

A Nation At Risk – Reloaded: Part I

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Abstract

This article constitutes a counter-celebration of A Nation At Risk's 20th anniversary, treating the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report as the first shot in a massive campaign of propaganda whose language and logic bears startling resemblances to that of Cold War propaganda. The author traces and analyzes that language and its reform effects from the Reagan administration through the Clinton administration, laying the historical foundation for a subsequent analysis of George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act to appear in a future issue of this journal.

INTRODUCTION

Students of political economy share familiarity with Max Weber's description of the state as exercising a monopoly over the use of violence. To be more precise, Weber actually contended that "the state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of *force* within a given territory" [1] (emphasis added). Some of those same students may also be aware that Plato had earlier ascribed another monopoly to the state that holds tremendous relevance for educational policy analysts' reflections on *A Nation At Risk*, which "celebrated" its twentieth anniversary in 2003. Writing in *The Republic* (Book 3), Plato spends considerable time rehashing Socrates' defense of censorship before he goes on to claim that "we must prize truth." "Lay persons," he says, "have no business lying." Like doctors in charge of the health of the republic, however, the rulers of a just society should recognize that there are times when "lies are useful...as a kind of medicine or remedy. Only the rulers of the city—and no others—may tell lies. And their lies, whether directed to enemies or citizens, will be legitimate only if their purpose is to serve the public interest." [2] In addition to the state's monopoly over violence/force described by Weber, we can see how Plato's *Republic*, (frequently

cited by neoconservatives like former Secretary of Education William Bennett and Alan Bloom [author of *The Closing of the American Mind*] as one the “Great Books” and an intellectual cornerstone of modern democracies), grants the state a monopoly over lies.

As I previously have written, we should consider *A Nation At Risk* to be the greatest lie that the state has ever produced regarding our America’s public schools. *Risk* was more than a document. [3] In the first place, it was the most efficacious educational report ever issued by the federal government, judged in terms of the scope and scale of educational reforms that it engendered over the past twenty years. It was also a well-designed and orchestrated propaganda campaign that actually began 18 months prior to its release when Secretary of Education Terrel Bell established the National Commission for Excellence in Education (NCEE). If we examine the tactics of the NCEE as they are described by the Commission’s Executive Director, Milton Goldberg, and senior research associate, James Harvey, and if we even minimally analyze the verbiage used in their descriptions of those tactics, we recognize some rather disturbing patterns in their work.

Goldberg and Harvey report that they and the other commissioners conducted their activities leading up the release of their final report: “A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,” in “an extraordinarily open manner.” Not only did the Commission assume a high-profile throughout the 18 months leading up to its report, wherein Commission members participated in a public event somewhere in the US every 3 weeks, but maintained that profile for a considerable time afterward. Goldberg and Harvey admit that this rate of high-profile activity was conducted in order to “create a national audience for the Commission’s work.” They do not report, but we might suspect, that the high-profile of their activities was one of the many lessons that they learned after having “examined the methods that other distinguished national panels had used to generate public and governmental reactions.” [4]

Neither do Goldberg and Harvey reveal which “other distinguished national panels” they borrowed their methods from. Elements of their arguments, however, reflect the rhetorical style of those involved in formulating and promulgating the policies contained in NSC 68, the document that came to define US Cold War doctrine. For example, in listing the more publicly admissible lessons that they gleaned from

examining other methods for generating public and governmental reactions (dare we say ‘proper’ reactions?), the commissioners explain that “effective reports concentrated on essential messages, described them in clear and unmistakable prose, and drew the public’s attention to the national consequences of continuing on with business as usual.” This statement bears a startling resemblance to Dean Acheson’s account of the rhetorical maneuvers that he and other “hard liners” in and around the National Security Council deployed to “bludgeon the mass mind of ‘top government’” into believing that the Soviets were a military threat to the US and to world security. Acheson recalls how:

In the State Department we used to discuss how much time that mythical ‘average American citizen’ put in each day listening, reading, and arguing about the world outside his own country. . . . It seemed to us that ten minutes a day would be a high average. If this were anywhere near right, points to be understandable had to be clear. If we made our points *clearer than truth*, we did not differ from most other educators and could hardly do otherwise (emphasis added). [5]

In addition to making their “essential messages” clearer than truth, the members of the NCEE found that other distinguished panels had framed those messages so as to draw “the public’s attention to the national consequences of continuing on with business as usual.” On this matter, they could have taken their cue from a 1980 report that Goldberg and Harvey cite from the President’s Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties. The authors of this earlier report had warned that ““The continued failure of the schools to perform their traditional role adequately may have disastrous consequences for this Nation.”” [6] On the other hand, further evidence could be ushered in to support the conclusion that the methods adopted by the NCEE to generate a public and governmental response were taken from those associated with NSC 68 and the Cold War hysteria used to promote its underlying agenda.

