



2¾ Cheers for the New Quincy Institute

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What if George Soros and Charles Koch teamed up to do a thing? Sounds pretty scary so far. What if the project was to build a new antiwar think tank in Washington with the financial backing to make a serious mark? Does that sound even scarier? It shouldn't. The reasons why are *Trita Parsi, Andrew Bacevich and Eli Clifton*.

Recently the great anti-interventionist author Stephen Kinser announced in the *Boston Globe* that Soros and Koch have teamed up to fund – to the tune of a million dollars to start – a new group called the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, named for John Quincy Adams, America's eighth secretary of state and sixth president. It was Adams who famously echoed founders George Washington and Thomas Jefferson when he warned that the U.S. must not “go abroad in search of monsters to destroy,” since that would eventually lead to a necessary betrayal of the Revolution and individual liberty here at home.

The kicker is that the boss is our good friend Trita Parsi, the founder and former director of the National Iranian American Council which has done so much to promote the truth about America's relationship with Iran, debunk lies, oppose sanctions and violence, and support diplomacy and engagement for the last two decades. Trita's books, especially *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States*, are absolutely indispensable history. Trita told me a few months ago that his leaving his post at NIAC was only due to his plans for something even bigger and far more radical in the future. It sure seems like it.

But wait, there's more! Much more. The great anti-interventionist, conservative, retired U.S. Army colonel and academic historian, Andrew Bacevich is on board as well. Bacevich is the author of some of the most important antiwar books of our generation: *The New American Militarism, The Limits of Power, Twilight of the American Century, Washington Rules, America's War For the Greater Middle East* and the forthcoming *The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered Its Cold War Victory*. His regular articles for *The Nation, The American Conservative* and TomDispatch.com have helped to inform our perspective for years. His presence in our movement has also helped to reinforce the legitimacy of the antiwar position as perfectly patriotic and pro-American in every way, just opposed to what is so obviously wrong with our government's actions. Importantly, Bacevich's son, also named Andrew, was killed in Iraq War II in 2007. Bacevich's wisdom and commitment to international restraint is to be well-respected. I interviewed Andrew about the new institute a couple of weeks ago. (More about that below.)

And then there's Eli Clifton. This is another writer that we at Antiwar.com have loved for years. His great journalism for InterPress Service, the Center for American Progress (I know, I know, but still, click through and read it, trust me.) and Lobelog have been a staple around here as long as I can remember. He has Lobe's knack for tracking and destroying neoconservatives wherever they may be found. And he's such a pleasant kind of guy too. He never seems to be angry about what the hawks are up to. Perhaps it would only distract him from his hunt. Who is funding who on the war party's side? That's what Clifton wants to know. And he knows how to find the answers too.

I have interviewed all three of these men dozens of times about their great work on my various radio shows over the years.

The other two major co-founders of the group, Suzanne DiMaggio, previously with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the New America Foundation, and Columbia professor Stephen Wertheim, seem like pretty decent types themselves.

For her part, DiMaggio is an expert on Iran and North Korea. Not only that, but she has been doing the work in confidence and relationship building towards a peaceful future between the U.S. and the DPRK. As Tim Shorrock reports in *The Nation*:

"Since 2015, DiMaggio has led a private initiative involving former US and European officials and diplomats to meet with North Korean officials to discuss peace and security issues. Last month, she broke her silence on those talks and, with former US diplomat Joel Wit, laid out a potential path for a negotiated solution with Pyongyang in an op-ed for The New York Times that was widely circulated in US foreign-policy circles.

"Together, [former Secretary of Defense William] Perry and DiMaggio have helped shift the conversation in Washington away from demands for a 'preventive war' — a term invoked by National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and endorsed by CIA Director Mike Pompeo, who has also suggested 'decapitation' strikes to eliminate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un — and nudged it toward diplomacy and engagement."

Heroic.

In this interview with *Haaretz*, Professor Wertheim explains that the Institute's leadership is still coming to a consensus about their positions, but maintains for his part that the U.S. has "overidentified" itself with Israel and Saudi Arabia, and argued that participation in the Yemen war has not served American interests. That shows some courage right from the start. In this article in the *New Republic*, Wertheim makes the case not just against the current wars, but the doctrine of permanent American military dominance itself, while calling for a complete reassessment of the basic tenets and presumptions behind the entire foreign policy consensus.

The world's worst expert on everything, Bill Kristol, hates the idea. There must be something to it.

