
Book Review

Securing the Good Of the Other

by William C. Jones

The Battle for Peace: A Frontline Vision of America's Power and Purpose

by Gen. Tony Zinni, USMC (ret.) and Tony Klotz
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006
256 pages, hardcover, \$24.95

In the flurry of mostly banal publications which appeared over the last year, authored by numerous self-styled “experts” about how to “fix” a system which has obviously failed, whether it be the post-war debacle in Iraq, or the failure to act after Hurricane Katrina, Gen. Tony Zinni’s (ret.) *The Battle for Peace* comes as a breath of fresh air. While his recent appearance on “Meet the Press,” in which he called for the resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (and was soon followed by several other retired flag-grade officers), has gained media attention, General Zinni’s critique of America’s present way of conducting its military affairs is by no means limited to putting someone competent in charge of the Department of Defense (DoD).

Generally recognized, even by his opponents, as a “Marine’s Marine,” General Zinni combines the unique qualities of a soldier-diplomat, perhaps somewhat in the mold of General George Marshall, whom he greatly admires. But even before his appointment as diplomatic envoy in a variety of “trouble-shooting” operations in the Middle East and elsewhere, after he retired from the Marine Corps, this United States Central Command (CENTCOM) commander always understood the pre-eminently diplomatic nature of his mission. His encounters with the heads of state in the vast area of CENTCOM operations—which includes 25 countries in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, among the most volatile parts of the world—helped him to create the valuable political, social, and cultural ties which helped bring these countries into a collaborative relationship with the United States in safeguarding stability in the region.

Indeed, the concept of “instability” is a *leitmotif* of his concerns in *The Battle for Peace*. Far from viewing the so-called Global War on Terror as a fight between cultures, or as a simple struggle between “democracy” and “tyranny,” Zinni

views the problems America is facing through the prism of the underlying instability—social, economic, and political—in many parts of the developing world. Groups like al-Qaeda or Taliban feed on this instability in order to fuel their own movements and spread terror. Unless the United States is prepared to deal with the underlying causes of this instability, Zinni argues, it will never succeed in successfully rooting out the hard-core terrorists.

The world is a much more complicated place than that envisioned by those wild ideologues that got us into Iraq on the pretext that it would be a “cakewalk.” You have to analyze the problems on the ground, the view from the “foxhole,” as Zinni calls it, in order to see all the forces at play, before you can take effective action. In an interview with *EIR* on March 25, 2004, General Zinni had already warned about the radical “de-Baathization” undertaken by Paul Bremer, as a measure which would lead to chaos, a criticism which is now accepted as a commonplace truth.

You also must have an understanding of the underlying cultural factors involved in the area in which you are working, Zinni stresses. “Culture is formed by history and geography; it generates the customs, beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a society. Too often, we fail to analyze and understand these factors. Instead, we use our own cultural prisms to determine how things should be done, and in what order. We use them to assume superiority and right in all issues. We use them to stereotype and generalize. At best, this failure causes us serious problems in the world. At worst it leads to conflicts, chaos, and wars.”

Aggravated political and military crises develop over time. Conflicts over water, economic conditions, border disputes, the onset of famine all of these do not occur overnight. If you can detect the onset of a crisis at an early stage, the “simmering stage,” as Zinni calls it, measures can be taken to deal with it, at much less cost than would be the case by the time the crisis has reached catastrophic proportions.

The U.S. national security establishment, as it now exists, still reflects the structure of the Cold War era, he warns. The bureaucratic “stovepiping” of information and policy through the various departments, prevents the elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive policy in any particular crisis region. The same problem had dogged the U.S. military for a long time after the end of the Cold War, Zinni notes, leading to the reforms of the last decades which have facilitated a greater cooperation and interoperability among the various services. Similar reforms have to be made between the departments responsible for the total foreign policy effort. The crying failure of such coordination in the period immediately following the invasion of Iraq, has awakened people to the severe nature of this problem, he argues.

