

The Neoconservative Moment

Francis Fukuyama

ONE OF Washington's most exclusive clubs during the 1990s was the annual board dinner of *The National Interest*. Presided over by founding editor Owen Harries and often kicked off with a presentation by Henry Kissinger, the group included Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Irving, Bea and Bill Kristol, Samuel Huntington, Paul Wolfowitz, Norman Podhoretz, Daniel Pipes, Charles Krauthammer, Marty Feldstein, Eliot Cohen, Peter Rodman and a host of other conservative thinkers, writers and doers, including just about everyone now characterized as a "neoconservative."

What I always found fascinating about these dinners was their unpredictability. People's views were very much set in concrete during the Cold War; while this group was divided into pro- and anti-détente camps, virtually everyone (myself included) had staked out territory years before. The Berlin Wall's fall brought a great change, and there was no clear mapping between one's pre-1989 views and the ones held thereafter. Roughly, the major

fault line was between people who were more realist and those who were more idealist or Wilsonian. But everyone was trying to wrestle with the same basic question: In the wake of the disappearance of the overarching strategic threat posed by the former USSR, how did one define the foreign policy of a country that had suddenly become the global hegemon? How narrowly or broadly did one define this magazine's eponymous "national interest"?

It was at one of these dinners that Charles Krauthammer first articulated the idea of American unipolarity. In the winter of 1990–91, he wrote in *Foreign Affairs* of the "unipolar moment"; in the Winter 2002/03 issue of *The National Interest*, he expanded the scope of his thesis by arguing that "the unipolar moment has become the unipolar era." And in February 2004, he gave a speech at the annual dinner of the American Enterprise Institute in which he took his earlier themes and developed the ideas further, in the aftermath of the Iraq War.¹ He defined four different schools of thought on foreign policy: isolationism, liberal internationalism, realism and his own position that he defines as "democratic globalism", a kind of muscular

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¹Charles Krauthammer, *Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for A Unipolar World*.

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Wilsonianism—minus international institutions—that seeks to use U.S. military supremacy to support U.S. security interests and democracy simultaneously.

Krauthammer is a gifted thinker and his ideas are worth taking seriously for their own sake. But, perhaps more importantly, his strategic thinking has become emblematic of a school of thought that has acquired strong influence inside the Bush Administration foreign policy team and beyond. It is for that reason that Krauthammer's writings, particularly his AEI speech, require careful analysis. It is in the spirit of our earlier debates that I offer the following critique.

THE 2004 speech is strangely disconnected from reality. Reading Krauthammer, one gets the impression that the Iraq War—the archetypal application of American unipolarity—had been an unqualified success, with all of the assumptions and expectations on which the war had been based fully vindicated. There is not the slightest nod towards the new empirical facts that have emerged in the last year or so: the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the virulent and steadily mounting anti-Americanism throughout the Middle East, the growing insurgency in Iraq, the fact that no strong democratic leadership had emerged there, the enormous financial and growing human cost of the war, the failure to leverage the war to make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front, and the fact that America's fellow democratic allies had by and large failed to fall in line and legitimate American actions *ex post*.

The failure to step up to these facts is dangerous precisely to the neo-neoconservative position that Krauthammer has been seeking to define and justify. As the war in Iraq turns from triumphant liberation to grinding insurgency, other voices—either traditional realists like Brent Scowcroft, nationalist-isolationists

like Patrick Buchanan, or liberal internationalists like John Kerry—will step forward as authoritative voices and will have far more influence in defining American post-Iraq War foreign policy. The poorly executed nation-building strategy in Iraq will poison the well for future such exercises, undercutting domestic political support for a generous and visionary internationalism, just as Vietnam did.

It did not have to be this way. One can start with premises identical to Krauthammer's, agree wholeheartedly with his critiques of the other three positions, and yet come up with a foreign policy that is very different from the one he lays out. I believe that his strategy simultaneously defines our interests in such a narrow way as to make the neo-conservative position indistinguishable from realism, while at the same time managing to be utterly unrealistic in its overestimation of U.S. power and our ability to control events around the world. It is probably too late to reclaim the label “neoconservative” for any but the policies undertaken by the Bush Administration, but it is still worth trying to reformulate a fourth alternative that combines idealism and realism—but in a fashion that can be sustained over the long haul.