For example, the self-congratulatory tone taken by Goldberg and Harvey in reporting their success in generating the desired public and governmental response reaches its crescendo with their claim that: “Not since the heady days following the launching of Sputnik I has education been accorded so much attention.” [7] Given the emergence of the New Right and the resurgence of the traditional Cold War conservative bloc in the Republican party that led to Reagan’s electoral victory in 1980, it is not surprising that the discourses surrounding *A Nation At Risk* would reflect the rhetoric of Cold

War militarism. This reference to the attention that education received as the result of Sputnik I alludes to the rising Cold War hysteria during the 1950s that blamed professional educators for having failed “national security” interests by allowing the schools to deteriorate into bastions of anti-intellectualism – the same essential message delivered in “A Nation At Risk.”

In 1981, Reagan administration officials declared that a new threat to national security had arisen, and alerting the nation to this threat constituted the first “essential message” that Goldberg, Harvey and other members of the NCEE had to make clearer than truth in the public mind. Though the Soviet menace was still serious enough to elicit mass public concern in the opinions of Reagan’s elite planners, the threat of Soviet world domination was now coupled with the risk of the US losing its pre-eminence in world markets. “Competitors throughout the world,” Goldberg and Harvey explain, “are overtaking our once unchallenged lead in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation.” [8]

To fully grasp the connections between the new risk and the old one, we should understand that “our once unchallenged lead” in the global economy resulted directly from the conditions described below.

THE ORIGINS OF GLOBALISM

Contrary to the popularly received image of the “global economy” as the product of certain anonymous and autonomous historical forces that continually push humanity in the direction of progress, the basic contours of our current global economic order reflect many of the designs formulated within elite US planning circles prior to American entry into WWII. America’s elite planning community had predicted as early as 1939 that WWII would leave the industrial infrastructures of the colonial powers of Europe in ruin. Anticipating a German victory, members of this elite, business-dominated policy network set out to determine and enunciate to the federal executive “the political, military, territorial and economic requirements of the United States in its potential leadership of the non-German world.” [9]

By July of 1941, they had arrived at a conclusion regarding the territorial requirements for their ever-expanding economic interests, which they equated with

“national interests”. In July, the scope of those requirements, which they had designated as the “Grand Area”, included “the Western hemisphere, the United Kingdom, the remainder of the British Commonwealth and Empire, the Dutch East Indies, China, and Japan.” [10] By the middle of December, however, after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor pushed America into the war, the Council on Foreign Relations and the government committed themselves to the defeat of the Axis powers and the formation of “*a new world order with international political and economic institutions . . . which would join and integrate all of the earth’s nations under the leadership of the United States*” (emphasis added). [11]

American entry into the war, then, expanded the territorial vision of the Grand Area as the US positioned itself to create the world’s first truly global empire – a *pax Americana*. As Council of Foreign Affairs director Isaiah Bowman wrote just a week after US entry into war: “The measure of our victory will be the measure of our domination after victory.” [12] The question of how that domination could be maintained had yet to be determined.

CREATING THE COLD WAR

The plans to create and maintain a global economic order dominated by elite US interests laid the groundwork of US foreign policy both during and after WWII. The essence of that policy developed under the assumption of a German victory that would establish a Nazi-dominated Continental European bloc, including what would remain of a defeated Soviet Union. That is, the framework of US foreign policy in the post-WWII era emerged from a political and economic context that predated the official declaration of Cold War.

With no small measure of foresight, the American policy-planning community recognized that achieving this level of global hegemony could not be easily secured if presented to the American people and the world in such crass terms. As early as April of 1941, the Economic and Financial Group of the Council on Foreign Relations warned that:

If war aims are to be stated which seem to be concerned solely with Anglo-American imperialism, they will offer little to people in the rest of the world, and will be vulnerable to Nazi counter-promises. . . . The interests of other peoples should be stressed, not only those of Europe, but also of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This would have a better propaganda effect. [13]

In acknowledgement that the “formulation of a statement of war aims for propaganda purposes” differs “from the formulation of one defining the true national interest,” [14] these elite planners committed themselves to developing a war statement that would “cultivate a mental view toward world settlement after this war which will enable us to impose our own terms, amounting perhaps to a pax-Americana.” [15] In August of 1941, that statement arrived in the form of the Atlantic Charter, which portrayed Britain and the allies, later including the United States, as combatants in a noble struggle to preserve and extend what Roosevelt identified as the Four Freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Framed as elements of a more general anti-imperialist commitment in US foreign policy, the spirit of the Four Freedoms carried over into the post-war era with the Truman Doctrine of 1947.

