

Toward a Successful American Foreign Policy

Æsop was one of the first commentators who sought to guide rulers toward the understanding that real power did not always arise from force and violence. Living in a time known as “The Age of the Tyrants,” when rulers regarded anyone who questioned their dominance as a subversive, Æsop reproved them indirectly with a fable. The Sun and The Wind, he said, were disputing over which was the more powerful. To settle their argument, they agreed on a contest -- which could make a tiny human down on Earth take off his cloak. Going first, Wind hurled himself on the luckless fellow with hurricane force. But the harder the gale buffeted him, the more tightly did the man wrap himself in his cloak. When his “shock and awe” did not work, Wind finally gave up. Then came the turn of Sun. He did not frighten the man as Wind had done but beguiled him. Warmed by his rays, the man threw off his heavy cloak. From a necessary protector against Wind, he found that it had become an uncomfortable burden.

No more than in Æsop’s time are rulers today happy to receive admonitions, but now we assert our right as citizens to reprove them. Here I will put aside issues of law or morality to focus simply on effectiveness. I will argue that, in Æsop’s terms, creating an environment of mutual interest works better than threat. Some people will dismiss as naïve the notion that leadership can replace force in a world of great danger where evil is seen to be lurking in all the continents. In part, of course, they are right because this approach to the world is self-fulfilling. Treating others as evil and threatening them with destruction, as I showed in the previous essay, causes them to fear America’s power and threat. Buffeted or fearing to be buffeted by the modern military equivalent of Æsop’s Wind, at least some of them will wrap themselves more tightly in the “cloak” of nuclear power. Others will seek different but also dangerous means to protect themselves while they grudgingly and temporarily do as they are compelled or bribed to do. Æsop’s Sun was certainly not less powerful than Wind. Æsop was not arguing for weakness or passivity. Certainly not for isolationism. Rather he realized that Sun could use its immense power in ways that were effective because they did not terrify but created conditions in which Æsop’s man was led to see that his own best interest was to do what Sun wanted. Here I will outline the dimensions and attributes of a “warm leadership”

that is more likely than threat and violence to create the peace and security for which we all yearn.

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The precondition for the formulation of a successful policy is the recognition that “Wind” has not worked. “Improving” on Wind, increasing the power, the reach and the level of military threat, that America can direct toward others will almost certainly be self-defeating. But, despite our national proclivity to shortcuts, there are no gimmicks or “quick fixes” for America’s dilemma. Therefore, it is time for a general reassessment of where we are today and of the direction in which we are heading.

As I have argued in the previous essay, despite America’s vast resources and immense power, America is not safer today than a decade or even a generation ago.. We are losing the war in Iraq,¹ are certainly not winning the war in Afghanistan,² have embarked upon a campaign against terrorism that is not working,³ all at enormous cost to ourselves and future generations.⁴ More of the same, respected business and government statesmen believe, will bankrupt us. But that is what we are told we must do. Indeed, we are told that we must do so in ways that terrify even America’s few remaining allies. The latest official statement of American policy indicates that we are not heeding these

¹ In the last year, the number of daily attacks by insurgents have roughly doubled; US casualties have doubled; over 50 American-appointed Iraqi senior officials have been murdered; Iraqi police casualties are up a third; oil production is down; and from their belief that Iraqis would greet American soldiers with flowers in hand, senior American officials are now admitting that the war may be un-winnable and will likely last for a decade or more. A senior US general presciently said over a year ago that we are “already on the road to defeat.” (Thomas Ricks in *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2004.)

² Reports based on US government intelligence indicate that there is a resurgence of the feared and widely hated Taliban and that the writ of Afghan government we sponsor hardly runs outside the capital, Kabul. The social situation is dire: after three years of American occupation, Afghanistan ranks 173rd of 178 countries in the UN Human Development index. (Carlotta Gall, *International Herald Tribune*, February 23, 2005.)

³ As I write, an obviously well-orchestrated and large-scale campaign of terrorist bombings has wracked London. “Usama bin Ladin, who may or may not have been involved, has not been caught. Even if he were caught, his capture would probably not diminish the capacity of any of the now-several groups we lump into al-Qa’ida. Moreover, as the CIA has acknowledged, the Iraq war is proving an excellent training ground for a new generation of terrorists. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin on the British policy in Colonial America, we did not find a war of terrorism in Iraq but we created one.

⁴ As reported in the *Harper’s Magazine* Forum of June 2005, “A respected credit agency recently noted that by 2026, barring a change in our fiscal policy, US Treasury bills – once the world’s de facto gold standard – will be classified as junk bonds.”

warnings but are heading in the opposite direction.

The 2005 “National Defense Strategy of the United States of America”⁵ makes the United States appear to be a rogue state. It asserts that America will do anything it deems to be in its interest anywhere and anytime it chooses regardless of the interests of others and even in violation of its treaty obligations. In this document, the Bush administration has adopted the role of the lone “gun slinger,” a figure who may stand tall in American mythology, and so caters to the John Wayne or Clint Eastwood movie image so popular among us, but whom even the real, rather than the silver screen, communities in the Wild West refused to tolerate. The world community is likely to do on a larger scale just what the real communities of the Wild West did: seek to curb or break our frightening power. In extreme cases, states like North Korea will seek the ultimate protection, nuclear weapons; national non-states cannot – yet -- compete on the nuclear level but they can and will use the weapon of the weak, terrorism. Or, to put it in terms of the Westerns, shoot us in the back.

Ideally, America would seek to recapture the universal respect, indeed the love and admiration, from which it derived its influence, its real power, for so long. To those who question whether respect, a belief in American legitimacy and benign leadership, constitutes real power, consider the contrast between a city where the government is respected as legitimate and one where it is not: Dallas can live in reasonable security with a small police force while Baghdad cannot be controlled by a whole army. Historical example after example provides ample proof that even overwhelming force does not produce the level of security that comes when societies believe they are being treated with an acceptable degree of fairness and attention to their well-being.