Excessive Realism

KRAUTHAMMER and other commentators are correct that what is seen as “Kissingerian” realism is not an adequate basis for American foreign policy. A certain degree of messianic universalism with regard to American values and institutions has always been an inescapable component of American national identity: Americans were never comfortable with the kinds of moral compromises that a strict realist position entails. The question, which was the constant subject of those board dinners, was: What kinds of bounds do you

put around the idealistic part of the agenda? Krauthammer answers this key question in the following manner:

Where to intervene? Where to bring democracy? Where to nation-build? I propose a single criterion: where it counts. Call it democratic *realism*. And this is its axiom: *We will support democracy everywhere, but we will commit blood and treasure only in places where there is strategic necessity—meaning, places central to the larger war against the existential enemy, the enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom.* [italics in the original]

While this axiom appears to be clear and straightforward, it masks a number of ambiguities that make it less than helpful as a guideline for U.S. intervention. The first has to do with the phrase “strategic necessity”, which of course can be defined more and less broadly. Krauthammer initially appears to be taking a realist position by opting for the narrow definition when he refers to an “existential enemy” or an enemy posing a “mortal” threat. If these words have any real meaning, then they should include only threats to our existence as a nation or as a democratic regime. There have been such threats in the past: the Soviet Union could have annihilated us physically and conceivably could have subverted democracy in North America. But it is questionable whether any such *existential* threats exist now. Iraq before the U.S. invasion was certainly not one: It posed an existential threat to Kuwait, Iran and Israel, but it had no means of threatening the continuity of our regime.² Al-Qaeda and other radical Islamist groups aspire to be existential threats to American civilization but do not currently have anything like the capacity to actualize their vision: They are extremely dangerous totalitarians, but pose threats primarily to regimes in the Middle East.

This is not to say that Iraq and Al-

Qaeda did not pose serious threats to American *interests*: the former was a very serious regional threat, and the latter succeeded in killing thousands of Americans on American soil. Use of WMD against the United States by a terrorist group would have terrible consequences, not just for the immediate victims but also for American freedoms in ways that could be construed as undermining our regime. But it is still of a lesser order of magnitude than earlier, state-based threats. The global Nazi and communist threats were existential both because their banner was carried by a great power, and because ideologically there were many people in the United States and throughout the Western world seduced by their vision. The Islamist threat has no such appeal, except perhaps in countries like France that have permitted high levels of immigration from Muslim countries.

I suspect that Krauthammer’s intended use of the term “strategic necessity” is actually broader than is implied by his own words about existential threats. At the end of his axiom he leaps to the need to fight an “*enemy that poses a global mortal threat to freedom*”, and elsewhere speaks of the United States as “custodian of the international system”, suggesting a broad-minded understanding of self-interest. Does “global” here mean threats that transcend specific regions, like radical Islamism or communism? If the enemy’s reach has to be global, then North Korea would be excluded from the definition of a “strategic” threat. Or does “global”

²Iraq could have posed such a threat at some future date under the scenario sometimes hinted at by the Bush Administration, whereby they were to acquire a nuclear weapon and then turn it over to a terrorist group. The problem with this scenario is that (1) they were very far away from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and (2) there are a host of reasons for thinking that they would not turn such a weapon over to terrorists.

instead mean any mortal threat to freedom around the globe? Does the fact that an “enemy” poses a mortal threat to another free country but not to us qualify it as our “enemy?” Is Hamas, an Islamist group which clearly poses an existential threat to Israel, our enemy as well? Is Syria? And if these are our enemies, why should we choose to fight them in preference to threats to free countries closer to home like the FARC or ELN, which threaten democracy in Colombia, or Hugo Chavez in Venezuela? What makes something “central” in *this* global war? Was Iraq central to the war against radical Islamism?

It is clear that Krauthammer’s axiom provides very little practical guidance for answering these questions. He might respond that applying the general principle requires prudential judgment. He might further respond that his position is very distinct from that of the realists because he is using democracy as an instrument to advance U.S. strategic interests: By transforming Iraqi politics and turning a bloodthirsty dictatorship into a Western-style democracy, new possibilities will open up for the entire region that promises to get at some of the root causes of terrorism. This is indeed an ambitious and highly idealistic agenda, and it is precisely in the prudential judgments underlying the current project of transforming the Middle East that his argument is fatally flawed.