While the plans for an expanded Grand Area established the territorial requirements of the pax Americana, the Atlantic Charter and the Truman Doctrine combined to establish the political framework necessary to legitimize US dominance in the “new world order”. That framework provided an image of the United States as the defender of democracy and the right of all people to national self-determination. Determining and acquiring the level of military force required to enforce its global hegemony stood as the last requirements that the US foreign policy establishment would have to meet in realizing their vision of the new world order.

We must remember that the US policy elite laid their post-war plans under the assumption of a German victory well before that period we have come to know as the Cold War. They did not anticipate the survival of the Soviet Union. Though the survival of the Soviet Union did partially impede their global designs, the fact that the structures of the Soviet political-economy endured Hitler’s invasion proved to be rather fortuitous as far as US interests were concerned. Casting the Soviets as a military threat to the preservation of the Four Freedoms, as a threat to the national sovereignty of countries throughout the world, and as an evil force intent on world

domination provided the pretext for maintaining and expanding the war economy to meet the military requirements of *pax Americana* and the economic requirements of the dominant elements within the American foreign policy establishment.

If we limit our definition of the Cold War to a conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, we should note that the conflict began long before either nation could have been properly considered a global superpower. Though it is seldom acknowledged in polite circles, the United States and other Western powers launched an invasion of Russia in 1918. According to historian John Lewis Gaddis, this invasion was undertaken “in response to a profound and potentially far-reaching intervention by the new Soviet government in the internal affairs, not just of the West, but of virtually every country in the world.” [16] But Gaddis goes on to explain that the invasion was not undertaken in response to the threat of Soviet military intervention, but in response to the Bolshevik revolution and what it represented – “a challenge . . . to the very survival of the capitalist order.” [17]

Since the 14th century, Russia and much of Eastern Europe had served as an easily exploitable source of raw materials and labor for Western investors. From the 19th century onward, the steadily increasing flow of foreign investment capital into czarist Russia pushed the country into the modern patterns of neo-colonialism now familiar throughout most of the Third World. (As Noam Chomsky puts it, “Eastern Europe was the original ‘Third World.’” [18]) By the turn of the 20th century, most of the development capital in Russia took the form of foreign investments made for the purpose of generating export items, triggering massive levels of capital flight that intensified existing economic disparities between East and West and caused the national debt to escalate precipitously.

According to Z.A.B. Zeman: “The Bolshevik revolution was, in a critical sense, the reaction of a developing, essentially agrarian society against the West.” [19] The revolution represented more than the overthrow of the czar; it also signified a nationalist movement to liberate Russia from its quasi-colonial dependency on the West, whose “continuously multiplying factories in the [Russian] countryside” as one late 19th century Czech traveller observed, were “European oases”. [20] And while we should recognize that the democratic and socialist ideals of many Russians were crushed in the wake of that revolution, their populist drive toward economic

self-determination was largely fulfilled. And this, as far as the West was concerned, constituted the problem. ““The revolution’s challenge . . . to the very survival of the capitalist order”” rested in the Soviet Union’s refusal “to complement the industrial economies of the West.”

Not only did this refusal generate hostility from the West in terms of depriving their economies of a traditional source of cheap labor and cheap raw materials, but it also generated malevolent attitudes toward the Soviet Union because its ensuing economic growth posed what Chomsky has referred to as the “threat of a good example” that might appeal to other Third World peoples wishing to extricate themselves from Western domination. Moreover, since the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Western powers feared the Soviet Union as a political threat, worried that the success of the Soviet Revolution could inspire nationalist or other populist movements within their spheres of influence, even among their own domestic populations. This was “profound and potentially far-reaching intervention” that the West responded to in 1918 by launching an invasion of the Soviet Union.

While those fears were partially set aside for the sake of the military alliance during WWII, they certainly did not dissipate. At the end of the war, thousands of SS soldiers and other elements of Hitler’s armies within the Ukraine and Eastern Europe received US support to continue fighting within the Soviet realm. The US even employed the services of the head of Nazi intelligence on the Eastern front , Reinhard Gehlen, to coordinate the efforts of those forces under close CIA supervision. On the home front, traditional conservative elements in the US continued to express their fears of the Soviet Union as a political or ideological threat. Recognizing that the Soviets were “by far the weaker force,” George Kennan, Director of Policy Planning in the US State Department, argued that “it is not Russian military power that is threatening us, it is Russian political power.” [21] It was under his assumption of the Soviet political threat that Kennan formulated the original US “containment” policy.

