

# The Clear and Present Danger

J. W. Fulbright

It is one of the perversities of human nature that people have a far greater capacity for enduring disasters than for preventing them, even when the danger is plain and imminent. Winston Churchill; for all his prescience and eloquence, was powerless to prevent the Second World War: He wrote in 1936 of an England "decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent." The question for us today is whether we can succeed where Churchill failed—a tall order indeed—by preventing disaster so as not to have to endure it. Or must we wait for tides of adversity to sweep over us?

The catalyst, if not the cause, of our current, mounting difficulties was the Middle East war of a year ago. Like the assassination at Sarajevo in 1914 the October War set loose a chain reaction of events. The war precipitated the oil embargo, and the embargo, combined with Arab military successes, gave the Arabs a whole new sense of their own power and capacity. The oil-producing countries, non-Arab as well as Arab, became suddenly and belatedly aware of the power they held in their hands. United in OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), they set out to redress the imbalance between cheap oil and costly imports and also, in a psychological sense, to redress centuries of colonialism and exploitation. They did so with a vengeance, through huge and precipitous increases in the price of oil. It came like an avalanche, but, as the old aphorism goes, great crises may issue from small events but never from small causes. A great deal of

causal debris had accumulated on the Arab mountainside—the debris of mounting frustration over continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands, superimposed upon bitter memories of colonialism. All it took then was the sonic boom of the October War to send the rocks crashing down upon us.

The effect within a single year has been to bring the economies of the industrial countries to a degree of jeopardy no less than that occasioned by the Great Depression. And as national economies falter, democracy itself is threatened—in Europe, in the developing countries, and possibly even in North America.

The immediate and compelling problem is runaway inflation, aggravated by—though by no means wholly the result of—the high cost of oil. There was no exaggeration in President Ford's warning in Detroit last September of a "breakdown of world order and world safety." With inflation running at an annual rate of 12 per cent in the United States and in excess of 20 per cent in Japan, Great Britain, Italy, and other countries, the industrial nations are threatened with depression, mass unemployment, and consequent civil disorder, while the poor countries, as Robert McNamara recently reported to the World Bank, face "appalling deprivation" and "the risk of death."

Depending upon their varying degrees of historic stability, the democracies of the world—rich as well as poor—will bend or break in the economic whirlwind. Japanese economists are openly predicting a depression, and they see no escape from it. Italy, with one of the most overstrained economies and a fragile parliamentary system, may conceivably succumb to communism or neo-fascism. Great Britain, on the other hand, with its strong parliamentary tradition, may weather the storm for a longer time, even though its economy is one of the most heavily strained. Whatever the circumstances of each individual country, the fact remains that inflation has

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SENATOR J.W. FULBRIGHT, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, was invited to give an address on the centennial anniversary of Winston Churchill's birth. He delivered the address last November in Fulton, Missouri, where Churchill gave his famous "iron curtain" speech. This article is adapted from the Senator's lecture.

become a clear and present danger to democracy, including our American democracy.

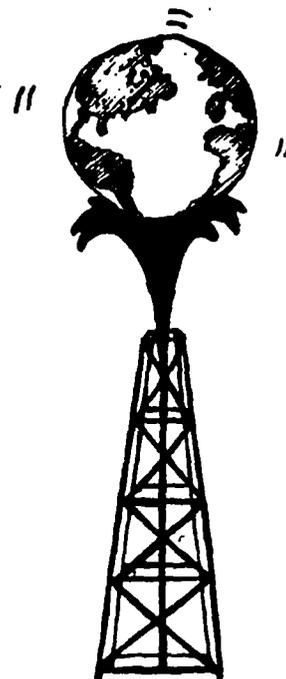
The major cause of accelerated inflation is the massive imbalancing of international payments caused by the quadrupling of the price of oil since the October War. The United States—far more fortunate than other countries because we produce nearly two-thirds of our own oil requirements—nonetheless will register a bill of approximately \$25 billion for imported oil in 1974, more than triple the \$7.5 billion paid in 1973. Meanwhile, the oil revenues of the producing countries will have risen from \$15 billion in 1972 to nearly \$100 billion in 1974, giving them surplus revenues on the order of \$60 billion over and above their total import requirements. With this trend continuing and accelerating, the credit of consuming countries—rich as well as poor—will soon be exhausted, giving rise to economic collapse and political upheaval.