Excessive Idealism

OF ALL OF the different views that have now come to be associated with neoconservatives, the strangest one to me was the confidence that the United States could transform Iraq into a Western-style democracy, and go on from there to democratize the broader Middle East. It struck me as strange precisely because these same neoconservatives had spent

much of the past generation warning—in *The National Interest’s* former sister publication, *The Public Interest*, for example—about the dangers of ambitious social engineering, and how social planners could never control behavior or deal with unanticipated consequences. If the United States cannot eliminate poverty or raise test scores in Washington, DC, how does it expect to bring democracy to a part of the world that has stubbornly resisted it and is virulently anti-American to boot?

Krauthammer picks up this theme in his speech. Noting how wrong people were after World War II in asserting that Japan could not democratize, he asks, “Where is it written that Arabs are incapable of democracy?” He is echoing an argument made most forthrightly by the eminent Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis, who has at several junctures suggested that pessimism about the prospects for a democratic Iraq betrays lack of respect for Arabs.

It is, of course, nowhere written that Arabs are incapable of democracy, and it is certainly foolish for cynical Europeans to assert with great confidence that democracy is impossible in the Middle East. We have, indeed, been fooled before, not just in Japan but in Eastern Europe prior to the collapse of communism.

But possibility is not likelihood, and good policy is not made by staking everything on a throw of the dice. Culture is not destiny, but culture plays an important role in making possible certain kinds of institutions—something that is usually taken to be a conservative insight. Though I, more than most people, am associated with the idea that history’s arrow points to democracy, I have never believed that democracies can be created anywhere and everywhere through sheer political will. Prior to the Iraq War, there were many reasons for thinking that building a democratic Iraq was a task of a complexity that would be nearly unmanageable. Some reasons had to do with the

nature of Iraqi society: the fact that it would be decompressing rapidly from totalitarianism, its ethnic divisions, the role of politicized religion, the society's propensity for violence, its tribal structure and the dominance of extended kin and patronage networks, and its susceptibility to influence from other parts of the Middle East that were passionately anti-American.

But other reasons had to do with the United States. America has been involved in approximately 18 nation-building projects between its conquest of the Philippines in 1899 and the current occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the overall record is not a pretty one. The cases of unambiguous success—Germany, Japan, and South Korea—were all ones in which U.S. forces came and then stayed indefinitely. In the first two cases, we were not nation-building at all, but only re-legitimizing societies that had very powerful states. In all of the other cases, the U.S. either left nothing behind in terms of self-sustaining institutions, or else made things worse by creating, as in the case of Nicaragua, a modern army and police but no lasting rule of law.

This gets to a much more fundamental point about unipolarity. Krauthammer has always stressed the vast disparity of power between the United States and the rest of the world, vaster even than Rome's dominance at the height of its empire. But that dominance is clear-cut only along two dimensions of national power: the cultural realm and the ability to fight and win intensive conventional wars.

Americans have no particular taste or facility for nation-building; we want exit strategies rather than empires—a point Krauthammer reiterated at the start of his lecture. Where then does he think the domestic basis of support will come from for this unbelievably ambitious effort to politically transform one of the world's most troubled and hostile regions? And if the nation is really a commercial republic

uncomfortable with empire, why is he so eager to expand its domain? Lurking like an unbidden guest at a dinner party is the reality of what has happened in Iraq since the U.S. invasion: We have been our usual inept and disorganized selves in planning for and carrying out the reconstruction, something that was predictable in advance and should not have surprised anyone familiar with American history.

Allies, Institutions and Legitimacy

THE FINAL area of weakness in Krauthammer's argument lies in his treatment of legitimacy, and how the United States relates to the rest of the world. Failure to appreciate America's own current legitimacy deficit hurts both the realist part of our agenda, by diminishing our actual power, and the idealist portion of it, by undercutting our appeal as the embodiment of certain ideas and values.

Krauthammer avoids confronting this issue by creating a bit of a parody of foreign critiques of American policy, something easily dismissed because it comes from "the butchers of Tiananmen Square or the cynics of the Quai d'Orsay." He manages to lump both the Democratic Party and most of our European allies into a single category of liberal internationalists. He argues that their opposition to the Iraq War was founded on a self-proclaimed normative commitment to multilateralism and international law. For liberal internationalists, war is legitimate only if it is sanctioned by the United Nations. But this high-mindedness, he argues, masks motives that are much baser: the Europeans are Lilliputians who want to tie the American Gulliver down and reduce American freedom of action. So they are both naive and hypocritical in the same breath.

