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## Perpetual War for Unobtainable Peace

BY BOYD D. CATHEY  
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Back in 2008 Patrick J. Buchanan published his volume *Churchill, Hitler, and The Unnecessary War*. Although it was reviewed and discussed at the time, perhaps because it dealt with world history on such a vast, scholarly scale, or because the subject matter seemed to be more the province of academic specialists (which Buchanan isn't), it did not receive the kind of press and readership that other of his white-hot books garnered.

Given the momentous decision by Congress to engage in open-ended war in Syria and Iraq and the ratcheting up of American opposition to Russia, Buchanan's earlier volume stands out for the number of cautionary lessons it offers.

What distinguishes his Churchill volume is that Buchanan, instead of specifically and individually examining pressing questions that have confronted us in recent years, explores "why" and "how" we arrived at our present critical situation, and just how the historic Christian West, in particular Christian Europe and the United States, came to face the present political, cultural, and religious crisis that is unparalleled in history.

*Churchill, Hitler, and The Unnecessary War* centers on the pivotal role of Sir Winston Churchill in British (and world) history during much of the twentieth century. Without exaggeration it can be said that his finger prints are all over British foreign policy throughout the previous century, from his time as First Lord of the Admiralty during World War I, during his "exile" from public office during the 1920's and 1930s, and his periods of leadership during World War II and

afterwards. Even before his death he had become an icon for both Americans and Englishmen, a symbol of courage and defiance against overwhelming odds, an inspiration to millions.

Yet, as Buchanan carefully and painstakingly documents, Churchill was, militarily, a disastrous leader; and strategically, his policies are at the very least open to serious debate and disagreement. His planned military adventures, including the infamous Gallipoli campaign during the First World War, the Norwegian invasion of 1940, Dieppe in 1942, and the Italian campaign of 1943, were either abject failures or fell way below their stated goals.

The internationally respected German historian Ernst Nolte has conflated, rightfully I think, World War I and World War II into one thirty-year event that he has called “the European Civil War” (unfortunately, his volume *Die Europäische Burgerkrieg* has never been translated into English, although a French edition exists). In that sense, World War II was a remarkably bloody and radical continuation of World War I, with some of the alliances rearranged. Buchanan approaches Churchill and British policy in a similar fashion, incorporating the research of scholars such as John Charmley, Maurice Cowling, and Niall Ferguson, with a solid discussion of the causes of the first war, mirroring much of the scholarship that now understands that war in 1914 was not a simple question of the “evil German butchers of Kaiser Bill” attacking poor defenseless Belgium. Churchill and Lord Grey, certainly, were beating the drums for war, but the British foreign policy establishment bears a considerable amount of responsibility for the conflict—a conflagration that Kaiser Wilhelm, when he realized in the last days of that sultry July of 1914 what was happening, tried frantically to avoid.

At the end of that war, the vindictive treaties of Versailles, Trianon, Neuilly, and Saint-Germain set the stage, almost inevitably, for future conflict. The intervention of American President Wilson, with his “Fourteen Points” and language of messianic liberal Protestantism, only made matters worse, as the “great lion” Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and other wily pragmatic nationalists exacted a fearsome and punishing toll on Germany and Austria-Hungary, all the while cynically mouthing Wilson’s elevated language.

Buchanan is very critical of Hitler, but he understands fully well how the German dictator was able to get elected with popular support. Where he is most fascinating is in his careful examination of British (and French) policies aimed at Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, and in particular, Churchill’s role in, firstly, advocating them, and secondly, in executing them. In dealing with Germany, Britain, under the leadership of Stanley Baldwin and later Neville Chamberlain, oscillated between policies of attempting to reach a *modus vivendi* and of opposition and establishing a *cordon sanitaire* around the German state. British public opinion and, indeed, many in the Foreign Office, sympathized with the legitimate desires of Germany to right some of the egregious wrongs inflicted on it by Versailles: millions of German citizens had been placed arbitrarily in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Italy. The old German Second Empire had been severed by a Polish corridor, the historic German city of Danzig (overwhelmingly German) had been separated from the mother country, and three and a half million Sudeten Germans forced into a discriminatory Czech state. Many British political leaders believed there were legitimate, peaceful ways to deal with these inequities, and that a war over these lands should only be the very last option.

Throughout the 1930s both Britain and France faced a growing desire by Germany to regain those lost territories. Drawing on voluminous scholarship on the topic, Buchanan details how it was largely the indecision and inconsistency of Franco-British policies that enabled Hitler to advance German interests. During the attempted putsch in Austria (1934), during the Rhineland crisis (1936), and at Munich over Sudetenland (1938), it was not the bellicosity of Hitler so much as it was the fumbling of the Franco-British that both surprised—and delighted—the German chancellor.