An Early Warning Team

For Zinni, however, the issue is not the creation of a new bureaucracy, like the Department of Homeland Security or the National Intelligence Directorate. Rather, it is to create



Palgrave Macmillan, *The Battle for Peace*

Recognized as a “Marine’s Marine,” General Zinni combines the unique qualities of a soldier-diplomat. He views the instability in many parts of the developing world as the underlying problem which fuels terrorist movements, not cultural differences. His goal is to deal with these underlying problems before they get to the boiling point. Here Zinni is shown with Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat (left), and Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (right), during his 2001-2002 efforts to mediate a peace settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis.

the type of instruments which can bring to bear the various capabilities that already exist within the State Department, the DoD, or other relevant agencies. Zinni is proposing the establishment of a National Monitoring and Planning Center (NMPC), whose function would be to detect the appearance of a problem at an early stage. This would comprise an inter-governmental team, with representation from every relevant agency. It would provide a forum to air any differing views about the nature of a brewing crisis, and would provide the NSC and the President with a comprehensive and multi-layered view of actual conditions in a particular country or region. It would report to the President and the NSC, but would not have any directive authority, nor would the director have a Cabinet position.

In the face of a major crisis, the NMPC could then expand into an Inter-Agency Crisis Management Center, bringing in, as needed, experts from the various departments to deal with a particular region. Again taking the example of the military, he also recommends that various regional experts, now holding academic or other positions, at universities or think-tanks, be formed into something of a diplomatic Reserve corps, able to be called up into active service at the onset of a crisis in an area in which they have expertise.

Such collaboration between agencies would also have to be broadened down to the tactical level, so that the various forces on the ground can be brought to bear in a coordinated way for implementing the envisioned policy. Zinni calls this an Inter-Agency Field Force.

In addition, the problems facing America are problems it does not, and should not, face alone, the General argues. The “battle for peace” must involve international cooperation, as well as cooperation among the regional states. As was clearly laid out by Lyndon LaRouche in his Southwest Asia Doctrine

(*EIR*, April 30, 2004), a crisis in Iraq could have been resolved by bringing to bear the forces in the region, in a mutual security relationship. From his own experience in these regions, General Zinni knows that the complex nature of some of these crises is far beyond the ability of the United States to resolve, without the assistance of some of the more stable nations in the region as well as the international community.

Zinni also recommends a greater level of cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are knowledgeable in dealing with major humanitarian crises. He relates how, as CENTCOM commander, he was able to effectively interact with the NGOs, in spite of their widely different cultures, and to utilize their expertise, especially in what Zinni describes as the “recovery stage” in a crisis.

We Cannot Ignore Other Nations’ Misery

General Zinni has an important message for the American people, especially since it is based on his long career as a soldier-diplomat. Many of those problems that have appeared endemic to the developing world, which most Americans could for so long ignore—starvation, disease, chronic unemployment, and lack of basic infrastructure—these “instabilities,” are now coming to haunt the developed world. The flow of immigrants from the South to the North, the flight of jobs to the low-wage countries of the South, the danger of the spread of pandemic diseases, are now threatening all nations. They can no longer be ignored except at our peril, Zinni warns. “We’re no longer immune from the festering problems of the ‘other world,’” Zinni writes. “We can no longer refuse to invest in preventing or resolving them. If we are going to achieve a true and lasting peace in all the world, a peace that guarantees security for the developed world as well as for the so-called Zone of Conflict, we can’t just look after ourselves

and ignore them. We will have to work hard to eliminate the instability, chaos, and violence out there.”

Reminiscent of the concept so succinctly expressed in those famous words of Pope Paul VI, “The new name for peace is development,” Zinni’s book raises the larger issues involved in the framing of a competent U.S. national security strategy. Some of this was understood, as Zinni himself indicates, during the Clinton Administration, the period in which he served as CENTCOM commander, and helped elaborate some of this thinking. The Cheney-Rumsfeld war on Iraq, and the much-touted Rumsfeld “defense transformation,” have helped to eradicate some of the understanding of this broader perspective among the U.S. military, even while the war on Iraq is placing these issues immediately on the agenda. It is hoped that *The Battle for Peace* will become mandatory reading for all young—and older—officers, who have been nurtured most recently on the apocalyptic theories of armchair ideologues like Thomas Barnett, whose writings have become *au courant* in Rumsfeld’s Pentagon. The experience garnered in Vietnam, as well as in Somalia and Central Asia, has brought home important lessons to Zinni, from which a competent national security strategy can emerge, a strategy which takes into consideration that important principle of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, “securing the good of the other.” It is hoped that the country will soon find the political leadership that can understand the importance of those lessons.

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