What Krauthammer here describes as the Democratic/European position is one that is readily recognizable and does in

fact characterize the views of many opponents of the Iraq War. But if he had listened carefully to what many Europeans were actually saying (something that Americans are not very good at doing these days), he would have discovered that much of their objection to the war was not a normative one having to do with procedural issues and the UN, but rather a prudential one having to do with the overall wisdom of attacking Iraq. Europeans tended not to be persuaded that Iraq was as dangerous as the Bush Administration claimed. They argued that Ba'athi Iraq had little to do with Al-Qaeda, and that attacking Iraq would be a distraction from the War on Terror. Many Europeans, moreover, did not particularly trust the United States to handle the postwar situation well, much less the more ambitious agenda of democratizing the Middle East. They believed that the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict was a more dangerous source of instability and terrorism than Iraq and that the Bush Administration was undercutting its own credibility by appearing to side so strongly with the policies of Ariel Sharon.

All of these were and are, of course, debatable propositions. On the question of the threat posed by Iraq, everyone—Europeans and Americans—were evidently fooled into thinking that it possessed significant stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. But on this issue, the European bottom line proved to be closer to the truth than the administration's far more alarmist position. The question of pre-war Iraq-Al-Qaeda links has become intensely politicized in America since the war. My reading of the evidence is that these linkages existed (indeed, it would be very surprising if they did not), but that their significance was limited. We have learned since September 11 that Al-Qaeda did not need the support of a state like Iraq to do a tremendous amount of damage to the United States and that attacking Iraq was not the most direct way to get at

Al-Qaeda. On the question of the manageability of postwar Iraq, the more skeptical European position was almost certainly right; the Bush Administration went into Iraq with enormous illusions about how easy the postwar situation would be. On the question of Palestine, the Europeans are likely wrong, or at least wrong in their belief that we could move to a durable settlement of the conflict if only the United States decided to use its influence with Israel.

The point here is not who is right, but rather that the prudential case was not nearly as open-and-shut as Krauthammer and other neoconservatives believe. He talks as if the Bush Administration's judgment had been vindicated at every turn, and that any questioning of it can only be the result of base or dishonest motives. Would that this were so. The fact that our judgment was flawed has created an enormous legitimacy problem for us, one that will hurt our interests for a long time to come.

THE PROBLEM of judgment gets to the heart of what is wrong with the vision of a unipolar world that Krauthammer lays out. In his words, the United States "has been designated custodian of the international system" by virtue of its enormous margin of military superiority. If we had in fact been designated global custodian, we would have no legitimacy problem, but we have unfortunately designated ourselves. We have in effect said to the rest of the world, "look, trust us, we will look out for your interests. You can do this safely because we not just any run-of-the-mill hyperpower. We are, after all, the United States." While we would not trust Russia, China, India, France or even Britain with a similar kind of power, we believe that the rest of the world should trust us. This is because the United States is different from other countries, a democracy espousing universal values and

therefore not subject the same calculations of self-interest as other would-be hegemon.

There is actually something to this argument. But it is also not very difficult to see why it does not gain much traction outside the United States, and not just among those endemically hostile to America. Krauthammer-the-realist, after all, argues for a narrow definition of national interest, which does not suggest we will be a very reliable partner to a struggling friend when we do not have important interests at stake. And even if we were willing to bear other people's burdens, what about our judgment?

Legitimacy is a tricky concept. It is related to substantive principles of justice, but it is not the same thing as justice. That is, people believe that a set of institutions is legitimate because they believe they are just, but legitimacy is always relative to the people conferring legitimacy.

Legitimacy is important to us not simply because we want to feel good about ourselves, but because it is useful. Other people will follow the American lead if they believe that it is legitimate; if they do not, they will resist, complain, obstruct or actively oppose what we do. In this respect, it matters not what *we* believe to be legitimate, but rather what *other* people believe is legitimate. If the Indian government says that it will not participate in a peacekeeping force in Iraq unless it has a UN Security Council mandate to do so, it does not matter in the slightest that we believe the Security Council to be an illegitimate institution: the Indians simply will not help us out.

Krauthammer and others have dismissed the importance of legitimacy by associating it entirely with the United Nations—and then shooting at that very easy target. Of course, the UN has deep problems with legitimacy. Since membership is not based on a substantive principle of legitimacy, but rather formal sovereignty, it has been populated from the

beginning by a range of dictatorial and human-rights abusing regimes. Our European allies themselves do not believe in the necessity of legitimization through the Security Council. When they found they could not get its support for the intervention in Kosovo because of the Russian veto, they were perfectly willing to bypass the UN and switch the venue to NATO instead.