With the German protectorate placed over the rump Czech state in spring 1939, the British government reacted, making what Buchanan calls the most serious mistake in the annals of British foreign policy: the “blind pledge” to Poland to go to war automatically should that nation ever be attacked. It was a completely irrational war guarantee, given to the wrong nation, over the wrong issue, and at the wrong time. Although Britain may well have had to face German arms in the future, Poland was a thousand miles away, incapable of receiving any British military or material aid in the case of conflict with Germany. Moreover, Poland was no “shining democracy on the banks of the Vistula River,” but rather a military-ruled state that had participated in the partition of Czechoslovakia (along with the Germans) and that had a record of mistreating German citizens in the corridor and in the Posen region. The German demands—for a German rail and road corridor linking Pomerania and East Prussia, and the return of Danzig—were not unreasonable starting points for negotiation, at least on paper. Britain’s pledge not only stiffened Polish resolve not to negotiate at all, it also altered inevitably German foreign policy that had been oriented towards a final conflict with Communist Russia. War became inevitable, but a war that Hitler never wanted: a war with Britain, a nation he genuinely admired.

Succeeding a broken and sick Chamberlain in 1940, Churchill, the longtime anti-Communist, embraced “the old bear” Stalin once the Soviet Union was attacked in 1941. Stalin became not only “Uncle Joe,” the putative “democrat,” to Franklin Roosevelt, but “precious” to Sir Winston. By 1942 he was praising the tyrant, and by 1944, with Franklin Roosevelt in tacit agreement, he was divvying up Europe into Soviet and British “spheres.” By 1946-1947 he would make an about face, but by then, with the nations of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, half of Germany, part of Finland, and a portion (temporarily) of Austria under Soviet control, it was too late for regrets. And Poland? It was our Soviet allies who helped Hitler invade and defeat that nation in less than a month in September 1939; they annexed half the country, and when the “war to defend Poland” was over, in 1945, the Soviets kept their half.

Sir Winston was a Victorian par excellence, a man who more than once claimed that he would never countenance the “sun to set over the British Empire.” Yet, as Buchanan documents, it was the old imperialist Sir Winston who did exactly that. And not only did he preside over the decline and end of the British Empire, he was largely instrumental through his anti-Teutonism in altering the balance of power in Europe, as well as globally. For the defeat of Germany, while removing a threat, created conditions for a “new” Europe and prepared the ground for a radically revolutionary world, a world that we continue to see developing around us. The “good war” in the name of human rights to make the world safe for “progress” and liberal democracy, ended by enshrining a brutal Communist world power that would dominate half of the world’s population for another fifty years, and even after its eventual demise, its Marxist ideology would continue to influence political and economic affairs in much of the West. Perhaps even worse than orthodox

Communism, the secularist and openly anti-Christian society that has succeeded it and now dominates historic Christian Europe and increasingly America, is much more pervasive and fatal to the traditional beliefs that created our civilization.

After the end of World War II, any real conservative opposition to the new and revolutionary post-war arrangement was greeted with labels like “neo-fascist,” or “racist,” or “anti-semitic.” Rightwing and conservative opponents who have questioned the post-war paradigm, it is often suggested by those on the political and cultural Left (as well as by the Neoconservatives), are throwbacks to Hitler and “neo-Nazis,” and yet, Hitler and the Nazis were *never* of the traditional Right. It makes little difference: such calumnies usually stanch any profound criticism, allowing the post-war revolutionary paradigm to continue largely unchallenged, either from the historic Left, or by the pusillanimous politically-correct Right.

The template created after World War II established the foundations of a new global—and intolerant—religion of liberal democracy and equality. Anyone who dissents from that talisman is considered outside the bounds of legitimate debate. The collapse of the Soviet state in 1990-1991 only gave impetus to the paradigm, as many of the proponents of the “new world order” now proclaimed that we lived in a “unipolar world.” And whereas in the 1950s and early 1960s some American (and European) conservatives had attempted to retrieve something of the pre-war traditionalism that had historically counter-balanced the egalitarian liberal and Leftward drift in politics and society (e.g., Russell Kirk, Mel Bradford, etc.) and had critiqued the growing managerial statism of both the Left AND the Right (e.g., James Burnham and Sam Francis), the virtual triumph of a variant of the Trotskyite Left—the Neoconservatives—as the new “conservative mainstream” seemed to doom serious discussion.

As events in the Middle East and in Eastern Europe seem to swirl out of control, Pat Buchanan’s *Churchill, Hitler, and The Unnecessary War* has much to say to us. By examining the earlier historical foundations of our post-World War II society and by understanding how the so-called “good wars for democracy and human rights” became platforms by which the cultural, political, and religious Left was able to impose a radically revolutionary paradigm that would influence our thinking and outlook in the decades since, Pat Buchanan has done us all an immeasurable service.

*Churchill, Hitler, and The Unnecessary War* contributes to our understanding of the continuing zeal of our elites to wage perpetual war for an unobtainable peace. One hundred years ago the world plunged unwarily into a cataclysmic war that no one really saw coming and that horribly scarred and radically disfigured the face of humanity. As William Butler Yeats expressed it, “The blood-dimmed tide” was loosed upon the world. The question remains: are we repeating the same errors once again?