It is not only “ideally” that America must seek to recapture respect for its role in world affairs. It is essential. Without the sense that a state or a government is legitimate in the exercise of its power, it is seen as tyranny. That is the downward trend on which we are embarked. Every recent public opinion poll taken -- even among traditional friends and allies -- indicates that the reservoir of goodwill which for long gave America

⁵ www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/nds-usa_mar2005.htm

its unique strength is now well drained.⁶ Refilling that reservoir with what President Eisenhower, drawing on Thomas Jefferson, called “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind,” will be a long-term process.

What are the means to do so and how can we prosper in the meantime?

In this short paper, I can only set forth the titles or headings of the actions, which are necessarily complex and multifarious, spanning as they do the whole world and involving diplomacy, military affairs, trade, investment, fiscal policy, foreign aid, the environment and other issues.⁷ Although diverse, they all fit under a general category: they are the exact reverse in both spirit and action of “National Defense Strategy of the United States of America.” America must renounce the threatening unilateralist approach to other nations proclaimed by the Bush administration to begin to reestablish its leadership. *Reestablish* is the key word. What I have to say is not so much an argument for change as for restoration, not radical but conservative, not theoretical but proven by experience. So, as Thomas Jefferson proclaimed in his First Inaugural Address, “let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.”

1

The most dramatic and potentially the most destructive problem in today’s world arises from the existence and spread of nuclear weapons. Nation-states have acquired them because they fear one another. There are today perhaps 20,000 of these lethal devices in widely scattered locations. Since America used them in the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, governments came close to using them on several occasions: the French (backed by the then chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff) wanted President Eisenhower to order the use of tactical nuclear weapons to destroy Vietminh forces attacking at Dien Bien Phu; we now know (but did not know then) that Russian

⁶ A poll of public opinion in 21 countries of some 22,000 people conducted by the B.B.C. indicated that 58% expected the Bush administration to have a negative impact on peace and security and that, for the first time, “dislike of Mr. Bush is translating into dislike of Americans in general.” (*The Guardian*, January 20, 2005).

⁷ I discuss the history of these various activities in *Neighbors and Strangers: The Fundamentals of Foreign Affairs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

submarine commanders had the authority to fire them during the Cuban Missile Crisis;⁸ and the Indians and Pakistanis were at the edge of using them against one another at least twice. As long as they are available, it seems almost inevitable that sooner or later some government will use them.

It is not only that governments may decide to use these weapons that is dangerous. Keeping them secure is enormously expensive and requires a skilled and loyal bureaucracy. As with any large number of things, losing a few is easy.⁹ Americans think we are very good at managing our many arsenals, but I understand that even we are unable to account for all of them. Presumably at least some other nuclear powers are less exact than we. And some of them have trouble keeping the loyalty of their officials or even regularly paying their salaries. So the temptation to steal and sell is high. And the temptation is not restricted to “rogue” officials. Several governments have fostered the spread of technologies, materials and even manufacturing equipment as America did in both Saddam Husain’s Iraq and the Shah’s Iran. Pakistan recently followed the American lead. Probably other countries will do so in the future.

On nuclear weapons, the United States has an obviously double standard: they are acceptable when our friends have them but not when others seek to acquire them. Of course, such a standard is justified in national terms. But it is not acceptable to those (like North Korea) which fear us or those (like India and Pakistan) which have regional rivals they fear. The head of Indian’s nuclear weapons program stated flatly that India “could scarcely accept a regime that arbitrarily divided nuclear haves from have-nots.”¹⁰ In fact, it did not. While they have not publicly stated their positions, others have or probably will follow. Israel, which has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is known to have between 400 and 600 nuclear weapons while Iran, which has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is believed to be on the way toward acquiring them.

Fearing America and watching a series of moves preparatory to invasion, North

⁸ Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in conversation with the Soviet submarine commanders. (“Apocalypse Soon,” *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2005).

⁹ We have had the same problem with missiles. About 1 million shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles have been produced. They are the perfect weapon against helicopters and relatively low flying aircraft. In the 1980s, the CIA provided about 2,000 to the anti-Russian mujahidin militants in Afghanistan. Thousands more were sold to other countries. Thousands are missing. See US Congress Government Accountability Office. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04519.pdf>

¹⁰ Jaswant Singh in the September 1991 issue of *Foreign Affairs*,

Korea plunged ahead with a nuclear weapons program. This move is relatively recent. During the Clinton administration, North Korea abided by the 1994 “agreed framework” and stopped weapons-related plutonium reprocessing. That moratorium at least bought time. North Korea did not produce nuclear weapons. But the time was not used to create an alternative means to achieve “security.” North Korea continued to be frightened of America. Its fear was soon given substance. Shortly after taking office, Under Secretary of State John Bolton, backed by Vice President Dick Cheney, scrapped the “agreed framework,” and President Bush issued his Inaugural blast against North Korea as a part of the “Axis of Evil.” Not surprisingly North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and pushed its nuclear program to conclusion. Blasted by “Wind,” it wrapped its cloak tightly around itself. A similar course of events is under way in American-Iranian relations. Iran’s leaders would have to be naïve not to take every precaution against America’s “Wind.”

Nor does the danger stop with North Korea or Iran. It is unlikely that Iran will be the last country that will consider acquiring what is the ultimate defense against attack, the “cloak” of nuclear weapons. As Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wrote in the article I quoted above, “If the United States continues its current nuclear stance, over time, substantial proliferation of nuclear weapons will almost surely follow. Some, or all, of such nations as Egypt, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Taiwan will very likely initiate nuclear weapons programs, increasing both the risk of use of the weapons and the diversion of weapons and fissile materials into the hands of rogue states or terrorists.”

