What if the insurgency that now appears like a distant cloud on the horizon -- no larger than a man's fist -- is really the precursor of a popular war? What if the "extremists," "militants," "terrorists," are the advance guard of a popular war to restore sovereignty to Islamic peoples? Can the US and Israel win *this* war against close to a quarter of the world's population? Will this be a war worth fighting, worth winning?

Shouldn't these great powers heed the words of Friedrich Engels? Shouldn't they heed history itself. After nearly a century of hard struggle, the Chinese gained their sovereignty in 1948, driving out every imperialist power from its shores. Today, China is the world's most powerful engine of capitalist development. It threatens no neighbour. Its secret service is not busy destabilising any country in the world. At least not yet.

Imagine a world today -- and over the past sixty years -- if the West and Japan had succeeded in fragmenting China, splintering the unity of this great and ancient civilisation, and persisted in rubbing its face in the dirt? How many millions of troops would the West have to deploy to defends its client states in what is now China -- the Chinese equivalents of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, and Iraq? If Vietnam bled the United States, imagine the consequences of a quagmire in China?

Would the United States prefer this turbulent but splintered China -- held down at massive cost in blood and treasure, with bases, client states, wars, and unending terrorist attacks on American interests everywhere in the world -- to the China that it has today, united, prosperous, at peace; a competitor, but also one of its largest trading partners?

At what cost, and for how long, will the United States, Europe and Israel continue to support the splintering, occupation, and exploitation of the Islamic heartland they had imposed during World War I? At what cost -- to themselves and the peoples of the Islamic world? There are times when it is smarter to retrench than to hold on to past gains.

That time is now, and that time may be running out.

Another turn of the screw -- another attack by the United States or Israel -- and this window may close irrevocably. If wars, civil conflicts, or revolutions sweep across the Islamic world -- unlike the Chinese revolution, most likely this turbulence will not be confined to one segment of Asia. In one way or another, this violence will draw the whole world into its vortex. One cannot even begin to imagine all the ramifications, all the human costs of such a conflagration.

The most vital question before the world today is: Can the United States, Israel, or both, be prevented from starting this conflagration?

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