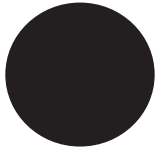


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Toward Universal Empire The Dangerous Quest for Absolute Security *David C. Hendrickson*

When the attacks of September 11 came, the jolt was so sudden and unexpected as to convince nearly all that we had entered a fundamentally new world. Indeed, in many respects it was obvious that we had. The sinister use of simple means to secure mass destruction was terrifying; and in the course of the weeks and months registering the disaster the president enjoyed a virtually free hand in defining the character of the American response. That response has included not only a justified war in Afghanistan to depose the Taliban but two other changes whose significance is likely to prove far-reaching: one is a pronounced emphasis on unilateral methods in the conduct of American foreign policy, the other a new American strategic doctrine of preventive war. Both changes represent a new orientation in American foreign policy that holds peril for the future; if realized, they will give an imperial dimension to American policy unmatched in prior experience. It may be an exaggeration to say that the American government is taking “hasty and colossal strides to universal empire,” as Alexander Hamilton said of the French Republic in 1798, but the line of march is very clear. It is toward a nation and an executive unburdened by traditional legal precepts and normative commitments to multilateral action, a vision that finds the constraints of international society an unwanted and unacceptable burden. It is toward universal empire.

The embrace of a doctrine of preventive war is a highly significant step. It represents a radical departure from the twin pillars of national security policy during the Cold

War—containment and deterrence. It is also contrary to a long established rule in international society that forbids the first use of force altogether or save in narrowly drawn circumstances. The norm against preventive war became embedded because experience with the contrary practice, which permitted states perfect discretion in the use of force, had led to results nearly fatal to civilization. That perception prompted the search for restraints on the first use of force and aggression that were registered, successively, in the League of Nations, the United Nations, and NATO. In the epoch of the world wars, doctrines of preventive war were closely identified with the German and Japanese strategic traditions, not with that of the United States.

The second factor that has distinguished the Bush administration is its penchant for unilateral action. This was a marked propensity before September 11, and that event served only to deepen it. Reflecting the general tendency has been the sour and unconstructive withdrawal from the Kyoto accord on climate change, the maniacal opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and—most astonishingly in light of the president’s declared commitment to free trade—the imposition of high tariffs on steel. But the propensity toward unilateral measures has above all been marked in the conduct of the war on terrorism and in the strategic doctrine that has emerged in its course. That doctrine sees the United States as possessing a kind of *carte blanche* to act

on behalf of the perceived exigencies of its national interest and of international security. Even when the administration makes an approach to international institutions, as it did in its September 2002 demands on the U.N. Security Council, it does so with the explicit reservation that it intends to pursue in any event its chosen course, thus impugning the authority of the council even in the appeal to it. Nor does NATO, the security arm of Western civilization, count in this reckoning. The U.S.-European disparity in military contribution and expenditure—destined to grow even larger over the next several years—is seen to legitimate a power over peace and war that belongs to us alone by virtue of our preeminent power.

The acceptance of preventive war and the rejection of multilateralism are momentous steps. They promise to change our role in the world as profoundly as the attacks of September 11 increased the felt vulnerability of the ordinary American citizen. How far this new orientation in American foreign policy will run can only be speculative, but it is the proposition of this essay that if the tendency runs far it will lead to ruin. It stands in direct antagonism to fundamental values in our political tradition. It will almost certainly give rise to countervailing trends in the international system that are contrary to our interests. Finally, it threatens to wreck an international order that has been patiently built up for 50 years, inviting a fundamental de-legitimation of American power.

The Power Problem

The doctrine that power needs restraint, and that overbearing and unbounded power constitutes a danger to both order and liberty, is an old one. When John Adams said that “jealousies and rivalries have been my theme, and checks and balances as their antidotes, till I am ashamed to repeat the words,” he expressed an idea that entered deeply into both early American diplomacy and the formation of the federal constitu-

tion. The one great work of political theory produced in the United States—*The Federalist* essays written at the time of the ratification of the Constitution—is a brilliant and relentless demonstration of the perversity of failing to provide such checks among human beings “remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue.” The genealogy of the doctrine, however, reaches much further back than the eighteenth century. Long before it was instantiated in the American constitutional regime, hostility to any situation of unbounded power was a staple of constitutional thought, being registered in various ways by Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero among the ancients, and by Locke, Montesquieu, and Bolingbroke among the moderns.

The same insight came to be applied to the international system and to the sphere of diplomacy. The theme is heralded, at the very outset of Western civilization, by the resistance of the Greek city-states to the bid for universal dominion made by the Persian emperor Xerxes, who had wished to “so extend the empire of Persia that its boundaries will be God’s own sky,” and who believed that “there is not a city or nation in the world which will be able to withstand us, once these are out of the way.” It found expression in opposition to the corruptions that befell the universal empire of Rome, which lost its republican freedom and became a menace to the world when it became too powerful. Resistance to universal empire has also been a consistent thread of modern thought since the Protestant Reformation. It gained moral authority in the struggle of the Dutch provinces against the religious intolerance and despotic ambition of the Spanish kings. It was a mainstay of British foreign policy in the eighteenth century, and the basis of the claim that Britain protected the public liberties of Europe. It then passed on to the American founders and their epigones. In thought and experience, resistance to universal empire is coeval with the history of civil liberty.