Is diversion of weapons a real possibility? Driven by a sufficient sense of threat and having at its disposal a relatively large amount of money, say \$1 billion, I believe almost any government could acquire at least the components to assemble a weapon. How long will it be before some non-governmental organization can do so is anyone’s guess, but over time it is almost inevitable. Then our world will be very insecure indeed. In 1945, Robert Oppenheimer warned a Senate Conference¹¹ that it would take just three or four men to smuggle components of a bomb into New York, reassemble them and

¹¹ Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, “Bin Laden’s Nuclear Connection,” (*The Nation*, April 25, 2005).

blow up the city. Against this threat, he said, there was virtually no defense. Given that only about 2% of the 20,000 containers that arrive each day in America's 300 ports are ever inspected for nuclear materials, the chances of intercepting a well-shielded weapon are very small.¹² With the huge number of weapons that now exist, their spread to many states and their likely spread to still others and eventually to non-states, Oppenheimer was prescient: there is no defense. Our current policies will not protect us and if we stick to them we or our children are doomed at least to a world of constant fear and likely to a world of many ravaged landscapes and few disfigured survivors. Clearly, we must change course.

The prospects of evolving a successful policy in time to prevent a further spread of weapons are not bright and, at best, will take foresight, wisdom and will. The more we seek to coerce other governments, the more likely they are to follow the path of North Korea. By attempting to implement the 2005 "National Defense Strategy of the United States of America," that is, to preempt the process with force, we will incur nearly ruinous cost to Americans and to American interests. So what must be done?

On nuclear weapons, we need a vigorous policy of elimination. This horrible device has no useful function in our world. Even keeping it in being is outrageously expensive. Over many years in negotiations with the Russians, we worked out a process to scale back. We must restore the momentum of that process. We can begin in Europe where hundreds of now-redundant but still-lethal "tactical" nuclear weapons are in place to fight the war that did not happen. They should be destroyed. From that first step, others follow. We and the Russians should rapidly and severely reduce our enormous and dangerous stockpiles and decide not to upgrade the remaining weapons. Moves taken in this field have so far been paltry or even duplicitous.¹³ We need to get serious. From those beginnings, we need to address the related issue of regional disarmament. In some ways, this is the most dangerous aspect of the nuclear weapons problem since poorer countries can be assumed not to have the money and technicians to manage their arsenals safely. Effectively addressing this issue will be impossible so long as such

¹² Peter Peterson, "Riding for a Fall," (*Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2004).

¹³ As I mentioned in the previous article, when it announced a partial reduction of its 5,300 "operationally deployed nuclear warheads," it merely moved these to a "reserve category" rather than destroying them.

countries as North Korea and Iran are driven by fear of us or when some regional powers, like Israel, refuse to enter the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Solving these dilemmas will certainly not be easy, but failure to do so will almost certainly ensure that nuclear weapons will be used -- with ghastly effect.

2

The process of moving toward the elimination of nuclear weapons will be beneficial not only in reducing the danger of their use but also in restoring the confidence of other peoples in America's respect for law on which their willingness to trust it depends. We have, after all, treaty obligations which, having been passed by the US Senate, are also American law. In the nuclear field, the main focus of this paper, America should honor the Nonproliferation Treaty. Although not legally bound by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty because it was not ratified by the US Senate, America would do well to abide by it. This is to its own best interests because, if America begins, as now appears likely, to resume testing, its action will constitute a license for other states to do so. Then, the process of curtailing the spread of nuclear weapons will become far more difficult and their use far more likely.

Respect for law is, of course, not limited to treaty obligations. America's closest friends are shocked at the way it has flouted its own and other countries' laws. The Abu Ghuraib scandal certainly played a part in the new view of America, but the trend away from respect toward fear predated disclosure of some of the uglier aspects of America's "crusade." Kidnapping and "rendition" of more than 100 persons whom the American government asserts are terrorists are the latest aspects of what most other peoples see as a lawless pattern in the "new America."¹⁴ They are not alone. Even senior American military officers have spoken out about the stain on their honor by the our practices at Abu Ghuraib Guantánamo, Bagram and perhaps dozens of other prisons and torture centers.

By its respect for law, America will set a standard which, in their own interest,

¹⁴ In an unprecedented move, an Italian judge has ordered the arrest of 13 American intelligence agents and is investigating 6 others for kidnapping and transporting a Muslim cleric to a country where he would presumably be tortured. Stephen Grey and Don Van Natta, Jr., "Italy judge orders the arrest of 13 CIA agents," (*The International Herald Tribune*, June 25, 2005.)

others will *usually* follow. Conversely, Americans may be certain that if they set the style of breaking the law, others will *certainly* follow. We cannot hope to succeed in inculcating a respect for law and order in other countries when we violate it ourselves. This will not only endanger Americans, as it certainly will, particularly in the military, but it will also lower the standards by which the whole world community conducts relationships. Even a casual reader of the press can see that the veneer of civilization is thin in our world. We would be very foolish to rend it.

Selfishly, Americans should also recognize that lawlessness abroad breeds lawlessness at home. A government that breaks its own laws anywhere is likely to do so everywhere. Those who argue that infringement of liberty and circumvention of law are necessary should be reminded of the remark of the English statesman William Pitt shortly after the American Revolution that “Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.” In the quest for “security” we are giving up both the rule of law and our traditional liberties. Our Ben Franklin warned us that in following this course of action, we would deserve – and get -- neither. Put another way, what we are doing is violating not only our own laws but our image as a democratic as well as a law-abiding society. Such practices have done America more damage than any terrorist could have done.