As conceived under Kennan, “containment” meant conceding those areas occupied by the Red Army during WWII to Soviet domination while protecting the rest of the Grand Area from the political threat that is, preventing other nations from achieving independence from the global political-economy that subordinates the needs of indigenous populations to the demands of US and multinational corporations. As

Gaddis points out, however, what we have come to know as containment has been the product, not so much of what the Russians have done, or of what has happened elsewhere in the world, but of internal forces operating within the United States. . . . What is surprising is the *primacy* that has been accorded economic considerations in shaping strategies of containment, *to the exclusion of other considerations* [Gaddis' emphasis]. [22]

Those internal forces giving primacy to economic considerations in shaping what we have come to know as containment include the right-wing of the foreign policy establishment and the military contractors, agribusiness, and nationally-based oil companies whose economic and political clout grew enormously during the economic recovery provided by WWII. In their view, Kennan's conceptualization of containment, which portrayed the Soviet Union as a political or ideological threat, failed to evoke the necessary sense of crisis or national emergency that could justify the level of military build-up required to either enforce the new world order of 1945 or, in the case of military contractors especially, to assure their continued long-term profitability. In order to assure these things, they needed to develop a different portrayal of the Soviet Union and the nature of the threat that it posed to the US and the world. Working through the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Security Council, these forces developed that alternative vision of the Soviet threat in a secret internal planning document known as NSC 68 (National Security Memorandum No. 68).

Written by Paul Nitze, NSC 68 sought to make it perfectly "clear that a substantial and rapid building up of strength in the free world is necessary to support a firm policy intended to check and roll back the Kremlin's drive for world domination." [23] Though Acheson and Nitze knew, as did Kennan and others within the foreign policy establishment, that the Soviets did not possess the capacity for "world domination," facts hold no relevance where matters of elite policy formation are concerned. Following Plato's advice, the pursuit of elite interests under the guise of "national security" or "the national interest" often demands "useful truths" to effect the implementation of appropriate policies for the "common good." As Jerry W. Sanders explains:

while the vision of a Pax Americana constructed on the foundation of militarism was accepted within the foreign policy establishment . . . it was not so extensively held outside those rarefied circles. The wider business community and the wider political community would have to be persuaded of the wisdom of tripling military expenditures, bankrolling Europe's rearmament, and garrisoning American troops abroad to ensure the success of such an ambitious undertaking. [24]

NSC 68 was designed to affect that persuasion at the executive level of the federal government. As Dean Acheson would later recall, “the purpose of NSC-68 was to so bludgeon the mass mind of ‘top government’ that not only could the President make a decision but so that the decision could be carried out.” [25] Secret internal planning documents, however, do not suffice to affect policy, especially where federal budgets are concerned. And “bludgeoning the mass mind of ‘top government’” only went part way toward that end. Advocates of “rollback” or “containment militarism” would also have to generate a consensus in Congress and a sufficient level of public support in order to transform their secret document into an active policy. Chester Barnard, chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation, predicted to other members of the State-Defense Policy Review Committee (which conducted the review leading to NSC-68) that, in order to push the increase in military expenditures that rollback strategy demanded (from \$13.5 billion to \$50 billion) through Congress, “the government is going to need assistance in getting public support.” [26] Or, as Robert Lovett, an investment banker with strong ties to the foreign policy elite, claimed: “We must have a much vaster propaganda machine to tell our story at home and abroad.” [27]

Toward these ends, Barnard recommended the formation of a private citizen's lobby that could “then translate NSC 68 into public discourse under the guise of extraordinary bipartisan concern transcending ordinary politics to meet the national crisis.” [28] These concerns led to the formation of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), a private group drawn together by top officials in the State and Defense Department for the sole purpose of gaining support for the policy recommendations contained in NSC 68 from members of Congress and the general public.

Editorials in the *Washington Times-Herald* described the CPD as “a group of citizens supporting the interventionism of the Truman administration,” charging that the members of CPD were “all prominent internationalists” who were on the Committee

for the Marshall Plan and “profited handsomely from the spending under the Marshall aid program.” This account predicted, further, that “they will also profit from spending under the defense program.” [29] Quite prophetically, Senator Robert Taft warned that the militaristic policies advanced by the CPD would create “great deficits and inflation, and bring on ‘the garrison state’.” [30] Even in the face of this opposition, the CPD was largely successful in creating an image of the Soviet Union as a military threat with aspirations for global domination, thus legitimating both the maintenance of a huge public subsidy to advanced industry through the military system and the now familiar patterns of US intervention in maintaining its global economic hegemony. [31]

THE CONTOURS OF WORLD ORDER

Educators and other agents of American social services must be somewhat confused as to why the so-called “peace dividend” has yet to materialize in the aftermath of the Cold War. If they could only speak with members from the majority of the Third World population, however, they might be extricated from their naiveté long enough to recognize that there is no forthcoming peace dividend, because there is no peace.

