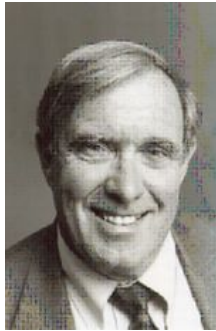


International Affairs Forum Interview:

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By **Dimtri Neos and Jens F. Laurson**



John J. Tierney, Jr. is the Faculty Chairman and Walter Kohler Professor of International Relations at *The Institute of World Politics*. Before that, he was the Special Assistant and Foreign Affairs Officer, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1981-1993); a frequent participant in various national security negotiations for the U.S. Government; the Executive Director of the Congressional Caucus on National Defense and the National Security Research Group, U.S. House of Representatives as well as the Chairman of the Politics Department at Catholic University, Washington D.C.

International Affairs Forum: Operation Iraqi Freedom may have worked as well as expected – but the aftermath clearly did not. How do you see the situation in Iraq now – a year after the invasion... and the situation in its neighbor states and the U.S. Who is better off – and who is not?

John J. Tierney, Jr.: The “better off” expression has been used repeatedly by both pro and con politicians and pundits – but only the Iraqi people really know the answer and I’m unaware of any polls taken. It’s actually a political throw away and probably cannot be answered with precision. People like myself (which is to say: most) have little or no true knowledge of Iraq and have never been there. How are we to assess this question? I actually dismiss those who answer it by the test of domestic political loyalty, as most “experts” seem to do.

So, my answer is “I don’t know.” A better question would be “why should I care?” Without a history of interest in Iraq and minus the validity of the original motivations, this question is troubling.

But, obviously, Iraq is in a hell of a mess today and the “better off” phrase is probably inappropriate.

IA-Forum: The choices that any U.S. administration is left with in Iraq seem bleak. What – if any – choices have we... and does the political will exist to make them and how are they going to play out if enacted and how if not?

John Tierney: There are three choices in the main: a) hang tough with many more troops and full scale occupation; b) multilateralize the operation and diminish the US role; c) exit strategy, elections, let Iraq take care of itself and leave within a declared time. As the Assistant Secretary said of the long ago occupation of Nicaragua after seven years of frustrating insurgency, “let the strong man emerge without further waste of time.” Somoza wasn’t a liberal democrat but Nicaragua was off our table.

Risks and problems of each are apparent and need no elaboration. Political will for a) seems out, so b) or c) will probably be

adopted, with b) more likely with a Kerry Administration.

IA-Forum: What can the goals for the U.S. and Iraqis be in the current crisis... and what solutions are there for the attainment of these goals?

John Tierney: The goal is a stable Iraq in my view but not necessarily a democratic one. I'd rather see a strongman with a long-term commitment for representative government and with a good measure of coalition backing. Safety now is more important than even "legitimacy" with that expression perhaps too distant for now. Not knowing the Iraqi political culture with any sophistication, this answer is almost instinctive to me. But I'm aware of similar scenarios in history and security and stability have almost always prevailed in the end, after the democratic ideology proved unrealistic, if not utopian in the extreme.

IA-Forum: How does the current state in Iraq play out for the Middle East? The road to democracy sweeping from Baghdad to Tehran, Damascus and Riyadh seems clogged at the time. Can the spreading of democracy of our, western, values still be a goal and if it should be pursued, how can we? At what cost should democratic/liberal values be spread at all – and does it, can it backfire?

John Tierney: We should rein in our horns on this and search for more concrete, realistic goals. The rhetoric should also be toned down and Theodore Roosevelt's phrase to "speak softly ..." is more applicable.

IA-Forum: How has U.S. policy changed or how will U.S. policy change because of the Iraq war and aftermath. Is the U.S. strengthened or weakened... and how

ought it project her power in the future when her security is in danger?

John Tierney: Boggled down with an insurrection does not increase anything, opinion, strength, morale, support. Nothing! Power "projection" should be measured, realistic, combining military capacity and threat with "soft" power elements, diplomacy, public image and public diplomacy, prudence, discernment, truth, civility, justice, respect etc. We are lacking in many of these, in my view.

IA-Forum: How does that question apply to Iran or North Korea?

John Tierney: It doesn't really apply, but the proper application of the spectrum of power to both of those cases, in my view, also falls short. There is a glaring inconsistency across the board (assuming consistency a virtue) and I believe that both of those are more dangerous than Iraq was, and certainly more than it *is*. I mean, Bush was *right* in "mission accomplished," or at least US policy should have concluded that, rather than more ambitious and poorly judged and implemented follow-up. Regime change was accomplished in a few weeks, nation-building may take generations but the public will not support it for much longer.

IA-Forum: Owen Harries, Senior Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies in Sidney writes in a July FT op-ed that the excessive power of the U.S. led to hubris. ("When things go wrong, there is an inclination to blame the failure on lack of resolve, insufficient support or bad luck rather than on the folly and impracticability of ones goals." Accurate or off ??

John Tierney: Regrettably, Harries is correct.

IA-Forum: Do you see a transformation of U.S. foreign policy to follow the Iraq war as was the case for almost three decades after Vietnam.

John Tierney: Probably. That is, there will more likely be a breathing time, when we assess and go back and re-evaluate. Rumsfeld himself did this a year ago in the famous “leaked” memo, but more long-term evaluations will almost certainly follow, and definitely with Kerry.

IA-Forum: If the U.S. had not invaded Iraq, how would we control dictators and their aim to harm the U.S.?

John Tierney: Let me count the ways. Threat, blockade, covert ops, assassination, coalition building, counterintelligence, police style ops, subversion, properly applied sanctions, other creative economic war plans, exposure, intensive diplomacy, surgical strike (as Israel did). There are more but that’s some of the ways we operated in the Cold War. We also supported Pinochet, Somoza and dozen of other bad guys without 140,000 soldiers on the ground.

IA-Forum: How will European and other powers – Russia, India, Japan, China come to mind – have to adapt their politics and even their thinking in order to ensure a cordial cooperative relation

with the U.S., regardless who is her President?

John Tierney: *If* they want a cooperative and cordial relationship they should demonstrate the benefits of coalition building for themselves and for us. It’s two-way street, and I believe that it is the US, as the world’s only superpower, which should take the lead in this kind of diplomacy. I don’t like the word “multilateralism” since it implies that US interests might be subsumed, but “leadership” as Bush Sr. did in 1990, Truman, Ike, JFK and later Reagan. FDR was great on this with the Latin Republics with his Good Neighbor Policy after generations of interventions and occupations and “Yankee Go Home” reactions to us.

IA-Forum: George Bush jr. is going to be reelected while running – in part – on the issue of the War on Terror. If your view is inconsistent with that of the majority of the American people who find strong leadership and courage important in times like these, can you elaborate on how you reconcile that for yourself?

John Tierney: There’s a fine line between stubbornness and courage or leadership. At times Bush shows the first trait to a fault and this came out in the first debate, or so I think. Bush has the potential but so far seems more of a “hedgehog” than a “fox.” He’s more of an evangelical than a Tory like the Old Man.