

Columnist Patrick J. Buchanan looks across the world situation with its many examples of "the centrifugal forces of nationalism, tribalism and separatism" and comes away with the reminder that America is subject to some disintegrating forces as well. Tribune Media Services has given permission to reprint this article from The Arizona Republic of March 27, 1991.

## **BALKANIZATION THREATENS THE U.S.**

By Patrick J. Buchanan

WASHINGTON - Even a cursory viewer of today's headlines can see a common thread running through the history of the post-Cold War era:

Czech president Vaclav Havel is rudely treated by independence-minded Slovaks. Croatia purchases arms secretly as it moves away from Serbia-dominated Yugoslavia. Slovenia heads the same way. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldavia, Georgia, Armenia refuse to vote on Mikhail Gorbachev's all-union treaty. They, too, wish to break free.

We are witnessing the final breakup of the greatest empires of the 19th and 20th centuries--the Russian and British. The labors of the great imperialists are being undone, as is the work of the nation-builders of Versailles who carved out of the Hapsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov empires the modern states of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Everywhere, nationalism is routing internationalism. Race and religion undermine established regimes. Iraq is coming apart, with the Kurds breaking loose in the north, Shiites in the south. India faces rebellion in Kashmir and Khalistan. In South Africa, the black-on-white struggle is slowly displaced by a black-on-black struggle between the African National Congress and Inkatha, the one based largely in the Xhosa tribe, the other in the Zulu nation.

Welcome to "the new world order."

And how should the United States view all this?

As we have no vital interests in the coming conflicts, as we lack the energy or resources to halt the forces of dissolution, our role should be, by and large, passive.

The lone potential threat to US security lies in disintegration of a Soviet Union that still has the world's largest missile arsenal--with 10,000 nuclear warheads aimed at the United States. But a decommunized Russia, preoccupied with preserving what it can of the old empire, will not have much spare time to advance imperial designs against a distant United States.

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The breakup of Canada, with Quebec seeking independence, also poses no threat. Indeed, US diplomats should be studying what to do if the Maritime provinces, cut off from Ontario by a "Quebec Corridor," or the Western provinces that bear no love for Ottawa's socialists, seek association with the United States.

Peaceful expansion of the United States to the North Pole in the 21st century, acquisition of Greenland from Denmark making the US land mass--for future generations and coming centuries--equal to greater Russia--is not so wild a dream.

Yet we Americans are not wholly immune to the centrifugal forces of nationalism, tribalism and separatism.

First, there is a danger of our being sucked into wars in which we have no vital interest. Just as Anglophobe Irishmen sought to align the United States against Great Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries, we are being drawn today into the intractable disputes of the Middle East, central Europe and Southern Africa.

Second, Mr. Bush should take a long second look at his campaign pledge to make Puerto Rico our 51st state. Should that happen, the United States would, like Canada, overnight become a bilingual nation.

This generation will decide whether we preserve a republic, or become an empire. In 1898, we seized the Philippines, as well as Puerto Rico, and fought a guerilla war to hold them. Anyone think we would be better off if we held them still? In the 19th century, some Southerners wanted to make Cuba a state. Would that have been wise?

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Third, the United States should review its immigration policy. Earlier immigrants came here to shed ties to the old country and the Old World, and become Americans. For most, that is still true, but not for all. Some arrive now not to go to work, but to go on welfare; others come in, recruited by criminal gangs that play on their own ethnic groups; still others come in to prey upon American citizens. In some Southwest prisons, a large slice of the inmate population is illegal immigrants. Having defended the border of Saudi Arabia, perhaps we should consider defending our own.

Those who argue for "open borders" tell us that

only individual rights. The demand for group entitlements, for quotas, for racial set-asides, is a demand to alter forever the character of our country. The battle against these elements is a battle to preserve the republic.

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immigrants invariably add to a nation's GNP. We were a great country before we were a rich country; and our social crisis is unrelated to a shortage of consumer goods. It is rooted in the fact that we are ceasing to be, and ceasing to see ourselves, as one nation, indivisible, one people.

If we are to remain one nation, we need to maintain a common cultural vocabulary. English and American history should be taught to children from the earliest grades. Before they have left eighth grade, American kids should know the stories and heroes, the myths and legends, of the Revolution and early Republic. Before they leave high school, they ought to have been introduced to English literature and our constitutional form of government.

America has been spared the social divisions of other nations because here there were no group rights,