Under the rules of the old game, the Cold War, the masters of pax Americana recognized that “Anglo-American imperialism” offered “little to people in the rest of the world.” In order to produce a “better propaganda effect,” official statements would have to stress “the interests of other peoples, . . . not only those of Europe, but also of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.” [32] In addition to the anti-imperialist pretences of Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” and the Truman Doctrine that “containment” doctrine professed to embody, US foreign policy took on an extra burden to help provide for the welfare of Third World peoples.

January 20, 1949 marked a crucial moment in the evolution of relations between the economically and militarily dominant nations in the North and the subordinate nations in the South. On that date, in delivering his inaugural address, President Harry Truman announced the end of imperialism and the beginning of the development era. The official Truman Doctrine of 1947 had, of course, already reiterated America’s anti-Imperialist commitments that Franklin Roosevelt had expressed in signing the Atlantic Charter in August of 1941. The novelty of Truman’s pronouncement on

January 20, 1949, however, rested in its promise of a US foreign policy aimed at assisting the newly independent nations ‘develop’ the level of economic independence that they sought in the wake of their political independence. “The old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit,” Truman wrote “ – has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.” [33] The historical record, however, reveals a pattern radically different from any “democratic fair dealing.”

“Containment” doctrine and “development” policy have complimented one another in establishing the patterns of the post-WW II global economic order. Where “development” policy imposes an agro-export program on the South, which forces them to maintain their traditional role in servicing the economies of the North at the expense of their own domestic populations and their local environments, “containment” functions to avert any deviations from those patterns. Should citizens of any nation decide that they wish to pursue an independent economic path, the essence of economic nationalism, containment policy used to make it possible for them to be automatically characterized as “communists”, “socialists”, “terrorists”, “extremists” or any other term that might serve to align them closely enough with the Kremlin to justify US military intervention. With the Soviet Empire now removed from the scene, returning once again to its Third World status as an investment haven for the West, containment policy requires new pretexts. But the Cold War, when viewed as a “North-South” conflict rather than an “East-West” conflict, continues up to the present.

If anything, as Clinton’s National Security Advisor Anthony Lake commented, the removal of the Soviet deterrent means that “where and how [the US] intervenes abroad is increasingly a matter of choice,” with the choice guided by the obvious criterion of “What is in it for us?” Lake adds that: “throughout the Cold War, we *contained* a global threat to market democracies: now we should seek to *enlarge* their reach (emphasis added).” [34] The boldest assertion of post-Soviet foreign policy from an American official, however, came during the Persian Gulf War, when George Bush declared to anyone thinking of challenging their assigned role in the latest “new world order” that “What we say goes!” [35]

THE NEW WORLD ORDER AT HOME

Waging the Cold War as a pretext for the huge levels of military spending required to maintain its global empire exacted a heavy toll on domestic economy of the United States. Though space renders a full accounting of those costs prohibitive for me here, we only need to consider how the demands of the military-industrial complex for federal research and development funding allowed Germany and Japan to become far more competitive in consumer markets. Given the levels of military spending that the Reagan administration was to initiate in the process of renewing Cold War tensions, however, any linkage between the economic hemorrhaging that military spending had inflicted on US society in years past and the recessionary patterns of the 1970s had to be avoided. This understanding provides some context for grasping the second essential message that the NCEE had to make clearer than truth in the public mind.

Just as they had blamed the schools for allowing the nation's educational standards to deteriorate and allow the Soviets to beat the US into space in the 1950s, advocates of containment militarism were now blaming the schools for the increasing inability of the US to compete in international markets and the concomitant recessionary tendencies of the domestic economy. Once again reflective of the hysterical militarism of the Cold War rhetoricians who inspired the language of this report, the authors of "A Nation At Risk" complained that "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." [36] The prerogatives of business that dominate foreign and domestic policy exclude the possibility that this decline could be related to the Trade Act of 1963 that provided tax subsidies for US firms that relocated or established new production facilities in foreign countries. Also excluded as a contributing factor to the economic plight of American workers, the maquiladora agreement that the federal government established with Mexico in 1965 allowed US companies to import materials into Mexico duty-free for further processing or final assembly. These products are then transported back to the U.S., where the company pays only a small tariff on the value added in Mexico (labor, materials, and overhead). Since the labor is main cost and is so inexpensive (\$.50 an hour), the tariff is minimal. [37]

Other implicit, though nonetheless “essential”, messages that the NCEE was to impart to the public included the assertion that had the schools provided students with better skills and more knowledge, the thousands of industrial jobs that left America between 1965 and 1980 could have been saved. After all, it was owing to the terrible education of those students that American business had to seek refuge among the more highly skilled and trained masses in nations like Mexico, Thailand, and Haiti. Naturally, the questions of wages, safety standards, and environmental regulations, all the product of the meddlesome American public’s interference with the imperatives of business, never entered into the decisions to export US manufacturing plants and jobs overseas. In the final analysis, the “clearer than truth” reality conveyed in “A Nation at Risk” sought to convince the American public that they, because of their poor job skills, were responsible for the downturn in the American economy, which would only worsen under “the continued failure of the schools to perform their traditional role adequately.” [38]

