

THE WRITER'S FREE INTERNET EDITION – VOLUME II

ESSAYS ON AMERICAN EMPIRE

Liberty vs. Domination

by

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EAST AMHERST

2009

DEDICATED

To

DOROTHY GRUBER-ROZEFF

A Good Woman and a Loving Wife

PREFACE

This is Volume II of *The Writer's Free Internet Edition Series*. The 42 essays in this book were first published between July 30, 2005 and December 29, 2007 on the Lew Rockwell web site, where they are now [archived](#) with many others of mine. I thank him warmly for publishing my work. I also thank those who have taken the time to send me many thousands of e-mails that provided me with valuable comments, support, and encouragement.

This volume brings theory and evidence together to argue that American empire is a departure from principles of liberty and peace and, as such, has not brought about happiness, justice, and security for Americans. Sooner or later, the empire will decline and fall because it contains within it the causes of its own downfall. Sooner or later, Americans will have to choose different political arrangements. Their best chance for prosperity is with sound ethics and liberty, I believe.

The essays in this volume focus on the international decisions of the American empire, which attempt to extend the power and influence of the empire outside America. They focus on American foreign policies, the Middle East, and the alternatives of neutrality and defense. They explain some aspects of the American empire, examine its actions, question its rationales, dispute its benefits, point out its costs, and condemn its evils.

The essays are substantially unchanged from their original form. My aims included writing clearly and simply on fundamental matters of lasting significance. I aimed for accurate statements, sensible theories, and useful understanding.

I taught and did research in finance for over 30 years. I write on political matters as a tyro, but I am a trained scientist and I employ scientific ways of thought. I prefer to express a simple and bold hypothesis that surely cannot be the whole truth, to a complex and muddled hypothesis. The last thing I want is to spread cloudy thinking and confusions. I seek to untangle basic questions without oversimplifying too much.

The immediate catalyst for writing was the Iraq War. Analyzing various aspects of this war meant examining the enterprise that launched it, which is the American empire. I relied on the research tools of my trade: curiosity, logic, theorizing, research, and analytical habit. Essays are done quickly, however, and not in the depth of a scientific article. All the resulting failings herein may be attributed to me personally. Whatever degree of truthful insights and judgments that is present may be assigned to a source of inspiration beyond me.

The topic of American empire is very large. I do not achieve scholarly completeness on any of these topics. I owe myself and readers the development and expression of my thoughts with a reasonable degree of coherence, logical supporting argument, and fact, even if an essay takes only a few hours to compose and lacks the depth of a scholarly article. I do not delve in depth into all the possible scholarly literatures that deal with these topics, but I do hope that some of the content will be of service to others.

This volume touches upon many aspects of American empire. Being in essay form, it does not provide a systematic account of empire or of the state. To clarify the material on empire and help overcome this deficiency, I've included previously unpublished material. In addition to a new general introduction and conclusion, each chapter contains a newly-written introduction to the major ideas in the essays in that chapter. Volume I in *The Writer's Free Internet Edition Series* collects other essays of mine on the state.

Michael S. Rozeff, East Amherst, New York.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Force and American Empire11
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER I

THE IRAQ WAR

Introduction . . . . .	.35
Bush's Folly . . . . .	.46
How Did Saddam Hussein Become a Grave Threat?	.56
Exiting Iraq Now . . . . .	.72
Bush's Counterattack . . . . .	.78
Compounding the Folly . . . . .	.84
Success in Iraq? . . . . .	.91
Benevolent Hegemony Goes Down the Tubes . . . . .	.97

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER II

POLICIES OF EMPIRE

Introduction . . . . .	.103
The War on Tyranny . . . . .	.108
Stop the ‘War on Terror’ . . . . .	.115
What if Osama bin Laden Dies? . . . . .	.124
Twenty-Six U.S. Intelligence Agents Indicted in Italy on Kidnaping Charges . . . . .	.131
Iraq and the Neo-Domino Theory . . . . .	.139
Troubling Misconceptions to Build a Dream On	.146

CHAPTER III

A MORAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction . . . . .	.152
Escalating the Sin . . . . .	.155
American War Crimes . . . . .	.158
Saving Lives or Committing Evil? . . . . .	.163
A Very Great Evil . . . . .	.172
The Living Dead . . . . .	.174
The Cause of Empire . . . . .	.180

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER IV

IRAN

Introduction . . . . .	.183
Bombing Will Not Settle the Iranian Nuclear Issue	.185
The Iran-U.S. Dispute and Military Action .	.187

CHAPTER V

FAULTY NEOCONSERVATIVE THOUGHT

Introduction . . . . .	.195
Islam Isn't Kosher . . . . .	.199
Morality and Fourth Generation War . .	.204
Pushing the War Buttons . . . . .	.211
Appeasement and War on Iran . . . . .	.217
People Who Live in Glass Houses . . . . .	.223
'You Liberals' . . . . .	.226

CHAPTER VI

CONVERGENCE OF THOUGHT

Introduction . . . . .	.230
2008 - Choose Your Foreign Policy Poison .	.233
Tony Blair's Internationalism . . . . .	.236
A Clinton II Presidency . . . . .	.244

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hillary Clinton: The Tragedy Continues249
--	------

CHAPTER VII

AMERICAN EMPIRE

Introduction . . . . .	.253
Malevolent Hegemony . . . . .	.259
Occupation Hazards . . . . .	.265
Foreign Policy: The Production of Folly . . . . .	.275
Why Are We in Iraq? . . . . .	.279
America Chose and America Chooses . . . . .	.288
Why We Are Still in Iraq . . . . .	.296
Repudiate the Bush Doctrine . . . . .	.303
National Security by Spreading Democracy? . . . . .	.307

CHAPTER VIII

NEUTRALITY AND DEFENSE

Introduction . . . . .	.318
Is the Country More Secure because of President Bush's Policies? . . . . .	.321
Pakistan and U.S. Foreign Policy . . . . .	.331
Toward New American Foreign Policies . . . . .	.335
War or Peace? Achieving Peace Among States . . . . .	.343

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Peace and Security Through Defense and Neutrality .353

Getting to American Neutrality363

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION371

INTRODUCTION

Force and American Empire

Empire does not remove problems for Americans, it originates them. As in the 20th century, the current foreign engagements of the U.S. are bringing serious problems to Americans at home. Foreign engagements per se are not the issue, for the U.S., as long as it exists, necessarily comes into foreign relations with other states; and if it does not exist, then Americans will have foreign relations in other ways. It is *improper* foreign relations that cause problems, such as invading a country on the pretext that it might develop weapons that might one day threaten the U.S.; or invading a country to arrest a fugitive or a suspected criminal.

The current marks of improper foreign relations are wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Trade Towers massacre, stringent measures at airports and borders, a Department of Homeland Security, and liberty-destroying assumptions of government authority in such legislation as the Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act.

America didn't have these problems in the 1800s. They have come about because sometime around 1898, with earlier historical beginnings, Americans decided to have a full-fledged international empire. Because of international empire, which had never previously been a preoccupation of America, the country joined into the global warfare of the 20th century. It forcefully intruded into the affairs of others and produced new enemies.

An international empire has never been necessary to the country's security, survival, or enhancement. Its existence constitutes a radical shift away from the wisdom of the Founding Fathers, who considered it improper and imprudent. They were right, for each step along the way toward greater empire

has brought bad results and has led to further steps and further bad results. The American entry into World War I led to Versailles, Hitler, and World War II. The U.S. moves into the Pacific and China led to war with Japan. The U.S. intrusion into the Middle East in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, and Iraq has now led to fighting in the Middle East and central Asia. The empire recently has laid out a program of worldwide political change that places it in problematic relations with over one billion Muslims.

I hold that for the average American, the cost in blood and treasure has not been worth it. I hold that the wars, military expenditures, debt, loss of liberty, and inflation that empire has visited upon Americans have brought Americans no tangible rewards. Empire has only benefitted narrow interests. I hold that this foreign adventurism has held Americans back from progressing as rapidly in the 20th century as they did in the 19th. If the largest benefit of empire is supposed to have been security, where is that security? Each deeper commitment to empire has brought more unnecessary foreign entanglements and wars. Each has brought more enemies and less security. The twin strategies of defense and neutrality would have avoided great travails, allowed Americans to progress faster, and brought us much greater security. I hold that the social choice to pursue empire has been a tragic social mistake and that it is a continuing mistake.

I hold that the ethical values and the liberty that were and still are essential ingredients in American progress are incompatible with state and empire as we know them. I hold that the U.S. as state and empire is on a course destructive of those values and thus of American well-being. Large-scale states and empires with enormous powers necessarily dominate the lives of millions of persons and suppress their liberty. By whatever political names they go, be they socialist, fascist, or democratic, they take us away from peace, justice, security, and happiness. They appeal to the worst in us. They de-civilize us. They set us back. I believe that the American state and empire have gone bad in results and wrong ethically.

Insofar as state and empire are *our* government and reflect *our* beliefs, knowledge, and values; insofar as state and empire are *our* responsibility, most of our largest problems stemming from our chosen political arrangements are of our own making. We ask our government to do too much. We allow it to do too much, in the course of which it has to act unjustly. We give it too much power, which it gladly accepts and augments. Our government makes far too many laws, most of which are bad laws. We are not really governing ourselves.

We have turned government over to others. These others who now control government have the upper hand. They are no longer our servants but our masters. They use government to diminish our lives, liberty, and property at their will, certainly not at ours, and certainly not in the public interest. The government and its laws are generally acting against the public or broad interest. They are acting against our personal interests and well-being.

The trend toward a greater and uncontrolled government power is unfavorable to our welfare. This is a fact that has long been ignored. It has been easy to ignore it as long as the drag of an ill-constructed government was offset by the benign effects of free markets that produced a rising standard of living. But beneath the accustomed surface continuities of everyday life, the corrosive forces of bad government and laws will in due time produce sharply negative discontinuities and collapses in standards of living and security, unless they are stemmed and reversed. No one can do this but you and me who are ordinary Americans and not part of the ruling establishment of well-connected interests, politicians, professional elites, and bureaucrats.

Who is responsible for the existence of empire? We the People are. In a vain attempt to set aside this responsibility, we may point to particular government officials who took the actions that promoted and built up empire. We may pinpoint private interests that have corrupted government for their own ends. We may argue that we were handed this situation and did not create it. We may point out the difficulties we face in overcoming it. But ultimately, We the People are still the ones who elect Congress every two years. We are the ones who make things happen and let them happen through our actions and inactions. We stand idly by, silently approve, and often loudly applaud. We are the only ones who can change the course of history now. Our current crop of elected officials will not do this, but that is because we will not do this. We are the ones choosing men and women to represent us who believe in the wrong things and do the wrong things. We are the ones who accept our current form of government and its ways. We are the ones who employ force upon our fellow Americans and foreigners. We cannot deny our share of responsibility.

A country cannot rest on contradictions. It will eventually go one way or the other. It will either work toward higher ground or lower ground. It will honor sound principles or dishonor them. To the extent that the Constitution has sound principles, America cannot simultaneously deviate from this document and follow it. It's one or the other. America cannot simultaneously enact arbitrary State laws and hold to "the laws of nature and of nature's God" as the

Declaration of Independence puts it. It's one or the other. Americans cannot simultaneously dominate each other and foreign peoples while believing they are peaceful and spreading justice. It's either aggression or peace. America cannot simultaneously steal and obey the eighth commandment. It will either steal from one another or not steal from one another. America cannot simultaneously trample on life, liberty and property and respect them.

When Americans are awakened to the realities, many want to know what to do about them. Many Americans want to work within a constitutional system. They want neither rebellion nor revolution. There is no need for either because those Americans who want to can work within the existing legal framework of the Declaration of Independence and the *original* Constitution; while others who do not want to can dissociate from it. The greatest needs are to know the proper ethical ideas, wanting to implement them, courage, persistence, patience, constant pressure and push, wisdom, unity in the purpose of effecting proper change, and organization. All these characteristics have for too long been applied to achieving improper and wrong ideas.

The current course is one of increasing despotism, tyranny, and totalitarianism. We are heading for a corrupt, inefficient, and merciless police state that suppresses liberty at every turn. The present course has already largely destroyed adherence to the basic American ideas embodied in the Declaration of Independence and that which might be sound in the U.S. Constitution. While imperfect documents, they are better than the current ideas being followed, which are destroying the social, family, and personal capital of the country.

To get back on course and undo at least a century of misguided action, we do not have many options. There are only a few possible courses of action that retain law, continuity, and order. The three basic options are return to the original Constitution, dissolving the Constitution altogether, and implementing key changes that restore the most important elements in the Constitution so as to generate a dynamic that leads to further restoration.

Lysander Spooner's arguments show that the Constitution does not legitimate the U.S. government. But even to the extent that the U.S. Constitution might express some sound principles of limited government or express some rights, state and empire have gone bad constitutionally or against that standard, which means legally. Although the Constitution has severe defects and can be said to have failed us, we have failed it too. If Americans understood it properly and

adhered to it today, they would shift onto a path that would bring them greater peace, justice, security, and happiness. We Americans are encountering severe problems – retrogressing in important ways – because we are not governing ourselves properly. There are several ways to get back on course, of which one is getting back to the Constitution or restoration of the original Constitution. That option requires bringing about important and basic changes in thought and action. We'd have to change our ways. We'd have to take charge of our government. We'd have to build a republic. We'd have to alter radically our foreign policies. We'd have to stop military offensives and shift to defense. We'd have to rebuild militia and make it an integral component of government. We'd have to end the welfare state. We'd have to create a proper money and monetary system. We'd have to end a great many interferences in commerce. Congress would have to impeach Supreme Court justices. And all of these kinds of changes would require that we change attitudes, beliefs, and underlying philosophies. We'd have to throw off decades of mis-education and replace it with sound thinking, principles, and ideas. This menu is a tall order, but it can be done if the pressure for serious change builds up. It is like a logjam breaking up. If the political pressure from below gets large enough, the situation can change dramatically. If the Soviet Union can shift from being a communist dictatorship to a federal republic, why can't the U.S. likewise shift? If We the People apply enough pressure to the 50 states, they can greatly cut back the powers of their creation, the U.S. (the Union), and bring about a federal republic shorn of international empire and vastly reduced in its domestic empire.

Getting back to the Constitution requires such fundamental changes in the status quo that they may be impossible to bring about. We the American People may be so insurmountably divided that we are no longer able to account ourselves as one people and govern ourselves by the original Constitution. If that is the case, then another option to better our condition is to dissolve the Constitution. The individual states acting together can legally do this. Americans can create a more fluid social and political situation in which a number of peoples can re-constitute themselves. We could follow out the principles of the Declaration of Independence and aim at a more radical degree of freedom of association in which every person is free to choose his or her own government.

There are other viable options to alter and improve the situation. If the key levers being used by state and empire to rule us can be disabled and thwarted, then we can move forward. There are those who are focusing on the state's

financing via the banking system. They urge us to change the monetary system. Others urge that we amend the Constitution to stem government taxation, borrowing, and spending. Others urge us to revitalize the Militia within individual states for any number of purposes, the most general one being, in the words of the Constitution, that “A well regulated Militia [is] necessary to the security of a free State.” Yet others urge us to replace public with private education.

Those who want to alter America’s course in these specific ways and who are currently trying to implement these and other options as individuals and through individual organizations and parties should form a coalition, a nationwide movement to reconstitute America’s national (commonly called federal) government. They should convene. They should find a means of broad-based communications and financing so as fully to engage grass-roots America. They should, after due consideration, state principles of action. They should select a few, probably no more than four or five, directions to support, such as instituting a proper monetary system, revitalizing the Militia, electing state legislators in key states, key constitutional amendments, and private education.

The U.S., as state and empire, needs to be brought under control. This can be accomplished. We the People have to do this. We are the only ones who can.

A few basics of empire

A state is a political organization. Its members are distinct from the people and societies that it rules and interacts with in somewhat the same way that a company and its officers are distinct from its shareholders and customers. The national state of Americans is the United States, or the U.S. Its officials, who are centered in Washington, are not the people of America in somewhat the same way that the officers of IBM Corporation, in the main, are not its shareholders. Shareholders have a certain degree of control over the corporation and its officers and management, but it is incomplete. In a roughly analogous way, voters relate to the state. They can vote, but the state has distinct powers, and its officials act on their own for their own reasons. Moreover, a state has powers that no company has. The officials of the state have the power to make laws and enforce them.

An empire is a state that has extended its rule. It is a state in which a powerful sovereign runs a government that rules over a set of states, nations, or peoples. This makes an empire a political organization, usually quite small in number

of top officials, that interacts with and influences one or more societies with multitudes of persons. The few in the empire rule the many in society.

Any general criticisms we might have of the state as an organization that governs also hold for an empire. The general defects that afflict the domestic programs of the state also afflict the foreign ventures of the empire. This volume targets issues of war, defense, and security.

By making laws, using taxes and subsidies, and making broad decisions, an empire influences and molds every aspect of those societies, from language, transportation and communication to the economic, the legal, the religious, the cultural, the educational, the ethical, the scientific, the philosophical, and the ideological. Societies also influence the empire. Causation is bidirectional. The empire cannot do what it does without the support and participation of many of its citizens. To any individual person or group, the might of the empire is overwhelming. Those in the empire, on the other hand, have to contend with great masses that outnumber them.

There are those who run the empire, and then there are we who are ruled by them. We find ourselves under the empire, willy-nilly. We are like a stockholder who is required to hold stock in an enterprise and who is assessed taxes to support its ventures.

Those who run an empire are like any of us in that they decide what to do according to their own wants and values, not those of others. Like us, they operate within various constraints and incentives. Like us, they look ahead and try to shape matters so as to improve their personal situations.

Since the values, constraints, and incentives of state officials differ from ours, what they choose to do is not usually what we prefer. It is what they prefer. They have their philosophies and ideas about human nature, and we have ours. Actions that to us as subjects may appear despotic, irrational, and evil will seem rational, right, and good to those who have the power to decide them.

In view of these differences and the dissatisfactions that their laws and taxes produce (and are bound to produce) for many of us, the rulers will try to persuade us to support them; we will be taught to become patriotic, not only to country but also to state. The rulers will arrange favors and payoffs to some or many of us so as to sustain their rule; we will be taught to depend on the state's programs of welfare and security. The empire will constantly be

launching propaganda offensives. It will constantly be erasing history, reinterpreting history, lying, and making up slogans and stories. It will constantly be marginalizing its opponents. It will constantly be selling its ventures and programs. All of this will be in addition to its use of force and threat of force to keep its subjects in line and obedient.

An empire faces internal (domestic) and external (foreign) constraints. A simple model that captures the essence of international politics is to think of each state as a gang that rules a society in a given neighborhood. Once a year at a holiday, the gang poses as Robin Hood and gives away “free” turkeys. An empire is a powerful gang with a large territory. It absorbs resources and gives away many “free” turkeys to cement loyalty to it.

The guiding idea of rulers is power, both as a means and an end. There is no limit to how much power they would accumulate if given the opportunity. They would rule everyone and everything in the entire world if they could, but they cannot. The other gangs they want to dominate in other neighborhoods offer resistance, as do their own subjects.

The empire is a tiny group that gains its strength from the wealth and manpower of the people in the neighborhood that it rules. It is costly to extract that wealth and simultaneously gain the cooperation (even loyalty) and submission of those whom it rules. The more that an empire dominates and taxes these people, the lower their economic productivity and the greater their resistance. This lowers the empire’s strength and ability to project power upon other gangs.

The U.S. is the *national state* set up by the U.S. Constitution. National means that its laws affect the citizens of every state in the Union. This is an organization with relatively few top officials who run the presidency, the legislature, and the Supreme Court. It operates through bureaucracies that make up a government with thousands of employees. America the country is not the state we call the U.S. or the U.S.A. America denotes many things, such as the land, the peoples, and their culture and ways. The government and state come into close contact with these things and affect them greatly, but the U.S. and America are two different things. Similarly, American society and societies are not the same as the U.S.

The American empire is the U.S. state with extended rule. We might call it the U.S. empire to denote its political source, as [Laurence M. Vance](#) has done in

his article verifying the existence of the empire. It is common also to call it the American empire, to denote the place and people that it rules and that form the center of its strength.

Why empires decline

I sketch out a theory of why empires decline. It does not recount all possible reasons for decline, but it highlights ones that I believe are definitely at work. The essays flesh out this outline. The reason I focus on is that the empire's use of force to control behavior undermines the liberty and values, and thus the production, that are the sources of its strength. The use of more and more power creates more and more dysfunctions in the society. This produces decreasing and eventually declining returns to effort. The only possible reforms to remedy these problems entail the application of less force and control, but the rulers, who want power, believe in power, and use power to meet every problem, resist this path. Therefore, the society, state, and empire decline: "...for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

An empire is an extended state. To understand decline of an empire, we need to understand decline of a state. To understand the latter, we need to understand the nature of a state.

I posit that a society requires governance if it is to survive and advance. It will have some common or public institutions of law (or norms and customs) that deal with criminality, property, rules of exchange, and other matters, such as war and dealing with other peoples, where a degree of societal centralization and uniformity is productive. The people and organizations that attend to these functions may be called government and the state. Some of them or parts of them arise naturally within the society, so that governance is shared among a variety of institutions.

Government (or governance) is essential. It is a question of what kind of government. Will it be a standard state that uses coercion? Will it be a government voluntarily chosen by all, or will a few impose it on many? Will it have many powers or few? Will it be centralized or decentralized? Will its functions be dispersed among several institutions or focused in one?

A minimal or watchman state is one that is restricted to essential functions and no others, such as dealing with criminality, war, and the justice system.

A justly productive society is one that, barring its being conquered by a stronger force, is surviving without aggression against its own members or the members of other peoples. The degree of production and wealth depends on its technology and resources. The justice of one society and its notion of aggression may differ from that of another society. One society may leave old and sick people to die as a way to preserve the remainder; it may do this because its resources are limited. Another society may engage in human sacrifices because it is superstitious. Over time and place, there is a distribution of societies. They are not all uniform regarding what aggression and justice are, but there is a central tendency. We may therefore conceive of what mankind generally regards as aggression and what it does not, so that the notion of a justly productive society has meaning. A justly productive society is producing sufficient goods for its own survival and perhaps progress without gratuitous violence being visited upon its own members or aggression being used against other societies. It is not engaged in conquest to obtain goods. Its members are able to and do produce what they need without taking from each other or others. If there is an issue of distribution of goods, such a society handles problems of wealth distribution more by voluntary, customary, and nonaggressive means than by aggressive means.

A justly productive society necessarily has a minimal state.

A conquering society has a state that is not justly productive. It is a society that uses aggression to gain resources for itself and/or its society or portions thereof. It no longer has a watchman state.

These two types of society are pure conceptual types. A given society may combine elements of both just production and conquering.

Suppose a society has a watchman state. Suppose that a ruler takes over who is atypically aggressive. He may become the ruler because he can see the latent power that may be accrued within even a watchman state, or he can see that the society does not have safeguards to prevent the inroads of aggressive rule. Over time, he and others like him expand the state and its powers.

Suppose that through this process a society is a mixture of just production and aggression. The society's state aggresses against some members of its own society. Society is riven. Some members of society are making gains at the expense of other members via the state by the use of force. This is typical of most societies. To the conquering members and state, the benefits of internal

aggression and conquest exceed its costs. The opposite is true of those members of society who are on the receiving end of the aggression. They are typically being taxed and constrained. Their product is being “stolen” under cover of “law” by a non-productive group of “criminals.” Since they are incurring some costs without benefits, they respond by producing fewer goods. Society as a whole becomes less productive than when aggression was not “legal.” The society declines.

A kind of warfare emerges in the society as the aggressors seek to enhance their takings, usually by taxes, and those being attacked seek to escape their clutches. The war tends to be won by the aggressors, although eventually, even if it takes generations, the society will collapse under them. The aggressors win for many reasons. Important ones are that they control the state’s power and they form a more cohesive group than those whom they domestically conquer. The more that they take from productive persons, however, the more that the society tends to decline or progress less rapidly than competing societies with states that are more nearly watchman states. Eventually, the state and society fall.

In other words, the state is always in a kind of slow internal warfare with society; or rather certain components of society are at war with others in society and they use the state to gain the upper hand. There is a rather long-lasting but temporary equilibrium that the aggressors seek to prolong by a very great many means. The situation is not stable for two reasons. First, the state is a vehicle for gaining by coercion, and people are drawn to use and expand its powers. Second, as a stronger state weakens production and strengthens resistance, the state and productive society decline.

The decline and fall of empire follow the same dynamic.

Conquerors look for prospective conquests in which the benefits of conquest exceed the costs – to them. Conquest is a risky project or investment. The conquering empire expends resources prior to receiving future uncertain returns. Conquests are a great deal more risky than domestic control; but because leaders are likely to be more aggressive than the societal norm, they are less risk averse and more prone to undertake conquests of foreign lands. Conquests involve high costs such as financing the venture up front, moving and maintaining armed forces at large distances, meeting the resistance of nations being conquered, integrating another nation into the empire, and maintaining order after the conquest. Due to the low risk aversion of

aggressive conquerors, they adopt conquests that involve these high costs while bringing in either small net benefits or even no net benefits. Consequently, as taxes rise, the society's productivity declines. Continued far enough, the empire will fall.

Not all, but enough, rulers will give in to the urge to acquire and use greater power, so that the state and empire will grow in power. This will happen because the more aggressive in a society will compete to become leaders, and because the society will want and choose the more aggressive among them to be leaders. The latter occurs because the society will demand defense against enemies and be reluctant to risk their own lives in that defense. The state may also educate and brainwash its subjects in these directions. It may concoct enemies and disarm the populace. But, the stronger that a state becomes, the more these leaders will take on low or negative-return projects, due to their low risk-aversion. The costs of their imprudence fall on society and undermine its production. It becomes more likely that they wound or kill the goose that is laying the golden eggs, i.e., tax and regulate the productive society to death.

This is a partial theory. Why it is that the rulers of an empire tend to ignore reality and drive the state and empire into the ground requires more theory. Some of the less intelligent of them believe their own rhetoric and see themselves as infallible (or close to it) or possessed of powers that can correct all ills. Many more find themselves working within or trapped in a system whose complexity defies serious alteration. Whatever moves they may make using their powers, while attempting not to lose them, simply tighten the knots and degrade production further; but they cannot cut the Gordian knot for fear of undermining the system and their position in it.

Empire and Constitution

The U.S. Constitution constructed a domestic empire by erecting a national government that is sovereign over the individual state governments in certain important respects. Its language arguably enabled further expansion of the original empire continentally and overseas, although this plainly required both misinterpreting that language and applications of force.

The Constitution divides sovereignty, with the U.S. having sovereignty over the states in designated spheres. Its powers over the states and citizens have grown over time. Noah Webster promoted this kind of national government at length in 1785 in the influential *"Sketches of American Policy."* Webster's

views were those of other “federalists.” In reality, they were more nationalists and less proponents of a federal government or confederation like the one that existed under the Articles of Confederation.

“There must be a supreme head, clothed with the same power to make and enforce laws, respecting the general policy of all the states, as the legislatures of the respective states have to make laws binding on those states, respecting their own internal police. The truth of this is taught by the principles of government, and confirmed by the experience of America. Without such a head, the states cannot be united; and all attempts to conduct the measures of the continent, will prove but governmental farces. So long as any individual state has power to defeat the measures of the other twelve, our pretended union is but a name, and our confederation, a cobweb.

Union did not mean federation to the “federalists.” A federation is a contract among parties in which each agrees to certain actions while maintaining their own identities. Union meant a supreme government, which was a new government to be called the “United States.” The United States was not to be the individual states united as through a confederation, but a supreme and new entity.

“What, it will be asked, must the states relinquish their sovereignty and independence, and give Congress their rights of legislation? I beg to know what we mean by United States. If after Congress have passed a resolution of a general tenor, the States are still at liberty to comply or refuse, I must insist that they are not united; they are as separate, as they ever were; and Congress is merely an advisory body. If people imagine that Congress ought to be merely a council of advice, they will some time or other discover their most egregious mistake.

The new state would have real teeth. The states must give up important elements of sovereignty and be ruled by the new government.

“The idea of each state preserving its sovereignty and independence in their full latitude, and yet holding up the appearance of a confederacy and a concert of measures, is a solecism in politics that will sooner or later dissolve the pretended Union, or work other mischiefs sufficient to bear conviction to every mind.

The Constitution did not settle the matter of secession in a peaceful way. When the South left the Union, the North forced Union upon it.

“The general concerns of the continent may be reduced to a few heads; but in all the affairs that respect the whole, Congress must have the same power to enact laws and compel obedience throughout the continent, as the legislatures of the several states have in their respective jurisdictions. If Congress have any power, they must have the whole power of the continent. Such a power would not abridge the sovereignty of each state in any article relating to its own government.”

The practical questions were what powers the Congress would have. The federalists won the day. They got a constitution that set up a government with a Supreme Court that was part of the government and could extend its powers. They got enough open-ended language that allowed the national government to expand. They did not win extensive powers for the national government right away. That took a civil war and subsequent developments and rulings, but they won.

Alexander Hamilton thought of the pre-constitutional confederation of thirteen sovereign States as an empire. In *Federalist 13* he writes:

“The ideas of men who speculate upon the dismemberment of the empire seem generally turned toward three confederacies--one consisting of the four Northern, another of the four Middle, and a third of the five Southern States. There is little probability that there would be a greater number. According to this distribution, each confederacy would comprise an extent of territory larger than that of the kingdom of Great Britain.”

James Madison in *Federalist 14* saw an empire already in place in America prior to adopting the new constitution:

“Hearken not to the unnatural voice which tells you that the people of America, knit together as they are by so many cords of affection, can no longer live together as members of the same family; can no longer continue the mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellowcitizens of one great, respectable, and flourishing empire.”

The term empire more loosely refers to the peoples, lands, and realm that the

empire rules. In that sense, America was an empire in 1787. Today it is an empire that spans a continent and reaches to every continent and the solar system.

The anti-federalists, as they came to be known, were anti-empire and anti-Constitution. They knew that the principles of the American Revolution were being erased by the new government and constitution. Anti-federalist James Winthrop in his letter ([Agrippa IV](#)) of December 3, 1787 writes

“We find, then, that after the experience of near two centuries our separate [state] governments are in full vigour. They discover, for all the purposes of internal regulation, every symptom of strength, and none of decay. The new system [U.S. Constitution] is, therefore, for such purposes, useless and burdensome.

“Let us now consider how far it is practicable consistent with the happiness of the people and their freedom. It is the opinion of the ablest writers on the subject, that no extensive empire can be governed upon republican principles, and that such a government will degenerate to a despotism, unless it be made up of a confederacy of smaller states, each having the full powers of internal regulation. This is precisely the principle which has hitherto preserved our freedom. No instance can be found of any free government of considerable extent which has been supported upon any other plan. Large and consolidated empires may indeed dazzle the eyes of a distant spectator with their splendour, but if examined more nearly are always found to be full of misery. The reason is obvious. In large states the same principles of legislation will not apply to all the parts.”

Winthrop’s prognosis was far-sighted. He understood that a government ruling over an extensive region and population is very likely to become a despotism and ensure the misery of its subjects. The empire might from a distance appear splendiferous, but under the surface numerous of its people will be found to be suffering from a variety of problems and limitations. This occurs for several reasons. The central government accrues excessive power, dominates its people, and suppresses liberty. It proceeds to make decisions in place of the persons it rules; but since these persons are better equipped than the government to know what decisions conduce to their own happiness, a powerful central government passes too many and detailed laws that do not apply well to individual circumstances. Despotism in this fashion produces

misery.

Revolutions are prone to come to bad ends in the form of centralized rule, as did both the French and Russian Revolutions. The American Revolution came to a bad end when the U.S. Constitution was adopted. Instead of insuring liberty and promoting the security and welfare of Americans, it has resulted in a despotic national government.

Although the U.S. Constitution enabled the national government to operate an empire in foreign lands and gave Congress and the Executive plenty of latitude and power to do so, it did not give them a people willing to volunteer to fight and hold other lands, like Mexico in 1848. And it did not give them a broad taxing power to finance such wars. In time, the national government overcame these obstacles. The government instituted the income tax and a central bank. The Supreme Court provided necessary rulings to support conscription. The attitude of many people changed under the influence of those who promoted an international presence for the U.S. Jingoism spread. A national empire became an international enterprise.

Responsibility

Hamilton said in *Federalist* 22 that the existing structure under the *Articles of Confederation* was infirm because it did not rest on “THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE.” He wanted American empire to be more solidly based:

“The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority.”

Consent is not an unambiguous idea. How is it expressed? By voices? If so, whose? By votes? By exit from the system? Who are “THE PEOPLE”? How do they identify themselves? I argue that if government is to be based on consent of the people, then the designation of who belongs to a people must also be based on the consent of those same people.

Assume for the moment that Americans comprise a people, which is by no means assured. If “THE PEOPLE” is the body that legitimates the empire’s authority, then can the leaders of American empire claim that all their many actions are justified because Americans have voted them into office? They

cannot, because they are sworn to uphold the Constitution. Just as we cannot escape our responsibility, they cannot escape theirs when they engage in actions that go against the Constitution that they have sworn to uphold; or when they misinform the public, or lead it without regard to the public trust.

The contemporary state is not a watchman state whose powers are directed toward defense against crime and war. Most governments today use power to advance the agendas of interest groups and themselves. Their claim that elections justify these uses of power, or that the vote gives them consent of the people, falls apart under scrutiny. Modern elected legislatures claim the power to legislate on almost anything, even things that make unsafe anyone's person, livelihood, and property. But there can be no legitimate consent to takings that are illegitimate under the Constitution and have been made legal only by Supreme Court decisions that have abandoned the original Constitution. Elected officials have no greater rights than the people they represent. If you and I cannot rightfully redistribute wealth by force, then neither can elected officials.

The leaders of the U.S., through dereliction of duty and worse, have been and still are responsible for these deviations from legality. They cannot excuse their actions by saying they were voted into office anymore than voters can excuse themselves for doing nothing about their misbehaving leaders.

Even if we feel individually powerless, I hold that as individuals and as a *social body* we Americans still bear responsibility for the doings of our state and empire. This state and empire are ours and not someone else's, whether we like it or not. When the great mass of us fails to organize against the powers of state and empire, we are as a body endorsing these institutions. We as individuals may not be consenting, but we as a social body are. In saying this, I assume that Americans are a people. There has been no referendum on this matter. We have not been given a chance to say aye or nay. But most of us are here because of immigration to this land of our ancestors and the naturalization of those immigrants. At a minimum, we are Americans by inheritance; and the allegiances to state and empire run much more deeply than that among many Americans.

One of the most serious challenges any people living under a constitution faces is that the sovereign may acquire the power to interpret and thus alter the constitution without the direct involvement of "THE PEOPLE." The sovereign can make law to enhance his own power. Therefore, consent cannot rationally

be made a foundation of a state's power without stringently limiting the state's power to alter that constitution. And if perchance it alters it anyway by its actions, then there has to be some means of reversing such behavior. That method cannot logically lie in a Supreme Court that is an instrument of the government. The only other possibility is in the parties to the constitution. In America, that places the sovereignty back with We the People who promulgated the Constitution. The national government cannot be supreme or the lawmaker of last resort. Consent cannot be granted in perpetuity to a *system* whose power grows without consent. There must needs be ways to dissent and dissociate from the entire system. This has been an enduring problem with the U.S. constitution. The civil war settled one struggle unsatisfactorily. By force, it made the national government dominant and removed state dissociation from the system. It made the Union perpetual. This upset the balance of power in favor of the national government by removing one check on the national accretion of power, the threat of secession. Other steps followed such as direct election of Senators. The consequence was a continual growth in national power. And, as James Winthrop predicted, with that came a continual increase in the unhappiness of people and groups whose lives more and more are dominated by a despotic government.

The empire and Iraq

Once the empire is in place and regarded as a settled matter, it is made into a perpetuity. It becomes a kind of immortal and all-embracing political structure and rule that affects the thinking of those within the empire. With few exceptions, they absorb its assumptions. They live with them and by them. They no longer question the misinterpretations of the constitution that are embodied in the workings of state and empire. Most citizens stop asking: Why do we have an empire? Is this empire good or evil? Is it a good or bad thing? For whom? Instead, they accept the empire as good, right, and just. They stop exercising their sovereignty. They are taught that the Union is the source of its own authority, and they forget that they are the source of government authority. The belief in empire replaces other beliefs that pre-date empire, such as beliefs in liberty, sovereignty of THE PEOPLE, and beliefs based in faith and reason. These alternative beliefs lose currency in the face of the power of empire. The domination of the empire becomes second nature to the lives of its subjects. It becomes part of the natural environment. Concepts such as peace are redefined in terms of the empire. A *pax Americana* comes to define the meaning of peace as American peace. Empire comes to define that which is good, right, and just, inasmuch as it is the law and makes the law. Empire

comes to restrict and permeate thought. It subdues, overcomes, and reworks the psychology, rationality, and value system of everyone living under it. Empire redefines every concept, including liberty. Empire replaces God and God's laws.

American Empire cannot help but be fundamentally subversive to original American ideals. Nowhere is that more clear than in George Bush's attack on Iraq in March, 2003. This was an act of a sovereign attempting to extend its sovereignty and influence to a foreign land. At a minimum and by offensive means that have nothing to do with providing "for the common defence," it sought the unconstitutional goal of changing Iraq's form of government and replacing it with one more friendly to the empire's interests. The supposed attempt to defend this nation by instituting democracy in another land, or otherwise controlling the affairs of a foreign state, or by making war, is an act of offense, not defense. It is an unconstitutional act of an empire using force. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld arrogantly used the term "shock and awe" to describe the effects of such force. No matter how objectionable some foreign government may seem to American officials, they have no legal authority to change it.

Furthermore, such acts of war and attempts to control the governments of other countries directly contradict the American ideal of consent of the governed. The consent of another people cannot be fashioned from the actions of Americans, in the presence of American armed forces, and as a result of Americans destroying an existing political order. Neither can consent be fashioned on the basis of arbitrary borders that contain many peoples whose potential associations are in question. Consent cannot be fashioned by force, as the American civil war attempted to do. Force replaces and suppresses consent. It shapes outcomes in accord with the will of its wielders.

President Bush and others near him took advantage of the 9/11 massacre to promote the Iraq War. Neither the American government nor the American people learned from the Vietnam experience to stay away from interminable and costly wars with unachievable objectives. The presumptions of empire and its system of power were too entrenched to be broken apart by the intrusion of that negative reality.

The empire and its supporters do not place much value on lives lost, bodies injured, or on families, livelihoods, and structures torn asunder, so long as they are not American or not their own. At least 100,000 Iraqis have died. In most

cases, no one knows who killed whom, or why. Terrorists were attracted to Iraq. Various groups within Iraq begin to kill each other using terrorist methods. The American attack and victory unleashed forces beyond America's immediate control. On most parts of this planet, peaceful definition of peoples and peaceful consent of the governed of these peoples is a long ways from being attained.

The U.S. attacked another country that was no threat. It attacked without provocation and justification, and with a host of false justifications. Americans were subjected to a propaganda campaign. Bush revved up an incredible and false propaganda machine. Concocted rationales fell on many accepting ears, conditioned to accept empire and the words of its leading figures. Bush had no compunctions about attacking a country that was no threat to the United States. Clinton's bombing of Iraq and his war making in Yugoslavia, also evil acts of empire, were a prelude.

Congress funded the war. Congress approved the war. The attack was an act of the American government as a whole. Warfare between the U.S. and Iraq did not begin in 2003. It had been going on since August 2, 1990, when Iraq attacked Kuwait. Leading up to that war, America armed Saddam Hussein, even with the means of creating biological weapons that he used against Iran and Kurds. American empire has been operating in Iraq and other countries of the Middle East for a long time.

Al-Qaeda has its own quest for empire and domination. The beastly terrorist and completely criminal activities of al-Qaeda have no regard for innocent human life. Al-Qaeda has its own massive lies and propaganda. This has led many Americans to support the war on terror. But the evil deeds of al-Qaeda do not justify support for the American empire. The fact that al-Qaeda massacred Americans in New York City and the empire used that event to declare war on Iraq is no reason not to see the evils of the empire for what they are and end them. We must set our own house in order and we must at the same time secure ourselves against terrorism using appropriate means. These two are closely related.

The empire today

Empire has gotten into the American blood, not without a receptive host and an active effort by government and others to assure its virility. Empire at present does not meet with anything more than token resistance or disapproval

from most Americans. It is the dominant paradigm of political structure.

The United States has significant and influential war lobbies, oil lobbies, construction lobbies, weapons lobbies, and Israel lobbies. The lobbyists influence Congress, which funds the wars through taxes, borrowing, and inflation. Lobbyists have been effective in influencing Congress. They have been effective in gaining media exposure to support their causes. This influences public opinion. The government itself goes to great lengths to influence public opinion. The acts and powers of empire rest on a machinery of money, influence, communications, and power to declare laws.

The ambitions of American empire are alive and undiminished today under a new President and a new Congress. How well they are, given the financial problems of the government and the damaged economy, is another matter. The members of government, dependent on and addicted to the paradigm of empire, cannot abandon it. This is their lives. The government acts as if it still has access to plenteous resources to fund its adventures abroad and at home. As expected, Democrats are less interested in Iraq than in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but it's still empire. The press carries accounts of the Israeli option to attack Iranian nuclear facilities without American approval, but it is extremely unlikely that such an attack is possible without outright American approval or perhaps signals from our rulers that the U.S. would not seriously sanction Israel for such a campaign. This too is empire on display.

The concept of American empire has deep historical roots, going back as they do to 1787, and including the American civil war, the continental expansion, and the coming of age as a world-class power. American empire has deep institutional roots. It has deep financial roots. And it has deep roots in the hearts of Americans.

The continental American empire expanded against the British empire, the French empire, the Southern states, and the Spanish empire. America's expansionary intentions were stopped short at the Canadian and Mexican borders. As noted by historian Walter T. K. Nugent in his 2008 book *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*, American hopes to conquer Canada in 1812 were dashed by American military ineptitude and British skill. In the Mexican-American War, America stopped short of capturing the whole of Mexico. Among other constraints that were subsequently removed, the nation at that time did not have an income tax base to finance such a war or a war machine with a standing army. Modern America beat back the German

and Japanese empires. It has neutralized the Russian empire. It still has ambitions in the countries that were in the old U.S.S.R.

There are clear signs that the American empire has reached and passed its apogee. Its ambitions far exceed its financial base, even with an income tax. Its methods of dealing with problems are increasingly rigid. More and more, the leaders fail to diagnose the problems and devise sensible solutions to them. This shows up in hopelessly bureaucratic health care legislation and a second generation military that is very slow to adapt to fourth generation warfare. The business success that formed the empire's financial foundation is increasingly hamstrung by the empire's tax and regulatory policies. Companies, talents, and skills move offshore. The American people are increasingly subservient and dependent on transfer payments. Their governments at all levels are increasingly powerful, bureaucratic, and yet dysfunctional. The empire's leadership is increasingly shallow and unable to make headway. High debt and depreciation of the currency are facts of life that constrain further adventures. A marked tendency toward concentration of power is present. Large business corporations and lobbies increasingly turn first, last, and always to Washington. Massive mal-adaptions have been put in place, such as huge bailout and pork-barrel programs in the face of banking problems. Even venture capital firms are looking to public funding.

A resurgence of empire, an increase in its status and vitality, is not out of the question; but there are few signs of it in the political sphere at present. An enlightened and skillful emperor might conceivably lengthen the empire's life. But as things now stand, no such leader has appeared for decades. The empire has apparently passed its prime.

Conclusions

America's leaders are now running an empire, both domestically and in foreign affairs. Their actions dominate and control persons here and abroad. This clearly constitutes a broad attack on liberty.

The American empire, as we have seen, is built on force, not on consent. Consent requires the possibility of exit, and exit has been foreclosed.

The American empire is corrupt. Its language of liberty routinely contradicts its actions of domination. It misuses its power against American citizens and foreign lands.

The empire and its supporters gain center stage for their views and interpretations. They systematically undermine the fundamental concepts that underlie liberty. They corrupt and twist language in order to justify their acts. It is in their interest to do so. The misuse of power has negative ramifications along many dimensions.

In *Federalist 1*, we read

“The subject [Constitution] speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world.”

The empire is reputed to bring about the safety and welfare of its inhabitants. There is no safety in numbers, however, when national control increases and concentrates power to such an extent that it is enabled to bring the entire nation into wars that its regions or component states would never have entered by themselves. In that case, the center produces unnecessary wars without any clear connection to the defense of Americans. These wars only strengthen the national government and ensconce militarism in the society. There are no welfare gains when strong national control stifles the liberty of individuals, debilitates businesses, and destroys free markets.

The most important point I have made is this. Force as a foundation for a political economy eventually causes the system to fail. This is happening in America. This happened with Nazi Germany, with the Soviet Union, and in Communist China. The greater the use of force, the worse the political economy becomes and the sooner the tendency to failure.

Force causes system failure for any number of reasons. Slaves are far less productive than free people. Heavily taxed and regulated people are less productive and inventive. Force destroys the benefits of free markets. Force destroys the social capital of trust, language, accurate concept formation, history, and fair dealing. Force undermines proper values. Force ends up with a people who are less capable of competing, surviving, and defending themselves. Force allows leaders to exercise their whims and engage in wasteful wars and foreign ventures that weaken the system. Force leads to corruption, hypocrisy, division, in-fighting, instability, and chaos. Force leads to income inequality, public theft, and destructive wealth redistributions. Force hollows out the middle class.

In short, empire, which is built on force, is something that poisons the blood of the body politic and society. Empire brings about its own demise, as its deadweight losses and costs accumulate and outweigh any conceivable benefits.

Force leads to resistance and eventual change. In America, there are signs of increasing political fragmentation and challenge, as in the case of some legislators in some individual States beginning to resist the national government and speaking once again of secession. The worse that the empire makes life, the more such movements will arise.

Americans are going someday to have to live with the end of their empire. They will have to get it out of their system. This will be a very good thing, because a renaissance in American life at all levels will accompany a diminishment of American empire. Making the transition away from empire and back to a healthy society will be an important and tough challenge, far more so than sending a man to the moon, because this involves such deep changes in thinking and institutions at the personal, social, and political levels. Empire is in the blood of Americans. Purging it is going to be a traumatic experience.

CHAPTER I – THE IRAQ WAR

INTRODUCTION

The war on terror was the driving concept of American foreign policy under George Bush. As part of the war on terror, the American empire became more intent on shaping foreign governments. The U.S. made a long-run commitment to changing Afghanistan. This led to closer relations with and military bases in several Central Asian states. The war on terror drew the U.S. into concrete actions and policies that went beyond earlier advocacy for rights, democracies, and trade.

The Iraq War was billed as part of the war on terror. “*Bush’s Folly*” makes the case that initiating the Iraq War in 2003 was folly (both for Americans at large and the empire), that is, that it had disastrous consequences that could have been foreseen, based on past U.S. and other colonial interventions in other countries and warnings from experts with experience in such involvements.

Such a blunder, even for the empire itself, raises the question of why Bush started the war. Since many such policy blunders occur throughout history, we must ask why. The governing *system* is a reason why leaders are too often blind. Policy-makers, being men of power who have risen to power, tend to overconfidence in their own powers and willingness to use them. They tend to excessive risk-taking. A second major reason for a high incidence of folly at the highest levels of power is that the leaders do not bear the full consequences or costs of their actions, many of which occur in the distant future and fall on other people. On the other hand, they become “great” men of history and heroes if they succeed. Hence, they have a distorted incentive to bet on long shots and programs that may cover them in glory. A third and similar factor is that leaders are responsive to special interest groups that can benefit narrowly while spreading the costs to others. Such groups obtain rather sure rewards, such as war contracts, through the taking on of risks whose possibly bad

outcomes fall on other people. This reinforces the tendency for the leader to take risks.

While these incentive factors contributed to this war, they are not the only explanation of all such blunders or even this particular blunder. For example, leaders of empire may come to believe in their own rhetoric about the empire's strengths and abilities to vanquish all ills. A number of other articles in this volume address this question with different answers.

The essay examines Bush's important West Point speech in June of 2002 when he outlined his doctrine that preemptive and preventive wars are justifiable. These ideas dilute the restraints on warfare. They expand the possible aggressions that states may initiate both externally and internally. The Bush doctrine is a recipe for more power at the top to start a war, with reduced hurdles to doing so. This doctrine stretches the meaning of defense to include offense. It is folly for Americans in that it weakens a key limit to government power. It allows the executive larger and vaguer grounds for starting wars. Leaders are given more scope to identify enemies, threats, and causes of hostilities. If every state adopted this doctrine, wars would be easier to instigate and become more plentiful. The doctrine would be at hand ready to use whenever any leader took office who happened to be more prone to perceiving enemies and threats, or who happened to be more prone to aggression. It would be easier for him to create war fever and engage the nation in removing, not actual, but perceived threats. The boundary line between war and peace would become blurred and open to interpretation of self-interested parties. This doctrine is one of several faulty Bush policies examined in this volume.

Given a normal (bell-shaped) distribution of paranoid perceptions and aggressiveness among those who take office, the nation can be drawn into war every so often merely by the chance of electing high officials drawn from the extreme of the distribution. It therefore makes sense to have a very high bar against war-making to act as a check against this possibility. There seems to be no such constitutional or other check, including the provision that Congress declare war. In practice, the President who asks for war after some provocation, real or contrived, gets it, usually by a one-sided Congressional vote. At such times, Congressional behavior is the irrational behavior of a crowd.

The other side of this argument is that it pays the nation to start or quickly

enter a war so as to avoid the risk of an enemy armed force destroying the nation. This is what a Union is for, to maintain its component parts. Too high a bar to war-making leaves the country open to attack and destruction. The Constitution settled this argument in favor of making war. It passed the war-making power to the Congress along with the financial capacity and the power to create a military establishment. The anti-federalist arguments lost. For example, Brutus wrote

“It may possibly happen that the safety and welfare of the country may require, that money be borrowed, and it is proper when such a necessity arises that the power should be exercised by the general government. But it certainly ought never to be exercised, but on the most urgent occasions, and then we should not borrow of foreigners if we could possibly avoid it.

“The constitution should therefore have so restricted the exercise of this power as to have rendered it very difficult for the government to practice it. The present confederation requires the assent of nine states to exercise this, and a number of other important powers of the confederacy. It would certainly have been a wise provision in this constitution, to have made it necessary that two thirds of the members should assent to borrowing money.”

The next essay brings out several major concerns. One is the use of propaganda to sell government programs, in this case, a war. Another is the apparent ease with which non-elected intellectuals, in this case, neoconservatives, can capture foreign policy when an administration is receptive to their ideas. “*How Did Saddam Hussein Become a Grave Threat?*” traces the history of the major false charge made by the Bush administration, which was that Saddam Hussein was a grave threat. This idea was already starting to percolate in 1998, when Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act.

Instead of looking for Iraq war origins in broad incentives as in “*Bush’s Folly*,” this essay is a detailed case study that looks for clues in the people who started the war. Saddam Hussein was troublesome but contained prior to the war. He posed no war threat to the United States. A group of neoconservatives, however, wanted him removed. They began a campaign to that end. In 1997, William Kristol’s *Weekly Standard* published the issue “Saddam Must Go: A How-To Guide,” containing an article by Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz. Subsequent articles by Max Boot, Gary Schmitt, Robert Kagan,

and William Kristol promoted war with Iraq. Kristol influenced Karl Rove and Condoleezza Rice. In his campaign for the presidency in 2000, Bush showed that he could rather easily swing to the side of making war when he declared of Saddam Hussein: "And if I found out in any way, shape or form that he was developing weapons of mass destruction, I'd take 'em out." In addition, his 1999 team of advisors included such vocal war advocates as Wolfowitz. Bush, amenable to their ideas, converted them into action after 9/11. Since the facts did not warrant an attack on Iraq, high level administration members orchestrated a disinformation campaign. Bush fully participated in the lies, and he carries a major responsibility, along with Congress, for bringing about the war.

The propaganda campaign was sustained and highly effective, raising the specter of mushroom clouds and uranium yellowcake. Speech writers fused the symbols of weapons, Iraq, and terrorism into one rationale, captured in the phrase "arsenal of terror." This exaggerated Saddam's terror credentials in order to justify a full-scale war for his removal. Saddam Hussein did support terrorism in various ways. He paid the families of Palestinian suicide bombers, and some terrorists found safe haven in Iraq. During the propaganda campaign, allegations were made that the Iraqi facility, Salman Pak, was used to train terrorists. Subsequently, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence concluded otherwise. In any event, a state's support or involvement in criminal activities such as these is not an action that justifies general war.

I cannot help but conclude that American foreign policy was captured by naive, faulty, simplistic, militaristic, arrogant, and dangerous neoconservative thinking.

The Bush administration was not anxious, even at the cost of much Iraqi loss of life, to leave Iraq until it accomplished its objective of creating a friendly democratic state. "*Exiting Iraq Now*," written in early November 2005, begins with an imaginary address in which the President announces an American withdrawal from Iraq after their vote on a new constitution. At that time, Saddam Hussein had been removed, a constitution voted upon, and elections scheduled for December. But Bush, the article shows, wanted more. He wanted the new government to succeed, by which he meant this: "This government will be our ally in the war on terror, a partner in the struggle for peace and moderation in the Muslim world..."

Bush wanted a certain kind of government, friendly to American interests. For

this he was willing to take the known and clear risk of severe civil war among Iraqi factions, with the American presence serving as a catalyst for such a war. At a minimum, 13-14,000 civilians were killed in 2005. Years of heavy violence that was virtual civil war in fact followed the December election and the continued presence of American forces in Iraq. In 2006, the death toll was 26-28,000 and in 2007, 23-24,000, according to Iraq Body Count.

In 2008, the toll fell to 8-9,000 civilians. The carnage continues in 2009. Between May 14 and July 15, the number of reported violent deaths is 938. The reduction owes to such factors as an Iraqi counter-movement against al-Qaeda, a U.S. program to pay Sunnis to stop al-Qaeda, a change in U.S. tactics to protect outlying areas, and the surge that increased U.S. troop levels. The risk of a rise in violent deaths, still at a high level, remains.

Bush and the U.S. military, at high cost, contributed to a degree of stabilization that might again allow an orderly exit. It could have been done much earlier. The outcome of the war still remains in doubt, since the present government lacks real control in Iraq. There will be no resolution of Iraqi politics until Americans withdraw. Whatever the degree of friendliness to the U.S. is or becomes, its permanence is unknown. There are still 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq as of June, 2009. The pace of withdrawal is slow but scheduled to quicken. The U.S. is paying 100,000 Sunni fighters. The U.S. sought control over Iraq in the sense of shaping its government and its policies. At a high and continuing price, it has not at the moment gotten this. Iraqis are still paying the price. To Americans at large, the costs of attaining the current situation are certainly high, and any benefits are difficult to discern.

No matter what one may conclude about benefits and costs, the war continues the American habits of unilaterally invading other countries, attaching the nation to the wars of others, and injecting an American presence into the affairs of others. Bush's doctrines heighten these involvements. If all states justify preemptive and preventive intrusions by inventing rationales for so-called wars of liberation or wars to remove potential threats to their imagined security, warfare will be encouraged.

In November of 2005, President Bush and his followers launched a verbal and press counterattack on their critics, using repetition to bolster support for his war policies. Propaganda campaigns like these in which leaders use the airwaves and media to overcome substantial opposition to get their way are today taken for granted, but they have serious defects. They are one-sided in

that the opposition is fragmented and cannot control the terms and information used in the “debate.” A leader should serve, not manipulate. When truth is a casualty, poor decisions and/or decisions that do not serve the public are the result.

Three Bush themes mentioned in “*Bush’s Counterattack*” are (1) that Iraq is a war against terror, (2) that terrorists have made clear that Iraq is “the central front in the war on terror,” and (3) that if Iraq were not the battlefield, then terrorists would be active elsewhere and inside America. The Bush administration excelled at propaganda. They formulated simple but false themes that disarmed critics and penetrated the airwaves and press.

Iraq was never a war against terror. It was a war to remake Middle Eastern states to the liking of the U.S. It was a war to further Israel’s interests. It was a war of personal animus of George Bush. It was a war to secure oil. It was a war to remove an annoyance at a supposedly low cost.

George Bush attracted al-Qaeda to Iraq. Al-Qaeda did not attract George Bush to Iraq.

The mortality of Americans and Iraqis soared when Bush attacked Iraq and created a battlefield. Terrorist designs against continental America haven’t diminished because of Iraq. The pool of potential recruits to terrorism is always very large. Iraq is a terrorist recruiting tool.

Saddam Hussein was a dictator who used brutality. He was not an anti-U.S. terrorist. He neither planned nor brought about the 9/11 massacre, and it was not in his interest to do so. He did not cavort with or support the terrorists who did. Bush attracted al-Qaeda to Iraq by attacking the country and destroying its government. He created the “front.” Furthermore, by tilting toward Shiites in Iraq and attempting to marginalize Sunnis, Bush created an insurgency that used violent and terror tactics. Only when the U.S. began to pay off former Sunni insurgents to work against al-Qaeda did the overall level of violence diminish, while still remaining at high levels.

The argument that terrorists would be in America if not in Iraq is pure fancy and misleading. The high and rising level of terrorists and terrorism in Iraq is a direct consequence of the American attack on Iraq and the American policies put into place after the initial victory. Events like the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse photos aided terrorist recruitment greatly. The high incidence of terrorist

attacks within Iraq would not have been aimed at the continental U.S. had the Iraq War not begun, because the vast majority of terrorism arose within Iraq due to the war. Bush's horrid remarks on exporting the war on terror to Iraq suggest that Iraqi lives count for very little.

Concentrated power in government trumps and shapes public opinion to its own ends. American democracy can take years to pass legislation, while interest groups proselytize and gain votes; or else it can hastily rush headlong into action, as in going to war against North Vietnam and as in passing enormous bailout bills. The results are nearly always improper, ill-considered, and destructive as is illustrated when Bush rushed into war against Iraq and when he hastily declared a war on terror. When we govern ourselves by concentrating vast power in the hands of one or a few men, we leave ourselves open to large and long-lasting negative results when they make bad decisions that affect the entire society. This is far from wise. Leaders with excessive power that is not well-monitored and controlled have a lowered incentive to listen to their public or to reason, and a greater incentive to turn a deaf ear, make persuasive speeches, stay their own course, withhold information, spin events to their liking, stonewall, blame exogenous circumstances, and expend further resources on their ventures, even as they go wrong.

By the end of 2006, the war had gone on for 3 years and 9 months with no end in sight. The war was still going badly, and civilian casualties were much higher than in 2005. Washington sought new ways to handle the situation. "*Compounding the Folly*" discusses the report of the Iraq Study Group. In keeping with the composition of the group, which consisted of establishment figures who support American empire, the group did not question the wisdom of interventions or the basis of the war. It did not seek ways to get America out of Iraq quickly. Rather, it provided many recommendations to alleviate and perpetuate the situation so that it might yet achieve certain objectives. The strong point of the report was its frank and eye-opening appraisal of the many negatives in the existing situation. The report called for staying the course so that American prestige would not suffer from a withdrawal that was impelled by circumstances unfavorable to Americans. It called for a surge in troops. Bush followed this advice. He also changed commanders, and the military changed its strategy. Some successes followed, namely, the level of civilian casualties was brought down and the situation stabilized enough that withdrawal without embarrassment became feasible. Bush ameliorated the situation to some extent, while failing to reach his objective of getting a peaceful Iraq with a people loyal to its government and the latter being an ally

for the U.S.

Withdrawal of American forces has not yet occurred. In mid-2009, the troop level remains the same as before the surge. Obama has promised a reduction of 100,000 personnel in 2010; limited resources in the face of other priorities are the reasons. The U.S. is still heavily engaged in Iraq while looking to reduced commitments that will number 35-50 thousand.

Attacking Iraq rested on several general ideas: that remaking the political structure of foreign nations can be a benevolent act and a profitable act in the interests of America. It rested on the idea that if America does not control some distant land, then someone else will; and that someone may ultimately pose a threat to America.

Each of these ideas is questionable. Americans would object if the Chinese declared their intent to help us by remaking our government for us. Choosing one's own government is a basic liberty. The methods and results of such a social choice are far from ideal, but, for better or worse, another nation's political relations are theirs, not those of another state. A state is the outcome of a balance of contending forces and interests interacting in a society. The interloper usually does not fully understand these forces and has problems controlling them so as to create a desired political outcome. Attempts at such reconstruction therefore usually prove unprofitable, because they run into strong, long-lasting, unforeseen, and complex forces of resistance that prove more costly to control than the gains from the new politics that are achieved. By being an interloper in a game of power, the U.S. has no way to be neutral. It chooses up sides, usually on the basis of its own interests. Benevolence is an impossibility under these conditions.

The Iraq War did not benefit Americans in general. The war changed the political face of Iraq. It resulted in the deaths and injuries of a very great number of Iraqis, large population displacements, a large destruction of wealth, and the release of new and violent political forces. The political situation remains unresolved. Iraq, instead of becoming a counterweight to Iran, as the administration hoped, may end up being closer to Iran than under Hussein. The sectarian and ethnic differences have become stronger within its society, with a stronger tendency to ethnic cleansing. The costs and negative consequences of the war far exceeded the benefits for both Americans and Iraqis. The U.S. tied down its forces for years and wasted its treasure in a display of American weakness. Had Saddam Hussein been let alone, most

groups would have been better off, and al-Qaeda would not have been given a focal point for carrying out its slaughter. The eventual shape of Iraq and its relations with its neighbors, especially Iran, remain in doubt. The U.S. has not gotten a set of friendly democratic countries up and running in the Middle East.

The U.S. is a strong fighter. It can deplete American resources to win battles, even if winning them brings no prize to Americans at home. It has staying power. It can turn its mistakes around. But mistakes are still mistakes. They cost more in blood and strength and will and resources than they are worth. Even a strong fighter cannot afford to take punishment indefinitely or extravagantly.

The essay "*Success in Iraq?*" begins with broad judgments about the Iraq War in terms of costs and benefits to broad groups. In the main, however, it takes a moral tack. It argues that a war like this that forcibly extracts wealth from taxpayers and then forcibly attacks another nation without just cause cannot be justified by the war's promoters by their pointing to the prospective gains that they expect. They cannot justify a variety of evils by the good that they claim will materialize. The Iraqi war dead certainly have no say in the matter. The war promoters have no way of knowing whether the living Iraqis wanted to be "liberated" in the way the way they were, or ruled as they now are after the invasion ended.

The end of the invasion brought the U.S. face to face with the practical problem that its leaders had not thought through, which was how to hand the country back to the Iraqis. Who would be its new rulers? What kind of state would they run? To what kind of state would Iraqis be loyal and to what persons? How does one get a democratic state to arise out of a nation divided along various religious and ethnic lines? The invasion was followed by an occupation run by American rules and rulers. The first Director, who was General Jay Garner, wanted quick elections and Iraqis in charge. He did not want a policy of de-Ba'athification. After one month, Paul Bremer took over. His first order was to de-Ba'athify Iraqi society. America imposed its concept of liberty on Iraqis, which entailed punishing Sunnis and transferring power to Shiites. After that, Humpty Dumpty could not be put together again.

An unjust American invasion teaches injustice to Americans. It undermines the principle of liberty it supposedly supports. Instead, it confirms and perpetuates a principle of aggression. The U.S., having no ownership of the land of Iraq

and no say over its peoples, cannot rightfully attack them in the name of American self-defense or national security, much less shape their subsequent government for them. In doing all this, there is, from a moral standpoint, only failure and no possible success in Iraq.

“Benevolent Hegemony Goes Down the Tubes” argues that the neoconservative policy of “benevolent global hegemony,” first articulated by William Kristol and Robert Kagan in 1996, is a contradiction, really an impossibility. The benevolent hegemonist is a state, and that state is supposed to be the U.S. In this theory, the U.S., having been anointed with the light of true political structure, appoints itself as judge, jury, and world policeman. It goes around the world finding criminal governments, removes them, and sees to it that the liberated peoples devise American-style democracy. The superpower unilaterally makes the world safe for democracy or its conception thereof. This is what the Iraq War is supposed to be about.

In all respects, this vision is absurd, as Iraq has shown and other countries before that have shown like Haiti and South Vietnam. Hegemony means domination, and domination is not benevolent. States are not benevolent associations. They are organizations of a few powerful persons who use compulsion, both out of self-interest and for interest groups. Even partial hegemony in the form of aid and loans works negative magic for the people in the recipient countries. The funding of states is also by compulsion, and that too disqualifies them as peaceful and benevolent. With the property rights and liberties of Americans being endangered species, America’s “democracy” in no way is a model for any country, much less one to be imposed on others, whether they want it or not. In practice, domination is usually attempted domination, after which the occupied country resists and/or reverts to form.

President Bush and his aides time and again devised very effective slogans and arguments, albeit false ones. They knew how to short-circuit thinking, either because that’s how they themselves thought or because they knew how to do it to others. At one point, they argued that if the other side is doing something bad, then what we are doing to fight them must be good. If insurgents are killing Iraqis and American soldiers, then our presence in Iraq must be right and we should keep fighting to attain victory. As Bush put it “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” Bush conveniently ignored that it is quite possible to be neither with him and his policies nor with the terrorists.

Having himself begun the fight and stimulated various insurgents, all of whom

he termed terrorists, Bush asked us to endorse the U.S. fighting because others were fighting back. But this is no reason at all, being nothing more than a circular justification: We were supposed to support the U.S. war effort because the U.S. was at war and others were fighting us. Bush's two choices presumed the very thing that his critics questioned, which was the justice of the war. If the U.S. having gone to war in the first place was wrong, then American victory was beside the point, even if the insurgents were also unjustly killing innocent people. Besides, by looking at it as a fight, Bush begged other important questions, like: What is this victory being sought? What does it get us? What are its risks? Might we be better off withdrawing from the fight.

1. BUSH'S FOLLY

If LRC [Lewrockwell.com] has made anything clear, it is that the Iraq War is tragic, wicked, and unjustifiable, but the fact is that it is also a failure in terms of attaining the main national security goal of the U.S. Not only that, this failure was entirely predictable before the war began. In short, starting the Iraq War was a senseless and foolish act – folly – from the point of view of enhancing the security of the U.S., a Bay of Pigs writ large. This conclusion is not, I will argue, an exercise in Monday morning quarterbacking.

The folly of nation-building

If the powers-that-be had restricted themselves to only American experience and recent experience at that, they would have known that a major involvement of American forces to engage in nation-building (or spreading democracy) would be far from a trivial exercise to be accomplished by incredibly simple-minded shock and awe or any grand display of July 4th killing fireworks. The Viet Cong and the rickety succession of South Vietnamese administrations taught that lesson.

Someday a neoconservative or a high Administration official may confess as did Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in 1995 concerning the Vietnam War: "Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong." In the same vein, "When McNamara left office in 1968, he told reporters that his principal regret was his recommendation to Kennedy to proceed with the Bay of Pigs operation, something that 'could have been recognized as an error at the time.'" This defines folly.

Our officials would have known that even minor involvements as in Somalia and Haiti failed to play out as planned. They would have known that the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan was a failure, and that the U.S. incursion therein was still far from successful in terminating al-Qaeda or even creating the mythical stable government friendly to that of the U.S.

Or if they had considered the American intervention in Lebanon, they would easily have found the following evaluation by their own military of a situation much like that of Iraq. Of the involvement in Lebanon in 1982–1983, Lieutenant Commander Westra states:

"American policy was formulated without adequate consideration of the

complexity of the Lebanese conflict or its political and religious antecedents. Additionally, our policy was pursued from a purely American perspective without consideration of the goals and motivations of numerous factions involved in the fighting. As a consequence of these policy shortcomings, American military forces were mistakenly committed as a first resort before all diplomatic and other means had been exhausted.

"The key problem of our involvement in Lebanon was that American military forces were mistakenly committed in order to solve a complex set of political problems that had no military solution. By submitting future regional conflicts to a 'Lebanon Test,' policymakers will have an in-depth model delineating the multitude of considerations and pitfalls affecting policy formulation and the use of military force to secure the objectives of policy in regional conflicts."

If many in the military knew better, wouldn't this information reach the President? Mightn't it even seep out to the bloodthirsty editorial writers and thence to the gung-ho public?

And if the President or any of his estimable advisors had spent 15 minutes or so studying the experiences of other nations in colonial wars of intervention or comparable domestic interferences involving whole societies, wouldn't they have discovered that the world history of many states and empires is strewn with abundant foreign policy (and domestic) failures, so many that they are virtually the norm?

Prohibition was a failure. The War on Drugs was and is a failure. The War on Poverty was a failure. Both Napoleon's and Hitler's invasions of Russia were failures. Three Anglo-Afghan Wars over the course of 80 years were failures. The Aceh War fought by the Netherlands in today's Indonesia over a 40-year period was a failure. These man-made disasters routinely drain the attacker and undermine his spirit, and they often last a very long time.

The folly of preemption

The President's West Point speech in June, 2002 outlined his preemption strategy.

"Deterrence – the promise of massive retaliation against nations –

means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.

“Yet the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. (Applause.) In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act. (Applause.)

“Our security will require the best intelligence, to reveal threats hidden in caves and growing in laboratories.”

Can a President e-mail the CIA or FBI for a personality profile of dictators who possess weapons of mass destruction (however they are defined) in order to determine scientifically (unbiasedly) who is or is not unbalanced? Can this be done at a distance, without observing or testing the dictator directly? Does the medical profession accept "unbalanced" as a medical diagnostic category? Should a preemptive military strategy be based on a judgment about who is or is not balanced? If all of the answers to these questions are "Yes," which they most certainly are not, should a strategy then be based on the notion that this dictator "can" use the weapon or "can" give them to an ally, somehow determined to be "terrorist"? Is shooting first and asking questions later lawful or prudent?

In plain words, what is the President telling us? Our greatest weapons, our atomic deterrents, are of no use to us. Hidden in the dark are enemies we cannot apprehend. We cannot contain powerfully mad enemies who act in secrecy. So we will strike out, we will create a battle, identify an enemy. Then we will feel good, we will feel safe. Kill the bastards! (Applause.)

These high-toned words of President Bush reflect frustration and fear, the instinct to fight and kill, emotionalism disguised as statesmanship. However, they add up to utterly senseless foreign policy.

The speech next girds us and the military to "confront the worst threats before they emerge." This means that the U.S. will eliminate what it perceives to be a threat that could enter the set of "worst threats" before it matures into a "worst threat" member. Apparently, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction fall into this category since they were so minor that they were never used by Iraq

or found. Be that as it may, this doctrine appears to be the product of minds with an excess of confidence in themselves plus an excess of self-righteousness, who proclaim their ability to determine threats before they become threats, who declare the right to interfere with them militarily and summarily, without talk, without negotiation, without exploring other avenues of threat reduction. Has diplomacy been ruled out or cast aside as a means to achieve national security?

What does the U.S. stand to gain by announcing such a policy? Here the U.S. is threatening retaliatory action upon threats that it perceives. This is basically telling other nations that the U.S. retains the option of preventing any nation it designates as an enemy from developing a variety of weapons and weapons delivery systems. It is difficult to imagine how the U.S. can enforce such a threat or policy without turning itself into an aggressor and alienating the rest of the world, because of the subjective factors involved and the intrusions on the sovereignty of other nations. If other nations adopt such a policy, then virtually any attack on any nation is justifiable, or even attacks on internal parties designated as threats or potential threats.

At a most basic level, the preemption policy is folly because it overlooks the basic moral thought patterns of human beings. If Iraq had attacked another country, then a war against it would be understood and supported widely. On the other hand, if the U.S. attacked Iraq without such a clear provocation, then it would supply a pretext for all sorts of retaliatory measures against the U.S. The U.S. would foster terrorists who would feel justified in their acts. In addition, the rest of the world would not support the U.S. and its influence would wane.

The folly of mis-identifying the enemy

The main national security goal of the U.S. was stated as follows in September, 2002: "Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government."

This statement is unobjectionable, although in fact the U.S. Constitution places the establishment of justice and insuring domestic tranquility ahead of providing "for the common defence."

The Iraq War is the consequence of taking this mission into strategy via the preemption policy:

"Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed...And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. So we must be prepared to defeat our enemies' plans, using the best intelligence and proceeding with deliberation."

Obviously, the first step is to identify an enemy correctly. Who is the enemy? How is an enemy to be identified? This is a central issue. One of the problems with our political system is that the President identifies the enemy.

Was Iraq the enemy? During an interview on August 10, 2002, the President said it was and explained why.

Q "Mr. President, yesterday in an interview I guess with Scott, you described Iraq as the enemy."

THE PRESIDENT: "I described them as the axis of evil once. I described them as an enemy until proven otherwise. They obviously, you know, desire weapons of mass destruction. I presume that he still views us as an enemy. I have constantly said that we owe it to our children and our children's children to free the world from weapons of mass destruction in the hands of those who hate freedom. This is a man who has poisoned his own people, I mean he's had a history of tyranny."

An enemy is one whom the President describes as an enemy, for reasons he gives shortly. To be removed from the enemies list, there exists some mysterious process of proof to the contrary, but who carries out this proof or how it is done are unknown.

Iraq is an enemy because it has a desire for weapons of mass destruction, even if it does not possess them. The small threat that could grow into a "worst threat" is a desire. The President arrogates to the U.S. the option to brand any group or nation an enemy and then attack them, on the basis of a subjective determination by the U.S. that they desire weaponry. There could not exist a much more flimsy basis for aggression than this. The so-called leader of the free world has here abandoned any moral standing to be that leader.

An enemy is one who "still views us as an enemy," not even actually but presumably, according to the President. In other words, if I think that you think I am an enemy, then I am entitled to attack you.

Finally, and the President here sounds like he really means it, we have a duty to rid the world of tyrants who hate freedom and possess weapons of mass destruction. This statement is overkill since actual possession is not necessary to justify the attack. However, it appears that the enemy is also one who hates freedom. And how does one determine that? Probably if the country fails to hold an election according to the rules that the U.S. prefers, but not if it forces its citizens into Social Security and Medicare. Presumably, if President Bush had been governing in 1949, the U.S. would surely have attacked the Soviet Union, but 20 or more other countries may have qualified, many under the U.S. aegis.

On October 7, 2002, in a major prepared address to the nation, President Bush made his detailed case for Iraq being an enemy.

In this speech, he led off by referring to Iraq as a "grave threat." How so? From Iraq's "history of aggression" and "its drive toward an arsenal of terror." However, the U.S. was non-neutral during the Iraq-Iran War, and its inept diplomacy played a role in catalyzing the Iraq-Kuwait War. In addition, whether Iraq's weapons arsenal was intended to be used for defense, aggressive war, suppression, or terror was hardly known to the President. Apparently, the U.S. arsenal is never to be regarded as an instrument of terror no matter what its deadly impact because of the honorable intentions of its wielders.

U.S. foreign policy at this moment seems to have abandoned sober consideration and entered a shadowy world of its own, critically dependent on perceptions of threats before they become threats, subjective assessments of states of mind and intentions, and the emotional gratification of doing something, anything, to overcome frustration and fear. Is this the foreign policy of a "feel-good" generation?

The President went on to his well-known remarks about Iraq's possession of "chemical and biological weapons," claims we now know not to be true. We also now know that the Administration knew these claims were false. Here was both a false rationale and a lie (one of many) told to the American people.

Folly comes in many guises. An attack on Saddam Hussein, being something of a folk hero, by a power like the U.S. whose designs could easily be interpreted as imperialistic, would almost surely drive a wedge between the U.S. and Islamic nations, alienating the man on the street. The enhancement of Iran's position would be a natural consequence – but that would not deter a White House confident of moving from neoconservative victory to victory.

Was Iraq an enemy, a threat to the national security of the U.S.? Most definitely it was not, all assertions and propaganda to the contrary.

In sum, President Bush mis-identified the enemy. He put into play a strategy of nation-building that would almost certainly fail. He did this on the basis of an unethical doctrine of preemptive war that can only be applied in a highly subjective way. Thus, from the point of view of national security, his own goal, his decisions were folly, Bush's folly.