Kidnap and torture are, of course, the worst, but we have also created a lawless limbo. The American government sought, successfully, to avoid the procedures for which our ancestors have struggled since the Magna Carta and which were embodied successively in the 1689 Bill of Rights, the 1789 American Constitution and the 1946 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The government excluded civil courts from dealing with the new category of “enemy combatants,” but when, bowing to public outrage, used military courts, presumably to attempt to administer justice under ill-defined or non-existent law, it has tainted these courts.¹⁵ American practice has slipped

¹⁵ Lt. Commander Charles Swift, a military lawyer, testified in the Senate (and provided written proof) that he was ordered “to represent one of the prisoners [as his defense attorney] for the sole purpose of extracting a guilty plea.” (*The International Herald Tribune* editorial, June 20, 2005.) As Swift memorably commented, a trial “says as much about the society that holds the trial as it does about the individual before it...[it illustrates] who we are.”

far from what we think of with pride as our standard.¹⁶ As President Eisenhower affirmed, there is only one law, not one for America and another for the rest. That has been a key element in our real national armory. In its own national interest, both domestic and international, America must recapture its traditional commitment to a firm and clear adherence to law.

3

The reality of our world is that, like it or not, it is pluralistic. We may be the sole superpower although our perch may be more temporary than we now think, but we cannot accomplish unilaterally what we crave. And, for better or for worse, our best institutional means of action is the United Nations. So, we must stop the pointless and often ridiculous game of deprecating the United Nations and start making it useful.

The United Nations is what the Allies made it at the end of the Second World War and what we insist it be today. No more, no less. Of course it is weak because that is the way we have wanted it to be. We initially opposed giving the senior members of the Security Council the veto, as the Russians insisted, but it is we who have used the veto far more than the Russians. The UN is a tool, a device, a construct which we use when it fits our purposes, neglect if we choose and blame if we fail.

We need to help the organization, both the bureaucracy and the policy making organs (the Security Council and the General Assembly), mature. In doing so, of course, we must also mature in our attitude toward it. We must agree to cooperate even when we do not always approve of decisions taken there. That is the essence of living in any community, even the world community.

A key aspect of the United Nations is its peace keeping role. Preferring to use its own forces under its own command, America has generally opposed the United Nations

¹⁶ Not for the first time. I identify 5 periods in American history when government played fast and loose with law: the 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts; President Lincoln's 1863 suspension of *habeas corpus* and the right of trial by jury. In 1917, Congress passed a new espionage and sedition act enabling the "Palmer raids." In 1942, ordered by President Roosevelt, the US Army rounded up 120,000 Japanese-Americans, most of whom were American citizens, and placed them in concentration camps. Then, McCarthyism swept America in the 1950s. After each period of wrongful government action and public clamor, Americans were horrified by what they had done. They recognized, as Justice Davis wrote for the Supreme Court in 1866, "By the protection of law human rights are secured; withdraw that protection, and they are at the mercy of wicked rulers, or the clamor of an excited people." Hopefully, they will again soon.

being strong enough to do its job. This has been a costly mistake. Wars could have been avoided or brought to a more rapid end; hundreds of thousands of people would have escaped massacre; and our own security would have been enhanced had the United Nations been able to evolve a “muscular” peace keeping force. Moreover, a truly international force would be far more acceptable in most troubled areas than a solely American force or an American-dominated coalition. Distressed people would see it as less of a challenge to their nationhood, less as a lone “gunslinger” than a police force in which they also participate. But such a force must be effective. To be effective, it will have to be in-being, not just slapped together in emergencies. It must be managed by a sort of general staff operating under the Secretary General at the order of the Security Council. Creating such an organization does not require that the United States or any other country give up its military forces. These will continue to be required for defense and to assuage national sensibilities, but, hopefully, they will be scaled back.

It follows that at least some of America’s current massive outlay on armaments and military forces can safely and profitably be redirected to programs of public health, education, development and the preservation of the world’s environment. The \$500 billion the United States spent on the Vietnam war and the comparable amount now being spent on Iraq were essentially wasted. Had even a small portion of those amounts been spent on useful ventures, the world in which we live would be more decent, more prosperous and less dangerous for us, for our children and for others. The best way to move in this direction is by using a strong United Nations supplemented where possible and appropriate by regional security organizations.

But, instead of thinking creatively and providing adequate funding for the United Nations, we have been attacking it with charges that, to say the least, are overblown. The furor over the 1990s Iraq “Oil-for-Food” program is the latest example. The program was set up, at the urging of the United States, by the Security Council where, of course, America has a veto over all decisions. To monitor the program, the Security Council, in turn, established the so-called 661 Committee, of which the United States was a prominent member. Now we are told that during this regime of control, some \$6 billion worth of oil was smuggled out of Iraq and that the United Nations is to blame.

The facts are rather different. Most of the oil was shipped through the Persian Gulf.

There, masquerading as a United Nations fleet, was the US Fifth Fleet (with a token number of other nations' ships) under the command of successive American admirals. Fifth Fleet boarding parties inspected the oil tankers and let most of them (the ones responsible for most of the \$6 billion worth of oil) pass. If anyone was at fault there, it was the United States government. The rest of the \$6 billion was derived by the sale of oil that went out by truck to Jordan and Turkey which, for understandable (and I believe justified) reasons, were "allowed" by the United States to break the boycott. But we have chosen to blame the United Nations for a policy we instituted, oversaw and condoned. It is hard to disagree with the charge that "the only role it seems the United States expects the UN to play in the continuing drama of Iraq is that of scapegoat."¹⁷ If it weren't so detrimental to our own long-term interests, the charge would be a joke.

Another, more dramatic, example of "scapegoating" occurred in the Somali campaign during the Clinton administration. A fairly accurate account was given in the film *Black Hawk Down*. As the film makes clear, the American commander did not consult with or even inform the commander of the resident UN peacekeeping force before his troops attacked Mogadishu. But, having failed in the attack, he demanded to be rescued by the UN force. It did what it could. But, suddenly, the American operation became a UN operation and for this the UN was severely blamed.