But our legitimacy problem in Iraq went much deeper. Even if we had switched the venue to NATO—an alliance of democracies committed to the same underlying set of values—we could not have mustered a majority in support of our position, not to speak of the consensus required for collective action in that organization. The Bush Administration likes to boast of the size of the “coalition of the willing” that the United States was eventually able to pull together. One can take comfort in this only by abstracting from the *quality* of the support we received. Besides Britain and Australia, no one was willing to put boots on the ground during the active phase of combat, and now that post-conflict peacekeeping looks more like real warfare once again, Spain, Honduras and other members of the coalition are pulling out. Those countries that did support the United States did so on the basis of an elite calculation of national interest—in almost all cases against the wishes of large majorities of their own populations. This is true alike for Tony Blair, our staunchest ally, and for Poland, the most pro-American country in eastern Europe. While the behavior of Germany's Gerhard Schröder in actively opposing the war was deeply disappointing, I would still much rather have Germany on my side than a feckless and corrupt Ukraine.

IT IS CLEAR, in other words, that a very large part of the world, including many people who are normally inclined to be our friends, did not believe in the legitimacy of our

behavior towards Iraq. This is not because the Security Council failed to endorse the war, but because many of our friends did not trust us, that is, the Bush Administration, to use our huge margin of power wisely and in the interests of the world as a whole. This should matter to us, not just for realist reasons of state (our ability to attract allies to share the burden), but for idealist ones as well (our ability to lead and inspire based on the attractiveness of who we are).

I do not believe that the Bush Administration was in fact contemptuous of the need for legitimacy. What they believed and hoped, rather, was that legitimacy would be awarded *ex post* rather than *ex ante* by the international community. There was a widespread belief among members of the administration that once it became clear that the United States was going to disarm Iraq forcefully, other NATO allies including France would eventually come on board. Everyone was taken aback by the vehemence with which France and Germany opposed the war, and by the U.S. failure to line up normally compliant countries like Chile and Mexico during the Security Council vote.

The hope that we would be awarded *ex post* legitimacy was not an unreasonable calculation. It might indeed have materialized had the United States found a large and active WMD program in Iraq after the invasion, or if the transition to a democratic regime had been as quick and low-cost as the Bush Administration expected. Many people have argued that American unilateralism towards Iraq breaks a long pattern of transatlantic cooperation, but they are forgetting history. The United States during the Cold War repeatedly pushed its European allies to do things they were reluctant to do, often by staking out positions first and seeking

approval later. In the end, American judgment on these issues was better than that of the Europeans, and legitimacy was in fact awarded retrospectively. When this happened, the United States was not blamed for unilateralism, but praised for its leadership.

One could then interpret the Iraq War simply as a one-time mistake or unfortunate miscalculation coming on the heels of a long string of successes. Certainly, it would be utterly wrong to conclude that the war teaches us that the United States should never stick its neck out and lead the broader Western world to actions that our allies oppose or are reluctant to undertake. Nor should we conclude that pre-emption and unilateralism will never be necessary.

On the other hand, it is not simply bad luck that we failed to win legitimacy as badly as we did this time. The world is different now than it was during the Cold War in ways that will affect our future ability to exert leadership and claim to speak on behalf of the world as a whole. This is so for three reasons.

The first difference is, of course, the demise of the Soviet Union and the absence of an overarching superpower threat. During the Cold War, there was rampant anti-Americanism around the world and popular opposition to U.S. policies. But our influence was anchored by center-right parties throughout Europe that were both grateful for America's historical role in the liberation of Europe and fearful of Soviet influence. The global terrorist threat may some day come to be interpreted in a similar fashion, but it is not yet.

A second difference has to do with the very fact of our military dominance. During the Cold War, when our power was more or less evenly matched against

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that of the Soviets, we cared a great deal about credibility and slippery slopes. We were afraid that withdrawal in the face of a challenge would be taken as a sign of weakness and exploited by the other side. Today, the United States is utterly dominant in the military sphere. Credibility in our willingness and ability to use force remains important, but we simply do not have to prove our toughness to the rest of the world at every turn.

The final difference has to do with the fact that the current battlefield is not Europe but the Middle East. There were always sharp differences of opinion between the United States and its allies on how to proceed with respect to the Soviet Union, but they pale in comparison to the differences between the United States and virtually everyone else in the world with respect to the Arab world. So it is to this issue that we must turn.