General Omar Bradley said of General MacArthur's strategy of invading China, which fortunately was never implemented, that it "would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy." Regrettably, either no Omar Bradley stood beside President Bush or he chose not to listen if there was one.

Why Bush's folly occurred

It will probably be a long time before we know how and why Bush's Folly occurred. At the moment, I offer the following thoughts and perspective.

President Bush is a cunning man, in my opinion. He knew that the 9/11 attacks had changed American attitudes or at least opened them up to change. On 9/20, the President seized the initiative to shape the public's conceptions and interpretations of 9/11. He supplied a story that placed the events of 9/11 in a perspective of his own making. In his speech, the President, among other things, declared a very broad war on terror, presented the Taliban with an ultimatum, as a prelude to war, and outlined an agenda related to the war on terror. These are the acts of a man who knew enough to latch on to an historical moment and use it to amplify 9/11 into a cause of war.

If many Americans at that critical moment displayed the psychological characteristics of a crowd, then President Bush used that moment highly effectively to advance his agenda. Even those who support democracy as a

form of government should understand that this process does not follow the hallowed democratic script. Massive power lodged in the Presidency, a one-sided opportunity to be the focal point of a crisis, the first mover in providing doctrine and leadership, a crowd prepared to receive direction – all of these short circuit what is supposed to occur in a democracy, namely, open debate and exchange of information leading to a public consensus and then action. This democracy in this instance as in many others replicates a sort of mob rule, when its leader cleverly coordinates a fearful crowd, inciting them to support his actions.

Although Bush's Iraq War is folly, it was quite clear at the time when Iraq was attacked that our leadership could never have taken seriously the notion that Iraq had missiles and atom bombs ready to fly, that it was preparing a war against America. This notion is so far-fetched that we must wonder how it could ever have been promulgated to the American people much less believed. After all, whatever puny power that Iraq possessed had already been greatly reduced by previous wars with Iran and the U.N. coalition; and for a decade, the major powers had overflowed and inspected the country as well as embargoed it without mercy. We did not need a Downing Street memo to have understood in 2002 that the U.S. already had determined to attack Iraq regardless of pretext or legal justification, both from public statements and by actions to move military forces to the Middle East.

Why then did the President go ahead with this war? Was it to gain political capital, as some have suggested? This is plausible, but there are other possibilities.

James Ostrowski gives us a sturdy foundation for understanding war-making by democracies. He emphasizes that wars are made purposefully to achieve particular ends of particular people and groups of people. Wars, he says, occur to achieve one or more of the following goals for their proponents:

1. Domestic political goals, such as a war serving as a distraction from domestic troubles or a temporary remedy for them.
2. Advancement of a political agenda under the war's cover, such as control over industry or extension of police state methods.
3. Service to special interest groups that benefit from the action, such as defense, construction, and oil industries.
4. Advancement of messianic goals, such as spreading freedom and democracy, or making the world safe for democracy.

5. Advancement of imperialistic power or rule to a new region.

To this list, I add ends that public-minded politicians and statesmen might raise:

6. Advancement of geopolitical goals such as securing a warm water port or securing an oil supply.

7. Defense of life, liberty and property.

8. Fulfillment of a treaty or similar obligation with an aim such as collective security.

No matter which of these ideas or others motivated the President, this war shows clear error, with the sought after national security producing the opposite result, and weakening the U.S. morally, spiritually, politically, militarily, socially and economically. Bush's War is folly for countless innocent people who have been killed and wounded, it is folly for us, and it is turning out to be folly for him.

Maybe a degree of success in Afghanistan emboldened our leaders. Maybe the foolish mantra of sole superpower, that overemphasizes the military and overlooks the moral, went to their heads. Maybe the idea of a New World Order captured their fancy. Whatever transpired behind closed doors, President Bush (and others) evidently thought that this war would be easy and result in many benefits. They should have known better. They stupidly underestimated the potential risks and losses. They overconfidently peered into the future and saw many gains within reach and few losses. They miscalculated. Then again, perhaps we will learn that they failed to calculate at all. Perhaps they just threw the dice.

The remedy

Whatever historians uncover, the important lesson is that the Iraq War joins a long list of other State-sponsored misadventures. State leaders do brainless things because, having a monopoly on legal violence, their accountability for their acts is relatively low, because they do not bear the full costs of their acts, because the information and intelligence systems within States are never up to par as they too involve poor accountability, and because the system is geared to raising leaders with harmful characteristics to the top. When leaders possess excessive power, as in the case of the Presidency, the potential damage is multiplied.

Societies require order, and it can be given by a range of methods, from self-government to despotism. Our country has over and over again accepted the paranoid proposition that order requires conquest or control, temporary or permanent – of the South, of the territory between the Atlantic and the Pacific, of the Pacific Ocean, of Mideast oil, of Iran, of South Korea, of Vietnam, of the Philippines, etc. Now the thought is that Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Afghanistan, and who knows how many other places, are military fair game because some ill-defined thing called our "national security" is at stake. Folly, folly, and more folly, bringing increasing disorder, insecurity, and totalitarianism. Will the American people please come to its senses? Let us make self-government our political aim.

The helpful comments of Dorothy Gruber-Rozeff are gratefully appreciated.

July 13, 2005

2. HOW DID SADDAM HUSSEIN BECOME A GRAVE THREAT?

President Bush officially took the U.S. into the Iraq War on 3/19/03, citing Saddam Hussein as a grave threat, a man with weapons of mass destruction that endangered Americans. Within a few months, Americans began learning that this charge was false. Saddam possessed no significant weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or at least a corps of seekers found none anywhere they searched. Therefore the charge that he was a grave threat also was false.

How fantastic that the President and many other of his officials could have made so many false statements. How alarming that so many believed that Saddam Hussein was an imminent threat. Every day we learn more details about how this situation occurred, how intelligence was fixed, how high administration officials set inexperienced Bush operatives to reading and misreading raw intelligence, how administration officials pressured professional intelligence officers or shunted them aside, etc.

In years to come, we shall discover a great many more details. Perhaps Congress will hold more hearings. Historians and others will offer many theories and explanations. In my view, Bush made a significant error in starting the Iraq War, and that is why understanding the history quickly is important. War is terrible. We certainly do not want avoidable wars. We have yet to see the full consequences of this war, in terms of shifting resources away from going after terrorists, in fostering new terrorists, in strengthening Iran's hand in Iraq, in encouraging Islamic fundamentalism, in weakening the U.S., and in other as yet unrevealed ways.

If Saddam Hussein was not a grave threat, how did so many people come to view him as one? When did common perception transform him into a mortal threat to America? Who stimulated this transformation and why? What accidental factors contributed to this error?

If we can answer these questions in depth, perhaps we can learn more about the fundamental failings of our system of state and government. Perhaps we can change our system. Perhaps we can avoid similar errors in the future. This article merely begins to raise pertinent questions. It does not answer them. Perhaps it points in fruitful directions; perhaps not. It only begins to sort out the strange case of Saddam Hussein's transformation from two-bit dictator and strong man into an evil the size of Hitler, capable of producing mushroom

clouds over America, possessor of unmanned vehicles filled with biological diseases lying off the Atlantic shores.

Answers to historical questions often have no simple beginnings. We might begin, for example, on February 19, 1998 when a group sent an [Open Letter](#) to President Clinton calling for "a determined program to change the regime in Baghdad." This letter was signed by 40 individuals, including Perle, Abrams, Bolton, Feith, Gaffney, Kagan, Kristol, Ledeen, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Wurmser as well as former high government officials like Weinberger, Carlucci, and McFarlane.

The ideas and themes in this letter would be repeated and elaborated upon (with variations) down to the present: "And despite his defeat in the Gulf War, continuing sanctions, and the determined effort of U.N. inspectors to ferret out and destroy his weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein has been able to develop biological and chemical munitions. To underscore the threat posed by these deadly devices, the Secretaries of State and Defense have said that these weapons could be used against our own people." Iraq was "a danger to our friends, our allies, and to our nation." Iraq, the writers claimed, "is ripe for a broad-based insurrection. We must exploit this opportunity...What is needed now is a comprehensive political and military strategy for bringing down Saddam and his regime." "Vital national interests" required action. The authors urged Clinton to "save ourselves and the world from the scourge of Saddam and the weapons of mass destruction that he refuses to relinquish." The actions recommended included a war of insurrection with anti-Saddam provisional government forces backed by American forces, a blueprint that now appears naïve.

The letter writers viewed Saddam as a severe scourge or threat, making action necessary to save not only ourselves but also the world! How and why did these individuals come to hold such an extreme and apparently mistaken view of a minor dictator who not long before was allied to the U.S.? This question is beyond my scope here. My main observation is the fact that the assessments and recommendations in this letter contrasted sharply with the more sober views of a good many official Bush administration statements made during most of 2001, as I shall now document.

Early in Bush's first term, in February of 2001, Powell and Rumsfeld said that Iraq was not a nuclear threat. Rumsfeld: "Iraq is probably not a nuclear threat at the present time." Powell: "[Saddam] has not developed any significant

capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors." Powell also declared the containment policy a success. Powell: "And even though they may be pursuing weapons of mass destruction of all kinds, it is not clear how successful they have been. So to some extent, I think we ought to declare this a success. We have kept him contained, kept him in a box." While "his activities present a danger to the region, they are not a danger to the United States." He repeated this assessment in May of 2001: "The Iraq regime militarily remains fairly weak." In July of 2001, Rice spoke of "progress on the sanctions...He does not control the northern part of his country. His military forces have not been rebuilt. This has been a successful period." As late as 9/16/01, Cheney said (in answer to a question regarding terrorism) that "Saddam Hussein's bottled up." Asked if we have any evidence linking Saddam Hussein to 9/11, he answered "No." In 1995 General Hussein Kamel, who was the director of Iraq's weapons program, had defected with crates of documents and told U.N. officials "All weapons – biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed." CIA Director Tenet's January 2002 review of global weapons did not mention Iraq but did mention North Korea.

In September of 2002, the International Institute for Strategic Studies issued [a study](#) of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. This body is an establishment organization with government links, and Blair construed its findings as supportive of Saddam as demon. These facts make the report's findings all the more of interest. The study emphasized only Iraq's potential capabilities to produce weapons. As for the realities, it said: "Iraq does not possess facilities to produce fissile material in sufficient amounts for nuclear weapons. It would require several years and extensive foreign assistance to build such fissile material production facilities." The report worried over stocks of biological weapons like anthrax and the ability of Iraq to produce more on short notice. Iraq's chemical weapons, "the first to reach full maturity," had been "devastated" by the Gulf War, and "Through to 1998, UNSCOM was able to dispose of large quantities of CW munitions, bulk agent, precursors and production equipment that were not destroyed in combat." The Gulf War wrecked Iraq's missile capabilities, and the report speculated that perhaps Iraq had a few dozen short-range missiles. It said that "Iraq does not possess facilities to produce long range missiles and it would require several years and extensive foreign assistance to construct such facilities."

I conclude that earnest and informed opinion for months before and after 9/11/01, including a number of high-ranking Bush administration officials, did

not regard Iraq as a mortal, serious, or imminent threat to the U.S. Officials knew of Saddam Hussein's interest in rebuilding his weapons. They suggested that he was not in possession of a worrisome store of weapons of mass destruction and, as Powell said "they have not been able to come out with the capacity to deliver these kinds of systems or to actually have these kinds of systems that is much beyond where they were 10 years ago." The IISS report verified this assessment. Iraq simply could not attack the U.S. with weapons of mass destruction. It was hardly even a serious threat to its neighbors in the region. This does not deny that Iraq was a festering and unsolved foreign policy problem that could (as it has) become worse.

We might begin the story in October of 1998. That month, the 105th Congress passed the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. This did not authorize use of American armed forces, but it provided funds for President Clinton to support groups seeking to oust Saddam Hussein. The Act read in part: "It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime." Clinton used funds to support the Chalabi group. Bush continued that support in 2001.

How did it come about that Congress passed this Act? Had the efforts of the 40 anti-Iraq activists borne fruit? If there is a story of how they succeeded in Congress and against the CIA, it remains to be told. For Chalabi, an Iraqi Shia and ally of Wolfowitz and Perle, had been repudiated by the CIA in 1995. Jordan, in 1989, had convicted him in absentia of massive embezzlement.

We might begin the story as early as April 14, 1993. On this date the Iraqi Intelligence Service was part of a failed plot to assassinate Bush I using a car bomb. Clinton retaliated by bombing Baghdad. On 9/26/02 Bush II was to say "...I truly believe that now that the war has changed, now that we're a battlefield, this man [Saddam Hussein] poses a graver threat than anybody could possibly have imagined. Other countries, of course, bear the same risk. But there's no doubt his hatred is mainly directed at us. There's no doubt he can't stand us. After all, this is a guy who tried to kill my dad at one time." To what extent was war made as a consequence of an intense personal feeling or animosity?

In context, these remarks came a few days before the key date of 10/02/02. This is when Congress passed a Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of Force in Iraq. About 2 months earlier, Bush administration officials stepped up their

public statements against Iraq. Bush's statements were part of a flow of statements prior to an important vote.

Enough warm-up acts. Let us raise the curtain and begin the story with Bush as candidate in 1999–2000 and as President-elect. Bush over and over made clear that he would use military force against Saddam Hussein if he were found to be developing weapons of mass destruction: "And if I found out in any way, shape or form that he was developing weapons of mass destruction, I'd take 'em out." Bush's 1999 team of 8 foreign policy advisors included vocal and very persistent advocates of military action against Iraq such as Paul Wolfowitz. Starting at least in December of 1997 when he co-wrote *Saddam Must Go: A How-to Guide* and continuing unremittingly thereafter, Wolfowitz promoted military action against Iraq. One of the group, Stephen Hadley, briefed Republican party policy-makers in the spring of 2000, informing them that removing Saddam Hussein would be number one on the Bush foreign policy agenda. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be downgraded in priority. Four in the group, Wolfowitz, Armitage, Perle, and Zakheim, were among the 40 letter signers in 1998.

Paul O'Neill says that preemptively taking out Saddam Hussein was a focus at the very first few meetings of Bush's new National Security Council in early 2001. In his words: "It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The president saying 'Go find me a way to do this.'" A senior Pentagon official confirms "Iraqi policy is very much on his mind. Saddam was clearly a discussion point." O'Neill relates that Bush asked Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Shelton for contingency plans to introduce U.S. ground forces into Iraq to support an insurgency to bring down Saddam. Meanwhile, the think-tank, Project for a New American Century, with Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Perle as founding members, was writing: "While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for substantial American force in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein."

There is no doubt that Bush and some of his key advisors focused on Iraq and Saddam Hussein at least from 1999 onwards. They had a penchant for removing Saddam Hussein from rule. They did not regard preemptive war or introduction of U.S. ground forces as an insurmountable obstacle. Their minds leaned strongly toward removing Saddam from power, although outright war was not yet the consensus means of achieving that goal. They aimed to do more than Clinton had done. They felt that containment had run its course. Did

these players consider a full range of options? Did they consult experts or seek other opinion? Did they naïvely underestimate the ease of creating a new Iraq? Was their knowledge of Iraq superficial? Were they infected with the hubris of power?

Oil played some role in 2001. Cheney's oil task force group began meeting in late January of 2001 and by early March had a detailed overview of all the oilfields and interests in Iraq and the rest of the Gulf region. An independent task force dominated by oil interests (the Baker Institute group) contributed a report that singled out Iraq as a "destabilizing influence." It recommended a full-scale U.S. policy review, including "military, energy, economic, and political/diplomatic assessments." The story of Iraq's oil has yet to be uncovered in detail.

Early in 2001, Chalabi received funding. An Information-Collection program was set up that provided a conduit for "intelligence" from Iraq that competed with traditional channels. Later in 2001, administration officials began to extend their control over intelligence and/or build an alternative information network. Bolton barred the State Department's Intelligence liaison, Greg Thielmann, from attending meetings. Thielmann: "Bolton seemed to be troubled because INR was not telling him what he wanted to hear." In June of 2001, Cheney named his aide, William Luti, to head NESA (Near East and South Asia bureau). Inside the Pentagon were several focal points of important activity, the Office of Special Plans and the Defense Policy Board, that were staffed by administration stalwarts. The complete story of how these offices influenced intelligence and the press remains to be revealed. [W. Patrick Lang](#) provides one account based on available recollections. This story is central and crucial to the Bush administration campaign to market the Iraq War. Also, see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

The 9/11/01 disaster galvanized the pro-Iraq War contingency, including Bush. That afternoon, Rumsfeld asked aides whether the information was good enough to hit Saddam Hussein. Wesley Clark relates that he was pressured that day to blame 9/11 on state-sponsored terrorism and link it to Saddam Hussein. Perle said: "This could not have been done without the help of one or more governments." Bush wondered whether Saddam's regime was involved. On the following day, Richard Clarke found Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz trying "to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq." Bush, according to Clarke, wanted to see if Saddam did this, to look, to find any shred. Bush, hazy on the details, acknowledges speaking to Clarke. See also

[here](#).

Wolfowitz and Powell clashed over Iraq, Wolfowitz wanting immediate action. Powell won this battle, but lost the war. On 9/17/01, Bush directed the Pentagon to start the military planning for a war against Iraq.

There is no doubt that Bush in the period after 9/11 decided to make war on Iraq and Saddam Hussein although Iraq presented no threat to the U.S. and no serious link between Iraq and al-Qaeda had been established or existed. Why? I speculate that Bush leaped to the conclusion, based on the enormity of the Trade Towers attack, that the U.S. was at war. He called it a battlefield, did he not? He also felt he had a responsibility to secure the U.S., a duty. He or others then conceived of a war on terror, a genuinely new concept. But whom to fight? Iraq seemed an obvious target, not by any logic of immediate threat, but because it had been a target of one sort or another already for years. It was already high on Bush's agenda. Why not take it out now? That was the logic. This was an opportune time to do what they wanted to do anyway.

The only problem was that while the Bush insiders took it for granted that war against Iraq was right and appropriate, many others did not. The solution was to launch, or devise, or manufacture rationales for a war against Iraq.

A link between al-Qaeda and 9/11 was one such rationale. Remember that on 9/16/01 Cheney said there was no evidence of such a link. The State Department's April, 2001 report on state-sponsored terrorism included Iraq but made no mention of any al-Qaeda activity in Iraq. It noted that "The regime has not attempted an anti-Western terrorist attack" since the 1993 Bush I assassination attempt. Powell in his comments made no mention of Iraq. By contrast, CIA briefings of Bush contained numerous mentions of al-Qaeda and bin Laden including one on 8/6/01 headlined "Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in U.S." Woolsey, former CIA director, on 9/13/01 continued to promote his favored notion that Iraq was behind the first bombing of the World Trade towers and now their destruction. Clarke on 9/18/01 sent a memo to Rice with his report on an al-Qaeda-Iraq connection. He and a Rice staffer, Khalilzad, concluded "that only some anecdotal evidence linked Iraq to al-Qaeda." "The memo found no 'compelling case' that Iraq had either planned or perpetrated the attacks." The credibility of this memo is strengthened by the fact that Khalilzad was Wolfowitz's co-author of "Saddam Must Go."

Undeterred by Clarke's report, the administration in October continued the

search for an al-Qaeda to Iraq link and never quite gave it up. Rumsfeld set up a 4–5 man intelligence team under Feith for this purpose and to examine Iraq's intentions. Feith's team included Wurmser who pored over raw CIA intelligence reports and produced a report for Rumsfeld. Wolfowitz dispatched Woolsey to London to seek evidence of a connection. During the month, Woolsey made several public statements blaming Iraq for the attacks.

In contrast, Powell went on the record blaming bin Laden for 9/11: "...we think he's guilty and all roads point to him." The State Department's November 2001 list of countries in which al-Qaeda had operated did not include Iraq. We now know, and I will skip the details, that Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 and almost nothing to do with al-Qaeda's leadership or even its operatives apart from occasional and tangential crossing of paths.

On 11/20/01, Perle went further. Of Iraq he said "it poses the greatest threat to the United States." He also spoke of evidence linking al-Qaeda to Iraq. Neither of these statements could be substantiated. Although chairman of the Defense Policy Board, he said he was speaking for himself. Bush began to cross a line. On 11/21/01, he said "Afghanistan is just the beginning on the war against terror. There are other terrorists who threaten America and our friends, and there are other nations willing to sponsor them. We will not be secure as a nation until all of these threats are defeated." By this point in time, there were numerous and clear press reports about Iraq being the next target. Bush's allusion to "other nations willing to sponsor" terrorists meant Iraq, among others. At about the same time in a *Newsweek* interview, Bush said that Saddam Hussein had ambitions of mass terrorism. At a press conference, he added: "If they develop weapons of mass destruction that will be used to terrorize nations, they will be held accountable." Bush placed the burden of proof on Saddam to "show us that he is not developing weapons of mass destruction."

In December, Wolfowitz went even further: "With respect to Iraq...the combination of support for terrorism with the development of weapons of mass destruction is clearly one of the most dangerous potentials in the world." Bush and Wolfowitz were moving toward a brand new theme, a new way to sell the war. This was the marriage of weapons of mass destruction with mass terrorism. It was linking Iraq as a state sponsor of terror with WMD. Bush and others now fused terror and WMD and Saddam.

On 12/20/01 the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution

on Iraq's weapons programs. Noting Iraq's noncompliance with U.N. inspections, it viewed Iraq as a mounting threat. This resolution spoke of "Saddam's ability to reconstitute his nuclear weapons program, his biological weapons program, his chemical weapons program, and his long range missile program..." This language and these charges would be repeated frequently in months to come. The House seems ahead of the White House in this instance in using the term "reconstitute." Who inserted this language into the resolution?

After the anthrax events in the U.S., both intelligence agents and scientists searched for a link to Iraq. None was found. The anthrax strain was American.

A short three months after 9/11, the Iraq war hawks had won the day. During most of 2001, a number of officials had viewed Iraq as in a bottle, contained, and as militarily weak. The CIA and others made it clear that Iraq was not a nuclear threat. No serious evidence had turned up linking Iraq to al-Qaeda. No serious evidence linking Iraq to 9/11 had turned up. Yet after 9/11, Bush and others were linking Iraq with support for terrorism and with the development of weapons of mass destruction. They were painting Iraq as a serious threat to the U.S. This disconnect between the reality and the rhetoric was evident at the time. It became even more apparent later when no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq despite intensive searching.

In his State of the Union address on 1/29/02, Bush, speaking of Iraq, stated that it posed a "grave and growing danger." Iraq "could provide these arms to terrorists...could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States." Bush amplified the hypothetical risks of possible Saddam actions. He did not appreciate the risks of his own actions in disrupting Iraq. No significant change had occurred on the ground in Iraq since the time a few months earlier when administration officials (Powell, Rumsfeld, Rice, Cheney) spoke of Iraq as weak and contained. In truth then, Iraq was not a grave danger and was unable to accomplish these alarming activities. The following months brought even further departures from the truth.

It is possible, but implausible, that at this time (throughout most of 2002) Bush and others fully believed what they were saying, which was basically that the Iraq threat was a present danger to the U.S. that justified attacking Iraq. It is possible because such a belief lies a few steps beyond Bush's earlier idea that Saddam should be taken out if he developed WMD. It is implausible because it was not factual. The CIA on 2/01/02 wrote that it had no "direct evidence

that Iraq has used the period since Desert Fox to reconstitute its WMD programs." It continued to speak of Iraqi capabilities in chemical and biological weapons and its lack of a nuclear program and missiles. Bush knew this. He knew that Saddam possessed little beyond capabilities and desires. I find it more plausible that Bush and others were intent on building a case for war against Iraq, and that they crossed the line into falsehood. (A collection of some quotes [appears here](#).) I believe they lied. I also believe that they deluded themselves, insulated themselves from contrary beliefs, and that they intentionally built a rival intelligence operation and sought intelligence to confirm their a priori beliefs. They themselves corrupted the workings of the national security system.

Norman Podhoretz has argued that Bush believed what he was saying because his CIA director Tenet assured him that the WMD case was a "slam dunk." However, Tenet did not make this statement, if he did, until 12/21/02, almost a year later. Podhoretz has argued that Bush believed what he was saying because his National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) said so. That report did not appear until 10/04/02. It has since been ripped apart by the Select Committee on Intelligence of the U.S. Senate. Furthermore, many individuals have provided anecdotal evidence that Bush's closest associates and administration members managed to influence the contents of the NIE.

The question of whether or not Bush believed what he was saying [or lied](#) may be important for impeachment hearings or for psychologists or for its entertainment value, but it is somewhat peripheral. False ideas and falsehoods became prevalent and culminated in war, whether or not certain people fully believed them or did not.

Michael Smith's lengthy [Telegraph article](#) is well worth reading for the additional insight into the war momentum revealed by the British side of this. We know that on 3/14/02 Britain's Ambassador to the U.S., David Manning, sent a memo to Blair. This made crystal clear the problem of selling the war. Smith also cites a sensitive paper prepared by the Cabinet Office Overseas and Defence Secretariat. I quote portions of Smith's article. The time frame is March of 2002.

"There was increasing pressure within the administration to invade Iraq and it had less to do with the War on Terror than a desire to finish the job that the president's father had begun in the Gulf War.

"‘The success of Operation Enduring Freedom, distrust of UN sanctions and inspection regimes, and unfinished business from 1991 are all factors,’ the paper said.

"But there would be major problems finding a legal justification to use military force. ‘Subject to law officers' advice, none currently exists,’ it warned starkly.

"There was no greater threat that Saddam would use chemical or biological weapons now than there had been at any time in the recent past; regime change had no basis in international law; and there was no evidence that Iraq was backing international terrorism that might justify an action based on self-defence, as in Afghanistan, the options paper said.

"No one doubted that America could invade Iraq successfully on its own if it so chose, but the likely long term cost of rebuilding the country, laid out in detail in the Cabinet Office options paper, must have come as a shock to Mr Blair.

"The only certain way of ensuring success was to keep large numbers of forces on the ground for ‘many years’.

"Even so there was no guarantee that regime change would produce the desired effect. While both Iran and Israel had weapons of mass destruction, even a representative Iraqi government would probably try to acquire its own.

"MI6 opposed revealing details of its intelligence and, at any event, it didn't back up the claims Mr Blair wanted the dossier to make. The latest Joint Intelligence Committee assessment, dated Friday, March 15, said information on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction was ‘sporadic and patchy’.

"It was barely able to back up the claim that Saddam had any sort of weapons programme, confining itself to concluding: ‘We believe Iraq retains some production equipment, and some small stocks of chemical warfare agent precursors, and may have hidden small quantities of agents and weapons. There is no intelligence on any biological agent production facilities.’

"‘Colleagues know that Saddam and the Iraqi regime are bad. But we have a long way to go to convince them as to: the scale of the threat from Iraq and why this has got worse recently; what distinguishes the Iraqi threat from that of eg Iran and North Korea so as to justify military action; the justification for

any military action in terms of international law; and whether the consequence of military action really would be a compliant, law-abiding replacement government.'

"Neither the extent of the threat nor the reasons for tackling it now were clear, Mr Straw said. It was doubtful that America would be considering military action if the September 11 attacks had not occurred.

"But at the same time there was 'no credible evidence' to link Iraq to Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'eda."

Smith's article provides strong support for the important conclusion already mentioned above, that Saddam was no serious threat and many in the Bush administration knew it. In addition, it suggests that Bush's impatience to finish off Saddam had partly a personal basis. It suggests that the Bush administration failed to look down the road to the morning after the bombing had ceased.

On 3/24/02, Cheney said that Saddam "is actively pursuing nuclear weapons at this time." On 4/12/02 Rumsfeld: "...he's developing weapons of mass destruction..." On 7/23/02 the Downing Street memo read: "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy...But the case was thin. Saddam was not threatening his neighbors, and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea or Iran."

On 9/23/02, Rumsfeld resurrected the linkage of Iraq to al-Qaeda, stating it is "accurate and not debatable." On 9/28/02, Bush stated his case more strongly than ever: "The danger to our country is grave and it is growing. The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons, is rebuilding the facilities to make more and, according to the British government, could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the order is given. The regime has long-standing and continuing ties to terrorist groups, and there are al-Qaeda terrorists inside Iraq. This regime is seeking a nuclear bomb, and with fissile material could build one within a year."

This is a most clever set of statements, with the obvious design of convincing the listener that Iraq is a grave danger. In point of fact, none of the weapons systems mentioned posed a danger at the time; and Saddam was not threatening anyone with what he did possess. There was no evidence of any

significant amounts of chemical or biological weapons. The regime may have been seeking a nuclear bomb, but it did not then have the capabilities and would need a great deal of foreign assistance to obtain them. Iraq did not possess high-grade fissile material. Iraq had not had links to al-Qaeda in the past. Quite possibly members of al-Qaeda were in Iraq, having fled Afghanistan or as cells with their own aims. Their presence did not mean that Iraq was actively supporting them in efforts against the U.S. The 45-minute claim was obviously inserted to arouse fear in the listener. It has been [criticized on many grounds](#), as being obtained from a thirdhand source, as not being substantiated, as referring to battlefield weapons, as being eye-catching, etc. In Bush's speech, there is no indication of who would be attacked. The misleading impression is given that all of the actions mentioned are a "danger to our country," that is, the U.S. In sum, this may have been one of the most deceptive and propagandistic statements that Bush had made up to that point in time.

On 10/02/02, after the Congress passed its Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of Force in Iraq, Bush told leaders: "We know Saddam Hussein has longstanding and ongoing ties to international terrorists. With the support and shelter of a regime, terror groups become far more lethal. Aided by a terrorist network, an outlaw regime can launch attacks while concealing its involvement. Even a dictator is not suicidal, but he can make use of men who are. We must confront both terror cells and terror states, because they are different faces of the same evil."

Again we face a set of carefully crafted and cleverly misleading statements. In this case, Bush virtually claims that Saddam Hussein, an outlaw regime, is in the business of using a terrorist network to launch attacks while hiding its own role. He links terror cells with terror states. We have to remind ourselves that time and again, the CIA and others failed to find links between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

On 10/04/02, the CIA released its NIE report that was an about-face from its earlier stance. This report later [was debunked](#) by the Select Committee on Intelligence of the U.S. Senate. The Senate report suggested that all of the "major key judgments...either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting provided to the Committee." These misjudgments were that Iraq "is reconstituting its nuclear program," "has chemical and biological weapons," that it was developing an unmanned aerial vehicle to deliver biological agents, and that all the key aspects of its

biological program were more active and advanced than before the Gulf War. The Senate Committee blamed this faulty intelligence on faulty trade craft. However, [the evidence](#) points to Bush administration pressure on and corruption of the intelligence process as a far more likely cause of the intelligence breakdown.

The next day, 10/05/02, Bush was in New Hampshire telling the audience: "This is a man who told the world he would not have weapons of mass destruction – your chemical, your biological or nuclear weapons. For eleven years he has lied. On the one hand, he said he wouldn't have them – he does." These statements appear to say that Iraq has nuclear weapons, but Bush probably misspoke.

Bush's speech on 10/07/02, just prior to an important Congressional vote on 10/10/02 to authorize military force against Iraq, powerfully summarized all his favored themes. Iraq was no longer a grave danger but now a "grave threat." It was driving toward an "arsenal of terror." The theme of conjunction of weapons of mass destruction with terrorism had now been distilled into a powerful three-word phrase. Immediately after describing Iraq's weapons and its support of terror and practice of terror on its own people, Bush invoked the memory of 9/11 and the pledge "to confront every threat, from any source, that could bring sudden terror and suffering to America."

What conclusion could any listener reach other than Saddam's regime must be destroyed? Saddam was defiant, deceptive, broke his word, was building weapons of mass destruction, hated the U.S., was in bed with terrorists, and at any moment could rain down sudden terror on the U.S. Although Saddam was by no means threatening "America and the world with horrible poisons and gases and atomic weapons," somehow Bush was saying that he must not be permitted to do so! Bush was saying that Saddam was an imminent threat. But this was false.

The next day (10/08/02) Bush's claims [were answered](#) in an article that featured the views of "a growing number of military officers, intelligence professionals and diplomats in his own government [who] privately have deep misgivings about the administration's double-time march toward war." Their number (at least a dozen) made up for their anonymity. The article spoke of "intelligence agents...under intense pressure to produce reports supporting the White House's argument that Saddam poses such an immediate threat to the United States that pre-emptive military action is necessary." The

administration was charged with "squelching dissenting views." The analysts tore into Rumsfeld's claims of an Iraq-al-Qaeda link. They criticized Bush's comments on Saddam's quest for a softball size piece of highly enriched uranium saying "Saddam has sought such highly enriched uranium for many years without success, and there is no evidence that he has it now." Furthermore, how would he deliver a weapon? And if a weapon were detonated, that would "...automatically trigger a response that would include Iraq, Iran, North Korea..." They criticized Bush's mention of aluminum tubes and a number of other administration statements. On 10/09/02 yet [another article](#) drawn from similar sources attacked Bush's presentation. See also [here](#).

Unfazed, Bush on 11/04/02 in Dallas said: "At one time we know for certain he was close to having a nuclear weapon. Imagine Saddam Hussein with a nuclear weapon."

On 11/13/02 Iraq accepted U.N. Resolution 1441 and a few days later U.N. inspectors returned to Iraq. On 12/07/02, Iraq delivered an 11,800-page declaration to the U.N. The U.N. handed it over to the U.S. which edited out 8,000 pages. Within a few days, several American experts said that the new document contained nothing new. On 12/22/02 Iraq invited the CIA to enter Iraq and track down any weapons of mass destruction. An advisor to Saddam Hussein also asked the U.S. and Britain to offer up any hard evidence they had of WMD. Hans Blix made a similar request. Britain indicated that it had no hard evidence. On 12/30/02, the U.S. began providing Blix with information. On 1/09/03, Ari Fleischer stated "We know for a fact that there are weapons there." That same day, Blix reported to the U.N. that weapons inspectors have not found evidence (a "smoking gun") that would prove that Iraq violated U.N. resolutions. On 1/27/03 the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iraq had not resumed its nuclear program. During January of 2003, administration officials continually assailed Saddam Hussein's cooperativeness, his documentation, and alluded to hard evidence of weapons programs. This culminated on 1/28 with Bush's assertion that Iraq had recently sought to buy uranium in Africa, a charge we now know to have been based on fabricated intelligence. On 1/29/03 Blix defended himself against a number of charges and charged there were [inaccuracies](#) in statements made by Powell and Bush. On 2/04/03 he dismissed the claim that Iraq had mobile biological labs or was moving them before inspectors arrived.

On 2/05/03 Powell made his Security Council speech after many days of [editing out](#) unsuitable material. He has since regretted making the speech,

calling it a "blot" on his record. The many claims concerning weapons of mass destruction have never been verified.

One day later Bush continued with a laundry list of specific charges against the Iraq regime. Many were at best [misleading](#) and at worst were lies.

Blix and the IAEA provided several more reports in February suggesting Iraq was cooperating with inspectors and finding no cause of war. No WMD had been found. By the end of February, however, Blix expressed frustration with the slowness of the process.

For years officials have worried about the opacity of Saddam's activities to rebuild his weapons and complained about poor or slow accounting for various materials and weapons. This raises several questions. Are Iraqi record-keeping standards comparable to those in the U.S.? This is doubtful. Is government record-keeping ever of high quality? This is doubtful. The U.S. accounting for Iraq's oil revenues has been a scandal, and even today there is low transparency. Making war over the inability of a foreign country to account for some chemical purchased 15 years ago that may have been stolen, sold, lost, or deteriorated is not an exercise in rationality. It is even less rational when one is dealing with individuals from a foreign culture who may place quite a different emphasis on answering up quickly and correctly to the demands of westerners.

On 3/16/03 Cheney disagreed with the IAEA's assessment that Iraq's nuclear program was moribund.

War with Iraq officially began on 3/19/03.

November 14, 2005

3. EXITING IRAQ NOW

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 7, 2005

President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Three weeks ago, the Iraqi people demonstrated their remarkable courage and resilience. They voted on and passed the new Iraqi constitution, an event unthinkable a short three years ago. Elections will soon be held in December. While extremists are still attempting to derail the progress of individual rights and democracy in Iraq, the Iraqis have chosen freedom and democracy. On behalf of the American people, I congratulate them on the ongoing political process.

In a short time, Iraqis will freely form their own government. That event signals a new chapter in Iraqi responsibility over their own destinies. Iraqis began writing their new history from the moment that Saddam Hussein's iron grip was broken. They risked their lives to become police officers. They risked their lives in the new Iraqi security forces. They have fought along side our own troops. They have faced brutal killers whose radical ideology leaves no room for political and religious freedom, who hope to turn Iraq into a totalitarian state.

They will not succeed. While 10 million Iraqis were turning out to vote, in an election run entirely by them, the Iraqi security forces oversaw a peaceful election process. The Iraqi security forces now number in the hundreds of thousands. Their determination to keep their country free matches the determination of those 10 million who voted and others who did not. Iraqi security forces must now continue the struggle for the liberty of the Iraqi people. I am confident that they can and will do so.

I am proud of the legacy of freedom that our military has achieved. The sacrifice has been great. I grieve with all those families that have suffered loss. The heartbreak and burden that they have endured now allow an Iraqi nation to determine its own future. This is a victory that we all can be proud of.

An important part of our mission is now completed. I announce today an end to the military participation of American combat troops in Iraq. Prime Minister

Blair will make a similar announcement concerning British forces. We now look forward to a redeployment of all American forces out of Iraq.

As I have stated before, I will not set a timetable for this withdrawal. However, I intend for it to be rapid.

The future of the Iraqi nation belongs in the hands of the Iraqi people. They face difficult problems. To secure the blessings of liberty, to attain effective reconstruction, to subdue the destructive acts of terrorists, will take hard work and cooperation. Americans will surely help a newly elected government meet the needs of the Iraqi people. Neighboring nations can also help. Now is the time to bury old enmities and rivalries. Now is the time for every country in the region to move forward to shape a brighter future of peace for yourselves, your children and grandchildren.

Thank you for listening.

END

This is a speech we will not soon hear. While members of Congress talk about timetables, Bush resists. As for troop reductions, the White House says there will be a "rolling target" based on "conditions." The conditions are that Iraqi forces take over security.

Eventually, when the administration can reap political benefit or the troops are needed elsewhere, reductions will occur. A substantial contingent of troops could remain for a long time according to Secretary Rice.

Americans and Iraqis, many civilian, will continue to lose their lives and be injured indefinitely. The enormous war costs will go on.

The longer American troops stay in Iraq, the higher becomes the risk of debacle – open and widespread civil war stimulated by the presence of an American occupying force and American interference in Iraq's domestic affairs.

Now is a good time to exit. Now. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to stop awarding terrorists worldwide with a powerful recruiting tool, the continued American presence on Iraqi soil. Now is the time to end the needless death and destruction. [William Lind](#) is right. With voting on the constitution

ended and elections scheduled soon, now is the time to exit.

The clocks of further Mid-East wars are clicking and should be stopped. On May 6, 2004, the House of Representatives passed a nonbinding resolution authorizing [war with Iran](#). Bush has consistently pursued confrontation with Iran before and after that date. Withdrawing from Iraq is only one step in winding down the entire U.S. policy of controlling the Middle East.

Bush and the neoconservatives want regime change in Syria and Iran, through war if need be. This is still official U.S. policy despite Iraq. Bush raised the chance of war by invading Iraq, a neighbor of Iran. If Israel attacks Iran, Iran will consider it an attack by the U.S. The U.S. is already on one border of Iran in Afghanistan and wants to control another border in Syria. Getting out of Iraq is all the more important in order to take apart this second Frankenstein that Bush created and the House okayed.

The longer that Americans stay in Iraq, the greater the chance of a severe Iraqi civil war. Iraq at present has a low or moderate-level civil war, and that's bad enough. [Michael Schwartz](#) argues persuasively that American troops in Iraq enhance the chance of severe civil war because foreign (American) troops provide a focal point for terrorists or other elements that wish to turn Sunni against Shia. He argues that withdrawal leaves Zarqawi without a way to divide Sunni from Shia. He is correct.

Many Americans think we should stay in Iraq and see the job through. This is Bush's line. What this means is that Americans should remain indefinitely in Iraq in order to create a stable, secure, and pliant government that is friendly to the U.S.

Yes, it would be nice if Iraq were peace-loving, moderate, against terror, and a nation friendly to America. But if Iraqis are free, why can't they create their own future? They may wish to be neutral. They may wish to choose a religiously-based government. They may wish to fight things out. They may wish to negotiate, or fight and negotiate. What if the new rulers conceive that Iraqi interests run counter to those of the U.S.? What if the country decides to divide itself into several pieces? What if Iraqis want to control their own oil?

Seeing the job through does not mean Iraqi freedom. It means the U.S. must remain in Iraq indefinitely until our rulers get what they want. That is their real aim. If the preferences of our rulers conflict with those of Iraq's rulers chosen

by the much-vaunted process of Iraqi self-determination and freedom, then Iraqi freedom must take a back seat to the demands of American Empire.

Bush can easily foster Iraqi freedom, by removing an obstacle to it that is directly under our control, by getting Americans out of Iraq. That means exiting Iraq now.

If the Iraqis have conflicts to settle, they should be free to settle them themselves. We Americans do not know what the various factions want or how strongly they want it. These are things we cannot know. Only the unimpeded actions of the rival sides can reveal what they value and how much they value it.

If we Americans try to resolve Iraqi conflicts, we will invariably impose our own wishes and interests on the various factions. This is not freedom for Iraqis. Furthermore, the chances of blundering diplomacy and mishandled force approach 100%, since they are both controlled by the same crew of neoconservatives that has written, produced and directed episode one of this tragedy.

The President wants to "complete the mission." He wants to ensure "The success of the new Iraqi government." He says that "Ensuring that success will require more sacrifice, more time, and more resolve, and it will involve more risk for Iraqis and American and coalition forces." This government, we are told, has to be of a particular kind: "This government will be our ally in the war on terror, a partner in the struggle for peace and moderation in the Muslim world..."

Bush fears the wrong (from his perspective) government coming to power, now and in the future. He fears a government that might turn radical or ally itself with Iran, a government that might be anti-Israel or anti-American, a government that might be run by terrorists, or one run by religious fundamentalists. He even fears a government that might not last. He wants to make sure that these and like events do not happen.

Bush wants a puppet government that is friendly to American geopolitical interests. He has no confidence that the Iraqi people at this moment will use their freedom to produce a political outcome that reliably favors American interests. He wants control. This is what his words really mean, when he speaks of "ally" and "partner" and "ensuring that success." This is the language

of self-interest of the ruler of the American Empire. This is not the language of a disinterested Good Samaritan interested in freedom and democracy.

Bush wants to be sure Iraq is friendly. But that can't be done without influencing the formation of the government and/or its force structure. That is a recipe for controlling Iraq, not freeing it. That is a recipe for inciting continued resistance to American occupation, continued bombings and deaths. To Bush, safe and sound on his ranch, this is a cheap price to pay for a controllable regime that opens the door to broader control of the entire Middle East.

Bush wants to be sure that the government succeeds. This means two things. It means that there is no risk of a termination of the government outside the constitution, at least for a few years, so that the U.S. has a puppet to dangle. It means that there is no risk of civil war if the U.S. reduces its military presence and substitutes a locally trained proxy force. Gurkhas would be ideal.

None of these goals are legitimate and none should be attempted. Iraq is for the Iraqis, not for the Americans.

Often an overpowering force, an Empire, has been able to impose peace and rule a divided land. Is this what Americans want their country to attempt in Iraq and then in Syria and Iran under the propaganda doctrines of ending tyranny, spreading democracy, fighting terror, or increasing American security? We have engaged in brutal conquest under false pretexts. We are Romans sending our legions to conquer and rule in the name of pax Americana.

We are an Empire whose rulers possess unbounded ambitions. They want domination of the Middle East, not because of self-defense or freedom but for control. If they are successful, they will attempt conquests elsewhere. Warring will not end with Iraq or even the Middle East.

We abandon our goodness, our humanity, our souls and our noble aspirations if we listen to and support such evil. Our rulers will destroy our spirit. We cannot conquer and murder other peoples thousands of miles away without killing ourselves. We the people become murderers. We will discover too late that Empire is not a free lunch, that it is paid for in blood and brutality, guilt, rancor and division, in loss of freedom, loss of well-being, loss of morality, loss of ethics, loss of cultural values, loss of principles and virtues, loss of

society, loss of justice, loss of peace, and loss of God.

America went into this war dishonorably and under false pretenses. Ending our engagement quickly is a step that wipes away at least some of the disgrace associated with our actions. The President claims that "The best way to honor the sacrifice of our fallen troops is to complete the mission and win the war on terror."

The best way to keep faith with those who have fallen is to let no more fall. If they fell to end Saddam Hussein's tyranny, that mission was accomplished hundreds and thousands of deaths ago. If they fell to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, that mission ended years ago. If they fell so that Iraqis might have a new constitution, that mission is accomplished. None of these missions were or are proper, just, prudent, or constitutional for American soldiers, but, in any event, they are over with.

The largest question of all is that of the ethical justice of this and any such war. Shall our soldiers continue to keep falling until the "war on terror" is won? No, they shall not. Terrorists should be hunted down for specific crimes of terror. Our rulers should not send our soldiers into broad wars of destruction over entire countries in the false name of fighting terror. Our soldiers should not be sent into undeclared wars or wars based on loose, exaggerated and hyperbolic readings of United Nations resolutions. Our soldiers should not be sent into wars based on lies, innuendoes, phony intelligence reports, and propaganda campaigns. Our soldiers should not be sent into wars to free other peoples or establish democracies. Our soldiers should not be sent into preventive, preemptive, deterrent, or any other kinds of wars except those clearly in direct defense of our people. Our soldiers should not be sent into wars of expansion, wars of Empire, or wars for gain.

Our soldiers should never have been sent into Iraq. That is reason enough to bring them home now.

November 1, 2005

4. BUSH'S COUNTERATTACK

A month ago, neoconservatives and Bush officials launched a counterattack against the anti-war challenge to their policies.

The campaign began with neoconservative op-eds accusing critics of lying and listing Democrat quotes supportive of war. It continued with old rationales for the Iraq War and Bush's attacks on the anti-war salient. The campaign peaked this week with the release of a new government war strategy document and a presidential speech.

Not coincidentally, Hillary Clinton released a war policy statement of her own. Impaled on the hook of her October 2002 pro-war vote, she disclaimed responsibility for it. She accused the Bush administration of double-crossing her with empty assurances and false WMD evidence. She childishly took back her vote "Based on the information we have today."

Bush gave his speech at the U.S. Naval Academy before a contingent of midshipmen. Rumsfeld, John Warner, and Pete Hoekstra accompanied him. He pointedly mentioned Rumsfeld's service as a navy aviator and Warner's stint as Secretary of the Navy as well as Hoekstra's role as Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. This conveys: We're all part of the same team, fellows. You're important, and that's why we're all here.

Bush didn't choose the venue of the speech and the officials on the podium randomly. He wanted to use the occasion to rally, confirm, solidify, and inspire this generation of warriors. They actuate the might of the State. They are part of that might. Bush wanted to hold their loyalty and keep them firm in their individual commitments, especially now, as they hear doubts and questions about their possible missions.

Bush urged his audience to meet their future challenges, as have prior classmates of theirs. In what context? In "the first war of the 21st century: the global war on terror." (Bush means America's first war.) This he visualizes occurring almost everywhere and lasting until the enemy is everywhere defeated. In other words, forever.

On Iraq, Bush said that "the terrorists have made clear that Iraq is the central front in their war against humanity. And so we must recognize Iraq as the central front in the war on terror."

Two observations. First, Bush is fond of the term "front." The Iraq War has no fronts, but using the term creates the appearance of an ordered battlefield where there is none. Second, he talks as if the Americans have been forced into this battle by the insurgents who have instigated the guerilla war. He has no responsibility in Iraq. All the political and other interests are supposed to kowtow to the U.S. force of arms and obediently march into the hallowed halls of U.S.-shaped democracy. He's not to blame if they do not! They are ornery and evil.

Bush, and probably many others in power, really did believe that Iraq would be subdued and remade in the American image in a jiffy. Errors like this are a general phenomenon among the powerful. Hillary and many Democrats went along too, didn't they? They are bright and perceptive people, with vast experience in politics that you and I lack. But unchecked power causes otherwise normal and even very clever human beings to abandon their sensibilities. Politically powerful people have a reduced incentive to act rationally. They have an inflated sense of their own ability to control others.

Bush argues that "If we're not fighting and destroying this enemy in Iraq, they would not be idle. They would be plotting and killing Americans across the world and within our borders." An alternative possibility seems more reasonable. If Americans had not gone into Iraq, thousands of terrorist volunteers would have stayed in their home countries, content to nurse their grievances in other ways, unmotivated to give their lives to rid Muslim lands of intruders, and deaf to the rhetoric of bin Laden or his followers.

Didn't American intervention ignite and energize a resistance movement just as Europeans developed resistance movements in World War II? Why would we not predict a like event in Iraq?

A ruler who conquers a country and does not expect resistance is acting stupidly. Brutal dictators like Castro and Saddam Hussein know this because their longevity of rule depends on knowing this. Democratic rulers like Bush, who possess unchecked power for a short period of time, do not look ahead far enough. This leads to a variety of foolish acts that harm their subjects. Dictators make just as many mistakes and harm their subjects in other ways. Why would Saddam Hussein engage in a long and fruitless war with Iran if he did not mis-estimate Iran's power of resistance?

Bush cannot admit publicly he fostered a resistance movement, but he

underestimated its chances before the event because he believed that American power would easily prevail. Why would he hold such a skewed belief? He may have had many motives for making war, but being in power is one factor alone that contributed to his seeing the prospects in a biased way.

This happens to all rulers, no matter what their motives. Khrushchev criticized Stalin's errors before making his own. Hitler's blunders are legendary. It is a mistake to insulate anyone from accountability for his errors. This happens in all States. It is a basic reason why the rulers of States harm their subjects.

Bush says it is good we are killing the terrorists in Iraq, not in America. Maybe it seems good for some of the uninjured and surviving Americans who cheer him on, but this may be a temporary or short-run condition. Power often hampers the ability to look ahead a sensible time span. It often warps the ability to count all the costs. It often warps the judgment ability in other ways.

Bush's statement also means that Iraqis count for nothing. Harry Browne has asked what gives Americans the right to occupy Iraq and fight terrorists there. We kill and maim innocent Iraqis as we supposedly are "defeating a direct threat to the American people." Bush's speech explicitly says that our presence has attracted terrorists to Iraq. They then proceed to kill and maim Iraqis.

Our government proclaims that it does not even bother to keep tabs on Iraqi deaths. Power not only encourages stupidity but also immorality. Power in the form of the State removes the bonds or rules of conventional morality. It becomes right for the rulers of the American State to destroy Iraqis to protect Americans. That's what a State is for. The State is that great fiction by which what is immoral becomes moral.

The most troubling new element in his speech is Bush's open talk of marginalizing Sunnis whom he tags as "rejectionists." What happens to people who do not choose to participate in the ongoing state-building process? Official policy is to marginalize them. Bush says he is "working with Iraqis to help them engage those who can be persuaded to join the new Iraq and to marginalize those who never will." This process supposedly helps Iraqis "build a free society, with inclusive democratic institutions that will protect the interests of all Iraqis."

The U.S. kneads and mashes Iraqis into a pliant dough that bakes into a democratic bread. If you cannot be swayed to join, then you are relegated to

the lower or outer edge of society. Join the gang running the state or be left out in the cold. Is this freedom? Is this the protection of every individual's interests?

Bush is tilting American policy further in favor of Shiites. [Reports](#) of Shiite police forces torturing and killing Sunnis are growing. This is one unfavorable by-product of American state-building. Bush is also strengthening the hand of fundamental Islam everywhere and that of Iran in particular.

The majority of Bush's speech asserts the progress of Iraq's homegrown security forces under American tutelage. In this portion, one would think that Americans would soon be coming home.

However, Bush emphasizes that American withdrawal will not occur until the insurgent movement is no longer a threat to the country's political stability, until Iraqi forces handle the security of the new state, and until Iraq is no longer a safe haven for terrorists. These are tough conditions to meet, and they mean an American presence for years to come.

Bush is hanging on to his vision of an Iraq democracy that is a staunch American ally. How this is supposed to be assured is anyone's guess. Such a political situation is then, according to Bush, supposed to inspire democratic movements in Damascus and Teheran.

We agree with the President that there are some very bad guys out there, be they terrorists or whatever, who have not only killed innocent Americans again and again, but also have killed the innocents of many other nationalities. They operate in a subterranean way without sophisticated weapons and with shoestring financing. They are often willing to die for their cause. Their aims vary, but some important ones can usually be identified.

The issues are how to characterize and understand this battle and its sources. We'd like to find effective ways to reduce the numbers and presence of the bad guys to acceptable levels.

Consider how our powerful rulers have responded to terrorism. Has there been an open debate among our rulers, or a debate that broadly engaged the public about the nature of this problem and the alternative methods of handling it? This issue goes back several decades. Have we ever had this debate? Have there been due consideration and action to address it? If there had been, the

chance of 9/11/01 occurring would have been greatly reduced. I do not make this statement lightly.

Look at recent history. It is, I think, fair to say that Bush rushed headlong into his war on terror with Iraq as the current centerpiece. He declared his oversimplified vision, and that was that. Now we must reckon with the fallout from a hasty and flawed approach that short-circuited well-balanced and measured consideration of the problem.

Thoughtful consideration of problems is a casualty of the concentration of power in a handful of rulers. Power pits might against mind.

Our rulers claim a monopoly on lawful violence, violence in defense of legitimate rights. If no one can lawfully challenge this claim, then they have a free hand. They need not think matters through thoroughly. They need not consider a broad range of interests. They can act on impulse, or whim, or emotionally. Or they can dawdle and let Rome burn.

Our system of concentrated power places us in the hands of people who can act irresponsibly to us and get away with it for a long enough time to harm us greatly. Impeachment requires some of our rulers to investigate and try others. This is akin to asking the Supreme Court to limit the power of the federal government. We can't expect this check upon power to be used very often or used wisely.

The moral and ethical issues involved here run deep. By what right does the American State take sides for or against the ruling House of Saud, the Shah of Iran, Somoza, Aristide, the Contras, Egypt, Israel, etc., not just verbal support but force of arms, covert intelligence and other operations, and packages of aid? How do we face up to the fact that the aggressions of terrorists and others upon innocents are means that we ourselves have resorted to with even greater deadly impact for a long, long time?

Moral facts are highly pertinent in any battle. Morality conditions whom we fight, where we fight, why we fight, what we hope to achieve, how we fight, how long we fight, how we motivate ourselves to fight, what price we are willing to pay, and how we know when we have won or lost.

Bush knows this. This is why he repeatedly characterizes the terrorists and the Iraq War in terms to his liking. Bush has the immense power of the bully pulpit

to influence the moral context of thought about the war. This is yet another drawback to the concentration of power in rulers.

Most everyone has difficulty in acknowledging his own errors, maybe because we are insecure or underestimate the reservoir of forgiveness in ourselves and others. Add to this normal tendency the possession of great power and you get a ruler capable of making big errors and then not being able to recognize, admit, and correct them. This ruler will self-righteously and stubbornly dig in his heels even as his subjects suffer. Even hugely popular entertainment figures with a seeming monopoly on audiences are prone to turn into monsters.

It is one thing for one of us to be optimistic and make a decision. If we are wrong, we lose. It's quite another for the power of office to encourage grandiose visions that can end up making us all lose. Such power encourages stupidity, immorality, and warped judgment. The judgment biases show up in all sorts of ways, such as excessive optimism or pessimism, or excessively long or short time horizons, or placing too much or too little weight on bits of information. It is always hard to make decisions under uncertainty. Unaccountable and focused political power make the decisions all the more fallible and all the more costly and serious.

What solution is there except for individual freedom and the accompanying responsibility? This means an about face in many of the directions we are now heading in.

December 3, 2005

5. COMPOUNDING THE FOLLY

Iraq under study

The Iraq Study Group Report is out, the first of more reports on Iraq to come from various organs of our government. This report and the ones to follow signal the first stage of a U.S. attempt to extricate itself from Iraq with the least damage to its position.

The Report has some good points. The fact that it was produced at all is a plus. No matter what the Report recommends, it provides an alternative establishment voice that openly is questioning existing policy, even if only tangentially. The Report usefully aggregates and summarizes information from many persons in an official way. The main plus of the report is its frank description of the current situation. Coming from whom it does, this is a small step forward in the public debate over Iraq.

With or without negotiations, the U.S. cannot exit from Iraq without deciding to exit. Despite occasionally warming up to the idea of an eventual U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, this Report does not recommend a pullout from Iraq or even a long but clear roadmap to that end. Instead it agrees with President Bush in still seeking a one-state Iraq political structure with a "representative government," that is, a democracy. The Report wants to see a central government that controls all of Iraq's oil revenues: "The United States should support as much as possible central control by governmental authorities in Baghdad, particularly on the question of oil revenues."

But U.S. control over Iraq's political future is an impossible hope and always was. Iraq is not West Germany or Japan in 1945. The Iraqi people are not homogeneous, and Iraq and Baghdad are historically at or near the epicenter of numerous empires. (See [here](#).) A U.S.-style or U.S.-assisted democracy in Iraq cannot submerge deep rivalries based on religion, history, revenge, power, and oil. The only way that Iraqis might have conceivably chosen a single or several governments for themselves was for the U.S. to have left Iraq after toppling Saddam Hussein. But the U.S. stayed on, and now its failed attempt to impose its own idea of order has turned into a serious wound to both Iraq and the U.S.

The Report's presumptions

The Iraq Study Group Report echoes President Bush's belated recognition that democracy in Iraq "will depend primarily on the actions of the Iraqi people," yet it still holds to the discredited theory that the U.S. armed forces, wealth, and assistance can help determine the sex of and give birth to a new and unified Iraqi democratic state. But if a people does not want a government or a democracy that fits U.S. specifications, what can the U.S. do about it short of imposing such a government, an action that, as in Iran, can only lead to long-run problems? And should the U.S. be in the business of encouraging the modern, over-powerful, and dysfunctional welfare state anyway?

If this Report's writers and top Administration officials have their way, a pullout will be very slow. They are still seeking outcomes beyond U.S. control and attainment, such as a stable Iraqi state ruling a peaceful Iraq. The Report calls for a temporary increase in U.S. armed forces in Iraq along with numerous other measures that not only do not remove the U.S. from Iraq, they increase American involvement and commitment.

Strangely, the Report maintains the hope of American success in Iraq even as it views as "implausible" that the Iraqis will avert an "unfolding civil war." While recognizing and spelling out the hopeless situation, the Report nevertheless calls for a last ditch and concerted effort to salvage something out of the Iraq debacle. Playing poker or the stock market in this way, by failing to cut losses, leads to bigger losses. Only the illusion that one controls the game, the market, or the Iraq situation is what keeps the player in a losing game, meeting every raise and raising the stakes even higher. The U.S. political establishment, as reflected in this Report, still thinks it has what it takes to win the game of shaping the world to U.S. tastes. It fears that if it loses this hand in Iraq, the U.S. will be set back for many years to come. If this and succeeding administrations keep increasing the size of the pot, and there are no indications that they will not, then, unless the American people see the light, the prospect of financial ruin will provide the last and final sanction to terminate the excessive and unrealistic U.S. ambitions.

If you do not at first succeed

The Report stresses that neither American policy-makers and soldiers nor the Iraqi government control events in Iraq. It stresses the long odds against the U.S. being able to achieve its official goals. But the Report fails to grasp that

as long as the U.S. continues to look for success on its terms in Iraq, it will be held hostage to events on the ground in Iraq that are initiated by a variety of armed and hostile factions that the U.S. has no control over. In blunt terms, the Iraqi factions will run circles around the U.S. The U.S. can't win.

The U.S. had an opportunity over a year ago after the Iraqi elections to declare victory and begin a face-saving withdrawal. That option is gone. The U.S. can no longer withdraw without acknowledging defeat, even if it blames the Iraqis for sabotaging their newly-formed state. The U.S. never could get what it wanted in Iraq, and it still can't. It could get illusory military victories, but it could not create a viable Iraqi democracy.

The more that the U.S. interjects itself in Iraq, the more that its fate depends on what the other Iraqi players decide to do. These other players have their own agendas and forces. They can outlast the U.S. The Report observes that 15,000 U.S. soldiers cannot control 6 million fighting Iraqis in Baghdad. "The results of Operation Together Forward II are disheartening. Violence in Baghdad – already at high levels – jumped more than 43 percent between the summer and October 2006." Despite these facts and years of negative experience, the Report says: "We could, however, support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad, or to speed up the training and equipping mission, if the U.S. commander in Iraq determines that such steps would be effective."

The Report's assessment

In the words of the Report, the situation in Iraq is grave, deteriorating, and dire. Violence is unchecked, underestimated, persistent, severe and growing more severe. Daily life is often unbearable. Almost 15 percent of the population has been displaced. Large numbers of Iraqis have died and are dying as a direct result of the war. The Report describes each of the factions warring in Iraq. The main Shia factions are the Mahdi Army (itself fractionated) of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Badr Brigade of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. The Sunni factions are less identifiable. Al-Qaeda "is responsible for a small portion of the violence." There are also criminal gangs. The government of Iraq is weak and divided with some of its elements initiating and sustaining a great deal of violence. The Iraqi Army lacks leadership, loyalty, discipline, equipment, personnel, logistics and support. The Iraqi police, "organized under the Ministry of the Interior," are in even worse shape. They not only do not control crime, they "routinely engage in sectarian

violence." The U.S. does not know who is in the police or where the money and equipment are going. All of the preceding and more concerning Iraq is stated in the Report.

As for the American situation in Iraq, the Report views it too as extremely negative. We are told that Americans in the U.S. military are being killed and wounded in Iraq at an undiminished rate. U.S. forces are heavily taxed and overstretched. Equipment is fast wearing out, leading to shortages in the U.S. The rotation system interferes with efforts to learn the local scene and earn the population's trust. The cost of the war is unsustainable. The Report admits that the American presence in Iraq fosters resentment among Iraqis. It makes plain there is no military solution in Iraq: I quote: "As another American general told us, if the Iraqi government does not make political progress, 'all the troops in the world will not provide security.' Meanwhile, America's military capacity is stretched thin: we do not have the troops or equipment to make a substantial, sustained increase in our troop presence. Increased deployments to Iraq would also necessarily hamper our ability to provide adequate resources for our efforts in Afghanistan or respond to crises around the world." Like Democrat leaders, the Report wants increased U.S. involvement in Afghanistan: "...the United States should provide additional political, economic, and military support for Afghanistan, including resources that might become available as combat forces are moved out of Iraq."

Which way to jump?

Where the Report comes up short is in its lack of analysis. Since it accepts the basic assumptions and thrust of U.S. policies worldwide, it cannot ask searching questions. It cannot grasp the deep-seated reasons for U.S. failure in Iraq. It cannot see the contradictions in U.S. policies. It really does not yet admit that the U.S. has failed in Iraq, and therefore it cannot really analyze the causes of this failure. While it is true that Iraq's government depends on the Iraqis, the Report nowhere seriously questions the numerous U.S. errors in thought and deed that brought about today's problems in Iraq. If U.S. foreign policies are not subjected to the most severe and searching scrutiny, then how can the erroneous assumptions that go into their making ever be rooted out? If the U.S. does not understand the basic reasons for its Iraq failure, will it not repeat the same mistakes elsewhere, such as in Afghanistan or Somalia?

The most important conclusion of the Iraq Study Group is that the U.S. should not pull out of Iraq. Its main reasons are that a single national state is not

guaranteed at this time, U.S. prestige and influence will suffer, Iraq will lurch toward chaos, and sectarian killing will increase. If the U.S. did not accurately predict the results of attacking Iraq in 2003, can the Study Group now accurately predict that the results of rapidly withdrawing U.S. forces will be unambiguously dire? Clearly not. One sure result of withdrawing is an end to American deaths and injuries. Another sure result is the restoration of American military capabilities. A third result is to staunch the war borrowing, and this in turn can lead to a growth in America's capital stock and income. A fourth result is that Iraqis will play a bigger role in deciding their own future. The killing and chaos in Iraq are already at very high levels. Can they go higher? Yes. Might they go lower if the U.S. pulls out? They might, and a pullout is what most Iraqis favor. Perhaps they know something that U.S. officials refuse to see. The U.S. prestige is already at a low ebb because its weakness is evident every day of the week in Iraq. The bargaining power of the U.S. with respect to other Middle Eastern countries is already at a low ebb because they know that the U.S. is inflexibly bogged down in Iraq. They can manipulate the U.S. by proxy explosions, attacks, and assassinations. A U.S. pullout actually can improve the prestige and position of the U.S. in these respects.

There are many potential scenarios that no one can predict. The positive results of pulling out of Iraq are highly visible, the negative results not so clear. Yet the Iraq Study Group fears the worst from withdrawing and hopes for the best in remaining. But if the U.S. implements the 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, the U.S. continues on an interventionist course whose outcomes have already proven to be negative and even predictably negative.

Intervention risk

The Study Group's many recommendations are interventionist and far too optimistic. Most of them involve the U.S. doing this or that thing in Iraq or with Iraqis. Their main recommendation, for example, is to integrate American armed services personnel into Iraqi units. Did this work in South Vietnam? Can it work in a society as divided as Iraq's where loyalties are highly uncertain?

In general, interventionist foreign policies are necessarily highly risky. Many unknown things can happen in the future where disputatious factions are involved. Interventions make America's future depend on a game of super-roulette. In (American) roulette, any of 38 numbers can come up. In

super-roulette, the possibilities are far greater. There is a significant dispersion in potential unpredictable outcomes, many of which are bad.

Since U.S. policymakers have to commit to a single policy at any given juncture, the odds of choosing a wrong policy are very high and the odds of choosing the single-best right policy are infinitesimal. The only way to hedge the interventionist risk is to choose flexible foreign policies that can be adjusted if bad outcomes transpire. However, the U.S. is not known for choosing flexible policies. The choice of war, in particular, forecloses numerous options. It is a commitment to a rather inflexible course. The U.S. is now paying for the folly of embracing the unacceptable risk of remaking Iraq in its image.

Conclusions

Americans at large have turned against the war, even if they have not acknowledged its folly much less changed their minds about America's role in the world. And now that U.S. officialdom has begun to own up, even partially, to the dreadful spot that Iraqis and the U.S. are in, we are seeing the initial stages of an official desire for the U.S. to disengage from Iraq. This process has a very long way to go.

Doubtless, the supporters of American Empire will do everything they can to protect the hard shell of their paradigm. They will do this by placing the blame for Iraq on a variety of singular and unusual factors. They will blame everyone from Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and neoconservatives to the Iraqis themselves. They will be quick to point out errors like dismantling the Iraqi Army and failings in the U.S. military. What they won't do is question the basic policy of American Empire.

The Iraq War has been utter folly, prompted (among other things) by ignorance of Iraqi and Middle Eastern realities, erroneous perceptions of American strengths, oversimplified and outsized political hopes, and incompetent execution. Like all government programs, it has failed badly. The U.S. blindly rode into an impenetrable thicket, and got a cropper for its pains.

Now the Iraq Study Group Report proposes to compound the folly. It urges the U.S. forward into the thicket, based upon the same premises and erroneous assumptions that the U.S. held when it galloped into Iraq almost four years ago. Once again the cream of America's political ruling class displays its

ignorance of foreign affairs and its misperceptions of what the U.S. can accomplish. Once again we are given a set of impossible political blueprints and no reason to expect anything other than continued deficiencies in carrying out the plans.

It seems that no matter who they are, in government or out, new hands or old, the Washington jockeys who whip the American horses into battle wear the blinders, not the horses. Living and working in the center of the American Empire breeds a peculiar form of blindness of thought. Facts are seen but not understood. They do not result in appropriate action.

Unfortunately, the Iraq Study Group Report provides neither a serious break with existing U.S. policy nor the slightest hint of a major re-evaluation of the U.S. role in Iraq, the Middle East, or the world.

December 13, 2006

6. SUCCESS IN IRAQ?

At a meeting this week hosted by the Arab League, leaders of most of Iraq's factions progressed toward reconciliation. There were a number of hopeful signs. They attended the conference held in Cairo. They conferred with each other for several days. They worked together to fashion a joint statement in an atmosphere of agreement. They made plans for a reconciliation conference to be held next year. Sunnis made some gains and moved further into the political process. The various factions agreed on a number of other cooperative measures such as not accusing each other, creating a fair election, and handling the situation of detainees. A number of participants expressed optimism at future progress.

Their statement called for a timed American withdrawal conditional on a buildup of Iraqi security forces, and it condemned terrorism.

The conference did not include leaders of the insurgency or former leaders of the Ba'ath Party. Conferees differed on the difficult issue of armed resistance and insurgency, making likely the continuance of the violence and rising death toll among Iraqis and foreigners.

Now that some Democrats and even a few Republicans have awoken from their torpor, the way is open for the U.S. to be able to withdraw fully from Iraq in 2006. The sooner this is accomplished, the sooner that Iraqis can settle their own affairs.

The President has a window of opportunity to declare "victory" in birthing an Iraqi democracy. He even has a chance to mitigate severe domestic repercussions and save what's left of his Presidency.

The complete withdrawal of American troops anytime soon is a long shot. It looks like troop numbers will be reduced in 2006. But a permanent presence on American bases in Iraq is in the cards if the new government is friendly.

Winding down the Iraq War will not terminate the high degree of American engagement in the Middle East and elsewhere. It will not discourage addicts

of American power. Unless we domestically clean house and discredit neoconservative ideas, they will be heartened by the Iraq outcome no matter how it turns out. If stability occurs, they'll take credit. If it doesn't, they'll blame the anti-war supporters. Neoconservatives will, along with the President, declare success in Iraq and keep up the pressure for more foreign adventures.

We wish the Iraqis well. We hope they achieve their values. We hope that by withdrawing from their country, we allow them better to achieve their values. Societies often rebuild rapidly after wars are over. We hope this happens in Iraq.

We hope that each and every Iraqi lives peaceably and creates greater happiness than was possible under Saddam Hussein. Unfortunately, this is not now the case, certainly not for the Iraqi dead, certainly not for those blown up daily, probably not for the maimed and injured, probably not for those living in greater fear and greater misery in a war-torn country, and probably not for those whose opportunities to progress are diminished and frustrated by the consequences of war.

Success in Iraq, if it is declared, is actually an empty phrase. This war made Americans no safer from terrorists than we were before. We are less safe because we diverted resources and attention from hunting down known terrorists and we encouraged more adherents to the terrorist cause.

A good many companies gained war contracts, but we would have been better off if they had been producing goods we valued and could use. A good many Americans felt the thrill of war and benefited from its entertainment. For the price paid, Hollywood could have turned out any number of gory war movies. A good many neoconservatives, commentators, politicians and pseudo-statesmen felt good about this war, as if they had made a big contribution to the United Way. We'd be far better off had they not stolen our wealth and wasted it on this destructive escapade.

Gains from this war for Iraqis are hard to discern. Some politicians who will eventually be running the country may gain, if the country survives, but that cannot have been a reason to "free Iraq." Maybe some Kurds have gained or some Shiites; women may have lost or Sunnis. There is no unambiguous calculus by which we automatically know that making war in Iraq was right for Iraqis. We'd like to think so to comfort our consciences after the fact.

Before the fact, before embarking on the Iraq War, the prospective gains in terms of Iraqi freedom and democracy were figments of the neoconservative imagination. There was no way of knowing what value individual Iraqis placed on these political structures as compared with other values in their lives. To interfere with their lives, in the process killing and maiming thousands and considerably diminishing the lives of those who survived, could never be justified by appeals to abstract concepts of freedom and democracy. The war can't be justified in this way after the fact either. The dead can't vote. They can't speak. They can't tell us whether they are grateful we freed them.

Iraq may fashion a "democracy" with many of its trappings of Parliaments and votes. It is not clear that the typical Iraqi will have gained much. We cannot know what value Iraqis place on these things. We can never know what political and economic situation may have occurred inside Iraq had we not intervened. Terrorism may subside in Iraq, or it may become a nagging factor of daily life. We cannot know how surrounding countries will relate to a new Iraq.

Iraqi values were inestimable before we attacked, and they are inestimable now. We did not know then what Iraqis wanted or how much they were, as individuals, willing to pay for it. We do not know these things now. These things are unknowable.

To speak of our doing good by freeing Iraqis and fostering democracy is literally to speak nonsense. It is to act like an omniscient God who knows what lies in every person's heart, to know what they value and how much they value it. To invade a country on such a premise is to attempt to live other people's lives for them. This cannot be done without destroying their freedom.

Suppose that China, looking at the U.S., determined that we were not a free people, that our democracy was a sham, that two parties monopolized the ballot, that they gerrymandered voting districts to ensure being elected, and that those in power were stealing from the people. Suppose that China invaded the U.S. to free us. Suppose that after deposing and imprisoning our leaders, China remained for years, rooting out and killing all those who resisted the presence of Chinese soldiers. Suppose that whole cities were leveled by the Chinese to root out these insurgent Americans, these terrorists. Suppose that our economy was so disrupted that we could not be sure of getting basics like water and electricity. Suppose that our travel was restricted, that we had to stop at Chinese roadblocks. Suppose they shouted at us in an unintelligible

language, shot us, and pushed us around. Who could say in the end that the Chinese had done us a favor by freeing us?

Since the Iraq War involves a massive amount of aggression, loss of life, injury, displacement, destruction, and misery, we are responsible, directly and indirectly, for huge losses. Future consequences and losses remain to be seen: for our military, for their morale and fighting power, for the folks back home, for our politics, for terrorist activity, for Iraqis, for our relations with other nations, and for the Middle East. We are less well off in a myriad of ways.

In attacking Iraq, we surely have attacked both truth and justice. Downgrading these essentials harms us, dragging us downwards. We set ourselves back in terms of our principles and direction. We weakened our character.

This ill-considered war loses us time and sets us back in terms of facing our serious problems. It hastens our decline into a second- and third-rate nation. What gains it us if we have a diamond-studded military and a deteriorating country?

Until we see a systematic change in ruling doctrine, we can be quite sure that our rulers will continue to project American power throughout the world, no matter what their party affiliations. Due allowance being made for temporary lapses, disputes and rhetoric, this has been the predominant course of events for over 100 years.

In his 1939 letter to Adolph Hitler, President Roosevelt wrote: "Nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the cause of self-evident home defense."

These are fine words! It is as near to self-evident truth as one can get that no rulers of any State have a right to send their armies to invade other lands, except in clear self-defense. It is truth because invaded lands and possessions do not belong to an aggressor.

Would that Roosevelt's successors had lived up to this self-defense philosophy! Unfortunately, most of them have not, including most recently Presidents Clinton and Bush. Iraq and Saddam Hussein never generated an American "cause of self-evident home defense."

Roosevelt queried Hitler: "Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations? Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iran.

We will make it easy for our current leader. President Bush: Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of Syria and Iran? Will you assure us that the CIA or covert Special Forces will never again be used to undermine a foreign State? As for our previous leader, Mr. Clinton, can you explain in what way Yugoslavia threatened Americans such that you brought Americans into war in that country?

Roosevelt wanted Hitler to speak to him as an intermediary: "Because the United States, as one of the Nations of the Western Hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe, I trust that you may be willing to make such a statement of policy to me as head of a Nation far removed from Europe." Whether disingenuous or not, Roosevelt must have thought there was some plausibility to his assertion that the U.S. was far removed from Europe and not involved in its controversies.

We are no longer as far removed from other countries in terms of travel time as we once were, but we are every bit as far removed from the "controversies" of other countries as we ever were. This is because their squabbles and differences do not directly involve the whole American people in a cause of self-defense. Yet our direct military and economic involvement through our government and its organs is huge. Who can name the self-evident threats to our lives posed by Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, Kosova, and Uzbekistan? Who can explain the self-evident threats to our lives posed by Greenland, Iceland, Germany, Okinawa, and Japan where we have large military establishments?