Instead of engaging in such sophomoric antics, we need to get serious about the UN. We can hold it to higher standards only if we are honest with it, involve it in our actions and adequately fund it. It will never be perfect – what organization is? – but to adapt the American "Cowboy Philosopher" Will Rogers's lampoon of the American congress, while it may be a terrible system, anything else would be worse. During my time in government – and since – we have criticized but never made any serious and sustained effort to improve. Doing so should be a high American policy priority.

4

What is now being done about terrorism has proven ineffective. We begin with

¹⁷ Joy Gordon, "The UN is US: Exposing Saddam Hussein's silent partner," *Harpers*, December 2004.

misunderstanding what “terrorism” is.¹⁸ It is not a thing, a place or a group. To speak of waging war on it is vacuous. It is simply a tactic which is used in desperation by those who do not have power comparable to those they regard as their enemies. It is the weapon of the weak.

There are several reasons for our failure to develop a strategy to counter it. The fundamental reason is that large numbers of people believe that it is their only means of action. Most believe themselves to be under alien occupation and are fighting desperately to liberate themselves. In Iraq the struggle is against our occupation. In what is left of Palestine it is against the Israeli occupiers (who most non-Americans see as American surrogates). In Çeçnya (Chechnya) it is against the Russians. This form of nationalist struggle is age old. Our ancestors used terrorism in the mainly guerrilla war we call the American Revolution; the Armenians used it against the Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the 20th century; the Irish used it for centuries against the British; various underground resistance movements in Europe used it against the Germans during the Second World War. In recent times, it has been played out against the British (Kenya and elsewhere), Belgians (The Congo), French (Algeria) and Chinese (Tibet and Sinkiang or “Turkistan”). When we approved their cause, we regarded them as “freedom fighters.” When we did not, we called them “terrorists.”

A second kind of motivation arises when groups of people regard their governments as corrupt, anti-national and/or unreligious. The predominant current example is the collection of different ethnic groups we lump together as *al-Qa^cida* and believe to be controlled by Usama bin Ladin. These groups target us because they believe that we are the upholders of regimes they regard as tyrannical. Having despaired of secular nationalism, these people have espoused religious fundamentalism – they think of their movement as *sala^fiya*. The word means both to “return” and to “advance.” It is roughly the mindset of the European and American Puritan movement which similarly adopted the notion that they were delegated by God to cleanse the world. Its beliefs are strikingly similar, with the change of a few names and dates, to religious fundamentalism among Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Christians.

¹⁸ Although partly for reasons different from mine, this is the point made by the former White House counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke in *Against All Enemies* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

The nature of the groups that participate in this form of violent theology and/or violent politics is complex. In my study of all the major examples of guerrilla warfare since the Second World War, I concluded that in every episode, it was possible and useful to identify five major groups. The first, obviously, was made up of combatants or, as the French called them in occupied France and colonial Algeria, *résistants*. They are necessarily few in number. In the Algerian war, they never numbered over about 13,000 at any given time; in occupied France that was about the number before the German collapse; in Iraq, the number is about the same today. In what used to be the Palestine Mandate, they are far fewer. They are the people the great practitioner of guerrilla warfare, Mao Zedong, referred to as the “fish.”

Supporting them are people Mao called “the sea.” While they carry on their normal functions in society, they supply, hide and give information to the combatants. They also are the recruiting ground from which killed or captured combatants are replaced. This group numbers many times the actual fighting force. Its numbers vary with the intensity of the conflict but usually can be estimated to at least 20 times the number of combatants.

The third group is an opportunistic criminal element which is given scope by the breakdown of public order that is an inevitable consequence of guerrilla warfare. It is usually quite small but overlaps with and is tolerated or encouraged by the combatants both because it distracts their enemies and because it often is a source of funds. Occasionally, it merges into the ranks of the combatants. Armenian terrorists in Istanbul occasionally robbed banks; the IRA has done the same; and, in Iraq today, criminal gangs kidnap people from whom ransoms can be collected. In Afghanistan, Çeçnya and Colombia, drug dealing plays a similar role.

The fourth and largest group is made up of those who simply want to be left alone. They can be radicalized by the policies of the occupying power, by nationalism or by religion but, as a group, they are generally passive victims. The fifth group is made up of those who support the regime. In the American Revolution, these people were called “Loyalists” and in Algeria they formed the basis for the French–empowered *harkis* (auxiliary or light troops). In the defeat of the dominant regime, they are usually forced into exile as the Loyalists were to Canada and the *harkis* and others were to France.

It does not appear that the American government fully understands what motivates

these separate groups or how they interact.

In Iraq, the major American thrust has been against the combatants. This tactic has never worked. As individuals are put out of action, jailed or killed, others replace them. Consequently, terrorism or guerrilla warfare can last for centuries (as it did in Ireland and has in Çeçnya). America and other powers have been operating at the wrong end of the challenge. Even if the repression is absolutely brutal, as practiced by the British in Kenya, the French in Algeria, the Russians in Çeçnya and the Israelis in Palestine, the more hatred is generated and the more people move from the group that is passive to the group that is supportive of the combatants.

History shows that the only way to stop the fighting is to dry up the “sea.” That is, when enough of the society believes that it has achieved a satisfactory result of the struggle, it ceases to support the combatants. That is not the result of such gimmicks as “civic action” or even of genuine aid projects but only when the irritant, the outside power, leaves. The sequence is: sovereignty comes before security, not, as we are attempting in Iraq, to achieve security before according sovereignty. That is what happened in Ireland in 1921, in what became Israel in 1948, in Algeria in 1962. Northern Ireland, in Çeçnya, Occupied Palestine and Iraq illustrate what happens when the dominant power attempts to reverse the order: the war continues.