It would seem that the Marxian prediction of breakdown resulting from the “contradictions” of capitalism was about to become a reality. Mr. Brezhnev himself said in a recent speech that inflation and economic crisis were “speeding up the disintegration of the political machinery of capitalism rule,” and that this indeed was “unavoidable” because it stemmed from the “very nature of capitalism.”

**I**s this crisis of democratic capitalism indeed fated and beyond our control? The answer, most emphatically, is that it is not. The cure for inflation is to live within your means, which is something we were not doing before the increase of oil prices. That comes first—the elimination of the prodigal, outrageous waste of basic resources which has become endemic to the American way of life. Beyond that, through a wise and skillful foreign policy, we can bring peace to the Middle East, that fountainhead of so many of our troubles, and by so doing open the possibility of lower oil prices—for long enough at least to allow a gradual transition to new forms of energy. Although domestic political pressures have inhibited our leaders from exploring the possibility forthrightly, there is excellent reason to believe that resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict would bring a respite on oil prices.

I wish to suggest what I believe to be rational and feasible courses of action, broadly as to domestic waste and inflation, somewhat more specifically as to the problems of the Middle East. I speak, let me stress, only of what we *can* and *should* do, not of what we *will* do. I am inhibited from prediction by a highly developed appreciation—the product of a long career in politics—of the human tendency to irrational behavior.

All indeed that can be predicted, and that with some certainty, is that as long as we temporize on inflation and the Middle East these time bombs will



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keep ticking away. Palliatives will no longer suffice in either area. The truce of last year, followed by the disengagement agreements and the lifting of the embargo, which got our cars back on the road, lulled us into supposing that the crisis was over. In fact, the embargo did us less harm than the quadrupled oil prices which followed. At home we now face the threat of economic collapse, while in the Middle East the tide moves inexorably toward another war and another embargo. If that comes, as Secretary Kissinger knows better than anybody, it will take more than a renewal of “shuttle diplomacy,” more than disengagement agreements, more indeed than Mr. Kissinger’s brilliant best, to retrieve the calamity.

**W**e cannot blame the oil producers for the irresponsible, rapacious extravagance of our vaunted “way of life.” We Americans are not only living beyond our economic means; we are damaging the world’s ecology by depleting irreplaceable raw materials, by consuming renewable resources such as forests and fish faster than the earth’s natural processes can replace them, and by fouling the rivers and oceans beyond their natural capacity for cleansing themselves.

Even if we could afford our extravagant lifestyle—the overpowered automobiles, the beefsteak diet (for dogs and cats as well as for humans), the throw-away boxes and bottles, the gadgets and whimsies that clutter our surroundings from the kitchen to the Pentagon and even the moon—it would still be important to conserve and cut back, to go back to living more simply. Over and above the material waste, our high living is also wasteful and destructive in the psychological sense. We have long passed the point of diminishing returns as between our gadgets and luxuries and the human satisfactions that they yield. Like spoiled children who have had

too many toys, we are always looking for new playthings—and encouraged to do so by the massive advertising industry—but the gadgets only amuse us for a moment or two, and then we are off in search of something else.

It is being said these days in Washington, that most charitable of communities, that in calling for only voluntary restraints to curb inflation President Ford shrank from “biting the bullet,” offering up a “marshmallow” instead—a 5 per cent surcharge on incomes over \$15,000, but no gas rationing, and no price and wage controls. This may have been no more than a marshmallow, but as the President promptly retorted, Congress found even the marshmallow too tough for its tastes. It appears that no one is yet prepared to take the drastic steps, voluntary and mandatory, to curb inflation. It is almost as if we did not quite believe the evidence before our eyes, or our own words acknowledging that evidence. President Ford was not overstating the matter when he warned Congress that inflation threatens to “destroy our country, our homes, our liberties. . . .” Congress applauded the President’s warning but rather in the way one applauds a Fourth of July speech, as oratory to be appreciated and then forgotten, but not as literal truth to be absorbed and acted upon. It is as if Churchill had qualified his clarion call for “blood, toil, tears and sweat” with a statement that of course he could never advocate compulsory military service or higher taxes, and as if the British people and Parliament had then set to squabbling over *whose* blood and toil would be offered up and in exactly what amounts.