I doubt whether our rulers can give us a coherent explanation of our many interventions, outposts, alliances, aid packages, loans, and bases. Fifteen years ago, the rationale for some of this was to prevent the international spread of Communism. Now that the Cold War is behind us, our rulers seem unable to pull the plug on American power. They keep flailing away at new enemies and feeding us new (and old) rationalizations for war.

Freeing other peoples and establishing new democracies is one of these rationales for war. This rationale is false, wrong, empty, and destructive. It is false because we are bringing the replacement of one sort of rule for another, one sort of State for another sort. We are not bringing freedom. It is wrong because we have no right to aggress upon another people, causing great damage, in order to effect this transformation. It is empty because we do not know and cannot know, before or after, whether the gains exceed the losses or vice versa. It is destructive because a war begun to free others employs aggressive principles applied to both ourselves and others. The consistent application of aggression ultimately undermines its users. Applied in the U.S., it can only tear apart our society. Applied overseas, it can only elicit resistance.

Success in Iraq? A victory in Iraq? We will hear these phrases spoken. We will be tempted to feel good, that what we have done has been right, that it has been for truth, justice and the American way. This will be propaganda. The reality is that this war was none of our business, that we meddled where we do not belong, that we caused great damage, and that some gained and some lost but we can't know how much. The reality is that starting this war under false pretenses was inimical to justice and the opposite of the American way.

November 24, 2005

7. BENEVOLENT HEGEMONY GOES DOWN THE TUBES**U.S. or insurgent victory?**

A quick neoconservative question: Do you want a U.S. victory in Iraq, or do you want the insurgents to win? Although this question is designed to separate Republicans from Democrats (libertarians and market anarchists don't count), here's a quick answer: Neither. Choosing American victory means American soldiers and other personnel staying in Iraq indefinitely without a realistic chance of victory (whatever that word now means). It means continuing a cluster of neoconservative ideas that add up to a failed theory: benevolent neocolonialist hegemony. This theory has completely miscarried.

U.S. victory now means trying to win the unwinnable and, in the process, losing more and more. American victory has been continually fading as an option almost from the instant the war began. Generals and politicians are finally beginning to acknowledge that fact publicly. The main question remaining for Washington now is how to withdraw with the least loss of face, prestige, and power, doing the least damage to its credibility.

U.S. or insurgent victory? Neither. Choosing one or another insurgent winner is impossible. A virulent civil war now rages in Iraq and there is little that Americans or anyone else can do about it. Many Iraqis want us out and some want us to remain. Some say that our presence prolongs the conflict, and others find it in their interests to keep us around supporting them. Americans are being pulled into the civil war, whether they like it or not.

Benevolent neocolonialist hegemony

Our leaders, who apparently did not know a Shiite from a Sunni, have made a fine mess of things. We do not know why America invaded Iraq in 2003. Our leaders have given us many reasons, and we suspect others that are hidden. I focus on one very important set of ideas that is still being voiced: benevolent neocolonialist hegemony. We know that before the invasion, neoconservatives argued that America was a superpower whose foreign policy should be benevolent American hegemony. According to this doctrine, America should spread democracy, even by force of arms if necessary. It should use its (super)power to remake the world in its image. We know that, right up until the present, Washington and Condoleezza Rice in particular looked upon

Lebanon as another example of this doctrine. After 9/11, this doctrine was combined with the war on a tactic – terror. The idea became that spreading democracy was not only right (everyone wants freedom) but also practical (it would stop terrorism). And it was argued that preemptive war was a legitimate tool in the democracy-building neocolonialist toolkit.

On the ground in Iraq, benevolent neocolonialism has been thoroughly discredited. It will soon be found wanting in Washington and hopefully throughout America. Benevolent hegemony didn't work in Iraq because it is impracticable. It is impossible for it to work, no matter how benevolent the U.S. tries to be or thinks its motives are! Benevolent colonialism is a contradiction in terms. A truly benevolent colonialist state doesn't enter a country in the first place. It doesn't manipulate a country's government or support dictators. If it has occupied a land, it quickly turns rule over to its inhabitants. But in these cases, what does a benevolent colonialist accomplish? It gains no colonial benefits and installs no friendly government. Benevolence has just as little place in international political affairs as it has in the operation of Adam Smith's invisible hand. States are not churches.

When the U.S. takes over another country like Iraq, it has few palatable alternatives. The very acts of taking over and occupying a country pre-emptively are not benevolent. Every land usually has natives who are rebellious against an occupier's rule. They create insurgencies unless they are suppressed. If America acts as a traditional empire and puts these insurgencies down, ruthlessly if necessary, then it is not acting benevolently. American occupiers have somehow to impose their will and rule if they attempt to create a democracy or a friendly state. Either America puts in a colonial governor with full ruling powers or it does not. If it has such a governor who uses his power to suppress and rule, which is hardly benevolent, this itself will generate insurgencies against American rule. If America imposes a vision, a form of government, and creates a bureaucracy and armed forces, then the conquered land has no real democracy. It has no real self-determination, and this is not benevolent. If America tries to be a neutral arbiter of competing local interests, it is inevitably drawn to one side or another, earning the enmity of the other sides. It loses its claim to benevolence. Under certain conditions, where the country has strong competing interests or tribes or religions, the ruler finds himself presiding over civil war.

If America tries to act as a benevolent occupying empire without an empire's full range of often ruthless ruling alternatives, it ties its own hands and dooms

itself to failure. If it tries simultaneously to occupy and not occupy a country, it will fail. Benevolent hegemony is a confused and contradictory (neoconservative) foreign policy that simply cannot occur. Hegemony means to dominate others, and domination of one country by the rulers of another can't be benevolent.

The empire blunders – American style

In the past the American version of empire has been some form of economic, political, and military alliance and/or control by which the local satraps are tied to American interests. America attempts to gain its dominance with a minimum of its own military forces being interjected. Perhaps it supplies military and economic aid or technology to keep the local ruler such as a Shah or a Somoza in power. Perhaps it supplies World Bank or IMF loans. Even these milder forms of dominance can lead to insurgencies and trouble spots or even terrorism directed at America itself as when two Puerto Rican nationalists tried to kill President Truman. With American support and assistance, the locally supported dictators often suppress their populations ruthlessly. These policies can lead to obstreperous competing hegemonists like Iran, some of which are supported or urged on by other great powers. The empire's policies lend credence in some quarters to Usama bin Ladens and suicide bombings striking against the new Rome and its Western allies. These enemies of America have long memories of occupations and invasions that we have forgotten or even know nothing about. They do not need the American empire in order to rekindle ancient enmities or imagine new ones. They can find plenty of grounds for terror in their own religious and political agendas. They commit their own crimes, but the American empire provides plenty of ammunition for their grievances and propaganda.

When the American empire resorts, as in Iraq, to its own armed forces and occupation, the chances of failure rise dramatically. The U.S. pulled out a win in the Philippine-American War, a stalemate in Korea, a loss in Vietnam, a loss in Cuba, a small win in Grenada, a loss in Somalia, and now another loss in Iraq. (No full scorecard here.) Some of these battles were very long, bloody, and expensive. Iran has become a loss, but America hasn't given up yet. It still hopes to re-install a friendly government. The overall record when there is large-scale intervention is not encouraging. In the long tide of history, Iraq looks like a mistake made by an inept emperor. This emperor and his men (including Condi) have a new and faulty theory. If they continue to follow it, we will see more such mistakes. The empire will be severely weakened. It may

collapse.

Empires often have used ruthless tactics to rule provinces. The alternative is to absorb them, lay down the empire's laws, and provide peace so that the people can integrate into the empire and progress. Sometimes a combination of these methods subdues the conquered. Did American leaders know what they were doing in Iraq? Did they expect that Iraqis would behave like defeated Germans or Japanese? They haven't. Did they expect that a new country would quickly arise from the old? It hasn't. The Germans and Japanese were utterly defeated. The Iraqis were not. They faded into the population to fight another day. Saddam Hussein and a deck of cards were mostly tracked down. Many were not. Determined people who know how to hide and make bombs can defeat rulers on their home turf.

Rumsfeld doctrine fails

John Paul Vann thought that America could introduce Americans on the ground and win such conflicts with the right tactics and the right ways of dealing with populations, and maybe he was correct. Maybe rural pacification all but defeated the Viet Cong guerillas in Vietnam. Maybe the invasion of North Vietnamese regulars won for the North Vietnamese. But do Americans have the stomach and the patience for pacification tactics in Iraq and other distant lands? Are our armed forces trained and capable of doing these sorts of things? Is America consciously a new kind of democracy-building colonialist power? Is this what America is about? If so, it will have to instill a supportive ethic at home. This in fact is the American direction. America can't be such a militaristic power without destroying its own calling card of freedom. Even the empire-building of the last 100 years through uniquely American means that combined Marines, CIA, World Bank, IMF, foreign aid, naval fleets, and local dictators is inconsistent with what America stands for. Such empire-building must ultimately unravel the pacific moral foundations of the country in favor of militarism.

Is on-the-ground pacification the kind of war that Rumsfeld envisaged? Far from it. His idea was and is to replace men on the ground with smart bombs and smart reconnaissance and intelligence. His aim was to avoid on-the-ground pacification. If he could have engineered a CIA-type removal of Saddam Hussein and replacement by a friendly ruler, he would have been overjoyed. His aim was empire-on-the cheap via shock and awe, a kind of surgical military operation followed by a clean American remaking of Iraq. His aim

was to replicate the supposedly successful Afghanistan campaign in Iraq.

The Rumsfeld doctrine of war on the cheap has been discredited in Iraq. And little by little, Afghanistan is also reverting to form. It is amazing that our leaders believe that the governments of societies can be torn down and rebuilt like so many engines. They don't seem to understand that benign internal politics are not often the rule. It is amazing that Rumsfeld is still holding office promoting the same ideas for war on Iran and Syria.

Choosing up sides

U.S. victory in Iraq or insurgent victory? Neoconservative columnists like to pose questions like this. Let's ask them a few questions. Why pursue an impossible policy of benevolent neocolonialist hegemony? Doesn't the U.S. engagement in Iraq reveal more clearly than ever that the U.S. is an empire? What right does it or any empire have to impose its will on another country? Don't empires rely upon domination? And doesn't such domination lead to insurgencies that they cannot control? Won't the extension of American empire bankrupt America? What is a U.S. victory in Iraq? Where and who were all the insurgents before the U.S. invaded Iraq?

The Iraq War is not a football game in which there will be a winner after 60 minutes or so of play. Every move by one player creates new players all around. Every overtime leads to more overtimes. Even when one side is supposedly "defeated," the game goes on. The players fight to the death, and they make up new rules as they go along. The outcome of the Iraq game depends on the Lebanon game and the Iranian game. The outcome depends on the support of the cheering sections.

Like their policies, the neoconservative question is oversimplified. The hidden premise is that these are the only two logical choices. Where is the answer "none of the above"? Where are the third, fourth, and fifth choices?

First best is to settle the conflict peaceably, without victory by anyone. First best is for the common Iraqi people to win peace and for Americans at home to give up the idea and love of war. First best is for the soldiers from many countries to go back home where they came from. Second best is to withdraw from Iraq and leave Iraq to its warring factions. Sooner or later, they will reach a peace.

Conclusion

U.S. victory or insurgent victory? The President has said: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." He has said: "Either you're with us or against us." The premise is that one or the other of these two choices is the right choice. Choose "us" because we are right. Choose the U.S. because its policies are right. Or choose the insurgents because their actions are right. Well, neither side is right. Benevolent neocolonialist hegemony is wrong both morally and as a practical matter. Whoever the insurgents are that are killing 100 people a day in Iraq, they too are dreadfully wrong.

President Bush is a Bible-reading man. He knows the words of Jesus in Luke 11:23: "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." The Biblical premise is that one or the other of these two choices is the right choice: God or Satan. Jesus laid down a far more meaningful choice than have either Bush or the neoconservatives.

August 22, 2006

CHAPTER II – POLICIES OF EMPIRE

INTRODUCTION

“The War on Tyranny” looks at the Bush doctrine that promises to make the U.S. a force for “democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” This doctrine pro-actively extends Woodrow Wilson’s policy. Wilson’s 1917 request for war with Germany contained these words:

“A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants.”

This article of faith has guided many American leaders ever since, even as numerous democratically elected leaders break the peace (sometimes acting autocratically) and numerous dictators do not. [James Ostrowski](#) refutes the myth of democratic peace.

Bush’s doctrine is a contradiction. It is impossible for democratic movements and institutions to end tyranny as long as they themselves are vehicles for tyranny. And they cannot be anything but tyrannies when there are no or highly expandable limits to what legislatures can legislate and impose by threat of violence. Democratic totalitarianism is a real phenomenon.

Democracy is a term used to describe a system to arrive at decisions that uses voting. It has many variations. The decision to go to war is still being made by certain people, whether they have been given that power through a vote or not. There can be a referendum on war in which everyone is polled, or the decision rights might be lodged in an executive, a Congress of representatives, a parliament, or a dictator. In order to assess whether or not democracy is a form of government less prone to make war than other forms, the key features of

democracy have to be defined. The decision to go to war depends on important variables that are not part of what democracy is. Look at the vast difference between going to war before and after the U.S. Constitution was adopted, and look at the differences while under the Constitution. Both are cases of democracy. Wilson's statement is a half-baked and ill-considered theory. A president persuades and has the power to persuade. He leads into war and has that power along with Congress. This itself is a problem. Before the Constitution, the fighters were volunteers, not paid by the public. The enterprise was financed differently and the decision to fight was made in a more decentralized way.

Democracy is falsely presumed to be the ultimate vehicle of world peace, even as the world's leading democracy promotes war to achieve that peace. If the general welfare that is sanctioned in the Constitution can only be achieved by remaking every nation and culture of the world in the American image, then American security is an outlandish goal. Does American security demand American rulership of the world?

Security through interference in other nations is itself a contradiction, because such interference invariably means that the U.S. takes sides in the domestic politics of foreign nations, usually on behalf of the status quo or ruling clique. No administration can even identify democratic movements objectively or tell them apart from a large number of breakaway and secession movements throughout the world. Further, any U.S. notion of what democracy is or is not is bound to be influenced by U.S. interests.

This Bush doctrine is a recipe for constant U.S. involvement throughout the world that puts the nation in the way of trouble. It ignores and/or glosses over the governmental ways of other nations. This is a high-cost policy with few tangible benefits for Americans. It is a policy to be carried out by the State, which tends to be highly inefficient in everything it does and usually makes matters worse for the peoples on the receiving end of American meddling. American meddling has typically been in concert with foreign States. This has often strengthened the hold of their governments over the peoples they rule.

Terrorism, as explained in "*Stop the War on Terror*," is not war, and it should not be used as an excuse to make war on countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Bush's generalized war against terror is both evil and senseless. Killing innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan does not bring back the victims of 9/11. Letting loose campaigns of further widespread destruction does not

restore their lives. Creating fertile grounds for terrorists to bomb and to recruit more terrorists is counterproductive. Terrorists do not want to attack targets in the U.S. simply because they hate us for who we are or hate our freedom for what it is.

This article examines a host of negative consequences that can be expected to flow from a war on terror. The war on terror has already had many horrendous results, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the use of torture, airport searches, the Patriot Act, war crimes, warrantless wiretaps, and a deterioration in procedures that comprise due process of law. The war on terror has been bad for liberty in general.

Terrorism is a real problem. States are on a learning curve. As appropriate counter-terrorism knowledge and methods grow, recognition that broad wars are not a sound method will grow.

“What if Osama bin Laden Dies?” begins by comparing terrorism to crime. Terrorism produces far less damage than crime, even after adjusting for the greater seriousness of each incident. Since terrorists have broad objectives, such as political or religious, they are unlikely to disappear.

War causes far more damage than terrorist acts. Launching a war to hunt down terrorists is a contradictory act, likely to cause more damage than it alleviates. This is especially true when a war destroys an existing political structure, for this induces power struggles. Creating democracies is an objective that is by no means obviously consistent with the objective of peace and peaceful social relations. Every state imposes net costs on some groups and likely imposes net costs on all. It can only be created by complex means by which some coalitions gain power over others. This process of struggle to create a power structure is inherently rivalrous and induces violence, not peace. There is a very great number of possible democracies, ranging from city-states to various affiliation groups. The American empire invariably chooses sides to support and others to suppress. It then participates in a host of struggles that are often violent. There are no clear criteria by which to support one side or another. The U.S. often chooses according to its own interests or those interest groups that influence it.

The essay provides many solid reasons to suppose that U.S. efforts to destroy terrorism do not actually have that destruction as a goal. Rather, the war on terror is the product both of various interest groups and of geopolitical

concerns of the State. To some extent, the response to terrorists depends on the importance to the State of the region where it occurs. Terrorism against the U.S. has been a by-product of its imperialism; the U.S. war on terror is a response within that same imperialistic structure. Since that structure has not changed, we may conclude that if bin Laden dies, nothing basic will change. The war on terror will go on as long as it serves those interest groups and those geopolitical concerns.

Law enforcement officials are an appropriate and effective means to safeguard due process and liberties while hunting down terrorists. They may not be the only means, but they are a decent means upon which to build procedures to be used by more extensive forces. The essay “*Twenty-Six U.S. Intelligence Agents Indicted in Italy on Kidnaping Charges*” highlights the views of experienced prosecutor Armando Spataro on this matter and provides a timeline of events relating to a CIA kidnaping and rendition in Italy that was outside the law. The trial of these agents is [in progress](#) at this date. CIA agents allegedly kidnaped a suspected terrorist (since released) and transported him to foreign prisons where he was tortured. This has been part of a general CIA campaign that eclipses the rule of law and confounds police operations and international cooperation of police officials.

Government propaganda can be as clever as it is false, persistent, and misleading: such as the notion that war in Iraq is necessary because it is the big domino, whose fall to terrorists or Islamic extremists will cause other dominoes to fall: such as the notion that Iraq is a central front in the war on terror: and such as the devilish notion that it is better to fight terrorists in Iraq than on American soil. These are all ex post rationales dreamed up, after the attack resulted in problems of occupation, in order to justify a continued American presence. I address these and related matters in “*Iraq and the Neo-Domino Theory*” by raising many questions about Bush’s rationales for war in Iraq. The crude neoconservative views, as articulated by Bush, are filled with erroneous assumptions, erroneous characterizations of others, misshapen views of human psychology, misapprehensions of threats, distorted views of history, misplaced loyalties to other nations, unsupported theories about civilizational conflicts, and fixations on certain scenarios to the exclusion of all others. All this puerile mishmash comes down to making war to refashion the world and achieve American hegemony, as if America possessed a golden key to the organization of every society on earth. It is scary and incredible that this paranoid and fanciful nationalist ideology has captured so much thinking in Washington. It vividly demonstrates the danger of lodging so much power

in the national government.

Congress supported the war. This includes numerous Democrats. “*Troubling Misconceptions to Build a Dream On*” examines five erroneous ideas (out of many possible) voiced by one Congressman regarding Iraq. He is a Democrat. It is hard for any Congressman to vote for war funding and not rationalize it in some way. Americans who support the war do the same. This Congressman supported the Wilsonian notion of establishing democracy in Iraq. He blamed the war on bad information, as opposed to seeing it as folly. He took the mismanagement of the war effort as something of a surprise, as opposed to understanding the problems with the U.S. government and the military establishment. He thought the U.S. could not afford to show weakness in the effort, which is a version of an appeasement theory. He seemed to think that Americans should not be using oil if the revenues flow to states that the State Department disapproves of. And he thought that Iraq was a domino that could not be allowed to fall. This sincere Congressman, like many in Congress, is a man with voting power who does not question the basic assumptions of American foreign policy and who does not know enough to wield the power he has been given. This representative explicitly rejected the common sense of those constituents who appealed to him directly to end quickly the U.S. involvement in Iraq.

1. THE WAR ON TYRANNY

The War on Tyranny briefly outlined

On January 20, 2005 in his Second Inaugural Address, President Bush launched the War on Tyranny with these words: "So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

Possibly the President is [sincere in his belief](#) that such a policy serves "America's vital interests." Possibly this policy is put out for public consumption to cover other goals. Possibly this policy suits the wants of the President, not the nation. All three of these can hold simultaneously. Concerning the President's wants, my hypothesis, for what it's worth, is that our President is a slippery, cagey, psychologically wounded flimflam man who so craves fame that he will torture reality into a grandiose portrait so that he will feel good and look good in the history books. These intuitions based on little beyond my personal sense of the man are inessential. The incontrovertible fact and subject before us is that he has told us that our "mission" and "calling" is to "support expansion of freedom in all the world."

What "you can do for your country," as JFK put it, has transmuted into our standing up for a War on Tyranny (my words) disguised as the goal of spreading democracy to end tyranny. I surmise that the President, something of a (neo) con man, didn't want to remind us of the Iraq War, so he cloaked his language. Every President lauded by the statists as among the "best" instigates at least one war. President Bush has now launched his third. This one is far and away the most significant, which is why we should label it so that everyone knows what it is: the War on Tyranny. The War on Terror is still on, or has it been absorbed into the War on Tyranny?

F. William [Engdahl](#) independently arrived at this designation back in February of this year. More importantly, he wrote a fine piece explaining that the War on Tyranny conveniently is being launched against countries (apart from North Korea) that possess vast oil resources located at geopolitical flash points. So the War on Tyranny not only fits the President's predilections but also those of important oil and defense interest groups and the baleful harebrained neoconservatives.

Some of these countries ring China, so that U.S. foreign policy is apparently relaunching the dangerous containment policy of John Foster Dulles with China replacing the Soviet Union. Secretary of State Rice has listed a number of target countries and will soon no doubt be preaching the democratic gospel to them backed up by Washington's toolkit of threats, pressures, aids, CIA actions, etc. One must break eggs to make an omelet. Other Washington "sources" have added to the list. It seems to include Algeria, Belarus, Cuba, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. Others will be added such as Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan with their oil resources.

I wonder how the U.S. would react if another nation placed us on a list, followed by a trip to Washington by their foreign minister who told us what we must do in order to create a more perfect Union and establish justice or democratic rule. I wonder how we would react if China or another power established a policy of cozying up and seriously influencing Mexico and Canada, opened up a few bases there, or supported a few of their major companies on their soils. Watch how our leaders react to Chinese-Venezuelan relations.

Our policy makers have let it be known that all tyrannies are not created equal, or that the U.S. will pick and choose the ones it wishes to exert pressure on as well as the time to do so. This flexibility underscores the notion that the War on Tyranny is in part a War for Oil. In addition, it means that for many countries the War on Tyranny is simply a continuation of already existing policies and relations. For example, Algeria has already placed itself for its own reasons in the U.S. camp, while the U.S. policy of [sanctions](#) against Myanmar, in place since 1990, was extended under Bush. Such sanctions, illegal under the Constitution and accomplished by Executive Order, invariably harm the affected population, strengthen the controlling rulers, help certain manufacturers, and fail to democratize the affected countries.

Criticisms of the War on Tyranny

I can think of many ways to approach or view the War on Tyranny, and they all suggest the same thing to me. It's wrong and bad. I'll make a handful of these arguments.

Supposedly the U.S. is called to a War on Tyranny in order to respond to some sort of "mortal threat" to the nation arising out of massive resentment and

tyranny simmering beyond our borders. This is complete nonsense, and living up to this wrong theory will harm us greatly.

Haven't Central and South America been full of resentment and tyranny for a nice few hundred years? And what about Mexico? Did the U.S. fight the War of 1812 with England because it resented us and was ruled by a tyrant? Was Jefferson Davis a tyrant who resented the U.S.? Was the Spanish-American War fought because Spaniards resented us? Or was it because the spheres of influence of two states conflicted and American industrial interests were being compromised in Cuba? Did the U.S. fight Hitler because he was a tyrant or because he was an expansionist tyrant?

Is bin Laden a tyrant or an expansionist? Maybe he'd like to be a tyrant; maybe he'd like to have an empire. I do not know. I am simply saying that to mis-diagnose the threats to the U.S. by seeing them as caused by resentment and tyranny is a very, very large error of judgment because it opens up a huge can of worms that will cost us dearly and lead invariably to even worse threats. It is simply a massive blunder.

Surely bin Laden's problem is not resentment arising from lack of money. And he seems free enough in thought and speech. He moves about freely enough, although from cave to cave. The U.S. seems to have a big problem catching him. He might even be as free as the President in his expensive cocoon.

What is the logic in relating the unfree condition of many of the world's peoples to the sheer inability of the U.S. to track bin Laden down and bring him to justice? It does not add up, friends.

There's just about as much of a connection of terrorism to the tyranny we observe in foreign countries as to making everyone take their shoes off at the airport. But we're trying that too. Very shrewd, our neocon leaders. They know how to seize a government, they know how to run their mouths, they know how to smear their enemies, they know how to work the system, they know how to instigate murder – the skills of dreadful evil men. They seem not to be able to bring us security, which is because their goal is not security but power. However, their grand schemes and visions of power so cloud their minds with misinterpretations and fallacies that they cannot think straight about the very thing they covet, causing them to blunder.

Mr. [bin Laden](#) is resentful of a whole bunch of things that he makes perfectly

clear. His resentments over U.S. actions and policies do not, however, automatically translate into mass resentments of world peoples in a dozen or more countries who are poor and/or tyrannized. Given the perpetuation of the existing U.S. interactions with many other countries, however, our benighted policy makers might well cause this result to occur. The U.S. might strengthen bin Laden's appeal, help him recruit, or create many more bin Ladens.

What about the "mortal threat"? The [odds](#) of most terrorist events are low. If there is a betting market out there on an atomic event in the U.S., I'd like to know about it, because we simply cannot and should not rely on one man's word about such a matter, especially a man who can launch atomic attacks himself.

For anyone, terrorist or President, to launch a nuclear attack without very substantial reason and provocation would be to lose whatever moral high ground he might have or be seeking and create an even more resolute enemy. Even a terrorist has to consider the prospective gains of his acts (such as goading the opposition into wasteful wars or wars that aid his own recruiting) versus the losses (such as being tracked down and attacked vigorously.)

The next argument is a legal one. The U.S. Constitution doesn't give the Federal government the powers that it will undoubtedly use to prosecute this war. There is no legal basis for military actions to free other peoples or bring down tyrants, unless those countries have attacked the U.S. There is no legal basis for providing foreign aid to rebel groups seeking to overthrow a tyrant or for foreign aid as a reward for setting up a democracy. There is no legal basis for channeling funds to the CIA or other covert operatives to destabilize governments. (Related issues involving the Afghanistan War are beyond the scope of this article.)

Another argument utilizes the non-aggression axiom. I argued elsewhere that the libertarian non-aggression axiom does not countenance aggression by C to free B from the oppression of A. When A consists of rulers tyrannizing their subjects B, the matter is internal to that State. However, if some of the subjects of C wish to cooperate voluntarily with some of the subjects of B to rebel against A, I see no problem with it. The only issue for rebels and those assisting them is that both should in fact be acting in defense of the rights of the rebels. I do see a problem with the entire State C assisting the rebel group B. For one thing, State C is coercing taxpayer funds in its effort. For another thing, this brings C into conflict with State A, virtually war. But since A has

not aggressed upon C, there is no warrant for the war.

Oil

Now, one last and most important argument. Let us suppose that the U.S. Constitution allows a War on Tyranny and that the non-aggression axiom is not a consideration. Suppose that the War on Tyranny is really a War for Oil, on the grounds of national security, for example. Should it not be fought on that ground? Definitely not.

The national security argument is based on the fear of a loss of power or control. The premises are these. Energy based on oil is a vital commodity in peace and war. If we don't control it, we just can't be sure what will happen next. We will be at the mercy of forces beyond our control. All these statements are true. However, it does not follow either that we have a right to control or should try to control oil at its source by creating friendly democracies or by installing American bases everywhere or by related means.

We are in the same boat as many other peoples and countries on this earth who rely on trade for vital goods. The suppliers of these goods, whether they be oil, computer expertise, anti-tank weapons, water, cotton, grain, or capital, have an interest in providing a steady supply. Many countries import oil. If they did not import it, what would the suppliers do with it? If the Saudis didn't sell oil to the U.S., they could not eat it, paper their palaces with it, or ride in it. They want to sell their oil to us. They have no reason not to.

If the French or the Chinese or the Finns buy some of it, who are we to say no, you may not, that it's earmarked for us and us only? There is a world market for oil. There are many sources of supply and many sources of demand. The barrels are essentially indistinguishable once they enter the channels of trade. They can go anywhere and to anyone.

If the price rises, as it has, the incentive for more production increases. If price rises do not coax out more oil production, then the world will adapt to that situation by innumerable means. We will build more nuclear plants. We will alter the automobile. We will alter the location of work and living to diminish travel.

If oil or any commodity has a supply that can be interrupted, everyone knows enough how to deal with that uncertainty. They can have backup oil supplies.

They can have backup means of producing energy. There will be those who will hold inventories just waiting for the day when an emergency arises so that they can sell them at a high price. Everyone knows that life is uncertain and we learn how to cope with it.

All of this is very well-known. It may even be known to politicians who act as if they do not comprehend economics. But that is an illusion. They understand. They simply have a different agenda. So what is the real issue with our rulers? Why do they harp so on the vital national security interest in oil? It's a smokescreen to hide what they really are after.

They are afraid that they will lose their freedom of action to make war. They want power and more power and they view oil as a weapon of power. Their actions are based on a power mentality whereas the rest of us have a mentality of peace. They are not interested in our security at all, or national security, but in maintaining their options to wage war without constraint. They know that the Germans in World War II drove for the Baku oil, and that the Japanese occupied Indonesia to get oil (after the U.S. and Great Britain in 1940 imposed an oil boycott on Japan.) They do not want to see the U.S. hamstrung by a lack of oil in wartime or even by a threat in peacetime that might affect the U.S. economy and constrain their actions. They want power.

The U.S. already controls a great deal of oil and other things, but our leaders con us by claiming we are still not secure. The con is that they are correct but still misleading because no one is ever 100% secure and the quest for it by improper means brings the opposite result. The more power they seek (in the false name of security) by intruding everywhere in the world and trying to control everything, the less secure everyone else in the world gets. Then the more these other countries try to expand – missiles, submarines, armies, alliances against us, you name it. In other words, our leaders want power and open options in the future to exercise power, and by going for it, they create greater insecurity for us by inspiring others to act against us. They play their power games and we pay the price.

Practically speaking, I do not believe that the War on Tyranny will even bring to our rulers the power that they covet much less security to us. Once China or some other power has enough submarines, they can cut off U.S. oil supplies in any really big conflict because the U.S. is basically an island. Once a hostile power has enough nuclear weapons and is willing themselves to die, the U.S. power cannot prevail because we have a lot more to lose.

Anyway, even if our leaders had our security in mind, meaning the control over future outcomes so that the U.S. population can go forward in their SUVs unfazed by all contingencies, they cannot legitimately get it for us by means of power and force applied to other countries and peoples. That is wrong and everyone knows it, so that sooner or later it will elicit opposing forces against us such as terrorists.

The solution to this bad situation is straightforward. It will stop when we stop it. A lot more people have to (1) recognize that our rulers are conning us all the time, (2) recognize that they are out for themselves, not us, (3) recognize that their quest for power is dangerous and harmful to us, and (4) take away their powers.

July 30, 2005

2. STOP THE ‘WAR ON TERROR’

Terror and terrorism are ancient evils, no doubt prehistoric. The Zealots-Sicarii formed a sect of First Century Jewish terrorists. The Ismaili sect of Islam created the Order of Assassins ca. 1100. The Reign of Terror in the French Revolution occurred in 1793–1794.

In our day, we recognize terrorists by their methods: bombing, armed attack, kidnaping, assassination, arson, barricade/hostage, and hijacking, etc. They frequently target civilians, non-combatants, or neutrals intentionally, or else they harm them indiscriminately; and they also engage State and military forces directly when it suits them.

Terrorists are highly aggressive, the furthest thing from peaceful, and defense against them is definitely in demand. Seeking out and capturing bin Laden and others who were behind 9/11 has high priority. This does not mean, however, that we Americans should ratify and support what our rulers promote – a world war on terror. It does not mean that we must stand for an unjust, unwise, and unconstitutional State-orchestrated worldwide campaign against all terrorists everywhere, a campaign that itself ends up slaying many thousands of innocents and ends up creating new, formidable, and unnecessary enemies aiming their bombs at us U.S. citizens, a campaign that provides cover for the U.S. going to war wherever and whenever it chooses to. After all, terrorists are just about everywhere, and often where there are other geopolitical and oil interests.

Why should our rulers embark on more Iraqi-style wars? Why should they intrude into more tangled up regions of conflict like Palestine and Israel? There are dozens of these minefields awaiting us as our rulers keep on trying to stamp out terror worldwide. They have names like Kashmir, Nigeria, Thailand, Algeria, Libya, Eritrea, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Mindanao, etc. Why should our rulers engender more and more dangerous opponents against us? If new generations of terrorists come after us where we live, won't it be because our rulers have launched or supported new military actions in far-flung lands? What do we get out of it if future terrorists attack us with missiles or atomic bombs?

Although we should not intrude into these foreign disputes, our rulers will unless we stop them. They will extend American influence as far as possible, despite what might happen to us, because this is the logic of those who stand to benefit by extending American power, who gain from a larger American Empire.

Terrorists are criminals, but they are not always our criminals. When they are, as in the case of bin Laden and others whom there is evidence against, then there is justification for moving against them, although we may debate the means of doing so. I am concerned here with the more general issue of expanding this search into a blank check for war. When our rulers brand countries like Syria and Iran as terrorist nations and threaten war with them, they are using the war on terror as cover and justification. They appear ready to go to any lengths for oil and Israel. Extending the Iraq War to Syria and Iran will overnight greatly exacerbate problems of terror and exacerbate our economic problems. Such attacks will just as surely undermine our freedom at home.

There is good reason for police and intelligence authorities to cooperate internationally. Infiltrating and penetrating terrorist organizations is useful. But why mix politics and law enforcement – why is the State Department involved in activating laws via its terrorism list if not to advance political objectives? Highly objectionable is that our rulers have deputized and enlisted us willy-nilly in a broad war to bring terrorists everywhere to justice. This spells sorrow, heartbreak, and pain as Iraq exemplifies. Our rulers demand the right to go far beyond policing, even international policing. They expect to go anywhere with any type of military force or other tools of State that they conceive necessary to end terrorism. But this is *carte blanche*.

Since the U.S. was created, there have been many foreign crimes, many foreign wars, and many violent foreign conflicts in which it was possible to identify the good guys and the bad guys. Intervening or getting involved to put away foreign lawbreakers has always been an option, an option our earlier leaders often wisely passed up. Unfortunately, what with experiences like Latin American interventions, World War I, embargoes, lethal "police actions" and more, Presidential and Congressional intervention has grown into an acceptable and routine habit or custom, sold to us and lazily and uncritically accepted by us as the right thing to do. This is the habit of Empire and those accustomed to benefit from Empire. However, it is hard to think of a single intervention in a foreign land that has been justified when outright war was not

the issue.

Even if terrorists operating against Israel have links to persons or officials in Iran and Syria, that is no strong or persuasive justification for our rulers to attack those countries. These are attacks on Israel, not us. And they are attacks by individual terrorists. And they are not acts of war against Israel or us. Even if one views the U.S. and Israel as war allies, the terrorist links and incidents form nothing but a pretext to invade Syria and Iran. The other pretexts will be that terrorists are using Syria as a sanctuary and that Iran wishes to build an atom bomb.

If our rulers paint whole countries as terrorist, this is a flimsy pretext. The U.S. has for decades gotten itself enmeshed with several Middle Eastern countries militarily and sometimes violently. It has given multi-decade military and other aid to Israel and other nearby countries and formed a close military relationship to Israel. Our rulers have intruded and extended the U.S. overseas into the Middle East. This is the context in which they now threaten attacks on Syria and Iran. This is more of the same for reasons other than terrorism.

Our rulers tell us that democracy is a cure for terrorism, that they intend to pacify the world by spreading democracy. This is a sham, another pretext. Terror is no stranger to our own democracy – from General Sherman to Timothy McVeigh and on to eco-terror. Even our children learn and employ terror tactics. Great Britain, which is some sort of democracy, made liberal use of terror bombing during World War II. The U.S. employed torture and killing of boys routinely in the Philippine-American War. More recently, the Clinton-Albright sanctions on Iraq claimed 500,000 children's lives. All of these and more cases make it clear that democracy is no solution to terror. The reason is simple. Terror is a method chosen rationally when the terrorist perceives its usefulness. As Albright remarked "...we think the price is worth it."

It is best to assume that terrorists have aims, that they are reasoning human beings. Terrorists have used terror in war, revolution, insurrection, rebellion, separatist movements, banditry, oppression, suppression, creating States, destroying States, and ruling States.

Subject to definition, there may be close to 840 terror groups worldwide. The exact number is not important, only that the groups are large in number and widespread. There are also hundreds of paramilitary and warlord type groups

that can overlap the terror groups. In addition, there are very many localized separatist or secessionist movements that are usually peaceful but can be violent. Some of their more radical members may be attracted to terrorists or vice versa – terrorists may latch onto separatist movements. Some of the many terror groups have links, weak or strong to other terrorists, paramilitary groups, or to al-Qaeda, some are mixed in with the drug trade, some are bandits, etc. The overall picture is complex and fluid.

Many weaker nation-states are faced with serious challenges from sizeable ethnic and religious minorities with grievances. Many such groups have political aims, but they may have military, religious, or other aims or mixed goals. Tomorrow, many stronger States will also be faced with similar breakaway movements.

It is not difficult for terrorists to latch onto a variety of legitimate breakaway movements and considerably cloud the picture, drawing a clumsy adversary into lengthy and debilitating side battles. In Iraq, for example, the U.S. military has a hard time telling terrorists from Iraqis who want their country back, so the blanket term "insurgent" is used. In conflicts like these, the U.S. can easily fall into the role of being anti-revolution, anti-progress, anti-freedom, anti-people and pro the status quo.

There is little tangible good and much tangible harm that can come to us from allowing our rulers and usually our military to get involved in all these trouble spots. As matters stand, we have had troops tied down in Korea for 55 years, for example. Troops all over the globe raise the chances of being drawn into wars at the option of enemies.

Logically, terror is a rational choice from man's arsenal, so it is not about to disappear. The notion of a very long war on terrorism that will rid the world of terrorism is therefore nonsense.

A widespread war on terror is plainly a practical nightmare because of the large numbers of groups involved in a broad range of countries and situations. Furthermore, these situations are not static but dynamic. However, those who want to maintain and enhance power, who want a larger State, experience such a nightmare as a virtue. Continuous warfare, alerts, trouble, even bombings on U.S. soil, provide those in office with a free hand. They drive the people to their rulers.

The U.S. war on terror, if carried forward as national policy by succeeding administrations, will, from the people's point of view, compound the blunders already made. There are many reasons why this is so. Here are a few:

- (1) Our rulers can more easily get us involved in wars.
- (2) Our rulers can more easily stir up and foster even more anti-American terrorism.
- (3) Our rulers can more easily be drawn into conflicts like Iraq that are lost the moment they are begun, conflicts that play into the hands of terrorists.
- (4) Our rulers will have a convenient excuse for ever more foreign intrusions.
- (5) We can have no confidence that our rulers know or appreciate what is happening on the ground in 50 different States when these countries face difficulties that involve terrorists, bandits, rebellions, secession movements, warlords, and paramilitary groups.
- (6) We can have no confidence that our rulers know or appreciate what is happening in many countries in terms of ethnic and religious divisions.
- (7) We can have no confidence that our rulers know how to deal with what is happening on the ground even if they dimly discern what it is.
- (8) The situations that foster terrorism, separatism, war lords, rebellions, and instability of States are highly dynamic and fluid. We can have no confidence that our rulers will react to changes appropriately. Once a State sets policies, it grinds on inflexibly, slow to adapt to realities. It perpetuates myths for public consumption and loses its own moorings.
- (9) The U.S. does not have the resources to handle all these situations without bankrupting the nation or making us a lot poorer. The Iraq case alone illustrates this.
- (10) Because it lacks the resources to control terror in foreign lands, the U.S. can only fight this war by allying itself with local rulers. This places the U.S. in a position of supporting, in many instances, corrupt and weak regimes. The U.S. will be attempting to shore up weak States; it will be supporting anti-freedom regimes.

(11) The rulers in these allied States or others who take their places can turn out to be bad guys, and they will use aid that our rulers have supplied in ways that hurt their people and us.

(12) Terrorists can attack and steal arms caches and weapons that we have supplied. Terrorists can infiltrate and corrupt ruling cliques.

(13) The war on terror is an open-ended commitment to interfering in the internal affairs of a great many other lands, peoples, situations and States. The costs of doing so are huge, but the benefits are not readily apparent.

(14) The general idea of the war on terror is consistent with a bigger idea, namely, that the U.S., in large measure, will control the political shape of the world to come. This bigger concept is not just to fight terrorists but to bolster up a variety of States on every continent so that their militaries can suppress terror movements. The U.S. will then preside over a set of obedient and well-behaved "democracies." The war on terror in these terms is simply a cover operation for an extension of American Empire.

We can have no confidence that this plan will succeed. Indeed, we can have great confidence that this plan will fail. Other existing major powers or powers that arise in the future may come into conflict with U.S. satellites on their borders. The factors that stand in the way of success are deeply imbedded ones of past disputes and injustices, power-seeking by various groups, ethnic rivalries and hatreds, poverty, ignorance, religious differences, resentments, plus the lack of knowledge, ignorance, ineptness and incompetence of our rulers. It is also not clear that the affected peoples want the U.S. involved or won't resent interference and turn against us.

(15) In essence, the war on terror is consistent with the larger American plan to replace the failed British, French, German and Dutch Empires and colonialist rules with a more clever American system that uses local rulers and forces combined with judicious use of aid, loans, American military, American know-how, intelligence, and diplomacy. This plan, even if it has no name, even if it is not entirely recognized by those promoting it or executing it, is already in operation. It pre-dates the current administration and will continue after Bush is gone. It is in effect through the policies of the U.S. Department of State, supported by the Congress and the Executive. It is a continuation of the policy of Empire that the U.S. has advanced for the past 100 years.

Such a plan cannot possibly work without setting up administration, that is a trained corps of people dedicated to the overall enterprise. This plan has to win over the native peoples. It has to be sold to the American people. The American people have to commit themselves to becoming a kind of world ruler – a missionary with a gun-an uplifter – a State builder. This is the context of the world war on terror.

These ideas that attract many Americans because of their humanitarian component are dangerous and faulty ideas. They assume that the State is a caring and loving institution that can spread goodness and enlightenment when the State is just the opposite. These are [old but wrong](#) ideas of Progressive Imperialism, Global Meliorism, Wilsonianism, that see America as Crusader State. We should reject the war on terror in the context of rejecting these larger concepts.

(16) Those Americans who commit themselves to the war on terror as some sort of morally just thing to do had better be aware that they are being suckered. This plan will fail because it will be used to further American interests, not foreign interests. The so-called unselfishness and generosity of Americans who are providing a gift to all those peoples encumbered by terrorists will, in reality, be seen to be the rhetoric of Empire. Underneath it all, selfish American interests will steal the cake and eat it. They will twist the rules and regulations, the laws and administrations, as they have done in the past, into shapes that suit their own greed.

(17) A U.S. military presence to support the war on terror is assured. We can have little confidence that our military is up to the kinds of tasks envisioned. I do not doubt the bravery of our men and women under arms. I do doubt the effectiveness of our military organization for the kinds of operations that accompany a war on terror. Our government did not introduce the military into Afghanistan with quiet and surprise. It alerted the enemy to its presence. Our military still relies heavily upon bombing, which is ineffective in holding ground and in rooting out guerilla-type forces. Our military in Afghanistan relied heavily on local forces, a procedure prone to serious error. Our military let the major part of al-Qaeda slip away, failing to block escape routes and failing to engage the enemy with troops on the ground at a critical juncture. Our military in Iraq shows that it cannot hold and secure that country or even a part of it. Basically, for the most part we still have a conventional military with souped-up weapons and technology.

There may be some effective killing-machine mercenaries that the State has recruited, men who like their work and do it well. This is a dangerous tool in the hands of a unilateral power like a State. Build up enough of them, and they will eventually take over us. Instead of a militia who will stem looting and help people, Blackwater mercenaries were used in New Orleans. Are they also hunting down bin Laden?

The above list of concerns is hardly exhaustive. They are laid out from the view of those of us forced to accept what our rulers are doing. We bear the costs.

From the rulers' point of view, crises, setbacks, failures, and burdens on us are not objectionable. In judicious amounts and at judicious times, they actually enhance the powers and positions of our rulers. Terrorists are not our most important enemy. Our ruling system with its massive power is a greater danger. The wrong ideology embedded in the ruling system will end up destroying it and us.

The chance of terrorist acts and the chance of more severe terrorist acts against America and other countries have risen since President Bush instigated war in Iraq. This is because diminishing terror was not the purpose of this war. The war on terror was merely one of several convenient cover stories. The goals of the Iraq War were to settle a private score that the junior Bush felt, oil, the extension of American empire, and the furtherance of Israeli interests. In today's episode of the war on terror, the U.S. pursues its aims with terror (such as huge "Shock and Awe" missile strikes) and torture. And it escalates the recruitment of terrorists and terrorist acts.

It is reasonably clear that personal factors contributed to Bush's decision. He apparently relies upon religious convictions translated into holy missions that he conceives. But even if this factor was absent, the fact is that our rulers knew when they began this war that it had almost nothing to do with the real terror threats of al-Qaeda. They simply advertised the Iraq War as part of a war on terror, with Saddam Hussein painted as a major terror threat.

For these deceptions and the consequent war crimes, for launching an illegal and unjust preemptive war, the responsible rulers deserve shame, scorn, and ostracism. They deserve to be investigated thoroughly, tried, and punished if convicted. They deserve impeachment. The same goes for the Clinton/Albright clique. However, the main reasons for doing this are not out of vindictiveness

for what our rulers have done. It is to fix guilt on deserving rulers. It is to reduce the power we have too liberally granted our rulers. It is to preserve what little is left of the rule of law. It is to cleanse, to restore some semblance of morality and justice. It is so that future rulers will behave more narrowly and properly. It is so that we the people will recognize our wrongs and own up to them. It is so that we will recognize the weaknesses in ourselves, in our information systems (press and media), and in our system of too-powerful government. It is so that we can find our way to an altogether fitting and proper limitation of the American State. It is so that we will not compound the felony by ratifying a blanket war on terror.

The Iraq War is a blunder. The conception of a world war on terror is likewise a highly injurious mistake. It is a slogan that prevents rational consideration of our interests as individuals. It is a policy that contradicts our individual interests and those of foreign peoples it supposedly helps. It is part of a larger erroneous philosophy of making the world better through statism. Disengagement and non-intervention are the appropriate State policies, not locking into interminable and impenetrable foreign conflicts and terrorist problems. Starting new wars in Syria and Iran is pure disaster.

The notion of discouraging, controlling, and punishing a given group of terrorists, of hunting them down and bringing them to justice, is a sensible and limited objective. This is self-defense. Who is to do these things, against which terrorists, and how they are to do them are open issues, open questions. In contrast, the concept of a broad war on terror that reaches anywhere in the world should be no part of American foreign policy and no part of our thinking.

October 15, 2005

3. WHAT IF OSAMA BIN LADEN DIES?

Terrorism won't stop

One of these days, Osama bin Laden will die. What then? Will the war on terror wind down? We know with 100 percent certainty the answer. The war on terror will continue, and it will continue indefinitely until its costs to our leaders and their associates outweigh its benefits. At that point, our leaders will undeclare the war on terror. The anticipated benefits or aims, which are not to end terrorism in the world, I will treat in due course.

But for now let us suppose, absurd as this assumption is, that the aim of the war on terror really is to end terrorism in the world. Then it is easy to see that, even if bin Laden dies, this war must continue for such a length of time as to exceed any prior war one can name.

What is terrorism? Terrorists use criminal means to achieve political and other ends. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, terrorism is "the unlawful use of – or threatened use of – force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives." Terrorism, by this definition, differs from ordinary crime in two ways. Its objectives are broader and its targets are broader. Otherwise, it parallels both crime and warfare. Terrorists use methods of warfare against civilian and other targets whose effects are similar to the killings perpetrated by states when they fight each other.

The human race to date has not ended its political and other divisions, differences, and rivalries; nor has it ended resorting to criminal means to settle them, such as warfare and terrorism. It might be easier to climb Mt. Everest than to find more than a handful of conquerors in history who did not kill or use means of terror. Therefore, why should terrorism ever cease?

Terrorism, actual and potential

The actual amount of terrorism is not large, but the potential amount is large. To gain perspective, consider ordinary crime.

On December 15, 1919, the FBI helped the Army's Military Intelligence Division search for an army fugitive. It used an "Identification Order." This was the first wanted poster containing details about the stockade escapee. He was captured five months later. The IOs became a staple, often seen in post offices. Since their humble beginning, over 5,400 have been issued, or about 62 a year. John Dillinger was number 1217; Bonnie and Clyde were number 1227.

The FBI to this day has never run out of criminals to hunt down. It fights an eternal war on crime because the conditions that produce crime are always present. The IOs became the Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list in 1950. There have never been less than ten names on the list since it began and a great deal of competition to make the top ten.

The population of the U.S. is quite large, but not all that large. It's about 300 million. In 1919, it was 105 million, which was large enough to produce many criminals. Arrests for violent and property crimes (excluding drug arrests) came to 2.2 million in the U.S. in 2005. That's about 0.75 percent of the population.

No one knows the number of terrorist acts each year worldwide. Judging from the DOD's definition, no one ever will know since terrorism shades over into unofficial wars and also occurs during official wars. Estimating and manipulating the estimates will, we can be sure, turn into government cottage industries. How do we classify the daily explosions in Iraq? How do we classify deaths produced by U.S. sanctions against Iraq? In some sense, terrorist acts are discrete things, while warfare is continuous killing. Although we can't trust the published statistics and definitions vary, some estimates suggest 200–700 discrete terrorist acts a year worldwide. Suppose it's 500 a year.

Whatever the number is, several facts are clear.

(1) The amount of terrorism is surely troublesome and horrible, but it is not large relative to other evils. Suppose quite arbitrarily that each terrorist act is 50 times as deadly as a typical criminal act. Therefore, to compare to ordinary crime, we might take $50 \times 500 = 25,000$ to find the number of terrorist-equivalent crimes. Murders in the U.S. run about 15,000 a year. The worldwide total is about eight times this or 120,000 a year. All these numbers are iffy but in the ballpark.

The world's population is 6.5 billion people. At the crime rate of 0.75 percent in the U.S., the number of criminal arrests would be 48,750,000 worldwide each year, a gross guesstimate. The number of terrorist-equivalent crimes is trivial compared to crime in total.

Rummel's estimate of death from warfare in the twentieth century is 169,000,000 or 1.69 million persons per year. Obviously death from terrorism is trivial compared to death from warfare, even recognizing that many war deaths can be classified as terrorist-caused deaths.

(2) The amount of potential terrorism is very large. Given the large world population and the endless possibilities of political, ethnic, and religious frictions, it does not take much of a shift toward conflict and concurrent criminal-type behavior to raise the terrorism significantly. If the 500 terrorist acts are the work of cells of 5 people each, then only 2,500 individuals are directly involved per year.

By the same token, terrorism could fall steeply back to levels of some decades ago if political situations within states stabilized and potential terrorists reverted to peaceful means to attain their agendas. The spread of cheap and violent technology facilitates terrorism, and so do the political, ethnic, and religious conditions in many states throughout the world.

If bin Laden dies, the number of potential terrorists still remains very, very large; and the number of reasons for terrorism remains very large. Therefore, if the war on terror aims to eliminate terrorism, it and terrorism will simply continue even after he dies. The powers-that-be will declare his death a great victory. It will be hailed as progress. Yet in the next breath we will be told that the war must continue and that this success shows us that we are making progress and must continue. Of course, whenever there is a failure, we will be told also that the war must continue.

The war on terror is like respiration. It's necessary for life, life of the state, that is.

War on terror promotes terror

My numbers are speculative, but changing them by an order of magnitude won't change the two conclusions. Terrorism is not a large risk now, and terrorism has a great deal of room to grow in size. It will grow, other things

being equal, if the U.S. continues ineptly to prosecute its war on terror.

The U.S. starts major wars on political units in regions without stable states, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike the British Empire, which managed to control the conquered territory using a mixture of its own and local organization, the U.S. in clueless fashion destroys the existing political structure and then tries to recreate a new one. This nation-building or state-building doesn't work because the survival of every state is a delicate balancing act. States always impose net costs on the population; and so they cannot come into existence without logrolling and other vile means by which ruling coalitions gain power over the general population.

Having destroyed the existing power structure and unable to create a new one without actually running the country, the U.S. actions necessarily generate new resistance movements and new political struggles within those states. These insurgencies are bound to employ terrorist tactics to some extent. And so the U.S. war on terrorism will engender more terrorist acts if it continues to destroy state organizations. This has happened in Iraq. It is happening in Afghanistan as the Taliban regroup and counterattack. It will happen in Iran if the U.S. tries to remove the current power structure and replace it with another.

Real aims of war on terror

There is every reason to conclude that the war on terrorism does not aim to eliminate terrorism. That is a pretext. What are these reasons? (1) Terrorism can't be eliminated. (2) Terrorism is not a large problem. (3) The costs of fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are huge, at least one trillion dollars, compared to the costs imposed by terrorism. (4) The U.S. has caused more terrorism by starting two wars. (5) The U.S. has made no effort against terrorism in many parts of the globe. (6) The U.S. has made no significant effort to reduce its own political, military, and economic presence in foreign countries that entangles the U.S. in local power struggles. (7) Worldwide terrorism has risen since the U.S. began the war on terrorism.

This does not say that the U.S. will not kill terrorists when it has the chance or won't devote resources to catching them. It will do both. But these activities do not centrally explain the war on terrorism. There was no compelling reason stemming from terrorism to attack either Afghanistan or Iraq. We know this all too well concerning Iraq. As for Afghanistan, the U.S. had been heavily

involved there for almost 30 years. There was no reason to depose the Taliban regime and replace it with the standard set of Afghan warlords. The presence of bin Laden on Afghan soil provided an ideal pretext to invade. It was also easy to demonize the Taliban in the public's eyes by the usual propaganda. But if the war had been fought to get bin Laden, why hasn't he been caught?

The calculus that brought on the war on terror is not a Republican or a Democrat calculus, since both parties support the war wholeheartedly. They disagree on how to prosecute the war, but both want it and show no signs of undeclaring it. It is a political calculus, a complex and hidden weighing of various costs and benefits that we can discern. We can't know how much each factor contributed to the final declaration of this war, but we can see the factors.

On the cost side, our political leadership is entirely reckless. They do not bear the costs. Americans at large do. The Congress will vote to absorb huge amounts of resources from Americans because it has the power to do so and because Americans have not yet cried out "Stop!"

On the benefit side, the war on terror provides important benefits to

1. The state. It is the occasion of state power-grabs. In particular, President Bush prefers that the president be Cæsar, garbed with dictatorial powers over both the rest of the government and the lives of Americans. In addition, the war on terror seeks to make the state's image of protection indispensable to every American as well as a long-running affair.
2. The military-industrial complex. The contractors gaining from fat war contracts are well-known. Some of these link directly to key administration officials. But most of them contribute to both political parties.
3. The state's bureaucracies. The Department of Homeland Security is a prime beneficiary. Other beneficiaries are the many officials who make up Washington's bureaucratic apparatus in other departments and agencies.
4. The Israel lobby. This administration and both parties are larded with pro-Israel figures who had no little influence in instigating the war on terror.

Imperialism

The benefits reach to many others, such as various power-hungry intellectuals who champion internationalism. They reach to Americans who obtain the psychic benefits of flag-waving, cheering, blood-lust, phony patriotism, displays of U.S. military might. They reach to banking and oil interests. For example, Afghanistan is supposed to be a transit area for a new pipeline.

But I believe that the prime impelling motive or motives behind the war on terror are much deeper than any of the benefits listed above. The analysis of these motives is complex. They are summed up in one word: imperialism, a drive of one nation to expand and dominate other nations.

Throughout history, again and again, political units seek to expand. It is almost as if their survival depended on it, that if they did not expand, then they were doomed to be subjugated by others. In fact, those who fear subjugation the most might well be the ones most inclined to subjugate others. But imperialism goes beyond such a psychological explanation. It has economic, political, and ideological motives, all operating together, and all three do operate in the American case.

American imperialism ranges from soft to hard. Being run by the state, it is inept (soft or hard) and causes more problems than it solves. For example, although Iraq and Afghanistan are important geopolitically, the U.S. over-emphasis on terrorists and the ideology of democracy contributed to the disastrous means of dealing with them through wars or hard imperialism. Soft imperialism would have worked better. It would have been far easier to pay off Saddam Hussein and once again recruit him to the U.S. side or else pressure him in other ways. But the U.S. is equally inept at this approach, the results being apparent in earlier Middle East escapades.

Broad power struggles

My own emphasis is upon the political and, in particular, the security aspects as conceived by those in power. I emphasize the geopolitical factor as a prime motivating factor, and it is its rationality that needs to be assessed as well as its effectiveness. In the case of the war on terror, why have Iraq and Afghanistan been targets? They surround Iran, another nation the U.S. seeks to dominate.

More broadly, the idea held by our leadership is influence, control, or domination of Central Asia and the regions lying south. These regions include countries formerly in the Soviet Union, such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These form a large abutment against Russia and China, the other major powers in the world. They are also rich in undeveloped resources. South of them lie Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The inter-relations of all these states become important to the U.S. if it is to counter Russia and possibly China, although the latter is not expansionary. These nations are also important in preventing the growth and spread of radical Islam.

The fact that NATO is in Afghanistan is significant. It is the first such operation outside of its traditional European-Atlantic theatre. The European states in NATO view this region as critical to their interests too, although they characteristically have slower trigger-fingers than the U.S. Russia is not dead as a world power. The Russian state is reverting to form as it once again centralizes power, conducts overseas assassinations, and attempts to pressure Belarus and the Ukraine. The U.S., China, and Europe all are still engaged in a containment strategy against Russia as well as against one another. Having seen central European states and central Asian states peel off, they want to maintain and solidify this situation. Europe needs to stop radical Islam from regaining strength.

Conclusion

What if Osama bin Laden dies? What will change? My answer is – nothing.

January 30, 2007

4. TWENTY-SIX U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENTS INDICTED IN ITALY ON KIDNAPING CHARGES

Milan prosecutors, including Armando Spataro, have succeeded in obtaining indictments on kidnaping charges against 26 American CIA operatives and 5 Italian intelligence officials. The latter are alleged to have kidnaped Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr in Milan on 2/17/03.

Kidnapings like these are euphemistically termed "extraordinary renditions" by those who perpetrate them. This phrase has found its way into press reports that I sometimes quote. The term kidnaping is more truthful.

Only time will tell how important these indictments are in turning the tide against the tyranny of George W. Bush and its support by Congress and the Supreme Court. The case has a significant potential. The U.S. intelligence agents indicted may never be extradited, but they may be tried in absentia. Evidence will be made public. This episode is a notable legal and official step in bringing to justice those who have set out to destroy the rule of law and the Bill of Rights. Perhaps others will be encouraged to stand up against our homegrown tyrants. At the very least, the integrity and determination of the Milan prosecutors provide a ray of light, and a hope that they will give some spine to U.S. officials who have remained silent and supported the latest episodes in the growth of American despotism.

Most of this article consists of an objective history of the events leading up to the issuing of these indictments. Such accounts have a power all their own. Before providing that, let us look into the thoughts of the man who has brought these indictments about, Armando Spataro. There are lessons here too.

Spataro is an experienced prosecutor known for his work against the Red Brigades. His terror-fighting credentials are impeccable. At the time of Nasr's abduction, Spataro and others were investigating him as a terror suspect. The CIA and Italian intelligence kidnaping undermined their legal investigative processes.

Spataro's subsequent investigation of this illegal act has not been motivated by anti-Americanism or left-wing sentiments, as he has been accused of. In a 2005 [interview](#), regarding a recent terror investigation, he states: "I must say

that in Italy – and I say this with some degree of pride – we have a deeply rooted tradition for these kinds of investigations against the organized crime, both of Mafia and terrorist nature. Therefore, judges give permission to monitor phone calls and conversations, obviously because our laws allow that, and our police force, as well as the public prosecutor, have an extensive expertise for these kinds of investigations." Mindful of the abuses of prosecutors in the U.S., I still have the impression that these are the words of a man accustomed to following the laws of his country. The entire interview shapes my view of Spataro's values.

He also states: "Well, I believe that everyone is interested in prevention, even in Italy. For instance, during the summer or close to Sept. 11, controls were intensified, and even the media worked a lot. And this is the right thing to do. But at the same time, it is obviously unthinkable to keep someone in prison or in a prison camp in one of our nations without a trial. And I must add, it is difficult to think about freezing and seizing the assets of someone suspected of being a terrorist without listening to his version." These are the words of a man who respects the rights of suspects.

And Spataro is very mindful of and experienced in international police cooperation, including with Americans. "Keep in mind that in Milan, we have had on our shoulders almost 10 years of investigation of this phenomenon, the Islamic terrorism, but unfortunately, it is a very difficult field to investigate. Also, our American colleagues and those in other parts of the world know that, and therefore, often we find ourselves before new findings; that is, names of people who are involved in the investigations, and some of them quite important, of whom we didn't have previous knowledge. This is a reason of concern, a reason why it is even more important to have international cooperation, not only within the European countries, not only between European countries and the Americans, but also with respect to North African countries, for example. I believe we should intensify our efforts in order to create a permanent and fast cooperation."

He adds: "Look, I am fairly convinced that we already have many conventions, international resolutions, by the United Nations, the European Union. We have agreements among police forces, and we also have physical places where we meet. I believe that it is important to really keep alive this cooperation. This means to blindly trust mutual reliability of the systems. I also have to say, though, that with respect to Italy, our relationship is excellent, our requests have always been answered quickly, and we did the same when it was the other

way around. Also, with respect to Rabei's case, we immediately notified the Americans, as well as other main European countries that were involved in the investigation, with copies of conversations, recordings, interviews, because it is good that the knowledge of these phenomena grows everywhere in the same way and at the same time."

Spataro's statements inform us that there are experienced police officials who have been and are involved in anti-terror work. They view it as a police problem. They know how to proceed legally. They know how to cooperate and share information internationally. They have a police culture that generates cross-country trust. They have had success. They do not have a CIA or intelligence culture. Meanwhile, the introduction of violent CIA methods eclipses the rule of law and confounds their operations.

In 2005, Spataro highlighted another extremely important consideration: "I feel the international community must struggle against . . . international terrorist groups in accordance with international laws and the rights of the defendant. . . . Otherwise we are giving victory to the terrorists." These are not the words of a man who views the struggle as a war on terrorism to be fought by conventional armed forces.

We are fortunate that countries still have local governments. They can be the seeds of resistance to national tyrannies. Spataro, a Milan prosecutor, has not obtained the cooperation of the governments of Italy, either that of Silvio Berlusconi or the new Prime Minister Prodi. They are in league with and supportive of George W. Bush, although they need to make public statements on occasion that suggest the opposite. They gain political mileage by publicly standing up for Italy as a sovereign nation.

Behind the curtain of public pronouncements, European governments lined up with Bush. A [memo dated 1/27/03](#) of the Council of the European Union indicates that the U.S. at that date had obtained the cooperation of the higher levels of European governments for the policies of kidnapping terror suspects and spiriting them away to prisons. A quote: "Both sides agreed on the areas where cooperation could be improved i.a. [inter alia] the exchange of data between border management services, increased use of European transit facilities to support the return of criminal/inadmissible aliens, co-ordination with regard to false documents training (US side will provide the EU with a paper suggesting modalities for the coordination of false documents training) and improving the cooperation in removals."

I next present a brief history of the events leading up to the issuing of these indictments. Make your own interpretations and draw your own conclusions. As this case unfolds in the future, this time line will help you understand what the events mean.

1/14/03 Nasr is walking along the Via Guerzoni in Milan when a surveillance photo is taken of him. Later Italian police find this photo on a computer disk in the Italian home of Robert Seldon Lady. He is at that time the CIA's ranking officer in Milan.

Nasr is already under surveillance by Italian authorities.

2/17/03 Nasr is kidnaped in Milan. Two men drive off with him in a van.

4/20/03 Nasr is released from Egyptian prison under home arrest. He makes calls to family in Milan recorded by Italian police wiretaps.

5/12/04 Egyptian police again arrest Nasr and place him in a Cairo prison, having discovered he spoke to people in Milan.

6/22/04 A Milan judge approves arrest warrants for 13 alleged CIA agents, charging kidnaping. The names are apparently aliases. CIA charged with secreting Nasr in Aviano Air Base, flying him to Ramstein Air Base in Germany, and then later to Egypt.

8/30/04 Milan prosecutors and the Italian Justice Ministry file requests with Egypt on Nasr's whereabouts but receive no reply. It is 18 months since Nasr was kidnaped.

8/04 Robert Seldon Lady steps down from his post.

7/1/05 Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi releases an official statement demanding that the U.S. exhibit full respect for Italian sovereignty. The U.S. ambassador, Mel Sembler, assures the Prime Minister of the full and total respect of the U.S.

7/20/05 Further Italian arrest warrants for 6 more CIA operatives.

9/27/05 Three more CIA agents charged. One is a diplomat who was in the Rome embassy.

11/10/05 The Milan prosecutors seek extradition of the 22 defendants from the U.S. The Italian Justice Ministry reviews the matter. Prosecutors claim the CIA action violated Italian sovereignty and obstructed ongoing Italian terrorist investigations.

11/22/05 Italian Justice Minister Roberto Castelli suggests that the Milan prosecutor, Armando Spataro, is a leftist acting out of anti-Americanism. Milan's chief prosecutor supports Spataro.

11/29/05 An Italian judge denies Lady's argument that he has diplomatic immunity and upholds the arrest warrant. The judge suggests that international law creates limits to consular activity and that "within these limits, naturally, is the principle of the sovereignty of the host state that cannot allow on its territory the use of force by a foreign state that [is] outside every control of the political and judicial authorities."

12/23/05 European arrest warrants good in all 25 EU nations are issued by an Italian judge.

1/06 Italian government seeks judicial assistance from the U.S. This includes permission for prosecutors to gather evidence in the U.S. The U.S. does not answer this request.

2/09/06 Unnamed senior Italian judicial source says that the 22 CIA agents will be tried in absentia within a month. Italian prosecutors have evidence based on telephone-taps and cell-phone records. They claim Lady was a central figure in the abduction.

3/3/06 Four months have passed without any action from Castelli. Castelli conducts his own investigation to see if the charges are well-grounded. After receiving a letter from Milan prosecutors that urges a decision, Italian Justice Minister Roberto Castelli accuses them of unlawfully pressuring him to request the extradition of the 22 CIA agents.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who has staunchly supported the American war on terror, echoes Castelli. Both suggest that if the Milan prosecutors push the case forward, it will harm U.S.-Italian ties.

4/12/06 Giving no reason, Castelli decides not to validate Spataro's requests for extradition. Spataro indicates he will petition the new government taking

office shortly.

5/10/06 Nasr's lawyer, having met with him in March and April, reports that Nasr was tortured. Such reports had surfaced much earlier.

5/11/06 An Italian newspaper reports that an Italian policeman has confessed to participating in the 2003 CIA kidnaping of Nasr. Italian officials deny being involved.

6/07/06 The Council of Europe releases a [67-page report](#) on the CIA's collaboration with 14 European countries in a web of secret prisons, kidnapings, and flights.

7/05/06 Two Italian intelligence officials (members of SISMI which is Italy's Military Intelligence and Security Service), including General Gustavo Pignero, are arrested in connection with the Nasr kidnaping.

7/20/06 Nicolo Pollari, head of Italian intelligence, testifies in closed sessions of the Italian Senate, that he was not involved in the CIA kidnaping.

7/31/06 Pignero testifies that the CIA had identified more than 10 Italian residents for "extraordinary rendition," that is, kidnaping, and others in Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

10/08/06 Italian prosecutors announce completion of their investigation. CIA agents involved now number 26. (This tally includes a U.S. Air Force officer stationed at Aviano Air Base.)

11/7/06 Spataro presses the new government for the extradition of the 26 CIA agents. There has been no response at this writing (2/17/07.)

11/10/06 Italian prosecutors add to their evidence an 11-page account of Nasr's kidnaping and detention, written in his own hand.

11/20/06 The Italian cabinet removes Nicolo Pollari as head of Italian intelligence.

12/11/06 Italian court sets a January 9, 2007 hearing date on issuing indictments for 26 CIA agents and 5 Italian intelligence agents in the Nasr kidnaping.

1/09/07 Hearings begin. Faced with possible indictments, lawyers for the accused press for a political resolution of the case. No defendants are present.

1/09/07 The lawyer for Robert Lady withdraws from the case, stating that Lady would not cooperate. "Robert Seldon Lady says that this case should have had a political solution and not a judicial solution," lawyer Daria Pesce said. "The Italian government could have decided it was a state secret - remember, this was a terror suspect. It would have been possible if the Italian government had had the courage to reach an agreement with the U.S. government."

A press report provides Spataro's reaction:

"Asked whether Pesce's withdrawal signaled the CIA's attempt to dissociate itself from the case, prosecutor Armando Spataro, who requested the indictments, said her statements were reminiscent of an era when terror groups tried to discredit Italian justice. 'I heard the same thing from the Red Brigades during the terror trials in the 1970s,' Spataro said."

Pollari's defense lawyers reportedly seek to add current Prime Minister Prodi and past Prime Minister Berlusconi to the witness list.

1/29/07 At a preliminary hearing, Pollari's lawyers move to stop Pollari's trial on grounds that the evidence to prove his innocence is classified. The judge can either rule on the case or refer it to the Italian Constitutional Court.

1/31/07 German prosecutors issue arrest warrants for 13 CIA agents on suspicion of the wrongful imprisonment of a German citizen, Khaled al-Masri, and causing him serious bodily harm.

2/12/07 Nasr is set free in Egypt.

2/13/07 Nasr plans to seek damages in a lawsuit against the U.S. and Italy. He plans to sue Silvio Berlusconi for cooperating with the CIA.

2/14/07 Switzerland, following other European complaints and investigations about the U.S. anti-terror operations overseas, announces an investigation into unlawful use of Swiss airspace.

2/15/07 Testimony is heard that the CIA contacted SISMI about "extraordinary renditions" shortly after the 9/11 attacks.

2/16/07 Italian Judge issues indictments on 26 U.S. intelligence agents and 5 Italian intelligence agents for their alleged role in the 2/17/03 kidnaping of Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr in Milan.

"This is a trial we absolutely should not have, and its result will be that our intelligence services will no longer have the co-operation of foreign intelligence," Mr Berlusconi was quoted as saying. "This is a strike against the security of Italian citizens."

In other very recent developments, the Italian government said it would not respond to extradition requests until the Constitutional Court ruled on whether prosecutors had overstepped by tapping phones of Italian secret service agents.

"The moves drew a scathing response from Milan prosecutor Armando Spataro, who said the extradition request was made to the previous government of Silvio Berlusconi before any Italian agents were implicated in the request and should not be linked. He denied prosecutors violated laws involving evidence. 'The law allows the government to give a negative response but not to fail to respond (to the extradition request)', Mr. Spataro said. 'The silence of this government by now exceeds the length of silence of the previous government.'"

February 20, 2007

5. IRAQ AND THE NEO-DOMINO THEORY

President Bush gave a speech recently on the war on terror, calling it "The Great Challenge Of Our New Century." Without addressing everything in this long speech, let us critically look at one aspect, namely, where the President is taking us in the Mid-East.

Mr. Rumsfeld and others of his ilk consider criticism of the President's decisions as hindering the war against terrorism and encouraging our enemies. They are the turncoats – to the principle of free and open speech. In matters of life and death as these are, that involve many deeply, all the more should the President and his men welcome every bit of thought and criticism they can get.

He sets the scene with the end of the Cold War: "And all the cost and sacrifice of that struggle has been worth it." As a consequence "new democracies" arose and "we've gained the peace that freedom brings."

Not so. To our regret, much of the cost and sacrifice of the American people did not buy us a Cold War victory. Time, patience, and internal Soviet problems broke the stalemate, not Korea, not Vietnam, and not the arms race.

The Soviet Union fell apart because the Communist economy was a huge failure. This tied in with a cynical lack of ideological loyalty to Communism and national movements for independence inside the Empire's boundaries. Stalin had built a system on terror and personal power that his successors could not maintain.

Years ago the common man regarded American interventions and burdens overseas with a strained smile and shrug. We had a job to do. We had to go clean up the mess that others were making. Common men and women served. Some were wounded and never fully recovered. Some never came back. It's not easy to write all that off in one or two sentences, but sunk costs are forever sunk.

We must act rationally now, not based on emotional ties to the past. Do we want the same thing again, another lengthy period of war mentality, injury and death? That's what the President is promoting. His idea is that we have to go through the same thing all over again in this century.

We have reasonably good information about the intentions of bin Laden and

his associates. We understand his motives. We know what he wants for the Muslim world. We know what he thinks of the U.S., Israel, and their allies. We know that he's willing to use extremely violent means to achieve his aims. He and his followers are murderers or murderous men.

The President understands and spells this out. Bin Laden's wish list includes the end of Israel, driving all infidels from all Muslim lands everywhere (Burma, Thailand, Eritrea, Somalia, Indonesia, etc.), the downfall of the secular Arab administrations whom he regards as U.S. puppets (such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, and now Iraq), and replacement by his style of Muslim rule.

Bin Laden wants us out, moderate Arabs out, Jews out, and himself or other bin Ladens in. Bush has that correct. Bin Laden is elitist. Right again. Bin Laden is "committed," "not insane," "focused," "radical," all apt descriptions.

Where do we go with these facts? President Bush has a neo-domino theory. The "militants believe that controlling one country [Iraq] will rally the Muslim masses, enabling them to overthrow all moderate governments in the region [the Mid-East] and establish a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia. With greater economic and military and political power, the terrorists would be able to advance their stated agenda: to develop weapons of mass destruction, to destroy Israel, to intimidate Europe, to assault the American people, and to blackmail our government into isolation."

Stay in Iraq, Bush warns. It's the big domino. If it falls, then all the rest fall. Did we hear this story before he attacked Iraq? No. Did he tell us then that terrorists had "set their sights on Iraq?" No. Did he tell us then that "terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in our war on terror?" No. We heard many stories, but not these. Mr. President, if Iraq is domino number one, you created it, you set it up, and you knocked it over. You attracted terrorists to Iraq; you created more enmity and enemies from native Iraqis.

The President repeats yet again his boilerplate warnings to Syria and Iran that he's prepared to "hold those regimes to account," that "they deserve no patience from the victims of terror," that they are "outlaw regimes," that they are "equally as guilty of murder," in providing "support and sanctuary." Why does he keep repeating these warnings? Syria and Iran surely have the message, so it must be to persuade us, to pave the way for more war. The President is getting ready to knock over two more dominoes, Syria and Iran.

Is Bush bin Laden's secret weapon?

Is Iraq ready to fall into bin Laden's hands if the U.S. pulls out? Who really knows? There may be civil war. There may be unexpected alliances and reconciliations. Who knows what the Kurds might do, or the Shia, or the Sunni? Who knows how they will react to interloping terrorists when the Americans are gone? Maybe another Saddam Hussein will work his way up. Syria and Iran might react. Turkey might react. Other neighbors might react. There may be other countries further away that decide to intrude. No matter who rules, they will want to sell oil. No matter who rules, the masses will struggle to better themselves under their rule.

Let go of Iraq. Let nature take its course. Stand back. Allow the parties most involved to work or fight this out. Withdraw. We did not break Iraq, and we do not own it. Iraq's never been an unbroken piece of pottery. Only force held it together.

Is it reasonable to imagine bin Laden or a terrorist coalition sitting in Baghdad, vulnerable to attack and assassination? Others in the region will have a big say about who runs the show. Whoever will rule, as time passes the situation will change. Look at how Iran has changed in the past 20 years. Iran will continue to change if the U.S. will simply leave the place alone.