In short, it is evident that terrorism or guerrilla warfare arises from political motivations and therefore must be addressed in those terms. Unless the dominant power is willing to engage in genocide, as the Romans did against the Britons, (occasioning Tacitus’s famous remark that the Romans “create a desolation and call it peace”) it cannot be defeated by military means. Indeed, the more powerful and pervasive the military suppression, the more members of the “sea” become “fish.” We see this in Iraq. There, virtually the entire non-Kurdish population is made up of people who have lost relatives, friends, neighbors and their property in the counter-guerrilla/terrorist war. The numbers illustrate the point. In 2003, American intelligence estimated the active combatants at a few hundred; in early 2004, the estimates had risen to a few thousand; today they stand at 15-20 thousand.

The longer the clash lasts, the more profound its aftereffects. A prolonged clash inevitably distorts, wounds and dehumanizes both the dominant power and its opponents.

The chaos it creates breeds warlords, gangsters and thugs as we see so clearly today in Afghanistan and Çeçnya. Algeria still has not recovered from the brutal war it fought against colonial France from 1830 to 1962. Worse, in fighting the inevitably dirty war, the dominant power engages in tactics that corrupt its own values. The very civilization of France was nearly ruined by the Algerian war; the early Zionists would be horrified by what is happening to the Israelis in their occupation of the Palestinians; and I shudder to think of the effect of American tactics (and individual fear) on the young Americans engaged in Iraq. Humiliating actions, torture, even murder become habitual.

The American government, forgetting our own “freedom fighters,” proclaims terrorism irredeemably evil. But, understandably, it does not always and everywhere oppose terrorism. We and the British supported attempts at terrorism against the occupying Nazi forces in various parts of Europe during the Second World War. We were intimately involved with terrorist groups in Central America during the Reagan Administration. More recently, it appears the US government is giving covert arms assistance to a Colombian anti-FARQ paramilitary group which it has labeled terrorist.¹⁹ This is dangerously short-sighted as was our condonance of the Nicaraguan Contra rebels and Guatemalan death squads.

What America needs to do is to align its policies in accord with President Woodrow Wilson’s proclamation on self-determination of peoples. We live in a world of states but there are many nations that have not achieved statehood. That is, they are communities which are linked by culture, ethnicity and neighborhood but live in states where they are regarded and regard themselves as alien. Most of the tumult so evident in our times is a result of this anomaly: the politically deprived groups struggle to achieve self-determination. The histories of the Kurds, Palestinians, Çeçens are only the more familiar of the experiences of dozens of unfulfilled nations. Once, America was a beacon of hope for them. We should aspire to become that again. But, above all, we must avoid actions that others will see as an attack on their sense of nationhood. That is where we must begin the “war on terrorism.”

5

America’s policy on intelligence, everyone agrees, needs revision, but I believe that

¹⁹ Frank Smyth, “US Arms for Terrorists?” (*The Nation*, June 13, 2005.)

the ways and means now being suggested are inadequate or inappropriate. To explain this, it is necessary first to disaggregate what we mean by intelligence. It falls into three categories: collection of information, evaluation of information and espionage. America generally does an excellent job collecting information. Most of what it gets, of course, is from “open” sources that are available to us all if we spend the time and look hard enough to acquire it. Less available is “esoteric” information acquired by intercepts of communications, code breaking and imagery. We tap virtually every telephone call made anywhere in the world, have broken virtually all secret codes and overfly with aircraft or satellites every actual or potential trouble spot.

During the Eisenhower administration, we evolved competent means to evaluate this information. The Office of National Estimates and the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research produced independent “appreciations” or forecasts based on the whole range of available information.²⁰ In political and military affairs, they performed the function of an engineering consultant in a construction project or Consumers’ Union in retailing: offering the best available advice. Sometimes, of course, they were wrong, but when they were downgraded, avoided or replaced, as in the build-up to the 1961 Cuban Bay of Pigs fiasco²¹ and the 2003 American invasion of Iraq,²² the results were far worse.

The third category of intelligence, covert action or espionage, is often called “dirty tricks.” It is a very old game.²³ In my time in government, everyone joked about but was secretly fascinated by what might be called the “James Bond Syndrome.” A shrewd, unbelievably sophisticated and utterly amoral “007” was very appealing to men like President Kennedy who often found themselves blocked by bureaucratic inertia, fear and law. It was apposite that James Bond was British because the real life CIA had learned its trade at the feet of British masters. Their code had two rules: be successful but don’t get caught. Alas, the British were not very good at either, and their American students in

²⁰ The “philosopher” of American intelligence evaluation was Sherman Kent whose book, *Strategic Intelligence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949) is the “Bible” in this field.

²¹ The Office of National Estimates was “cut out” of information on the operation planned and executed by the operational wing of CIA.

²² The Department of Defense created a separate organization, the “Office of Special Plans” headed by Abram Shulsky to evaluate information in a way that would justify policy, thus violating the essential element in evaluation, independence.

²³ See *Neighbors and Strangers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), Part 5.

the predecessor to CIA, the OSS, copied many of their mistakes. That was bad but what was worse was when they succeeded.

A big early “success” was the coup mobilized by Kermit Roosevelt of the CIA with the help of Montgomery Woodhouse of MI-6 in Iran.²⁴ By overthrowing the elected government of Mohamed Mossadegh, they started the disastrous sequence of events that led to the establishment of the current Iranian government. From Iran, we moved covertly to install a number of regimes and strongmen who became the bane of our existence and who compromised the principles for which we stood. Our botched attempts to murder Castro and Nasser, among others, scotched trends that might have made solving problems in a more constructive fashion difficult or impossible.²⁵

Even in less dramatic episodes, these activities denigrated the normal relationships America had fostered through diplomacy. American ambassadors were often not informed about what the CIA was doing in the countries to which they were accredited; being “out of the loop,” they could not effectively represent America. Rulers like the Shah of Iran quickly perceived that the CIA Station Chief was a better contact.²⁶ So often were the “back stairs” used that the front stairs became shabby and rickety. The long term effects of covert action were detrimental to America and tended to undercut and cheapen its image as a democratic, constructive member of the world community.