The German blitz did not allow the British that luxury, and we cannot afford it either. Our inability thus far to recognize the imminent danger to our most cherished institutions arises from the novelty of the circumstances which threaten us, from the absence of a recognizable “monster of wickedness” like Hitler to whom we can attribute our troubles and against whom we can organize our hatred and our fear. Because our troubles are primarily the result of our own misguided policies of several years and of the careless waste of our resources, and because our leaders have chosen to minimize the difficulties ahead rather than lay them candidly on the line, we have been unable to grasp the dimensions of the disaster which threatens us.

An intellectual effort of unprecedented magnitude is required to unite and inspire the American people to make the effort and the sacrifices required. We must prepare ourselves for even greater and more painful changes in our mode of living than we made during World War II. We can and should take the voluntary measures Mr. Ford called for—saving money, conserving energy, recycling scrap. We also can and should take mandatory measures, including a tax increase of more than the amount recommended by the President. Most important of all we must

conserve energy, first and foremost by requiring the automobile industry to manufacture cars which will go twenty or more miles on a gallon of gasoline.

I am sure that our leaders underestimate the capacity of the American people for pulling together and modifying their lifestyle in difficult times. During the acute oil shortage last winter, people *did* lower their thermostats, pool their cars, and obey the lower speed limits, and they did it with a certain cheerfulness, with a kind of satisfaction in the sense of shared inconvenience and common effort to overcome it. We felt for a moment like a community again—as we had not since before Vietnam and Watergate. Then the embargo was lifted, the gas lines disappeared, and we went back to our old ways, while the crisis mounted. Now our leaders are asking for sacrifice, but their trumpet blows so feebly as to leave one in doubt that they expect or really want it. Fearing political retaliation if they ask for real austerity, they ask for no more than token self-denial; they are asking the least from people, and that, to their dismay, is what they are getting.

To turn to the Middle East: I believe that the current situation is shaped by two central facts. One is the volatility of the Arab-Israel conflict, the high probability of another, greater war if the central issue of the occupied territories is not soon resolved. The second fact—which for domestic political reasons we are exceedingly reluctant to acknowledge—is the close relationship between the Arab-Israel conflict and the price and availability of oil.

The danger of a fifth Arab-Israel war is acute, and if such a war comes it will almost certainly be more violent and more protracted than the previous wars. In the year of truce since the October War of 1973 both sides have rearmed heavily. The consensus of military experts is that the strategic balance is shifting to the Arab side, not only because of Soviet supplies but also because of the greatly improved training and technical competence of the Egyptian and Syrian armed forces. Egypt and perhaps Syria are now armed with Russian surface-to-surface “Scud” missiles, which would enable them to attack Israeli cities as well as Israel’s vulnerable oil storage facilities. Israel, for her part, is generally assumed to have acquired nuclear weapons, and if Joseph Alsop is to be believed—and his Israeli connections are excellent—Israel is prepared to use those weapons if her cities are attacked. In Mr. Alsop’s view, Israeli warnings already issued amount to a veiled but unmistakable threat of nuclear war.

The alternative to war, and the only alternative, is a general settlement. It is no derogation from Secretary Kissinger’s great achievements to note that the disengagement agreements of the past year and the limited Israeli pullbacks in Sinai and the Golan Heights were no more than preliminary accomplish-

ments. The difficult issues remain—especially Jerusalem and the West Bank. Unless they are resolved, there will almost certainly be war, a war that would devastate Israel, quite possibly provoke a Soviet-American confrontation, and most certainly bring on a new, ruinous oil boycott. This prospective crisis, let me emphasize, is not a remote or hypothetical one; it is closer to being a clear and present danger.

