federalism" (due to the general tendency to identify key Iraqi political factions with religion and ethnicity as opposed to wider secular and regional interests and despite deep political divisions among each of these factions). Divided Kurdish parties demand greater "autonomy" than that envisioned by Washington; and the return of an estimated 400,000s of Shi'ites from Iran may exacerbate inter-communal tensions between Sunni's and Shi'ites, while the Christian community feels threatened and had begun to emigrate to Syria and Lebanon. "Communitarian federalism" (if not, communitarian chaos) may, in turn, be combined with what I call "libertarian sub-contracting" rather than democratic liberalism due to the tendency of both the US government and international organizations to parcel out tasks to private subcontractors, including private security forces, or else to NGOs, rather than Iraqi contractors.²²

The prospects for a positive recovery unfortunately remains bleak given the fact that Iraq represents a largely artificial state formed out of the ruin of the Ottoman empire with considerable internal religious, ethnic, and tribal (plus mafia) conflicts that threaten its possible dis-aggregation, and with which the US and the Pentagon have had no real historical experience. Other factors working against a swift Iraqi recovery include a weak economy (without a functioning middle class), and massive debts—not to overlook acts of sabotage and terrorism that seek to expel all foreign "occupiers," in additional credible regional threats to its territorial integrity (stemming primarily from Turkish and Iranian irredentist claims).

Should Iraq be ultimately be granted nominal independence, though a "democratically" elected government, it is highly likely that such a government will take exception to US political and economic policies, and seek the further reduction, if not the repudiation, of what it considers "odious" debts, at the same time that it pushes OPEC for higher oil prices to pay the massive costs of reconstruction.

Recurrent Pan-Islamic Movements

It is not totally accidental that British intervention in Egypt in 1882 was intended, at least in part, to squash pan-Islamic agitation (as well as Arab nationalism) as it was precisely the opening

²² At the end of the Persian Gulf War, the ratio of soldiers to contractors was 100 to 1; the ratio is now 10 to 1 and rising. This raises questions as to oversight and accountability. Institute for Policy Studies Report, "Paying the Price: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War"
http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/paying_the_price

of the Suez canal in 1869 which had eased the transport of pilgrims to Mecca and that ultimately led to the emergence of pan-Islamic ideology. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait may have possessed a relatively greater strategic-economic importance in contemporary circumstances than did Egypt's attack against Ethiopia in the late 19th century; however crisis in the Sudan was key to Egypt's stability. From this perspective, Britain was then forced to intervene to control the region of the Nile against pan-Islamic insurgents led by the Mahdi—as a step toward an eventual Cape to Cairo hegemony. What this may possibly imply for the US remains to be seen.

The pan-Islamic movement has at least partial roots in Egypt after pan-Islamic theorist Jamal ad-Din Afghani born moved to Egypt as a lecturer in 1871, after being denounced as a heretic in Istanbul. Afghani was subsequently deported from Egypt in 1879, prior to the disturbances that led to long term British intervention.²³ Much like Bin Laden and Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, held responsible for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, who first fought the Soviets and then the Americans, Jamal ad-Din Afghani believed that the struggle in Afghanistan should serve as an the inspiration to overthrow British imperialism or hegemony throughout the Islamic world.

The defeat of General "Chinese" Gordon in the Sudan in 1885 had been regarded as a victory of Islam over Christianity—until joint Anglo-Egyptian force took the Sudan in 1898 and kept joint control over the region until 1953. It has been argued that the killing of General "Chinese" Gordon in 1885 by the Sudanese Mahdi represented the 9/11 for British public opinion at the time,²⁴ in spite of the fact that the shift to a more proactive imperialist sentiment in Britain had already taken place with the 1882 intervention in Egypt.

As both Britain and France sought to establish their own spheres of influence in Africa, the year 1898 then saw a near Anglo-French clash over Fashoda, as well French efforts to forge an Anglo-German-Russian entente against Britain.²⁵ (As late 19th century conflict over the Sudan has continued to play itself out in contemporary circumstances, it does not seem entirely accidental that the Sudan in the latter part of the 1990s became a base for Al-Qaeda.) In today's circumstances, however, one cannot not expect the US and France to clash over Fashoda: Here, France appears to be desperately holding onto the remnants of its colonial hegemony (Ivory Coast), while the US appears to be deploying forces through Africa.

Although France, Russia and Turkey were all attracted by the anti-British elements of pan-Islamic ideology in the 19th century, it would not be until the rise of Imperial Germany, that the

²³ Louis L. Snyder, *Macro-Nationalisms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1984).

²⁴ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (Penguin, 2004), 151.