Dealing with the Middle East

KRAUTHAMMER has thought long and hard about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and his views on how the Israelis need to deal with the Palestinians colors his views on how the United States should deal with the Arabs more broadly. Krauthammer has not supported strongly engaging the Arab world through political strategies. In the past, he has put forward a particular view of Arab psychology, namely, that they respect power above all as a source of legitimacy. As he once said in a radio interview, if you want to win their hearts and minds, you have grab a lower part of their anatomy and squeeze hard.

Towards the end of his AEI speech, Krauthammer speaks of the United States as being in the midst of a bitter and remorseless war with an implacable enemy that is out to destroy Western civilization. This kind of language is appropriate as a description of Israel's strategic

situation since the outbreak of the second *intifada*. The question is whether this accurately describes the position of the United States as well. Are we like Israel, locked in a remorseless struggle with a large part of the Arab and Muslim world, with few avenues open to us for dealing with them other than an iron fist? And in general, does a strategic doctrine developed by a small, vulnerable country surrounded by implacable enemies make sense when applied to the situation of the world's sole superpower, a country that spends as much on defense as the next 16 most powerful countries put together?

I believe that there are real problems in transposing one situation to the other. While Israel's most immediate Arab interlocutors are indeed implacable enemies, the United States faces a much more complex situation. In Al-Qaeda and other radical Islamist groups, we do in fact confront an enemy that hates us for what we are rather than for what we do. For the reasons given above, I do not believe they are an existential threat to us, but they certainly would like to be, and it is hard to see how we can deal with them other than by killing, capturing or otherwise militarily neutralizing them.

But the radicals swim in a much larger sea of Muslims—1.2 billion of them, more or less—who are not yet implacable enemies of the United States. If one has any doubts about this, one has only to look at the first of the United Nations Development Program's two *Arab Human Development* reports, which contained a poll asking whether respondents would like to emigrate to the United States if they had the opportunity. In virtually every Arab country, a majority of respondents said yes. On the other hand, recent Pew surveys of global public opinion show that positive feelings about the United States in Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan and other supposedly friendly Muslim countries has sunk to disastrously low levels. What these data taken as a

whole suggest is that for the broad mass of public opinion in Muslim countries, we are disliked or hated not for what we are, but rather for what we do. What they do not like is a familiar list of complaints about our foreign policy that we somehow continue to fail to take seriously: our lack of concern for the plight of the Palestinians, our hypocritical support for dictators in Muslim countries, and now our occupation of Iraq.

The War on Terror is, in other words, a classic counter-insurgency war, except that it is one being played out on a global scale. There are genuine bad guys out there who are much more bitter ideological enemies than the Soviets ever were, but their success depends on the attitudes of the broader populations around them who can be alternatively supportive, hostile or indifferent—depending on how we play our cards. As we are seeing vividly in Iraqi cities like Fallujah and Najaf, counter-insurgency wars are incredibly difficult to fight, because we must somehow destroy the enemy without alienating the broader population and making things worse. Counter-insurgency requires a tricky mixture of precisely targeted force, political judgment and extremely good intelligence: a combination of carrots and sticks.

Israel used carrots during the Oslo process and then shifted to sticks after its collapse and the beginning of the second *intifada*. I do not want to second-guess either of these approaches, neither of which seems to have worked very well. But an American policy toward the Muslim world that, like Sharon's, is largely stick will be a disaster: we do not have enough sticks in our closet to "make them respect us." The Islamists for sure hated us from the beginning, but Krauthammerian unipolarity has increased hatred for the United States in the broader fight for hearts and minds. This suggests that we need a much more complex strategy that recalibrates

the proportion of sticks and carrots. This has begun to happen with the leaking of the Bush Administration's Greater Middle East Initiative, but that is only the beginning of a much longer political struggle.

Israel's policy of constantly being on the offensive, pre-empting and taking the initiative (as in its policy of targeted assassinations) is also something that does not scale well. Unlike Israel, the United States has a substantial margin of strategic depth and does not constantly have to run risks in order to stay on top. A sole superpower that is seen being as inclined to intervene pre-emptively and often will frighten not just its enemies but its friends as well. The United States must never abjure its right to pre-empt, but it is a right that needs to be exercised cautiously. Even talking about such a strategy, as we did in the *National Security Strategy* document, will tend to promote opposing coalitions and resistance to U.S. policies. Israel can afford to antagonize potential allies and disregard international public opinion as long as it can count on support from the United States. The United States could, I suppose, survive if it were similarly isolated, but it is hard to see why we would want to put ourselves in this position. It is hardly an advantageous position from which to launch an idealistic Wilsonian crusade to reshape the Middle East in our image.