It seems to be a feature of universal empire that states that rose on the basis of opposition to it have often found in the fullness of their power a basis for departing from the doctrine of their youth. Thus did Athens move from a position of first among equals to hegemony and then to despotic empire as it went from the Persian Wars to the wars of the Peloponnesus. Thus, too, did Great Britain, after having lambasted for a century the French bid for universal monarchy, find itself the recipient of the same charge during the War of American Independence—with the Americans denouncing “those schemes of universal empire which the virtue and fortitude of America first checked, and which it is the object of the present war to frustrate.”

Eighteenth-century Americans were not alone in treating universal empire as inconsistent with the preservation of the international system and of the liberties of states. Montesquieu, Vattel, Hume, Robertson, Burke, and Gibbon had all considered the theme, and were as one in regarding universal empire as, in Alexander Hamilton’s words, a “hideous project.” Up until the globalized age of the twentieth century, the term usually did not connote the literal domination of the earth, but rather dominance and mastery over a wide swath of peoples (who should otherwise, by virtue of proximity or interaction, form a system of states). Above all, it meant any situation in which one monarchy or state was in a position to give the law to the others; such a power, these eighteenth-century luminaries believed, was not to be borne.

Alongside the theme that universal empire was a menace was the proposition that it would recoil upon its authors. It was, in other words, not only a danger to others; it was a threat to its possessors. “Enormous monarchies,” Hume wrote, “are, probably, destructive to human nature; in their progress, in their continuance, and even in their downfall, which never can be very distant from their establishment.” Hume

traced out, as had Montesquieu, a natural process by which unbounded power turned on itself: “Thus human nature checks itself in its airy elevation; thus ambition blindly labours for the destruction of the conqueror.” The following two centuries gave ample evidence that Hume had seen a fundamental pattern in the world of states: what better summation is there of the fate of the successive bids for universal empire by Napoleonic France, Imperial and Nazi Germany, and Stalinist Russia? In the dreadful careers of these obscenely militarized powers, did not ambition blindly labor for the destruction of the conqueror?

The American Difference

When America rose to superpowerdom in the course of the Second World War, it did not take these grim examples as any kind of precedent, and its leaders would have found contemptible the proposition that because the European powers did iniquitous acts when they were at the top of the international system, the United States enjoyed the right to do them too. This country stood for a different principle. Believing deeply in the normative legitimacy of a world ordered by law, American leaders not only contained the unbounded power of the Soviet Union but also created an array of international institutions that embedded American power in a system of reciprocal restraints. In their totality, these approximated a constitutional system within the Western world. At the moment of truth, America rejected both isolationism and imperialism, opting instead to construct a constitutional partnership of free nations in the struggle with the totalitarian enemy. “From the beginning,” as presidential adviser Walt Rostow put it in 1967, “our objective was not to build an empire of satellites but to strengthen nations and regions so that they could become partners.”

The complex web of international institutions that arose after the war owed much, nearly everything, to American leadership.

Now an object of profound suspicion among apostles of the new empire, those institutions then expressed a grand design that entailed a novel bargain: we bid fair to surrender the policy of the lone hand in exchange for allied support of a liberal international order. Today's cheerleaders for unilateral methods have convinced themselves that the more our power grows, the less we have need of others, and hence the more we can consult a purely national standard. As the architects of the postwar order understood, however, the reverse is true. The more powerful the state, the more important that it submit to widely held norms and consensual methods. The more it overawes the remainder of the system, the more vital it is that restraints are laid upon that power, either by itself or by others. It is to the enduring fame of that generation of American statesmen that they imbibed that lesson, as it was the genius of the postwar system to have instantiated it.

The importance of multilateralism is often misunderstood, even by its advocates. Usually, the subordination to international norms, of either a substantive or procedural kind, is justified simply on the ground of interest. In fact, the central question these norms and procedures raise is one of legitimacy. It is generally true, as the multilateralists insist, that if you want to get your way in the world, you had best do so through working with others. But surrounding these calculations of interest—existing, as it were, in the atmosphere within which these passions and interests get registered and adjusted—is the more basic question of authority as distinguished from power. Like confidence in the financial markets, the aura of legitimacy is a difficult achievement requiring years of patient labor and the steady observance of exacting standards. Also like confidence, legitimacy can vanish in a hurry and, once lost, is very difficult to regain. Once lost, even proper consultations of the national interest are called into question by others, and the whole can

easily then seem a hive of imperial pretension and naked self-interest.