²⁵ Here, while the democratic states of France and Britain did not fight with each other over Fashoda, France did, however, seek to forge potentially hostile counterbalancing alliances to British hegemony. It was only after the perceived rise of a common threat of Imperial Germany in 1901, followed by compromise over Egypt/ Morocco that Britain and France were then able to re-align in the 1904 Entente Cordiale.

Kaiser would begin to provide strong diplomatic support pan-Islam in Morocco, and in the Ottoman empire. Bismarck's Germany (as well as France and Russia) were able to play the *bâton égyptienne* to press Britain for colonial concessions elsewhere, and had led Salisbury to the conclusion that it would be better to reconcile with Russia in Asia and France in Africa, as would eventually occur in 1904 with the re-formation of the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale.²⁶ German efforts to break out of its political-economic isolation caused by the Anglo-French entente led to the 1905 and 1911 Moroccan crises, an often forgotten aspect of the causes of World War I, in addition to the more well-known Balkan crises, in which acts of terrorism helped to spark major power conflict.

Imperial German support for the pan-Islamic movement indicates a historical precedent for the possibility that a major power (and not such a failed state, such as Afghanistan), could decide to support a similar movement in today's circumstances, if thoroughly alienated from the global system. Likewise, the pre-World War analogy also indicates to scenario than an act of terrorism could spark a larger conflict.

Concluding Theses

Iraq, much like Egypt and the Suez Canal in the late 19th century, has become an area of intense intra-Allied contention, as well as a focal point for global rivalry, including the burgeoning pan-Islamic and pan-Arab movements of these respective eras.

Much like the 1882 Egyptian Crisis divided France and England and ultimately led France to turn to Russia to form the 1894 Franco-Russian Dual Alliance, the Iraq crisis has caused a rupture in the US-European relationship, opening the possibility that Europe (in the process of its efforts to achieve a Common Foreign and Security Policy) may seek alternative alliances, looking toward either Russia or China or possibly both, possibly reaching toward a Sino-European "Red Eiffel Tower" alliance.

The issue of the Suez Canal remained an international bone of contention until the Cold War and the 1956 Suez Crisis; the latter led, in turn, to British retrenchment east of Suez by 1968-70, with the United States largely filling in the gaps once Britain withdrew its overseas presence. France (as well as Israel) then boosted its efforts to obtain nuclear weaponry, so as to gain relative independence vis-à-vis the two superpowers, the USA and USSR. Concurrently, memory of British and French roles in the 1956 Suez crisis has led Washington to oppose the development of a truly independent Common European Foreign, Defence and Security policy.

²⁶ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism* (London: Ashfield Press, 1980), 200.

Following upon the traces of British intervention in Iraq after World War II, US intervention in Iraq (and quest for access to, and control of, Persian Gulf oil and of sea lines of communication) begins a new cycle in the bid for world "hegemony."

In essence, during the Cold War, the US was gradually able to superimpose its control (though not without difficulties, as was the case in Vietnam) over the imperial infrastructure already put in place by the British and French by the 19th century (not to overlook those imposed by the Spanish and Portuguese in Latin America), thereby reducing the need for direct colonial controls, and making it easier to fashion the illusion that the US had not established a "formal empire."

In the post-Cold War, the US is beginning to superimpose its controls over former Soviet imperial infrastructure and geo-strategic positioning, including that of former Soviet "allies," particularly in eastern Europe but also in Central Asia, not to overlook Iraq as a former Soviet-backed client. The establishment of a world network of military bases comes at the risk of potential conflict with Russia, if not China, and other states—if these states cannot find a way to act in concert.²⁷ In previous eras, quests for world hegemony by a major state or empire have provoked a counter response, resulting in major power war.

While the US has thus far sought to avoid creating a more formal empire—US-led military intervention in a number of "failed" states and regions has increasingly resulted in long-term peacekeeping and the burden of social reconstruction, involving US armed forces—*even if assisted by multilateral or international supports and peacekeeping forces.*

Much as Britain made the leap to a formal empire in Egypt in 1882, after its conquest of India in the late 18th century, the US may be drawn deeper into control of Iraq than it previously expected—as truly multilateral aid and assistance may not be readily forthcoming, and as Iraq itself, not entirely unlike Egypt of 1882, may take a very long time to get its feet off the ground given its considerable internal conflicts, massive debts, not to overlook regional threats to its territorial integrity, and despite its considerable oil wealth.

New Alliance Formations?

The 1882 dispute over Egypt continued to rankle British and French strategic/ economic relations until the 1904 Anglo-French entente, which was forged as a result of the rise of Imperial

²⁷ On the role of US military bases in the expansion of the overseas American empire, see Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004). After September 11, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has acquired fourteen new bases in Eastern Europe (Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Kosovo), Iraq, the Persian Gulf (Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, UAE), Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, but also began to scale back deployments in Germany, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Johnson, 214-215.