If terrorists or their proxies become rulers, they will stew in their own juices. Before long they'll be talking to others and trading. They'll be exposed. They'll make mistakes. They'll overreach. They'll die off or be assassinated or fall on their own swords. New rulers will come along with different ideas. Many things can happen. Unless one makes a fetish of control, there is nothing in it for us to be involved.

Bush reminds us that Israel will be destroyed. What makes the U.S. the preserver of States, the upholder of the political status quo? What purpose does this serve? What is so sacred about maintaining any State, anyway? In the long run of history, Israel may disappear or be transformed. Most political entities are. In the short run, given their military, this is unlikely. Even if we end foreign aid to Israel, as we should, Israel will maintain itself.

A concern for the peoples of the Mid-East, all the peoples, should be first, not for their warring political units. It is time to transcend the State, and time to stop identifying a people with a State.

Is Iraq actually a domino? Bin Laden had a country in his pocket before, named Afghanistan. This didn't start a chain reaction throughout Muslim lands. Why not? Bin Laden is an atypical violent Muslim. Muslim peoples are not united by being Muslim. Being human, they have many wants. They have worldly aspirations. They know something about Western standards of living. They like the freedom they have. The terrorists are violent and extreme and many Muslims condemn that. Killing innocent Muslims in Iraq didn't help bin Laden's cause any, judging from a recent poll of Muslims.

Without the U.S. around, maybe some existing governments will fall, and maybe they won't. Governments are always falling. If some do, we can live with it. If some other power wishes to build an Empire and take our place, good luck.

Is there something wrong with cooling it and being patient?

Yes, says Bush. The terrorists don't want Americans around. This is true, but neither do we want Russian armies marching up and down our country or their missiles in Cuba. The terrorists are not running the Muslim world anyway, and if moderate Muslim countries do not want Americans around, that is their choice.

Yes, says Bush. They will get nuclear weapons. Possibly, but they do not want to be incinerated either. If we lived with the Soviet Union and Red China, why can't we live with radical Muslim States if that's what occurs? If we are out of their lands, they have less reason to assault us. Nuclear weapons are attractive to weaker States as an equalizer, a bargaining chip to keep the stronger States off balance, to gain concessions. Our power can be neutralized. What if it is? Then what? Then people get back to living and trading, minding the store. Even radical Muslims have to eat.

Will fighting in Iraq or Syria or Iran deter a nuclear attack on the U.S.? According to Bush, "no concession, bribe or act of appeasement would change or limit their plans for murder." One historian says that Hitler was like this, that he wanted to see his military in victorious action no matter what concessions he had won without fighting. We do not know if bin Laden and his coterie are like this. If we act as if his aim is our destruction no matter what we do, then he has nothing to lose by living up to that view. He can expect to gain nothing from us, so he must use every means to destroy us. We raise the chance of nuclear attack.

Yes, says Bush. We must try to shape and control everything in the world to our liking. Otherwise, we will face a hostile Empire.

How so? These many countries with Muslim components are not all homogeneous just because Muslims live there. To create an Empire out of them is currently a bin Laden dream, or it may be rhetoric. Bin Laden may not live that long, or he may blunder along the way. He simply may not get the support he needs. Some other Muslim or Arab might kill him. Some Western force may kill him. Israel might become aggressive. Bin Laden probably does not know much more about the many Muslim places than Bush does. A great many things have to go just right to be able to create a Muslim Empire, if that's really what he wants.

Let's be fanciful. Suppose bin Laden were able to take over Pakistan and get its atomic weapons. Will India allow this to happen? Suppose it did. What happens then? Does India destroy Pakistan? India has suffered many, many terrorist attacks in the past few years. It's a big target. Will China sit idly by? When it comes to power and its exercise, the number of possibilities is endless. Power politics is a constantly shifting multi-dimensional chess game in which everyone seems to lose, especially the common people.

Some believe that bin Laden's heart is set on taking over his home turf, Saudi Arabia. Despite all the pan-Muslim rhetoric, he may be a nationalist at heart. No matter what, the U.S. will never allow him to set up rule anywhere after what he's done. I cannot imagine terrorists running much of anything. Will bin Laden rule his Empire from a cave? Do they actually have a workable game plan, or are they too hooked on their violent chess game?

The President argues against observers who "claim that America would be better off by cutting our losses and leaving Iraq now. This is a dangerous illusion, refuted with a simple question: Would the United States and other free nations be more safe, or less safe, with Zarqawi and bin Laden in control of Iraq, its people, and its resources?"

His question is too simple. There is no straight line path between U.S. withdrawal and bin Laden takeover. There is a connection between the safety of the U.S. and our presence in the Mid-East tar pit. We will sink like any dinosaur.

The President writes one scenario: Iraq takeover, then a chain reaction

throughout all Muslim countries, then an Empire, then nuclear threats, Israel's destruction, and assaults on the U.S. You would think he was talking about building a tower out of children's blocks, not the actions and reactions of people and players all over the planet. The number of alternative scenarios is infinite.

Then, contradictorily, the President provides the makings of an alternative scenario: "And Islamic radicalism, like the ideology of communism, contains inherent contradictions that doom it to failure. By fearing freedom – by distrusting human creativity, and punishing change, and limiting the contributions of half the population – this ideology undermines the very qualities that make human progress possible, and human societies successful."

These words ring true. They suggest that terrorists, even if they do manage to gain control and install radical policies, will ultimately fail.

The President's primary appeal to fight and keep on fighting is, in one word, freedom. Defend freedom, bring freedom, stand for our freedom and that of others, see freedom's victory, see free peoples everywhere. If you are for freedom, and what American is not, then you must be for war in Iraq and war on terrorists everywhere. And after the Cold War "we've gained the peace that freedom brings."

War, Mr. President, has brought us neither peace nor freedom. War has centralized our government and curtailed our freedom. War has brought more war. World War I brought World War II, and World War II brought the Cold War and large-scale hot wars in Korea and Vietnam. War between Israel and surrounding nations has brought us into more war and promises yet more.

Mr. President, you may be called to bring the sword to the tyrants of this world. I am not. Many of us are not. You bring the sword to us when you force us all into your battles. If you understand and believe in freedom, then you know that it is up to each of us to make our own choices about how to do good in this world. If you believe in freedom, then begin by freeing us. Begin by freeing us to fight tyranny, or poverty, or ignorance, or any other evils we see, the ways we wish to. Stop distrusting the creativity of your own people. Stop suppressing half or more of your own population. Stop fearing how we will use our freedom. You are yourself creating the contradictions in our society that doom it to failure. Do not draft us into your century-long crusade for freedom.

October 18, 2005

6. TROUBLING MISCONCEPTIONS TO BUILD A DREAM ON

Building dreams

Louis Armstrong had a big hit, one of many, with "A Kiss To Build A Dream On." He presents it (along with Jack Teagarden, Earl Hines, and Barney Bigard) in the movie *The Strip*. The lyrics bring to light one thread in the thought pattern of neoconservatives, a thread of imaginative fancy that led to Iraq:

Give me a kiss to build a dream on
And my imagination will thrive upon that kiss
Sweetheart, I ask no more than this
A kiss to build a dream on

Give me a kiss before you leave me
And my imagination will feed my hungry heart
Leave me one thing before we part
A kiss to build a dream on

When I'm alone with my fancies...I'll be with you
Weaving romances...making believe they're true

Give me your lips for just a moment
And my imagination will make that moment live
Give me what you alone can give
A kiss to build a dream on

Folly is a compound of many elements. Dreams are one. Misconceptions are another. They are a kind of dream too, a running away from reality, a failure to see what is there before our eyes. Instead: "Weaving romances...making believe they're true."

I don't know how the Democrats will end up dealing with the Iraq War and with the President's up-and-coming request for more troops. I do know that the Democratic Party contains plenty of pro-war members in Congress. They try to get wiggle room. They try to be against the war while voting more funds for it. They try to rationalize their support while being against it. To accomplish this impossible feat, they have to express faulty ideas and cover up the truth. Their misconceptions are shared by many other Americans. That's what makes

them interesting and worthwhile to write about.

It happens that I ran across a forthright [interview](#) with Congressman Brian Higgins who represents most of Buffalo. His interview is a very convenient source. His lyrics express clearly some of the misconceptions that no doubt are shared by other Democrats, Republicans, and many Americans.

Experiment in democracy

Misconception #1: Creating a democracy in Iraq is an experiment.

Congressman Brian Higgins: "And this is an experiment – trying to create a state of democracy in the Middle East..." See also, for example, Prime Minister Maliki: "...in order to protect these experiments, particularly the democratic experiments that should be protected by those who are trying to oppose it." Or see Victor Davis Hanson: "Who knows what might happen should the Iraq experiment succeed..."

Translation: The U.S. invaded Iraq to conduct a scientific test. We wanted to see if we could rebuild a state after destroying it. The President gave us this assignment as part of his education programs. This experiment hasn't worked out too well, so we will have to try it again somewhere else.

Experiments are carefully controlled tests. No one can control all the human beings in a clan, a tribe, an ethnic group, a society, a community, a nation, or a country. These are not the stuff of which controlled experiments are made.

A scientist who charges into a laboratory and proceeds to smash instruments, vials, flasks, equipment, and the lab workers is not experimenting. When he mixes chemicals at random producing noxious fumes and corrosive liquids, he is not experimenting. When he fails to control temperature, pressure, amount, force, pressure, or anything else, he is not experimenting.

The U.S. government has conducted abominable experiments on human beings, but Iraq is not one of them. The Iraq War is an abomination. The Iraq War is a large-scale crime. It is a blunder. It is a man-made catastrophe. It is an evil. It is many things, but it is not an experiment. Calling the Iraq War an experiment in creating democracy covers up the evil by alluding to a supposedly noble aim.

Democracy is a kiss to build a dream on. An experiment in democracy is a kiss to build a dream on.

It wasn't our fault

Misconception #2: "The United States invaded Iraq based on bad information..."

Translation: The billions spent on spy satellites and intelligence agencies were all wasted. We got perverse information. Our diplomats talking to their diplomats and other diplomats in the region and elsewhere provided us with misdirection. Our reading of all their statements and sources gave us misinformation. Our tracking of arms sales gave us bad information. Our bombing runs for ten years told us nothing. The U.N. inspection teams gave us no useful information; they misled us. Our communications with foreign intelligence agencies gave us bad information. We went into Iraq worse than blind. All our sources actually gave us misinformation.

The Congress and the Executive branch had more than enough information to make a rational decision to go to war or not. They did not go to war because of bad information about weapons of mass destruction or bad information that Saddam Hussein was a severe threat. They did not go to war because they mistakenly thought he was behind 9/11.

Congress and the Executive surely do not want to affirm that they launched a major war based on bad information. It is their responsibility to act prudently, especially in such an important matter. That implies making sure of one's information. They surely cannot say that they acted on bad information without asserting their own culpability and irresponsible behavior.

If they are saying they acted on bad information, it is an excuse. It is an attempt to shift blame to others. It is an attempt to deny that they simply used poor judgment.

Former President Gerald R. Ford knew that there was no threat to national security from Iraq. He knew that the U.S. made a misjudgment, not based on bad information, but because of other personal factors, such as the "pugnacious" attitude of Vice-President Cheney. The administration's early record reveals numerous statements correctly assessing the Iraq situation. Everyone in Washington who was anybody either knew enough to assess

accurately what Saddam Hussein could and could not do or else could find out. They didn't know everything. They never do, but they knew enough. Some of them simply didn't seek out or use the information. Others had the information and let other considerations override it. They used bad judgment.

The President and his appointees decided early on to take out Saddam Hussein for their own reasons, not based on bad information. Their decision was based upon their own overconfidence, stupidity, and ignorance of a wealth of available and good information. They kissed myths, tasted power, and built dreams.

To say that the invasion was based on bad information is to weasel out from the responsibility and shift blame. It is to cover up the actual reasons for the invasion.

We can't show weakness

Misconception #3: "What we have demonstrated to other potential threats throughout the region – not only to us but to moderate Arab countries – is a vulnerability that has never been demonstrated before."

Translation: Vietnam never happened. Somalia never happened. Pearl Harbor never happened. The U.S. whipped North Korea in nothing flat and brought peace to the Korean peninsula. The U.S. emerged victorious in Afghanistan and accomplished its objective of tracking down bin Laden.

Never before? What U.S. intervention has not resulted in calamity? Where has the U.S. gotten in trying to distinguish between a moderate and an immoderate Arab state? Where has it gotten by nightmares of potential threats?

We need higher oil prices

Misconception #4: "It's oil. It's our addiction to oil...Because our addiction to oil, and the price we're willing to pay for it, slows political and economic reform there."

Let's see now. The U.S. should tax oil even more heavily than it already does. The overseas price will drop as the supply meets a restricted demand. Manufacturing and other costs will drop overseas and rise in the U.S. The U.S. economy will suffer while the rest of the world gains. This will make the U.S.

better off. We will be more free. We'll be free of our addiction. Washington shall set us free by taxing us.

Let's see now. U.S. citizens should suffer on the theory that the money they're spending for oil is not being used to reform overseas nations. It's our responsibility that whomever we buy from should use the receipts as we see fit. And this should be decided in Washington. We will be made free to suffer.

Let's see now. Greedy Americans who want oil are to blame for the insufficiencies of foreign regimes and foreign economies.

Escalation and the domino theory

Misconception #5: Increasing U.S. troop levels in Iraq is "the best of nothing but bad choices."

The U.S. has no choice, according to this idea, but to double and redouble even though it's losing the bridge game. If there is a rational idea behind escalation, what is it? Does anyone in Washington actually know? Isn't this a repeat performance? No one knew for sure why the first invasion occurred, and no one knows now why a new force should be sent in. Can anyone provide any explanation that will hold up under even limited scrutiny?

Congressman Higgins will not be pressured into timetables nor will he tolerate citizens who display emotion over Iraq: "In early spring, a group of folks from the Western New York Peace Center came in, very sincere folks for the most part – there were some folks there that were less respectful and rational – and they came in with a folder of resolutions, and they had one question: 'Why aren't you on these resolutions?'"

Like Alphonso Bedoya in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Congressman Higgins doesn't need no stinkin' resolutions. "Well, first of all I can speak for myself. I don't need to affix my name to a meaningless resolution that will have no effect in law...Most of the resolutions that folks want people to get behind, they had nothing more than political timetables associated with them."

Why is escalation the best choice? "Now the question is, do you just pull out?...Do you just pull everyone out and let Iraq and the greater Middle East fall?"

The answer given here, one must read between the lines, is Iran. Escalation is a way to show Iran that we mean business. Does the U.S. really mean business, or is this a great big bluff? Is the U.S. willing to commit 500,000 troops or more, which it does not have, to bring down Iran?

The answer given here is the domino theory. The domino theory never dies. According to this theory, no country can ever defend itself without a U.S. presence. No important region like the Middle East should ever settle its own problems. No important region should be under the influence of a local or regional hegemon or two. The U.S. must be the dominant hegemon. According to this theory, matters are always worse if the U.S. withdraws from a nation or region; they never get better. All the states in the region fall under the influence of some hostile power that then threatens the U.S. And matters are always better if the U.S. stays there indefinitely.

We need to increase troop levels in Iraq because the people there, like many peoples of the planet, are children. They can't run their affairs without Americans. They will always fall into bad hands. Better they should be in our hands. We are good and wise.

Besides, if we pull out, "It's going to create a lot of problems for the United States relative to oil prices, which will cause further economic distress relative to our addiction to oil."

Wait a minute. I thought we wanted higher oil prices.

Dreams need not have a foolish consistency.

January 8, 2007

CHAPTER III – A MORAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

“Escalating the Sin” condemns the Iraq War in biblically religious terms. The Iraq War is a sin, top to bottom, and escalating it, as opposed to ending it, continues the sin. This very brief essay is no more than a statement of my belief. It does not fully explore and justify that belief. For that I suggest the reader examine more complete sources, such as the article by [Chris Hedges](#), *War Is Sin*, written in June of 2009. I recommend the articles and books by [Laurence M. Vance](#).

“American War Crimes” takes the position that American leaders who brought about the attack and war in Iraq committed war crimes. If there is such a thing as a just war, then it is a war of self-defense, at a minimum. Self-defense is a criterion that has a degree of some definiteness to it. An attack on one’s land, actual or imminent, is something that can be observed and gauged by any and all. It is like a crime in progress that is, with a minimum of verification, recognizable. Wars of aggression are not just wars, and that means that their perpetrators are committing war crimes.

This article systematically reviews several major rationales for the war and shows why each does not withstand scrutiny. In particular, American self-defense had nothing to do with whether Saddam Hussein was a bad man who mistreated his people, who harbored ambitions, who once invaded Kuwait, or even who had big weapons; because he had not attacked the U.S. and was not about to attack the U.S. American self-defense had nothing to do with whether or not Iraq was a democracy. Democracy is no nirvana. Does a state that has a system of government that is better than democracy have a right of self-defense to attack democracies that it thinks are worse?

In a world divided into states, any rights that states appear to have are

derivative of the persons in the respective society who have formed and sanctioned that state. No group of persons has a right to declare law on its own and decide, again on its own, to start a war in order to enforce that law so as to remove other persons who are running what it regards as an unsafe foreign government. To do so is to invade the rights of others. When there is no issue of self-defense, in other words, making the world a safer place is no justification for unilaterally launching a war. Should such a general and subjective criterion be accepted, many nations will have a green light to start many wars.

America or a group of states cannot *on their own* legally launch a war on the thin or insubstantial basis of *their own interpretation* of U.N. resolutions. The U.N. Security Council never approved the Iraq War. It was not even put to a vote. Iraq in 2003 had committed no act of war. No weapons of mass destruction were found after Saddam Hussein accepted Resolution 1441 and again admitted U.N. weapons inspectors to Iraq. At worst, he managed to hide certain weapons; but the Security Council did not decide that such a suspicion justified a war.

“Saving Lives or Committing Evil?” is an essay on torture. In general, states seem to be more inclined to use torture than individual criminals are. The CIA has used torture for a long time. The U.S. began torturing a variety of captives – really prisoners of war and suspects – on a greater scale during the Iraq War. Why? The essay suggests that torture is more likely to be used when a war arises, when there exists a shadowy or underground enemy, when the public does not strongly disapprove, when the torture can be done secretly, and when the idea prevails that the enemy must be stamped out by any means. In the U.S. case, there has been an established bureaucracy that taught torture, so that as soon as high officials condoned its use, it could be put into practice quickly.

Research such as [Roger Koppl](#) suggests that torture is not effective. The reason he gives is that since the torturer does not know the truth, the tortured person has no assurance that he will stop being tortured if he volunteers the truth. His incentive, therefore, is not to tell the truth. Much more on this can be found [here](#). Taking it as a given that torture is not effective, this article provides a theory of why states use it. Basically, torture is done via a bureaucratic system in which the participants feel a diminished moral responsibility, in which there is a diminished incentive to check that the activities being conducted are working, and in which there is a decided lack of accountability. Torture is inefficient in the same way and for the same kinds of reasons that all state

activities are inefficient.

The article goes on, in detail, to examine the issue of torture's saving lives. The utilitarian ethic that underlies torturing to save lives is scrutinized and shown to lead to chaos and the breakdown of morality, as contrasted with fixed standards of good and evil behavior. The article concludes with biblical and religious views against torture.

Written in March of 2008, "*A Very Great Evil*" is a brief piece that condemns the American empire and all of us who are part of it for the evil done to Iraq and Iraqis. It is a wake-up call. It calls on Americans to stop worshipping at the national altar and heed "the spirit of peace," a reference to the Holy Spirit.

"*The Living Dead*" refers to an empire that lacks moral and ethical justification for its acts. Modern society's senseless activities and ills are outcomes and symptoms of an absence of appropriate law and ethics.

"We have only the appearance of a lawful social order. Rigidity combined with outlandish bureaucratic regulation made good by blind obedience are not law but its absence. Chaotic and mad results signify a lack of stable guiding laws of life, not their presence."

This is an essay in recognition of ethical standards that have been nearly obliterated by immersion in empire. The overwhelming presence and impact of empire on the citizens within its realm is toward violence, coarseness, and decadence. When the power structure acts lawlessly and without due regard for the person, the citizens begin to adopt such behavior as their own. Older standards fall by the wayside and civilization tends to deteriorate. The structure and practice of empire are basically evil.

This theme is continued in "*The Cause of Empire*." Empire's roots include domination of man by man, which uses power and conquest based on the arrogant belief that the empire is in the right. From a biblical perspective, this makes empire evil. It is viewed as a structure that stems from man's rejection of God's authority, which is the true authority that presents laws that bring peace to man. Having rejected God's authority, man has no recourse but to establish his own in its place. This effort cannot succeed because there is no firm basis in man himself for sovereignty. The restless attempts throughout human history to establish a human authority of some men over all men give us the recurrent empires and their wars.

1. ESCALATING THE SIN

The leaders of the U.S. sinned in invading Iraq, and they sinned in unleashing a devastating war in that earthly hell. They bore false witness to the American people, they coveted Iraqi oil, and they murdered. Americans at large must and will bear the consequences of these sins for applauding the mayhem, funding the war, and retaining the American perpetual motion war making political system. Americans and their leaders both stand indicted and convicted.

Opportunities to repent abound. The last election provided an encouraging sign, but only superficially. Key Democrats have signaled for months and years that they support the war. Where it counts, in the pocketbook, they have voted to fund the war. Now, they will not lift a financial finger to de-fund it. Instead, they will pass toothless resolutions and play for petty political advantage.

What more could Democrats ask for than to hang the war completely around Republican necks? If escalation succeeds, which it won't, they cannot be accused of not supporting the U.S. at a critical wartime moment. If escalation fails, as it will, they can accelerate their attacks on Republican foreign folly. Foreign policy has supposedly been a Republican strong point over many decades. What better opportunity for Democrats to seize some high political ground?

President Bush is unilaterally escalating the Iraq folly. He now escalates the sin. He has the power to do so, a power provided constitutionally by the framers and reaffirmed continually throughout American history. So far, Americans have not seen fit to rein in the imperial war making power of their presidency. The sin of our failures to rein in the military-industrial axis of evil lie upon us all. It has widened to become a foundation-lobbying axis of evil. We cannot hope to mitigate the consequences except by changing our evil ways.

The handwriting on the wall grows clearer. America will follow Iraq's descent into a living hell unless it reverses course not only in Iraq but in its grasping, fearful, bullying, and paranoid heart. Only just reactions to the crimes of terrorists can rescue America from its sins. Only intelligent, measured, and just exercises of force can hope to change the war making atmosphere. Only just behavior of the U.S. in all its foreign affairs can hope to defuse the threats of terrorism.

Is it too late? It is never too late to repent. But right now, America is doing the opposite. America has declared war on terrorism, a grisly blank check for endless escalations of sin throughout the world. It must undeclare this war in order even to begin to reverse course. Otherwise, the U.S. will continue, as in Somalia, to destabilize the politics of more and more foreign nations, inflicting and unleashing more and more unwarranted death and destruction. The consequences for America will be equally devastating.

Our modern Neroes do not fiddle while Rome burns. They ignite the fires in every suburb surrounding the city. These fires were set to smolder over a hundred years ago by U.S. leaders, especially signified by the Spanish-American War. Our leaders set more fires in many lands as the decades marched by. Sometimes the fires broke out into vast conflagrations that were doused but never entirely extinguished. There they smolder, ready to be fanned into flames, in far-flung lands like Lebanon, Egypt, Thailand, Pakistan, Korea, Israel, the Philippines, and Iran. Bin Laden has been clever enough to pull America's chain, causing our leaders once again to release pure oxygen onto the slow-burning fires and ignite them into fiery blazes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

We are not the only arsonists in this world, but we are the ones responsible for what we do. The fruitless election is past. Escalation in Iraq is what we are choosing, and it is destined for utter failure. Even if Baghdad is stabilized, which it won't be, the civil war in Iraq will simply move onto other grounds in space and time, extending to other regions and extending temporally.

The U.S. involvement with Middle Eastern oil began a long time ago. A key event was Franklin Roosevelt's meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Abdulaziz on February 14, 1945. One thing has led to another, as they often do when commitments and agreements are struck.

American entanglement and ambitions in the Middle East have now flowered beyond anything that FDR or Truman could have imagined as they laid the foundation for American woes. American leaders now dream of controlling the Middle East and its oil. They dream of controlling Iran. They dream of establishing stable democracies in countries that have their own timetables and cultures of political expression.

Although it is possible for Americans to interact with all the peoples of the earth in just and peaceful ways, we choose not to when it comes to our national

state. This is how it must be with states. Our leaders have chosen unjust and violent ways. Such ways escalate the reactions against America and Americans. They recruit jihadists against America. They destabilize the lands we intervene in.

The ways our leaders are choosing are sinful ways, and sinful ways bring retribution. We will experience that retribution. The more we escalate the sin, the more retribution we will experience.

January 12, 2007

2. AMERICAN WAR CRIMES

From my point of view, the American State has committed innumerable and grave war crimes by starting and prosecuting the Iraq War. I do not refer to crimes defined by international law or by past war crimes tribunals. I am no lawyer and neither are most Americans, but we understand what many crimes are. For my purposes here, it does not help us understand American war crimes in Iraq to subject our State's deeds in that country to an abstruse tangle of international code and interpretation. It does help us to look at what has happened from a simple commonsense point of view.

Let us think of war crimes as a subset of all crimes. They are those crimes committed in the course of war, start to finish. There are many crimes that we are accustomed to domestically, such as murder, theft, rape, arson, kidnapping, assault, maiming, causing bodily injury, vandalism, and property destruction. We know what these crimes are. They also occur in the course of war. To simplify matters, I speak of all these crimes as one category: crimes against property, or crimes that violate property rights. I do not mean to minimize the severity of the loss of human life by lumping it together with the loss of a building. I mean to make an accurate simplification. Murder is a property crime, since each person owns his own body. Rape violates the property right of a person, since it uses his or her body against his or her will. Kidnapping involves physically controlling a person's body, again a property crime. Obviously crimes like theft, arson, and property destruction all violate property rights. Maiming a person is a crime. I think it helps us to count all these crimes together as one set of property crimes in order to sense the enormity of their totality.

At the orders of the leaders in the Bush Administration, supported by most members of Congress who voted for war resolutions and voted for funding, America instigated the current war on Iraq in March of 2003 and before. If there are war crimes in Iraq, these men and women are most directly responsible. These people and perhaps some others comprise the American State, the organization that marshals our tax dollars and orders the military into action. I leave to others the naming of the names of those most directly responsible for American actions in Iraq. A reasonable indictment should have access to records in order to determine who had what responsibility. Whatever list I might produce here would surely be incomplete and possibly inaccurate. Simply to provide examples, in the Executive branch, certainly President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of State Rice, and

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld would be indicted. Advisors like Paul Wolfowitz and Steven Hadley might also be. Influential members of the CIA, the military, and the Congress likely also would appear on a list of those who set war crimes into motion.

But I have said "if there are war crimes in Iraq." Have there been American war crimes in Iraq? To answer affirmatively, we need to document three facts: property destruction, American responsibility for property destruction, and criminality of the American acts. I believe that most Americans know that there has been massive property destruction, and they know that Americans are directly responsible for much of it. They have seen some of it on television. However, most Americans probably don't believe that America's acts have been criminal acts.

The property destruction in Iraq is well-known. No one denies it. The only arguments are over how big it has been. A [recent BBC News](#) article places civilian Iraqi deaths at a minimum of between 33,710 and 37,832. Other estimates range far higher. No one knows how many Iraqi civilians have been injured. The group Iraq Body Count reports 42,500 injuries. Then there is destruction and damage done to all sorts of goods, from homes to capital goods to possessions. There are vast economic losses as businesses have been disrupted and destroyed. Civilians no doubt have been arrested and, at times, tortured.

The American responsibility for a large fraction of this property destruction is well-known. Our military forces have actively been engaged in it from day one of the war. Domestic Iraqi elements and foreign interlopers have also done their share of crime and destruction. Again, my purpose is not to allocate the crimes among the groups and persons responsible. I am unable to do that. As an American whose taxes support the carnage, who'd like to see it ended, and who'd like to prevent a repeat performance, my interest here is in American culpability, in getting us to clean up our own act. This does not mean I do not condemn the crimes being committed by Arabs, Iraqis, or other nationalities. I do.

This brings us to the third element, which is the criminality of the American acts. There is no doubt that American armed forces and possibly paid civilian contractors have destroyed large amounts of property. They have also seized large amounts of property. Whether or not these are crimes hinges on one question: Were these acts done in self-defense or not? It seems almost

self-evident that many property rights violations have been visited upon people who either were not attacking Americans in Iraq or had not attacked them in America. But this is apparently not enough to condemn Americans for their acts. The rules of war allow for "collateral damage." I won't question that doctrine here, although it can be questioned. But collateral damage is only allowable if there is justification for fighting the war in the first place. The major concern is still the criminality or non-criminality of America's presence in Iraq.

The issue of criminality most certainly does not hinge on whether Saddam Hussein was a bad man who mistreated his people, whether he committed atrocities or not, whether he wine and dined terrorists, whether he harbored ambitions to possess stores of biological or chemical weapons, or whether he had invaded Kuwait years earlier upon an American diplomatic snafu. In 2003, there was no self-defense issue involved in any of these activities. It does not hinge on whether he actually had such weapons, whether provided by Americans or developed on his own. Unless he used them on America, there was no self-defense issue involved. And there is no recorded attack by Iraq on America that brought on this war. Perhaps there is some wiggle room when an attack is imminent, perhaps then a country is entitled to attack first. Even in this case, diplomacy often goes on almost to the inception of hostilities. But neither of these was the case between Iraq and the U.S. There was no imminent and no actual attack. Most amazingly we had the spectacle of a President rabidly making speeches about non-existent threats as if they were both real and imminent, from a country that could not possibly launch an attack on the U.S.

Criminality surely does not hinge on whether or not Iraq was or was not a democracy as this has nothing at all to do with self-defense, notwithstanding the ravings of the President and his cabal of neoconservatives. It has nothing to do with bringing freedom to anyone, because this goal also has nothing to do with American self-defense. Whether or not America is capable of bringing freedom and whether or not it has actually done this are pertinent questions and acts much to be doubted, but even if we were capable and did bring freedom to Iraq this would not justify attacking the country. There is no self-defense issue involved in "liberating" Iraq because there has been no attack on America by the Iraqis. While this sounds quite like the Soviet Union's liberation of its satellites after World War II, if we are generous and give the American State the benefit of the doubt as to its honorable intentions, there is still no way to justify the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis while

liberating their country. But the basic issue remains that doing the supposed good deed of bringing freedom does not excuse acts of aggression. If this rationale for war-making is accepted, which means that committing wrongs to accomplish a supposed right is morally acceptable, then I am justified in cutting out your kidney in order to give it to a person who can't live without it. I am justified in taking your home and turning it over to homeless people. When the President uses such a rationale, he only shows us that he is bereft of proper moral education.

Criminality does not hinge on whether or not the Iraqi people suffered under Saddam Hussein. This has nothing to do with American self-defense. It does not hinge on provocative words or statements uttered by Iraqi leaders, although no one says this brought on the war. Political leaders make all sorts of statements and to construe them as an actual attack that requires self-defense would be folly. That would make for wars at the pleasure of any country that felt itself insulted or threatened by the words of another. This is not to say that there is no situation in which the combination of words and deeds, such as the massing of armies at a border or the sailing of warships or the overflights of airplanes, might trigger hostilities by a party under threat of attack.

Nor does American self-defense hinge on whether or not Iraq did or did not obey various United Nations resolutions or cooperate fully or partially with U.N. officials. Just because there is an international political body that the states have set up does not change the substance of whether acts are criminal or not. The states have anointed the U.N. as a power that provides a legal cover when enough member states have enough votes to act. These political procedures do not mean that all actions taken under the U.N. aegis suddenly become non-crimes or always lawful no matter what their content is. The U.N. is not above the law although it is convenient for it to think it is. Anyway, in the Iraqi case, there was no Iraqi crime committed that justified Americans "defending" themselves by a wholesale attack and bombardment of Iraq and by a continuing war that has created huge property damage in Iraq. If this were so, I think we would hear President Bush reminding us about it today as justification for continuing our defense efforts. We hear nothing of the kind.

We hear that the damage America has done is justified because the world is now a safer place with Saddam toppled from power. But this too, besides being a fantasy, has nothing to do with American self-defense. American and world safety may or may not have been lower with Saddam in office, but that does not justify attacking him. We are not talking about a serial killer haunting

the streets of Los Angeles. We are talking about the head of a foreign country and making war on another country, with all its attendant death and destruction. If the U.S. or any other country starts wars on the flimsy basis of increasing its safety, then any country anywhere is justified in starting a war merely by identifying a country, neighboring or otherwise, as reducing its "safety." Hitler surely could, and probably did, justify his many aggressions on grounds such as this. Perhaps he spoke of some other reasons than safety, like Anschluß or Lebensraum, but the basic idea is the same, namely, "we are justified in attacking because it makes us better off." This has nothing to do with self-defense and everything to do with immoral behavior.

The criminality or lack of it in America's actions does not hinge on the pragmatic strategy of attacking the terrorists before they attack us. It's quite obvious that the terrorists who brought down the Trade Towers died in the effort. Their actions trace back to al-Qaeda, not Iraq, not Saddam Hussein, and still less to the Iraqi people against whom many crimes have been committed. Al-Qaeda fostered a number of terrorist acts in the past 25 years, and no one has ever tied them to Saddam Hussein as the kingpin. He's on trial now, but not for causing terrorism against the United States or Great Britain or Spain or Indonesia. And if there had been evidence that showed Saddam's complicity in international terrorist acts, that still would not have justified the sort of war that America began, executed, and is carrying out today, long after his capture. There is such a thing as a proportionate response to crimes. The damage inflicted by America on Iraq is out of all proportion to the crimes supposedly committed by Saddam Hussein that are supposed to justify the American action.

Were American actions justified by self-defense? The answer is "no." This means that the officials of the American State committed war crimes. This means that they should be indicted and tried for war crimes.

March 24, 2006

3. SAVING LIVES OR COMMITTING EVIL?

Why in 2006 are we engaged in a public discussion of torture? Why do prominent lawyers and columnists promote torture? Why at this time are we reading memos written by top U.S. officials that justify their power to torture? Why do hear our Vice-President affirm that torturing by means of water is justifiable? Why does our Congress pass laws to legalize heinous acts of torture?

Why do we learn that our military has been torturing captives? Why do we learn that the CIA, continuing a long history of black deeds, has operated secret and not-so-secret torture hideaways in foreign lands?

Our officials simultaneously deny that torture is occurring under their command, while they (A) seek and pass legislation that absolves them of culpability of past crimes of torture, (B) seek and pass legislation that allows them to torture captives, and © tell us that torture is necessary for the safety of the American public.

Why are all these events happening now? Didn't nations agree to outlaw torture? Why is the U.S. now (again) flouting the Geneva Convention? Is torture necessary to save American lives and prevent another 9/11 catastrophe?

Why now?

When individual murderers or serial killers torture their victims before killing them, sensational stories are published. These dreadful cases are so uncommon that we learn the names of the killers. Isolated individuals rarely engage in torture. We do not hear about torture murder being a systematic feature of day-to-day life.

We only begin to hear about systematic torture when conditions are ripe for it. Torture becomes widespread when conditions exist that bring out bestial and cruel behavior in human beings and break down the usual moral inhibitions.

What are these conditions? (1) Torture typically arises when there are powerful figures of authority like high priests, kings, emperors, generals, bureaucrats, dictators, and presidents who possess the power to torture, often without detection; (2) Torture will rise if there is greater public indifference, sympathy,

acquiescence, or even approval. Polls suggest that about 58 percent of Americans are against torture and 36 percent would allow some degree of torture. The world averages are 59 and 29 percent, respectively. (3) Torture arises when there exists an enemy – real, imagined, or exaggerated – such as religious heretics, Algerian resistance fighters, terrorists, insurgents, or unlawful enemy combatants.

Even at lower levels of authority, such as with police forces and prison authorities, one-sided brutality, mistreatment, and sometimes torture arise. The enemies in these cases are common criminals, hippies, rioters, draft-dodgers, or simply unruly people who seem to threaten the police, the prison, society and the social order. Again, cruelty and injustice are more likely when the public goes along with it.

Usually it is war or violent struggle against an enemy that give rise to state-run and state-approved torture on a noticeable scale. Often the enemy is viewed as a shadowy conspiracy against society and its authorities.

The torturers may want confessions to scare off other heretics or insurgents or to show they are doing their job. They may want information concerning the conspiracy whose dim outlines they fear. They may be part of the state's control apparatus over their own population.

The conspiracy or enemy is seen as a danger that must be stamped out by any means, even immoral and evil means like torture. The moral element has to be negated or overcome. It takes training or indoctrination to produce torturers who overcome their compunctions and consciences. It takes a system. The U.S. military has provided such training to the U.S. Army Special Forces in the past with the involvement of the CIA. Between 1946 and 1984, the U.S. military taught torture at the School for the Americas in Panama, later moved to Fort Benning, Georgia. The CIA has been the main locus of U.S. torture capabilities.

The list of authorities, usually state and government authorities, that have tortured is very long, covering many places, times, and forms of government. There were four separate Inquisitions in the Middle Ages: French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Roman. English kings have tortured. American soldiers employed water torture in the Philippine-American War (1899–1902) against natives. The CIA has used torture for decades. The British government operated a secret torture center in London during World War II. America's

South Vietnamese ally tortured. To this can be added Nazis, Communists, Fascists, South American dictators, Middle Eastern countries including Israel and Iraq, etc.

States use torture to maintain control over their own populations, that is, to suppress dissidents, rebels, or enemies within. And they use it to maintain control over insurgents in distant territories or colonies.

Today we face all the conditions that tend to generate torture. We have powerful officials of state who want torture, long-established intelligence and military bureaucracies that train for torture, a divided public whose feelings do not run high against torture, and shadowy enemies.

The torture bureaucracies

A good many articles tell us that torture is ineffective and explain why it is not effective. Interrogation along humane lines is said to produce better results. These articles counter the impression left by U.S. officials that torture has saved American lives.

There is some truth to the theory that torture is ineffective, or at least that it's not as effective as one might believe. There's enough plausibility to this theory that it pays us to think through what such an idea really means.

But at the same time, torture surely accomplishes some of what it sets out to do, even if it does so inefficiently. Didn't Saddam Hussein hold his rule partly through torture? Didn't Stalin and Papa Doc Duvalier use such methods? Didn't Mao Zedong employ extensive torture in his 1968 Cleansing Class Ranks campaign?

Suppose that torture is actually a poor way to achieve the results it's aimed at. Then why do we observe it cropping up again and again under the same conditions? Is it an error? Quite possibly it is.

I've argued in the past that reliance on the state is a longstanding error, in part because the connection between the state's actions and the effects of its actions are hard for people to discern and disentangle from other causes. Furthermore, the state propagandizes on its own behalf and its accountability is diffuse. These factors make it hard for people at large to develop an appropriate, reliable, and strongly-held folk wisdom that the state actually harms rather than

helps them.

Torture presents a similar situation. In the U.S., the episodes of torture occur once a generation or so, and society has no solid institutional memory of how well or badly it works. It has been 35 years since the Vietnam episode.

The authorities can spin the torture theme to their own ends and manipulate public opinion. What works against their success in selling torture is the strong moral inhibition against its use, so the authorities hammer away at this by emphasizing the expediency of the torture. Since the public has no strong experience or knowledge base about torture, a large fraction becomes persuaded that the moral rules can be broken for the sake of saving lives.

If torture is largely ineffective, why is it perpetuated? It's like many government programs that go on and on and on. First and foremost, torture is not done by runaway individuals within the state. Torture is done via bureaucratic or hierarchical methods within a state's power structure. One set of people orders it done. Another set of people sets it up. Another set of people actually does it. The torture is veiled in secrecy. The torturers are removed from the powers above them that endorse the torture. All the parties involved feel a need to justify that what they are doing works. But there is usually no systematic checking up that the torture is effective.

Afterwards, members of the bureaus and the public may possibly become aware of anecdotal reports from disenchanted torturers, rival interrogators, and those tortured that suggest that the torture didn't achieve its aim. But such spasmodic reports have little impact on the broad public or even on the torture bureaucracies that always shy away from taking responsibility for anything anyway.

In government, few really know what is going on. Few know whether it's doing any good or not. Few care. Many are protecting themselves. Whistleblowers are ignored or dealt with. Public outrage is deflected.

The FBI, which may believe in benign interrogation, will have no strong interest in promoting its views against the CIA, which may believe in brutality. The higher-ups are disinterested, or interested only in knowing that there have been some good results that they can trumpet in order to make themselves look good. Even if there are no good results, there are always those officials who want to show that they are doing something to protect the public.

The whole situation is typical of the state and the state's bureaucracies.

A second set of factors has to do with the top officials. Like the public, most of the higher-ups are also ignorant of whether torture is effective or not. This means that most officials do not have strong feelings one way or another. Furthermore, being men and women of power, these officials are less likely to be as morally inhibited as the typical citizen is. In such a situation, if there are a few officials who have strong pro-torture beliefs, they can persuade the fence-sitters to activate or expand the torture capabilities that already exist within some of the state's bureaus.

The bottom line is that while many citizens condemn torture and get sick to their stomachs over it, and while many innocents and captives are being destroyed by the torture apparatus of the state, the state's cruelties grind on.

The utilitarian fallacy

The main argument in favor of the current round of torture is the utilitarian one that it has saved or is saving American lives. We do not have enough information to verify whether this statement is true or false, but neither do those who make it and they can't get such information. If the knowledge that Americans torture captives hardens resistance against the U.S. and creates more insurgents, then torture has cost American lives. Torture may cost the lives or sanity of some torturers. It may teach Americans to ignore other moral rules and generate further evils. Because the utilitarian cannot measure or know the multiple negative effects of torture like these, he is incapable of ever proving the statement that torture saves American lives.

There are deeper objections to the utilitarian defense of torture. In the utilitarian ethic, a bad act is allowable if its good consequences more than outweigh the bad. This is supposed to provide a guiding rule by which people live. But we must ask "Who is going to do the bad act, such as the torturing?" Will it be each of us in our daily lives? Will we each make judgments that we can do evil acts because we think the good coming from them outweighs their evil? Without moral guidelines, how can we possibly make such judgments, and won't they lead to chaos? How can we judge amounts of good and bad and the ramifications of our evil acts?

Suppose anyone can commit an evil act if he believes that the good it generates outweighs it. Won't the moral distinction between good and evil simply break

down as everyone does what he pleases according to his own judgment? Won't the distinction between evil-doers and good-doers break down? How can we distinguish a victim from an aggressor if the aggressor argues or believes that he is doing good by some malicious act?

It is clear that utilitarian rules can't be used at an individual level as a general way of life without creating chaos. Can they possibly be used at a group or social level? This raises more questions. Who can oversee this process? Who judges the amounts of good and evil? Who says it is all right to euthanize old people so that the living will live better? Who draws the lines? The state? Its employees? Will some authorities be allowed to commit these crimes on behalf of everyone else? But then who monitors them and decides whether what they are doing has a net benefit to everyone else? Who controls them? Even if a group process is followed, the distinction between good and evil, between evil-doer and good-doer breaks down.

Suppose, however, that somehow standards of good and evil are maintained. The utilitarian ethic leads to a few people, or some of the people, or even a majority of the people making life and death decisions for the rest. But in this process, whether it be done by individuals or by social groups, parties, or the state, there are *no fixed standards* of good and evil. The utilitarian standards, if they exist at all, are man-made. This means that they are subjective, changeable, and biased. This means they are open to abuse. Changing rules of good and evil must ultimately lead to confusion, clashes, and social disorder.

Instead, suppose that we have a fixed rule. Murder is forbidden, period, because it is inherently evil. It's evil because it violates God's commandment. We have a once-and-for-all judgment from above, from beyond mankind. We have a clear line that avoids confusion. We have a moral law that everyone can understand and implement. We have a stable and constant rule, an absolute rule that prevents abuse. Such a law makes the human being inviolate. We either have such a law or we do not. Without such a moral law, we have an unsettled utilitarian ethic. We have chaos, bias, and injustice. With such a law, we have order, freedom, and justice.

The torture quiz

Take the following quiz.

1. Does the threat of death lie behind torture?

2. Is torture cruel?
3. Does torture break the will?
4. Does torture cause betrayal of honor?
5. Is it permissible to wreck the body of a captive?
6. Is it permissible to extract or steal information from a person's head under duress?
7. Is it permissible to steal or injure a person's mind? Health? Dignity? Peace of mind?
8. Is torture a physical aggression against a defenseless person?
9. Is torture of a captured enemy soldier the appropriate response to their participation in their defense or aggression?
10. It is good to relieve the pain and suffering of others. If one inflicts pain and suffering on others, is this not then evil?

You may grade the quiz yourself. If you think this quiz is biased or if you favor torture, you may add an additional unanswerable question: Does torture save lives?

Or take the one-question quiz: Would you want to be tortured, to be treated inhumanely and cruelly?

A few religious words

In Genesis 49, Jacob said of two of his sons: 5 "Simeon and Levi [are] brothers; Instruments of cruelty [are in] their dwelling place. 6 Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. 7 Cursed [be] their anger, for [it is] fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel."

Simeon and Levi are condemned for harboring instruments of cruelty and using them in their wrath against men and oxen.

Psalms 74 says: 20 "Have respect to the covenant; For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty."

The CIA's covert prison facilities are termed "black sites" in official documents. God's covenant and laws are opposed to these places of cruelty.

Ezekiel 34 speaks against the cruelties of the misbehaving shepherds of Israel: 4 "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them."

Leviticus 19 speaks of mistreating the deaf and blind: 14 "You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I [am] the LORD."

Is it coincidence that the U.S. military blindfolds and hoods its captives, or that it deafens them and others with obnoxious sounds?

Pope Paul VI promulgated *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), in which was written: "Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator."

Later, in *Veritatis splendor*, August 6, 1993, Pope Paul classified all of these acts as "intrinsically evil."

Conclusion

Speaking of torture is difficult when American soldiers are taught to behave barbarously in wars such as Vietnam and Iraq. It is hard to speak of torture when hundreds of thousands of innocent people are slain in and because of American-style warfare, or when America sets off bloody civil wars such as

in Iraq.

Torture is the next step beyond the harsh, hostile, brutal, trigger-happy, callous, and demeaning behavior of American soldiers that is so often reported in the press. If torture is counter-productive, so is this behavior. Both are products of state bureaucracies.

The American public is altogether too lenient with its purse and its sympathy for any American military enterprise. It is altogether too tolerant of war-making and war-supporting Congressmen.

Americans, how great our wickedness on the earth has become!

October 30, 2006

4. A VERY GREAT EVIL

Led by rulers blind to justice and deaf to history, arrogant and self-righteous, anxious for fame, indifferent to violence and willfully ignorant, a selfish and malleable American people, aroused by fear and steeped in obedience, sent their uniformed and armed sons and daughters into a strange and ancient land to conquer and root out its political leaders, defeat its forces, and remake that distant and foreign nation in its own image. Unfamiliar names like Mosul and Fallujah, crossed and re-crossed by the peoples of ancient civilizations for thousands of years before Americans birthed a nation and empire, became bloody headlines of mass destruction, death, desolation, and disruption.

Five years later, the shame of a nation, the invasion of a foreign Muslim land with massive injury and death brought to its people by this supposedly Christian nation, still multiplies its evil and continues the campaign of interference, domination, and suffering begun decades ago. History will record no shining victory here, but a long-running episode in which a mighty empire, like its brutal predecessors, wasted its blood and treasure in injustice, futility, and ineptitude.

We are guilty of a very great and ongoing evil. When will we not only end this very great evil but also extinguish its sources? Do we ask if we will repeat these deeds next year or five years from now? Do we even wonder what other strange and unfamiliar places and peoples we will invade or re-invade? Do we wonder what themes and stories we will then conjure up as justifications so that we may sleep the peaceful sleep of the innocent?

We have arranged our comfortable and painless lives so that, out of our sight and without being whipped and brutalized, we effortlessly pay for a massive machinery of blood operated by an immense political power that we have inherited, built up, maintained, blessed, and anointed. That machinery and what it does and is doing is who we are. That machinery embodies our evil, and it is a very great evil.

It is an evil waiting to be undone and overcome. Will we be the people to undo and overcome it? Maybe not. Time is short. Our disintegration runs on and on, unstoppably, on an unending track. Our leaders persuade us that we are racing to the top. We are racing to the bottom. The contempt for human life exhibited by us and our leaders rises. It shows no sign of diminishing.

Our rulers manipulate us into the worship of power and the machinery of war. We pay for our own destruction. Our war department and those of other nations are already building terrifying robot machinery that will develop itself under the programmed instruction of its masters. The bloodthirsty tyrants among us, left unchecked, will raise warfare to ever higher levels. What will they do but employ such a phalanx of robots domestically against us or those targeted as enemies of the people? Who will escape being a target? Oppression and domination are the life-blood of tyrants.

Empire abroad and oppression at home, in all its forms, are brothers under the skin, mutually reinforcing. We have empire abroad because we have domestic oppression, and we will have domestic oppression as long as we have empire abroad.

The quadrennial spectacles of presidential politics change faces. They do not change the organizations of power and blood that run America. Will we change them? Possibly, but maybe not. A democracy is a hydra. How does one change it? Where is the tyrant? He is everywhere. He is inside us. We must cut down the tyrant inside each of us.

We are not radical enough. We are too self-satisfied. We are not rebellious enough. We are bound up in invisible wires. We are indoctrinated. We fear too much, and in that fear is our slavery.

Whence cometh change? The spirit of peace hovers over and around all of us. The air carries its unaccustomed words to our ears. We hear them not, or ignore them. The light carries its messages to our eyes. We read them not, or ignore them. These are very great evils.

We have kneeled so long before our national altar that we can no longer arise and topple it. It is an idol with a huge mouth that symbolizes devouring. We worship and devour ourselves. We bow before this idol, which is a dehumanized and depersonified vision and version of ourselves. This is a very great evil.

March 26, 2008

5. THE LIVING DEAD

Up until now, I've always thought of the American Empire in conventional terms as a continuing enterprise that, sooner or later, would decline and fall. No more. Today I began thinking of it as dead, ethically, that is. This helps to fix its place among good and bad human institutions. I think we can think of the state in the same way. Why give these institutions one shred of credit more than they deserve?

As I see it, the Empire was stillborn ethically. Whatever life it had and has, was and is, ethically invalid. Its life is drawn from us the living; we die as it batters on our blood. Like a vampire, the Empire is morally dead. It lives by night and darkness, has no reflection in any mirror, and can't survive without inflicting death on the living. The body of the Empire keeps on fighting for blood, round after round; but it's a moral zombie. Unfortunately for us, we are part of it. As in the Dracula story, we sustain it, we are hypnotized by it, and after awhile we become a disciple of the dreadful creature. We see and live the night and day of the living dead.

Life is identified with ethical behavior. Speaking of his unrighteous enemies, David wrote "their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre." But, "thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield."

Never does one hear more howls of protest as when one proclaims to the modern relativist ear that there is such a thing as absolute right and wrong; and that straying from right does have negative, life-destroying consequences. This reflexive and defensive reaction to any disturbing thought of an absolute value, despite the relativist's own absolute assumption of no absolutes, shows that our ethics are in bad shape.

In our political lives and thus our individual lives, less and less do we recognize and live by the ethics we once lived by and still should live by. These ethics can still be found in desk drawers of hotel and motel rooms. Our society's usual institutions for conveying ethics are so weak that business students have to take courses in ethics to compensate for not learning elsewhere that stealing and cheating are wrong.

A hundred or more years ago, when philosophers declared God dead; when science shook faith; when socialism postulated new ideals; when the U.S.

pursued national power; Americans turned away from the beliefs, ethics, and practices that had brought them bounty. And now, after many years, we can see clearly, if we would or could, that we made a wrong turn. That wrong turn cannot be dismissed, as the young and naïve are wont to do, by pointing to the reduced time it takes to travel from Los Angeles to Toronto or to the breaking of color barriers. These things or others like them in even more bounteous quantity would have occurred had we stayed on and extended the proper ethical course of a limited and just government that minded its own business at home and abroad. That wrong turn is measured by such things as near-continuous warfare, broken lives and families, a dependent and dumbed-down population, static standards of living, ever-deteriorating money, humongous debts, greater cruelty, greater indifference to suffering, a greater use of violence, less liberty, less freedom of choice, increasing authoritarianism and militarism, greater welfare, more crime, less justice, less innovation, less civility, deteriorating art and culture, and less civilization.

The ethical underpinnings, however slight, that girded the myth of the U.S. as a beneficial international power have dissolved. The mistaken ideals that launched the U.S. into World War I and further overseas misadventures have proven empty and false. The ill-considered ideas that entangled the U.S. in the international machinations of the world order of states have backfired.

Domestically and internationally, the machinery of state surrealistically clanks on, but it is hopelessly clogged up. Its rhythm lacks measure and cadence in its chaos of nervous exhaustion. It goes through the motions, incanting the tired slogans and spells of its once-powerful magic. The bizarre atmosphere dispensed by the strange and unbelievable practices of the American Empire contains no life-giving oxygen. It suffocates whatever it envelops with a poisonous gas of laws, pressures, and regulations. Morally and ethically dead, dispersing ever-more utterly outlandish emanations, the machinery of state deals death upon whatever it touches.

Having gutted the ethical foundations of life, we have instituted policies of death. More and more we come face to face with our own madness. Today, people constantly refer to things as "crazy." Yet they do not fully realize what they are saying, how deep this craziness goes, or why it is so prevalent.

Political modernity in America is irrational and senseless. The domestic political machine is geared to produce truly incredible wares that did not exist 50 years ago: thousand-mile walls at borders, denuded travelers at airports, 57

varieties of higher-priced and less efficient fuels, know-nothing graduates, asset seizures, uncaring doctors, dirty hospitals, inflating abortions, inflating money, political correctness, money and speech-controlled political campaigns, jigsawed political districts, food and pesticide bans, deteriorating infrastructure, dependency, irresponsibility, clogged courts, women soldiers, grade school sex education, rampaging prosecutors, thought crimes, asbestos insanity, protected insects and swamps, broken families, murderers freed and drug users imprisoned, class action lawsuits, eavesdropping, wiretapping, books of labor laws, unopenable bottle closures, arbitrary environmental regulations, moon bases, and destruction of the rule of law. Aren't all these products of our society simply madness?

But, you say, I exaggerate. Are we not healthier, wealthier, and wiser? Where's the chaos? All is in order, is it not? Appearances deceive. Bela Lugosi's Dracula was suave and urbane. The American inmates are indeed under control, but they are gobbling anti-depressants and other such drugs at a very high rate. Houses are bigger than ever, but meanwhile so are debts and millions of two-earner families run to stay even. Where is the wisdom? Certainly not in Washington or state capitols.

We have only the appearance of a lawful social order. Rigidity combined with outlandish bureaucratic regulation made good by blind obedience are not law but its absence. Chaotic and mad results signify a lack of stable guiding laws of life, not their presence.

The absence of law means an absence of a moral and ethical basis for the products of the American political machine. Those who think there is and defend this insane machine delude themselves as they attempt to delude others. I challenge anyone to show that American political life does anything except constantly flout the Ten Commandments, which are what should be the true source of law, justice, and order. Instead, madness, which is a variety of death that disregards truth and reality, spreads like an infection.

Madness has its own cleverness and intelligence, mind you. It feigns sanity. It accuses the sane of being mad; it makes the sane wonder if they are the ones who have lost their minds. The demon vampire promises everlasting life.

The New World Order of Woodrow Wilson, promoted by U.S. leaders for almost 100 years, briefly brought into prominence by George H.W. Bush, continued by Bill Clinton, promoted with new vigor by George Bush, and to

be continued by whoever is elected in 2008, is, in reality, a corpse, having no sound ethical soul. Being nothing more than a vain emanation of empire, it too walks among the living dead. There is no Columbia or Universal Pictures writer to script it with a truly productive life. There is no Boris Karloff to bring it to life; no Elsa Lanchester to play the bride of this Frankenstein's monster. The mad doctors of empire continue to pump serum into the cadaver's veins and expose it to lightning, but the heavens give this body no independent existence. It lives off the living.

In 1998, [Lew Rockwell](#) wrote: "The foundations of [U.S.] empire have begun to crack," and he recounted the many signs and signals thereof such as waning public support, U.S. isolation in the world community, a weakened military, and divisions within the establishment. He was and is correct. The empire can only exist with continual infusions of life support. Take them away and the body disintegrates. In the practical and political spheres, the U.S. empire is being exposed to the sun's rays. It is disintegrating.

Any impartial and serious review of the history of U.S. interventions overseas must concede that U.S. actions lack a sound or firm ethical basis, all political rhetoric notwithstanding. The devotees of realism in foreign affairs or of realpolitik claim a vague utilitarianism. This neither limits the state's scope of action nor can be mapped into improvements in the welfare of individual citizens, domestic or foreign. The Wilsonian-style devotees of new world order face exactly the same ethical riddles. Although they claim noble goals such as democracy, their actions at best treat both American and foreign peoples as so many pieces to be manipulated in a worldwide political puzzle. And at worst, they treat people as cannon fodder or as slaves from which wealth can be extracted so as to finance their grandiose schemes to better humanity.

There is no ethical magic by which what is wrong for you and me to do becomes right because we elect officials who order the CIA to do it for us. We are implicated in every wrongful act of our state and empire. When the U.S. intentionally degraded Iraq's water supplies through sanctions in the 1990s, killing hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, these acts were wrong; and we as Americans were implicated in those deaths. When U.S. soldiers torture or when the CIA operates secret prison camps and tortures, these acts are wrong; and we as Americans are implicated. When the U.S. unjustly attacks Afghanistan and Iraq, nations that have not attacked the U.S., these acts are wrong. When the U.S. bombs Yugoslavia, for no defensive reason, it is an unlawful act. When the U.S. behind the scenes supplies arms, money, and

technical aid, and instigates other states in their attacks, again, we are in the wrong. When the U.S. in one way or another violently overthrows a Noriega, a Diem, and a Mossadegh, or tries to overthrow a Castro, we are in the wrong; for none of these actions trace back to any conceivable ethical justification in terms of what you and I as individuals are entitled to do. At best, our officials claim a thin veneer of legality based upon liberal, that is, unwarranted constitutional interpretations. To be truly lawful, a constitutional justification must rest on a legitimate theory of legitimate right.

In the ethical sphere, which is the underpinning of political legitimacy, the U.S. empire has never since its inception had justification for most of its acts. It had pretexts, often as not concocted. So, in reality, it was always a morally inert thing, a creature of the living dead. America needs to drive a stake through this beast's heart or else find itself exposed to further disintegration. We stand to lose a great deal unless we repudiate much of what we now believe in, accept, and have come to stand for.

Will we expeditiously dissolve our creation, this Dracula, in the nearest vat of hydrochloric or sulfuric acid à la Peter Cushing? I doubt it. But the horrific intensification of the Iraq War launched in 2003, surrounded as it is by all manner of deceit, provides another opportunity for a change of heart and action among Americans at large. We need to admit to ourselves that what we have done is wrong. We need to admit that much of what we have done for a long time is wrong. Then we have to take steps not to repeat these massive collective sins.

At this moment, it is written on the hearts of all who pay any attention whatsoever to public events that this state and the empire it supports are morally and ethically brain-dead. More than a few acknowledge this, but most rebel against this knowledge and refuse to accept it. The fact that so few of our intellectual, political, business, and religious leaders acknowledge this that they know is true; the fact that so few speak out against our unjust state and empire; the fact that so few demand fundamentally new directions for our country; these facts mean that this Dracula has embedded itself deep in the lifeblood of very many Americans.

While it is late in the game, it is not too late for Americans to reject U.S. pretensions to creating a world international order. It is not too late to reject the longstanding prejudices and desires of our establishment elite to run the world. For decades, we have been listening to a constant barrage of rhetoric

from the internationalists among us claiming to support and propel American values to all corners of the globe. But their constant global interference has been anti-American. They have departed drastically from the fundamental Washingtonian-Jeffersonian principle of neutrality and non-interference. Do we want other nations to interfere in our land? Do they have that right? Then why should we interfere in theirs?

January 26, 2007

6. THE CAUSE OF EMPIRE

Aggressive foreign policy causes no end of misery. How can we alter the aggressive foreign policy of the U.S.? We need to diagnose its cause before prescribing a cure.

Wilhelm Röpke, in his book, *International Order and Economic Integration*, makes the case that aggressive foreign policy does not stem, as the Marxists would have it, from capitalism or finance capitalism. He writes:

“It is true that in such cases the chain of cause and effect contains economic links, but it ends finally in the field in which, contrary to the materialistic interpretation of history, all decisions take place: the field of politics, power, ideology, psychology, sociology, emotionalism. Everything which at a superficial glance seems to indicate that capitalism is the villain of the piece proves upon more thorough examination to be entirely fallacious. It only proves that, under the present economic system as well as under any other, stupidity, egoism, greed and falsehood can carry on their evil work against peace, as long as reason, public spirit, moderation and truth are not able to keep them under control. Not the imaginary inescapable fatalism of the economic laws of capitalism are to be denounced, but human default.”

I agree in part. Röpke is correct to trace empire, based on politics and power, back to the human being. And he is correct to reject market exchange or ownership of capital as causes.

But we need to go further. It will appear to be superficial to trace empire and its wars back to the human being. We wish to change this evil behavior, if we can. To do that, we need to understand its cause or causes, if we can. So we ask: From whence inside the human being does the "evil work against peace" arise? From man's reason? From his will? From his imagination? From his ego? From his emotions? From his desires? From his heart (his essence)? From all of these? Where shall we turn to find the answer?

Röpke locates the source primarily in reason and ego. But there is far more to evil than "human default" and "stupidity," which encompass human error and human blundering. Röpke comes closer when he speaks of egoism. But mere arrogance, self-interest, and pride still do not fully hit the mark in understanding evil, although egoism as self-worship does. Nor does Röpke hit

home in characterizing evil when he speaks of falsehood versus truth, for what he means by falsehood is rather narrow. He means Machiavellian falsehood or intentional lying (akin to fraud and use of force) in the service of gain and advantage. Although Röpke gives us some clues, we need to go further if we are to diagnose evil and prescribe a remedy.

The Holy Bible provides us with insight as to the location of evil. We find clearly stated the prime location of evil in man. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.) Also: "...and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;" (Genesis 8:21.) Proverb 12:20 says "Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil." Jesus says: "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4) And also: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matthew 12:35.)

According to God's Word, man's evil runs deep, as deep as it can go, pervading his very essence. Evil is within man's heart. The evil is manifested in all the facets of man: his mind, his will, his imagination, his wants, his emotions, and so on, but the source runs deeper than any single one of these. Each of these aspects places specific evils on display, like vanity, pride, selfishness, falsehood, and immoderation. As Jesus put it: "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." (Matthew 7:17.) The whole tree is corrupt.

When Röpke speaks of "reason, public spirit, moderation and truth" as keeping "stupidity, egoism, greed and falsehood" "under control," in order to achieve peace, he is very, very far from giving the Biblical view of the matter. In the Biblical diagnosis, the solution cannot be from within man in and of himself via his own self-control because the evil pervades man from top to bottom. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, not unless that corruption is alleviated.

The evil of man relates directly to authority and its imposition on other men. But the latter evil relates directly to man's relationship with God. We are told throughout the Bible that man's evil, which is his sin, is sin "in the sight of the LORD." This evil provokes God and incurs his wrath. And the reason for this is that the evil came about by the rejection of God. Man through concrete

action in the Garden showed his unbelief in God's instruction and authority. Man made himself the authority and simultaneously rejected the authority of God. The only other possible authority left to man after rejecting God's authority was himself.

But there are many men on earth. Having rejected God, men surely reject each other as authorities, because men are lesser beings. They are left in the uncomfortable position of seeking a final authority on the earth. Who among them is the ultimate authority? Obviously, from the perspective of the Bible, none of them are. They cannot possibly find a man among themselves who is the ultimate authority. There is little recourse among those who reject God's authority but to attempt to make themselves the authority. They cannot succeed, but, in reflection of the evil in their hearts, they try. They attempt to dominate one another. In the political realm, gross misuses of the State manifest these attempts.

Empire and war involve extensions of man's authority via the State. One set of men wishes to rule another set of men. There is a restless search for the authority of some men over other men. And, by the way, those leaders who have a deep need to demonstrate their authority, no matter what their professed relationship is to God, can be the most dangerous.

As areas of human behavior related to empire and war, Röpke mentions "the field of politics, power, ideology, psychology, sociology, emotionalism." To mention too much beclouds the matter. The problem is sin, specifically, evil in the heart brought about by rejection of God. To reject God's authority is to accept man's authority. The logical consequence is a struggle to be number one on earth. Aggressive foreign policy quite directly traces back to the rejection of God's authority.

Man, being the evil creature he is, he also misinterprets God's Word on behalf of aggressive foreign policy. This problem is a very serious one addressed by a number of LRC columnists such as [Bill Barnwell](#) and [Laurence M. Vance](#)

We should know what we are up against. The cure for empire and war is by no means simple since it involves a multitude of human hearts and God. And it involves a serious degree of transformation. But there is healing available.

October 10, 2007

CHAPTER IV – IRAN

INTRODUCTION

The threat of the American empire making unilateral war on Iran over the nuclear issue intensified in the Bush II administration. The U.S. has been at odds with Iran for a long time. Talk of Iran's nuclear weapons potential goes back 25 years. In 1996, Congress passed the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act. The article "*Bombing Will Not Settle the Iranian Nuclear Issue*" was written at a time when the risk of a U.S. or Israeli air strike on Iran, possibly using nuclear weapons, had risen to about 1 chance in 3. It warned that such a first strike would provide a long-lasting recruiting tool for terrorists and give them the green light to retaliate on American soil in kind.

"The Iran-U.S. Dispute and Military Action" begins by reviewing the conflict's roots and the reasons for it. The U.S., as in Iraq, wants a friendly and pliant government in Iran. The U.S. wants a degree of dominance over Iranian affairs, while the Iranians want independence. Iran has aspirations to become a regional hegemon, while the U.S. wants hegemony. These basic differences result in suspicions and positions that are not susceptible to settlement at this time, unless each side gives up something. Each side's ambitions clash with the other's.

The U.S. has tried to isolate Iran and brand it a renegade using the nuclear issue. That issue has gained substantial traction. The House passed a virtual declaration of war on Iran in its Resolution 362 that was shelved in 2008. Iran has a program to develop nuclear power plants, aided by Russia, and the U.S. has always feared and charged that this would pave the way to nuclear weapons. Whether or not Iran will develop nuclear weapon capabilities is an open question. It now has 7,000 centrifuges to enrich uranium that can be used either peacefully or as part of a weapons development program, but it probably hasn't enough electricity to run them continuously. Since Israel and some other

nations have nuclear weapons, it may seem rational to Iran's leadership to increase their options for developing them in the future in order to counter threats from nuclear powers like Israel and the U.S.

Bush and neoconservatives demonized Iran. A number of them advocated preventive war and/or air strikes on Iran's suspected and actual uranium enrichment facilities. What might the U.S. military say to this? What might consideration of the ramifications of such strikes suggest? This article assesses many factors that affect the chances of the U.S. taking various military actions against Iran. There is not at all an open and shut military case in favor of bombing Iran's nuclear facilities. Any number of factors suggest that it would be disastrous, including endangering the U.S. troops in Iraq. Hence, the article suggests that rational considerations will dissuade the Bush administration from attacking Iran. In the future, the more threatening that Iran is perceived to become, the greater the chance that Israel and/or the U.S. will initiate military action against Iran. Time may or may not be on the side of the West's goals. Iran's government is not highly successful. Much of the population wants change. This can lead to a friendlier regime, or it can lead to greater repression and control in Iran.

None of this would be a problem if the American empire did not seek to extend its foreign control. Such extensions are detrimental to most of its citizens who bear the costs. Pragmatically, all such extensions of power create difficult problems for the U.S., whose officials seem always to be taken by surprise time after time despite their predictability. Attempts to intrude on other states and control them often go awry. The supposed benefits from such attempts, such as the vague thing called "national security," are not at all apparent. The costs in the form of armaments, occasional guerilla wars, divided countries, and now blowback on American soil are highly visible.

1. BOMBING WILL NOT SETTLE THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR ISSUE

The United States is walking at the edge of a cliff. If it bombs Iran to stem Iranian development of nuclear weapons, it fatally poisons U.S. relationships with the entire world of Islam. If it uses nuclear weapons in the assault, it further seals the fate of future generations of Americans.

Reports of such a strike in preparation go back over a year. Yet the American media are failing to warn of the catastrophic implications of such an attack.

The insurgency in Iraq and movements like al-Qaeda, ready to recruit and rain destruction worldwide, show us what to expect as a consequence of bombing Iran. Islamic moderates will never again ignore fatwas that declare war on America if America bombs Iran.

Muslim Pakistan has nuclear weapons now, and bin Laden hides on its doorstep. If bin Laden hasn't been captured by now, this shows how shaky the U.S. reliance on Pakistan is.

Moderate Muslims could disregard extremists like bin Laden in the past. But after the U.S. and Israel waste dozens of Iranian facilities and kill many innocent civilians, generations will not forgive or forget the brazen aggression.

Future Americans will live in perpetual fear of a nuclear response on American soil. A country that cannot keep drugs out of prisons will not be able to keep terrorists from smuggling nuclear arms onto the continent.

America's children and grandchildren will have President Bush to thank for taking the fatal step over the cliff. They can thank 50 years of American interference in the Middle East, Central Asia, and elsewhere for a bloody fourth-generation war on their soil.

America can step back from the brink at any time it chooses. Our fate is not yet sealed. Changing direction is not the impossibly difficult or complex matter that it seems. Richard M. Nixon went to China. Kennedy pushed for the nuclear test ban treaty.

Diplomacy is always available. Dramatic gestures are equally possible, and they can shift the moral climate overnight. The world has neutral and religious leaders who can mediate policy shifts.

Every day's crop of deadly incidents in Iraq provides the occasion for political statements that can move the U.S. away from the precipice. The choice is between moving away from intervention or hurtling into the abyss. That is where we stand today.

The stubborn single-minded devotion to force and the misguided Utopian hopes of the U.S. leadership are perilously bringing the country to a point of no return. The U.S. has an excess of military might that is blinding our rulers. They cannot see what using this power brings in its wake.

Too many years of untrammelled use of military might have shielded U.S. rulers from the immorality and consequences of their acts. They now live in a world of dangerous delusions about the use of power. They fail to see the perils of its use, even when the mortal consequences to American lives are staring them in the face. The only reason they have not bombed Iran already is that they have not yet created the pretext for obtaining cover for this aggression.

After Iran has been bombed and the Middle East cauldron boils over into a wider war, it will be too late ever to go back. Our leaders will twist and turn to rationalize the necessity of their heinous acts. They will whip up glory and praise for their use of mighty weapons, even nuclear weapons.

The deadly course we are on is not our only alternative. We must turn away from the brink of more war. We must turn toward nonintervention. We must renounce nuclear weapons. Either that or leap over a cliff of death.

January 7, 2006

2. THE IRAN-U.S. DISPUTE AND MILITARY ACTION

The conflict

Iran and the U.S. are at odds. They have been greatly at odds since 1979 when the Shah of Iran fell from power and the Islamic Republic of Iran began. But the U.S. participation in the coup that overthrew Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1953 shows that the U.S. has long sought substantial influence over Iran's rulers. What are the roots of the antagonism between these two states, and how might it end up?

The main U.S. aim in the region is a steady flow of oil from the Middle East. To attain this goal, U.S. policy since World War II has been to protect the security of Saudi Arabia and to have close ties with nearby oil-producing entities like Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. In the past, this aim involved ties and influence over Iraq and Iran, until problems of control arose.

The protection policy follows a general pattern established long ago when the British obtained oil concessions: "The Ruler of Qatar, for example, secured a formal guarantee of protection from Britain against attack by an external power before signing the May 1935 commercial agreement."

Secondly, the U.S. supports the existence of the State of Israel. Iran doesn't.

The Bush Doctrine introduced another aim, American national security. Bush declared that American Middle Eastern policy will be designed to prevent "catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends." The means will be "a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East." The Iraq War is an example of the forward strategy in operation.

The U.S. has a fourth aim, which is to prevent Iran and the Middle East from being dominated or heavily influenced by Russia. The chance of this happening at present is low, but dominance is a longstanding Russian ambition.

All the U.S. aims bring the U.S. into confrontation with Iran. The U.S. wants to counter Iran politically, ideally have it under U.S. influence. In essence, this implies a position of weakness or even submission for Iran.

Iran, on the other hand, aims to be (a) independent and (b) a regional power.

By independence, Iran means that it does not want to kowtow to other countries, to be pushed around, or to be treated as a second-class pariah.

The U.S. goal of dominance and the Iranian goal of independence are irreconcilable. This is why the U.S. and Iran are in conflict.

The problems faced by the U.S. are problems of its own making. The U.S. introduced itself into the Middle East. It did not have to aim for secure oil via political agreements. It did not have to support the State of Israel. It does not have to inject itself into Iraq or other nations to secure itself. It does not have to prevent Russia from trying to meddle in the Middle East. Iran aims to become a regional power. The U.S. does not have to prevent this either.

Now that the U.S. is thoroughly entangled in the Middle East, it will have big problems disentangling itself. But it should, because no good for the U.S. is coming out of being enmeshed in the affairs of the Middle Eastern nations. The oil is less secure and the U.S. is less secure. This seems to be a no-brainer.

Iran and the U.S. do not have diplomatic relations. Their officials hardly even talk to one another. A brief thaw transpired in 2000 when both President Khatami of Iran and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made some hopeful gestures, although they exchanged no words. However, their actions did not have time to overcome the irreconcilable aims of the two countries or their history of conflict that includes the CIA's overthrow of Mossadegh and Iran's support of Hezbollah. In short order, the CIA during the Bush administration was accusing Iran of various terrorist and nuclear activities. Bush was placing Iran in the axis of evil, and the warming gave way to a deep freeze. This sharp shift in the climate severely injured progress.

The U.S. possibly can get off the Middle East hook by a settlement in which the U.S. agrees to withdraw from the region (as the British once did) in return for agreements from Iran and Syria (and perhaps a few other nations) to recognize Israel. The U.S. would have to make other concessions and the State of Israel would also have to make very serious concessions. The U.S. does not want such an agreement or withdrawal. It is still intent on using its power in the region. It is also not clear that Iran and Syria, among others, want to let the U.S. off the hook.

The nuclear issue

To become stronger and more independent, Iran wants its own nuclear power plants. The U.S. vigorously supported the Shah's ambitious plan to have nuclear power plants. But ever since his overthrow, the U.S. has tried to derail Iran's nuclear program (and its government.)

Iran's oil production has fallen dramatically while its population has risen. Every barrel of oil Iran uses domestically sacrifices the receipt of export dollars. The oil that Iran uses costs Iran just as much as it costs to an outside buyer. This is one reason why it wants nuclear power. The U.S. leadership has propagandized that Iran is awash in oil and does not need nuclear power plants. This myth has been repeated in the American press.

As a further step toward independence and power, Iran also wants to control each stage of the uranium production process. This is allowable under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It allows a low degree of uranium enrichment, and Iran wants to do this processing itself.

The U.S. doesn't want Iran to have nuclear power plants, and it does not want Iran to have nuclear weapons. The U.S. views an allowable nuclear power program under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision as a precursor to an Iranian threat of nuclear weapons being developed. This is consistent with the U.S. goal of keeping Iran politically weak. Had the U.S. not blundered into the region, the whole nuclear issue would not have been a problem for it, real or imagined.

Actually, Iran has no nuclear weapons. It is a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and the IAEA inspects its nuclear program. Iran has consistently denied ambitions for nuclear weapons. It has verbally guaranteed that it is against them and will not produce them. This could change if threats or pressures against Iran rise to a high enough level.