It cannot be permitted, and it is up to the United States, not alone but in collaboration with the Soviet Union and the United Nations, to prevent it. Israel, it appears, is stalling, and with nothing concrete in mind except to get all the arms and money she can get from the United States so as to try to hold off the inevitable. The Israeli leaders might have made good use of time gained since last year's truce to prepare for the necessary accommodations. They might have been telling their people, as Israel's first and wisest leader, David Ben-Gurion, tried to tell them in 1971, that peace is Israel's "great necessity," and "to get it"—Mr. Ben-Gurion said—"we must return to the borders before 1967." "As for security," Ben-Gurion added, "militarily defensible borders, while desirable, cannot by themselves guarantee our future. Real peace with our Arab neighbors—mutual trust and friendship—that is the only true security."

The shift of the balance of power gives added force to Mr. Ben-Gurion's prescient words. This shift is more than a matter of improved weapons and fighting skills on the Arab side. The rise of the Arabs is based upon two powerful and growing forces: *money* and *nationalism*—the enormous wealth which is accruing to the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf and the surging national feeling of the Arab peoples, especially the embittered, tenacious nationalism of the Palestinians. The brief, spectacular ascendancy of the Israelis in the Middle East has been based primarily on human assets which cannot be expanded—discipline, energy, bravery, and competence. Impressive as these human assets are, they do not and cannot outweigh the fact that Israel is a small country with modest natural resources and heavy liabilities—with no oil except that of the occupied Sinai fields, with an economy burdened by military costs and inflation, an economy so dependent on the United States as to make Israel, however little we or the Israelis may care to admit it, a client state of the United States.

**W**hat is taking place in the Middle East is a long-term historical unweighting of the scales of powers, comparable, say, to the inexorable displacement of France by Germany as the paramount power of Europe in the nineteenth century. The difference in the Middle East is that it is all happening much faster. The friends of Israel in the United States do her no service by refusing to recognize these facts of power and change. Myopia among the Israelis, with their siege mentality, is

perhaps understandable. It is much less so among Israel's supporters in the United States, who, by underwriting intransigence, are encouraging Israel on a course which must lead toward her destruction, and just possibly toward our destruction as well.

Israel, I am convinced, can and should survive as a peaceful, prosperous society—but within the essential borders of 1967 as called for by the Security Council's Resolution 242 of November, 1967. That resolution calls as well for a settlement "guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every state in the area. . . ." This provision, as I have suggested in the past, can be implemented by Great Power guarantees contracted through the United Nations Security Council and, in addition, by an explicit, binding American treaty guarantee of Israel.

That much we owe them, but no more. We do not owe them our support of their continued occupation of Arab lands, including old Jerusalem and the Palestinian West Bank. The Palestinian people have as much right to a homeland as do the Jewish people. We Americans—who have always professed adherence to the principle of self-determination—should be the first to appreciate that. But when the United Nations General Assembly voted on October 14, 1974, by 105 to 4 with 20 abstentions, to allow the Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in the Assembly debate on Palestine, the United States was in the minority of four—with Israel, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic.

So completely have the majority of our officeholders fallen under Israeli domination that they not only deny the legitimacy of Palestinian national feeling; but such otherwise fair-minded individuals as the two candidates for Senator from New York engaged in heated debate as to which one more passionately opposes a Palestinian state. We have nearly allowed our détente with the Soviet Union to go on the rocks in order to obtain an agreement on large-scale Jewish emigration—a matter of limited relevance to the basic issue of human rights in the Soviet Union, and of no relevance at all to the vital interests of the United States. Senator Jackson further obfuscates the matter with invocations of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Note that the Article refers not only to the right to *leave* but also to the right to *return*. Is the right of the Palestinians to return to homes from which they were expelled any less fundamental than the right of Soviet Jews to make new homes in a new land?