In sum, covert action sounds cheap and easy but in practice it never is. We should quickly phase out of this dirty business.

6

The United States is upheld and given its character by a tripod: one leg is the popular participation in government; the second leg is an informed public; and the third is

²⁴ His account is *Countercoup: The Struggle for Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).

²⁵ President Nasser discovered the assassination plot. So when President Eisenhower sent an ambassador to lecture him on the rule of law and the need for constructive action in the concourse of nations, he was nonplused. As he told me later, he puzzled over whether the ambassador was a fool or just thought Nasser was. In fact, American ambassadors were often not informed of what the CIA was doing in the countries to which they were accredited.

²⁶ Blame fell on both sides. The Station chief was often aggressive and able while some ambassadors were weak and did not wish to know what might embarrass them. A personal note: sent to admonish the Shah of Iran on his wasteful, ineffectual and dangerous arms procurement policy, I was accompanied by Ambassador Julius Holmes. All the way to the ski resort where we were to meet, Holmes lectured me on the protocol of entering and leaving the monarch’s presence. When we met the Shah, it was obvious that he was as bored as I was by the trivial ambassador.

the economy. I will touch on these only briefly as they are generally familiar.

Popular participation is not only embedded in the Constitution but is practiced in our neighborhoods and towns. Very few other societies are so participatory as America's. As citizens we are accustomed to strike out on our own, to assemble to express our opinions and to form associations to act outside government to solve local problems. This is America's greatest strength.

Unfortunately, we have not been so successful in creating an informed public although we have been repeatedly warned of the consequences of our failure. Thomas Jefferson put it succulently in 1816 when he wrote, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Poll after study illustrates how bad our educational system is. Even college students are woefully ignorant of even where countries are.²⁷ When we, as citizens, vote for those who today almost literally run the world, we need to know more than where countries are; we need to understand at least the rudiments of their history, politics and culture. Yet studies show that even college graduates cannot describe neighboring Mexico and Canada. Africa and Asia are, literally, beyond the pale.

To make matters worse, an attack has been mounted in our colleges and universities to silence those whose avocation it is to teach us about other peoples and other cultures. Called "Campus Watch,"²⁸ it aims to implant in America a form of denunciation for unorthodox opinions – getting students to "report" on teachers -- that its

²⁷ A National Geographic Society survey showed that only 13% of American college students could find Iraq on a map on the eve of the 2003 war. As a former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Crowe, wryly remarked, "Wars are God's way of teaching Americans geography." Another study found that one in each 10 young Americans could not find even America on a blank map of the world. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 2003).

²⁸ Viewable under www.campus-watch.org Similar to the way that the McCarthyites attacked specialists on China who (correctly) predicted the fall of Chiang Kai-shek, Martin Kramer has attacked specialists on the Middle East in the Department of State (in *Ivory Towers in the Sand*, Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy) while Daniel Pipes, astonishingly recently appointed to the board of the United States Institute of Peace, has orchestrated campaigns against professors in American universities who have been critical of American and Israeli policy in the Middle East. Inspired by Pipes and Kramer, Senator Rick Santorum has written a bill which only George Orwell could have imagined, entitled "Ideological Diversity to cut federal funding from colleges and universities that permit teachers and students from criticizing Israeli policies. Santorum's colleague Sam Brownback wants to go even further, to create what would amount to an ideological police force. (Michael C. Piper, www.americanfreepress.net April 21, 2003).

creators among the Neoconservatives must have learned from Communist Russia, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. It is profoundly “un-American,” destructive and detrimental to our national health and security. We Americans are a microcosm of the world community: we come in all colors, believe in all religions, speak all languages – we are, as our motto proclaims, *e pluribus*. In our quest for *unum*, we would be the poorer for forgetting our roots and ceasing to enjoy our differences. It is our diversity which makes our country rich and varied and which enables peoples all over the world to empathize with us.

It isn't only schools that are deficient in giving us what we need to prosper in the world. In large areas of the country newspapers pay little attention to world or national events and television offers little more. Perhaps there are sound commercial reasons for this since approximately 50 million Americans cannot read above a primary school level. So, dulled by television snippets of news, politicians' “photo opportunities” and radio “sound bites,” the American public appears to have little appetite for analysis of complex issues.

Almost worse, in the flow of news, there is little memory so what is reported one day is drowned out by subsequent events or simply dropped from coverage. This makes achieving a coherent account of any situation almost impossible for the average reader.²⁹ Taken together, the schools, the press and the government create a contrast between what we actually know and what we need to know frightens and appalls our allies and gives comfort to our enemies.

The third leg of the tripod that upholds America is the economy. Today, we can see that strength melting before our eyes. Were it not for the Chinese willingness to fund our rapidly growing debt, the dollar would be near collapse. Respected, conservative and experienced businessmen agree with former Secretary of Commerce (in the Nixon administration) Peter Peterson that “to commit America to a broader role [in foreign affairs] while remaining blindly ignorant of the ultimate cost of doing so is sheer folly.”³⁰ He points out that as of last year, the United States was borrowing \$540 billion – the figure has now risen to \$666 billion -- yearly from the rest of the world and that such men

²⁹ See Michael Massing, “Unfit to Print?” (*The New York Review of Books*, June 24, 2004).