Now I know what you're thinking: Soros! Koch! I feel the same way. After all, Soros organizations have been involved in so-called "soft-power" regime change operations in favor of U.S., EU and NATO interests for decades now. The Koch-backed Students for Liberty have also helped to promote U.S. interests in Latin America, as well as in far-away Eastern Europe.

It makes sense though that either would still be interested in military restraint compared to the way things are now. Charles Koch is famously a former libertarian activist who has funded many important institutions in our movement for years, including the all-star line up of imperial opponents in the Cato Institute's foreign policy department: Doug Bandow, Ted Carpenter, John Glaser, Trevor Thrall, Emma Ashford, Gene Healy, John Mueller and Christopher Preble. (I don't know Eric Gomez, but I'm sure he's great too.)

Koch has also recently put money into a group called Defense Priorities which features greats such as retired army lieutenant colonel and heroic Afghan war whistleblower Daniel L. Davis, former Antiwar.com regular contributor Chuck Peña and foreign policy critic Benjamin H. Friedman.

(Full disclosure: in 1979 and 1980, Antiwar.com founders Eric Garris and Justin Raimondo were employed by Charles Koch to organize protests against the re-institution of draft registration. [Your author was a toddler then, and has never worked for a Koch-backed organization.])

And George Soros? Perhaps he merely wants to drive up a seller's market in "smart" color-coded revolutions in Russia's traditional sphere of influence instead of war with Israel's enemies in the Mideast. Who knows? As Vox writer Kelsey Piper points out here, Soros wrote a piece for the *Wall Street Journal* denouncing the war on terrorism years ago. Any fool could see it. Why not him?

There are few to no principled libertarian billionaires who can pass our purity tests. But what's the real point? What we want to know is under what conditions did these two promise their support to this important new group?

According to Andrew Bacevich, when I interviewed him a couple of weeks ago, the answer is none whatsoever. There were no policy conditions and Bacevich says none will be accepted by the staff. They brought their extremely-restrained foreign policy to the table and the billionaires in question decided then to fund the project. I believe it. And knowing 3/5 of the leadership of the group the way I do, I don't believe they would sell out their position for anything – certainly not for a measly million dollars.

It is true also that of the three leaders of the group with whom I'm familiar, none of them are libertarians (Parsi and Clifton are both progressives, Bacevich a conservative) or favor a policy of complete or near-complete abolition of foreign policy which Antiwar.com adheres to. For example, as Bacevich has written and explained in the past, and including in his most recent interview on my show, he favors continued U.S. engagement in eastern Asia in order to dissuade a new arms race and contest for power among South Korea, China and Japan over dominance in our place, which could, in theory, lead to violent conflict. Of course the balance of power might settle itself in a more sustainable way in America's absence, but his concern is not entirely without justification.

But when I asked Bacevich about realist school professor Stephen M. Walt's favored concept of "offshore balancing," which would limit intervention to the prevention of a single dominant force from rising in Europe, the Mideast or East Asia, Bacevich objected, essentially arguing that such an academic concept is still far too broad of a mandate for America's foreign policy in his view. Instead he prefers to focus his arguments much more on the need for diplomacy for solving

problems, as opposed to relying on military force, than advocating for any one particular overall foreign policy doctrine beyond “restraint.” And he does mean that the U.S. should negotiate in good faith with other nations, not just bully them with men in business suits in place of camouflage.

This to me is good enough. Not everyone can be plumb-line on everything. There is potentially quite a bit of space on the spectrum between “ending forever wars” and true non-interventionism. We should be concerned that a less-than-abolitionist position could become an Achilles heel if the hawks ever feel the need to cite our allies to claim that “*even the Quincy Institute guyssay*” that this or that policy is acceptable or even necessary. But what have we got to lose? Almost nothing. And what are the chances that overall we will regret the establishment of this new institution? Virtually zero.

Here’s another thing about the Quincy Institute that deserves our admiration and support. They are not just financed and run by liberals and conservatives. In fact, they are explicitly founded for the purpose of bridging left-right divides to create a new alternative *consensus* to that of the neoconservatives and liberal “humanitarian” hawks.

This is exactly in the spirit of the mission of Antiwar.com. Libertarians and non-interventionist purists we may be, but we seek to promote and work with forces from across the spectrum who mean sincerely to put an end to the American empire and its wars. Too often any alliance of the left and right is cause for great alarm. Centrist bipartisanship has been the rubber-stamped mark of the empire and the kiss of death for innocent civilians and individual liberties alike. Here is an alliance in opposition to the extremist positions of the so-called moderates.

It’s just what we need and long overdue.

We wish the Quincy Institute the best of luck in their fight for peace.