Germany, as well as an agreement of France to formally recognize British controls over Egypt in exchange for French controls over Morocco. In the meantime, France looked to Czarist Russia for a new security relationship in that British ties no longer appeared reliable as a counterbalance to an increasingly threatening Imperial Germany.

Burgeoning French and EU ties to China can be compared and contrasted with the opening steps of France to forge the Dual Alliance with Russia in the late 19th century, as well as with the Franco-Soviet pact prior to World War II. In this regard, will the EU follow-up on French-German proposals to lift arms sales to China, and seek out closer military and economic ties with China, in a "Red Eiffel Tower Alliance," following the US intervention in Iraq? If so, this might parallel the steps of 19th century France as it looked to an alliance with Czarist Russia in the years that followed British intervention in Egypt, precisely because that intervention helped to undermine the Entente Cordiale.

Prime Minister's Jean-Pierre Raffarin's spectacular visit to China in April 2003 during the SARS (SRAS) crisis, to establish commercial and high technology cooperation with China, coupled with recent Franco-German overtures to open arms sales to Beijing, raise questions as to the extent of the security relationship that might be established with China involving sales of advanced weapons systems and dual use technology. The prospect of Franco-German arms sales to China may likewise put pressure on the US to break the arms embargo imposed on China after the Tiananmen Square repression in June 1989.²⁸ At the same time, arms sales to China, the question of Turkish membership in the European Union threaten to divide Europe once again, which has yet to transcend still festering divisions over US-UK-Spanish and Polish intervention in Iraq.

The fact that both China and France have spoken positively of the future establishment of a "multipolar" world has caused a negative counter-reaction in Washington, which prefers cooperative "multilateral" cooperation over uncooperative "multipolar" counter-balancing, unless, of course, Washington decides to act unilaterally. On the one hand, the US fears a strong Europe that can engage in unilateral actions (as proved the case in the 1956 Suez crisis); it also opposes a Europe that may take a neutral on a number issues that the US seeks support.

Washington remains concerned with Chinese military threats to Taiwan and demands to unify with Taiwan by force if necessary, China's growing naval and nuclear capacity, as well as the burgeoning US trade deficit with China, combined with the fact that China is the second largest US creditor, after Japan, as these two countries now support the dollar in order to hang on to their

²⁸ Frank Umbach, "EU's Links with China Pose New Threat to Transatlantic Relations" *European Affairs*, Spring 2004.

<http://www.europeaninstitute.org/Spring-2004/eus-links-with-china-pose-new-threat-to-transatlantic-relations.html>

own trade surpluses. While the Americans argue the Chinese *renminbi* is undervalued, the fact that China represents a major creditor could possibly permit Beijing to threaten speculation against the US dollar in order to obtain specific geopolitical and economic goals.

Could this scenario of a Sino-European alignment result in new step toward a potentially dangerous multipolarity? Or could the new Europe look to tighten relations with both Russia and China? Or Russia alone? And would such actions be taken in coordination with the Americans? Or could European dreams of unity falter, with a bit of American prodding, in the effort to divide the "old" Europe from the "new" one? Or could the Americans look closer to an increasingly authoritarian Russia, while Europe looks to China, if the EU is unable to reach accords with Russia? This is also not to say that "Weimar" Russia will necessarily transform into "Fascist" Russia (Russia could possibly disaggregate), but that the EU could, most likely, find an instable and increasingly authoritarian Russia difficult to deal with, at the same time that EU links to China may continue to raise Russian suspicions.

The 19th century geohistorical example also indicates that it is not without historical precedent that recurrent pan-Islamic movements could obtain the overt support of a major power or powers, sometime in the near future. The Axis powers also sought to support any anti-British movement. The risk is that American efforts to sustain hegemony may be met by both resistance (of various anti-*status quo* partisan groups) as well as by countervailing alliances of both major and minor powers—if a multilateral and concerted approach cannot soon be implemented and sustained.²⁹

Egypt and the Suez Canal remained throughout the 20th century and erupted into an issue of contention between the US, Britain, France, Israel, Egypt and the pan-Arab movement, during the 1956 Arab-Israeli war, leading France and Israel to speed the development of nuclear weapons and to opt for relative independence vis-à-vis both the Soviet Union and the USA. Political-economic instabilities, coupled with pan-Islamic movements, that presently threaten Egyptian socio-political stability as well. It appears highly likely that Iraq, much like Egypt in 1882, will remain an issue of international contestation involving the question of American "world hegemony" for quite awhile. The question remains for how long, and with what consequences...

²⁹ See my analysis, in Hall Gardner, ed. *NATO and the European Union: New World, New Europe, New Threats* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), Introduction, Chapters 2; 8 and 16.