³⁰ “Riding for a Fall,” (*Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2004).

as former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin doubt that we can escape a crisis and doubt that “the US current account deficit is sustainable at current levels for much longer than five more years.” The total national debt America had accumulated in its whole history when Mr. Bush was elected is expected to double during his time in office.³¹ A forum of financial experts pointed out that “respected credit agency recently noted that by 2026, barring a change in our fiscal policy, US Treasury bills – once the world’s de facto gold standard – will be classified as junk bonds.”³²

It is or should be crystal clear that if America does not get its own economic house in order, regardless of what else it does, it will not be able to continue to play a major role in world affairs.

7

In many ways, the Palestine problem is the most pervasive, complex and dangerous problem in American foreign policy. It is also the most difficult to address because it is so deeply embedded in guilt, emotion and fear as to be almost beyond rational thought. Americans, both government officials and private citizens, feel far freer to criticize America, Britain or France -- as I have done – without being thought to dislike or oppose the peoples of those countries, but most non-Jews are pathologically afraid of being charged with anti-Semitism even critical only of the hard-line policies of Ariel Sharon. This is not only demeaning to us but is no service to Israel or to Jews elsewhere. Israel is no longer, if it ever was, an international charity; it is a powerful, rich nation-state. It should be analyzed, as its own citizens analyze its actions, in respectful terms.

Like any other two states, Israel and America have national interests which do not always coincide. Only if the citizens of each rationally define their interests and understand what they are prepared to do to protect them can they correctly order and evaluate their relationship. Certainly that is how the Israelis themselves have always analyzed their relations with America. When Israel saw a conflict between its goals and ours, it naturally chose its own. America has seldom done so. At the governmental level

³¹ Nicholas D. Kristof, “Glide Path to Ruin,” (*New York Times*, June 25, 2005).

³² (*Harper’s Magazine* June 2005).

we tip-toe around issues which have severely harmed American interests,³³ closed our eyes to events which elsewhere and by other people we would oppose, in some cases even with military force,³⁴ and, despite our own fiscal problems, have been a cornucopia for Israel.³⁵ Mindful of the danger of being thought to be anti-Semitic, American specialists on the Middle East feel inhibited to say in public what their studies lead them to think.

Israelis act in a far more adult and secure fashion than Americans. Whereas Americans fear to criticize the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the outstanding Israeli scholar Avi Shlaim³⁶ was forthright in describing the Israeli occupation of Gaza. After pointing out that in Gaza the 8,000 Israeli settlers controlled 40% of the arable land and most of the water while the 1.3 million Palestinians struggle to exist in what little remains to them, he commented that the Israeli occupation “is a hopeless colonial enterprise,

³³ The Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon was profoundly disturbing to American relations throughout the Middle East; its policy toward the Palestinians has stopped the peace process and certainly promoted terrorism directed at America.

³⁴ Two of the most spectacular instances are when Israeli agents set fire to an American government library in Alexandria in 1954 in an attempt to damage Egyptian-American relations and when the Israeli air force and navy attempted in 1967 to sink a U.S. Naval ship, *USS Liberty*, during which attack 75 American servicemen were wounded and 34 were killed. They shot up even the life boats and life preservers with torpedo, machinegun, rocket and napalm fire, apparently attempting to ensure that there were no survivors. Such an attack by any other country in the world would almost certainly have provoked an immediate military reaction. Instead, at the order of President Johnson, the US Navy threatened with court-martial any crew member who revealed what had happened.

³⁵ We have given to Israel or provided in loans that were never expected to be repaid about \$100 billion, have given Israel special trade relationships that in some cases remove import duties we charge other countries and have subsidized Israel armaments industry even when it has thwarted American policy by selling arms where we are trying to prevent arms sales, as it did recently with China.

³⁶ Born in Baghdad in 1945, he grew up in Israel, served in the Israeli army and is now British Academy Research Professor of international relations at St Antony's College, Oxford. He also commented on what we all know that “American foreign policy has habitually displayed double standards toward the Middle East: one standard towards Israel and one towards the Arabs. To give just one example, the US effected regime change in Baghdad in three weeks but has failed to dismantle a single Jewish settlement in the occupied territories in 38 years.” Israel is now asking the US for \$2.2 billion in additional aid to pay for the withdrawal of the 8,000 Israeli settlers from illegal settlements. (AP & Reuters in *The International Herald Tribune*, July 12, 2005). Thus having subsidized the building of settlements, in contravention to international law, America is now expected to pay to dismantle them. If this practice were extended from Gaza to the West Bank, the money cost would be literally staggering. Worse has been the impact upon American relations with others of America's involvement with this aspect of Israeli policy.

accompanied by one of the most prolonged and brutal military occupations of modern times.” A non-Jewish American writing that would have been excoriated as anti-Semitic or even hounded from his academic or government post. This is unworthy of America and is misleading for the Israelis. Knowing that they have virtually a blank check to do as they wish, they pay little attempt to American government attempts to bring about conditions conducive to its interests in the Middle East. This is not to say that the Israelis are solely to blame; Americans are more at fault. The Israelis are merely acting rationally as they see their interests. It is America that is acting irrationally. Many senior and respected Israelis agree. They worry that the main beneficiary of the American weakness is the Israeli extreme Right and that Israeli’s long-term best interests, and even Israeli democracy, will suffer as a consequence.

It is long since past time for America to regularize its relationship with Israel as normal, state-to-friendly-state in ways that will help Israel come into accord with the achievement of peace in the Middle East. This is to the interest of both states and should be a high priority for America.

8

There are obviously many other aspects to a redesigned foreign policy for the United States, but most of them follow under the above headings. The principal issue is to renounce the quest for world domination and get back on the more positive, more humane and safer track that America staked out when it became the leader of mankind. In conclusion, it is evident that merely increasing the power, targeting and reach of what Aesop called "Wind" will not increase the security and well-being of any of us. What I have argued is needed is to shift from reliance on this kind of power to something that has a chance of working. Only through the refilling of the reservoir of good will toward America can we move again toward a world in which decency, respect for difference and the rule of law will recapture for America the position it once enjoyed.

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