Returning to the “extraordinarily open manner” in which the Commission conducted its work, Goldberg and Harvey state that the numerous public events held during the 18 months leading up to the release of their report afforded the opportunity for “administrators, teachers, parents, and others to . . . discuss their perceptions of the problems and accomplishments of American education.” [39] Given that “A Nation At Risk” delivered the same message contained in both the 1980 report from the President’s Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties and the 1983 report from the National Governors Association’s Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (“Action for Excellence”), we can only conclude that this message was formulated long before the public was actually “consulted.” If that was the case, then the high profile of the NCEE’s work can be seen as an effort to manufacture public consent to the education policies that the Reagan administration sought to enact; namely, returning education to its “traditional role” of providing adequately processed human capital to advanced industry – all at public expense, of course – maintaining the traditional patterns.

All of this conforms to the practices of public diplomacy conducted by the Committee on the Present Danger in the early 1950s. Once the CPD had accomplished its mission of shifting US foreign policy from “containment” to “rollback”, it disbanded

in 1953. Not inconsequentially, many of its original members and some new ones resurrected the CPD during the Reagan era, Paul Nitze, author of NSC 68, included. The presence of these elements undoubtedly affected the formation of the Office for Domestic Diplomacy to help initiate the Reagan administration's second wave of Cold War hysteria to justify the huge budgetary increase in defense spending that contributed so heavily to our current deficit crisis. Holly Sklar cites a senior US official who described the efforts of the OPD as ““a huge psychological operation of the kind the military conducts to influence a population in denied or enemy territory.”” [40] Demonstrating the general sentiments that elite policy makers hold toward the public (the domestic enemy), the OPD also instructed administration officials “to refuse to appear in public forums with well-versed opponents.” [41] While most of the OPD's activities were geared toward manufacturing jingoist hysteria over the fear of a massive Nicaraguan invasion of the United States and protecting the “Teflon President” from criticism, we should expect that all of Reagan's cabinet officials were briefed on such strategies and that the NCEE was not excluded from the conversation.

Public diplomacy, such as that carried out by the National Commission for Excellence in Education, represents nothing less than an effectively organized and operated propaganda campaign, serving the function of what Walter Lippmann called the “manufacture of consent.” [42] Writing in the 1920s, Lippmann observed that propaganda had already become ““a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government”” aimed at mobilizing public support for policies established by ruling elites. During the same era, Edward Bernays explained further that ““the very essence of the democratic process”” is ““the freedom to persuade and suggest The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society It is the intelligent minorities which need to make use of propaganda continuously and systematically.”” Thus, as Noam Chomsky comments, “If the freedom to persuade and suggest happens to be concentrated in a few hands [e.g., Goldberg and Harvey] we must recognize that such is the nature of a free society.” [43]

In retrospect, the NCEE manufactured a sufficient level of consent to allow its educational policy recommendations to be carried forward throughout the Reagan,

Bush I, Clinton, and, now, the Bush II administrations. Reflective of the business class' contempt for professional educators, who might have funny ideas about education serving aims other than those specified by the school's "traditional role" (selecting for obedience and conformity), the first Bush administration did not entrust the task of developing an educational policy to carry the nation into the 21st century to the Department of Education. Rather, the Bush team took a more direct route toward casting educational policy to meet the demands of business, charging the US Department of Labor with the task of formalizing the NCEE's recommendations into formal policy and, eventually, federal legislation. Though no educational legislation was passed under Bush, the Labor Department did succeed in creating a sort of vision statement called "America 2000," which Bill Clinton and the Democrats embellished and enacted into legislation as the "GOALS 2000: Educate America Act."

THE CLINTON TEAM TAKES CHARGE

Lest we should be duped into believing that the other half of the Business Party operates under different imperatives, the Clinton administration's approach to educational reform has not significantly differed from the approach taken under Reagan and Bush. The rhetoric surrounding GOALS 2000, however, demonstrates less of the nationalist flavor of "A Nation At Risk", preferring a more global approach to convincing the American public of their need for these reforms.