Since an Iranian nuclear program is legal, the U.S. uses other means to browbeat and undermine Iran's ambitions such as influencing Russia to slow down its work, instituting sanctions to slow down Iran's progress, and influencing European countries who deal with Iran.

Exaggerated U.S. fears of Iranian nuclear potential are deeply embedded in the American psyche. They permeate U.S. thinking and policy. The U.S. has for

over 25 years persistently raised the spectre of Iranian nuclear weapons even though Iran has none. In 1985 the military was considering reports of Iran attempting to develop nuclear weapons during the Iran-Iraq War. In 1992, military thinkers spoke of Iraq, Iran, and Libya luring Russian scientists to work on their nuclear programs. In 1996 the Congress of the United States passed The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act. Rep. Gilman (N.Y.), for example, at that time spoke of the clandestine nuclear programs of both Iran and Iraq as if they were real. None of this has ever panned out.

IAEA inspectors have been inspecting Iran for years. They haven't found any nuclear weapons program going on in Iran much less actual weaponry. The IAEA now is beginning to act as Bush did with Saddam Hussein. The IAEA has demanded that Iran somehow prove a negative, that it does not have nuclear ambitions or weapons.

Iran for many years conducted allowable small-scale experiments on the enrichment of uranium but it failed to disclose them as it was obliged to. These were lab or bench experiments. Their sophistication level was not high. Producing various uranium compounds in the lab is a very long way from creating concentrated uranium and a workable bomb that can be placed on a missile. After these experiments were revealed in late 2003, Iran moved to a policy of full disclosure and additional voluntary inspections. This backfired on Iran. It produced increased Western and IAEA suspicions, demands, and pressure accompanied by long negotiations that recently halted or have failed when Iran ended its voluntary suspension of enrichment activity. Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of IAEA, seems to have taken each voluntary or other concession as reason to demand another and another. As the saying goes "Give an inch and he'll take a mile." He gave an interview to Newsweek in which he vented his righteous indignation publicly against Iran for stopping what it volunteered to do over and above its legal requirement two years ago. This took him out of a supposedly objective mode into a powerful political mode. In 2005 President Khatami expressed disappointment with the ongoing talks with the EU-3 and hinted that Iran would end its voluntary halt of uranium enrichment if the other side did not live up to its promises. This has now happened. The whole issue now appears headed for some sort of U.N. process, but only time will tell.

Why would Iran, despite their high cost, want nuclear weapons? A country with nuclear weapons can't use them against another country that also has them for fear of retaliation. If both Israel and Iran have nuclear weapons, the

chances are neither will ever use them on each other. The country that has nuclear weapons can intimidate and/or deter the country that does not have them. Israel can deter Iran, for example. However, this one-sided balance of power is an inducement for Iran to get nuclear weapons. If it got them, it couldn't use them. Therefore, Iran (rationally) seeks to get Israel to give up its nuclear weapons and join the nuclear non-proliferation club. But if Iran thinks that the U.S. and/or Israel are a big enough threat to its existence, then it becomes rational for Iran to get nuclear weapons so as to neutralize the threat.

In the end, has Iran so far accumulated fissile material and conducted the experiments needed to produce an atomic bomb (never mind a hydrogen bomb)? No, it has not. Is it a few months away from building a bomb? No, it is not. Perhaps the Clinton Administration gave them atomic secrets, as some accounts suggest. This sounds quite far-fetched but we do not know. If so, where is the evidence of weapons production? There isn't any, and the IAEA looked hard.

It is rational for Iran to do the initial research on nuclear weapons, especially if it keeps it within legal bounds. What this does is provide Iran with the option later on to produce weapons if the need arises. This option is valuable. It strengthens Iran. This is why the U.S. is against even this step. This is one reason Iran will not accept the Russian suggestion that it enrich uranium and ship it to Iran. On the other hand, a viable course of action might be for a joint Russian-Iranian company to enrich uranium in Iran. The Russians could make sure that the enrichment was low-level, and the Iranians could increase their technological skills.

Military action

Under the Bush Doctrine, the U.S. could go to war with Iran at any time Bush chooses. He has repeatedly demonized Iran. It wears the scarlet letter T for terror and tyranny. However, a big collision between Iran and the U.S. is probably not imminent. At present, the futures market is saying that we should not expect the deadlock to end in an air strike against Iran. The chance of an overt U.S./Israeli air strike against Iran in the next 14 months has fluctuated between 32 to 39 percent recently (see Tradesports). This is a substantial chance.

Let us look at this event from the point of view of the U.S. leadership. Imagine that it is considering a decision to make an air strike. The goal is to delay

Iran's nuclear power program, not regime change. Let us examine a number of factors that lower or raise the chance of an attack.

1. Bombing may not accomplish its goal because some Iranian facilities are hardened underground (lowers chance.) On the other hand, the Bushehr reactor can be destroyed and bombing would do enough damage to delay Iran's progress for some years (raises chance.)
2. Iran may retaliate. It is strong enough militarily to attack Americans in Iraq (lowers chance.) On the other hand, the Iranian army is not experienced, has little staying power, lacks equipment, and lacks air cover. It's best at defense (raises chance.)
3. Iran can bomb Israel with missiles (lowers chance.) On the other hand, the missiles may not be too accurate and Israel has some anti-missile capabilities (raises chance.)
4. Iran can bottle up the Straits of Hormuz and interfere with Persian Gulf traffic (lowers chance.) This is a real threat because Iran can mine the Gulf and has various missiles. On the other hand, doing this cuts Iran off from a vital source of export and import for itself (raises chance.)
5. An air strike will strengthen the current regime in Iran as most wars do (lowers chance.) On the other hand, some elements within Iran want regime change (raises chance.)
6. An air strike will radicalize Muslims and create an insurgency (lowers chance.)
7. An air strike will not change longstanding Iranian objectives. In fact, it will strengthen their will to achieve them, even if they are delayed (lowers chance.).
8. An air strike will cause Iran to drop out of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and develop nuclear weapons as a defensive measure (lowers chance.) If Iran develops nuclear weapons, then neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia will reconsider their non-nuclear policies (lowers chance.)
9. An air strike does not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It makes it worse because it will, if anything, harden Iran's antagonism toward Israel (lowers chance.)
10. An air strike will cause a sharp rise in the price of oil. This will torpedo Western economies for a while (lowers chance.)
11. The U.S. military forces are not prepared for an Iranian engagement at this time (lowers chance.) On the other hand, they can be pressed and inspired further (raises chance.)

Perhaps factors such as these explain why the market makes the odds at about 2-1 against an air strike. However, a 32–39 percent chance of another war is substantial. We can understand why. The basic U.S. policy is to undermine the existing government in Iran. The U.S. has said that it retains the military option to do so and may use it as a last resort. There are unconfirmed reports of U.S. Special Forces in Iran or in and out of Iran or making ready to enter, either for intelligence, destabilization, preparatory, or infrastructure destruction purposes. There are unconfirmed reports of U.S. overflights attempting to get Iran to reveal its air defense and radar systems.

There is information that U.S. contingency plans against Iran go beyond air strikes. They do not involve substantial ground troops. They call for massive bombing, not only of suspected nuclear sites, but elsewhere, plus the invasion of enough ground and Special Forces to create a fall in the regime and a replacement with a new form of government. American planning looks for a cheaper version of regime change than in Iraq. However, the many negatives listed above suggest there is no such thing as cheap regime change. Occupation might prove necessary after all.

An air strike by itself does not fit in with America's main goal of keeping the oil flowing without disruption, and it may lead to a wider war. Therefore, a full-scale attempt to remake Iran might tempt Bush. The best scenario he can hope for is a collapse in Iran's political structure, people dancing in the streets, and the army throwing down its weapons. Then might come the typically messy creation of a new government. Other scenarios involve prolonged war. Available sources suggest that Iran's armed forces, while inexperienced, might be fairly formidable in a defensive mode, more so than Iraq's were. What's more, they are consolidated with the government. The Islamic Republic of Iran carefully appealed to and restructured the Shah's armed forces so as to absorb them into the regime. These and factors of geography suggest that overthrowing the Iranian government might be harder than in Iraq. The U.S. probably can accomplish it, but the battle may take longer, be more bloody, and require a large contingent of ground troops. After the military "victory," the real problems of occupation might begin as in Iraq. These sorts of scenarios deter the full-scale approach. They leave the air strike option, but that can lead to oil supply disruption and a full-scale war anyway.

The military forces of both sides and the rulers of both sides can think through these factors, and they have better information. This analysis implies that rational U.S. military officials uninfluenced by political pressures will most

likely heavily caution against invading Iran and against an air strike as well. They might endorse it as a last resort if there was a significant Iranian threat that could not be handled by other means, but there isn't any such threat at present. However, the U.S. military is not making the decisions.

Conclusion

What's going on at present is a series of bluffs, threats, moves and countermoves by both sides designed to keep the other side off balance and gain some advantage. If the U.S. makes a war out of the current situation, there is no just or legal basis for it. The U.S. is neither being attacked nor threatened, nor is any ally being attacked, nor is Iran preparing to launch an imminent attack. Starting a new war against Iran will enmesh the U.S. in the Middle East even more than now. But our rulers may see it as a way out of the Middle Eastern briar patch. Instigating war now will solidify the doctrine of preemptive war. It will complete the destruction of what's left of civilized restraints on war-making.

For the moment Iran will continue to stand up for its treaty rights. It will continue to taunt the U.S. and then stand up to it. This helps Ahmadinejad politically up to a point and fits in with Iran's aim of not being dominated. If he goes too far, other powers in Iran will pull him back.

What President Bush might do is another matter. He has identified Iran as an enemy. In his mind, he has justified taking action against it. He believes that this is a commitment, a calling, and a responsibility. He believes that it is reckless if he does not do so. He is not a man especially sensitive to existing legalities. He prefers to make up his own. He is not chastened by the Iraq experience. He may be encouraged by it. Bush may be letting the clock run, moving troops out of Iraq and Europe while preparing to take out Iran and awaiting the politically opportune moment to do so.

January 23, 2006

CHAPTER V – FAULTY NEOCONSERVATIVE THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION

“Islam Isn’t Kosher” exposes the sloppy thinking and sleazy tactics of two writers associated with neoconservative think tanks, who call for the U.S. government to outlaw the Dow Jones Islamic Markets index. These authors exhibit oversimplification, extremism, single-mindedness, suspicion, intolerance, misunderstanding, smearing, defamation, and vilification. What may well be worse is the spreading of false ideas through illogical leaps:

“The U.S. is a superpower (fact). Therefore, the U.S. should seek global hegemony (illogical leap). Saddam Hussein has WMD (supposed fact). Therefore, the U.S. should take him out (illogical leap). Iran is seeking nuclear weapons (assume true). Therefore, the U.S. should introduce Special Forces into Iran and foment a revolution (illogical leap). Syria supports Palestinian causes and terrorists (true). Therefore, the U.S. should make war on Syria (illogical leap). Islam has its own methods of finance (true). Therefore, to fight terrorism, America should outlaw Islamic finance (illogical leap).”

“Morality and Fourth Generation War” explains some of the excellent work of William S. Lind on warfare in a world of weak and weakening states. One cannot understand the conflicts of today or U.S. failures (and occasional movements in the direction of successes) in Iraq and Afghanistan without Lind’s concepts. His articles are highly recommended. Wars have, in order of importance, strategic, operational, and tactical levels. A war lost on the strategic level cannot be won at the operational and tactical levels. Wars have moral, mental, and physical levels. War is fought at all these levels. Neglect of the all-important moral and strategic levels can doom a combatant.

According to Lind: “What ‘wins’ at the tactical and physical levels may lose at the operational, strategic, mental and moral levels, where 4GW is decided.”

On America vs. Iraq, Lind writes:

“The present American way of war assumes that superiority at the tactical (or perhaps merely technical) level, manifested in high technology, will overcome massive failures at the strategic and moral levels. Strategically, a war with Iraq will help, not hurt, our real enemies, non-state forces such as al-Qaeda. Morally, we are launching an aggressive war against a weak enemy for no clear reason.”

The article applies fourth generation concepts to the Israeli-Hezbollah war in July, 2006 and concludes that Hezbollah was the winner at the moral level. We now know that Hezbollah was also [the winner](#) at the conventional physical level.

Neoconservatives who pushed for war with Iraq and are pushing for war with Iran do not understand fourth generation warfare. They do not understand the weakness of the U.S. in such wars. They see only strength in hardware, and they think that these wars are like World War II. “*Pushing the War Buttons*” criticizes the warmongering of Victor Davis Hanson against Iran.

Thomas Sowell calls for more firepower from nations like Israel that, he thinks, are restrained by peace critics. Unaware of the changed nature of the battlefields and wars that America steps into, Thomas Sowell blames Western difficulties in achieving war victories in fourth generation wars on peace movements back home that restrain the armed forces.

Like neoconservatives in general, Hanson thinks that it is only proper for the North American superpower to attack such countries as Syria and Iran. He thinks that the U.S. can win these wars, but he does not realize that U.S. attacks set off fourth generation warfare with non-state enemies that the U.S. has a tough time grappling with. He thinks that American air power wins the day: “History shows that massive attacks from the air are something the West does well,” and “...the West would hit back with something far greater than a cruise missile.” Hanson’s ignorance of military reality is what impelled his overoptimistic neoconservative brethren to promote war against Iraq, and they

have learned nothing from the experience. Bombing infrastructure and such (as opposed to close air support of infantry) is vastly overrated. For example, Daryl G. Press, who looked at the evidence, writes in *International Security of the Gulf War* (1991):

“I make two primary arguments about air power during the Gulf War. First, air power was not decisive; it did not neutralize the Iraqi ground forces. At the end of the air campaign, Iraqi ground forces could still maneuver, and they still had the C3I [command, control, communications, intelligence] supplies, numbers, and morale to fight.”

The same can be said of other campaigns, such as in Vietnam, Bosnia, and the Israeli campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Oblivious of the problems with Western strategy and the moral element in getting involved in 4GW, Sowell blames Western difficulties in winning victory on appeasement. This essay and the following one, “*Appeasement and War on Iran*” pick apart many aspects of the appeasement argument. Shouting “appeasement” is always popular among war supporters, because of its emotional appeal to those who are reminded of Hitler. Tony Blair, for example, justified NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia on the basis of not appeasing Serbia. But the overused appeasement argument completely fails to fit the facts of American actions. The U.S. did not appease either North Vietnam or Iraq, and it was never shy of exerting considerable and prolonged force against them. In Iran’s case, there is no comparison at all between Hitler’s Germany and Dr. Ahmadinejad’s Iran. Iran has annexed no neighboring regions or countries, has no nuclear weapons, and has not threatened the U.S. The U.S. has made no concessions to Iran. In fact, it has done the opposite. The U.S. supported Israel’s massive losing effort in Lebanon, to the detriment of both the U.S. and Israel. There was no appeasement. Appeasement is not a problem for the U.S. The strength of the AIPAC-Israeli lobby in Congress is. Those who wish to make war should not be allowed to get away with the appeal to appeasement and bolster their case with it. The historical circumstances that linked Chamberlain, Hitler, and Munich are not continually repeating themselves every time a dictator appears whom the West wants to remove.

The essay “*People Who Live in Glass Houses*” begins by quoting an American who believes in a first strike against Iran, to prevent them from building nuclear bombs and dropping them on us, as he put it. This seems to be quite

close to neoconservative opinion. Influential opinion like this is a good argument against democracy, or at least against having a state with power to launch such attacks, or against having a defense strategy that is really offensive in nature, or against a monopoly state altogether. It is a good argument for a policy of nonintervention and neutrality.

Iran has no nukes and no missiles to deliver them. It won't use them if it gets them, not unless it wants to be become nuclear rubble. Before risking this, terrorists will likely choose to use biological weapons or suitcase nukes or poison gas. Bombing Iran will create generations of terrorists aiming their weapons at Americans. Why have terrorists come to target America anyway? This is a relatively recent phenomenon. This brief essay suggests that U.S. interventions and policies are drivers.

"You Liberals" responds to the notion that the U.S. should not "back down" from "Russia, China, Iran, and all the rest." I believe that under the existing political framework, America should courageously and prudently handle threats not of its own making. But not backing down from threats that it itself has generated is simply instigating a higher level of hostilities that it has initiated. When a society creates a pool of national wealth that is used by its leaders to fashion interventionist foreign policies, it creates retaliation and resistance against itself, often long-lasting. American insecurity is thereby enhanced. To follow up counter-threats with further military actions and interventions is simply to nurture a rising spiral of violence.

Extending the Truman Doctrine that called for U.S. support of free peoples, Eisenhower intervened in a civil war in Lebanon in 1958 under the Eisenhower Doctrine that the U.S. could unilaterally use force in the Middle East to counter international communism. This paved the way for a second U.S. intervention in 1982 that supported Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Actions like these helped create such movements as al-Qaeda.

Eisenhower considered applying his doctrine to Vietnam, but he was averse to a land war in Asia. Kennedy and Johnson entered Vietnam, creating a defeat for America. The major problem of wars like Vietnam and Iraq is this. The strategic goal is to create a friendly democracy in another country whose politics are complex, rivalrous, possibly violent. The people may be lacking in critical knowledge, customs, and traditions that Americans take for granted. American style war is not an appropriate tool for achieving the desired strategic goal.

1. Islam Isn't Kosher

In "[U.S. companies and Islamic law](#)," Rachel Ehrenfeld and Alyssa A. Lappen call for the U.S. government to outlaw the Dow Jones Islamic Markets index. No joke.

Ronald Radosh claimed one of the bad "isolationist" ideas was that "war means militarism and repression at home." He's wrong. If neoconservatives want to repress a stock index of all things, free speech is not far behind. President Bush just blasted criticism of how the Iraq War began as "deeply irresponsible" and "illegitimate."

Dow Jones Indexes recently licensed its Islamic Market Turkey Index to Family Finans House, Turkey's largest noninterest banking house, to be the basis for an Exchange Traded Fund on the Istanbul Stock Exchange. The Turkish market is up 20% this year. The U.S. market is up 2%.

The Turkish index is part of a Dow Jones family of about 31 Islamic indexes composed of about 1,200 Shari'ah compliant stocks globally. These companies do not produce alcohol or pork-related products, conventional banking services, entertainment, tobacco, defense and weapons.

In America, there are similar mutual funds called "socially-conscious" funds that preclude investing in certain types of businesses. What is so special about Muslim preferences? They're Muslim, that's what.

According to Ehrenfeld and Lappen, Islam isn't kosher: "In their urgent desire to find new markets, Americans have opened the door to Islamist expansionism." These products "are catering exclusively to Muslims," and "only advance the Islamic impetus to impose sharia-governed banking on the West." They say "there is no reason for American banks, businesses and investment firms to introduce Islam or any other religion into the U.S. capital markets." Since sharia, they say, "is the same Islamic ideology that is used by Islamic terrorists, its acceptance in any civil forum is not a good thing."

They do not even bother to qualify their statements with radical Muslim or Islamo-fascist Muslim, just any Muslim will do. The number of American Muslims might be 2 million or more. If they want to follow or buy these Islamic stocks, they don't count. Dow Jones doesn't count either, nor do all other investors, domestic or foreign, who might like to invest in Islamic

securities. (Diversification pays.) The people in Muslim lands don't count who might benefit if the companies issuing these stocks trade in a worldwide market and obtain capital at a lower cost. Americans and others don't count who might do business with these companies that are based in Muslim lands. The companies, they don't count either. Freedom doesn't count. Free trade doesn't count. The profit motive doesn't count, and satisfying customers doesn't count because "there is no reason" for these indexes. Nothing counts except to keep America pure and untainted by "Islamic ideology." Islam isn't kosher.

The authors seriously claim that Islamic indexes introduce religion into the capital market. Such indexes are treyf. To win the war on terror, we must not allow preferences to influence loans or investments. Freedom does not count. This is not repression?

The neoconservative Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) that sponsored this paper is allied to the neoconservative Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD). The President of CPD, Clifford D. May, is also President of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD). Five of the top six officials at FDD (Steve Forbes, Jack Kemp, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Newt Gingrich, and R. James Woolsey) also are on CPD.

It's legitimate for high-level financial backing for the FDD to stem from, among others, such Jewish figures as Dalck Feith (father of Douglas), Leonard Abramson, members of the Bronfman family, Bernard Marcus, and Michael Steinhardt. Mr. May says that the founders of the FDD helped secure funding for the CPD by getting their friends to contribute. It is all right for AIPAC to influence American politics. But it is not all right for Dow Jones to compute and publish stock indexes. Is this fair?

Religion can be introduced into American politics, but American business must not introduce Islam into capital markets. What's logically next? The U.S. must ban American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) of foreign stocks from selected countries that do not toe the American line. Then the bans can be extended to American companies doing business in disapproved countries. The Congress can then introduce sanctions against Americans doing business with anyone who does business with anyone in a Muslim country. Why not ban movies like *The Thief of Baghdad*, *Flame of Araby*, and *Casablanca*? Why not ban Persian rugs and carpets? None of this is repression.

We are instructed not to support sharia because that is the "same Islamic ideology" that the terrorists use. Hitler was Roman Catholic. Therefore, shun all Roman Catholics.

Ehrenfeld and Lappen applaud Ontario's Premier Dalton McGuinty who wants Ontario to outlaw arbitration according to sharia in the Muslim Community by the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice in civil cases. The Islamic Institute of Civil Justice offers binding arbitration for those who voluntarily choose to use the service, and the parties "are free to use the laws that they wish to rely upon." When it comes to anything Islam, Ehrenfeld and Lappen do not favor freedom.

A colleague at Harvard Business School, Benjamin C. Esty, has a case study called "The International Investor: Islamic Finance and the Equate Project." He also has a note explaining Islamic Finance. Why? He writes: "With more than a billion Muslims living primarily in regions with enormous infrastructure needs (the Middle East, Asia, and Africa), there is a growing need to understand Islamic culture, traditions, and financial systems." Instead of a clash of civilizations, which is not inevitable and far from desirable, mutual understanding and trade that benefits all are the remedy for suspicion and warfare.

In an earlier article, Financial Jihad, Ehrenfeld and Lappen speak of "the Islamic impetus to impose Sharia-governed banking on the West." They do not say how the Islamic system is enforced on Americans. They can't, because whoever uses it does so voluntarily.

Ehrenfeld and Lappen's method of character assassination in this article is to link legitimate businesses to Muslims whom they then link to others whom they criticize. In other words, they use the technique of guilt by association. Dow Jones, for example, consulted with an acknowledged and respected financial expert named Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo who wrote: "It is my conviction that the Dow Jones Islamic Market Index represents a service of inestimable magnitude to investors the world over, regardless of their religious persuasions. For Muslims, however, the service is even greater for the reason that they now have access to a financial information tool that will allow them to live their religious ideals in today's marketplace. To my way of thinking, the Dow Jones Islamic Market Index represents a triumph of religious and ethical virtues in the marketplace, and opens the way for a whole new financial sector."

In turn, Ehrenfeld and Lappen point out that Dr. DeLorenzo is a member of the Fiqh Council of North America. I cannot verify this, although he was secretary in 1999. According to writer Steven Emerson, the Fiqh Council "harbors many terror-sympathizers." A complete evaluation of this charge is beyond the scope of this article. I wish only to point out the bias and unfairness in Ehrenfeld and Lappen's attacks on Dr. DeLorenzo. They have not found one thing, civil or criminal, that he has ever done wrong.

Emerson writes that one of the council members (Al-Awani) is "an unindicted co-conspirator in the case against Sami al-Arian, the alleged North American leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad." The chain runs Dow Jones to DeLorenzo to Al-Awani to Al-Arian. Al-Arian is on trial in Florida, and the jury is deliberating at this moment. No matter how this turns out, and this case itself is a celebrated one, it has nothing to do with DeLorenzo, Dow Jones, or Islamic methods of finance that have developed over hundreds of years.

By contrast, *The Jewish Week*, which is an independent community newspaper serving New York, wrote a laudatory article on DeLorenzo in 1999, noting that he was advising Dow Jones on "stocks that are 'kosher' for Muslim investors." The article pointed out that Dow Jones was also considering indexes for "Orthodox Jews and Bible Belt Christians."

Ehrenfeld and Lappen ring alarm bells because large and small U.S. financial institutions are integrating Islamic products. They view Islamic banks and products as not corresponding to U.S. banking law. In fact, because interest on debt is not allowed, the Islamic finance uses equity and profit as a substitute. Financial products are often fungible.

Why their dismay? Because Muslims are "blatantly pursuing ulterior motives." They are? All of them? Prove it. Islamic banking is financial jihad. It is? Because a Muslim once said so?

The common cloth of neoconservatism is many things. Here we see oversimplification, extremism, single-mindedness, suspicion, intolerance, and misunderstanding.

We see smearing, defamation, and vilification. A Saudi banking scholar said at a Harvard conference that Islamic finance incorporated altruism as well as self-interest, that it ameliorated the excesses of capitalism, and that it yielded a fairer distribution of benefits. Whether this statement is accurate or not,

Ehrenfeld and Lappen say "it fits well with bin Laden's statement" to the effect that "Muslim companies should become self-sufficient in producing goods equal to the products of Western companies." This they term bin Laden's "economic warfare."

There are many interpretations of these statements, some favorable, others not. Their accuracy and utility are not the issue. The point is how these authors link a non-aggressive characterization of Islamic financial practice to a non-aggressive statement made by bin Laden in order to discredit both Islamic finance and anyone who plays any role in furthering it.

The closing line in Ehrenfeld and Lappen's article asks "Why are Western banking and financial officials and regulators playing into bin Laden's hands?" How do they reach this preposterous conclusion? By another neoconservative habit: the illogical leap. The more I read them, painful as it is, the more I am reaching the conclusion that neoconservatives simply can't think straight. Or if they can, they dissemble when they argue publicly.

The illogical leap appears at convenient times after stating various facts or supposed facts. The U.S. is a superpower (fact). Therefore, the U.S. should seek global hegemony (illogical leap). Saddam Hussein has WMD (supposed fact). Therefore, the U.S. should take him out (illogical leap). Iran is seeking nuclear weapons (assume true). Therefore, the U.S. should introduce Special Forces into Iran and foment a revolution (illogical leap). Syria supports Palestinian causes and terrorists (true). Therefore, the U.S. should make war on Syria (illogical leap). Islam has its own methods of finance (true). Therefore, to fight terrorism, America should outlaw Islamic finance (illogical leap). In some of these cases, it will be found that other implicit illogical leaps are being made. For example, in some of the instances just mentioned, the illogical leap is that what benefits Israel also benefits the U.S., or crudely speaking Israel = America. This should read Israel does not equal America, and neither does neoconservatism.

November 22, 2005

2. MORALITY AND FOURTH GENERATION WAR

Anyone who is anti-war will benefit from understanding the theory of war: why wars are fought, how they are fought, and how the peace is made and kept. The field manual of Fourth Generation war [found here](#) helps us understand many of the conflicts occurring around the world today and helps us glimpse the possible outcomes of these struggles. It applies to the war Israel is now fighting in Gaza and Lebanon. It sheds light on the difficulties that the American State and its soldiers face in fighting today in Iraq. Expect to find a document with many illustrations that explains how American soldiers should be trained to fight Fourth Generation war. But also expect a surprising emphasis on the moral level of war that connects directly to libertarian theory.

William S. Lind and experienced soldiers co-authored the Fourth Generation war field manual, which is a work in progress. He invites comment. Using the Fourth Generation model, Lind accurately assessed events in Iraq early on and predicted the current civil strife occurring there now. [In his article](#) of November 26, 2003, for example, he forecasted that "non-state forces will come to dominate" in both Iraq and Afghanistan because of basic American blunders. In his words: "In Iraq, the two fatal early errors were outlawing the Baath Party and disbanding the Iraqi army. Outlawing the Baath deprived the Sunni community of its only political vehicle, which meant it had no choice but to fight us. Disbanding the Iraqi army left us with no native force that could maintain order, and also provided the resistance with a large pool of armed and trained fighters." Lind has continued with many insightful articles that are archived on LRC.

The rudiments

Fourth generation wars are currently defined as wars fought by non-state forces against states. (I am not sure what wars fought by non-state forces against each other are called.) The states have greater resources if one simply counts armed forces, matériel, and money. The non-state forces are weaker, yet they can win as Fidel Castro showed in Cuba. They tend to be guerillas and use guerilla tactics, so that Fourth Generation warfare is virtually guerilla warfare.

Guerilla warfare is not terrorism. "Terrorism is an enemy special operation, a single tactical action designed to have direct operational or strategic effect. Because targets that have such direct operational or strategic effect are few and are usually well-protected, terrorism normally plays a minor role in Fourth

Generation conflicts – though when it does occur the effects can be wide-ranging."

Most of the manual, through case study examples, advises Marine (or Army) forces how to integrate or interact with the local population in order not to drive them into the arms of the enemy and in order to gain effectiveness against the enemy. For example, the manual counsels against the instinct to escalate force. It advises de-escalation, being very patient, talking with locals and opponents, and not wanting to fight. It talks of withdrawing at times and not fighting every fight, not killing innocent people, and using cash for a host of issues including blood money. The recommended soldierly behaviors are many quantum leaps beyond giving chocolate bars to children or cigarettes to adults.

The moral level

Libertarians will find interesting the pervasive emphasis on the moral element of war as contrasted with the physical and mental levels. The word "moral" appears almost 50 times. The moral level of war is described as the most powerful level, the decisive level, the dominant level, and the all-important level. Battles can be won like leveling Fallujah or creating buffer zones in Lebanon while being a disaster at the moral level and thence a disaster in terms of the war's ultimate outcome.

The term "moral" has several meanings in the manual. It does not here mean rejecting an entire war as illegitimate, unjust or immoral. It can't because the manual is designed to nurture an armed force that supports its State. One thing it means is following the non-aggression axiom or respecting the legitimate rights of the population and the Marines' opponents, including when they are taken prisoner. This includes but goes beyond the Geneva Convention. The authors write: "In terms of ordinary, day-to-day actions, there is a Golden Rule for winning at the moral level, and it is this: Don't do anything to someone else that, if it were done to you, would make you fight."

Another thing that moral means in the manual is respecting the population as persons. This rule goes beyond the non-aggression axiom. It means soldiers not acting as if they are superior. It means Marines responding to the values of the local culture. If American bases replicate American living standards and locals are not allowed on them except in service roles or if soldiers do not respect traditional values of pride and honor or if soldiers inadvertently insult

local people, all these things contribute to losing at the moral level.

It is gratifying to find support for basic libertarian doctrine in a manual that distills the accumulated wisdom, drawn from the experiences of fighting men, of what works and what does not work in wars that directly involve populations. This confirms the universality and practicality of rights embodied in the non-aggression axiom. It confirms that people everywhere hold common ideas of justice and fairness that soldiers (and others) cannot violate without negative consequences.

Although the manual suggests that warfare is reverting to pre-1648 modes, in some respects it calls for movement away from unlimited warfare and a return to the rules of eighteenth century war as discussed in Guglielmo Ferrero's *Peace and War*. For example, it calls for limited engagement of armed forces and occupying a foreign area only as a last resort. It recommends not destroying or disbanding the armed forces of the enemy State, not humiliating the enemy, and treating them with the honors of war. The manual recommends not using the maximum of force and engaging the enemy in more lightly armed ways.

The moral and the practical

There are very good practical reasons for all of the manual's advice and for limiting war, the main one being that it helps to win at relatively low cost and to keep the subsequent peace. Yet at the same time, the recommendations are more consistent with libertarian theory of war and peace (see [Rothbard](#)) than existing practices. One cannot expect a libertarian condemnation of war in a war field manual, but the movement toward a lower, more humane, and more sensible level of war is a big plus.

Sound moral rules that are consistent with human nature are at the same time practical rules that enhance value creation. This holds in war as well as in peace.

Many of the manual's examples that stress moral behavior for practical reasons of not alienating the population and turning them into fighters against Marines are also examples of rights violations. Killing and maiming innocent civilians are prime examples. Breaking into homes, terrifying people, and abusing or torturing prisoners are all rights violations.

The American mistakes of disbanding the Baath Party and Iraqi Army had practical consequences that Lind clearly pointed out. At the same time, I will stretch a point by suggesting that there were some moral problems as well. Imagine that an enemy conquered General Motors Corporation, broke it up, outlawed it, and all the employees lost their jobs. Employees do not have rights in their jobs in a free market, but an outsider who comes in and coercively breaks the agreements between them and their employer is violating rights and creating moral chaos. Neither all Iraqi soldiers nor the whole Sunni bureaucracy were guilty or equally guilty of crimes that required the punishments of losing their livelihoods. This meant a lot to them and they were performing services for the State. Of course, the Iraqi State and Sunni control over it were gone, but America then set about rebuilding a new one. I judge matters in that context. As usual, America did not create a free market. It set about hiring and retraining new bureaucratic workers and policemen to do much that was earlier done by those who had been fired. It relied on Shiites. The criteria it used are murky. It seems to have discriminated against Sunnis or those who had police or military experience. It then forcefully integrated communities by using Shiites to police Sunnis. This could do nothing but ignite strife and provide opportunities for Shiites to take revenge against Sunnis. To this day, many bombings are directed at American-trained police and many killings are attributed to various death squads. As at home, the American State went for social engineering, acted immorally, and failed to envision the consequences of its acts.

There were basically three paths that America could have followed in Iraq once it had made the mistake of conquering the country: break up the old State and reconstitute it, retain the old State, or retain the old State but shrink it or subdivide it while withdrawing as quickly as possible. The worst course, which America chose, was to break up the old State and reconstitute it. The Fourth Generation manual strongly suggests preserving enemy States, which is the second path. This indeed is preferable to path one which has led to civil war. The third path, however, is best of all, although it is far from easy. Free markets, property rights, and economic prosperity are key elements in overcoming sectarian violence because they give the prospect of large material gains that outweigh the nonpecuniary gains of revenge or bloodshed. They change the game from a zero-sum game to a positive return game. De-nationalizing the oil industry and distributing shares to all Iraqis would have jump-started this process. Instead, Americans engaged in national economic planning with large contracts going to American companies.

Weakness and moral strength

One theme of the manual is that there is power in weakness and that a strong force loses at the moral level when it bullies a weak movement. "We also see the power of weakness. In Fourth Generation warfare, the weak often have more power than the strong. One of the first people to employ the power of weakness was Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's insistence on non-violent tactics to defeat the British in India was and continues to be a classic strategy of Fourth Generation war. Once the British responded to Indian independence gatherings and rallies with violence, they immediately lost the moral war."

The manual needs to clarify the dictum of power in weakness. It is not always so. It depends on the moral stature of the weak. Gandhi gained this stature by non-violent tactics and by personal abnegation. Other things being equal, al-Qaeda (which is weak) loses at the moral level when it bombs and indiscriminately kills innocent civilians, whether they are voters are not. With all things not equal, al-Qaeda's strategy and tactics take calculated risks. While losing temporarily at the moral level, they may gain strategically if they unnerve their opponents and drive them into bad or immoral actions of their own. By the same token, strong forces that act morally and against clear injustices against them do not lose at the moral level. They lose if they overdo matters or harm innocent people while attempting to punish their enemies. In other words, what matters are violations of the non-aggression axiom and not simply weakness and strength per se.

An unfair criticism

The manual assumes, as it must, that the American armed forces will be motivated to carry out the wishes of their superiors and go at the Fourth Generation war in a creative way, which is what such war demands. A weakness may stem from this point of view. I will make an unfair criticism since, after all, the manual is written to instruct the American combat soldier on how to fight and win a war in a foreign country like Iraq or Thailand. It does not and cannot address why the American soldier is on foreign soil in the first place. But the criticism is a point worth thinking about because it's related to the soldier's behavior.

Let us ask: What are the aims of the war? Why is it being fought and what is the American force supposed to accomplish? While the manual aims for a remaking of the American armed forces in which soldiers will be taught to

acquit themselves in ways to assure victory in Fourth Generation wars, it is hard to tell what victory is supposed to mean. That apparently has to come from somewhere else, but what victory means and where it comes from are unclear. Yet knowing what a war aims for is very important.

It is logical that the tactics and behavior of the armed forces have to link up with the war's aims. To teach appropriate behavior in a vacuum of aims is dubious. The soldiers need to know who the good guys are and who the bad guys are. The manual mentions the motivation of the enemy but doesn't go into the motivation of the American soldier. For the Marines' motivation, they need to know why one side is good and the other side is bad. Perhaps the divisions of sides are not clear. Then they need to know the difference between good and bad behaviors of a given side or sides as measured against some goal that the soldiers are trying to achieve. What is that goal? For example, how can soldiers treat villagers in ways to gain their cooperation against guerillas (as the manual teaches) unless they somehow know that the villagers prefer the victory and government that the soldiers stand for to what the guerillas aim to achieve or impose?

But the soldiers may not know these basic things. Early on, we are accurately told: "Once again, clans, tribes, ethnic groups, cultures, religions and gangs are fighting wars, in more and more parts of the world. They fight using many different means, not just engagements and battles. Once again, conflicts are often many-sided, not just two-sided. Marines who find themselves caught up in such conflicts quickly discover they are difficult to understand and harder still to prevail in."

If they are hard to understand, the Marines will be at a loss to know who's who, what's what, and what to do about it. This may be an exaggeration, I readily concede, but not a point without some merit. No manual, no matter how much it improves upon the old ways, can overcome a war begun in the wrong place, at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons.

Conclusion

Rather than summing up, we can apply the teachings of the Fourth Generation war model to the current Israel-Lebanon war. It's Fourth Generation war because Hezbollah is a non-State group with some State participation and pretensions. But it is not Lebanon. Hezbollah is very weak compared to Israel. The total number of its core armed fighters is variously [estimated](#) at 300 to

3,000, although Hezbollah itself says 5,000 to 10,000.

By Fourth Generation precepts, Israel has already lost by applying too much force too widely and too indiscriminately against Lebanese targets and not Hezbollah. It has killed and wounded hundreds of civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands. Israel is using Third Generation war against a Fourth Generation enemy. Hezbollah wins simply by drawing out the battle, scoring some hits against tanks and ships, and maintaining intact most of its fighters and leadership who fade away into the countryside or hide in cities. It wins by recruiting new fighters because of Israel's excessive use of force. Many articles and quotations already point to this outcome. It wins by gaining political support both in Lebanon proper and beyond its borders. It wins if after the war is over it engages an occupying force with guerilla tactics. Lobbing rockets into Israel does not help Hezbollah at the moral level because they are not hitting military targets. They are killing and injuring Israeli civilians. Perhaps this helps them project an image of strength and action against an overwhelming force. The United States loses because of its crystal-clear alignment with Israel. Bush and Rice immediately stand behind Israel, drag their heels, and wait. Rice holds out for lasting peace rather than a cease-fire. Obviously American leadership wants Israel to have time to continue the war and countenances the costs being imposed on the Lebanese people.

July 26, 2006

3. PUSHING THE WAR BUTTONS

Recent editorials by Victor Davis Hanson and Thomas Sowell, while different in content, both convey the notion that war is preferable to peace in the Middle East. What are these intellectuals thinking? What is the deeper meaning of the open worship of power in our media?

Neoconservative Hanson issues bombing threat

In his article "Real Test for Islam: U.S. Patience," it is really neoconservative Victor Davis Hanson who is running out of patience. He's ready to strike out in fury. He's ready to hit Iran and Hezbollah "with something greater than a cruise missile." What passions stir such blood lust? I'd guess a pride wounded by its failure to get its way. I'd guess ambition to rule. I'd guess hatred of the obtuse Arabs. I'd guess vengeance for spoiled neoconservative plans.

If there are any well-thought out policy reasons for Hanson's threat, he doesn't express them in this article. The main reason, if it can be called that, is that the U.S. has not been able to get its way by any other means.

Hanson says that "an exasperated West is running out of choices in the Middle East." He looks for a "new policy of retaliation" which is "an exasperated return to the old cruise-missile payback." I read his words as revealing his psychology, not that of any particular U.S. policy maker or official, although this is possible. Hanson doesn't quote or refer to anyone in particular. He's the one who seems exasperated.

He's irritated because the U.S. is tied down in Iraq. He's annoyed because oil prices are already so high. He's peeved that any further U.S. action will derail the economy and bring profits to nations like Iran. He's nettled that U.S. action will alienate Arabs, endanger Republican chances in the upcoming Congressional elections, and weaken lame-duck George Bush.

He can't say so, but his problem is that U.S. policy blunders that were urged on by him and neoconservatives like him have failed miserably. The democracy ducks are not all in a row in the Middle East. Iraq has a civil war. Lebanon has a huge refugee and rebuilding problem not to mention further political instability. Hezbollah will almost surely not be destroyed by Israel's bombing of airports, bridges, apartment houses, television aerials, bunkers, or its killing of hundreds of civilians. Whatever its own follies of rhetoric, policy,

and possible miscalculation, Iran currently benefits at a safe distance. Democratic elections in Palestine have only caused the West hypocritically to repudiate and undermine the winner, the duly-elected Hamas. Hostilities and war in Gaza continue apace. The U.S. has destabilized the entire Middle Eastern region and strengthened fundamentalist Islam.

Like most warmongering ideologues, Hanson can't see that the other side or sides also think that they are in the right and that their cause is just, which is not to say that blowing up innocent civilians is just. He writes: "Hezbollah and Hamas, and those in their midst who tolerate or vote for them, didn't so much want Israel out of Lebanon and Gaza as pushed into the Mediterranean altogether." It is a fact that Arab States and Arab movements are divided in their visions of the future Middle Eastern political map, but there remain many that do not accept Israel as a legitimate political entity and/or do not accept that Israelis properly own land they live on and occupy. The persistence of this agenda frustrates Hanson no end. Hanson cannot understand its long historical roots that go back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British mandate, the British foot-dragging when it came to Arab self-determination and independence, the long history of Arab-Zionist antagonisms, and the shaky beginnings of the State of Israel that rest on armed struggle and confrontation. According to the 1959 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, these include "a country-wide guerilla struggle" and "the slaughter by Jewish terrorists of about 250 Arab villagers, half of them women and children, at Dair Yasin on April 9 [that] precipitated a panic flight from the coastal plain."

And what angers him is that the stubborn Arabs do not respond to inducements. America "has spent thousands of lives and billions in treasure trying to bring democracy to Iraq." America has tried "to end our old cynical support for Middle East dictators." America "has also welcomed the help of the European Union, the U.N., China and Russia in convincing the Iranians of the folly of producing nuclear weapons." Denmark and the Netherlands welcomed Muslims to their nations. Yet to Hanson these ungrateful wretches fail to reciprocate the West's good acts and gestures. "But like Hezbollah and Hamas, Iran does not wish to parley..." Hanson is saying that we are the good guys, our hands are clean, we are sincere, and they won't even talk to us. Why don't they jump at democracy as they're supposed to?

And so Hanson accuses these intransigent groups of "slowly pushing tired Westerners into a corner." But this is actually how Hanson feels. Although everything he says about the Middle Eastern situations is mostly in the third

person, it directly reflects what he personally feels, because in the end, he is the one that is issuing the threats: "If they're not careful, Syria and Iran actually will earn a conventional war, not more futile diplomacy or limited responses to terrorism. History shows that massive attacks from the air are something the West does well." And, additionally, "...the West would hit back with something far greater than a cruise missile."

Hanson is a clever enough writer to stop just short of fully expressing his blood lust, but he goes far enough to make it clear what he really wants and savors. He's tired of halfway measures. In the limit, what he calls for, almost hopes and itches for, is *Götterdämmerung*. An Arab holocaust would not bother him.

Sowell belittles peace movements

Thomas Sowell in his article "Push for Peace Usually Brings Anything But" blames peace movements for preventing wars from achieving their objectives: "An aggressor today knows that if his aggression fails, he'll be protected from the full retaliatory power and fury of those he attacked because there will be hand-wringers demanding a cease-fire, negotiations and concessions." This is silly. If peace movements have had any serious and systematic impact on war-making by States, it surely has been a second-order effect. The first-order effects are those related to the realities of the war, such as cost, financing, and success in battle. These do include morale of the troops and morale at home, which in turn relate to the moral justifications of the war and other factors. But to argue that war making in the twentieth century has caused cease-fires that in turn produced greater war defies credulity.

His three examples are the Falkland Islands War, Middle Eastern history since 1947, and the appeasement of Hitler. The British disregarded world opinion and took the Falklands. It is far from evident that world opinion has ever held the Israelis back to any significant degree in their numerous military actions. I am sure that Sowell the economist prefers the hypothesis that the British and the Israelis acted in their own self-interest. This implies that they factored in the potential acts and threats of others as indicated by their opinions. But this is surely rational. And Israel surely is not doing anything at present that even hints that world opinion, much less peace movements, are influencing its Lebanon campaign. If and when Israel's leaders appear to bow to such currents of opinion, the odds are that they will have substantial underlying reasons rooted in political and military realities for doing so.

It seems that those who favor war never tire of mentioning Adolf Hitler and appeasement. To them, appeasement means cowardice and weakness in the face of threats. If that is the meaning of appeasement, then they are correct. Appeasement is a faulty policy of dealing with an opposing and threatening force. But this definition of appeasement over-simplifies political realities. It's far easier after the fact to see when a State has gone too far, but before the fact there are always uncertainties and many factors to weigh. Each player in the international game has a hard time knowing the true intentions of the other players, what alliances they can call on, what power they can bring to bear, and how far they will go. The chances of judgment errors are large even if the leaders are not cowards or weak. Hitler and Stalin made a number of large errors by misreading the intentions of other nations and in other ways. Leaders can also err on the side of too much force and cause calamity that way.

In the political world that we live in, political control of the earth's turf is divided among various gangs known as States. When one gang invades the turf of another gang, the remaining gangs have to assess whether the threat to their turf has risen and what to do about the expanding gang. They don't always judge properly. Weakness and cowardice are but one of many possible sources of misjudgment. Whether or not the British and the French were too weak and cowardly toward Hitler is an interesting historical question, but we cannot automatically draw the conclusion that the proper policy toward an expanding gang or a gang that is talking about expanding is for the United States gang to take some sort of overwhelming military action against that gang. This is a recipe for endless warfare.

Obviously, the notion of not appeasing provides absolutely no guidelines about which conflicts to get involved in or in what ways or how deeply. The resources of any gang are limited, and it requires criteria to decide when, where, and how to engage other gangs. As an economist, Sowell knows this. He knows that "not appeasing" does not provide an optimal policy. I take his use of this example as rhetoric. What he's really saying is simply that Israel's demolition of Lebanon should not be constrained by either other States or by vaguer peace movements (antiwar.com?, Amnesty International?). Perhaps he also means that Israel's leaders shouldn't be constrained by Israeli public opinion which will harden against the war as the Israeli casualties mount or by Israeli moderates.

Sowell blames appeasement for "never-ending attacks on Israel..." The ideology of those opposing Israel seems to provide a far more plausible

explanation. People do not blow themselves up because they know that they will not be punished for their aggression. His suggestion seems to be that Israel should have exterminated or totally suppressed its opposition because he says: "...one of the dangers to the attacker would be the prospect of being annihilated." Wars of extermination do occur, but it is not imaginable that Israel could engage in destroying millions and millions of Arabs or even hundreds of thousands without unleashing a torrent of long-lasting anti-Israel activity.

Sowell concludes that "'peace' movements don't bring peace, but war." His argument rests on two faulty notions. The first is that peace movements have weakness and cowardice (appeasement) as their motivating factors. As an economist who knows that people are rational, Sowell should know that the far greater likelihood is that those who favor peace estimate, expect, or calculate that peace is far better for them than war. Americans resist some wars and not others. They discriminate. If many resisted the Vietnamese War, it is reasonable to believe that they thought the benefits of the war were outweighed by its costs. If many supported World War II, they thought the opposite.

The second notion is that weakness and cowardice are the important or dominant factors that bring forth war. However, all over the world weaker groups have begun and are fighting wars against stronger groups. And it has always been this way with resistance movements. The American Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the War for Southern Independence were fought because of grievances or disputes. Where was the appeasement when the South fought the North? England in the first two cases was the stronger side. Texans fought for and gained independence from Mexico in 1835–1836. Where was the appeasement in this war? Appeasement didn't drive the Americans back from the Yalu River in North Korea. The Chinese Communists did, and prudence not peace movements made use of the atom bomb untenable in that instance.

Conclusion

In the present instance, the issue is Israel's use of force in Lebanon. Hezbollah's use of force to kill and maim civilians in Israel, recently and in the past, is entirely unjustified. Hezbollah cannot help its cause one bit by such morally reprehensible acts. By the same token, if Israel is attacking Hezbollah, then it is unjustified in killing Lebanese civilians and wrecking the country. To

justify his acts, Prime Minister Olmert declared that Hezbollah's acts are "actions of a sovereign state that attacked Israel for no reason. The Lebanese government, of which Hizbullah is a member, is trying to destabilize regional stability. Lebanon is responsible and it will bear responsibility." But this is ludicrous and unbelievable. Israel, like Hezbollah, can only harm its cause by war acts that go well beyond attacking Hezbollah.

Hezbollah and Israel mimic what the major States of the world did during their wars of the twentieth century: unlimited warfare against States and all those living under them. Any peace movement in this world has to condemn unlimited warfare and, at a minimum, push for limits on war. In 1931, Guglielmo Ferrero in his *Peace and War* wrote of "the increasing subservience towards power that is spreading everywhere, and particularly in the morbid admiration for every adventurer, past and present, who has raised himself to power by the use of force and disregard for law; and in the rage for violence which has seized upon all classes and peoples nearly everywhere as if the only way they could feel their power was by oppressing another class or people."

In the last few years, the deification of power has come out into the open in the media of this nation. It is time for the American people to repudiate it thoroughly, now and forever.

July 25, 2006

4. APPEASEMENT AND WAR ON IRAN

Neocon appeasement story

Appeasement and Munich are favored neocon themes to promote and justify more war. In a dangerous trend, they are being picked up by more columnists. Strange that the more force that the U.S. applies in the Middle East, the more that the neocons wail appeasement and the more force they demand. Strange, because repeated applications of force, the opposite of appeasement and applied in the name of avoiding appeasement, have brought no tangible gains. They have brought losses, and losses should be cut. Once again, neocons can't think straight. One should not throw good money after bad. The U.S. can't win in the Middle East. It should take its chips off the table. It should never have sat down at the table.

Neocons now call for armed confrontation with Iran in order to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. They want the U.S. to stand up to Iran and fight if necessary, starting a war if need be. If rhetoric and public fears launched wars, we'd already be in another one. And Congressional resolutions and sanctions have in fact moved us closer to war. This is a war that the U.S. cannot win physically. It is a war that is morally lost the instant that the first bombs are dropped on Iran. This is a war that leads to hundreds of years of future warfare setting Islamic peoples against the West.

There is no end to how much force neocons wish to apply, and anything less than total war is regarded as appeasement by them. Some take this position because they believe that anything less than overturning Iran and preventing it from obtaining nuclear weapons means the destruction of Western civilization. The neocon position has matters backwards. Trying to overturn Iran by force will itself hasten the destruction of the West.

Neocons argue that Iran wants to bring down the entire West no matter what. They infer that U.S. disengagement and negotiations are therefore useless and war is necessary. They are incorrect on all counts. Not all Iranians want to see the West destroyed, and not all are inflexible in their views. But suppose that Dr. Ahmadinejad is one of the inflexible ones. Suppose that he is indeed a "certifiable apocalyptic" (see [Gary North](#)). He can be restrained by those mullahs who do not share his beliefs or who have more realistic expectations. It makes sense to play for time and attempt to divide the Iranians. It does not make sense to play into Ahmadinejad's hands and bring on the conflict that he

might desire or believe that he is called upon to instigate.

The neocon position entails the utter destruction of all Iranians who wish to see the West destroyed. What they do not realize is that it also entails the continued destruction of anyone else who takes their place after they are destroyed. And we can expect that initiating war on Iran will radicalize not only Iranians but also many other sympathetic Muslims.

What appeasement?

On the face of it, the appeasement position is incredible. Where's the appeasement? The U.S. has plenty of force and has not been reluctant to use it. Where are the U.S. concessions? There haven't been any. Where's the Munich agreement? It doesn't exist. Where's the Iranian industrial power comparable to Hitler's or the comparable ability to place a very large well-trained and equipped armed force into combat well beyond one's borders? Iran is incapable of destroying the West. Where's the nuclear arsenal of Iran? Even if it had one, which it does not, it could not destroy the West without itself being destroyed. Where's the history of aggressions and annexations by Iran that compare to Hitler's? Iran has supported Hizbullah which managed to get the Israelis out of Lebanon for a while and has used and supported terror tactics. So have many nations. So have many dictators that the U.S. has supported. We condemn all such actions, but the question is whether they add up to a record like Hitler's. They do not. Why is Tehran so [interested in](#) negotiating with Washington, in a clear break with the past? Could it be that it sees a danger of being attacked? When Washington spurns Iran's overtures, the first in 25 years, is this appeasement? Of course not. And if Washington agreed to negotiate in good faith, would this be appeasement? Of course not.

Meeting with Iranians and Ahmadinejad has many immediate benefits. We gain information about what Iranians want. We gain information about their divisions and the strength of their preferences. We delay hostilities. We learn more about Dr. Ahmadinejad. We raise our moral stature. We have a chance to change some of their minds. The two sides might actually agree on a few further steps that lead away from war. What do we lose? Iran gains time to pursue its nuclear ventures. There is little we can do to stop that anyway, short of war. Sooner or later, if Iran wants nuclear weapons, it will get them. If starting a war with Iran is as bad as I think it is, with very negative long-term consequences, then meeting with Iranians is a very good investment.

The neocons simply want to ratchet up the level of violence to remake the Middle East. Their argument is that if we do not, we'll be destroyed by Iran or by some pan-Islamic combine. This is ridiculous. The U.S. nuclear arsenal deterred the Soviet Union. It can deter Iran. The neocon answer to this is that Iran is led by hate-filled fanatics who will not face a reality like seeing their country effaced from the earth by hydrogen bombs. How credible is that assumption? Should U.S. policy be based upon such an assumption? Not all Iranians are impervious to realities. Many Iranian leaders have a definite political agenda. Not all are expecting the imminent return of the Mahdi. Iranian goals run up against American ambitions in the Middle East, and this is a basic source of conflict, not an abstract desire to destroy Western civilization and be destroyed in the process. Churchill said "A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject." If we rely on the extreme beliefs of our homegrown neocon fanatics, whose own ideas are impervious to change and who can't propose any course of action except war, then we shall ourselves destroy our own civilization.

Losing is not appeasement

The neocons do not realize that force is a great weapon as long as it's not used. They did not understand that once the U.S. embarked on a policy of force in Iraq, it risked more than its initial stake. Losing Iraq lost the U.S. prestige and credibility everywhere else in the region and wherever else it might be confronted. It strengthened Iran's hand. It weakened Israel's. Practically speaking, the American people and the military are much less likely and capable of underwriting another venture on the heels of a failed one.

Once an initial application of force goes wrong, as in Iraq, defeat and withdrawal begin to look like appeasement in the face of other threats, real or imagined. In other words, what seems like appeasement to the neocons now is a direct consequence of resorting to force in the first place and losing. A U.S. weakened by its missteps and unable to make good on its threats will indeed be more inclined to pull back. If it does, it won't be appeasement. It will be the result of losses and seeking to stem further losses. This will not be the end of the world or Western civilization. It will, however, be attributable to the long-term (flawed) U.S. policy of trying to control the Middle East and to the specific neocon policies that included attacking Iraq, sanctions and threats against Iran, a diplomacy of pressure, and attacking Lebanon.

The Lebanon fiasco

If Israel ever attacks Iran, it means the U.S. attacks Iran. The U.S. has to restrain Israel if it is to avoid setting fanatic against fanatic and launching a hundred or more year's war.

From this standpoint, the U.S. miscalculated badly in encouraging Israel to attack Lebanon. Neocons hoped that Israel would take out Hizbullah and reduce its threat. They hoped for a widening of the war to Syria and Iran.

If Israel failed, the risk was that Hizbullah would be strengthened and Israel weakened. Now that Israel has lost and Hizbullah won, the loss has exposed Israel's weak and vulnerable position. Israel is surrounded by foes with renewed spirit and hope.

The balance of power has shifted in favor of Hizbullah, Iran, and Syria. Hizbullah's political position in Lebanon has been strengthened. Even if it has been temporarily weakened by loss of men, material, and position, it can quickly rebuild its operations and resupply its guerillas. Israel won't be able to stop the flow of weapons or prevent recruiting and training.

Israel's foes have several advantages. Hizbullah's leaders can decide when they want to apply pressure. They can bide their time. They can decide how much pressure to apply and in what forms. They have allies in Gaza. They can maintain guerilla tactics and avoid outright massed attacks on Israel. The odds are that they will stay with tactics of attrition, threat, terror, and political pressure, hoping to weaken Israel or gain concessions. Some types of concessions that weaken it as a Jewish state might effectively, over time, spell the doom of Israel in its present form. The game is a long-term game in which changes in the demographics in Israel can play a part. Even out-migration of Jews from Israel can play a part.

Restraining Israel

Iran is a state that aspires to be the Middle Eastern hegemon while the U.S. opposes Iranian dominance. Iran and Syria have the advantage of Hizbullah, which buffers their direct involvement. Israel's advantage is that it can use surprise attack, but against whom and will it succeed? It didn't work against Lebanon.

Israel will try to block Hizbullah's resupply efforts while avoiding an expansion of hostilities. It will try to rebuild its credibility. A direct attack on Syrian territory would bring Syria into the war and then Iran, its treaty ally. Once Iran is in, the U.S. would come in. A major war would result. The U.S. military cannot rationally support such a costly and risky war. Therefore Israel (rationally) should be restrained by the U.S. Will it be? The U.S. urged Israel on in Lebanon. Influential interest groups like AIPAC that have no concern for U.S. interests will be urging the U.S. to support whatever Israel does to the hilt. And our current leadership seems only too anxious to comply, partly because they are operating under one neocon illusion after another anyway. This situation could not be more dangerous. The U.S. support of Israel's attack on Lebanon has only made it more dangerous and has only shown us once again that U.S. policy is on a disastrous course. Appeasement is not the problem whatsoever. Stupidity is.

The U.S. shouldn't even contemplate allowing Israel pre-emptively to bomb Iran for any reason. This is the same as a U.S. attack. What sort of world will we have after such an event? Such an attack would be long-term suicide for Israel and mean endless war for the U.S. Unfortunately, although the U.S. military cannot rationally recommend an Israeli air strike upon Iran, this does not mean that it could not happen. The U.S. has blundered numerous times in the Middle East (and elsewhere) and can again.

Conclusion

The U.S. hasn't appeased any country in the Middle East. It has done just the opposite. America's missteps in the Middle East have weakened its position. All is not lost. The U.S. can stop playing the foolish neocon war game, pull back, rebuild credibility, rebuild its financial and other strengths, take a breather, tone down the rhetoric, talk with its foes, rebuild its moral stature, and play for time. This is the smart course to take, as opposed to setting the world ablaze.

The two main issues in the Middle East are oil and Israel. U.S. can buy oil without controlling the politics of the Middle East. It can deregulate energy, including nuclear energy, and resolve its energy problems without war. The Israel issue can't be resolved as easily. Israel in its current political form is doomed. It makes no sense for the U.S. to start a world war in order to preserve Israel. It makes no sense for the Israeli tail to wag the U.S. dog. The U.S. has to control Israel. America got into this mess and only America can get

out of it. America has little choice but strongly to control Israel, if it can, to control negotiations, if it can, and to lead the way in settling all the outstanding questions surrounding Israel's existence and political nature. The alternatives are that Israel will gradually be worn down anyway and/or that the U.S. will engage in the great folly of a major war.

Every official U.S. link with and every step into a foreign country creates costs and risks for the American people. They usually are not worth it. They usually cause losses. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the Middle East.

August 25, 2006

5. PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASS HOUSES

"What should we do, let Iran build nuclear bombs and drop them on us? We should go after them with a vengeance." These are the e-mailed ideas of a man who favors attacking Iran pre-emptively or preventively. The public utterances of our leaders are not far different.

Preventive attacks on account of distant imagined threats are aggressive attacks, pure and simple. They are what Hitler did. They are what Israel has done in bombing Iraq and Syria. They are what the U.S. did in Iraq.

Our leaders are slightly more sophisticated in their thought. They know that the greatest risk facing Americans is not a nuclear-tipped missile attack by Iran. It is detonation of a smuggled nuclear bomb. They fear that Iran will disperse nuclear weapons to Islamic terrorists who will use them against Americans.

Determined antagonists can hunt down sources of fissile materials and nuclear technology now, even without Iran. Every so often, the press reports that the CIA has wind of a bomb smuggled into the U.S. Our leaders and others have warned us again and again of the significant chance of a nuclear attack on a major U.S. city within the next 10 years. An American Hiroshima or much worse is no longer a remote prospect.

Why has this happened? Apart from minor frictions, we in North America have lived peacefully with the Islamic world since Columbus landed. There is nothing inherent in the Islamic religion that set it on a jihad against Americans over the past 400 years. The Islamic peoples of the world never had a generalized hatred of us or our freedoms.

Our problems arose in the last 50–60 years. Terrorists tell us plainly that their beefs with the U.S. are political. It is plain that American foreign policy has triggered a terrorist counter-reaction. The U.S. for a variety of reasons has intervened in foreign countries. Instead of greater security, we are getting greater insecurity.

There are only two ways to go in the Middle East: get out or get in deeper. Getting out is wiser. That will reduce the threats. Getting out requires that America reverse course. This course was set in 1787 but the ship of state didn't set its full sails until 1898 and the Spanish-American War. Since then, the ship has become a Titanic speeding along as it heads for its iceberg.

Changing course is the only way to avoid the collision and sinking of the ship. The alternative to getting out is to get in deeper, such as by attacking Iran and Syria. Bush, Cheney, and Rice have opted for this course. The U.S. Congress has for years taken an anti-Iran stance.

What will be the result of getting in deeper? Under the best of circumstances, the U.S. will be involved in occupations that will last a very long time. The U.S. stayed for 50 years in the Philippines. It has been in Korea and other places around the world for 50–60 years and counting. Bush has said that the war on terror will take 100 years.

These occupations will have the goal of remaking the politics of Middle Eastern societies. They will be very costly. The Iraq War tab is now put at 2 trillion dollars after only 4 years. There will surely be local resistance movements in those countries. The occupations will attract foreign elements as in Iraq. We will see bloody campaigns that make the Philippines look like everyday riots. In time, the U.S. may produce reliable allies. This is under the very best of circumstances.

Under all other circumstances, far worse outcomes will occur. We can expect at least 100 years and more of war. The U.S. will be at the mercy of foreign nations upon whom it depends for financing. The U.S. will be at the mercy of any nation that arms and foments local rebellions in the occupied countries. Al-Qaeda and other similar movements will be able to recruit a new army of anti-U.S. soldiers. Attempts to blow up U.S. cities will intensify. The U.S. in its classic historic form will collapse. In fact, the U.S. has already substantially transformed itself from a classic liberal republic into an empire. This process will intensify. The U.S. will become more brutal at home and more brutal abroad.

And for what? What do we get out of all of this?

Americans live in a glass house. We should stop throwing stones immediately. We should get out, not get in deeper.

The tragedy is that our leaders and too many of us cannot even think in terms of anything else. No American leader has seriously entertained any other conception except interventionism for a century.

They and many of us are all blind captives of a basic misconception: idealism

in international relations. With good intentions that are leading us to hell, we are looking for the war to end all wars, or the international institution like the UN that will insure world peace, or the extension of democracies so as to insure peace, or some other program such that the human race lives happily ever after.

We think that we can do good by intervening overseas or by making war. We are trying to achieve the Kingdom of God using the Kingdom of Satan, and we don't even know it.

October 31, 2007

6. 'YOU LIBERALS'

According to an e-mail message: "It is a sure fire cinch that you liberals will not allow the U.S. to take any action. What should we do, continue to back down to Russia, China, Iran and all the rest?"

The short answer is "No, the U.S. should not back down." I assure the reader that the former professor writing all these loony anti-war articles is not lily-livered. But my unhedged answer begs the critical question. Back down from what? What actions by the governments of these countries create threats to Americans that require our government to respond with military action?

There are those like my correspondent who want the U.S. to unleash its arsenal against any nation whose words and/or actions thwart the U.S., no matter what the circumstances are. Even if our leaders merely imagine the possibility of foreign actions that cross us or interfere with our plans, they would have us attack. Even if our own actions have induced the foreign response that we now view as a threat, these anti-appeasement advocates of strength would never have us back down, change our tune, or negotiate.

At least five assumptions lie behind this militaristic attitude. (1) The U.S. is always right and has not caused the other side to respond. Conversely, the other side is wrong and/or has no legitimate beef with us. (2) The threats are so malign and imminent that drastic action is required. (3) Drastic U.S. action will succeed in ending the threats and lead into a better situation. (4) There are no other ways to end the threats. (5) The U.S. has exclusive privileges overseas that no other nation has. It has an exclusive right to act pre-emptively or preventively in force. Put another way, the U.S. is surely good and has been given unambiguous authority from some source to spread this good and crush any resistance to it.

More briefly, the idea behind U.S. militarism is that the U.S. is strong and right. These other countries are inferior and wrong. We can't let them gain strength and push us around, or else we'll end up with the short end of the stick. It's a dog-eat-dog world, and we're not going to be the dog that's eaten.

The problem with this theory is that it is all wrong. Applying it therefore produces negative results. The picture is supposed to be a Rembrandt, but really it's a Rothko.

In reality, our government has a penchant for throwing its weight around. It involves us in unnecessary, highly costly, and lengthy struggles in areas of the world where we have no obvious national interests. Every such conflict leads to further unresolved problems and future conflicts. The results of these military ventures are further long-lasting risks and costs. We get a never-ending negative harvest, rather than the peace, security, and bounty we are promised.

In view of this, we the people should automatically assume that the five assumptions behind American militarism are false. We should not give our government the benefit of these doubts. It is entirely rational for us to be highly suspicious of what our leaders propose to do in foreign policy.

There are those militaristic Americans who do not think in these terms. They react viscerally to those furriners that they perceive are trying to knock our block off. They see the news, they listen to their favorite glib but ignorant commentators, and they join the cheering section for our guys.

These are people who identify with the U.S. government. I don't. I view the government wholly as an antagonist. It's not a well-trained steed that we ride that might act up once in a while. It's more like a Brahma bull that's always ready to toss and gore its rider, or like a tiger ready to tear us apart.

When there are foreign troubles, it's often one government picking a fight with another government. It has nothing to do with me or you. Most people here and abroad know this. I (and I suspect most of you) have no beef with any Russians, any Chinese, and any Iranians, nor they with us. If any of them has a bone to pick with me, they haven't let me know about it. Our mutual problem is controlling our governments in their rivalries.

If anyone in the Middle East has a problem with me, I assure them I am not part of the U.S. government and never have been. The U.S. government and I are on opposite sides of the fence. It takes as much of my wealth as it can and regulates me. I can live without it; it can't live without the likes of me.

If any of my fellow citizens wish to include me under the umbrella of our government's foreign policies, please count me out. I didn't recognize Israel, send troops into Lebanon, and fight wars in Iraq. I didn't overturn Mossadegh, station troops in Afghanistan, bomb Yugoslavia, and shower other nations with American agricultural products. I don't control the U.S. government and

neither does anyone else that I know personally. As far as I can tell, the U.S. state acts as if it owns me and my property. I certainly don't own it.

In short, as far as what "we should do to Iran," the answer is you're speaking to the wrong person. I'm not we. Mr. We doesn't live at this address. Provide your opinion to the appropriate Washington address. I personally have nothing to back down from.

As a "liberal," or whatever else one may wish to label me, I have utterly failed to stop the U.S. government from doing anything that it wants to. The U.S. government has never paid the slightest attention to any opinion of mine or any other American that I know of. I am strictly a number and a tax return ready to be plumbed for penalties. I haven't prevented it in the past from not backing down, and it's still not backing down from whatever fights it chooses to pick.

Has anyone ever seen the U.S. back down from a fight? Our heads of state sometimes put on their best Gary Cooper manner and claim reluctance to make war. At other times, they act as belligerently as possible and promise to take us all to the grave before losing to "our" despicable enemies. Either way, we are constantly making war. Our leaders annoyingly ask us to smother our allies with love and affection for staunchly throwing in with us. I'm sorry, but I don't know any of these allies any better than I know my supposed enemies.

Government is a means to mobilize hatred and brotherhood at great distances. I must be missing the gene for once-removed love and hate. With me they do not register. It is hard enough for me to feel properly toward the people I know at first hand much less total strangers whom I am supposed to love and hate. Unfortunately, government succeeds with enough people to get the support it needs.

The set of people known as "you liberals" requires some consideration. Liberals and even liberal parties abound throughout the world. Keeping up with what they stand for is a full-time job. In America, liberals are whipping boys for conservatives. Mona Charen criticizes a "standard issue, liberal human rights type." Rush Limbaugh has said "If there are people by definition who are soulless, it is liberals – by definition." Conservatives in America are media figures who make an excellent living beating up on those whom they call liberals.

It is strange to see liberals berated for being soft on war when Wilson,

Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, and Clinton have all presided over wars.

The two labels, liberal and conservative, have long since been degraded. They don't mean what they used to mean. And they also don't mean what they used to mean even before that.

The heyday of Classical liberalism ended by some estimates around 1787. Liberalism was in decline during the nineteenth century. By 1915–1935, when it joined up with nationalism and imperialism, liberalism had become welfare-warfare statism. Why this happened is an interesting question. The gung-ho attitude of the public during World War I surely played a part, and the quote with which we began reflects the durability of that attitude. Both parties became welfare-warfare statist, alternating the emphasis as they switched in and out of power. They became secret allies, each being necessary to the other in the quest to keep the public off balance and enthusiastic over one or the other. Party partisanship conveniently supported the state's growth of power.

Neo-conservatives are nothing more than welfare-warfare statist liberals. Their heroes are the two Roosevelts (according to their guiding light [Irving Kristol](#)). They prefer strong and big government. They pooh-pooh Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*. They are more than ready to inflict Wilsonian idealism upon Americans via foreign ventures such as Iraq.

It is more than ironic to be chastised as an anti-war liberal by someone espousing pro-war neoconservative sentiments when the neoconservatives are in fact themselves the liberals! They have simply stolen the term conservative from the isolationist and anti-New Deal Old Right.

December 3, 2007

CHAPTER VI – CONVERGENCE OF THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION

Both major political parties in America are committed to U.S. intervention overseas. Neither party stands for either neutrality or a defensive security strategy. To illustrate this, “*2008 – Choose Your Foreign Policy Poison*” gives a rundown of the foreign policy positions of the main candidates in 2006. The two parties offer Americans no fundamentally different choices.

Both Clinton and McCain staked out extremely bellicose positions on Iran. Clinton: “We cannot and should not – must not – permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons.” McCain: “a nuclear capability in Iran is unacceptable.” Senator George Allen said Iran was a “great threat: and was “continuing to acquire weapons of mass destruction.”

War hawks often argue that Iran has no need for nuclear power plants because it has so much oil. They do not understand that a barrel of oil costs Iran the same as it costs us, since every barrel they use foregoes the revenue they could get by selling it in the world market. The hawks, furthermore, passed the 2001 Sanctions Act that seeks to prevent investment in Iran to develop its petroleum resources.

Internationalism is a doctrine of cooperative relations among nations. “*Tony Blair’s Internationalism*” examines neoconservative internationalism, which is far different. It raises the fear of alien forces aligned against Western civilization. It promotes a belief that Western civilization *is* civilization and a belief that it is the West’s right to remake the rest of the world in its image, even by force.

The Blair Doctrine, which is his “Doctrine of the International Community,” calls for a world rooted in common values of democracy. Such democracy in

practice means a more-or-less totalitarian world lacking in liberty and suffocating creative individuality. It means a totalitarian democracy that is run by professional elites. Blair outlined his views on April 22, 1999. This was in the midst of the NATO bombing campaign (March 22 to June 11) that sought to make over various Balkan societies that are in conflict. Blair imagines a West that faces an extremist fundamentalist Islam that is the West's most important enemy. They are indeed a problem, especially if not handled properly by making war on entire countries. The reality of what governments support what terrorists and for what purposes is complex and must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The same goes for religious factions.

Blair mistakes the true values of Western civilization. Blair puts the major value as Democracy, but western Democracy in practice is socialist and fascist, anti-liberty, and anti-property rights. Democracy surely does not head the list of Western civilization's true values. The true values of Western civilization are more in tune with biblical values as reflected, for example, in the Ten Commandments.

Blair also mistakes the most significant enemies of these true values of Western civilization. The most important enemies of Western civilization are inside the West. Their ideas consist of a cluster of destructive philosophies propounded, taught, and adopted in the West. They are far more effective in dissolving Western civilization than elements of Islam. These ideas are reflected in Blair's own positions. There is no surer way to bring down the West than the neoconservative strategy of remaking the world by force. It can succeed only in producing opposition and resistance to the effort. It can succeed only in undermining its own strengths, which stem from liberty, entrepreneurship, knowledge discovery, property rights and protections, adherence to natural law, and free markets. Tony Blair's internationalism is a neoconservative recipe for continual intervention and continual war.

Hillary Clinton's internationalism is not far different from that of neoconservatives and Tony Blair's, as described in "*A Clinton II Presidency*." Having chosen her as Secretary of State, Barack Obama's foreign policies are like hers.

Although Hillary Clinton didn't become president, "*Hillary Clinton: The Tragedy Continues*" applies equally well to the Obama presidency. This includes heating up the war in Afghanistan and having to deal with the problems that this creates in Pakistan. It includes energy measures in the name

of reducing global warming. It includes universal health insurance. At the time I thought that deficits might constrain government spending. I was wrong.

1. 2008 – CHOOSE YOUR FOREIGN POLICY POISON

Right now, the 2008 election shapes up like this. The Republican frontrunners are Senator John McCain (Az.) and Senator George Allen (Va.). McCain is ahead of Allen. Giuliani is running third, quite far back.

Hillary Clinton is the Democratic favorite with Governor Mark Warner (Va.) running a distant second.

The Republicans are slight favorites to retain the White House. All these rankings are from Tradesports contracts.

Senators McCain and Clinton are competing intensely in an Iran War tournament. First prize goes to whoever stakes out the most pro-war position. Both are hawks. Both are prepared to bomb Iran. Choose your war crimes poison, Republican or Democratic.

In a speech that could have been written and proofread by AIPAC, Clinton loudly clanged all the pro-Israel and anti-Iran bells: "We cannot and should not – must not – permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons." McCain ratcheted up the Iranian confrontation to the most serious since the Cold War and declared that "a nuclear capability in Iran is unacceptable." Is Iran a child in need of correction? Choose your hectoring poison, red or blue.

Senator George Allen of Virginia is another Iran War hawk. To him "Iran remains a great threat to the United States and their neighboring countries [sic] by continuing to acquire weapons of mass destruction." In a masterpiece of logic, Senator Allen lauds his co-sponsorship of the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 2001 while stating "my sincere hope that by opening up economic channels and foreign investment to Iran, it will help bring capitalism and greater freedom to the Iranian people."

The 2001 Sanctions Act and its predecessor try to squash any investment to develop the petroleum resources of Iran and Libya! What stronger incentive for development of nuclear power could there be? Choose Allen as your dark horse poison.

Congress housed hundreds of co-sponsors of the sanctions against Iran. Choose your poison, a hawkish Congress or a hawkish Executive.

Governor Warner may be running for Vice-President. He has no foreign policy experience, but that doesn't disqualify him. Most Presidents and Vice-Presidents have no foreign policy experience, nor do they seem to learn much while on the job.

The Governor has occasionally spoken out on foreign matters, albeit briefly. He views nuclear proliferation as a "tremendous challenge," especially in Iran and North Korea. This means that he doesn't want to see it happen, he does not see a low-cost way to prevent it, but he's against it. He also thinks that "Islamic extremism is a challenge." This means he'll continue the war on terror. In 1996, Warner favored the deployment of U.S. ground troops to Yugoslavia. He favors foreign and economic aid when they are used to further U.S. interests. It looks again like a case of choose your poison. This poison may have more of a Bill Clinton flavor.