**W**ithin the broader question of the West Bank there is a special importance about Jerusalem. It is here especially that the Arab-Israel conflict converges with the question of the price and availability of oil. Let me explain why.

The oil countries, united in OPEC, appear to be on a kind of power "trip," and their lack of restraint is widely, and properly, condemned. Those most insistent on repeated price increases, however, have not been the Arab states, but two of the principal non-Arab producers, Iran and Venezuela. The largest oil exporter, Saudi Arabia, has shown a keen awareness of the dangerous disruptions threatened by the fourfold increase in the price of oil, and Saudi officials have made known—both publicly and privately in unmistakable terms—their strong desire to lower prices and to work out long-term supply arrangements for the industrial nations, especially the United States. The Saudis are motivated by strong feelings of friendship and also of reliance upon the United States. Greatly fearing communism and Soviet and Chinese influence in the Arabian peninsula, Saudi Arabia looks to the United States as its mainstay against communism in the Middle East.

But the Saudis are caught in a dilemma. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for them to accommodate the United States while the United States provides the money and arms which enable Israel to occupy Arab lands. Further—and this is the heart of the matter—King Faisal feels a special responsibility, indeed a stewardship, for the holy places of Islam. Saudi Arabia is the most orthodox of Muslim societies: the holy city of Mecca is within its territory, and the Kingdom uses the Koran as its Constitution. Second only to Mecca in sanctity to Muslims is Jerusalem, where the Dome of the Rock is located, scarcely a hundred yards from the Wailing Wall, which is Judaism's holiest site, and within a half-mile of the Christian shrine, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

As a city sacred to three religions, Jerusalem warrants a special status. Under the original United Nations partition plan of 1947—to which the United States subscribed, and which, to my knowledge, it has never repudiated—Jerusalem was to be a "*corpus separatum*" under a special international regime." After Israel annexed the old city of Jerusalem in 1967, the United Nations General Assembly condemned the action, on July 4, 1967, by a vote of 99 to 0, and then condemned it again on two subsequent occasions.

In a world without effective international law, sovereign nations are often required to choose between justice and self-interest. A fair solution for Jerusalem, however, as indeed of the Arab-Israel conflict as a whole, requires no such choice, although uncritical supporters of Israeli policy have insisted that it does. The choice for the United States, they say, is one between Israeli democracy and Arab oil, between high morality—as they would have it—and the crassest greed. In fact, the withdrawal of Israel to her approximate borders of 1967 and the internationalization of Jerusalem would be wholly consistent with the principle of the self-determination

of peoples, an international principle to which we have always professed to subscribe and one which is also central to the United Nations Charter.

An Arab-Israeli settlement will not put an end to the energy crisis. Nor could it be counted upon to bring about an immediate substantial reduction of oil prices. It would, however, eliminate the major irritant in relations between the United States and the Arab states—especially Saudi Arabia—and in so doing create a much improved environment for negotiations on oil supply and prices. A settlement making just provision for the old city of Jerusalem and for the other occupied territories would greatly increase the political influence of Saudi Arabia, and therefore its weight as a force for moderation within OPEC. Saudi Arabia would be liberated, in effect, to do what King Faisal and his ministers want very much to do: cooperate to keep the West, and especially the United States on which Saudi Arabia relies, prosperous and strong.

Such an approach would not constitute a "sellout" of Israel. Quite the contrary, it calls upon Israel to do nothing more than she ought to do anyway, even if there were not a drop of oil in the Middle East. Indeed it would be to Israel's advantage, probably her salvation, because there can be no lasting security for that small, beleaguered community without a settlement, and there can be no settlement without withdrawal. For the United States the occasion—if we rise to it—is one of those rare and happy ones in which justice and self-interest coincide.

Unfortunately, neither the Israelis nor their uncritical supporters in our Congress and in our media have appreciated what is at stake or the enormous distortion of American interests in our present course. Endlessly pressing the United States for money and arms, and invariably getting all and more than she asks, Israel makes bad use of a good friend. Unlike the Saudis, the Israelis seem not to recognize that if the United States is gravely weakened, they themselves can hardly hope to survive.