What Now?

SINCE I HAVE volunteered only to write a critique of the views expressed by Charles Krauthammer and am not myself running for president, I am under no obligation to lay out in depth a positive agenda for American foreign policy that would serve as a substitute. On the other hand, there are elements of a different neoconservative foreign policy that are implicit in what I have said thus far. The United States should understand the need to

exercise power in pursuit of both its interests and values, but also to be more prudent and subtle in that exercise. The world's sole superpower needs to remember that its margin of power is viewed with great suspicion around the world and will set off countervailing reactions if that power is not exercised judiciously.

This means, in the first instance, doing the simple work of diplomacy and coalition-building that the Bush Administration seemed reluctant to undertake prior to the Iraq War and not gratuitously to insult the "common opinions of mankind." We do not need to embrace the UN or multilateralism for its own sake, because we somehow believe that such institutions are inherently more legitimate than nation-states. On the other hand, we need like-minded allies to accomplish both the realist and idealist portions of our agenda and should spend much more time and energy cultivating them.

The promotion of democracy through all of the available tools at our disposal should remain high on the agenda, particularly with regard to the Middle East. But the United States needs to be more realistic about its nation-building abilities, and cautious in taking on large social-engineering projects in parts of the world it does not understand very well. On the other hand, it is inevitable that we will get sucked into similar projects in the future (for example, after a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime), and we need to be much better prepared. This means establishing a permanent office with authority and resources appropriate for the job the next time around as part of a broader restructuring of the U.S. government's soft-power agencies.

To this list I would add a final element that for reasons of space I cannot elaborate here. The visionary founders of the postwar order were institution-builders,

who created not just the much-maligned UN system, but the Bretton Woods institutions, NATO, the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea alliances, the GAIT, the WTO, and a host of other international organizations. Institution-building is not something that has occupied the time of officials in the Bush Administration, but it should. If the United States does not like the fact that the UN is dominated by non-democratic regimes, then it should invest in an effort to build up other institutions, like NATO or the Community of Democracies founded during the Clinton Administration, that are based on norms and values we share. The Community of Democracies initiative, which the French foreign minister Hubert Védrine tried to strangle at its birth, was never taken seriously by the Republicans, for, I assume, "not invented here" reasons. But such a

global alliance of democracies, led by newer ones in eastern Europe and Latin America, could play a legit-

imizing function around the world in a way that NATO cannot.

If the United States cannot create new global institutions, then it could try to pursue a vision of overlapping multilateral organizations on a regional basis. The Bush Administration has stumbled into a six-power format for dealing with North Korea; why not seek to make permanent a five-power caucus once we (hopefully) get past the current impasse over nuclear weapons with Pyongyang? Such an organization could play a very valuable coordinating function in the event of, say, a sudden North Korean collapse. Mutual suspicions between Japan, Korea and China are high, and a multilateral forum would be a much better vehicle for sharing information and plans than the current system of bilateral alliances running through Washington. The Chinese in recent years have been pushing a series of regional

America needs to remember that its margin of power is viewed with great suspicion around the world.

pacts—ASEAN Plus Three, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, a Northeast Asian Free Trade Area, and ultimately, an East Asian Free Trade Area—that they argue may some day serve as the basis for regional security arrangements as well. While the Japanese have seen these as bids for regional leadership and have replied in kind with trade pacts centered on themselves, the Bush Administration has not, as far as I am aware, formulated anything like a coherent response. Do we simply want to swat down proposals for regional multilateral organizations, as we did in the case of Mahatir's East Asian Community in the

early 1990s or Japan's proposal after the Asian financial crisis for a regional IMF, or do we want to engage with the region and shape such proposals in ways that can suit our own interests? I believe that East Asia is under-institutionalized and ripe for some creative thinking by the United States.

I believe that this kind of recalibration of American foreign policy still qualifies as falling in Krauthammer's fourth "democratic globalism" basket, being neither isolationist, liberal-idealist nor realist. Whether it will ever be seen as neo-conservative I doubt, but there is no reason why it should not have this title. □

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