The good thing about 2008 is that Bush will become an ex-President. The bad thing is that whoever replaces him will probably continue his policies, which are in turn extensions of policies that go back decades. Congress repeatedly has made clear its support of America's Empire. America will continue to ally itself with some and make enemies of others.

For what reasons? No one can deny the role of the interest groups, foreign and domestic, that have had their say and gotten their way. Yet beyond the imperatives of money and interests, in the main American politicians are now become a crowd, an unthinking herd that sounds a variety of refrains with a single voice – nuclear threat, weapons of mass destruction, democracy, freedom, terror, the homeland, national security, vital interests. Maybe a Hillary Clinton calculates her words, and maybe a John McCain does not. But they come out very nearly the same. We do not have a single Cato demanding that Carthage must be destroyed. We have a chorus of them.

The Communists did not subvert the United States of America. We ourselves accomplished that. In the process, we subverted thoughtful thought.

Too many opinion leaders and too many rulers have listened to the same idiotic phrases, the same simpleminded interpretations, the same falsified history, and accepted them. This makes for an unthinking crowd. Too many have been lulled into a condition of unthinking acceptance of wild phrases and ideas. They spout what they hear. They spout to the camera. They spout what a speech writer puts in front of them. If they are Senators, they simply spout.

We now have wall-to-wall commentators whose main claim to fame is an unfettered gift of gab when the cameras are running – speaking a mile a minute, interrupting each other, yelling at each other, and striving to come out on top. Reporters have become stars in their own right. Their questions are speeches, running longer than the answers of those whom they interview.

Choose your poison, Republican or Democratic, red or blue. It is as you might choose a dry breakfast cereal. They occupy an entire aisle, but you will find they are all pretty much the same, jacked up with sugar, vitamins and iron. They all promise health, a healthy heart, that you will lose weight, and conformity with a new and revised food pyramid. In the same way will our major parties offer a choice of more of the same.

The great excitement will be within each party as the zealots eagerly create PACs and raise money, pushing their newly-minted men and women of the hour, the new photogenic centrists who will capture the opposition vote and return the party to power. To do what? To reform education, wean the country away from oil, save Social Security and Medicare, and now to fight the never-ending war on terror and preserve the security of the "Homeland."

Homeland is an odious term! What's wrong with America and Americans? Why do we need a German-sounding phrase, reminiscent of heimat or vaterland, a word with overly nationalistic and ethnic, even Nazi connotations, a word that attempts to unite all Americans into one fearful unit? Perhaps Karl Rove was responsible for this concept. Let us reject it and the Department of Homeland Security that goes with it. Let us choose none of the poisons proffered to us under any and all guises.

February 8, 2006

2. TONY BLAIR'S INTERNATIONALISM

Like President Bush, Prime Minister Blair is on a round of speeches about terrorism and foreign policy. Blair's first speech, delivered on March 21, 2006 is two parts attack on the anti-war critics and one part advertisement of Blair's brand of internationalism.

The internationalism Blair wants

In his heart of hearts, Blair wouldn't mind resurrecting the British Empire. He can't get that, so next best is an alliance with the strongman named the U.S. in which Blair controls the action. Failing that comes a British-U.S. partnership in which the two nations either go it alone or create a cluster of satellites that remakes the world in the Western image. Spotted somewhere into this picture are the U.N., NATO, and other organizations like the World Bank and the IMF, all to be utilized whenever convenient for British ends.

Blair suggests that "unless we articulate a global policy based on common values, we risk chaos threatening our stability, economic and political, through letting extremism, conflict or injustice go unchecked." It is hard to imagine a more exaggerated set of goals unless it is Bush's hyperbolic aim to eliminate tyranny everywhere. Blair means to control extremism, conflict, and injustice through a "global policy." In practice this means a global military force under Western control. Blair has mailed an invitation signed by himself to himself asking himself to intervene anywhere in the world. He wants a standing international army, even if he never comes right out and says so. Like all unbridled neoconservatives, he wants benevolent global hegemony.

It is understandable that statist like Blair will never consider or mention the alternative of privatizing all the functions supposedly delivered so marvelously by the organizations run by the Blairs, Bushes, Putins, Hu Jintaos, Annans, Singhs, Chavezes, and Mugabes of this world. But he also does not believe in the alternative of local and nearby government responsive and accountable to the local communities they serve, that is, the classic American ideal. He believes in the maximum of centralization of power, in unresponsive and unaccountable power, and in paralyzing regulation administered by remote and unlistening bureaucracies. These institutions don't risk chaos. They bring chaos. They are chaos masquerading as order.

Internationalism has severe defects

Within his barely-concealed quest for a standing international force to impose order lies the great risk of a tyranny over the entire world. This is not about to happen, but it's where Blair's visions and policies will lead. World tyranny is not what Blair wants or envisions. He imagines a neutral police force enforcing the peace, like the bobbies patrolling London or the Paris gendarmes. But who is to give them their marching orders? Who is to decide what dissidents they kill or repress? Who is to decide what sides to take in the world's numerous messy conflicts? Who is to pay for this force? How will the people control this force?

We cannot rely on the good intentions of Western leaders. Under the loosened confines of democratic or republican constitutional methods of control, they have repeatedly demonstrated that they can be just as ruthless and brutal as any tyrant or dictator whom they condemn. They have shown that they are capable of the greatest blunders in assessing which sides to take in local conflicts. They have shown that in many instances they are downright incapable of creating stability. In fact, they have shown time and again that their interferences produce even more long-lasting conflicts that spread in ever-widening circles and that breed more and more instability and destruction. No, we certainly cannot rely on good intentions. That is not the way this world works. Mr. Blair is dreaming.

Blair's internationalist pretensions are not new for him. The general basis for his policy wish-list is "a doctrine of international community" with justification "as least as much by reference to values as interests." His first axiom is "that the defining characteristic of today's world is interdependence."

In reality Blair's internationalism is a thoroughly statist, expansionist, and world-government-oriented affair. It is a retreaded mix of suffocating British socialism, ambitions for world empire, and white man's burden blown up to international scope.

Internationalism hasn't worked

The phrase "international community" stems from Blair's 1999 [Chicago speech](#). Here he first laid out the internationalist political model that he is now hawking as reason for the war against terrorism. Here he showed how a glib political leader can cook up a socialist stew by mixing in the faddish phrases

of the day – globalisation, international co-operation, global markets, human rights violations, interdependence, international institutions, international community, global environment, global financial markets, and global security. But what does this recipe produce? Removing the pot lid reveals international financial regulation, international control of trade, sustenance and enhancement of the U.N. Security Council and NATO, approval of the Kyoto agreement, and manipulations to bail out debtor nations and the banks that have loaned them money. This is the unsavory mess that is being passed off as world-class cuisine. We are not buying, Mr. Blair.

In practice, Blair's politics of internationalism at that time meant singling out Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic as devils of the day. They were the "dangerous and ruthless men" who by Blair's exalted insight into world values had to be shown the door, so that future tyrants-in-training would learn a lesson and behave themselves. Has this scare-tactic worked? It backfires when the international force, such as the U.S. force in Iraq, fails to gain control; for then it shows its weakness. At that point, anyone with a gun or a bomb is encouraged to fire them off. In fact, they can fire them off even if the world force supposedly has control.

Control of one country by another is not the easy matter that Blair presumes. There are any number of countries that have put together successive decades of peace, and they have done so with a variety of homegrown governments. But how many examples are there of one country successfully imposing its will on another country in which we observe decades of peace in the subservient or conquered nation? We are more likely to see insurrection, rebellion, and brutal means used by the conquerors to keep the peace. Conquerors quite often are driven out or beat a face-saving retreat.

In his 1999 speech Blair termed NATO's intervention in Kosovo a just war that was designed to end ethnic cleansing and rid the world of the evil dictator, President Milosevic. In point of fact, Milosevic was an elected President. He ran ahead of his party which won 80.5% of the vote in the December 1990 election. In point of fact, [observers](#) of Milosevic's war crimes trial held that, after several years, the prosecution's case had failed miserably. In point of fact, the western leaders like Bill Clinton that instigated the bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia acted unjustly. They are as guilty of war crimes as the present-day Bush Administration officials are for the Iraq War.

Blair in 1999 bemoaned the "destructive policies" of both Milosevic and

Saddam Hussein that have "brought calamity on their own peoples." Couldn't the same be said of Britain's destructive governmental policies or those of any other state in the world? Couldn't the same be said of America's intervention in Iraq for the Iraqi people? He added: "Instead of enjoying its oil wealth Iraq has been reduced to poverty, with political life stultified through fear." Maybe Mr. Blair has special insight after all. This is an apt description of today's Iraq.

Blair on terrorism

In his recent speech, Blair implies that Western interventions have not made terrorism worse. What does this statement mean? There are tactics of terror, and there are users of these tactics. The chances are that the tactics of delivering terror are evolving in response to Western methods of warfare, although the basic guerilla tactic of infiltrating and harming the enemy or the civilian population remains the same. The chances are that the original set of terrorists (like associates of al-Qaeda), if we could identify its members, has in fact grown. What we can be sure of because we see the bloody results daily is that the occupation in Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein have led to a big increase in users of terror tactics among Iraqi groups, and these were not using these tactics before. Blair is dead wrong.

One goal of Blair is to paint a picture of the conflict between Western peoples and terrorists that supports Bush's neoconservative strategy of intervening in other countries militarily in order to free suppressed peoples so that they can politically express their inborn yearnings for western-style democracy. Neoconservatives are not satisfied in killing known terrorists who have committed mass crimes. They also are not satisfied in promoting Western ideology in opposition to extremist ideologies that they detest. They do not believe in a competition of ideas. They believe in warfare as a means of snuffing out their opposition. They not only think they are correct and have a better way of life, which are acceptable behaviors, but they also believe in the military crusade to achieve their goals – and this is unacceptable behavior. Blair calls this being "strongly activist," a euphemism for a crusade. When Bush in 2001 spoke of "this crusade, this war on terrorism," the French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine said: "We have to avoid a clash of civilizations at all costs. One has to avoid falling into this huge trap, this monstrous trap conceived by the instigators of the assault." Blair has not changed his tune one bit since that initial folly. He continues to compound it.

Blair goes even further than promoting the idea of a clash of civilizations. He

views the West as in a titanic struggle for civilization against barbarity. Talk about extremism! Where is the moderation and restraint, where is the prudence in this point of view? How can this do anything but confer far too high a status on a small group of terrorists who do not speak for Muslims in general?

Blair on Islamic fundamentalist regimes

Blair is against countries being ruled by extreme fundamentalist Islamic political leaders. He does not see a "clash between civilizations. It is a clash about civilization." In other words, extremist Muslims are uncivilized. They are against civilization itself, defined as Western ideas of democracy, rights, freedom, progress, and optimism. All of these are "democratic values, which do not belong to any race, religion or nation, but are universal." Blair sees an embattled world, riven with a dire conflict, a world poised to destroy western civilization. There seems a streak of delusion or madness here and an unnatural degree of fear, but such views also satisfy the yearnings of leaders who wish to see themselves as the Churchills of our age and need Hitlers to oppose.

Perhaps God is dead in Blair's mind and he has replaced it with democracy as the ultimate value, but he does not speak for mankind. If Islamic countries in one way or another, peacefully or not, become ruled by Islamic regimes with varying fundamentalist pedigrees, Blair and the West would do well to exercise tolerance, restraint, patience, and moderation. They need not actively fight these regimes as long as they do not attack western countries. The natural laws of life will prevail before long and the regimes will alter in the face of exigencies, constraints, new faces, the aspirations of their subjects, trade, contact with others, their own failings, etc.

But no, Blair is not of a mind to allow to occur a multiplicity of unplanned and spontaneous human actions below the surface of the grand actions of statesmen like him. As he sees it, the uncivilized terrorist and Islamic fundamentalists "do not see opportunity in the modern world." There is a clash between "extremism and progress." "It is a battle of values and progress..." "This is, ultimately, a battle about modernity." Yes, there is a conflict in the philosophies of religiously-based states and secular states. But there need not be violent conflict between their states or their societies. And Blair need not elevate the political, religious and other agendas of a variety of terrorists, separatists, secessionists, rebels, tribalists, and fundamentalists into a large-scale battle between Western secular states and Islamic fundamentalist states whether they be moderate or radical. Defending against criminal

terrorists does not have to be transformed into world war.

What all this comes down to politically is the Bush-Rice doctrine: The West does not accept and cannot live with states ruled by fundamentalist Islamic regimes. The West insists upon democracies. Furthermore, as the Palestinian and Iraq cases reveal, the outcomes of the democratic process are not enough to satisfy the West's quests for what are called stability and proper values.

Blair and the anti-war critics

Much of Blair's speech is taken up with a rhetorical attack on anti-war critics. Most of it consists of debating flourishes and straw-men attacks.

For example, Blair characterizes his and Britain's foreign policy as "strongly activist." This may be accurate, but it justifies nothing because activism per se is neither good nor bad. Blair wants us to think that being active is better than being passive, and being strongly activist is better still. But the words "strongly activist" are empty rhetoric. The important thing is the brand of activism. Who is engaging in this activism? Are their actions just or unjust? Are the actions prudent and effective? His defense will have to address these questions. They cannot rely on action in and of itself.

Blair wants to justify the interventions of the western nations and their "military action in Kosova, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq." He wants to disparage "a doctrine of benign inactivity." This is, of course, a straw man. Charles H. [Featherstone](#), among others, provides an alternative set of actions. There were and are many such "activist" alternatives provided by many writers that outline agendas that do not involve wars in country after country.

Furthermore, Blair cannot think beyond the confines of states being the only organizations that can act benignly, justly, and militarily across borders or internationally. States have preempted these arenas and made private alternatives illegal for a very long time. They have obliterated the private incentives for such actions. If we do not observe such alternatives in action, there is good reason why we do not. But I am sure that it would be no problem to create a private contingent of skilled professionals to hunt down al-Qaeda operatives. Blair ignores all such alternatives and prefers to set up and knock down straw men such as doing nothing, isolationism, or other bugbears such as appeasement, watching genocides occur, or allowing Hitlers to rise. His rhetoric in this direction is highly misleading because it presumes that states

are the only available organizations capable of initiating punitive actions against international criminals.

Blair's sharpest line is that those against intervention believe that "Saddam should have been left in place or the Taliban free to continue their alliance with al-Qaeda." If you aren't with us, folks, then you are in favor of the enemy. But one can surely disapprove of Saddam and the Taliban without endorsing an attack by Britain or the U.S. on them.

The other side of Blair's jibe is this. Bush and Blair believe that if a state disapproves of selected tyrants or tyrannical friends of its enemies, then that state is morally obligated and justified in launching wars against these nations. The right behavior in the face of tyranny, genocide, or any crime is not war. War is a generalized and widespread activity that severely harms noncombatants. No country has the right to injure innocent people while seeking to stop tyrants or catch criminals. War often leads to further war and prolongs combat. The right behavior is focused and sharp action limited to the specific tyrants, mass-murderers, or criminals. Such action should probably be quiet, secret, and undercover. Furthermore, the police, the military, the country, the mercenaries, or the private vigilantes that engage in these crime-stopping actions should be responsible for collateral damage or errors in their actions.

Conclusions

Blair in 1999 declared "We are all internationalists now..." In practice this statement is a euphemism for hubristic action. The anointed nations of the West that are blessed with singular destructive power, singular knowledge of democracy and values, and a singular overestimate of their power and influence will order the globe according to their wills. They will do so by using their wiles and influence within the U.N. and NATO where possible. Otherwise, they will unilaterally or in combination act against any threat, visible or imagined, to their well-being. They will use any level of force they desire in doing so. They will rule the waves and continents. Hail Internationalism! Hail Britannia! Hail America!

Internationalism is a bigger version of statism, subject to the same criticisms, only more so. The more remote the power, the less accountable it is and the more likely it is to make gross error. No citizen can rely on the good intentions of elected officials. Still less can the citizens of the world rely upon

international force structures set up and run by one or more states. They are even less accountable and even less responsible. What's worse than a state? A superstate, an international power structure. International organizations set up by states can only become even more bureaucratic, arbitrary, and prone to make bad decisions than states already are.

Given the elastic possibilities of tyranny present in today's world, Blair's internationalism justifies virtually any intervention anywhere and anytime. What state is not guilty of multiple tyrannies, small and large? Their whole existence and methods are built on them. Blair's proposal provides no advance whatever in the science of politics. Rather it is a specious rationale for some states who camouflage their tyrannies with democratic majorities and other electoral devices to intervene in the affairs of other tyrannies who in a less sophisticated manner care not that their tyrannies are open to the view of others.

March 29, 2006

3. A CLINTON II PRESIDENCY

Hillary Clinton's already-high chances of becoming the Democratic Presidential nominee in 2008 have gone up even more. She is now the favorite with a 55 percent chance of winning. No one else in the field even comes close. Her closest contender is Al Gore whose odds are 6.4 to 1 against winning the nomination.

In a match up against John McCain, the Republican frontrunner, Hillary is favored to win.

What would a Clinton II presidency be like on the main foreign affairs issues of the day? Her recent speech of October 31, 2006 before the Council on Foreign Relations provides clues, and her positions are representative of current Democratic views.

Mind you, elected candidates have a nasty habit of making a bonfire of their campaign speeches in the White House fireplace. And two years hence, much will have changed.

Hillary on foreign policy

1. War on terror. Hillary *fully accepts* the idea of a war on terror. She says that Afghanistan is "the forgotten front line in the war on terror." She wants to "win the war on terror, not just the battle." She wishes Bush had said to the Congress: "...we're going to have so many costs related to the war on terror; we need to take a deep breath here; no more tax cuts until we figure out where we are financially..."

The war on terror is a government program accepted by both major parties. Hillary wants to fight and win it too.

The notion that it is misconceived and misbegotten is not on her mind.

2. Iraq war. Her program to end the war includes pressuring "the Iraqis" (which ones?) to "become serious about achieving an internal reconciliation." If they don't, we are to present them with "real consequences," which are apparently that we will withdraw troops against the wishes of the Iraqi leaders.

She suggests we should pay oil profits to every Iraqi so that they have "an

incentive to stop fighting." This not only won't work, it will never be done.

Her next idea is to go multilateral. Convene a regional conference of every nearby state (except Israel and Lebanon) and get them to guarantee a sovereign Iraq.

If we can't control the Iraqi factions, we surely can't control Syria, Iran, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Among the Pandora's box of possibilities, they might like to carve up Iraq for themselves, bicker over it, introduce their own forces, make demands on the U.S., or squelch the Kurds. With such a conference taking place, the Iraqi factions might have even more incentive to fight and/or ally themselves with one or more conference participants.

Last, Hillary gingerly endorses a "phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq."

Candidate Clinton tells us that "we have finally reached the point of complete absurdity," citing the Bush administration's daily contradictions on Iraq. Her solutions are equally absurd because Iraq is a pit of quicksand. Struggling makes matters worse. The only way to get out is to grab a nearby branch and pull oneself out – exit Iraq no matter what.

3. Afghanistan war. "NATO officials [are] predicting that the country could fall back to the Taliban in six months." To Clinton, "The stakes are unbearably high for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, for the country's northern neighbors in central Asia, for the reach of Al Qaida and for our own credibility and leadership."

How has an effort to round up bin Laden changed in her mind into a broad war to save central Asia? Bush made the mistake of helping bin Laden create a jihad against the U.S. Now Clinton wishes to repeat and reinforce this error by entangling the U.S. further with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

In her words, "We should begin by responding to our NATO commander's call for more troops in Afghanistan where on a per capita basis we have spent 25 times less than we spent in Bosnia and deployed 1/50 as many troops."

Democrats (and compassionate conservatives) are fond of expanding

programs. One quagmire isn't enough when we can easily get bogged down in a few more.

4. Iran. Candidate Clinton: "U.S. policy must be unequivocal. Iran must not build or acquire nuclear weapons." And: "We know that a nuclear Iran poses a direct threat to its neighbors in the region, with Israel as its chief target. It also poses a significant threat to the United States,..." In a speech to AIPAC, she said "A nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable." It "would shake the foundation of global security to its very core."

This position is indistinguishable from that of the Bush administration. Clinton proposes "direct talks" with the Iranians. No doubt some level of communication is already taking place.

But what good does such overheated and hyperbolic rhetoric do? Can the U.S. really stop a country that is determined to get a nuclear bomb from getting it without resorting to the most brutal methods? And if Iran ever does decide it wants the bomb and gets it, won't it be held in check by other nuclear powers?

What about North Korea and Pakistan who are nuclear powers? What if a revolution or some other turmoil occurs in Pakistan in which terrorists gain nuclear weapons? What if North Korea sells a nuclear weapon to an enemy of the U.S.?

5. Woodrow Wilson-style international activism. Hillary disagrees with the means used by Bush, such as a higher degree of acting unilaterally, crude and/or no diplomacy, and one-sided painting of other nations as good or evil. But these are trivial matters beside the basic thrust of American policy. She's mistaken to say her policies will be a "sea change."

The important fact is that she is every bit as anxious to remake the world in America's image as Bush is. She will continue the century-old Wilsonian international policies. "American foreign policy exists to maintain our security and serve our national interests. And in an increasingly interdependent world, it is in our interests to stand for human rights, to promote religious freedom, democracy, women's rights, social justice and economic empowerment."

American interference overseas is a fixture of the foreign policies of both major parties.

American liberal conservatism

In a sense, Hillary Clinton is very conservative. Her proposed policies are not ones that rock the American boat. She would increase the size of the military. She would soup up the FBI and the intelligence agencies.

Like Alan Greenspan, Hillary has completed the trip from the youthful enthusiasms of her youth to the unimaginative and tiresome policies of power and preservation of Empire.

The remnants of her liberal side will surely resurface as they do in her speech when she reminds us that she "introduced legislation for our country to take the lead in education for all, to aim at giving every child in the world access at least to primary education by 2015."

It seems to be a psychological law of statist that after a program has been shown to fail over and over again domestically, one then proposes to extend the program internationally!

Conservatives and liberals divide on certain social issues, but none of them are central to what the two major American political parties are about. Both parties are conservative and liberal. They both introduce new statist programs and they both preserve the status quo after their introduction.

Both parties dream of solving America's problems with endless state intrusions into education. Hillary now calls for creation of "a public service academy, a West Point for public service, that would send a message about the importance of civilian preparedness and response at home and abroad. It could become a place where we teach critical languages and put a high priority on learning about those cultures we so poorly understand today." It's easy to imagine Republicans endorsing this concept or even expanding it.

Conclusion

Hope springs eternal. There will be those, including some libertarians, who are so fed up with Bush's follies and his augmentation of presidential and state powers that they will welcome a Democratic administration. Such an emotional fix will prove short-lived. Clinton I continued and extended Bush I's policies in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Haiti. In her own way and with her own style and emphases, Clinton II would continue and extend Bush II's

policies. There may be some backtracking on the fringes of the Patriot Act, but the Department of Homeland Security won't be removed. The war on terror will continue and be expanded.

Circumstances will force anyone who is the next president and those thereafter to deal with a number of severe domestic and foreign issues: the dollar, Medicare, government debt, over-regulation, failing education and health care, and foreign adventurism.

Maybe reality will provide some checks on the powers-that-be, but America really needs an exorcism. It needs to expel the demon state from its body politic, leaving behind a healthy adherence to the laws of God. Neither party is aware of this. Americans are not aware of this. Even if they were aware, neither Democrats nor Republicans are radical enough to take on the task. With God's grace, Americans at large will find their way to the healing we so very much need.

November 8, 2006

4. HILLARY CLINTON: THE TRAGEDY CONTINUES

Hillary Clinton is more and more likely to become the next President of the United States. The price of her nomination contract on Intrade has jumped to the 60 area, meaning she has a 60 percent chance of winning the nomination. No one else is even close. The market thinks that Bill Richardson is likely to be her running mate. Speculators think that this ticket will win the election, although they are not as sure of that. They are very sure that Democrats will retain both Senate and House control.

A Clinton II presidency will affect taxes, stock and bond prices, dollar and gold prices, and a great deal else. Speculators and planners will be watching closely her every word in order to discern the material impacts of her possible policies. Long before she is elected, asset prices will begin to move in anticipation of potential legislation and policy changes. There are certain areas that Hillary Clinton is very interested in that will affect many Americans and the portfolios of many Americans.

Interesting questions arise. Will Bill Clinton serve in a new Clinton administration? Will he have a marked influence on Hillary's policies? Will her fiscal and monetary policies look like his? Will she be her own woman?

I will briefly summarize a few of Hillary's currently indicated directions. This usually is a valuable exercise. Elected officials often follow the signals they emit during their campaigns. But it is an iffy exercise. Events overtake a president and lead to unexpected twists and turns. I also cannot resist offering a few of my own jaundiced reflections. It is extremely difficult to watch multiple American tragedies unfolding before our eyes and not say something about them. And who knows? Maybe Hillary or someone close to her will read this and see some light.

Hillary would like to end the war in Iraq. Bill Richardson even more plainly wants to end it. The idea is to shift the \$450 billion going into warfare into domestic concerns like health care, education, and energy. Such a platform is a sure winner. But Richardson as Vice-President will have limited influence. Hillary will find herself drawn into the foreign policy game just as her husband was.

Hillary as President will curtail U.S. military operations in Iraq but not end them. She has promised to end the war, but at the same time she promises to

transform and continue it. She says she will retain a significant force and continue to try to produce country-wide military and police forces, attack terrorists, and provide materiel. She will call for more equipment for the area and fewer personnel. She will talk tough to Iraq's leaders.

Her promise to end the war is an empty one. Since she and the U.S. establishment want to produce a stable Iraq allied to the U.S., she can't end the war because that will produce the opposite consequences. Iraq will disappear and be replaced by a partitioned country with many frictions: between Iranian and Iraqi Shiites, between Iraqi Shiite factions, between Sunnis and Shiites, between Turkey and Kurds, etc. The bloodthirsty terrorists of al-Qaeda will ally themselves with whomever they can to lever their position.

Events in Iraq are unpredictable. Both the U.S. and Hillary are willing hostages to them. Even under the cover of a democracy, a strong man could arise, another Saddam. Which way will Hillary go? Will she bite the bullet and withdraw, letting the chips fall where they may? Or will she succumb to the urge to shape events and control Iraq's future? Like her husband, she will do both. She will straddle the issue. Just as he bombed and bombed, she will try to substitute equipment for manpower. She will withdraw some men but not all; and she will not withdraw power and interference. She will compromise between those voices urging faster exit and those counseling disaster if she withdraws too quickly. In other words, the war will drag on until the balance of power shifts to install a regime or regimes that keep power.

Hillary on the Iraq War is a continuing disaster. She will not exercise a foreign policy leadership that will make a real difference. She has already joined others in her party who promise to heat up U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Adjacent Pakistan also continues to heat up as another hot spot.

On energy, Hillary is a booster of the Apollo Alliance. She supports renewable energy sources, ethanol, biofuels, clean coal, and measures to reduce global warming, which are all popular but costly, wasteful, and ineffective ideas. None of these measures will reduce America's oil dependence, as she claims to want. Only a big shift into nuclear power will accomplish that. However, she is at best lukewarm and/or really cold on nuclear power plants. She thinks the public is against them ("so hard to site them") and that they cost too much ("so hard to fund them.") Since she could exercise leadership on nuclear power and isn't, she is unlikely to go in that direction. Instead, in a speech on Feb. 26, 2007, she called for an Apollo Project for energy that would end "tax breaks

for big oil" and subsidize research and development of clean fuels.

Hillary on energy is a disaster, but so has been every administration for a long time. U.S. energy policy is a huge and stupid tragedy, and Hillary will play a lead role in continuing it.

Hillary hasn't moved an inch on HillaryCare. The Congress, with benighted public support, has moved in her direction, enacting universal health care piece by piece. Hillary will extend health care benefits and introduce price controls on insurers. She wants full and universal coverage for all Americans. On paper everyone will have health care. In reality, there will be rationing and price controls. American health care will deteriorate even further. Will Americans care? Will they fly to India or Thailand where they can get better, faster, and cleaner health care? Hardly likely. Unlike Canadians suffering with their national health care system who have been coming here, where will Americans turn? They will wait, suffer, and die before their time. The only bright side is that this will provide a background for those who see some advantage in running against the system and drastically changing it. Nothing less will suffice at this point than completely dismantling the health care monstrosity.

Hillary on health care is a continuing disaster. George Bush II played his role in this tragedy by introducing the prescription drug benefit and failing to reform the system in any way.

In another sign that she does not understand economics and/or wants to make political hay, Hillary wants women by law to be paid the same as men are. This sounds good to untutored American ears, who think this is a matter of simple justice. However, if women were systematically being underpaid for no good reasons, wouldn't those same businessmen who are supposed to be so greedy rush in and hire them at \$0.75 on the dollar? Shawn Ritenour explains some of those good reasons for men-women pay differentials [here](#), and Thomas E. Woods, Jr. explains that "never-married women of comparable education and experience and who work full time have the same incomes as their male counterparts" [here](#). Raising women's pay above the market level that takes into account compensating differentials (related to such factors as on-the-job training, length of tenure, job interruption, and time spent with family) will put women out of work.

In an interesting pair of contradictory statements from the Hillary campaign site from which I draw her positions, we are told that "Hillary has stood firm

as an advocate for a woman's right to choose." Hillary favors *Roe v Wade*. She is in favor of abortion. But a few sentences later we read this: "As president, Hillary will continue her lifelong fight to ensure that all Americans are treated with respect and dignity." Apparently, babies in the womb do not count as Americans. Moreover, Hillary is known as a champion of children: "America is ready for a president who fights for our children." She has a long slate of legislation relating to children, including a new proposal to extend pre-kindergarten schools to all 4-year-olds. Why then does she not favor the babies who would be born? Maybe it's because they can't vote.

Hillary on the American family is yet another continuing disaster. In the Clinton II realm, the government will step up its invasion of the family. The State long ago crossed the boundary into American family life in a largely unnoticed and unheralded stealth invasion. Hillary will extend the State's victory over the American family and consolidate that control.

Like all presidents, Hillary can be counted on to push for a number of favorite hobby-horses. Hers are many. They include public schools in overseas countries, support of Israel, government reform, voting reform (including same-day registration and an Election Day holiday), and working with the U.N.

Political government under Hillary will grow larger, just as it has under just about every president ever elected. This process can go on for some time as there is a lot of ruin in a country. When major American establishment figures start talking different games than the ones we've been hearing for the last 100 years, then we'll know that some real change is in the air. This has not happened yet. In the meantime, the only consolation is that the State is running into diminishing returns. We can see this in the projected deficits to fund the government's programs. We can see it in the difficulties and cutbacks in countries overseas. Economics is a constraint on how far the State can go. Clinton II will be operating under constraints. Unfortunately, they are not yet tight enough to prevent her from continuing the tragic policies of her predecessors and placing her own personal stamp upon them.

August 18, 2007

CHAPTER VII – AMERICAN EMPIRE

INTRODUCTION

“Malevolent Hegemony” is a primer on American empire. American empire expanded beyond North America in 1898. As in most human efforts, the rulers of an empire think in terms of preserving what they have and extending it for further gains. They use tools of domination to achieve their ends, the same ones that are used in states. They press their power against weakness. Neoconservatives propose an extension of American empire benevolently: “benevolent global hegemony.” They identify the U.S. interests with what they conceive as benevolent goals. Hillary Clinton, for example, writes

"American foreign policy exists to maintain our security and serve our national interests. And in an increasingly interdependent world, it is in our interests to stand for human rights, to promote religious freedom, democracy, women's rights, social justice and economic empowerment."

The rest of the world and many Americans, however, are not automatically enamored of what these code words mean when it comes to practical policies and arrangements that affect their lives, especially when the U.S. seeks these goals by using force, covert or overt. Benevolent hegemony is a contradiction in terms for a state to achieve.

The leaders of American empire have repeatedly underestimated the problems of occupying another country and trying to transform its society and systems. *“Occupation Hazards”* explains the difficulties of occupation and why they arise. The U.S. occupied Haiti for twenty years without creating a stable political system or a robust economy, for example. Government failure is the rule domestically when a government tries to transform a society or a part of it. Before a goal is ever reached, like eliminating poverty or drugs, the

government usually creates unforeseen problems. The efforts end up making matters worse than before it began. The same holds in attempting to remake foreign countries. An empire is typically better off following a go-slow or hands-off policy that allows local customs, laws, and religion to prevail, while introducing a few underlying items to integrate the province into the empire such as its coinage and transportation.

Government failure in occupation, as in most everything else that it does, is a necessary consequence of the organization of human activity using government by force. The titular owners of a government, the public, cannot or do not exercise effective control over it. The government attempts to produce goods but without having the information it needs to do so effectively. Lacking that information, it has no clear goals. Its goals are vague and unstable, depending on the whims of its leaders and shifting tides of many factors. The government has no clear criterion of success. It then has no clear way to instruct those who are carrying out its tasks, and they, in turn, have no clear way to provide information to their higher-ups. No one has good incentives to respond to changes in the environment in which they are operating.

The occupying government is supposedly trying to produce a good (for Americans or for the U.S., but not necessarily for the occupied country.) It is a complex and vague good, which is the transformation of a society and its politics along the lines of the American model. The government rate of failure at this is high. Meanwhile, what is actually being produced are activities that benefit interest groups and bureaucracies that are being paid taxpayer dollars.

“Foreign Policy: The Production of Folly” follows up this line of thought. Foreign policy is supposed to be a good or service. There exists a coalition using the foreign policy process for its private gain (an Exploiting Clique that may include State Department employees, defense contractors, farmers, aid officials, foreign state officials, and so on.) The General Populace (or We the People) sees no gains from the “good” that is produced; it sees losses.

Why does this happen, when it is not rational for the General Populace? Those with power are imposing their wills on others. The Constitution as is and as interpreted gives them that power. Raw power is not sufficient. Acceptance is needed. They are aided immeasurably by the Constitution and by getting accepted the notion that foreign policy has to be a public good. The General Populace relinquishes foreign policy and allows it to be socialized. Then it no

longer owns or controls foreign policy. At best, it has the illusion of ownership via the occasional election of officials. The owners and operators of foreign policy are government officials and the Exploiting Clique who run it for their own benefit.

Their policies produce folly for several reasons. Taxation relieves them of being controlled by those who supply them with resources and finance. Constitutional powers and barriers to controlling those powers relieve them of being controlled by voters. The goals and time horizons of the Exploiting Clique do not match the General Populace. Their own goals shift and they face internal struggles. They act in secret and can be corrupted.

Foreign policy, as conducted by government, is not actually an economic good. This alone explains why we get folly when foreign policy activities are conducted. Foreign policy actions are violent, vague, affect many individuals differently, and create counter-reactions.

Three essays examine the factors behind the American empire invading Iraq: “*Why Are We In Iraq?*” is the first. The other two are “*Why We Are Still In Iraq*” and “*America Chose and America Chooses.*”

These essays explain two factors that influenced the judgment to go to war: error and empire. The error of invading Iraq, shared by neoconservatives and the Bush administration, had two sides. The first error was to overestimate the benefits of the invasion. Bush and his cohorts thought that removing existing weapons of mass destruction, installing a friendly democracy, and decreasing terrorism were worthwhile goals that made the U.S. more secure. But there were no weapons of mass destruction and Iraq was not a source of terrorism directed at America. It is very hard to see how a friendly democracy in Iraq raises the welfare of the average American as compared with whatever other governments the Iraqis might come up with. It might make life easier or be an ambition for those who man the U.S. state, but the state is not the same as our country and its people.

The other side of the error was to underestimate the war’s costs. The Bush administration thought that remaking Iraq would be a cakewalk.

Similar errors have occurred in the past; the problem is not specific to Bush and his men. The analysis suggests that it is endemic to the American *system* of empire and/or its supporting beliefs. The essay suggests

“Our institutional system of education and state encourages know-nothing and arrogant power-seekers to gain office and, once in office, it lets them behave overconfidently (underestimating costs and overestimating benefits), commit costly errors, and get away with them.”

Men of empire who act on its behalf have a supporting ideology that they disseminate and usually believe in themselves. One core belief is in projecting power through the state; they carry with them an ideology that favors control. Buttressing their ideology is a system. The persons who act to further empire cannot have their way and put either a foreign policy or an invasion into effect unless there is a system of state and society that makes these collective actions possible.

Those who further empire do so out of varied motivations, interests, and values. The most general interests are geopolitical. They include such factors as

- Secure America
- Establish secure buffer zones
- Forestall competing powers
- Prevent growth of hostile forces
- Secure regions for trade

Then, in the case of Iraq, there are specific interests such as

- Secure oil supply
- Secure Israel
- Economic gains of business and other interest groups

Spreading particular values and institutions is a factor, such objectives as

- Establish democracy, justice, freedom
- Establish American beliefs and ways

These factors can be inter-related as means to ends in some cases. Empire-builders may believe that achieving one goal implies achieving one or more other goals. Establishing democracy, they may believe, will lead to secure trade; or preventing growth of hostile forces may secure Israel. Reinforcing and overlapping beliefs like these solidify the overall belief in empire that is

present in the minds of the empire-builders.

As a goal, securing America sounds attractive but has faults. It is broad and vague. It lumps all of America together and suggests one agency engaged in defense, like a national government. Even if a national government has the charge of securing a nation, this does not imply that empire is a sound way to accomplish it. In the following chapter, I argue for neutrality and a defensive posture instead. Has the U.S. strategy of expansion by empire enhanced American security or not? It certainly has been very costly. It has certainly gotten many Americans killed and wounded.

The essay "*Why We Are Still in Iraq*" goes into the question of oil, as does "*Why Are We in Iraq?*". The U.S. got into the Middle East mainly because of its interest in controlling its oil supply. It is not content to be one among many buyers in a competitive market. Oil suppliers, it fears, may use oil as a weapon or as leverage against the U.S. A world policeman cannot operate as it pleases if it is being pressured by other nations with their interests, and a military cannot operate without secure oil supplies.

The interest in oil really goes back to the factor of implementing the American empire. The latter is being driven by an excessive control-oriented ideology and culture that finds one root in an excessive desire for American security. This goes back to the founding of the U.S. government. It shines through *The Federalist Papers*. The prime concern of those who favored a strong national government, and an American empire that united the states, was national security on a continent on which major European powers were present. This factor was present in Lincoln's desire to maintain the Union at all costs. It lies behind Manifest Destiny. It lies behind American expansionism. One root characteristic in the character of the American state is *fear* of incursion and dismemberment of what it sees as one grand nation. This is the reason for the endless drive for security. That fear is excessive and can rightly be termed paranoid.

This is not to deny that other factors have, as time has passed, come to complement this root factor. They may even overlay it and obscure it. The desire for security is easily transformed into an ideology with religious character of doing good for the entire world by spreading the American way. It is not difficult to fuse two goals: promoting the American way of life that has supported its economic growth while also seeking to overcome insecurity. By spreading American ways, Americans gain security for that which is

deemed right and proper for everyone to adopt. It is easy for religious elements in American society to believe that the empire is advancing the good of mankind, or that the welfare state is overcoming the ills of the American population. It is easy for interest groups to join up with the empire and begin to affect its course. Empire then comes to be a strong wave with several components contributing to its thrust. It is not easy to turn such a force back or diminish it. It is very likely to continue on until it erodes its own economy and fails, or until it runs up against stronger forces, or both.

The [Bush Doctrine](#) includes preventive war as well as spreading democracy. “*Repudiate the Bush Doctrine*” points out the negatives of preventive war. They revolve around starting a war based on tenuous notions of what may or may not be in the mind of a possible enemy. The attacker makes certain that his people and the supposed enemy, who has not attacked him, will bear the very real costs of present war, based on highly uncertain assessments that the enemy *might* attack and impose even higher prospective costs. This procedure is not rational unless the costs of a potential enemy attack far exceed the actual costs the attacker brings to pass, and unless the odds of that attack are high and visible. These conditions are rare, and they surely did not hold in the case of Iraq or Afghanistan. Preventive war exercised by a major power is also bound to encourage other states to start wars based on similar loose perceptions and justifications.

One of the major ideological forces that drives the American empire is the notion of spreading democracy throughout the world. This rationale does not hold up under scrutiny, as explained in “*National Security by Spreading Democracy?*” As a strategy of increasing security, it fails.

1. MALEVOLENT HEGEMONY

The rulers of the United States rule over far more than you and me. They control and strongly influence many foreign rulers of dependent satellite countries. This extended rule makes our Presidents the powerful emperors of a vast Empire.

Changes in the person and party who occupy the Oval Office certainly affect the detailed course of the Empire, for history is made by individual decisions and acts. However, the basic inclination of many Americans and their rulers to sustain and expand the U.S. Empire, the disposition to international Empire, has held steady for over 100 years. While some leaders are reluctant to extend American power, others are not. The net result, the major trend, is unmistakably greater American control. And before America's international expansion began, the same tendency to expand appeared in the form of Manifest Destiny.

Against this background, Bush's bloody invasion of Iraq is the latest of a lengthy list of conquests and invasions that have occurred over a long period of time. For example, President McKinley ordered U.S. soldiers to war against the people of the Philippines between 1899 and 1902. Estimates of native civilian deaths in that conflict range from 200,000 upwards.

Or consider the Middle East in the context of American Empire. Many Americans and certainly many American rulers have sided with the cause of Zionism and with Israel for over 100 years. The CIA overthrew Iran's prime minister in 1953. American soldiers invaded Lebanon both in 1958 and in 1982–1984. Franklin Roosevelt began the close relationship with the royal family of Saudi Arabia in 1945. Saudi rulers have been top recipients of American military hardware for many years. America played a complex role during the Iraq-Iran War of 1980–1988. Extension of American power into the Middle East is nothing new.

Detailing America's official political, military, financial and economic linkages to numerous countries is easy. So is documenting American intrusions, wars, operations, overt and covert. There is simply no question that our rulers are presiding over an Empire.

In World War II, the U.S. Empire, benefiting from the primary role played by the Soviet Union against Germany, defeated two other expansionist States,

Japan and Germany. Thereafter, the American Empire mainly butted up against the Soviet Union until 1990.

The Cold War against communism provided a convenient ideological framework for the extension of American Empire. The real work beneath this cover occurred as our rulers built up a far-reaching set of institutions to implement the Empire. These include the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the U.S. military, NATO, SEATO, OAS, trade pacts, foreign aid, and so on.

The prime ideological enemy of the Empire in the 20th century was communism, with a diversion to fascism. Passions were aroused by viewing communism as a godless creed intent on world domination. Both ideology and religion are important in mobilizing sentiment against an enemy, even though they are not the root reasons for a conflict. Today Bush II compares the terrorist movement both to communism and to fascism and paints it as 100% evil or as an errant extremist religion. Every day some neoconservative column writes of Islamo-Fascism. These are appeals meant to stir passion. They are not reasons for the battle in Iraq and the coming conflicts in Syria and Iran. Those have to do with the expansion of Empire.

Our rulers are neither infallible nor all-powerful. They make mistakes and they must contend with competing powers. For example, they misread the nature of the conflicts in both Korea and Vietnam. Their errors destroyed the lives of many. These costly wars weakened the Empire. Even today, Korea remains a trouble spot that no American ruler wants to see flare up.

Empires are extended States. Within them are still the non-producers and the producers, the parasites and the hosts. Sometimes it is hard to tell one from the other. The parasitical rulers do not want to see their current supply of hosts shrink. They benefit from a bigger supply of hosts.

The key terms in understanding empires are (1) preservation (or security) and (2) gain (of power and wealth). Rulers are like anyone else. They think in terms of loss and gain. Self-preservation or security is prevention of loss. More power and wealth are gains.

Rulers, being men of power, think and act in terms of force and taking. They are alert to threats and inroads against their power. Conversely, they push their power against the weak spots of others in order to gain more power or wealth.

Rival empires are like competing neighborhood gangs. Just as gang leaders worry about their turf, emperors worry about, jostle and fight over border regions.

Although the members of a society and their rulers interact in complex ways, pushing against each other, the rulers have the upper hand. They wield the power. They lead. They control education, communication, and the military. They are usually more united than their disunited subjects.

It is an oversimplification to identify the actions of the rulers with the empire. The situation is far more complex. The established bureaucracy and apparatus of government play a big role. The defining limits of this apparatus are vague and may go outside the traditional ideas of government. They may include foundations, educators, consultants, corporations, doctors, entertainers, and journalists. There are always men who actually control or aim to control or compete to control the rulers. The official government rulers are also divided. Furthermore, the rulers have to control the population at large. Often they have to accede to its passions or the passions of some powerful or influential groups in society.

Although the actual and detailed picture is complex and ever-shifting, like the day-to-day fluctuations in weather, the overall climate of Empire remains constant. The weather maps focus on preservation and gain. There is no noble cause in all of this. Noble causes stem from the rhetoric of indoctrination, influence, and control over the minds of the hosts.

In 1996, William Kristol and Robert Kagan published "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy." Much else in this article is wrong, but it did clearly state the goal of Empire or

"America's international role. What should that role be? Benevolent global hegemony. Having defeated the 'evil empire,' the United States enjoys strategic and ideological predominance. The first objective of U.S. foreign policy should be to preserve and enhance that predominance by strengthening America's security, supporting its friends, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world."

Kristol and Kagan incorrectly thought that Clinton had not followed this objective, and they incorrectly construed this objective as contingent upon

America's recently acquired predominance. However, the fact is that America's rulers had been following this foreign policy in one way or another for a hundred years. Kristol and Kagan wanted more Empire. With many like-minded functionaries in the Bush administration and with the occurrence of 9/11, their wishes have come true.

The benevolent hegemony of an American Empire is impossible. Being an (extended) State, an Empire uses force to rule, and imposed force acting upon innocent subjects is malevolent, not benevolent. Attacking the Iraqi people was not an act of American self-defense, any more than attacking the Philippine people was. "Standing up for its principles" is ideological cover for an act of brutal conquest.

The rulers of the United States have meddled in the Middle East for decades because they conceived such acts to maintain and extend the American Empire. Who controls and profits from the oil resources has been a paramount factor. There are always other reasons. There are those who support Israel for its own sake. There are those who support democracy for its own sake. Yet these are not fundamental. To our rulers, oil is a fundamental reason. If Israel did not exist, the U.S. would still be in the Middle East. If there were no oil in the Middle East, the region would still be of geopolitical concern.

The whole policy of controlling the Middle East for its oil is misconceived. It is beneficial to those oil companies who wish to ensure their profits, but it is of no benefit to consumers of oil. The Middle Eastern countries cannot eat their oil. Selling it on the world market is their natural course.

By controlling the region for so many years and siding with Israel, the U.S. has now succeeded in re-igniting an old Islamic force related to an older Islamic Empire. At present, this force is not especially strong by U.S. standards, but it is strong enough continually to cause a great deal of damage all over the world. It is buttressed by its own persuasive ideology and religion. It has plenty of potential recruits. It can over time develop or obtain highly destructive weapons, if it has not already done so. The American Empire is colliding with a nascent Islamic Empire that it catalyzed into being.

Emperors and rulers are prone to great blunders. Yet the power structures often survive because the losses are made good by the subjects. Bush went into Iraq on the theory that creating a pliant satellite would be easy and that the whole region could then be brought under firmer U.S. control. However, he has tied

down American soldiers for years to come, exposed them to constant threat of death and injury, exacerbated the terrorist problem, created an expensive liability, raised the price of oil, impelled other countries like China to seek oil in places like Venezuela, encouraged smaller countries to seek atomic weapons, and set in motion political forces that involve every other country in the region. So far, there is no perceptible gain.

Kristol and Kagan envision a world in which American military might intimidates everyone else so much that "potential challengers are deterred before even contemplating confrontation..." They want Americans to search and destroy the world's monsters, to wade into the international arena happily, cheerfully and with relish, to be thankful for the opportunity to bring peace to the world through military might. They want Americans to interfere anywhere and everywhere, in this way living up to their moral responsibilities with courage and honor. Kristol and Kagan write that "sitting atop a hill and leading by example becomes in practice a policy of cowardice and dishonor."

It is amazing that such nonsense could ever be swallowed or taken seriously, but this is the stuff of which Empires are made. This is the line of guff we have been fed for 100 years. Kristol and Kagan know this because they laud Theodore Roosevelt as an inspiration for Americans "to assume cheerfully the new international responsibilities."

Courage and honor belong to the human race, to be found abundantly in every part of the globe that human beings walk. Are Kristol and Kagan such immature fools that they think these virtues need to be demonstrated by force of arms? A woman's devotion to her ailing husband is an act of courage and honor, the refusal of Rosa Parks to give up her seat on a bus is an act of courage, firemen entering smoke-filled buildings in which it is impossible even to see are acts of courage, scratching out a living against hard odds is an act of courage for millions of people. Living peacefully frequently involves both courage and honor.

If Kristol and Kagan understood courage, honor, and the human animal, they would realize that displays and exercise of might do not undermine the human spirit. They energize them to resist and fight back, even to the death. Might makes wrong. It has to because it oppresses and suppresses human rights.

States and Empires are not agents of morality and peace. They are instruments of force, disruption, disorder, death, dismemberment, and war instigated by

those who rule them and command others. Peace is not brought by bombardment, shock and awe, and M2 .50-caliber machine guns.

Morality is not brought by a sword. Is this how Jesus influenced mankind?

October 29, 2005

2. OCCUPATION HAZARDS

The U.S., having forcefully occupied Iraq, is running into severe occupation hazards. Why? One reason: The U.S. does not know why it is there in the first place. Its goals are a moving target. There were no WMD, so we decided to hang around and create a democracy. Who knows for sure why we are in Iraq? Compare Colgate-Palmolive, the toothpaste and soap company that operates in over 200 countries and territories. Colgate occupies a good deal of foreign space and deals with a good many foreign peoples. Its occupation hazards, if we can call them that, are nil in comparison with those of the U.S.

Why does the U.S. state face hazards that companies operating in foreign lands do not? One obvious difference: The U.S. state invades countries or makes cozy deals with their rulers, while companies with overseas operations generally enter foreign markets peaceably. Why does the U.S. operate by invasion and state-run deal-making anyway? What does it have to offer that's so special? Companies clearly do good when they produce and sell their products overseas. Why it is that the great forces and power of the U.S. state seem not to do good? Why does the U.S. in fact so often seem to do bad? Why does the U.S. run into occupation hazards when it expands with its imperialistic ventures while Wal-Mart is welcomed with open arms in China?

Imperialism in brief

U.S. imperialism came of age with the Spanish-American War in 1898. Iraq is the latest episode. After 108 years, Americans by and large have not yet learned that imperialism is unjust and wrong. Nor have they learned that it is bad for them; and that they shouldn't support it with flags, parades, patriotism, loyalty, or yellow ribbons. Heavy costs fall upon the citizens of imperialist countries, diminishing and sometimes ruining their lives. Most Americans don't recognize this yet.

Imperialism is a government program. Government programs fall into two categories: domestic imperialism and foreign imperialism. Domestic imperialism includes programs that dominate us. Foreign imperialism consists of programs that dominate others and us. All government programs diminish the general welfare. Because (foreign) imperialism is a government program, it too harms the general population.

In the short run, imperialism may pay for some special interest groups within

the imperialist country; but imperialism is not a paying proposition for them unless it is imposed with draconian measures that extract wealth from the subject country. Eighteenth century France tightly controlled the colony of Haiti, employed slavery, and is said to have made the project pay off handsomely. Eventually, the slaves rebelled and made France leave.

Due to the state's built-in socialist inefficiencies, however, imperialism does not generally pay in money terms for the typical citizen. It benefits the state, by building up the state's power and importance.

If citizens can be enlisted to believe in either domestic or foreign imperialism, which means they gain psychic benefits from state programs, then a dangerous situation emerges. Society becomes increasingly martial and partial to war. Naturally, the state prefers this outcome and encourages it because the citizens then support their own slavery while the state's power grows. The recruitment of citizens to imperialist causes, domestic and foreign, is the single greatest means by which liberty is destroyed. The state's two methods of enlisting the population in its causes are the scare tactic and the appeal to morality. Whenever the ruling powers call for more power to battle enemies or to achieve moral goals, the first response in defense of liberty must be a firm "No!"

Haitian occupation

Haiti has been one of several countries that the U.S. has controlled from time to time. There are therefore lessons to be learned by examining it. We will find strong parallels to Iraq.

Haiti, the size of Maryland, has 8.3 million people. It occupies the western one-third of a Caribbean island near Cuba (now called Hispaniola), the other two-thirds being occupied by the Dominican Republic. (The U.S. has intervened there too.) No short article can do justice to the rich history of Haiti or to the plight of its poor people whose estimated income is \$1,700 a year, but even a brief and partial look at its relations with the U.S. has much to teach us about occupation hazards.

As part of its growing imperialism, the U.S. state occupied and ran Haiti from 1915 to 1934. The apparent causes were that Haiti was undergoing bloody civil strife (167 political prisoners had been executed); and Haiti lacked a stable

government friendly to the U.S. The U.S. occupation was both [bloody and racist](#), not unlike the earlier Philippine-American War but not as severe. Anywhere from 3,250 to 15,000 Haitian deaths resulted from the occupation. Atrocities even brought Congressional attention.

The U.S. left behind a system of unstable military rule. Haitian rulers rose and fell, took power and lost power, came and went [very frequently](#) until the brutal François "Papa Doc" Duvalier took over between 1957 and 1971, followed by his son, Baby Doc, who ruled until 1986. The turnover in rulers was not different from what had occurred prior to the U.S. occupation. Lately the turnover has increased even as the U.N. and the U.S. have increased their involvement. There have been 19 leadership changes since 1986, about one a year on average. Between 1806 and 1915, there were about 60 changes or about one every two years.

American occupation did not improve Haiti's accumulation of wealth. Haiti was poor before the American occupation and remained poor afterwards.

Haiti did not long remain high on a list of American priorities, but the occupation dragged on. Although the U.S. had conceived of Haiti as a problem and gotten directly involved, it was basically a backwater to the power elite and easy to forget and ignore. Two decades of U.S. rule did not transform this small country into a success story, not that the U.S. really tried.

As above, it is useful to distinguish the state, whose objective is power; imperialist interest groups, whose objective is economic gain; the general citizens of the imperialist country who pay for the venture and receive little benefit; and the citizens of the occupied country who lose, apart from those who may ally themselves with the imperialists.

The ostensible objective of the U.S. state in such imperialistic ventures seems to be stable rule. This is an objective that binds together or homogenizes the disparate objectives of the state and the various interest groups. Stability means a situation without untoward violent events that jeopardize U.S. power or the balance of powers. It means a situation that provides American commercial and financial interests a decent chance of making some money. The imperialistic venture usually entails steady work for bureaucracies, be they military forces who have a chance to go into action and try out their latest war theories, or bankers, economists, diplomats, and others who find their services in demand. Such ventures often begin with some horror stories that capture the

public fancy, mobilize public opinion behind the state, and allow it to confirm its self-appointed role as protector and savior of various values. In this way the state gains power and subjugates its citizenry who willingly help forge their own chains.

To sell imperialism, the state quite often suggests that it is making an occupied country into a success story on the American model, whether in terms of economic freedom (free markets) or political freedom (usually called democracy by our leaders). This mobilizes an appeal to achieve a moral goal, entrapping certain naïve citizens. But this is not really the objective that is sought after. As will be explained below, the U.S. does not know how to create such economic and political outcomes; and it cannot do so even if it tries. As a matter of fact, the U.S. occupation of Haiti failed on all idealistic criteria. Political instability, if anything, worsened. Economic progress remained anemic. The U.S. introduced problems that added to Haiti's existing problems whose causes, many and varied, included, among others, U.S. and international actions that stretched back hundreds of years. It might be observed at this point that Iraq is a repeat performance in these respects.

Iraq parallel

The Haiti experience and others like it on a greater or lesser scale did not deter the Congress and the Executive from recently repeating the occupation experiment in Iraq: a country 16 times the size of Haiti with 3 times as many people, possessing various deep animosities, and speaking a language so unfamiliar to Americans that our intelligence agencies can't even keep up with reading its press. Even today in its gigantic embassy in Baghdad costing \$600 million, the U.S. has only 6 members fluent in Arabic.

In the case of Iraq, there was no immediate civil strife (as in Haiti) to speak of, but our leaders did their best to remind us that Saddam Hussein had been the author of previous civil blood-letting. As with Haiti, our leaders again conceived that Iraq lacked a friendly government. Although it was a stable government, they argued strenuously that it had nurtured past instability in Kuwait and elsewhere and intended to bring about more instability. Thus, although Iraq was far, far from Haiti in many respects, the rationales for American intervention were amazingly close. Like Hollywood, which retells the same 7 stories with variations, the state sells imperialism by varying the details. Haitian political executions were replaced with gassing Kurds. Unfriendly Haitian presidents became a dictator with an "arsenal of terror."

Three lessons

From several perspectives, such as improving the general welfare of Americans or Haitians and acting in the name of humanity, the Haiti intervention failed. In the same way the interventions in the Philippines and Vietnam failed. From these perspectives, the first lesson to be drawn is that our leaders, both the Bush administration and the entire Congress who supported his invasion of Iraq, have, in invading Iraq, acted stupidly and ignorantly. They not only made a mistake, they made a mistake that clearly could have been discerned before they invaded. (They may have acted even more stupidly and ignorantly than political leaders customarily act.) As a group (in how they voted and acted) they showed no grasp of pertinent history and no knowledge of what nation-building entails. They displayed less intelligence than a horse who knows enough not to step onto a treacherous piece of terrain. The consequences have been extraordinarily deadly and injurious.

Even if they knew no history, America's leaders could have avoided such stupidity by acting morally. If they had conceived that invading Iraq was imperialistic and unjust and, for that reason, not to be done, they could have avoided causing the disaster Iraq has become both for Americans and Iraqis. Moral and just action is also right action.

It makes no difference if, in the case of Iraq, our leaders actually thought they were protecting the American people, which is one of their cover stories. In the same vein, it made no difference that soldiers in Haiti may have thought they were paternalistically bringing along a backward race of people, whom they referred to by a variety of derogatory epithets. Hypocrisy is hypocrisy, and stupidity is stupidity. Horse sense our leaders did not display. Their stupidity remains on display, inasmuch as the incoming chair of the House's intelligence committee, Sylvestre Reyes, does [not know](#) what Hizbollah is.

Of course, from a different perspective, that of the imperialists or various military, defense, construction, and intellectual interests, matters do not look as bleak. They may yet view the episode as a net plus for themselves. The interests and bureaucracies, the tendons of the state's Frankenstein body, have a life of their own.

The second lesson (again from the people's perspective) is that stupidity in the behavior of elected officials (and rulers of all types) is par for the course. Having observed it in many and repeated instances over widely separated times

and instances and across nations of all kinds, we should now expect it. It is built into our particular system of government and that of all similar oversized governments. While individually of normal intelligence, government officials cannot help but appear to behave stupidly (against our interests) when we place them into positions of enormous power, send them huge amounts of money to use as they please, and allow them free reign and latitude to act irresponsibly within a flawed political framework to make any laws they please. Our own stupidity and irresponsibility in endorsing, complying with, and maintaining such a system is surely reflected in the seemingly stupid behavior of those whom we choose to rule us.

Beyond stupidity, however, there is cupidity and self-interest. Some of the state's players know the score, but they wilfully ignore and distort; and in so doing act in the most evil fashion.

A third more general lesson should be drawn, a negative lesson about what cannot be done, even if the state were to be conceived of as some sort of vehicle to carry out idealistic ventures. The state that is the United States of America cannot create mirror images of itself in other countries. The political and military institutions of the U.S. state, with all their taxing and banking powers, with all their powers to regulate and transfer wealth and tamper with economic activities, with all their powers to move men and material into other countries, with all their powers to install and depose rulers and rewrite constitutions, and with all their powers to police and kill, are entirely incapable of replicating America's success story in other countries. The U.S. (meaning the U.S. state) cannot implant in other countries the root factors that have made America thrive. This does not mean it can't be done. It can be done. It can be done by private means, such as by the Colgates of this world. But the U.S. can't accomplish this feat, even if it were to try. I shall explain why, and in so doing, I shall explain several peculiar weaknesses of the state as an organization that I have not explained in earlier articles.

Why occupation hazards arise

If the U.S. could not stabilize the politics of a small country like Haiti after a hands-on occupation of 20 years, how can it accomplish the more difficult task of transforming that country or any other country's society and economy into a mini-America? There are basic reasons why it cannot be done and why occupation hazards arise. The first six reasons have to do with the nature of any occupation. (1) The occupied or governed country has its own foreign and

entrenched institutions of law, custom, habit, culture, education, history, and language standing in the way. (2) The governed country has its own factions and rivalries standing in the way. (3) The governed country has relations with surrounding countries who will not remain passive in the face of an occupying force. (4) The occupation by any power sets in motion opposition moves from other large powers. (5) The very fact that coercion is being used by an occupying force raises obstacles. Some portions of the native population are bound to be suspicious and resent intrusions. They may rebel. Some portions are bound to seek alliances with their occupying rulers and vice versa. Such alliances set political and military conflicts in motion. But economic progress and stability are incompatible with these conflicts. (6) The American success story came about because the state's powers were limited for quite a long time and Americans stood for law that protected property rights. They knew how to implement such law. But an occupying U.S. is not a U.S. with or standing for limited state powers. And many peoples in the world neither are devotees of law that protects property rights nor know how to implement it of their own accord.

The next five reasons have to do with the fact that the state is a political organization whose principals, the voters, do not exercise a tight control over it; and the fact that it is an organization that can avoid financial market discipline by its powers of taxing and money-creation. These reasons can be viewed as extensions of von Mises' idea that a socialist organization cannot calculate value and therefore cannot make rational choices.

If the state were like a business whose capital was controlled by owners and lenders and whose production was determined by customer demand, it would have a clear focus. Neither of these occur. (7) Instead, the state, as a political organization, lacks a clear focus. It aims for power, that much is clear; but to achieve power it needs to select specific means or immediate goals, and these are not clear. Having no profit or loss criterion to measure progress toward power, the state's top officials have a wide degree of latitude in selecting its specific programs. While the rulers and their goals may be quite stable over time and often are, they are also fuzzy and changeable. They involve, for example, vague aims like "defeating Communism," "making the world safe for democracy," "warring on poverty," and "eliminating terrorism." In Iraq, we have seen a succession of ever-changing and vague goals. These goals also depend on who happens to be leading the state, various political exigencies and contingencies, and the strengths of the preferences of the current leaders. A business firm is unlikely suddenly to shift from selling toothpaste to selling

hair cream when the CEO changes, but a state will display a higher degree of idiosyncratic change in its goals and in movement toward these goals when rulers change. A business firm has a clear criterion of wealth creation to employ in judging potential projects. The state has only a vague criterion of increasing its power.

(8) Having vague goals, the state cannot and does not measure its actions against a clear criterion like profit or loss. Therefore, the state lacks a clear-cut way of knowing whether it is succeeding or failing in gaining power. This implies that the state lacks a clear-cut way of knowing how to allocate its resources among programs. It does not know how much to allocate toward domestic imperialism as opposed to foreign imperialism. Among domestic programs, it does not know how much to allocate among each.

(9) A state has to administer a foreign occupation (or achieve any goal) through bureaucracies and human beings as its agents. As with all top managers, the state's top managers run into incentive and agency problems in getting their lower-level agents to conform to their dictates. But these problems are worse in a state than in a business firm because the state lacks a clear objective function such as profit. Since the state can't measure its success, it lacks clear ways to communicate its goals or criteria for attaining them to the subordinates who are asked to achieve these goals. This implies that the top managers lack efficient means to monitor what their subordinates are doing, which means they can't measure efficiency and productivity well and relate them back to a clear goal. They don't have budgets and accounting systems that measure profits or proxies for profit, so they resort to crude measures of effectiveness like number of patrols and number of bombs dropped. The subordinates look upon these measures as measures of success and attempt to maximize them, often leading to counterproductive actions. These monitoring and measurement problems explain why states are inefficient at whatever they attempt to do.

(10) Information is supposed to flow from lower levels to higher levels in an organization. All top-level managers run into information problems about what is occurring at lower levels or "on the ground." These problems are worse in state-run bureaucracies because the subordinates, not knowing exactly what they are doing or why, do not know what information to transmit and often transmit irrelevant or misleading information. Since the top managers can't provide clear criteria for action, they cannot receive clear signals about progress toward their goals. The state's organizations then tend toward

inefficiency.

(11) In all organizations, higher-level managers have to delegate decision-making power to lower-level managers because the latter may often possess more specific, timely, and relevant information to act upon. Obviously the president can't be deciding what towns or houses to search for rebels. The problems of whom to delegate to, how much and what type of power to delegate, and how to monitor the resulting activities are very ticklish. It's easy for a parent to order one child to clear the table, another to wash the dishes, and another to dry them. When a state is not even sure what its mission is in a foreign country, it is much harder to delegate responsibility. Viewed against various single-minded and clear objectives that outsiders might have, the state's results will invariably look foolish.

In sum, for basic reasons, an occupying state, as the U.S. is in Iraq, is singularly ill-equipped to transform an occupied country into a model society and state. The same analysis applies to the transformation of a state's domestic society by means of domestic programs. Government failure is endemic to all government activities because the organizational model of government is inherently defective.

Conclusions

The U.S. state clearly cannot remake other countries peacefully. If it tries to change a foreign society or nation, it must use force since it, as a state, has no other resource at its disposal except power. And when it does use force, it cannot succeed in imposing an American blueprint on another society. With overwhelming force and at very high cost, it might succeed for a time if it completely conquered a nation and ruthlessly implemented its agenda. The costs are so high that countries don't ordinarily do this.

In proportion as the U.S. imposes force on others, it gives up being a free republic at home. In proportion as the U.S. imposes force on its own citizens, it also gives up being a free republic. The Hamiltonian idea or hope that the U.S. can be designed to be a republican empire is faulty. To transfer resources to the state and to augment its power so that it could become an empire, the country has sacrificed its freedoms at home. The country changed its Constitution so as to make empire possible. As the empire waxes, the republic wanes. Republican empire can't be attained. If the U.S. should attempt to impose a draconian solution on Iraq, it would have to mobilize resources at

home. This would have to be done coercively and with war measures. The republic would decline still further.

In passing I pointed out that the state really does not try to achieve the grand aims that proponents of empire sermonize about. It does not really try to spread the institutions of freedom. The goals of empire are stability, power, and the opportunity for some interests to profit. But this observation is secondary. Even if the state tried to achieve grand goals, it could not possibly achieve them. It cannot achieve even the limited goals that it has actually sought, not without turning the occupiers into despots at home and abroad. The state as an organization has too many built-in defects for it to be able to achieve its goals efficiently for long. Its drive for power is fortunately restrained in its forward motion by the inefficiencies of the state as a socialist enterprise.

In 1803 Haitians routed Napoleon's forces in Haiti, which were very substantial, and declared a republic, one that has had a rocky history. Disease afflicting the French assisted the Haitian victory, and so did Napoleon's preoccupation with the European theatre. There are always these auxiliary reasons why seemingly strong empires, such as Napoleonic France and the modern U.S. state, cannot sustain their empires. The deeper reasons are that the state as an organization is socialist. Its goals are vague and changing, it cannot articulate clear measures of success, it cannot allocate resources properly, it cannot motivate its employees properly, it cannot measure success properly, it cannot develop or communicate vital information properly, and it cannot delegate responsibility properly.

When states run up against the opposition of forces that are more market-driven, that have clear aims such as driving out the invaders, that allocate their limited forces flexibly, that develop sound on-the-ground communications, that have motivated personnel, that develop effective dispersed decision-making, and that know what constitutes success, the states can be beaten, even if they possess greater resources. The colonists beat the superior British forces.

December 20, 2006

3. FOREIGN POLICY: THE PRODUCTION OF FOLLY

There are simply too many instances of absurd foreign policy produced by our government (and others) not to conclude that the production process itself produces continuing debacle. Any history book witnesses the senseless results. A centenarian can look back at two massively engulfing world wars and such other large-scale conflicts as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Iran-Iraq War, the French Indochina War, the French-Algerian War, the Russian-Afghanistan War, the Franco-Spanish-Moroccan (Riffian) War, and now the Iraq War.

The unreasonableness of foreign policy is evidenced by the immense squandering of human life and wealth, by devastating wars, interventions gone awry, development programs that hold back progress, and diplomatic ineptitude that creates enemies rather than friends. First the U.S. supports and arms Saddam Hussein. Then it becomes embroiled in a long struggle to undo him and the Baathist Party. First the U.S. supports, trains, and arms Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, only to find that he is an enemy whose designs do not exclude nuclear attack on the U.S.

Without too much exaggeration, we can say that we never get a reasonable foreign policy (the exceptions being so few that we may ignore them). This is as sure a fact as gravitational force.

Is it too far a stretch to infer that if foreign policy were eliminated altogether, we would be better off? If it is, then how about eliminating 95% of it? If we do, we cannot expect that the world will turn into a utopia, but it will almost surely become a better place to live in.

Why is it that we are subjected to unreasonable foreign policies by our governments? Why are reasonable policies, which have been known for a long time and are continually recommended by reasonable people, ignored?

Some of the reasons for endemic foreign policy failures are known, if not well-known. We can come to them a little later. Right now, I want to propose something new, or if it is not new it is at least fresh, that gets at the heart of the problem.

Foreign policy is a kind of transaction that one people has with another people, mediated by their respective governments. If it were an entirely free

transaction, such as occurs in free-market foreign exchange, there would also be mediating agents. For example, company A contracts with Thai workers to produce candied ginger. This is then shipped through various other intermediaries and ends up in the hands of American consumers who, in turn, might be shipping movies to Thailand. Each people hopes that something good will come out of this, and it usually does. If not, they stop trading.

We may begin, but only begin, by thinking of the foreign policy as the exchange of a good. This is how our government and sometimes both mediating governments (in the case of foreign aid) would like us to think of the transaction. They want to be thought of as public agents who are essential. We are to think that no one else but them can deliver the foreign policy "goods." Think of George Bush telling the broad sweep of Americans: "I have a good deal for you. I will get rid of Saddam Hussein who threatens us with weapons of mass destruction. He is creating an arsenal of terror." Then he turns to the Iraqis and says: "I have a good deal for you. I will enter your country and depose Saddam Hussein. I will free you so that you can make a democracy. Your prosperity will rise." Of course, he soft-pedals the rest of the message. "To do this, I will attack in force whether you like it or not." George Bush poses as a political entrepreneur who will improve the general welfare all around. We are to consider ourselves lucky to have him and not Al Gore as President.

Except that, as we have already noted, goods are not usually delivered. (Al Gore would not deliver them either.) The transactions actually will deliver "bads" to each side of the exchange. I have in mind what the General Populace gets out of it. No doubt some people will pull down some personal good out of these transactions, which will explain why they occur in the first place. Our focus here is the much larger folly that is produced as a by-product, and whose costs far outweigh the gains going to various private contractors, government officials, government bureaucrats, and so on. The latter individuals form the Exploiting Clique.

Now, the question is why we get these bads produced and delivered when we (the General Populace) know quite well how to produce goods, even in the arena of foreign policy and foreign transactions.

And the first half of the answer is that we, usually constitutionally, have replaced the possibility of perfectly satisfactory private goods with a pseudo-public good of our own (or the government's) making. The

government presents foreign policy to us as a collective consumption good (a public good). Each of us consumes it without diminishing the consumption of our neighbor, and none of us can exclude our neighbor from consuming the good. A public good has these two properties of non-rivalry and non-excludability.

From the perspective of the General Populace, American and foreign, there is no real need to socialize whatever transactions we may wish to have. We don't need the foreign policy we get. We are quite capable of devising and carrying out our own exchanges. But now we are faced with a second uncomfortable fact that provides the other half of the explanation of our foreign policy troubles. We do not own or control foreign policy. The Exploiting Clique does.

Now these two problems, the legal creation of false public (or socialized collective) goods and the fact that the General Populace does not own or control them, but an Exploiting Clique does, also pervade the domestic arena. They also help explain why domestic policies also are rife with failures. The next few remarks apply equally well to both spheres of government action.

The tendency for a marked increase in the production of folly follows directly from the ownership and control by the Exploiting Clique. A long list of negatives is built into this institutional arrangement. Many members of the Exploiting Clique can remain hidden and out of the public eye. Government officials tax to finance their ventures. This means they do not pay for their mistakes or experience the costs of their mistakes. They therefore can spend other people's money on their own ideas without regard to whom they are hurting and with sole regard to helping achieve their own private ends. They can bring about policies according to their whims and fanciful theories. By controlling foreign policy and by having power and ready financing, they can hazard or risk far bigger mistakes than any individual might otherwise do. They can control information. They can act in secret. They can be corrupted. Their time horizons can be and usually are much shorter than the time horizons over which their policies will be effected. They can be long gone before blowback occurs.

While I have given both halves of an answer as to why foreign policy continually produces folly, there is one more feature of foreign policy that alone, even without the preceding answer, provides another new insight. Getting back to the notion that foreign policy is sold to us as a kind of good, there is a fundamental problem with it that suggests why it fails. Foreign policy

is not inherently an economic good. It has none of the features of a good, not even a public good if such a thing exists. Foreign policy actions are violent, vague, affect many individuals differently, and create counter-reactions.

Foreign policy actions are not like helping someone across the street, feeding someone who is hungry, or slipping someone some money. Here we help a known person directly or reasonably directly without violence. We know exactly what we are doing and whom it affects. If we ourselves trade with foreigners, the transactions are more complex. But each step of a chain has the same features of being non-violent and recognizable.

Foreign policy actions are in all ways the opposite of these transactions. They are typically violent and unethical at the root. At the very least their implementation involves extracting taxes from one people. They displace and replace private exchanges. And they interfere, often drastically, with the actions of others at the receiving end. The Bush Administration certainly did not consult the Iraqis before arriving with the favor of its company.

Foreign policies have vague goals, like promoting freedom, enhancing economic development, creating order, or creating a democracy. The members of the General Populace, at both ends of the transactions supposedly to achieve these goals, actually do not know what they mean for them. There is no way that they can even be evaluated. Everyone involved is buying or getting a pig in a poke.

Lastly, because foreign policies are not goods but bads and affect all sorts of people in unpredictable ways, they create all sorts of unintended consequences. Foreigners attempt to nullify actions they dislike that are being foisted on them by outsiders, often in conjunction with their own domestic members of their own Exploiting Clique. The range of potential groups and reactions is very large.

Government foreign policy continually produces major folly. Any resemblance to reasonableness is purely coincidental. It does this by creating a false public good owned and operated by an Exploiting Clique. The General Populace is the loser.

September 28, 2007

4. WHY ARE WE IN IRAQ?

Defeat in Iraq

Have the President and his men accomplished their objectives in Iraq? Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat to Saudi Arabia or the region. However, since he was contained before the war, little has been gained on that score. Oil is no more secure than before. In fact, Iran threatens to disrupt supply. Oil prices have risen sharply. The U.S. has not yet restored Iraq's oil production, and issues relating to restoring the oil infrastructure and adjudicating old oil contracts remain unresolved.

Iran has become a larger and bolder threat to other countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia. It has a higher degree of influence over some factions in Iraq. Iran's oil revenues are up. Iraq's economy is in tatters. The U.S. is tied down in Iraq, and U.S. forces are vulnerable to attack. The shape of political things to come in Iraq is highly uncertain. To an unknown extent, the U.S. has strengthened the hand of Muslim jihadists although al-Qaeda will be little welcomed in Iraq once the U.S. withdraws. None of this was in the Iraq war blueprint.

Iraq is not a threat to Israel at present, but it was not a severe threat to Israel before the war began. Iran is now a greater threat, but Israel's nuclear weapons deter Iran.

Democracy was a tertiary objective, but we can't take the Bush administration seriously about this one. Assuming this was important and is supposed to mean a friendly government with a parliament, periodic elections, parties, campaigns, and all the standard democratic socialist bells and whistles, this hasn't happened. The country is having a civil war.