To begin with, GOALS 2000 shares certain characteristics with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the latest renegotiated General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) treaty. In the first place, Clinton inherited all three measures from the Reagan and Bush administrations. Secondly, NAFTA, GATT, and GOALS 2000 each represents an element of a more general pattern of structural adjustment related to the post-industrialization process that is redefining America's role in the global economy. One of the most important sources for exploring the relations between Goals 2000 and America's new role under increased economic globalization is Robert Reich's *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism*. According to Reich, former Labor Secretary in the Clinton Administration, any portrayal of American educational policy as serving the interests of corporate America is imprecise. Such claims assume that corporations still function according to the rules of "economic nationalism", wherein American

workers, American corporations, and the American government participate in a collective unity of purpose. According to Reich, this fragile unity of purpose could only hold the nation together provided that, “in return for prosperity”, American society [accept] the legitimacy and permanence of the American core corporation. Clearly, as Reich relates, US “government officials” accepted these terms, taking “as one of their primary responsibilities the continued profitability of American core corporations.” [44] This meant, as Reich admits, that corporate interests dominated the formation of US foreign and domestic policy, to include educational policy.

During the era of economic nationalism, high-volume, standardized production characterized the strength of the domestic US economy. Under these conditions, Reich explains, contributing to “the continued profitability of America’s core corporations” by “preparing America’s children for gainful employment” was not a “terribly burdensome” responsibility for government officials to meet. “The only prerequisites for most jobs were an ability to comprehend simple oral and written directives and sufficient self-control to implement them.” How such training may have translated into civics and social studies courses, Reich does not comment. Turning briefly to his response to a critic of Clinton’s educational policies, however, we hear Reich argue that the educational goal of “preparing young people for jobs” is “complementary, not contradictory” to the goal of “preparing responsible citizens with a strong sense of community purpose.” [45] Situating his earlier remarks on the responsibility demonstrated by government officials toward maintaining the “continued profitability of American core corporations,” we can easily determine which community’s purpose responsible citizens should have a sense of.

The only criticism that Reich directs toward our contemporary schools pertains to their failure to respond appropriately or adequately to the shift in economic realities as America moved from an industrial national economy to a post-industrial society within a global economy. Reich is fond of repeating what has become his standard line for diagnosing the ills of America’s schools: “the problems with our educational system is not that schools changed for the worse, they simply did not change for the better.” [46]

For Reich, it no longer makes sense to speak of an American economy. In the new world order, economic nationalism is dead. There remains but one economy, and it is

global. Similarly, Reich contends that the high-volume production core corporation is also a relic of our past; the high-value production transnational corporation has displaced it. The only element in any nation's economic structure to have retained its national identity is its workforce, and this only because of its relative immobility internationally. The point of Reich's obituary rests in convincing individual Americans that they should no longer perceive their economic fortunes rising and falling together as if they were all in the same big economic boat. Contemporary and future members of the American workforce must recognize that they drift alone, as rugged economic individualists, across the waters of the global economy. Whether they sink or swim depends no longer on the health of the American economy, but solely upon how valuable they can make themselves to the transnational corporations that determine which jobs will wash upon whose shores. The only manner in which they can attract the high-paying jobs that Reich associates with "symbolic-analytic services" is through an improved system of public education. Hence, they should recognize the value of Goals 2000.

Svi Shapiro, however, laments "the greatly increased emphasis" that Clinton's educational policy places "on the notion that public education exists to serve the needs of corporate America, *that education is preeminently about preparing kids for the job market*" (original emphasis). [47] This, he contends, is an approach to education "without heart or soul, a discourse about education that accepts reduces the education of the young to skills, knowledge, and competencies, one that liberalism's excision from it of moral and spiritual concerns. It is a language that accepts a disastrously limited view of what it means to nurture a new generation for a world in crisis and pain." [48] If our schools are to play a role in healing this blighted world, Shapiro argues, the political leadership in our country must adopt "a different American tradition and language concerning the purpose and meaning of education—one that connects people, especially the young, to the making of a democratic culture." [49]

In direct response to Shapiro's critique, Reich has argued that "While corporate America will benefit from the administration's reforms, the real winners will be the future workers and the current workforce." [50] Given that Reich projects that only 20 percent of the future jobs in the US will qualify as high-paying, symbolic-analytic

positions, the likelihood that future and current workers will actually derive any benefit from the current educational reforms seems rather small.

The deathknell that Reich sounds for economic nationalism should be regarded as highly ominous. We have already heard this member of the federal cabinet admit that corporate interests have long dominated US foreign and domestic policy, and that government officials have taken the continued profitability of US core corporations as one of their primary responsibilities. He even provides some insights into the lengths that those officials were willing to go in preserving corporate profits. He cites, for example, the CIA's involvement in the overthrow of Iranian president Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 that returned the Shah to power and restored U.S. control of Iranian oil. He also cites the land reform initiated in Guatemala under President Jacabo Arbenz Guzman that "confiscated" the plantations of the United Fruit Company as having prompted a similar response from the U.S government on behalf of the interests of American core corporations. What he does not tell us is that what Mossadegh and Guzman, as well as Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Daniel Ortega, and others recognized as "official enemies" in U.S. doctrine, share in common is having committed the crime of economic nationalism.