For these reasons it has become incumbent upon the United States—working with the Soviet Union through the United Nations—to take the decisive lead in bringing the quarter century of crisis in the Middle East to a prompt and equitable solution. The general outlines of such a solution are clear and even obvious: explicit acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist by the Arabs, including the Palestinians; Israeli withdrawal to the approximate borders of 1967, with United Nations forces patrolling demilitarized zones on both sides of Israel's borders; self-determination for the Palestinian people of the West Bank, either as an independent state or in some form of confederation with Jordan, according to their own wishes; a special status for the old city of Jeru-

salem, providing equal and uninhibited access for members of all faiths; and a general Great Power guarantee of the settlement and its terms, under the auspices of the United Nations, reinforced by a direct American treaty guarantee of Israel's independence and territory. On the basis of unofficial soundings, there is reason to believe that the Soviet Union would be prepared to join in such a settlement, including the guarantee of Israel.

A solution in the Middle East is the key to a resolution of the mounting world economic and political crisis. Although it cannot be predicted with certainty, there is good reason to believe that Israel's withdrawal from old Jerusalem and the West Bank will lead to a significant lowering of oil prices, giving the West and others the time they so desperately need to adjust to the new world energy situation. There is even better reason to believe that the failure to achieve a solution will bring a new war, a new oil boycott, and possible consequences therefrom ranging from another Great Depression to Armageddon itself.

To state the matter with simple candor: The United States has done as much for Israel as one nation can do for another. We, and we alone, have made it possible for Israel to exist as a state. Surely it is not too much to ask in return that Israel give up East Jerusalem and the West Bank, as the necessary means of breaking a chain of events which threatens us all with ruin.

As we survey these great difficulties, we cannot fail to perceive that the only available solutions are cooperative solutions. If the world crisis is to be surmounted, unprecedented accommodations will be required, starting with the absolutely essential accommodation of Israel and the Arabs. Beyond that—and because of it—it will become possible to build the equally essential cooperation between oil producers and oil consumers, between rich nations and poor nations, industrial and developing nations. We must rededicate ourselves to the objectives proclaimed by Churchill and Roosevelt in their Atlantic Charter of 1941, including their desire “to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned,” and the right of “access, on equal terms,

to the trade and to the raw materials of the world. . . .”

The great speech Winston Churchill delivered at Westminster College almost twenty-nine years ago is usually remembered for its warnings against war and tyranny and for its recognition that an “iron curtain” had rung down across the continent of Europe. But there is another theme in that speech, more hopeful and, I believe, more pertinent to the problems we face today. Churchill called as well for a new, cooperative world order. He called for a “good understanding on all points with Russia under the general authority of the United Nations Organization,” and he called too for the arming of the new world body with an international force. Speaking of the United Nations, he said: “We must make sure that its work is fruitful, that it is a reality and not a sham, that it is a force for action, and not merely a frothing of words, that it is a true temple of peace in which the shields of many nations can some day be hung up, and not merely a cockpit in a Tower of Babel.”

Churchill and his contemporaries tried to build a cooperative world order for the prevention of war. Today, three decades later, we are more than ever in need of a cooperative world order, not only to prevent war but to fuel our industries, to feed the world's proliferating millions, and to try to create an environment in which people cannot only live or live affluently, but live decently and well. Secretary Kissinger stated the problem and the choice with simple eloquence in his address last winter to the Washington Energy Conference: “Will we consume ourselves,” he asked, “in nationalistic rivalry which the realities of interdependence make suicidal? Or will we acknowledge our interdependence and shape cooperative solutions?”

I have no answer to that question, but perhaps a clue can be suggested. Lord Byron wrote that “The best of prophets of the future is the past.” History casts no doubt at all on the *ability* of human beings to deal rationally with their problems, but the greatest doubt on their *will* to do so. The signals of the past are thus clouded and ambiguous, suggesting hope but not confidence in the triumph of reason. With nothing to lose in any event, it seems well worth a try.