The scorecard on Iraq is one-sided. America's losses far exceed the gains. It is not clear that the liberated Iraqi people, those still alive and uninjured, have gained. The Kurds may have gained for now, but there is no telling how long that will last. On Bush's own terms, the Iraq War was a blunder. America has suffered a setback, a large frustration, in other words a defeat, although not a classic battlefield defeat. The U.S. has weakened itself and spent precious blood, bodies, energy, moral capital, and wealth on a useless war. By contrast, bin Laden can always point to Iraq as a recruitment tool. With limited resources, he managed to draw the U.S. onto an Arab battleground and become

tied down while he and his cohorts remain at large.

Invading Iraq was a mistake. Why did President Bush invade Iraq? More broadly, why are we involved with Iraq at all? Why aren't Congress and the Executive exiting the morass which is Iraq? Vice-President Cheney (8/29/06) says that withdrawing from Iraq would be "a ruinous blow to the future security of the United States." How absurd to suppose that a country with our might would be ruined by leaving Iraq! We will actually be strengthened. Why are they steering toward war against Iran? Answer why we are in Iraq and we answer these questions too.

Curtail the empire

Despite Iraq, our rulers and their supporters are taking the country toward more war. The Bush administration is certain that it's doing the right thing. It isn't changing direction. It will keep beating our heads against the wall until we collapse. Iraq hasn't been a wakeup call.

Surrounding the administration, single-minded warmongers are continually beating the drums for war. Statement after statement, column after column, writer after writer encourages open and enlarged warfare with Iran. More and more columns fatalistically describe the coming hostilities as if they are a foregone conclusion. In fact, this next war has already passed through preliminary stages of sanctions, threats, overflights, planning, and some on-the-ground reconnaissance. In fact, Iran may become overconfident and take one too many risks that ignites war.

William Kristol says "We have to stop them [Iran] from getting nuclear weapons." He's so sure that an Iran with nuclear weapons means the end of the world (or Israel or Western civilization) that he thinks we must stop them soon, before they develop such weapons. He discounts nuclear deterrence and Iran's wish to survive. He discounts further consolidating Muslims in a long-lasting jihad against the West. He discounts negotiation. He discounts Iran's internal politics. Kristol and company have no doubt on the matter. They are prepared to attack Iran pre-emptively.

Should we bank on any seer who can see only one possible future state of the world and who leaves no room for doubt or error in his forecasts? Should we bank on a pack of leaders that have followed the Kristol line before? The Bush policies have led us to frustration, large losses, continual bleeding, and

strengthening of our foes. They have reduced America's moral stature, alienated our friends, blocked better ways of handling our problems, created the prospect of endless war, and weakened whatever beneficial influence Americans exercise in the world. Should we heed these advocates of failure again? Of course not. But changing administrations will not solve our basic problem. When we understand why we are in Iraq, we will see that more failure is in the cards unless we make a major change in course. We have to do what Great Britain, France, and other countries have done. We have to curtail our empire.

Error

Why are American armed forces in Iraq? There are two important reasons: error and empire. Although oil is an important focal element, it proxies for business interests in general, and they proxy for the American system extended under the umbrella of American control and protection, that is, empire. America didn't fight the Spanish-American War, World War I, or the Vietnam War for oil. If we are to understand the Iraq War as part of a longstanding process, oil cannot provide the explanation.

The error was two-fold. It is common knowledge that the supposed benefits of the war, such as removing weapons of mass destruction, decreasing terrorism, making the U.S. more secure, installing a functioning democracy, etc. have not materialized. They need no discussion. The Bush team underestimated the war's costs and difficulties, and it overestimated the benefits. The Bush team thought that the war could be won easily, that they could install a friendly government easily, and that they could exit Iraq rather quickly and go on to their next field exercise in reconstructing the world.

The evidence supporting the latter assertion is overwhelming. Here are a few examples. Ken Adelman (2/13/02) said: "I believe demolishing Hussein's military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk." Donald Rumsfeld (11/15/02): "Five days or five weeks or five months, but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that." On 1/10/03, Rumsfeld endorsed an estimate of "something under \$50 billion for the cost." On 5/16/03, Cheney said: "My belief is we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators...I think it will go relatively quickly...[in] weeks rather than months." Richard Perle (3/25/03 said "...this will be a short war." Paul Wolfowitz on 3/27/03 thought that Iraq's oil revenues "can finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." George Bush on 7/2/03 said: "There are some who feel like – that the conditions are

such that they can attack us there [Iraq]. My answer is, bring 'em on! We've got the force necessary to deal with the security situation." Rumsfeld three weeks later said "I don't do quagmires."

Rumsfeld didn't heed his generals (a number of whom have publicly criticized him). He thought the war could be won with a minimum of armed forces on the ground. In a way, he was correct if war means removing the opponent's conventional armed forces. But the war didn't stop after that was accomplished. It mutated into fourth-generation warfare. At present, 4 years later, Rumsfeld is distancing himself from Iraq. He recently stated: "What is important is for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi government, ultimately, to deal with this problem." Had he and the administration believed this 4 years ago, the U.S. would never have invaded Iraq. Also backtracking, he recently claimed that he "never painted a rosy picture" about Iraq.

Why were these errors committed? We should not focus too greatly on Rumsfeld or the Bush team because America has in the past made similar large errors in going to war. The Spanish-American War, World War I, and Vietnam are examples. And World War I led to World War II. The causes go deeper than any single man, set of men, or administration.

The Bush team had ample university and bureaucratic experience but its actual collective experience of war was nil. Like most Americans, they were both insulated from and inured to the horrors of war. On paper, they were highly educated. But college educations that teach students confused philosophy, confused history, confused modes of thought, and contradictory doctrines can't promote sound analysis. A number of them (like Rumsfeld, Rice, Feith, and Wolfowitz) made their way through politics and policy areas. They were not experts on military science or the realities of war. Neither were they experts on the Middle East. Past administrations show similar faults.

We then need to ask why they failed to get better information, why they were so sure of themselves, why Congress did not hold them to account, why the media failed to criticize them or even urged them on, etc. We know that the administration conducted an effective propaganda campaign that influenced both the public and Congress. That campaign rendered criticism ineffective. We know that important elements of the press often push for war. There is a deeper and more general explanation. Those who come to power do so through manipulative skills that breed arrogance and an over-estimation of their

capacities and place in the world. Success at the game of power breeds hubris. Hubris, arrogance, and a know-it-all attitude appear in other administrations of the past.

Economics teaches us that as the penalty for overconfidence imposed on our rulers declines, they indulge in more of it. As the checks and balances of American government weakened from 1787 onwards, the rulers in Washington in all branches of government became more and more insulated from voting sanctions. Impeachment and other tools proved ineffective. The rulers learned how to control voters. They displayed more arrogance and hubris in everything they did. Today, when policies fail, their proponents often rationalize and move on to nice jobs elsewhere. Some with pangs of conscience re-examine their lives and make money selling books. Almost none look their mistakes in the face, speak out, and behave honorably while they are still in office.

In sum, the Iraq War is a big blunder committed by our boastful rulers in our Executive Branch who didn't know any better. Our institutional system of education and state encourages know-nothing and arrogant power-seekers to gain office and, once in office, it lets them behave overconfidently (underestimating costs and overestimating benefits), commit costly errors, and get away with them.

None of these factors contributing to error have changed. Therefore, we can expect more such costly errors in the future. We can't predict whether they will crop up in Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Somalia, Colombia, or Thailand, etc. or when they will occur. We can expect some learning to occur and some attempts to diminish error, but they will typically be superficial. We can expect some periods of relative calm, such as 1975–1990. But even during these periods, there will be smaller episodes and there will be blunders occurring that set the stage for subsequent larger errors of war.

Oil

Oil is actually a special case of business interests in general which in turn is a special case of the American system, that is, empire. Paul Wolfowitz is a key person, and in my opinion is the key person, other than President Bush, in understanding why we are in Iraq. He epitomizes a man dedicated to the American empire. Wolfowitz's career shows how to attain unelected political power. Any analysis of his public statements from 2000 onwards will show that he strongly urged the administration on at every opportunity, and he got

his way. What he has promoted and why he has promoted it therefore provide clues as to why the U.S. invaded Iraq.

Wolfowitz's public record exemplifies the surface reasons for why we are in Iraq. The main reason is a chimera known as secure oil. Since Franklin Roosevelt, this has meant protecting Saudi Arabia. At one time it meant installing the Shah of Iran. Later it meant stopping Iraq from going into Kuwait, a threat to Saudi Arabia. Still later, it has meant removing Saddam Hussein altogether for fear he would become a threat. A secondary or particularistic reason is Israeli security. An even less robust reason is to install democracies rather than authoritarian regimes, but Wolfowitz's commitment to this has been variable as in the case of his tenure in Indonesia.

In addition, Wolfowitz is a key figure in pushing for pre-emptive and unilateral American action. How did it come about that the U.S. invaded Iraq without their having invaded us or anyone around them? That is, how did the U.S. cross the moral Rubicon to pre-emptive war? The U.S. has intervened numerous times in the past, usually when there has been a pretext occurring in a foreign land. Those interventions were virtually pre-emptive. In this case, the Bush administration created a package of seeming threats and past offenses that substituted for a current pretext. Over and over again, it cited Saddam's past crimes and current threats. The U.N. provided some cover. In the minds of many, these became tantamount to a current pretext for war. If Bush decides to make war on Iran, he will repeat this performance.

Proponents of American empire and interests say that secure oil is their aim. The emphasis should be on the word secure. It means that America wants not only oil. It also wants political control, as in other parts of the world where oil is not a concern. Oil and political control happen to overlap in the Middle East.

America does not require political control in order to buy oil. The Russian empire never conquered the Middle East any more than the American empire has or can. If it tried, it would run into the same kinds of problems we have. If America withdraws, the oil in all probability will remain in the hands of Arab countries and Iran. They may fight with one another and rearrange their borders. This is not important. They will still have to sell their oil if they want revenue, and we and others are the market. We do not need literally to control the governments of the Middle East in order to have secure oil. There are a hundred other countries smaller than we are that buy oil and don't care who runs the Middle East. Why do we? The answer is that there is a large

underlying factor partly associated with oil but also partly independent of it. That factor is empire.

Why empire?

Again, Wolfowitz can be taken as a representative figure because his world view reflects the standard model of American empire. His career embodies the military and economic sides of empire. He views the globe in terms of American "interests." He takes American bases, economic and military aid, currency manipulations, debt packages, and pressures as standard operating procedures. In the earlier part of his career, he assumed that American military interventions were the norm and required no further justification than the proclamation of American interests at stake. Now at the World Bank, he assumes that economic aid requires no justification. Wolfowitz often expresses idealistic views and seeks to decrease corruption in governments who receive World Bank aid. But he is still working within the paternalistic assumption of American empire that the World Bank and like institutions should create economic development across the globe. He is a Republican now applying Democrat ideas, like those of the War on Poverty, on an international scale. Like all politicians, he recounts the errors of the past and promises to throw more money at problems in better ways. The compassionate conservative is simply a liberal democrat. Indeed, in terms of their means of operating, the conservative is a liberal. Only their ends differ.

If Wolfowitz stands for American empire, then the deeper cause of America being in Iraq is American empire. The American empire is pushing not only into the Middle East but also into Central Asia. Why is there an American empire? If we knew the answer, we'd understand better why we are at war in Iraq. The Iraq War is a blunder, but the really central question is why we are seeking to dominate the Middle East, period. The important fact is that we were in up to our eyeballs in the Middle East before invading Iraq. Explaining that fact is what is critical.

The literature on explaining empires is large. We need to look there for possible answers as to why we are in Iraq. [Joseph Stromberg](#) shows one direction that such inquiry can take. He explains and illustrates the basic idea that interest groups, such as corporate or big business (including banking) interests, use the state to further foreign economic interests. The evidence consistent with this hypothesis is voluminous. Foreign expansion and empire are almost always accompanied by expansion of business interests.

Many ancient empires surely were a function of the economics of conquest as they gained slaves, commodities, resources, fighting power, and taxes. But is this the entire story? Correlation neither proves causation nor excludes other causes operating side by side. Might not emperors, being men of power, be attuned to a good many non-economic factors? Empire-builders have more than business interests as their motivations. Dick Cheney may have had Halliburton's interests at heart, but it is doubtful that other members of the Bush team had this motive or only this motive. Emperors may have religious or ideological reasons for expanding. They may wish to encase their core regions with buffer zones of regions that would bear attacks. They may wish to attain natural geographical boundaries that are more defensible. They may wish to forestall competing empires from expanding at their periphery. They may wish to satisfy various internal constituencies. They may wish to satisfy their own yearnings to be as Gods.

The drive for expansion of the United States is strong because several elements are acting hand in hand. Our government is responsive or captured by a variety of interest groups and lobbies. The ideology of free markets (even if they do not actually exist) works hand in glove with businesses seeking to expand securely into new markets. Americans are semi-religiously and sometimes religiously trying to convert the world. Americans are a most insecure people who, from the inception of the country to now, persistently expanded the country's reach in order to achieve security (see Albert K. Weinberg's *Manifest Destiny*). Americans want to be number one and think they are number one. This is their God-substitute. When neoconservatives argue that America is the only superpower and that it should institute benevolent global hegemony, we are hearing a rhetoric that combines many of these long-running historical themes.

Geopolitical factors and rivalries, basically turf battles, can't be overlooked in understanding empires. The world appears as a large city with a few large land areas separated by big lakes. The U.S. wants to control the Middle East rather than have someone else control it, be it Russia, a revived Persian empire, or a Shia empire. It is not clear what the source of this territorial imperative is or whether it makes sense. America seems to have lived quite well without it between 1620 and 1945 or so. Accident may play a role. The U.S. almost inadvertently, haphazardly, and unthinkingly took over old British interests just as it took over old French interests in Southeast Asia. But it did take them over and we must assume that FDR, Truman, and succeeding presidents were guided by some general notions that these expansionary moves benefited the

U.S. In the geopolitical view, if Iran, for example, moves too strongly in tandem with Venezuela, which is an American interest that lies just across the lake, then sooner or later, America will try to overthrow Chavez.

Conclusion

We are in Iraq because of empire. We have armed forces in Iraq because of error. We have empire because we have a runaway state. In the long run, which sometimes is not that long, empire is seen to be an error. It is an error built upon the error of having a state. We have a state because of hubris, which is an excessive pride in which we boastfully compare ourselves to God or, in earlier days, to other deities. Hubris is associated with hamartia by which Aristotle meant a tragic flaw, an error in judgment, or a character defect that results in a hero's downfall. America and Americans have hubris and hamartia. We need humility. We can't avoid future Iraqs, future losses, and the fall of the American empire until we rein in the American state. We can't rein in the American state until we rein in ourselves.

August 30, 2006

5. AMERICA CHOSE AND AMERICA CHOOSES

He doth bestride the narrow world

Every few years the U.S. intervenes in a new foreign country, making headlines even as its lesser bases, alliances, and pacts pass beneath the radar. To name a continent, to name a country, is to name some form of intervention: Korea, Grenada, Haiti, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Vietnam, to name a few. Even the moon and Mars lie 'neath the new Caesar.

Each intervention is new and news; and our rulers furnish specific reasons for each one. They also appeal to unifying umbrella themes such as anti-Communism, anti-Fascism, and anti-Islamo-Fascism. Few remember or can name last year's theme. Yet the number of interventions, their global reach, and their long-term persistence paint a different picture. There is continuing method to this madness. An intelligible process is at work. There are long-term causal factors. Today's overblown War on Terror is merely the latest convenient cover story for numberless future interventions openly promised by our demoniacal current leaders. It is part of a long-term process.

Fashions change but clothes remain. The tools of international intervention, not its thrust, have changed in the new century. America traditionally relied upon behind-the-scenes methods of control such as aid pacts, banking credits, and military aid. All-out military engagements occurred but not as a first choice. Today's leaders choose war first and relish it. Today they choose to torture, to violate international canons of justice, and to destroy personal freedoms in the U.S. with Patriot Acts, dictatorial executive orders, and Bill of Rights violations. The American state bestrides the narrow world, and that includes America the country. America has become another of the President's "fronts."

Why have these interventions and wars happened? Why are they now happening? Why will they keep on happening? In the late 1800s, America chose between ploughshares and swords. She chose between spreading her glory by her traditional individuality or by the modern collective. She chose between blossoming forth peacefully through voluntary cooperation or pressuring others with state internationalism. She chose the deepest and bloodiest of foreign engagements directed by the state. She shunned her tradition of spreading knowledge and progress by personal and peaceful means. Jefferson's advice to avoid foreign entanglements gave way to

Wilsonian internationalism. America chose the state. State power exceeding that of any king took precedence over the spreading of American ways in accordance with the commandments. Godly ways diminished as Americans reached for national greatness and pride through their state. America chose empire. She focused her resources and power on her imperial leaders. Continental expansionism became international expansionism by force of state and world-girdling battleships.

In 1882 Nietzsche declared "God is dead...And we have killed him." America soon thereafter chose empire, the devil on its doorstep. America and all the other murderers, for we are not the only killers, now must face Nietzsche's questions: "How shall we, murderers of all murderers, console ourselves? That which was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet possessed has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? With what water could we purify ourselves?"

Four levels of causation

We read that Israel attacked Lebanon because Hezbollah kidnaped two Israeli soldiers. Assuming the accounts are accurate, this intervention-specific event tells us almost nothing about why Israel actually attacked Lebanon. There are other causes, several levels of them.

What are historical causes? Historical causation can't be discovered with scientific precision. Nor is it the product of abstract or impersonal forces. Human beings make history and each human being acts according to motivating ideas. To name an historical cause is to say that some individual person acted upon the ideas that underlie that cause. To make a convenient simplification of an impossibly complex process, we can say that four major levels of causation are simultaneously at work when America intervenes in a foreign land: empire, geopolitical, intervention-specific (or just specific), and personal.

Presidents over long time periods pursue somewhat similar policies. But since history is made by individual actions, we suppose that each President is affected in somewhat similar ways by the ideas underlying empire and the ideas underlying geopolitical factors. It's not hard to imagine that President Bush was motivated by the empire factor, a geopolitical factor related to the Middle East, and specific factors relating to Iraq itself like oil, weapons of mass destruction, and perhaps even terrorism.

And we need a fourth level that comprises personal factors. No doubt President Bush acted differently from anyone else who might have been President at the same juncture in history, even had that other person evaluated all the other factors in the same ways that Bush did. He brought some purely personal factors to the table such as his feelings about Saddam Hussein. In addition, any other President would no doubt also have evaluated the empire, geopolitical, and specific factors differently. Some other President might have been more concerned with bin Laden and less concerned with Saddam Hussein, say. Presidents interact with their advisors and Congress in distinctive ways, introducing still more scope to personal factors. More and more such complications are conceivable.

The empire factor

Because America has intervened so often overseas over many years and under many rulers, we suppose that there exists a major underlying factor. This factor is the empire factor. If the empire factor is real, it means that there is an underlying set of ideas or motivations and that these ideas motivate Presidents and others. If an empire factor is at work, then we should be able to find commonalities in the Presidential motivations that activate their decisions to intervene overseas. We should find these ideas expressed in the press. For example, there is the idea that interventions are necessary to bring America prosperity and security. There is the belief that Americans are morally justified in taking action. There is the idea that Americans are bringing justice and freedom to other peoples.

The empire factor is the root factor of American internationalism, militarism, and intervention. Empire has to do with controlling foreign lands and peoples by economic, political, and military means. If this element were absent, the interest of the American state in many parts of the world would vanish. Washington would even retreat from its alliance with Great Britain, which only waxed as the U.S. began advancing its interests overseas. Washington would end its involvements in the Middle East. America would shut down its overseas bases. America's overseas involvements would radically change in scope and form. Americans would learn how to defend their own lands without intruding on the lands of others.

The reasons for wishing to control foreign lands are many. Business interests are generally somewhere in the picture. This implies that if a state for whatever reason is more strongly controlled by businesses or interests that benefit from

foreign expansion, then we expect a stronger tendency to empire. Empire is driven in part by technology, including military means. A state that has learned how to travel afar and control the seas (or air) is more likely to use the sea (or air) lanes and sea (air) power to extend its domination. Empire is driven in part by religious, semi-religious, and ideological reasons such as the White Man's Burden or ideals of democracy. Empire depends upon the support or acquiescence of citizens and this depends on their psychology and beliefs. Reasons like these help explain the expansion of the British Empire. They also apply to the American Empire.

Geopolitical factors

In addition to the empire factor, domination expresses itself via geopolitical factors. These also stem from underlying ideas. For example, the U.S. intervened in Korea and Vietnam. There was an idea that if Korea became Communist, then nearby Japan would be threatened or that the Soviet Union would be encouraged to conquest. There was an idea that if Vietnam became Communist, then all of Southeast Asia would fall (the domino theory). Underlying the geopolitical factor in those cases were ideas such as anti-Communism, keeping Asia free, retaining the Pacific trade with Asia, etc. The U.S. geopolitically regards the Caribbean and Central America as a kind of buffer zone. Its land is a kind of stepping-stone to the U.S. The U.S. has intervened in Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, etc. partly for geopolitical reasons. Great Britain is a major Atlantic power connected to America by the sea lanes. This geopolitical connection helped bring America into two World Wars, not to mention other ties. The U.S. has a regional Middle Eastern interest that has involved it with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, etc. over a long period. This factor is driven in part by oil and the peculiarities of geography as oil is transported through critical waterways in the Mid-East.

Breaking up the large causation problem into smaller pieces is crude, but it helps us to think about causation more effectively. It might even help us make predictions that are better than throwing darts at a map. For example, what do we expect the U.S. interest in Sri Lanka to be? The empire factor suggests that the U.S. will have some interest, because American pretensions are global. If America did not project power globally, it simply would not be concerned about Sri Lanka. The geopolitical factor suggests America will have quite a bit of interest in Sri Lanka because its position south of India places it near important trade routes (including oil), it has a deep-water port that can dock U.S. Navy ships, it overlooks the Indian Ocean, and it is near Pakistan and

Bangladesh which have fundamentalist Islamic constituencies. Sri Lanka was once a crown colony, and it has a literate population. It would make a good place to invest in if it could settle its civil war.

Sri Lanka lies within India's sphere of influence, so we might not expect Americans to introduce themselves to any large extent. However, Washington in fact signed a defense agreement with Sri Lanka in 2002 by which America gained access to Sri Lankan ports for the U.S. Navy. This proved helpful during the Afghanistan War. That may have been a specific cause for the agreement in addition to the geopolitical links already mentioned. In exchange, the U.S. agreed to provide Sri Lanka with military training and equipment. This places the U.S. on the side of the government in its battle against the secessionist Tamil Tigers. America typically allies itself with the incumbent regimes. Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran were once such allies and incumbents. We might go on to consider specific causes that might crop up and lead to even greater American entanglement with Sri Lanka. There might be mineral, tourist, or voting blocks in the U.S. that would like to see the civil war ended.

Specific factors

Every intervention has specific factors that cause it, and these specific causes occasion much of the conversation and debate about wars. When we come to a given case like Malaya, the seagoing British Empire catered to tin, coffee, and rubber interests after an initial period of settlement and trade. Tin was an intervention-specific or simply a specific cause. Cuban independence groups, sugar interests, and the U.S. Navy helped motivate the Spanish-American War, for example. Banking and industrial interests have sparked various interventions elsewhere. The presence of Israel and the influence of Israel on American politics helped motivate the Iraq War. At times the press and public have screamed for particular wars; they are part of domestic political factors that are intervention-specific.

What is so notable about Bush II's Iraq War is that the specific causes were largely fabricated and that personal factors came to the fore. We have had specific causes fabricated or blown up in the past, such as the explosion aboard the *Maine* and the Gulf of Tonkin incident. And they too occurred after preliminary frictions and jostling that went on for some years as preludes to war. But perhaps never before have we seen such single-minded determination to initiate war combined with so little reason to do so and so much propaganda

and lies to make it happen. Furthermore, the arrogant hopes of a triumphant march into Baghdad followed by dreams of an American reconstruction of the Middle East with cooperative parliaments springing up right and left sounded like the dreams of the Third Reich as the Nazis marched into Paris.

With statement after misleading statement that turned into lie after clever lie, Bush and others built Saddam Hussein into a "[grave threat](#)" who possessed weapons of mass destruction. Bush labeled him as a man who possessed an arsenal of terror ready to be unleashed against the U.S. as had occurred on 9/11. He connected Saddam Hussein to 9/11. These were lies sold as specific causes of war, along with other phony revelations about uranium, aluminum tubes, and weapon-carrying drones.

Up until 9/11, many Bush administration figures regarded Iraq as contained and as no serious threat. This was not Bush's view. The 9/11 disaster was the catalyst that immediately transformed previous initial plans concerning Iraq into full-scale planning for war. The war on terror and the axis of evil were conceived as ways to package this and other wars. These became further fabricated causes that linked Saddam Hussein to 9/11.

Personal factors

History is always affected by personal factors. If only empire, geopolitical, and specific causes mattered, we would still observe differences in historical interventions if one person were replaced by another because the persons involved evaluate these factors in different ways and they bring purely personal factors to bear.

President Bush as a candidate staked out a combative position on Saddam Hussein, threatening to take him out on any hint of "weapons of mass destruction." He surrounded himself with war-hawks who had promoted war with Iraq for years. He spoke of Saddam Hussein in highly personal terms: "But there's no doubt his hatred is mainly directed at us. There's no doubt he can't stand us. After all, this is a guy who tried to kill my dad at one time." Psychologist [Oliver James](#) gives us a speculative but persuasive portrait of George Bush as an authoritarian personality whose pent-up fury and hostility could easily be turned against a Saddam Hussein or a Dr. Ahmadinejad.

Bush alone might not have attacked Iraq had it not been for the war-hawks he had recruited (and the 9/11 catalyst). Their influence had already made itself

felt when Congress in 1998 passed the Iraq Liberation Act calling for "efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein" and replace it by a "democratic government." But since the Senate passed this Act unanimously and the House overwhelmingly (360-38), the deeper empire and geopolitical causes were no doubt at work.

[Randy Scheunemann](#) was a key figure in drafting this legislation, and his hawkish (neocon) connections are spread far and wide, including links to the world's largest military contractor Lockheed Martin. He headed a lobbyist firm that represented Lockheed Martin and was President of The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq alongside Chairman Bruce P. Jackson, a former vice-president of Lockheed Martin. Scheunemann, a consultant and advisor to Donald Rumsfeld on Iraq sometime in 2001/2002, joined with William Kristol and others in supporting military intervention in Iraq. His public statements stress moral and other reasons for the Iraq intervention. A board member of the Project for a New American Century, Scheunemann like all of those associated with PNAC automatically assumes that American Empire is both right and prudent. In his work as an aide to Trent Lott, Jesse Helms, John McCain, and Bob Dole, he has been associated with American efforts in Panama, Somalia, Korea, Bosnia, and Haiti as well as with the expansion of NATO.

I do not mean to paint Scheunemann as some kind of rabid war-fevered hawk, or an exceptional behind-the-scenes power broker, or anything less than the dedicated public servant that he conceives himself to be and probably is. I only want to use his work as an example of how the several levels of causation work out in human form and how the personal factor becomes important.

To find rabid war-hawks, we need not go very far. With very little effort, one can examine the records of Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, Steven Hadley, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, and many other hard-liners to see how personal biases matter. In a number of cases, like Donald Rumsfeld, it is apparent that their pro-military, pro-empire, and anti-détente attitudes go back a very long time. In other cases, like that of Feith, there is a pronounced pro-Zionist, pro-Israel, and anti-Arab strain.

In 1972, Wolfowitz's doctoral thesis was on the danger of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Wolfowitz came out against atomic de-salinization plants that would produce fresh water in the Middle East, emphasizing the risk of diversion of plutonium to atom bomb production. (The de-salting plan had been proposed by Eisenhower as part of his Atoms for Peace initiative and

later studied at Oak Ridge.) The idea for the thesis was given to Wolfowitz by his mentor Albert Wohlstetter, who was a staff member of Rand Corporation and also mentored Richard Perle. Wohlstetter was a mathematician heavily involved in nuclear war analysis.

By that time, the Israeli nuclear capabilities were quite well-known; it was thought to have a number of nuclear devices. An article by Hedrick Smith in the July 18, 1970 New York Times was titled "U.S. Assumes the Israelis Have A-Bomb or Its Parts." Wolfowitz's thesis in effect advocated protecting Israel's Middle Eastern nuclear monopoly while preventing peaceful commercialization of atomic energy and nuclear proliferation to nearby Arab states.

Bush conferred power on these figures. Some of them had advised him during his campaign. He shared their views. War against Iraq may not have occurred except that Bush paired himself with other strong-minded and one-sided promoters of American power. I suspect a symbiosis or reinforcement of views occurred that led to the folly of Iraq.

America chooses

The same personal factors and/or chemistry may yet lead to the worse folly of war with Iran. The parallels are eerie. Bush has recently said: "The development of know-how and or nuclear weapons is unacceptable because an Iran armed with a nuclear weapon poses a grave threat to the security of the world." Not with such U.S. threats but only with skilled diplomacy can a military confrontation with Iran now be defused because, on his side, Dr. Ahmadinejad continues to push strongly for an increased Iranian presence in the Middle East. The Lebanon episode and the Iraqi morass have emboldened him in his efforts. He will expand his links to other nations and continually irritate the U.S. Iran's reported actions clearly suggest a movement in the direction of developing nuclear arms. If this proceeds much further or succeeds, the U.S. will either have to accommodate a new nuclear power, as it has North Korea, or make war, as Bush and his men aim to do. If history repeats, America will again make war.

September 8, 2006

6. WHY WE ARE STILL IN IRAQ

The American public has soured on the Iraq War. Yet the leadership of both parties is neither promising nor providing a quick or even visible end to this long war.

According to the U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, U.S. forces will be in Iraq for many years to come, even 10 years. He said: "Just about everybody out there recognizes that a situation like this, with the many, many challenges that Iraq is contending with, is not one that's going to be resolved in a year or even two years. In fact, typically, I think historically, counterinsurgency operations have gone at least nine or ten years. The question is, of course, at what level."

The U.S. is involved in the Middle East mainly because that's where the oil is. If there were no oil there, the U.S. would not be there. We are still in Iraq mainly because of its geopolitical relations to the Middle East and Middle Eastern oil. But there is more to it, as I shall suggest.

The concept that Middle Eastern oil is of direct concern to our government, an issue of great national security, is the central idea that has been guiding U.S. policy in the Middle East for decades.

This central idea is fundamentally mistaken. Far from improving national security, U.S. attempts to increase its oil security by interfering in Middle Eastern politics and economics have created greater oil insecurity and fueled political instability.

How is it that the U.S. has pursued counterproductive policies for so long? How is it that, far from altering course, the U.S. has recently become even more entangled?

The background of two world wars

During World War II, President Roosevelt appointed his Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, as Petroleum Coordinator for Defense. In turn, Ickes established a Petroleum Industry War Council. In 1946, President Truman created the National Petroleum Council as its successor. War and then a continuing wartime mentality after World War II caused oil to become a matter of national security in the minds of American leaders.

Two world wars taught America's leaders the wrong lessons. The wars did not bring peace or a return to a peaceful outlook. They did not return America to its continental concerns. They taught our leaders to view the entire world as crucial to America's well-being and rightfully within America's scope of action. Two wars taught America's leaders to be proactive. Our leaders now sought to control situations before undesired events could occur. They were not again going to wait to respond to events after they had occurred. Even though our leaders may have wanted peace, they prudently (in their eyes) planned for future war. An atmosphere of fear took over. They intended to control what they deemed to be critical events anywhere in the world. America would lead the free world. America would become the world's policeman. America would guarantee world peace. Our leaders saw this as America's responsibility. America's global success in both world wars convinced our leaders that America had the power to accomplish this grand role.

American leaders thought they had found the way to world peace. Its elements were continual preparation for war, readiness to interfere globally, alliances, and the making of occasional war. Wars are directed by states; and states use power. They use markets to accomplish their aims only if they regulate and control them. It was natural for American leaders to emphasize power and control. It was natural for them to emphasize and rely on state-to-state relations and state institutions. It was natural for them to de-emphasize building peace through peaceful exchange and free markets.

But was it natural for America unilaterally to assume the position of world policeman? Wasn't this tantamount to becoming an empire? Could such an effort even succeed? Could any single country have the wisdom to rule the world benevolently? Wouldn't such an effort invariably make mistakes and run aground on the shoals of national interests and situations that it did not understand and could not control? Wouldn't such an effort, even if noble, be subject to its own corruption by interest groups ready to take advantage of it? Could any single country have the resources to control the world? A single guerilla war might require hundreds of thousands of troops on the ground, cost many billions of dollars, and require a decade to fight.

More fundamentally, how could a large-scale state-inspired and state-led endeavor using the means of power bring peace when peace requires the polar opposite, namely, a lack of power relations?

Time passed. America and the world recovered from World War II. A degree

of peace and prosperity returned. This was quite natural and spontaneous. Continual warfare is not the human norm. Furthermore, in an age of science and technology, far more progress can be made peacefully than in fighting. Yet the American state and its leaders remained in the grip of wartime thinking, fears, and action. From 1945 to 1991, the Cold War provided the backdrop for innumerable global confrontations and actions. Major, open and long wars occurred in Korea (1950–1953), in Vietnam (1956–1975), in Iraq (1991–present), and in Afghanistan (2001–present). Further U.S. military actions occurred in Libya, Lebanon, Somalia, Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, and Kosovo. Direct Western Hemisphere military actions included Grenada, Panama, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

It is evident that these wars were not peace. It is evident that they destroyed lives. It is evident that they were very costly. It is evident that they diminished prosperity. It is evident that these wars caused mounting debt and a debased currency. At the same time, it is not evident that these wars purchased the security of either the world or America. They seemed only to create perpetual war in the name of perpetual peace.

This is the background to Middle East interventions.

Oil price instability

U.S. involvement in the Middle East dates back to the 1927–1932 era. The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and subsequently ambassador to Great Britain, Andrew W. Mellon, was a member of the family that controlled Gulf Oil Company (named for the Gulf of Mexico). After reluctantly taking an interest in Middle East oil, Gulf began competing with British oil interests. Mellon played a role in the negotiations. [See here](#).

U.S. oil companies began relations with Saudi Arabia in 1931. Because the world is divided into states, foreign business relations frequently lead to government involvement. The U.S. government became particularly involved with Saudi Arabia, which is the prime U.S. oil interest in the Middle East.

In these early events, there is no hidden conspiracy on the part of the oil industry to gain profits or the government to gain power. Events surely occur in the light of these standard incentives. Steps are also taken and measures adopted in response to external events. Actions in retrospect seem to be guided by fallible men of limited understanding whose long-term vision is clouded.

The events seem almost innocent, subject to the usual human motives, noble and base, but free from excessive guile.

The Yom Kippur War (Oct. 6 to 26, 1973) might seem to be a key event, because it led to the Arab Oil Embargo on Oct. 17, 1973 in which OPEC (the oil cartel) raised oil prices and imposed an oil embargo on the U.S. However, the economic effect of the embargo [was nil](#) compared to the effects of Nixonian price controls introduced on August 15, 1971 and the complex distorting effects of the Emergency Petroleum Allocation Act that Nixon signed on November 27, 1973.

The fundamental event that affected oil prices was U.S. inflation and the loss in value of the dollar. Nixon ended the gold standard on August 15, 1971, in reflection of that inflation and allowing it to accelerate even further. Prior to that, OPEC on Dec. 9, 1970 had already decided to post prices that took changes in foreign exchange rates into account. The oil sellers were seeking to maintain their income in real terms as U.S. inflation cut the value of the dollar. On Sept. 22, 1971, "OPEC directs members to negotiate price increases to offset the devaluation of the U.S. dollar." Again, on January 20, 1972, six countries agree "to raise the posted price of crude by 8.49 percent to offset the loss in value of oil concessions attributable to the decline in value of the U.S. dollar." The same considerations led to OPEC price increases in April and June of 1973. On September 15, 1973, further price increases were discussed. [See here](#) for a chronology.

One thing leads to another. The U.S. war in Vietnam brought inflation and devaluation of the U.S. dollar. It brought price controls, introducing distortions and instability into the U.S. economy. It led to a stronger OPEC and increases in the price of oil. The U.S. policy of world policeman and empire was having destabilizing consequences that American leaders never envisaged.

Iran and Iraq

Oil shenanigans soured the cordial relations that the U.S. once enjoyed with Iran. When Iran's elected prime minister Mohammed Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the U.S. responded with CIA operations that led to Mossadeq's imprisonment and the Shah of Iran's dictatorship. By 1963 Ayatollah Khomeini was opposing American-supported measures introduced by the Shah. Sixteen years later, the Shah was deposed and Khomeini established an Islamic Republic in Iran. The U.S. and Iran have been at odds

ever since.

The U.S. aided Iraq (and at times Iran) during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), but it tilted heavily toward Iraq. The U.S. knew of Iraq's use of mustard gas and condoned it. On August 18, 2002, the New York Times reported interviews with "senior military officers with direct knowledge of the program." The article quoted one former official of the Defense Intelligence Agency who said: "if Iraq had gone down it would have had a catastrophic effect on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and the whole region might have gone down. That was the backdrop of the policy."

Col. Walter P. Lang, retired, was the senior defense intelligence officer at the time. The Times article reads: "He added that both D.I.A. and C.I.A. officials 'were desperate to make sure that Iraq did not lose' to Iran. 'The use of gas on the battlefield by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep strategic concern,' he said. What Mr. Reagan's aides were concerned about, he said, was that Iran not break through to the Fao Peninsula and spread the Islamic revolution to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

"Colonel Lang asserted that the Defense Intelligence Agency 'would have never accepted the use of chemical weapons against civilians, but the use against military objectives was seen as inevitable in the Iraqi struggle for survival.'"

The increased U.S. involvement in world affairs had led to a loss of innocence and a loss of moral compass. The U.S. could not run the world without being coercive and amoral. Realpolitik took over. Habits of power took over. U.S. leaders lost the capacity to think in peaceful terms. They developed the insecurities of those who wield power and do not trust others. They feared that unfriendly Islamic regimes would control the oil. They feared the whole region going down, out of the American orbit. They imagined dire consequences. They have the same fear today, that fear being centered both on Iran and on al-Qaeda, which are in part creatures of their own making.

Why are we still in Iraq, and why are we projected to remain there for a long time? U.S. leaders do not want Middle Eastern countries to be run by Islamic Republics that they deem unfriendly. They fear this. They want them to be run by pliant regimes allied to the U.S. The reason for this is to maintain a degree of American control over Middle Eastern oil. They fear loss of control.

This policy is unnecessary because the oil-producing countries have no other use for oil than to sell it. This policy is counterproductive because its destructive effects and costs far outweigh the benefits. Here is a policy that makes oil less secure and lowers national security while aimed at the opposite effects. Why then does it go on? It goes on because policies of control are what Washington is geared to do ever since learning the wrong lessons of the two world wars that brought Washington into the position of being the number one world power.

The same explanation holds for the U.S. military entry into Iraq in 2003. Any sensible analysis before the event would have shown, and some did, that such an insertion of American forces and such a removal of Saddam Hussein would end badly. Why then did the President and the Congress initiate this war? None of the explanations made at the time or later explains this: not weapons of mass destruction, not the evils of Saddam Hussein's regime, not his mistreatment of his people, not a war on terror, not Saddam Hussein harboring terrorists, not Saddam Hussein posing a threat to his neighbors, not faulty intelligence, and not a campaign to bring democracy to Middle Eastern countries. These explanations are all either superficial, false rationales, deceptions and self-deceptions, or outright lies.

Invading Iraq was an outright blunder by leaders who thought it would be easy to remake the country and feared a series of imagined consequences if they did not. However, their basic policies and their basic rationales were the same as those of prior American leaders. And these policies of proactive control and playing world policeman were and are equally mistaken.

This was a blunder aided and abetted by the unusual influence of ignorant neocon supporters of Israel, by AIPAC, and by defense company lobbyists and toadies in Congress and the Executive. Nor can one overlook the amazing connections of Vice President Cheney to the Halliburton Company and President Bush to the Carlisle Group, both of which are major beneficiaries of the Iraq War.

In the end, the war in Iraq traces to the following important roots: (1) the mistaken and excessive control and power-oriented ideology of fearful American leaders that revolves around national and world security, this ideology having been reinforced by successes in several world wars, and (2) the corresponding mistaken notion that the U.S. must secure its oil supplies by political means such as by maintaining regimes in power that it deems friendly.

The U.S. would not be in Iraq if these conditions were not present. Removing them removes the basic rationales for the U.S. presence in Iraq. These are the necessary conditions for the war.

They are not sufficient conditions, however. More was required to produce this war. This involved a variety of interest groups conjoined with the personal interests and war-making blunders of America's powerful figures of state.

June 21, 2007

7. REPUDIATE THE BUSH DOCTRINE

Five years ago, President Bush enunciated the Bush Doctrine of preventive war. Atrocious as it is, it only extends earlier U.S. thinking and foreign interventions.

We have been here before. After World War II, major U.S. politicians and officials contemplated preventive strikes and full-scale atomic war against the Soviet Union. They urged this in private and in public in no uncertain terms. Harold Stassen, perennial candidate, made his strongest showing in 1948 at the very time when he favored preventive war. Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson was a war hawk. A secretary of the navy under Truman (Francis P. Matthews) called for preventive war publicly. Bernard Baruch wanted total mobilization. Fortunately, opinion was divided among our leaders, with some favoring preventive war and others against it. No first strike was launched, but talk of atomic first strikes persisted during the Cold War.

Neither does the Bush Doctrine stop with this Republican administration. Congress has heartily endorsed it and funded it. The Democratic leadership supports it. Hillary Clinton, the current front-runner in the Democratic Party by a wide margin, supports it. Obama timidly brought her support up in public. But he really touched only tangentially at the Bush Doctrine. He did not go for its heart or her jugular. He couldn't because he himself earlier had left open the option of missile strikes against Iran. He too supports it. Furthermore, he could not clearly and strongly hang Hillary out to dry on her pronounced support of U.S. war-making because he is the front-runner to be her vice-presidential nominee.

What did Obama get for even a tiny display of nerve and deviancy from the establishment line anyway? The very moment he criticized her (in late July) and said he would actually converse with the bad guys in foreign nations, he began losing serious ground to Hillary. Hillary counterattacked, making Obama seem weak. That was it for him. His Intrade probability swiftly dropped from its high of near 40% to 20%. It's now 13%. That was the end of his presidential campaign. [How wrong I was!]

You see, the American public is schizophrenic on war. Public opinion hates defeat but it also hates weakness, and its faith in government itself hardly ever dims, no matter what tribulations it experiences. The public supports wars, at least for a while. And then it takes a break before supporting the next one.

American public opinion is often volatile in the polls. In the post-WWII era, there was broad public support for taking care of the Commies then and there. General Patton was not a lone voice. Legislators in both parties urged Truman to act. By 1953, after experiencing the disappointing outcome of the Korean War, public opinion had turned sharply against that war. But these swings in sentiment mean little. They mask an underlying and persistent trust in government. Beaten and bruised, or perhaps browbeaten and intimidated, the spouse stays in the marriage until one or the other drops dead. The public likes strong leaders. The leader can go every which way on an issue, but maintain public confidence by remaining strong.

A pre-emptive war is a war that is launched when one sees the whites of the enemy's eyes bearing down. It is a first strike when there is certainty that the enemy is about to attack. And if this is so, no one much cares who fires the actual first shot. The war is inevitable anyway at that point.

A preventive war is something else again. It is an outright war of aggression launched when there is no imminent threat whatever. The justification is that an attack will surely come. Its occurrence is floating in the distant future somewhere. A preventive action now is supposed to forestall greater losses later. Their occurrence is also floating in the future somewhere. The Bush Doctrine makes preventive war the official policy of this nation. Iraq was attacked under this doctrine. I suppose Afghanistan comes under a clause or a variant.

Preventive war is a very iffy deal. Everything is in the eye of the beholder. The attack presumes that the other guy would have attacked, that no other diplomatic or other acts would have worked to prevent that outcome, and that the war itself is the best course to prevent greater losses. Meanwhile the bird in the hand is no picnic. Launching a war to prevent a war makes the war 100% certain and makes losses 100% certain. It opens up a big can of worms. It is a very strange and contradictory idea to launch a war to prevent a war. Japan did this when it attacked Pearl Harbor. This was not a prize-winning idea.

In addition, preventive war, being a war of aggression, is downright evil. The Bush Doctrine is an extraordinary public pronouncement of an evil policy. And yet it is also simply an extension of past doctrines that have involved the U.S. in global wars and global interventions. We therefore have to question strongly the roots of American foreign policy in general.

Americans usually think it's a good idea to follow their government, more or less blindly, into one war after another. Reasons of interest and advantage are always abundantly produced and publicized. The country's leaders never shy away from making the case for war. But beware! There is a slew of countervailing factors: (1) The government is a biased source of information. It gains from war by becoming larger and gaining power. (2) The government has lied and manipulated us into war. (3) The government glorifies war. (4) The long-term costs of war far outweigh the short-term costs. Politicians stress the benefits and downplay the costs. (5) Wars often go on for very long periods of time. Subsequent wars are often instigated because of the unsatisfactory outcomes of earlier wars. Even after they are supposed to have ended, the costs of war go on and on. (6) The other side is rational and may have genuine issues with us. The other side may not want war. Our own actions may be bringing on war. (7) War is hell for those directly in it and affected by it.

For all these reasons and more, the burden of proof is on the government in wanting war. The proof should be very convincing. It should be so convincing that Congress can declare war unambiguously for clear objectives that every man and woman on the street can understand. And everyone should understand the reason for the war.

Preventive war cannot possibly pass these criteria. It cannot possibly win our approval. Perhaps pre-emptive war can, under some dire circumstances, but not preventive war.

Will the leading politicians of both parties please step forward and repudiate the Bush Doctrine? If they do not, they bring themselves under a cloud of guilt. They implicate all of us in this guilt.

The causes of American foreign policy go deep. There is America's history of expansionism. There is the fact of American power. There is the militarization of the economy and nation. There is utopian idealism, often with religious roots. There is insecurity.

Frankly, none of these matter if they are merely to be paraded as excuses for our behavior. Motivations do not excuse a long procession of evil acts. For decades, we have had ample revelations of CIA intrusions and government malfeasance. We have observed numerous occasions of lying and covering up of lies that go back decades. We have observed numerous slipshod ventures and ventures gone wrong. Far too many of us are content to imagine that we

are in World War IV, facing a battle to the death with Islam.

We are responsible for such wild ideas. We are responsible for what we think and how we act. We badly need to clean up our act. The least our leaders can do is to repudiate a doctrine whose cumulative effects, if the most rabid supporters had their way, would surpass the Final Solution.

I do not expect such a repudiation. Neither do I expect the public to demand it. We are witnessing why it is that democracy does not work and how it transforms into tyranny. The supine acceptance of the Bush Doctrine is one of many sure signs of this maturing transformation.

October 8, 2007

8. NATIONAL SECURITY BY SPREADING DEMOCRACY?

Bush II had an explicit national security strategy of [spreading democracy](#) throughout the world. The 2006 National Security Strategy goes into this at great length.

Paul Wolfowitz was a close aide to Bush. He helped get the U.S. to invade Iraq. He was and is one of the foremost exponents of the policy of spreading democracy. This [Wikipedia article](#), for example, is clear on Wolfowitz's belief that spreading democracy is a key antidote to terrorism.

Spreading democracy can be done peacefully or via war or via methods that are in between peace and war. Bush believed in unilateral and preventive war as one method.

Now that Bush is gone, is this strategy also gone? It is not. President Obama has the same strategy. He is already applying it. He is only applying it in different ways and with different emphases.

Spreading democracy is a standard foreign policy of American empire that goes back to Woodrow Wilson. Obama is following this strategy in Afghanistan.

Wilson's address to Congress on April 2, 1917 sought a war declaration against Germany. He said "The world must be made safe for democracy."

Germany was at war with Great Britain and had been at war for three years. It had announced that it would sink any vessels approaching the ports of Great Britain, Ireland, and other European ports. Wilson looked upon this as war against all nations, including the U.S. He said that the U.S. had a right to the sea lanes and a right to supply Great Britain. He said that armed neutrality is ineffective and worse. And so he asked for and got war.

In the latter portion of his speech, he went far beyond asking for war. He made this fateful declaration:

"Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not

by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.”

He declared that certain kinds of governments could not again be faced by a neutral America. He said that states had rights that should be observed by other states. He was declaring the existence of an international law among states. He implied that he knew or that it was widely known what these rights and law were, and that violations were to be met by armed force. He implied that he or America or some “partnership of democratic nations” (such as a League of Nations or a United Nations) would thereafter stand for securing the peace and would secure the peace. Autocratic governments, he said, could not be trusted. Wilson declared war on tyranny, just as Bush II did in his Second Inaugural Address, when he said

“So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

The notion of making America (and the entire world) secure by ending autocratic governments overseas is the opposite of George Washington’s policy of neutrality. It involves making alliances. It involves readiness and willingness to go to war at any time. It involves continual war for the goal of continual peace, virtually a contradiction in terms. It involves some states identifying others as tyrannies and seeking to change their forms of government. It involves the notion that the world can achieve a condition of perpetual peace through the judicious use of armed forces.

Spreading democracy involves the U.S. being policeman of the world. It involves building up and maintaining military forces throughout the world. It involves the U.S. entering wars in which it is not directly a combatant. It involves the U.S. choosing favorites and enemies among other nations. It involves the U.S. in choosing the domestic factions that it supports within foreign nations and making itself the enemy of others.

Under this driving umbrella strategy, the U.S. continually constructs threats where there need not be threats. If it decides to defend Taiwan, then mainland China becomes a threat to the U.S. and an enemy. If it decides that Iraq is in

the wrong by invading Kuwait, then it makes war on Iraq. Under this policy, the U.S. for many years supplied arms and support to various dictators and/or autocrats such as Suharto of Indonesia, Marcos of the Philippines, Chun Du-Hwan of South Korea, and Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

The strategy is open to abuse. Under this strategy, U.S. foreign policies became shaped by domestic military, financial, agricultural, and other lobbies. States that are entering fights to spread democracy can enter them for reasons of self-interest and advantage to themselves. If two autocratic states like Iraq and Iran are warring, then the U.S. still finds a way to get involved.

The strategy faces operational problems. Who is to identify the instances when states violate rights? Who is to be the judge and jury of the suspected rights violations, the disputes, and the conflicts arising among states? What happens when two or more states both think they are in the right? Is any use of armed force by any state to be taken as evidence that it is in the wrong? Which disputes will be the occasion for American force to be used, and which will not?

Even more serious objections to the strategy are these:

- democracy itself is not an ideal form of government
- governments can have democratic forms and still be tyrannies
- governments can have non-democratic forms and still be peaceful
- democracies are not necessarily any more peaceful than other forms of government
- democracies can inhibit other goals like economic well-being and progress
- other forms of government can be consistent with economic progress
- self-determination of peoples does not necessarily lead them to choose democracy

The bottom line is that the supposed link between the security of Americans and spreading democracy overseas (as well as domestically) is tenuous and remote. It does not really exist, as will be argued further below.

Bush was obliged by law to publish annually a [National Security Strategy](#) document, under the Goldwater-Nichols Act. It is supposed to be the outcome of a serious effort by our top officials to plan strategy and make it public. Bush did this in 2002 and 2006, but not in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007.

Obama hasn't yet come out with the 2008 document, even though he has already announced his Afghanistan strategy.

There is research by writers on this web site that is critical of the strategy of spreading democracy. For an outside expert source, Nicholas J. Armstrong of the Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism has come out with [an article](#) that is highly critical of the strategy of spreading democracy *as Bush operated it*. Some of what he says may sound familiar to LRC readers, although his perspective is very different. He says

“...the Bush administration’s recent strategy documents possess significant shortcomings that led to important policy failures. A problematic rationale for the preemptive use of force, weak justifications and inconsistencies in democracy promotion, and a lack of strategic priorities are just a few criticisms among others.”

In other words, the Bush team didn't think through their methods and operated haphazardly.

“The current strategic assessment of the external security environment suffers from two significant weaknesses: the unrealistic notion that democracy promotion must underpin the actions of the U.S. abroad, and the flawed presumption that democracy promotion is the solution to transnational terrorism. Undoubtedly, terrorism is a significant threat to U.S. national security, but the most recent NSS illogically assumes that terrorism demands global democratization.”

This is a much broader criticism. It says two things. Spreading democracy is not a realistic foundation or center point for foreign policy; and the nation should not address terrorism by spreading democracy. He goes on:

“...the *preemptive* use of force – supported by an entangled justification of eliminating *future* threats while promoting democracy – creates an imbalance in retributive justice and thereby undermines the moral legitimacy of all U.S. democracy promotion efforts abroad, regardless of intent.”

This says that the Bush Doctrine is morally flawed and its application works against the U.S.

Armstrong mentions several criticisms of others:

“...the use of aid packages, military force, or even public diplomacy can be costly with no guarantee of long-term success – as exemplified by the \$10 billion per month cost of the improving, yet still uncertain democracy promotion efforts in Iraq. Critics...cite the interventions in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo as examples that any success in promoting democracy is associated with high costs and lengthy time commitments. While the short-term missions in Somalia and Haiti netted little gain, Bosnia and Kosovo have shown signs of success roughly a decade later, but only after considerable time and fiscal investment. Even so, measuring success of democratization is troublesome due to the difficulties of quantifying democratic progress in a tangible form.”

Before turning to the empirical side, let us think through some theory to analyze the question.

Why do people want security anyway? Security is desirable so that people may enhance their welfare. If free markets and property rights are suppressed by means of government measures enacted in democracies, then security is reduced and, by the same token, welfare may be reduced for many millions of persons that comprise substantial minorities or even for most of the entire society.

A relevant question is then whether or not democracy has a positive effect on economic growth. If it does not, then it means that democracy does not really enhance welfare. If democracy enhanced security, it should have a positive effect on economic growth and welfare. If democracy fails to enhance even domestic welfare, then the notion that spreading democracy to foreign lands will enhance domestic security and thus allow higher domestic welfare has to be seen as very far-fetched and very unlikely. In fact, if democracy lowers welfare, and there is evidence that it does, then by actively making foreign countries poorer, the U.S. is encouraging foreign people to rise up and resist America.

In those democracies in which government's limits are expansible, voting occurs on more and more goods, such as health care, education, and energy use, that once belonged to private decision-making. Under these conditions, democracy brings increasing violation of rights and increasing democratic

totalitarianism. It brings the increasing influence of lobbies for interest groups. This powerful process hampers economic growth. It is not easily reversed. Under these conditions, we will observe that political democracy and economic growth are negatively related.

On the other hand, in democracies that are replacing rapacious autocracies that have constricted the property rights and the economy, we may observe small and weak states and high economic growth if the democracy is associated with these conditions that free up the economy.

The key variables in economic growth *are not democracy per se*. They are such things as personal responsibility, respect for private property rights, private solutions to private problems, not collectivizing the economy and creating commons problems, low taxes, low barriers to entry, small government, and low regulation. If a state is weak and democratic, it may be conducive to economic growth. If it is strong and democratic, it may suppress growth.

A society does need security so that investment will be encouraged, including investment in human capital, but democracy is not a form of government that necessarily increases security.

So much for theory. What's the evidence? In 1983, Erich Weede (in the journal *Kyklos*) examined the impact of democracy on economic growth. The time period studied was 1960-79. He examined data for 124 countries. He found

“There is a clearly significant (at the 2% level) negative effect of political democracy on economic growth, however measured.”

Weede went on to look at those countries in which “government revenue as a percentage of GDP exceeds 20%.” His findings are remarkable:

“For these nations, many of the control variables lose most of their importance, in particular for GDP growth rates. Truly staggering, however, are the results in the democracy row of *Table 4*. Here it is obvious that political democracy is a major barrier to economic growth in those countries where the state strongly interferes in the economy.”

While democracy is not harmful in weak states or states that are small relative

to the economy, it is clearly harmful in strong states or states that are large relative to the economy. (This includes the U.S.) Where democracy entails collectivization, it slows down economic growth. Where government is large, there is pooling of resources and control of them by government. This creates commons problems (see [here](#) and [here](#).) Economic growth slows.

In 1992, John F. Helliwell (in an *NBER* article) again looked at democracy and growth. His study covered 98 countries between 1960 and 1985. He uses several sophisticated methods. The first one leads him to write

“The above experiments suggest that the results showing a positive effect flowing from income to democracy are not due to a positive effect flowing from democracy to growth. Indeed, whatever feedback there is seems to be negative...”

Helliwell found that higher income tends to lead to more democracy, but that the higher democracy then leads to lower future income. Democracy’s effect on income growth is negative.

His second method led him to conclude

“When the equation is re-estimated...the effect turns fairly large and negative, but is still not significantly different from zero...The fact that the estimated effect turns negative...is, however, what would be expected if there were a positive effect of income on democracy and a negative reverse effect from democracy to subsequent economic growth.”

Other studies of this question have mixed results. Some of them have known flaws and shortcomings. Those who believe that democracy helps economic growth can find some support for their hypothesis in earlier but less well-done studies. A 1990 review of a dozen or so studies by Larry Sirowy and Alex Inkeles (in the journal *Studies in Comparative International Development*) concludes there is no robust evidence, one way or the other. Unfortunately, this study does not conduct a meta-analysis, but it singles out Weede’s paper as one that more properly uses control variables. Given that and the Helliwell findings, a reasonable conclusion is that the empirical evidence does not support the hypothesis that democracy enhances economic growth, and there is some good evidence of the opposite.

Those who, like Paul Wolfowitz, think that spreading democracy overseas enhances American security and welfare should come forward and present their *theory and evidence* that it does.

Where is there evidence that America is even capable of accomplishing this goal, much less that the goal makes any sense? The American occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934 certainly did not help Haiti or the average American. American imperialism seems often enough to be the American goal.

The rhetoric of our leaders is not enough. They have had their way for 100 years, the latest instance being in Iraq. Not only is the theory of spreading democracy to promote American security subject to many severe criticisms to the point that it makes no sense, but in practice it runs afoul of many difficulties. Iraq provides a good illustration of this. Vietnam provides another.

A foreign policy of non-neutrality has several truly major inherent and severe problems.

- inability to recognize politically dynamic forces as they are occurring
- inability to forecast the path of politically dynamic forces
- catalyzing new political forces by interfering in another nation
- being held hostage to events initiated by political forces in another nation
- having policy captured by domestic and foreign interest groups
- being drawn into the fights of others
- having to deal with the actions and reactions of neighbors who have interests in the country being interfered with

The leaders of a nation that is intent on interfering with other nations and supporting movements that it deems anti-autocratic face all these problems and more.

As an example, I point to Woodrow Wilson's strong support of the Russian revolution in the Spring of 1917. In his speech to Congress cited above, he said

“Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the

intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude toward life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honor.”

In this incredible passage, Wilson managed to condemn the czarist form of government as un-Russian. He managed to affirm the Russian Revolution as democratic. He did not understand the forces and divisions within Russia at that time. He did not foresee the imminent overthrow of the provisional government by Lenin and the Bolsheviks a short six months later.

Are [Obama's strategic](#) positions any better on Afghanistan and Pakistan than Bush's on Iraq? Are they any less intent on spreading democracy? Not at all.

The White House calls for “realistic and achievable objectives.” Their first objective is not unreasonable as these things go. It is to disrupt the terrorists in the region and stop them from conducting terrorist attacks. The next objective is Wilsonian. It is

“Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.”

It is one thing to go after terrorists, as Jefferson went after pirates, although going after them on land has certain difficulties of territory and sovereignty that need to be ironed out. But putting those things aside, it is entirely another matter to get involved with building a government for Afghanistan. That continues the same old policy of spreading democracy that has no sound basis. It's the Bush policy all over again. Mixing that up with hunting down terrorists is strategic confusion. It is in fact quite amazing to read the White House's explicit intention to bolster the legitimacy of the Afghan government!

Obama is also aiming to strengthen “Afghan security forces.” These forces do not necessarily represent the interests of various warlords in Afghanistan, which means that Obama aims to interfere in this way again in Afghanistan

politics.

That is not all. Obama also aims at

“Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.”

This spells involvement in the domestic politics of a second large and turbulent country. Neighboring countries like Iran, India, and China have interests in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This means involvement with the reactions of these nations.

The American empire has had a consistent policy for 100 years: national security via spreading democracy. Obama is adhering to this policy. However, overseas democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient for security in America.

Theory suggests that democracy has a negative relation to economic welfare, especially as states get larger and infringe more greatly on property rights. Empirical studies over a hundred countries and several decades do not support the hypothesis that democracy enhances economic growth. If anything, they support a negative relation. To the extent that economic growth is a form of security and enhances security, domestic democracy reduces security.

If a foreign democracy has reduced economic growth, why would that enhance U.S. security? There is no good reason. One might expect that less prosperous nations might have a greater tendency and incentive to become trouble spots.

When the U.S. actually goes about the practical business of enhancing democracy in foreign lands, it runs into a host of problems that necessarily arise from the nature of interfering in the politics of others. The costs are high, often very high and long continued. They fall on the average American. Any benefits are showered upon specific interest groups, like Lockheed Martin, farmers, consultants, and Halliburton. It may also have appeal to those who mistakenly think they are doing God's work through the State.

If there is no known general benefit to the average American from this strategy and high costs, the strategy of promoting national security through spreading democracy appears to be irrational from their point of view.

It is my guess that Obama has not thought through the meaning of the strategy any more than he has thought through his Keynesianism. I think that our elected government officials do some thinking and questioning and shaping of positions so that they can get elected, but that, by and large, they unthinkingly accept the main assumptions of American strategies. They tinker around the edges but they do not really alter anything. Even when their rhetoric suggests something more radical, their actions retreat to the status quo. A Kennedy will send more advisers to South Vietnam and attempt to control its government. Domestically, they go about their usual business of making the democracy more and more totalitarian. Occasionally a Nixon will go to China, but it won't matter much because at home he and the American leadership will ignore the kinds of policies that might liberalize the economy and instead promote those that destabilize it and slow it down. And in foreign policy, they will stick to the same old Wilsonianism that should be thoroughly discredited and that has not served America well.

CHAPTER VIII – NEUTRALITY AND DEFENSE

INTRODUCTION

After some years, President Bush sold his war policies with the story that they had improved American security. *“Is the Country More Secure Because of President Bush’s Policies?”* questions this assertion from a variety of angles.

“Pakistan and U.S. Foreign Policy” shows how the major candidates of both parties accept the premise of intervention that typifies American empire, despite the fact that costs of these involvements far outweigh their benefits. America does not have the right to choose sides within foreign lands and interfere with their political situations. It hasn’t the knowledge to do this. It hasn’t the wisdom to do this. Neither does it have the money. In view of this, it calls for a common sense foreign policy of nonintervention with the following elements:

- avoiding trouble spots, just as a driver avoids potholes
- letting other peoples work out their own problems without butting in
- helping others through individual means, when others approve, not state means
- peaceful engagement through trade and personal interactions

“Toward New American Foreign Policies” extends the discussion. The state, being an instrument of power, interests, and politics, is not a right vehicle for actively intervening in the affairs of those who live in other lands. Every intervention takes sides in someone else’s domestic politics and relations with surrounding nations. It produces domestic resistance movements. It lacks the moral high ground. It is expensive. It entangles America for decades on end, as situations rapidly grow complex. It produces clashes with other large nations and empires that lead to wars. It encourages militaristic and fascist interests in America to gain undue influence. The American models of

government are by no means perfect, and the theory that they will lead to peace and security are flawed. Every state intervention involves collective might and resources directed by a very small number of agents of the people, but the latter have little or no control over the former. The result is high costs of agency, as the agents, who are in government, bear few costs of error.

High agency cost shows up in many ways. State officials can tap into large public resources. They are prone to misdirect aid because of their freedom of action. They play favorites according to their whims. They use covert violent methods at times. They can embroil the entire nation in warfare. When they err, they are slow to recognize and correct it. They have the resources to persist in folly and ill-chosen courses of action. Those who run a state's foreign policies have no clearer ways to know that "success" has been achieved than those who run the welfare state know that their programs have succeeded. In both cases, officialdom operates blindly with no real knowledge of the aggregate happiness of public interest. Making decisions that dominate and manipulate others and that force them into situations not of their choosing is a method that short-circuits the liberty of others to make their own decisions. One cannot produce liberty by taking it away from people.

If Americans wish to influence persons beyond the seas, they may. The appropriate manner is on private, not collective, account

Although empire promises peace, security, and prosperity, it brings their opposites. "*Peace and Security Through Defense and Neutrality*" explains the advantages of a truly defensive and neutral posture and the disadvantages of an offensive posture that chooses up sides and attempts to promote democracy or American ways. The article explains what goes into a defense strategy. America's so-called defense strategy is actually one of offense that invites attacks and counterattacks on American forces and on the continent while leaving the country vulnerable.

The offensive posture has three negatives: higher outlays for weapons, a higher chance of being attacked or getting into war, and a more destructive war if it occurs. By contrast, a strong defensive posture reduces the chance of being attacked. A defensive posture is such that the side that attacks stands to lose heavily when it attacks.

A defensive strategy that involves many more Americans at the grass-roots accompanies a smaller role for the state, the empire, and their forces. Limited

and small government accompanies a greater role for the population to be engaged in its own defense.

“War or Peace? Achieving Peace Among States” makes the case that states, being political organizations that aim at holding and expanding power, inherently are not agents of peace but agents of domination and its extension. The system of states therefore gives rise to complex maneuvers, threats, negotiations, and alliances that end up sometimes in wars, both civil and foreign. Collective U.N. security and negotiations among states do not alleviate this dynamic and do not achieve a higher degree of peace. They are political methods used by states to achieve their own goals. There are more conflicts in the world today and more being settled violently than ever before. There are more civil wars in progress than ever before, and they are more intense than ever.

“Getting to American Neutrality” explains the non-neutrality of American policies and its drawbacks. With the goal of peace and peaceful relations of all peoples, it calls for a neutral America, citing remarks of Presidents Washington and Wilson in support of that position. The article argues that the system of states has led the world into more and greater wars. This is because states are able to gather resources to produce more and more weapons and fight larger and larger wars. Nuclear weapons remain a danger and a flash point that can cause future wars. The risks of war will be reduced when states are reduced in power because states are inherently aggressive institutions that usually are not well-controlled by their peoples.

1. IS THE COUNTRY MORE SECURE BECAUSE OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S POLICIES?

Is the country more secure because of President's Bush's policies? Although no one knows the answer to this question, trying to answer it, as I do here, is valuable if only because security is important to us.

My answer is "No." The Iraq War has recruited more jihadists who are set against the U.S. If its cost of \$10,000 for each household in the U.S. had been spent by those households, greater security could have been achieved at home. The President's anti-civil rights laws and his approval of torture have made each of us less secure.

But those ideas are only the beginning of the story. A recent Bloomberg [article](#) reports: "There is one bright spot for the president: Half of all Americans still believe his policies on terrorism and national security have made the country more secure over the past six years, compared to 26 percent who say they've made the country less secure."

Is the country more secure now than six years ago because of the policies of the president? Since I side with the 26 percent who say it is not, I think millions of people have misjudged the issue. Why? This is another unanswerable question worth exploring.

I will not adopt the response that Americans are sheep, dumb, stupid, irrational, apathetic, uneducated, miseducated, etc. Even if Americans possess normal intelligence and rationality, most people who answer poll questions are [rationally ignorant](#). They are not educated on various questions because it does not pay them to educate themselves on these issues. In that situation, we might expect half the people to say "Yes" and half the people to say "No." Since only 26 percent say "No," there are some factors encouraging people to believe that the country is safer. What might these factors be? Why might people exhibit a favorable bias toward President Bush's security policies? Public education with a statist bias is one such reason. What else?

The big threat

For one thing, the government says the country is safer, the media report what the government says, and people read and believe the media reports. It doesn't pay them to dig deeper. Majority public opinion coincides with press reports

such as the mid-2005 Washington Post [story](#) that the "U.S. Sees Drop in Terrorist Threats." The source of the information is the government officials who keep lists of threats. It is a fact that the threat numbers have declined. The decline does not mean that the U.S. is more secure. Threats also declined prior to 9/11. What the public misses is often auxiliary facts and the interpretation of the facts. And this goes back to a public education that does not educate in how to think.

Furthermore, what matters regarding safety are the potential big threats. The press reports look backwards, not forwards. Maybe the President's oft-repeated message that the U.S. has gone five years without a major terrorist incident persuades the public that the U.S. is now more secure. We always have a tendency to extrapolate the present into the future, and President Bush's statements have reinforced that tendency. It is true that the other shoe has not yet dropped. Should this convince the public that it won't ever drop?

In early 2006, bin Laden warned the U.S. "The operations are under way, and you will see them inside your own home as soon as they are finished, God willing." He was speaking of a large terror event. The terrorist leaders of al-Qaeda are interested in high-profile and high-payoff destruction that they believe will have major psychological impact. They promise an event worse than 9/11. They can afford to wait and plan.

Most Americans ignore bin Laden's messages, thinking him some kind of nut or fanatic. Perhaps Americans are discouraged from listening carefully to the enemy's messages. Perhaps they find it emotionally unsatisfying or intellectually annoying to have to come to grips with anti-American views such as his. It is easier to avoid paying attention. Even those who hear his messages can rationally downplay his threats. We know that his political agenda includes rallying his forces and we know that a good many particular threats have proven empty. On the other hand, bin Laden needs to deliver upon his threats to maintain his credibility. Lacking the powers of a state, bin Laden's credibility is a major source of his ability to recruit and sway minds. For this reason and others, we should not ignore bin Laden's threats and messages. We should not infer that a few days of good weather mean that no more thunderstorms will occur.

Trust us

U.S. officials give us assurances of security during election years and advertise

threats the rest of the time. In the last election, Republicans strongly emphasized that they had done a top-notch job on security. This worked. The Republicans consistently maintained an edge over Democrats on this issue. But they had every reason to exaggerate their claims so as to be re-elected. Now that the election has passed, they will return to advertising terror threats. This helps them retain and augment their power.

Do many millions of Americans believe what their government officials say? Do they believe even now, even after decades of growing cynicism about the veracity of government officials? I'm afraid so. This is not only a matter of miseducation. The typical memory fades after about 5 years. Advertisers know this. It explains why they must keep having new ad campaigns for established products. Memories of ads (and other matters) are like capital goods that depreciate over time. Politicians rely upon this. They rely upon fading memories, usually memories of distant and confused political events that were not all that central to our lives in the first place. And the politicians rely upon their own current rhetoric to shape our thoughts. They supply fresh interpretations that block out failing memories.

Politicians also count on our general trust, our vague attitude that we fit into the society around us of which the state seems to be a permanent part. A person needs a good deal of thought and experience to shift the attitude of general trust into one of general distrust. The dots have to be connected, and one must reject the status quo. One must make what seem to be anti-social judgments since the politicians constantly claim that they are acting in the public interest. One must replace the rejected system with some other ideas. All of this is quite costly to the individual.

We should not automatically grant trust. We rationally place more trust in the words of those who have something to lose by not being truthful. This criterion excludes politicians. Politicians are more dishonest than ever before because they have arranged the political voting system so as to make their seats more secure than ever. They have little to lose by bending the truth, and it is easy for them to do it. All they need is a statistic to rely upon. They then can mis-interpret reality and get away with it.

Are we safer? It's government officials that are telling us we're safer. Why trust them? They also told us that Iraq was a terror haven and that we had a right to attack it. Were they truthful? Did they reduce terror there or did they enhance terror? The Baker-Hamilton report says that al-Qaeda has now

become a self-sustaining movement within Iraq, a movement now able to recruit and fund itself from Iraqis. Was this the case before the U.S. attacked? Not at all.

Didn't our leaders also tell us 90 years ago that we'd fight a "war to end all wars?" Didn't they tell us then that we'd make the world safe for democracy? Didn't they promise 60 years ago that the United Nations would be the vehicle for world peace? And 40 years ago, didn't they promise to eradicate poverty?

Didn't President Bush promise to cut pork-barrel spending, reduce the Federal debt, balance the budget, and lock away the Social Security surplus? Hasn't he done the opposite?

Didn't President Bush promise 6 years ago not to engage the military in nation-building, saying "I'm worried about an opponent who uses nation building and the military in the same sentence. See, our view of the military is for our military to be properly prepared to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place." Isn't the U.S. now enmeshed in nation-building in Iraq, and hasn't nation-building become the centerpiece of President Bush's policies?

Do laws enhance security?

Perhaps public opinion is responding to all the headline-grabbing anti-terrorist legislation. In the minds of some, Congress has waved a magic wand: It has drafted laws, and the laws have made us safe. Example: The Congress passed laws concerning containers shipped from overseas that might be used to sneak in destructive materials and weapons. The laws were The Port and Maritime Security Act of 2001 and The Maritime Transportation Antiterrorism Act of 2002.

Passing laws is one thing. Implementing them is another. In 2005, the GAO investigated and found, according to [press report](#), that "Two federal programs designed to identify and inspect potentially dangerous cargo before it arrives in Seattle and other U.S. ports are riddled with so many flaws they are unlikely to pose a serious challenge to terrorists intent on shipping people or weapons to this country, congressional investigators conclude." The two programs are the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism and the Container Security Initiative.

Our laws demand more and more latitude to spy and search. We endure endless searching at our airports. We make ourselves secure by not carrying on hair spray and shaving cream. No airliner has blown up or been commandeered for some time. Ergo we are all safer, right? Our leaders have given us security, right? If they say we are more secure, then we are more secure. Right? Many Americans think so. Security is like punching a pillow. One end goes down, the other end goes up. What if terrorists target something other than airplanes? The number of juicy targets on the ground is infinite. Terrorists in Delhi, Madrid, London, Moscow, and elsewhere did not attack or use airplanes. Are we really safer?

The U.S. might be more or less secure. Neither I nor anyone else can prove the case, one way or another. But if we think about how government operates and do a modicum of reading about government capabilities and efficiency, we will not be so comfortably confident that we are more secure. The days of thinking about the super-efficient FBI and CIA are behind us. Hollywood propaganda about the wonderful work of our national police in controlling crime is behind us. Black and white film strips of punch cards sorting fingerprints and J. Edgar Hoover reassuring the American public are strictly for old movie buffs. If these films ever had any truth in them, which is [doubtful](#), it has evaporated. Former FBI Director Louis Freeh has said of the FBI: "I think we have today something close to a failed agency." A 2004–2005 presidential [commission](#), the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, heavily criticized the CIA and other intelligence arms of the government.

If the U.S. is more secure, it's the private sector that's making it more secure. Supplying internet security is a growth industry. Private protection and law enforcement is an industry that is now [two to three](#) times the size of public law enforcement. The domestic industry might be even larger if the Iraq War had not pulled resources into Iraq, where an estimated 20,000 private contractors are hired by the U.S. If the U.S. is less secure, it's the federal government and the president's policies that have made it less secure. If it's more secure, it's because many organizations are privately taking measures to protect their property.

Internet security

Terrorists can cause damage and mayhem by attacking computer systems. The Congress recognized that government agencies are prone to computer

deficiencies and vulnerabilities when it passed the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002. This Act requires each agency to put in place information security and to have Inspector Generals that test the systems independently.

Both before and after the Act's passage, the press has carried numerous reports of security problems with government computers. I provide a small sample. A [report on the IRS](#) dated September 21, 2006, states that the IRS lost \$54.2 million when the Sasser Worm spread through its systems in 2004. The loss could have been avoided by installing available security patches. The report says that the IRS is still vulnerable: "Ineffective IRS patch management practices continue to put the IRS network at risk. The IRS continues to be exposed to network intrusions that could result in enormous financial impact..."

The Federal Election Commission not only flunked its [financial audit](#) ("The testing of internal control identified both reportable conditions and material weaknesses"), but also failed to have adequate information security.

The Department of the Interior has a history of problems. A [2003 audit](#) lists a dozen internal control weaknesses said to be "longstanding weaknesses."