As State Department officials explained in 1945, "The philosophy of the New Nationalism embraces policies designed to bring about a broader distribution of wealth and to raise the standard of living of the masses." Advocates of economic nationalism, they continue, "are convinced that the first beneficiaries of the development of a country's resources should be the people of that country." [51] It could be added that economic nationalism might also advocate the participation of a country's people in determining the direction that such development takes. The US government's position has, of course, been opposed to this brand of radical thought, believing that US investors should be the first beneficiaries as well as the planners of development wherever, whenever, and however they decide it should occur. Whatever trickle-down effects that U.S. investments might actually benefit the masses, at home or abroad, have always been regarded as an incident not an end of American policy. Further expectations are regarded as heretical to standard doctrine.

It is interesting that Reich should undertake to convince Americans that economic nationalism is now a relic of our own past. Given the extent to which elite US

planners have held economic nationalism to be anathema with regard to other nations within their domain, we could read Reich's book as an official declaration of the third-worldization of the United States, wherein the United States is regarded as but one among many colonies of a new state structure that transcends national borders.

In the *Financial Times*, BBC economics correspondent James Morgan describes a 'de facto world government' that is taking shape: the IMF, World Bank, G-7, GATT, and other structures designed to serve the interests of TNCs, banks, and investment firms in a 'new imperial age.' [52]

It has been noted that such *de facto* governing institutions are immune from popular influence, or even popular awareness. Even before NAFTA was signed into law, its architects demonstrated the usual contempt for democracy. The Labor Advisory Committee (LAC), based in the unions and established under the Trade Act of 1974, is legally bound to advise and inform the executive branch of government before any trade agreement is made. In the case of NAFTA, the LAC was informed that its report on the Agreement was due to President Bush on September 9, though the Committee was not provided a copy of the document until September 8. When the LAC finally did release its report, it reached some frightening conclusions regarding the likely consequences of NAFTA and called for the agreement to be renegotiated. Most importantly, they noted that NAFTA "will have the effect of prohibiting democratically elected bodies at [federal, state, and local] levels of government from enacting measures deemed inconsistent with the provisions of the agreement,' including measures on the environment, workers' rights, health and safety, etc." [53]

In an important book dealing with the anti-democratic and environmentally dangerous tendencies within the new wave of free trade agreements, Tim Lang and Colin Hines point out that in the case of the Canada-USA Free Trade Agreement, the prototype for NAFTA, "government subsidies to encourage energy efficiency and [natural resource] conservation," for example, "are given no immunity from trade challenge." Among the many cases that they cite to support their concerns is that of British Columbia, which was forced to "abandon reforestation programmes when it was challenged by the US forestry industry as an unfair subsidy, and hence contrary to free trade." [54] In a similar case, Mexico brought a case before GATT decrying the US Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972) as an unfair trade barrier when it was used to embargo imports of Mexican and Venezuelan yellow fin tuna because of the damage to dolphin

populations incurred as the result of those nations' fishing methods. GATT ruled in favor of Mexico; Americans will just have to live with their impotency to affect policy where it threatens the prerogatives of trade.

Numerous other cases can be cited to justify concern that under the imperatives of "free trade" "it is a violation of natural liberty and even science to deceive people into thinking that they have some rights beyond what they can gain by selling their labor power," [55] a point which returns us to Reich's response to Shapiro that the educational goal of "preparing young people for jobs" is "complementary, not contradictory" to the goal of "preparing responsible citizens with a strong sense of community purpose."

At first glance, there would appear to be a contradiction in Reich's promotion of an educational mission that would develop "responsible citizens with a strong sense of community purpose" and his support of "investor rights" agreements such as NAFTA and GATT that would effectively supersede any national policy decision affected through citizen initiative if that decision threatened the prerogatives of free trade. The contradiction is removed, however, when we realize that Reich's definition of a "responsible citizen" differs from our own, and after we question just which community's purpose these responsible citizens are to have a sense of.

In the case of elected officials, it is quite easy for us to determine how Reich perceives their roles as responsible citizens. As cited previously, Reich readily admits that under the old economic order government officials took "as one of their primary responsibilities the continued profitability of America's core corporations." With no evidence to support a conclusion that these responsible citizens have undergone any kind of religious conversion since the time those corporations became transnational, we can logically discern from Reich's analysis that it is the transnational corporate community's purposes that government officials, including federally-commissioned educational reformers, and other responsible citizens should now sense, protect and extend.

Notes

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[50] Reich, “Education For Meaning”, p. 2.

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