Despite numerous signals and clues, the FBI failed to detect the multi-year espionage activities of Robert Hanssen, which included information gathered from computer sources. The 2003 Inspector General's [report](#) wrote: "Our review of the Hanssen case revealed that there was essentially no deterrence to espionage at the FBI during the 1979 to 2001 time period and that the FBI's personnel and information security programs presented few obstacles to Hanssen's espionage."

How safe is the air traffic control system? [A report](#) issued on the FAA three months ago is encouraging to terrorists, but not to Americans: "GAO identified significant security weaknesses that threaten the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of FAA's systems – including weaknesses in controls that are designed to prevent, limit, and detect access to these systems. The agency has not adequately managed its networks, software updates, user accounts and passwords, and user privileges, nor has it consistently logged security relevant events. Other information security controls – including physical security, background investigations, segregation of duties, and system changes – also exhibited weaknesses, increasing the risk that unauthorized users could breach

FAA's air traffic control systems, potentially disrupting aviation operations."

Department of Homeland Security

On December 11, 2006, the *Investor's Business Daily* criticized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for being vulnerable to internet attack. Two DHS agencies, the Customs and Border Protection bureau and the Secret Service "failed to install software that can patch security holes." Internet security is important because of the potential for hacking into computer systems that control "air traffic...water treatment plants, pipelines, dam gates and ventilation systems, "and an imaginative terrorist can think up even more ways to wreak havoc via computer disruptions. Official sources confirm al-Qaeda's interest in recruiting people with skills that can be used in these ways. By contrast, the DHS has been embarrassed by incompetent hiring.

The IBD article added: "DHS is one of the most wasteful agencies in Washington. Spending is out of control. Audits have cited lavish trips, fancy office furnishings and bloated contracts. Yet last year the department spent 7% less on cybersecurity research than the year before."

Rich Lowry, in a [scathing article](#) on DHS titled "Bloated and Incompetent," used such words as stupid, senseless, blundering, dysfunctional, and corrupt to describe the DHS. The DHS for him is "the blundering bureaucratic monstrosity that is one of Congress' sorriest creations." Lowry even spoke favorably of P. J. O'Rourke's libertarian sentiment (!), citing O'Rourke's saying: "Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys."

Lowry did not recommend doing anything, while the IBD meekly concluded that the DHS must do a better job and get its priorities right.

Does the thought of getting rid of a monstrosity like the DHS never cross the minds of today's conservatives (and liberals)? Are they true believers who cannot think of dismantling any bureaucracy? Why is this? Why are stupid bureaucracies immune to death in the minds of state-lovers? Why must they be preserved, no matter how destructive they are?

If the thought of killing off a bureaucracy occurs to these popular media figures, do they suppress it? What are they afraid of? Are they afraid that one such radical thought might lead to another, and they might end up supporting

small government and private initiative? Are they afraid that one hole in the dike will lead to more and yet more and bring the whole edifice down? Are they afraid someone will disapprove of their radical thoughts? Do they fear disapprobation? Do they fear loss of their livelihoods if they do not conform to the status quo? Do they fear unpopularity or being thought too radical? Are they afraid of being too different?

The DHS is an inefficient, ineffective, and intrusive monstrosity. It should be abolished. Every dollar it spends could be better spent by private individuals attending to their own security.

Reducing terrorism risk

Supposed terrorist cells have been broken up. Terrorist plots have been foiled. Suspected terrorists have been locked up in Guantanamo and other secret prisons. The U.S. has thrown away the keys. Torture is used to extract valuable information. People secretly rejoice. They think: "The government is doing a nasty job, but it's doing it. We are all safer."

Are we safer? The government likes to boast of its successes, as with the Lackawanna Six. It can arrest someone and threaten to label him as an "unlawful enemy combatant," foreclosing trial rights and raising the prospect of indefinite detention (imprisonment). This induces plea bargains to lesser charges, so that President Bush can triumphantly speak of hunting down killers. The Lackawanna Six included a number of Yemeni-Americans who traveled to Afghanistan and passed some time at a training camp for beginning jihadists. From various accounts, they are described as foolish, bozos, knuckleheads, and idiots, but not traitors, killers, or even men planning to kill anyone. The government never proved that they intended to commit a crime. They ended up doing long sentences for the "crime" of material support for the possible violation of a long list of statutes. In layman's language, material support is almost anything that can be construed as being an accomplice to a crime that might be committed.

Should we feel safer because the government is putting away men of this ilk in this manner? Hardly. There are legions of much more violent men out there, and the U.S. is materially supporting the growth in their numbers, albeit indirectly, just as it once directly supported bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

Culturing the virus

Terrorism, like catching a cold, is the kind of risk that to some extent is within our control. If we tempt the virus to attack our bodies by standing in drafts, standing in front of people sneezing, and sticking our fingers in our mouths, we are more likely to catch a cold. The U.S. has been asking for trouble for a long time. It has been using its political, economic, and military muscle in many countries, like Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia. It has tempted the virus to attack, and the virus has at long last attacked. Now that the virus is circulating in the bloodstream and reproducing, it will not easily be stopped.

U.S. interference in the affairs of other nations was never right or just in the first place, which is reason enough to halt it now. But U.S. interference has also been inept, as all government programs are. John H. Kelly, the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon (1986–1988) chronicles some of the [sad history](#) of American involvement in Lebanon. He criticizes the 1982 U.S. military involvement in Lebanon as reactive, lacking a clear policy or mission, and fed by "emotionalism and hope rather than clear purpose." He notes that the situation in 1982 was perilous for strangers who were entering into a land with "armed Lebanese factions already embroiled in lethal contests and active warfare for the previous seven years." The U.S. attempted to portray itself as neutral, an attitude Kelly calls a delusion, but the Lebanese factions believed with good reason that the U.S. already had chosen its favorites to back including Israel, the Lebanese Christian militia, and the Lebanese President. The Lebanese intervention pulled the U.S. directly into the terrorist vortex.

Through its actions in Iraq and elsewhere, the foreign-interventionist U.S. is now culturing whole swarms of new and more potent viruses anxious to attack the U.S. The risks of an attack on the continental U.S. are growing, and the next attack may be pneumonia. Meanwhile to ward off these viruses, the domestic-security U.S. is going through the motions of washing its hands and keeping warm, but the water is cold and the coats are porous. The main results are destruction of rights and greater authoritarian rule in America, not greater security.

Are we more secure today than six years ago as a result of the president's policies? The U.S. is very good at arousing new generations of terrorists overseas, even as it is very bad at protecting Americans domestically.

December 18, 2006

2. PAKISTAN AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

How is the press interpreting the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan? Mainly in terms of domestic American politics. Mainly in short-sighted and short-term ways. Certainly it is not seen as indicating that there is anything fundamentally wrong with U.S. foreign policy.

The *Wall Street Journal* [says](#) it "potentially gives an edge to candidates boasting of experience over those promising changes." The newspaper says it is boosting McCain and Giuliani's candidacies. They are identified as anti-terror and national security candidates. Likewise, the *Los Angeles Times* [sees](#) a higher profile for national security and foreign affairs in the campaigns. The *Washington Post* [plays up](#) Hillary Clinton's personal knowledge of Bhutto.

Clinton is not alone. Every major candidate, with the exception of Ron Paul, wants to be seen as the strong anti-terror candidate who has the knowledge of Pakistani politics and world affairs and who can step in at a moment's notice and handle the situation. In other words, they assure the American public that they too will continue the failed interventionist policies of the U.S.

Obama attempts to play the role of the unconventional anti-Iraq War candidate. But, contradicting himself, he endorses an activist U.S. role in Pakistan: "We...stand with them in their quest for democracy and against the terrorists who threaten the common security of the world." Does this sound like George Bush, or does this sound like George Bush? In fact, following a clear Democrat Party policy theme, both Clinton and Obama promise that if elected they will deepen the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's where they think the real fight is.

Outdoing his competitors, Mitt Romney shows himself the global war-on-terror candidate. According to [Newsweek](#), "Mitt Romney condemned the assassination as proof of the 'extraordinary reality of global violent radical jihadism.'"

He is not to be outdone by Rudy Giuliani: "Her death is a reminder that terrorism anywhere – whether in New York, London, Tel Aviv or Rawalpindi – is an enemy of freedom...We must redouble our efforts to win the terrorists' war on us."

Enough. We get the idea. All you guys are strapping on an extra two six-guns. You're all expert marksmen. You all have your bags packed, ready to take a plane to any O.K. Corral in this wide world. You're ready for any number of showdowns. When you get there, you'll fire into the air while launching either the U.S. Marines, a fleet of AC-130 gunships, or a new Swiss bank account for whatever corrupt "leaders" you can dredge up. Every such leader will be a champion of democracy, who is doing the best that he or she can in the face of an unruly divided population that refuses to buckle under to the democratic script. All of this will be paid for by the American taxpayer and foreign central banks willing to buy the endless U.S. debt. This will go for the next 100 years (at least) or until the empire cracks, whichever comes first.

The infantile thinking of all the major candidates (with the exception of Ron Paul) is truly something to behold. All of them promise more of the same, with trivial variations. How is it that American politics has come to such a childish foreign policy, repeated decade after decade? How have so many remote trouble spots supposedly been transformed into critical matters of national security when any fool can see that by merely *ignoring* them consistently, we would enhance American security and well-being? How have we come to a pass where the major candidates continually mouth stupidities and put them into effect after elected? How can this go on and on and on, without significant change?

Evidently, America's national political system is broken. It is producing dysfunctional and foolish outcomes at every turn. It is a perpetual motion machine running in reverse. No candidate need deviate more than a tiny amount from the accepted party lines. One of them will invariably be elected. The two parties own the process of placing their Heckle and Jeckle candidates on the public's malfunctioning ballot boxes. There is no need for change. If it's broke, why fix it? No one is making anyone fix it.

Why should any candidate deviate? Why should they not throw more gasoline onto the world's fires? The two parties and their financial supporters and beneficiaries have built up an impregnable political position by endorsing an activist and interventionist foreign policy that never fails to get one of the two elected. Why rock the boat? Why should they not avail themselves of that power they assiduously seek? Why should they not tap into that great checking account denominated in everyone else's name but theirs?

One candidate has endorsed a sensible non-interventionist foreign policy: Ron

Paul. In a November 9, 2007 interview in the *U.S. News and World Report*, [Ron Paul](#) made these comments on Pakistan:

How has the deteriorating situation in Pakistan affected your campaign message?

"It fell right in my lap. It's exactly what I said. Ten billion dollars we paid into this guy's coffers to keep a military dictator who overthrew an elected government. And we're supposed to die for spreading democracy? We're going broke. And now we've created chaos in that country. We had Bhutto come back in there. Everybody over there knows our CIA is trying to run things. That's why he's so unpopular. As long as we're going to interfere, there will be a motivation for people to get rid of our puppet government and turn against us as well. That's where the radicalism comes from. It's a response to a foreign policy that is seriously flawed."

Foreign policy produces nothing but folly, as explained [here](#). We mistakenly believe that foreign policy is a collective good when, as it is usually practiced, it is a collective bad. Its only benefits fall out to selected interest groups out for themselves. Furthermore, this supposed good is owned and operated by an untouchable cartel of two political parties. And within those two organizations are much smaller cliques who control the nation's foreign policies. The institutional arrangements are what are producing the mass follies of foreign policy that we constantly observe.

The average person knows enough to stay away from trouble spots that promise more and more losses of all types without any expectation of noticeable gains. A driver avoids potholes. He does not steer directly into them. A common sense foreign policy involves avoiding trouble spots. It involves the patient ability to stand aside as other peoples work out their own problems. It involves the wisdom to know that America does not have the money or the wisdom to ameliorate every thorny or even less-than-thorny political problem in this world. It involves a redirection of the ideal of helping others, away from the state and toward individuals. It involves the willingness to engage other peoples directly via peaceful trade and social interactions. It involves avoiding the destructive manipulations that are the invariable consequence of government-to-government interactions in foreign policy as currently practiced.

At present, the dynamic of our political setup works against every sound instinct of common sense in foreign policy. At present, unstable areas like Pakistan are actually excuses for even more intervention. Major candidates use instability to advocate throwing even more fuel on the fire and throwing good money after bad. This alone should tell us that something is drastically wrong with the political system.

At a bare minimum, the exercise of American foreign policy badly needs a recess, a time-out. But what it really needs is to be trashed. It needs to be replaced by the common sense policy of government nonintervention.

In one word, American foreign policy should be non-interventionist. The government should wind down its foreign policy ventures. If Americans wish to interact productively with foreign peoples, the appropriate way is not at the state's collective and coercive level. It is at the personal level, as is done via social and business interactions.

December 29, 2007

3. TOWARD NEW AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICIES

The foreign policies of America are going down to disastrous defeat all over the world. Americans will soon wake up to defeat after defeat. The basic reason for these defeats is that the West under American leadership is simply incapable of controlling the rest of the world. Too many people live in too large an area with too many political cross-currents for any one nation or even a group of nations to be able to have mastery over. Within the many areas and countries that the U.S. is trying to subdue and run are too many people with knowledge of how to fight, the means to fight, and the will to fight. The world has too many other large nations, such as Russia and China, that can check America and the West in many possible ways and at every turn that suits them as the West seeks to run countries on or near their borders. Within the Western alliance, there are fractures that prevent united action. There are entire continents such as South America and Africa where events can, have, and will go out of American control.

America in every way is simply unequal to the task of ruling the world. It can't do it physically since it lacks the raw resources or power. It can't do it mentally since it lacks the spirit or will. It can't do it morally since it lacks the moral high ground. It can't do it financially since it lacks the wealth. If it keeps on trying to run the world, it can only meet with more defeats than it already is running into.

And there is no need for America the state to run the world. Our security does not depend on it. Nor is it right to spread a vision of what some or even many Americans think are right values via the forces of the state.

Preventing mass airplane terror is a win and a welcome win. That win did not come about by American foreign policy or by a war against terror expressed by American or Israeli troops on foreign soil. No doubt it came through intelligence methods and infiltration of terror networks. These are better methods than invasions, threats, sanctions, and similar pressures and methods that states employ.

Neoconservative baloney

The myth of America being a superpower that can remake the world is just that, a myth. Neoconservatives had a dream. They came to power. They turned that dream into a nightmare. They have taken America down to defeat after

defeat. They are still dreaming their dreams and still leading the country downwards. Faced with bitter losses, they will now accuse America of not trying hard enough. They will say that we should unleash even greater power and weaponry. They will claim that the military has been stabbed in the back. They will shout that their policies were not put into practice effectively, or that they were sabotaged by weak-willed or ineffectual politicians. They will seek even more power. They will blame everyone and everything they can think of. They will fill the air with their denunciations and obfuscations. They will call us critics defeatists. They will bemoan the toll already paid in blood, as if that were reason to spill even more blood. But the reasons for defeat lie in a basic reality that neoconservative policies failed to reckon with: America cannot run the world.

Why do Americans support the wild-eyed neoconservative policies? Some Americans are warmongers. Some are mute followers of their leaders. Some believe pragmatically that the President knows what he is doing. Some believe that this is World War III. Some believe that it is a Christian duty to save the world even if it involves collective military might. And so on. Defeats we can hope will alter these attitudes and beliefs, all of which are entirely wrong. War does not bring peace. Mute submission is suicide. The President has no idea what he is doing. This is not World War III. And Christians should not support armed interventions on behalf of what they think are good causes. Christians should not be supporting wars right and left.

Americans should hold fast to one self-evident truth and not listen to neoconservative humbug. The truth is that this country cannot rule the world by army, navy, marine, and air force power, threat, warfare, and intimidation. Nor can it even diminish terror by these conventional means. Superpower methods are useless in the aim of world rule. They are worse than useless. They backfire. If Americans continue to listen and follow current foreign policies, if they keep buying into the neoconservative propaganda, then they will suffer even more defeats.

Defeats

Afghanistan is a defeat and a snare. That war did not put Usama bin Laden out of business. It did not put local insurgencies out of business. The West ties down forces trying to hold a lid on a situation it can't control in the long run. Russia couldn't hold this country and the West can't either. Trying to do so begets Western losses with no tangible long-run benefits. Men and women die

and sustain injury. Wealth is dissipated. American debts rise while Afghani conflict continues. Warlords keep battling or fattening their purses. A fragile democracy there and others elsewhere struggle against insurgencies or don't measure up to American goals. The clock ticks on to a more visible Western defeat in Afghanistan, but the defeat is already there. What is it that the West has won?

Afghanistan was under Taliban rule which was tied in with Pakistan's support. The Taliban probably still have Pakistani support. American defeat in Afghanistan is also defeat in Pakistan. Someday the lid will blow off Pakistan as it did in Iran. What will America do then?

Iraq is a defeat and a snare. The country has a severe civil war going on. Americans sit in the middle of it all, powerless to enforce the American will, whatever that will is. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot put Iraq together again.

Lebanon is a defeat and a snare. Israel launches an invasion. The U.S. approves and supports it. However, the war reveals the weakness of Israel's armed forces, not only politically but also militarily, just as the Iraq War revealed the weakness of American armed forces to control a country. Hizbullah parries Israel with a force only a fraction of Israel's. Hizbullah, which is no moral paragon, makes itself look good beside Israel's blunderbuss approach that inflicts damage in all directions. There is no Israeli lightning war this time around. After weeks, Israel has penetrated Lebanon only a few miles. Iran sits safely at a distance observing how weak Israel really is. In the long run, can the State of Israel survive? Can it survive by brute force? I don't think so, not in its current form. Lebanon will be counted as a turning point in which Israel's enemies not only tasted blood but got the measure of their opponent, when the tide began to turn in their favor, when they rallied more sympathy for their cause, and even when they began to make headway in overturning Arab governments in favor of Islamic fundamentalist regimes. An Israeli defeat is an American defeat, whether or not America gave the green light for the initial invasion.

All over this world are trouble spots and more potential defeats. Thailand is or will be having war. Somalia experiences war and Ethiopia intervenes. China will sooner or later make a move of some sort on Taiwan. North Korea threatens South Korea. Venezuela links up to Cuba and Iran while threatening trouble elsewhere in South America. Brazil has severe problems. One can go

on and on and on. America cannot control all of these situations. It cannot police the world. It cannot run the world. Neither can the major countries that run the United Nations Security Council, and it is a good thing they can't.

Will Americans learn?

Defeat will not go down American throats easily. It may not go down at all. I do not know. But where character and brains most count are in times of defeat and loss. America failed to learn the lessons of stalemate in Korea and defeat in Vietnam. I have no great hope that it will learn from the current episodes. When the hand is burned on a hot stove, one learns not to touch it again. Will America learn not to touch the multitude of world trouble spots? I doubt it. There will be excuses and rationalizations instead. A basic problem is that foreign policy is the main toy of Presidents and Congresses. They can't resist playing with it. They like to. They don't get burned. We do. The basic problem is that Americans support their Presidents and Congresses with money, bodies, and wills. They should not. If this is the only way that Americans can get satisfaction, by displays of brawn all over the world, then they are doomed to defeat. The Lilliputians will tie the American Gulliver down and cut him up into little pieces. America should not be trying to save the world via armed force.

New directions

What is to be done? Many Americans worry about Islamic fundamentalist regimes coming to power, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan. Bin Laden or his deputies might soon be running Somalia or some other country. We need to distinguish the American state from individual Americans. The state's actions need to be severely constrained. The correct foreign policies in situations like these for the state are (a) patience, (b) non-intervention, (c) peaceful engagement, and (d) appropriate defense of America. The last resort should be war and only when a country directly engages the U.S. in war. Individuals should maintain their own moral high ground so that they can apply moral pressure against injustices and so that they can engage in voluntary individual (not state) action against them. The general idea is to shrink the state's role in foreign policy (state to state), and allow individuals to engage foreign people in voluntary relationships if they wish to, but still within the boundaries of just and justifiable actions. State's policies should be more passive than is today the case, and individual policies should be as active or passive as individuals see fit (within the limits of being just.)

If Christians wish to remake the world, they can do so with proper and traditional means as individuals (which includes voluntary organizations). If pirates attack ships in Indonesian waters, the shippers can use mercenaries if they wish for protection. Piracy need not lead to extension of the U.S. war against terror to Indonesian waters. If separatists in Thailand blow up a train and Americans want to take sides and fight in Thailand, that is their prerogative as individuals, not that I'm recommending it. They might even fight each other, or they might find Thais fighting them. And if so, the Thais should understand that America the state is not going to protect any of its citizens who undertake such ventures in foreign countries. They are actions of individuals. Situations can rapidly become complex, and this is a good reason why the American state should stay out of foreign situations. It is not proper for the U.S. state to choose up sides and commit the nation to one side or the other in foreign struggles, even if they involve Americans. It makes no sense to extend the protection of the American state, for example, to every American wherever they are in the world in ways that drag the state into local conflicts and wars. An American who travels should be responsible for his own protection. If Americans could carry guns, they would be a lot safer. And if they wore an emblem that signified they were under the protection of a credible protection company that would seek justice for any harm done, that would be better than running to an Embassy in case of trouble or waiting for the Marines to land. It would be better than terrorists, insurgents, and rebels being able to drag the U.S. into wars of their choosing.

The American state should lay back and sit still, first for 5 years, then 10 years, then 20 years, and longer. Americans need a long, long respite. We need to recover our sense of proportion. We need to learn how to think and see straight again. We need to solve our own problems. No nation can keep fighting forever without having a nervous breakdown.

We need to lay back and sit still because oppressive regimes have a way of self-destructing over time. This happened to the Soviet Union (and it's the path that the U.S. is on). There is a reason. The more that a regime tries to control, the higher become its costs of control. But also the benefits of citizen resistance rise as the regime becomes more oppressive. At some point, if the regime goes too far, the citizens make a change. It depends on their pain threshold and dissatisfaction levels. This is something that outsiders can't gauge. We should know about this. Americans once had a low threshold of pain and threw off the British rule.

Nonintervention has the enormous benefit of giving foreign peoples no excuse to be against America as a state. If our state has done nothing to earn their hatred or enmity, then they have no just cause against us. This will diminish attacks on us inasmuch as many attacks are for what enemies regard as just causes even if those attacked see matters in the opposite light. Nonintervention will not end all attacks or problem situations, however. One can imagine all sorts of such difficult cases even if the U.S. becomes more passive, but they will be clearer and easier to manage if our state is minding its own business. That's what nonintervention means: Mind your own business, America.

If Islamic regimes oppress their people (or we believe they do), we should be patient and not intervene as a state. Anyway, we have little choice but to wait for the inevitable alteration in the country's politics because collective intervention makes matters worse. We should be passive as a state, but active as individuals if we wish to. North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam despite American intervention, but now that country engages the U.S. in trade and other ways. If Iranians become dissatisfied enough with their rulers, they will change what they have. The U.S. surely can't do it for them without further defeat. The U.S. once intervened to put in a puppet, the Shah of Iran, and the Iranians, or some of them, never forgot it. Our CIA's intervention, among many others, led to the troubles we now face. If there is injustice in Iran that the Iranians complain about, Americans as individuals can support them if they see fit and speak out. If Iranians want money to support their cause, it is the right of any American to support them if the cause is just and the actions to support it are just. Knowing these things may not be easy, but that is what conscience requires. Pressures should build up from below, not from above by the concerted state actions we are used to seeing.

The evidence is in. State interventions solve nothing. They lead only to further conflicts. No person needs to sit on his hands in the face of international evils. There is plenty of work to be done to identify them. People can organize and speak out. They can apply moral pressures. Some international organizations do this already, and they make a difference. People can communicate with other peoples as individuals (including voluntary groups) and support them in many ways, even including smuggling, supplying arms, and fighting. There are many ways to effect changes. Muscular state policies have failed. What is left except the actions of individuals? If this sort of free market foreign policy sounds visionary and strange, it is. This is what bin Laden is doing. He is conducting his own war against the United States and its citizens. But his actions are terribly wrong and unjust. I am not commending private marauders,

pirates, terrorists, and thieves that prey upon innocents. I am commending private actions that are just, and that creates a large constraint and poses difficult problems for anyone who uses force.

Patience means that the state (not necessarily individuals) takes a much longer-run view than it is accustomed to and sits still and waits for the natural forces of change to occur. It means the state sees what its leaders think is evil or bad and does not do anything about it through sanctions, threat, armed force, interventions, and alliances. The state should simply not be leading the country into foreign adventures. The situations the state and the country face are not like calling the police because our neighbor gives his wife a black eye. A state that acts like a policeman in foreign nations faces resistance from other states and peoples. The state's international tools are limited, and the ones we have been taught to think work do not work well over the long haul. There is no end of injustices in this world, and the state cannot successfully commit the American people to rectify them militarily or by the standard means that have gotten us into so much trouble in the past.

Militarism must end

Americans have shed enormous amounts of blood. They have spent enormous wealth. Why? Defense or national security was only part of it and not even the major root cause. One intervention led to another and yet another on a growing scale. That was the main reason. The main reason was that U.S. policy is militarism. According to one definition, militarism is a national policy of maintaining large armed forces and being willing to use them aggressively to defend or promote national interests. This describes America. U.S. militarism is destroying America.

President Eisenhower in 1961 warned the American people: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist." Immediately thereafter, Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon committed the nation to the Vietnam War. Every President since has committed the nation to intervention and war in foreign lands. There is no end in sight. For wrong reasons, Americans now support what Ike foresaw would be a "disastrous" rise and misuse of power. The returns are coming in. They are defeats. American militarism will end or else America will end.

August 14, 2006

4. WAR OR PEACE? ACHIEVING PEACE AMONG STATES

The immense bloodshed of the twentieth century, continuing unabated into the twenty-first, combined with the increasing capabilities of developing and launching nuclear bombs, raises an urgent and important question. What steps should be taken to achieve greater peace among states? What must the world's peoples demand of their states in order that the latter move toward greater peace?

At present, policy analysts assume that the way to peace is via states negotiating among themselves. This has been the premise, for example, in the multi-decade efforts to seek a durable peace between Israel and Palestinians. Various states conducted negotiations. These met with partial success. Israel established relations with some nearby countries. But the worst of the conflict still continues with no end in view. The terrible conflicts of the past century often broke out despite negotiations among various states.

If states make wars, it seems logical that negotiations among states are the natural pathway to peace among states. Talking and settling matters seems the opposite of warring over them, and besides, what else is there? But since war merely carries policy and political conflicts into another realm, negotiations and war are not opposites. They are not substitutes. As Clausewitz realized, they lie along the same continuum; and that continuum has to do with states trying to gain influence, advantages, and domination over one another. Negotiations, therefore, are not natural steps toward peace. As long as states are doing the negotiating and their incentives and dynamics remain the same, a significant fraction of negotiations will end up in warfare and data bear this out.

We need to look elsewhere than to states negotiating with one another to find pathways to peace. We need to get outside the continuum of domination. We need to get outside the box of states.

A straightforward theory

Because states are political organizations that aim at holding and expanding power, they inherently are not agents of peace but agents of domination and its extension. This is why negotiations and war lie along the same continuum. They are means to the same end. One state is attempting to dominate or gain from another state. States, being political by nature, are inherently susceptible

to warfare as a means to extend their power.

Since states can mobilize and concentrate the resources of an entire nation or nations, they can project far more intense and devastating warfare than smaller political units are capable of. States can also mobilize the population's fear and distrust of external enemies. If peace is the aim of the world's peoples, then mankind by organizing itself into states has taken a very bad turn. It has created organizations whose incentives are to maintain and gain further power. In a certain number of instances, where particular conditions prevail, this system of states invariably leads to large-scale war; war being merely a step beyond negotiations and other warlike threats and actions.

If the world remains organized into states for the foreseeable future, then the logical way to achieve greater peace is to reduce the state-like qualities of all states. The way to peace is to dismantle state institutions and restrict state powers. If their powers are scaled back, states become less able to project themselves upon other states and less inclined to attempt to dominate them. If the powers of states are scaled back, then they become less able to project large-scale war.

Leaving states intact is not an ideal solution, the ideal being no states at all, but weakening them is a step in the right direction. This can only be done if a state's people make it happen. They need to understand that they are better off with a weaker, not a stronger state. This is counter-intuitive knowledge at present, but some day it will become common knowledge.

Illustration

To illustrate these points which I have made quite tersely, I will focus on the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. At present, the U.S. is involved as it has been for a long time; and the U.N., which is a coalition of states, is involved. Other states are involved as well.

The U.S. seeks an equilibrium between the opposing parties. It has the idea that if a Palestinian state is established that recognizes Israel, then some sort of stability will result. The U.S. thinks in terms of its current relations with Canada and Mexico. It forgets that those relations were not always easy and that there have been military incursions on both sides. It forgets the Mexican-American War. It forgets that even today there are Mexicans who seek hegemony in the Southwest.

More importantly, the U.S. does not fully grasp the difficulties on the ground, on the streets. The U.S. thinks in terms of an equilibrium in which Palestinians will be happy once they have a state they can call their own. But what will such a state do for the aspirations of the everyday Palestinian? They need to travel and work, to and in Israel perhaps. They want respect. Some demand justice for grievances dating back to Israel's formation. Perhaps the U.S. thinks in terms of buying off some of these concerns with aid. The basic U.S. idea is this: You Palestinians will have a state, and you will recognize Israel as a state and maybe we will grease the plate and you will all live happily ever after.

The problem and its solution

What is the U.S. up to? For its own reasons, it is up to Palestinian state-building designed to achieve regional stability. This is akin to state-building in Iraq. The theory is that states that the U.S. builds or tries to, of a certain type that holds elections, democratic states shall we say, will somehow channel the aspirations of the people such that instability, war, political and religious frictions, poverty, and barriers will decline. People will pursue happiness and peace will prevail. This is the theory.

But this theory is all wrong. States do not do any of those things. States merely fasten upon society and exacerbate problems and rivalries. They attack property and rights. They transfer wealth. They have power, and they set off and encourage competition for power. Even the quest for a Palestinian state is producing blood in the streets right now, just as it has in Iraq.

Israel, already being a state, produces the same results. If the region had no states, the odds of peace breaking out would immediately rise. As it stands, the path to peace for the peoples in the region lies in scaling back the states therein. In this example, this points (1) to Israel, and (2) not trying to create a Palestinian state. The goal should be all the people in the region being able to move and associate freely and work and trade freely.

Israel should not be building walls, pushing new settlements, and attacking with its heavy arms. It should reduce its restrictions and enhance movement and mobility of Palestinians. In so many words, I am advocating the diminishment and eventual dismantlement of Israel as a state. The fact that it is a Jewish or Zionist state is not the issue here. The fact that it is a state at all is key. I advocate the same type of solutions for other regions in which there is conflict like this. Sri Lanka should weaken itself and let the Tamils go.

Russia should let Chechnya go. China should let Nepal and Tibet go. India should let its rebelling and breakaway regions go. The U.S. should have let its South go.

Objections and counter-arguments

The general idea is that states exacerbate inter-state and infra-state conflict, and the road to greater peace lies in scaling them back. This is up to the peoples of the states. They are the only ones who can, if they will only recognize both the justice and the benefits of scaling back their states.

Will a people suffer more attacks from foreign or hostile elements if it cuts back its state's power? This will be the standard fear-mongering argument. Fear is a powerful motivation for a state. Will this be called appeasement? Undoubtedly it will be labeled appeasement. Old and mistaken ideas held by the well-intentioned will not change overnight. Furthermore, warmongers and power-seekers will fan the flames of fear and enmity whenever they can. Mankind does not learn the ways of peace easily.

But reducing the state to encourage peace is not as counter-intuitive as it sounds. Every such reduction is an act of greater peace itself. Peace is made by making more peace. Reducing a trade barrier is an act of peace; the trade barrier is the hostile act. Reducing the power of the Congress to fund the CIA and the World Bank are acts of peace; their meddlings in overseas countries are hostile acts. Reducing travel and communication restrictions are acts of peace; it is the restrictions that are hostile. Keeping one's armed forces on a tight domestic leash is an act of peace; planting them in foreign countries is hostile to those threatened.

Fear, mistrust, and enmity are great enemies of peace. Opposed to them is the fact that people know and understand in their hearts what justice means. This too is in our nature. We may be suspicious of strangers, but we also know at a deep level that they are the same as we are. If a state makes a concession or power reduction that is a just one, that is peaceful in and of itself, then the recipient side will be reluctant to bite the hand that has been extended to it. Suspicion and a history of hostility naturally can interfere as well as scheming to take advantage. The road to peace is not easy when everyone has been accustomed to warfare and the machinations of states. But if these reductions in state powers and threats are accompanied by discussions so that peoples on both sides come to understand what is happening, the chance of concessions

leading to attacks is reduced. Peace can be attained when the hearts and minds of people are engaged in seeking peace as an explicit goal and they understand that one must work at it like anything else.

What is the alternative? In Israel, what have its strong-arm methods got its people? Have attacks on Israel declined? Have Israelis obtained peace? If they suppress one form of attack, they change form. If grievances against Israel persist and if they are enhanced by its restrictions, the attacks against Israel will not diminish. They haven't yet. Israel's enemies have waxed, not waned.

Why negotiations fail

Israel made political progress with its neighbors between 1991 and 1996. This came to a halt. It was not the multilateral façade of the time that removed the US from the picture that solved problems. The introduction of Japanese or European states can solve nothing if the basic assumptions remain the same that states are trying to solve these problems.

In this case, two men, two politicians, Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, help us understand why states have so much trouble bringing peace. According to Robert H. Pelletreau who was the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and an Ambassador to several states, Netanyahu, perhaps partly for political reasons, wavered between a hard and softer line. He catered to his right and not to majority opinion. More generally, a leader of a state is beholden to his party and the party activists. This makes him less able to act on behalf of the general population.

Arafat, according to Pelletreau, was not different. "Unfortunately, in this time of stagnation Arafat is surrendering to his worst instincts, trampling on Palestinian human rights, stifling the press, allowing police excesses, and condoning corruption among his associates..."

We have to ask: What are leaders actually after? Preservation and enhancement of their powers is one thing. They are men in the middle, but they can't operate without power and that is their custom. Their own agenda is important. Somewhere down the list are their own people's interests, or what they personally conceive this to be. The problems arise because the peoples of the opposing nations are not themselves making peace. Instead, they are choosing powerful representatives who are caught in political processes of power and who cannot personally reconcile the many politically-motivated

interests surrounding them. We need a better way, and the better way is the market. The way out of these political boxes is to break them. Reduce the power of the state and thereby enhance market forces.

Think about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the U.S. point of view. How can one state, like the U.S., influence seriously the internal politics of another independent state, like Israel? It can, but this takes the sustained attention, resources, cleverness, adeptness, and knowledge of key men. It also takes luck. This is the game being played. It depends very highly, too highly, on the skills of a few men. It relies heavily on their understanding the attitudes on the street and among secondary players, like legislators. But they cannot routinely comprehend the whole and create by political means the human equilibrium they seek. Success may come on occasion, but the process itself is an obstacle.

In many cases, only the top officials of a state have the power to negotiate. The lower officials cannot make headway because no one is sure what their bosses really will settle for. This fact imposes even more limits on the abilities of states to achieve peace. A top leader has limited time, brains, skills, experience, and knowledge. He cannot attend to too many such negotiations and can't handle them all well. What does he really know? Negotiation is a chess game among rivals for power to see who can beat whom and outwit whom. How many simultaneous chess games can a top leader play? What qualifies him to play these games skillfully? The law of unintended consequences will always come into play and these consequences will be relatively large because of over-reliance on what one man knows and can accomplish.

Elections interfere with negotiations. The rise of competing office-holders is often a factor. The tools of the power trade are limited and involve power, not peace. For example, Arafat sought to have the major powers use trade as a weapon to pressure Israel. This is how men of power think. They will turn to and use tools of power that involve pressures and threats and inherently are anti-peace. Is it any wonder that they often do not create peace but instead set off opposing forces and resentments?

Negotiations by states often do not settle matters once and for all, and they often do not settle matters by just methods. Moving toward a supposed equilibrium through unjust methods must ultimately fail. The failure of Versailles is a case in point. The U.S. and Iraq never settled their differences after their first war. Look where we are today. The U.N. helped cause and has

not settled the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 60 years.

States can't keep the peace

When it comes to keeping the peace among disputing states, what have states come up with? Nothing but malfunctioning political mechanisms and machines. Beyond the usual negotiations, alliances, pressures, mobilizations, and threats, they have come up with the U.N. The number and severity of wars among states has increased since the U.N.'s inception. [Cuellar's study](#) of collective security tells us that (1) "violent crises have continued occurring at a rate somewhat higher than before World War II," (2) "violence (involving either protracted conflict or multiple incidents of violent confrontation) continues to grow as the predominant crisis management technique for a substantial fraction of crises, going from slightly over fifty percent in the period immediately following World War II to around seventy percent in the post-Cold War period," (3) "'Nonmilitary pressure' and legal arbitration approaches to the resolution of international crises constitute the primary conflict resolution mechanism in just a fraction of the crises, showing almost no increase over time. Use of mediation as the dominant conflict resolution strategy was similarly infrequent," and (4) "But the cumulative frequency of nonviolent means of managing conflict remains far lower than the frequency of violent means of resolution. Indeed, the lowest cumulative frequency is associated with adjudication, the highest with the use of multiple incidents of violence."

In other words, there are more conflicts than ever among states, and they are using violence more than ever as their primary means of settling these conflicts.

We the people are forced to rely upon but also demand and accept the pitiful methods of peace, tranquillity, and brotherhood brought to us courtesy of states. We are lucky that constraining factors are at work that bring us what peace we have. Many, many areas of the world are not lucky.

The twentieth century is the bloody opposite of an endorsement for the state system of making and keeping peace. As each state interferes with another, we get domino effects that broaden conflicts. Civil wars far worse than inter-state wars pepper the globe. The mean number of civil conflicts globally has risen from about 20 a year between 1812 and 1850 to 100 a year between 1951 and 1992. Furthermore, their intensity and duration have grown. This epidemic of

wars traces directly to the malign system of states that the world has adopted. External wars are the health of the state. Civil wars are the offspring of the state.

The best way to lessen the severity and incidence of inter-state wars is to lessen the state's power. This also will lessen the severity and incidence of civil wars. But the ultimate solution is no state at all.

The market solutions to human conflicts go much deeper than the supposed state solutions, whose defects have been pointed out above. Market interactions are limited in scope. The incentives all work toward peaceful dispute resolution. Disputes are far more recognizable, negotiable, and manageable. Markets change the realities on the ground. Markets are more flexible. They give broad masses of people countless chances to move ahead peaceably and with justice.

Summary and conclusions

Historical processes of war and peace are complex when looked at in detail. We need simplifying yet accurate theory if we are to make headway toward peace. The theory presented above has two main premises. One, other things equal, states are organizations geared to war-making. This premise itself follows from another theorem of political dynamics, namely, that states are political organizations of power that seek to maintain and augment their power. Second, other things equal, states enhance the destructiveness of conflicts when they choose to make war. This follows from the fact that states have taxing and other powers that permit them to amass the resources of entire societies. The theory predicts that states demand enlargement of power, or that they are constantly engaged in attempts at aggrandizement. This can occur internally or externally, showing itself in complex maneuvers, threats, negotiations, and alliances that end up sometimes in wars, both civil and foreign.

We do not observe constant warfare because the state's attempts to gain power face constraints. Some states are small and face geopolitical and resource obstacles. Who their neighbors are and how they behave matter. All states face the control of their peoples who bear the costs of war and limit the state's powers and intrusions; but the degrees and types of such control vary across states. Furthermore, the benefits of war accrue to some groups within a society and not others, adding more complexity. Basically, there is a demand for war

and a supply of war. War and peace looked at in detail are obviously highly complex subjects to understand fully in given cases because of the many factors influencing the demand and supply.

Yet even a rudimentary theory can enlighten us and help us reach some conclusions. The state itself is an impediment to peace and an encouragement to more and larger warfare, other things equal. Negotiations are instruments of states to achieve aims that primarily involve power support and extension of the states involved. Only secondarily do they involve the welfare of the peoples controlled by the states, and this arises through the indirect control of those peoples over what their states do. Therefore, other things equal, the path to achieving greater peace among states (and within states) is to reduce the state's powers and its access to war-making resources. This, in turn, hinges on the people within a state. In order to enhance their security, they need to reduce their demand for state power. Making the state more powerful actually reduces their security. They need to secure themselves by alternative institutions than handing great monopoly powers of taxation and war making over to a few chosen people. Giving in to fear and mistrust of other peoples and to the state's misinformation and propaganda campaigns is a recipe for greater war and less peace.

At best, these are rough guidelines to peace. They suggest reducing the state's powers. They resemble a recommendation to change directions and move back toward a classical liberal political order. But that is not the ultimate goal I'm recommending. That order of freedom stopped at the boundaries of the monopoly state and permitted it to exist and then augment itself. Reducing the state's powers (and thus reducing the chances of and severity of warfare) can occur in several ways. One way is to reverse the state's augmentations of the past while leaving the central state intact: reduce powers to tax, to borrow, to control money, to hamper trade, to make war, to control commerce, to regulate, and to install welfare programs. These actions amount to breaking the state down. But they lead to breaking the state up and/or eliminating the central state altogether in favor of smaller political units. If the latter can be accomplished directly, then the political maneuvers needed to attain reductions can be avoided.

The problem of reducing and breaking up a state is challenging. The state is controlled and supported by organized segments of the population who benefit from it. They are maintaining the equilibrium. Those under the state's control are disorganized, confused, dependent, fearful of change, subject to constant

propaganda, and apathetic. There is much work to be done if we are to create a society and a world with institutions that encourage peace and not war.

February 2, 2007

5. PEACE AND SECURITY THROUGH DEFENSE AND NEUTRALITY

Benefits of a defensive posture

Americans have a mass illusion. They have an offensive military posture and don't know it. They think they are freedom's defenders.

The Swiss have a true defensive posture. Their doctrine is to defend their land, but not to retaliate or initiate an attack on enemy soil. They do not make an attacker's civilian populations or industries into targets. Before establishing this policy, Switzerland was conquered by Napoleon in 1798. Since 1803, when its autonomy was restored, Switzerland has experienced no major conflict on its soil. Its consistent and unyielding adherence to a purely defensive posture has been an important reason.

The U.S. and the American people should have a defensive military posture, not the offensive posture that we now have and have had for a long time. A defensive posture will produce far fewer wars and correspondingly far more peace and security for Americans. The immense toll of war, in lives lost, lives damaged, and huge costs incurred, will be accordingly greatly diminished.

A defensive posture will bring far greater prosperity and happiness. The risks of catastrophic destruction in America and elsewhere will be vastly reduced. The risk of nuclear wars that devastate entire peoples and regions of the world will be reduced. The risk of terrible diseases being intentionally unleashed worldwide will be reduced. The risk of foreign lands, the seas, and space being used to launch wars will be reduced.

A far greater degree of peace and security will flow from a defensive posture.

Meaning of defensive and offensive postures

What does it mean for America to have a defensive posture? It does not mean pacifism. It does not mean unilateral disarmament. It does not mean weakness. It means an overall and consistent military position that does not threaten foreign nations with military action. It means that Americans make their country to a high degree invulnerable to attack from foreign states. It means that Americans choose strategies that reduce the gains to foreigners from attacking America and raise their losses if they do attack; so that they find attacking America a losing proposition. It means restricting American forces

to American soil by defending America in America and only in America. It means an armed America through the length and breadth of the land.

A defensive posture makes America strong, very strong defensively, so strong that foes do not find it in their interest to attack us.

By contrast, an offensive posture for America means that America is a constant military threat to other nations that it regards as foes. It means America chooses strategies such as being the world's policeman. It means choosing sides and not staying neutral when wars break out. It means constantly getting into battles and wars. It means provoking other nations into wars. It means intervening militarily in foreign nations. It means planting bases and weapons in foreign lands, on the seas, and in space. It means entangling alliances. It means constant development of new offensive weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. An offensive posture means making alliances that drag America into wars. It means pre-emptive war making, forward defense, sanctions imposed on other nations, and the Bush Doctrine. It means an American New World Order, as implemented by the U.S. since 1988, under all the Congresses and all the Presidents; continuing a century-long goal. It means a posture of attempted American military superiority and dominance in the world.

But achieving peace and security through superiority will always elude us. Offensive postures stir up offensive reactions and arms races from others. They stir up attacks on us.

Our irrationality

America is so far from having a defensive posture that even to posit it, to outline what it means, even to describe how it works and suggest that it will work better than an offensive posture, will leave most readers shaking their heads in disbelief and wondering about its practicality and the sanity of its hardy few supporters. However, it is Americans who have been talked into believing that their strategy is just and defensive when it is not. The fear mongers and warmongers, the war merchants, the war intellectuals and media, the utopia seekers, and the politically powerful all in unison derisively shout down such a suggestion; labeling it as appeasement, isolationism, and weakness. The war beneficiaries have drowned out the opposition for so long that they no longer know the truth themselves and cannot conceive of the alternative. But the ultimate responsibility for American war making lies with

Americans, their Congresses, and their Presidents. No amount of bluster can hide the blood-soaked truths of America's time series of wars that have originated from its longstanding offensive posture.

No amount of angry bravado or idealistic twaddle can hide the fact that the Swiss, with their defensive posture, were not attacked by the Japanese or the Germans in World Wars I and II. The Swiss have not become embroiled in one severe war after another as the U.S. has, in the Pacific, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East. And even the U.S. earlier in its history and for brief periods of time managed to restrain itself and produce a semblance of peace through something of a defensive posture. George Washington counseled a defensive posture. Yet in virtually all of its history, America's expansion and confrontations of the British, the French, the Spanish, the Indians, the Mexicans, and the Canadians were producing a culture of offense that is firmly embedded in American thought and behavior. It is offense wrapped in a false rhetorical bundle of defense, and this falsity reveals its irrationality.

The Swiss military policies have been far more rational than those of Americans. Every war that the U.S. needlessly threw itself into meant the large-scale destruction of American (and foreign) lives as well as property. War after war after war have reduced the prosperity of the U.S., saddled it with debt, held back its growth, and undermined the country's values and freedoms. As a consequence of its offensive posture, severe retaliation on American soil has begun. Had the U.S. adopted a defensive posture long ago, none of this would have happened. Americans today would have been much further ahead.

Defensive posture of Switzerland

In his 1982 article, "Invulnerability without Threat: The Swiss Concept of General Defense," Dietrich Fischer explains the defensive posture of the Swiss. The details of the defensive posture of the Swiss are not necessarily the same ones that Americans might choose; but reviewing what they do is very useful. It shows the uninitiated that America has an offensive, not a defensive, posture. It displays the fact of alternatives to America's offensive posture.

The Swiss objective is defense of their self-determination while allowing other nations their right to the same. This contrasts with the American objectives of extending the American way of life throughout the world and creating a fantasy world utopia of democracies. The Swiss armed forces are a militia,

drawn from the entire population. Arms, ammunition, and uniforms are kept at home. This contrasts with America where we have standing and separate armed forces; and where important groups frown upon personal arms and ammunition and constantly attempt to disarm the population; and where since the Militia Act of 1903, the militia has increasingly become a standard army.

Parts of the Swiss population stand ready for tasks such as civil defense and medical services. The country's defense is ready at all times. If an attack occurred, the army (the entire people) is ready to defend immediately. The population is also prepared to carry out sabotage, guerilla warfare, and civil disobedience. America has no counterpart to these plans. In keeping with norms of justice and just war, defense is to occur solely on Swiss territory. America, by contrast, seeks to fight anywhere but on American territory. The Swiss policy is not to retaliate on an invader's territory and not to destroy the home property or population of an invading nation. It is to obey the various international norms and conventions of warfare. America does the opposite, indulging in total war upon an enemy and causing severe damage to civilian populations. America's record in following international treaties and laws is horrendous.

By maintaining a military that permeates the population, by making known in advance a commitment to sabotage industrial plants, foodstuffs, and transportation facilities, by promising to engage in guerilla warfare, and civil disobedience, the Swiss raise the costs of invasion to an enemy while also lowering the benefits. This policy dissuades attack. By contrast, the U.S. invites attacks and wars. It looks for fights that it can join.

The Swiss have a neutrality policy. This means they do not have treaties and alliances obliging them to attack a country that attacks third party countries. This means that an aggressor has nothing to lose by leaving Switzerland alone. By contrast, the U.S. has numerous alliances that can send the U.S. into serious warfare at any time.

The Swiss offer services to other countries who leave them in peace: diplomacy, international relief, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and international arbitration. This provides a carrot for other nations not to attack them. The U.S. uses its aid and services as devices to reshape the world to its liking and to control other countries. It uses aid as inducements to install bases on foreign soil.

The Swiss defensive posture is rational in providing appropriate incentives to foreign nations not to attack Switzerland, and this posture has worked. The Swiss by no means have a perfect system. They may err and stray from it. Among other faults, there are political pressures to reduce or eliminate the militia. And in 2002, the Swiss, who had been smart enough to stay out of the U.N., became a member.

The counter-reaction

Most Americans will no doubt react instinctively against these facts. One can hear the responses. "We are not the Swiss, after all. We are not some small landlocked European country. We are the leaders of the free world. We are the ones who have stopped Nazism and Soviet Communism. We stopped the Kaiser. Where was Switzerland when the Soviet Union threatened all of Europe? Where was Switzerland when North Korea aggressed against South Korea? We are the defenders of freedom in the world. If we do not project the American system, who will? Do you want to fight our enemies here when we can fight and kill them overseas? Do you dare advocate Fortress America? Do you dare advocate isolationism? Are you mad?" Harry Lime of *Third Man* fame will ridicule the Swiss accomplishments and reduce them to the cuckoo clock as compared with the Borgias.

But who is it that is mad? Who prefers war to peace? Who prefers perpetual war for perpetual peace? Who prefers such fancies as a world under American hegemony or a world filled with well-controlled and peaceful democracies? Who prefers to draw lines on maps and construct fake countries that eventually fall apart under the strains of separatist movements? Who prefers to regiment America? Who prefers to militarize America? Who prefers to invite attacks on American soil? Who is prepared to spend America's blood and treasure on phantom ideals? Who places military actions in a host of foreign lands above the interests of Americans at home? Who manufactures one enemy after another? Who has huge war industries that constantly promote war and develop newer and deadlier weapons of mass destruction? Who has used these weapons of mass destruction?

There is method in the madness of the warmongers. What select few benefit from the American offensive posture? What companies and what Congressional districts benefit from the offence contracts? What power-hungry politicians, intellectuals, military officials, and bureaucrats benefit from their offensive fiefdoms? What Americans satisfy their patriotic lusts or their

religious fantasies? What paranoid fears and blood lusts are reinforced by the convenience of enemies to incinerate?

Defense versus offence

Are the Swiss mad or the Americans? Is a defensive posture something to be dismissed without consideration?

Why is a defensive posture a superior choice? In football, the best defense is a good offense. Why is this not true of a country's military posture? A football game is (a) scheduled and (b) played according to fixed rules and resources, such as 11 men on the field. Prior to a war, however, there is no certainty that the war will occur; and each side can alter its strategies and resources devoted to the conflict.

Suppose a country increases its offensive weapons. Then this prompts other countries to increase their defenses and their offenses. An expensive arms race begins. The increases in offensive weapons raise the levels of threat and increase the chance of being attacked. This is because the first side to use an offensive weapon has the advantage of destroying the offensive weapons of the other side. If two sides, for example, have missiles, the first side to use them has a better chance of destroying those of the other side. The offensive posture has three negatives: higher outlays for weapons, a higher chance of being attacked or getting into war, and a more destructive war if it occurs.

By contrast, a strong defensive posture reduces the chance of being attacked. A defensive posture is such that the side that attacks stands to lose heavily when it attacks. The recent Israeli attack on Hezbollah was of this variety. The American attack on Iraq has turned out in somewhat the same way in terms of continued American losses (although there is simultaneously the carnage of the civil war); and so is Afghanistan. The defensive posture may not be perfect, but it proves to be less costly in the long run because it reduces the chance of war, avoids arms races, and is less destructive when it occurs.

The amazing thing about America is that its position in North America makes it an excellent candidate for a defensive posture. America could be invulnerable and vastly reduce its participation in wars.

Americans would have to dismount their moral high horse, however. They would have to learn that their war making in the name of freedom and justice

constantly violates norms of freedom and justice. They would have to learn that they have no right to declare themselves as the world police, to choose sides when other nations are warring, and to join the fray. In practice, the U.S. cynically supports an Iraq and a Saddam Hussein while helping him build up his weaponry; and then later turns against him. And if it claims to abandon its realist international policies in favor of a moralistic support of democracies in all lands, it still ends up supporting one fractious faction over another. It still supports factions with feet of clay that are as prone to brutality and misuse of power as Americans themselves are. There is no excuse for America's offensive posture in any version of any international theory of American world leadership or intervention.

For the average American, there has simply been no good reason, moral or practical, to be fighting wars all over the world. If America defended itself as it should, the odds of an enemy attack would be very low. And America would be acting justly.

Observations

States internationally are in a condition of anarchy versus one another. There are incentives to cooperate because conflicts are costly. The movements of states toward accommodation with one another are analogous to what we expect protection agencies might do to settle disputes in a free market anarchism. But the incentives for cooperation are weaker with states because they are insensitive to the profit motive. In this situation of anarchy among states, where there is no international enforcement mechanism, the intentions and consistent behavior of the players count for a great deal in order to make commitments and words credible.

The offensive posture of the U.S. under Bush I and Clinton was already repositioning to a more aggressive offensive posture. Bush II and the Congress solidified that movement that had tentatively begun after the Soviet Union's breakup. The past three Presidents and Congresses threw away the golden opportunity of leading the world in a peaceful direction, beginning with nuclear disarmament. Now the Bush Doctrine has damaged the U.S. considerably. The U.S. actions have precipitated increasing arms commitments in many countries. (The arms suppliers are happy.) Bush II has taken the offensive posture of the U.S. to new heights and backed it up by extensive signaling of intentions and by deeds. Reversing this course is an urgent American priority.

America is developing new nuclear weapons and is prepared to use them, even use them in pre-emptive attacks. We live under such a massive illusion that proponents of an offensive strategy regard all of this as defensive and are able to convince masses of Americans that it is, when it is obviously offensive. A nuclear weapon might be a pure deterrent, but persuading another country of that is very hard when it can be used offensively. Nuclear weapons are highly unlikely to be used on one's own soil. They are clearly not part of a defensive posture.

Adapting a scheme of Karl Menger (son of Carl Menger), Dietrich Fischer has used a two-way classification for nations:

	vulnerable	invulnerable
aggressive	least safe	
non-aggressive		most safe

The aggressive nation has the offensive means or resources and the will or intent to use them. The invulnerable nation has the defensive means or resources and the will to use them.

The most security is achieved by not being offensive and aggressive while being strong in defense. The least security is achieved by being aggressive and offensive while being vulnerable in defense.

The U.S. is in the least safe posture. It is simultaneously aggressive overseas and vulnerable at home. Our borders are sieves. Determined and organized enemies that we ourselves have stirred up because of our offensive posture can and no doubt have infiltrated the U.S.

Return to ideal of neutrality

Americans have left home and need to return. We need to return to the ideals expressed in George Washington's Farewell Address. Here are some pertinent excerpts:

"Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct. And can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it?"

"Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another

cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests."

"The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible."

"Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities."

"Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel."

"Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?"

"It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements."

Conclusions

America has an offensive military posture that has not served us well. We should have a defensive posture. This will reduce the risk of attacks on

American soil and help create a more peaceful world. George Washington was right. William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and many modern presidents and Congresses have been wrong. Americans have chosen the wrong path. We have gone and are going in precisely the wrong direction.

Changing America's military posture requires that Americans shift their thinking back to defensive American ideals that were current when the republic was born but were subsequently discarded in favor of offensive military ideals that supported America's growth into an empire.

Both cynical or realist international policies of war and intervention, and utopian, idealistic, Wilsonian ideas of pseudo-morality led by America come to the same thing: an American offensive military posture. Both these modern views are wrong. Neither view benefits Americans at large.

Peace and neutrality have been given bad names among Americans by a long history of war propagandists and war beneficiaries. They have been twisted and perverted beyond recognition until we no longer know what they mean. The attainment of peace does not mean appeasement and cowardice. A defensive posture actually requires that the entire population be prepared to fight to defend themselves. A defensive posture is not pacifism. Neutrality means what Washington told us it means.

A just country will be loved and respected by the people. It will be prosperous. They will think it worth defending and want to defend it. It won't be easily defeated. When Americans determine to become a truly free and just people, they will adopt a defensive military posture. It will deter attack, and Americans will find their long sought peace and security.

March 19, 2007

6. GETTING TO AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

As in the past, this Congress and this President continue the non-neutral foreign policies of the U.S. A neutral U.S. would not have helped depose the Prime Minister of Iran in 1953. It would not have aided Saddam Hussein, later sided with him in the Iraq-Iran War, signaled him to invade Kuwait, then invaded Iraq, bombed it for years, and then invaded again. It would have dealt with these nations in a totally different manner. A neutral U.S. would never have assertively interfered in their politics and lands in the ways that it did. The non-neutrality of the U.S. is what set in motion the retaliatory destruction of 9/11. Non-neutrality produced the current Iraq War. It may produce a war with Iran or worse.

Non-neutrality as a U.S. foreign policy means that our leaders extract huge amounts of wealth from us that they then use on foreign escapades that interfere with many foreign states and peoples. The U.S. uses military, political, and economic means to influence and pressure other nations and peoples. It uses covert CIA-type means as well.

Non-neutrality means that the U.S. becomes a political player in these distant lands. The locals shape their policies and measures in expectation of U.S. actions, and the U.S. is drawn into their politics. For example, the U.S. supports Pakistan, a nuclear power. But this upsets India, another nuclear power that is in conflict with Pakistan. The U.S. then engages India in a strategic partnership, which upsets Pakistan, which then ties itself formally to Iran's military. But Iran, which has nuclear aspirations, is on the enemy list of the U.S. These sorts of complications multiply endlessly if we bring in two more nuclear powers, China and Russia, who have their own relations and conflicts with all of these States.

What then happens is that there is a continual menu of problems for the U.S. One problem leads to another, often many others. Our leaders place us on a merry-go-round of crises, each one connected to the last. Each problem crops up as a risk that must be dealt with or matters will deteriorate further. Yet each problem increases the chances of deeper conflicts. Our leaders act as if the merry-go-round is unstoppable. They claim we can never get off, that we have to keep riding the whirlwind endlessly because we are the world's leaders and this is our responsibility.

Yet it is obvious that far from enhancing the national security of the U.S., the

non-neutral foreign policies weaken it. And we can get off the merry-go-round any time we want to by replacing the policy of interference with a policy of neutrality. As President Wilson put it in 1914 after World War I had begun:

"Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."

In his declaration of neutrality, Wilson placed in opposition to non-neutrality its logical opposite, namely, a policy of peace and the encouragement of peace:

"Such divisions amongst us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of the proper performance of our duty as the one great nation at peace, the one people holding itself ready to play a part of impartial mediation and speak the counsels of peace and accommodation, not as a partisan, but as a friend.

"I venture, therefore, my fellow countrymen, to speak a solemn word of warning to you against that deepest, most subtle, most essential breach of neutrality which may spring out of partisanship, out of passionately taking sides. The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial in thought, as well as action, must put a curb upon our sentiments, as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another."

The case for neutrality is the case for peace. The case for non-neutrality is the case for the exercise of power, aggressive power, and that is the case for conflict in all its many forms including war.

U.S. policy in the Mid-East exemplifies its non-neutrality. The U.S. is enmeshed in the politics of just about every country in that region. If there is any single reason for the U.S. attempts to control Mid-East politics and nations, it is oil.

The Swiss and the Japanese make no attempt to control their oil supplies in this way. Neither do most other nations. Why then does the U.S. try to control oil? The answer is that the U.S. leaders want to be able to wield power without constraint. The exercise of power requires a military. The U.S. military cannot run without oil. It also cannot run without the U.S. economy, which cannot run

without oil. Our leaders want a huge and dominant U.S. military that has no problem getting the oil it wants. They want this military to have all sorts of offensive capabilities and to be able to project power across the globe. The consequence of this power-seeking goal is that our leaders want to control the Mid-East and its oil. The attempts at control go back to the days of FDR and before.

What have these power-plays brought Americans? Higher-priced oil than ever and no end of headaches. Our leaders have gotten us into several serious wars in the Mid-East. They threaten another one. They have stirred up anti-American terrorism. Their confused policies have at times aided one side, then another, and even terrorists. It has got to the point where our leaders promise us war for the next 100 years, warn us of nuclear catastrophes on American soil, and form a Department of Homeland Security to protect against the blowback from their Mid-East power-plays.

Americans want peace and security. Peace and neutrality go together, and they are classic American ideals and policies. When war broke out between France and Great Britain, President Washington in 1793 issued a Proclamation. In order not to offend anyone, it did not use the word "neutrality," but it declared neutrality nonetheless:

"Whereas it appears that a state of war exists between Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Great Britain, and the United Netherlands, of the one part, and France on the other; and the duty and interest of the United States require, that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent Powers;

"I have therefore thought fit by these presents to declare the disposition of the United States to observe the conduct aforesaid towards those Powers respectfully; and to exhort and warn the citizens of the United States carefully to avoid all acts and proceedings whatsoever, which may in any manner tend to contravene such disposition.

"And I do hereby also make known, that whatsoever of the citizens of the United States shall render himself liable to punishment or forfeiture under the law of nations, by committing, aiding, or abetting hostilities against any of the said Powers, or by carrying to any of them those articles which are deemed contraband by the modern usage of nations, will not receive the protection of the United States, against such

punishment or forfeiture; and further, that I have given instructions to those officers, to whom it belongs, to cause prosecutions to be instituted against all persons, who shall, within the cognizance of the courts of the United States, violate the law of nations, with respect to the Powers at war, or any of them."

In step after step, as the U.S. expanded into the Pacific, especially in the Philippines in 1900, and as it entered World War I, the U.S. abandoned neutrality. The last serious stand of a policy of neutrality occurred in the 1930s when Congress passed several Neutrality Acts. But when World War II left the U.S. in a relatively strong position, both militarily with the advent of nuclear weapons and economically, and when the Cold War commenced, the U.S. threw over all traces of neutrality. Not only is the U.S. no longer neutral toward the conflicts and wars of others, but the U.S. actively inserts itself into the politics and affairs of others. The U.S. is interventionist, not simply non-neutral. It has embraced interventionism with a vengeance and never looked back. The time has certainly come to look back.

Americans want and have always wanted a military oriented toward our defense that results in our peace and security. Instead, our leaders have built up a military oriented toward aggressive actions overseas. They then have gone looking for trouble because they had such a military and wanted to use it. Americans neither need nor want a military spread throughout the world, but our leaders do. How else can they secure for themselves the power they want? How else can they project the power they wish to exercise?

The end of the Cold War provided a major political window of opportunity to reduce nuclear weapons and lead the world away from their production and use. The time was also ripe to reduce the American presence overseas. The time had come to dissolve the dangerous alliances of the Cold War. Fortunately, they had never set off a major conflict with the U.S.S.R., but they had served their purpose. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had managed to avoid war for 45 years. Major areas in the rest of the world were moving away from centrally-controlled economies and toward decentralized market-oriented economies. The time had come to revert to a foreign policy of peace, not force and power, and such a policy had to be one of neutrality.

Our leaders failed miserably to lead us and the world in this direction. Instead, both Bushes and Clinton have continued the extensive use of U.S. power overseas, in the Mid-East, in the old Yugoslavia, and in central Asia. President

Bush has promoted U.S. nuclear weapons policies that make nuclear war and nuclear proliferation more likely.

Nuclear proliferation does not necessarily enhance the prospects of peace via the effect of deterrence. As more nations are involved, so are more leaders who may decide, for whatever reasons or non-reasons, to employ nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the more weapons there are and the more widespread they are, the greater the chances of their falling into the hands of shadowy and unidentifiable groups who do not respond to deterrence. Apart from some talk about suitcase bombs, the costs of obtaining and using nuclear weapons are still high enough that States are the prime organizations geared to their manufacture.

The public's instincts are sound in favoring the vast reduction and elimination of these weapons altogether. In the foreseeable future, it seems that this has to be done within the framework of the world's system of States because that is the system we have. Yet there is a great problem in thinking solely in such terms. At present, the dangerous motion toward terrible nuclear catastrophes on American and foreign soils is a function of the world's organization into States. States are uniquely able to seize and gather civilian resources and funnel them toward large-scale weapons programs. They are able to develop, buy, and steal nuclear secrets and technologies. They are able to spy, connive, and trade for them using political quid-pro-quos. They are able to conduct expensive programs to build and deploy nuclear weapons. States are able to mobilize the fears and suspicions of their peoples in order to gain their support for such programs. By concentrating power, States are vulnerable to the whims of their leaders who can take them into wars.

Therefore, to help reduce the problems posed by nuclear weapon availability, our overriding, continuing, and long-term focus should be to reduce the coercive powers of every State in the world. We should learn how to live without States so that we may attain a greater measure of peace. Only by moving toward less powerful States can we reduce their ability to wage the modern and devastating wars that we have witnessed since the system of States became entrenched in the world.

Attaining the aim of greater peace through reducing and ending States is not about to occur. It is not on the horizon of this or even the next few generations. It is a very long-term aim that spans the lifetimes of many more than a few generations. But peace should be our fundamental aim and direction, no matter

how long it takes. What do we do now to further that goal? We do whatever we can to encourage States to moderate their war-making potential and adopt non-aggressive policies. We should align our short-term actions and policy recommendations to the longer-term strategic goal of reducing States to mere shadows of their former selves.

We should never lose sight of this ultimate aim: a greater measure of peace by living without States. This is an aim that can unite every person on the globe who wants to live peacefully with all other people. This aim unites peace-loving Americans, Russians, Africans, Iranians, Israelis, Europeans, Australians, and Asians.

The aim of peace is the only moral high ground. States divide one people from another. They frequently attempt to justify their heinous war-making acts as moral acts of defense or national security when they are not. We need to measure the actions taken by States against a clear standard, and that standard is whether or not the action enhances peace. American neutrality is squarely a policy that aims for peace.

If we forget or diverge from this aim and standard, we are liable to get caught up in short-term judgments that compromise reaching the goal of peace. Instead of reducing the massive and centralized powers on this earth, we will enhance them. We will get taken in and diverted by the policies of our States.

We cannot forget that States pose the greatest risk to us all, both here and abroad. States have and can get nuclear weapons. States have many other means of producing mass destruction. During World War II, States on both sides used massive fire-bombing. To mention a few cases, late in 1940, Hitler struck Coventry and London. Churchill, in joint operations with the Canadians and the Americans, hit Hamburg with Operation Gomorrah in 1943, killing at least 50,000. The Allies firebombed Dresden in 1945. Roosevelt firebombed Tokyo in 1942, killing at least 80,000. He hit Kobe in 1945. Truman used atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

There are those, like Norman Podhoretz, who believe that the U.S. should bomb Iran now and stop it from developing nuclear weapons. Whatever the pragmatic soundness of this recommendation may be, starting a war is an act of aggression. It is also an extension of non-neutrality. When the U.S. abandons neutrality for non-neutrality, the next logical step is to take sides, as the U.S. did in World War I. At present, the U.S. considers that it has taken

sides with its "allies and friends." The 2005 Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations states "The US defense strategy aims to achieve four key goals that guide the development of US forces [sic] capabilities, their development and use: assuring allies and friends of the US steadfastness of purpose and its capability to fulfill its security commitment; dissuading adversaries from undertaking programs or operations that could threaten US interests or those of our allies and friends..."

The U.S. takes sides with its allies and friends, and it speaks for them in a leadership role. This non-neutrality procedure divides nations into friends and enemies. U.S. leaders can then attack the enemies and not consider it wrong in moral terms (although it may be pragmatically unwise) since they are enemies, the bad guys, who aim to destroy us and our friends, the good guys. Once the U.S. leaders have mapped out the Iranians as enemies, they act as if they know that Iranian intentions (homogenized) are evil. They know that these enemies have plans that they fully intend to bring to fruition. They know that no events will transpire that will alter these plans. These enemy plans must, by some kind of human predestination that takes them out of God's hands, come to pass. Nothing can be done to stop the enemy but attack now. Our leaders do not have to wait until a crime is committed or even wait until the outlines of its actuation appear visible. They can attack now because these, after all, are enemies.

Our leaders need a reality check. An aggression against Iran is still an aggression. It is a reprehensible and morally culpable act. Only by a devilish sleight of moral thought can our leaders (and Podhoretz) transform aggression into something justifiable. They want us to think that attacking Iran is an act of peace and good will toward men. How can this be so when it is an act of war? We are supposed to think that this is an act that will save millions of lives by preventing the bad guys from developing a weapon that will then kill the good guys. We are to strike out against Iran now and start a war because of what we imagine they might do in the future. If killing others because of what we imagine they may do is morally acceptable, then we are in for a great deal more killing. If a man's imagination is to be judge, jury, and executioner, then we have abandoned a thousand years of rule of law.

All of this bizarre thought of our leaders, which is fostering an outlandish reality in the Mid-East and elsewhere, stems from a foundation in U.S. non-neutrality coupled with the power to fashion events.

Neutrality in foreign policy means peaceful relations with other nations. It means non-interference in other nations. This will produce greater security for us at home.

Our leaders have taken us way off course. They have steered us away from neutrality, which was an American ideal. They will not steer us back unless and until we demand it and reduce their powers. Our predicament stems from the fact that our leaders command a very powerful nation and military. The U.S. can defeat almost any foe, even in Iraq and Iran, if it commits the resources, selects the winning strategies, acts ruthlessly enough or clearheadedly enough, and avoids the blunders that have held it back. But these strong capabilities present us citizens with a problem. Our leaders will continue to use these powers, even if they use them with amateurish ineffectiveness as in Iraq, until we scale them back. We cannot get our leaders to adopt a neutral foreign policy until we make it impossible for them to follow any other course but neutrality.

January 28, 2008

CHAPTER IX – CONCLUSION

When America was busy building a continental empire, foreign affairs played no great role. American security was sought by continental expansion and by civil war. Each of these was enlisted by their proponents to support the idea of making one great and secure nation. During that era, lasting from 1787 to 1898, the U.S. followed the advice of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. It avoided a high degree of foreign entanglements. Although there were voices that called for expansion into Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean, the U.S. in the main did not go there, although it fought Mexico and absorbed substantial territory from her. Avoiding foreign quagmires allowed security costs, in the form of military and war costs, to be kept low. The economy was taxed very lightly. Liberty was maintained. Rapid economic progress followed. This policy fostered a strong economy and a strong domestic empire.

Commodore Perry's opening to Japan in 1853 was an early signal of what lay ahead, which was an international empire. With the advent of sea power, Commodore Dewey's initiative in the Pacific, and the Spanish-American War, with William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson at the helm, with the Progressive movement, and with the decision to enter World War I, the American ship of state steered onto the world's seas. International commitments and involvements became the rule. This movement was powered by people believing in certain ideas, having certain interests, and possessing certain aims and values. An empire does not become an empire without people wanting it for their own advantage, wealth, power, and dominance. At the same time, an empire does not expand without people believing in its worth, rightness, and goodness religiously or semi-religiously. American empire has roots in Manifest Destiny. It has roots in a long series of wars – against foreign powers, against native peoples, and against the Confederacy – that produced one ruling sovereignty. After that, expansion across the seas was taken to be a natural extension. The desire for American security, to be achieved by promoting Americanism and democracy in particular, is one thread in this

fabric. There are others. The closing of the American frontier brought about the idea that progress demanded overseas expansion. Darwin's theories suggested to many that the rivalries of the international world demanded survival of the fittest nations.

The transformation to international empire began a process that is leading to the American empire's decline and fall. America's overseas empire involves five domestic negatives: a higher degree of taxation, much higher military and war expenditures, inflation, more centralized government control of the economy, and a loss of liberty at home. These erode and distort the economy that is the foundation of the empire's ability to command wealth. The existence of empire and such changes act upon a nation's politics, its ethics, its morals, its culture, its language, its communications, its families, its communities, and the content of its religions. An empire changes how persons look upon themselves and lead their lives. American empire is a political structure with far-reaching effects. An extensive welfare-warfare state tends toward a very long list of negatives, such as irresponsibility, moral decline, cynicism, hopelessness, resignation, corruption, decadence, coarseness, and violence.

World War I brought on national government economic control. This led to a much less stable economy. The economy boomed during the war but fell sharply afterwards. The centralized control over money helped produce a boom-bust cycle into the 1920s and 1930s. This facilitated a permanent apparatus of national economic guidance and control. It brought on the adoption of substantial government welfare measures in the name of mitigating economic hardships.

Welfare measures erode American strength and the American empire by undermining personal responsibility and incentives. The problems raised by a welfare system are never-ending. Welfare measures can absorb endless resources. The American empire was first built on *not* having a welfare state, since the latter undermines productivity, growth, and the economy. The healthy economy that supported America's domestic empire was built on ideas of sturdy independence, invention, innovation, and low taxes. America eschewed welfare. America stood for the individual. The dynamic of an empire stems from its centralized control in order to marshal resources and engage in foreign adventures. Those controls create economic ills that are seemingly alleviated by welfare measures, regulations, and more taxes. Those further alter the economy, making it less and less productive. They lay the groundwork for increased centralization of power, which further undermines the system.

The roots of American empire go back to the progressive movement and the industrialization that preceded it. [Thomas Leonard's](#) article makes the case that the key feature of the Progressive movement was anti-individualism. Important Progressives believed that society was greater than the individual, or the whole greater than its parts. They identified the state with society. They stood for social control by elites and professionals. They fashioned the groundwork of the welfare state and American empire.

America has always played catchup to the welfare state innovations of European countries; but ever since the Progressive movement began, the welfare state rose. America's major shift to welfare under Franklin Roosevelt has hastened the empire's demise. When an empire adopts the worst practices of other nations, the very practices that it used to avoid, it throws away one of its key strengths. Warfare always accompanies empire. When there is no welfare state and the economy can support wars, the empire thrives on well-chosen and well-conducted wars. When the welfare state becomes a reality, the economy is stretched too far. The burdens placed on it negate the growth incentives of a laissez-faire economy. The essential economic foundation of the empire and its warfare erodes. The presence of inflation is a symptom of the inability of the empire to support both welfare and warfare. When the empire enters into a weakened economic condition, any errors in choosing and fighting wars hasten the empire's decline by imposing burdens that are far harder to overcome in a welfare-state economy that no longer has its previous vim and vigor. And errors in choosing wars there will be, because the empire is so intricately involved with foreign lands and because by the time it becomes strong and dominant, its ideology of superiority and invincibility has taken hold in the minds of its believing leaders. When an empire is at an advanced stage, welfare and warfare act synergistically to undermine the empire.

The excessive desire for American security has failed. Implementing this desire via empire, which includes a larger and more powerful state at home and much increased commitments and entanglements overseas, has reduced American security. At home, the government offers empty and excessive pseudo-insurance for almost everything: bank deposits, pensions, floods, hurricanes, old age, unemployment, bad loans, and health. Policing the world invariably means becoming involved in countless matters of the domestic politics of others. This often leads into wars, which are an extension of political conflicts. It leads to economic drains on America. Empire continues to reduce overall American security and well-being.

If the rising stage of empire brings gains of various sorts and seems rational, at least to some, the declining stage of empire brings losses to many and is irrational. It fails to achieve the hoped-for objectives of security and well-being. American's leaders are presiding over a declining empire, but their power and ideology are so entrenched that they resist taking the steps to modify its policies and extend the empire's life. Bush blunders into Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama has grandiose budget-busting plans that hasten the empire's decline and fall.

Bush and Obama, operating in a post-Soviet world, are driving an American empire that is running on empty financially and ideologically. Without a clear enemy like communism, the empire does not have a new world to conquer. The 9/11 attack allowed the U.S. to rush worldwide terrorism into the vacuum.

The length of life that remains in a system like this is hard to predict. Perhaps an enlightened ruler will temporarily slow the process or even reverse it for awhile, thereby extending the empire's life. But, in the end, the American empire will, like all others, decline and fall for the basic reason that the use of force, whether for wealth redistribution or acquisition, or for obtaining security, is antithetical to justice and wealth creation.