Unfortunately, American students of international politics are not well placed to understand the importance of legitimacy; nearly all the internal debates within the discipline have conceived of states as utility-maximizers on a primitive Benthamite model. Adopting a utilitarian conception of what motivates human beings, the discipline has little to say about what gives rise to, and what might prevent, a loss of legitimacy. Among the professors, instead, we have seen the adoption of the same view of human motivation that Madame de Staël, an astute observer, once attributed to Napoleon. The first consul, she noted, “considers every kind of morality a formula which has no more significance than the complimentary close of a letter. . . . Bonaparte believes that anyone who says he loves liberty, or believes in God, or prefers a clear conscience to self-interest, is just a man following the forms of etiquette to explain his ambitious pretensions or selfish calculations.” This dreary mistake, now so common, was not made by the early adepts of the science of politics, who put questions of legitimacy or authority at the center of their investigations. “Men are not corrupted,” wrote Tocqueville, “by the exercise of power or debased by the habit of obedience, but by the exercise of a power which they believe to be illegitimate, and by obedience to a rule they consider to be usurped and oppressive.” Authoritative rule was seen as important not only in itself, and as vital to liberty, but also because the loss of authority was so crucial a factor in explaining events, especially the great turning points in history. In the estimation of the most penetrating thinkers, neither the experience of modern revolution nor the rise and fall of empire could be understood without reference to questions of legitimacy.

There is no simple way of articulating the complex bargains that have underlain the legitimacy of American power. Some

multilateral restraints are substantive, and consist in adherence to treaties and other rules of international law; others are procedural, and require the pursuit of an international concert. So far as decisions concerning war and peace are concerned, probably the most important substantive rule is the presumptive judgment against the first use of force. So far as procedural requirements in this domain are concerned, the two most important institutions have been the U.N. Security Council and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At no time in the last 50 years has the United States stood in such antagonism to both the primary norms and the central institutions of international society. The reason is not difficult to find. These rules and institutions convey a simple message to the Bush administration: by right you should not do what you want to do (invade Iraq, wage preventive wars, etc.). Hence these normative and institutional restraints have been belittled and demeaned by the administration, as relics of a former age. On present trends, they may indeed lose their relevance to international relations. If they fall, however, they will fall like a strong man, and will shake the legitimacy of American power.

Don't Get Carried Away

The application of these considerations to particular circumstances will inevitably spawn disagreement, even among those who accept their general tenor. The doctrine that power needs constraint, and that such constraints have been and ought to be supplied by the American commitment to international law and multilateral decision-making, does not mean that every internationalist venture is of equal merit, or indeed of any merit at all. Nor in our awe over the formidable character of American military power should we forget that our power to resolve certain burning conflicts in the world is in fact severely limited. The controversy over the International Criminal Court illustrates the first point; the Israeli-Palestinian con-

flict, whose solution under American auspices is a recurring demand of European opinion, is an illustration of the second.

The ICC has a tangled history. Fostered in the early-to-mid-nineties climate of humanitarian intervention, it arose initially as a joint American–European–Latin American enterprise to complement the menu of U.N. peacekeeping operations. Even with the waning of a political commitment to multilateral intervention, and despite subsequent American reservations and nonparticipation, the Rome Statute continued to gain adherents, and in 2002 the new court opened for business.

That the ICC will have a beneficial impact on international security is often alleged, but it is in fact quite doubtful. Among the oldest rules in the diplomat's canon is the proposition that if you want to make a negotiated peace you may need to waive punishment for previous offenses. Amnesties for previous offenses are features of nearly all conflicts that are settled by compromise and not by the all-out victory of one side. Even in cases of lopsided victory, subsequent judicial intervention may interfere with the requirements of political reconstruction. It is, however, in the cases that must be negotiated and that fall well short of decisive victory where the influence of the ICC could prove most pernicious. Experience shows that men can be persuaded to give up power or lay down their arms if they can be assured of a place where they can die in bed and in oblivion. In effect, the existence of the ICC is a standing impediment to this time-honored device. The more powerful the court seems to be—the more, that is, it seems capable of exercising the deterrent effect promised by its advocates—the more palpable this danger becomes. The ability of the court to call into question the political settlements that follow horrific conflicts is a loose cannon, and the threat of subsequent prosecution may operate to prevent such settlements from being made at all, at serious cost in human life. That is a huge penalty,

and it suggests that the ICC will detract from rather than contribute to the cause of international security.

The United States, of course, has not opposed the court for this reason. Washington would have been delighted with an arrangement that allowed the international community to prosecute whom it wished while exempting U.S. soldiers and officials from exposure (which placing the ICC under the jurisdiction of the Security Council, as the Clinton administration proposed, would have done). The other signatories, however, would not agree, and hence the possibility of prosecutions against American personnel remains. The court may bring a suit only if national courts do not act or if their judgments are questionable, and to move forward it needs the consent of the state on the territory of which the conduct occurred or the state of which the person accused is a national.

Faced with the modest danger of such prosecutions—one that could easily have been met at the time of the hypothetical evil—the administration instead threatened to veto the entire structure of U.N. peace-keeping operations, and did in fact veto the continuation of the U.N. mission in Bosnia (a step subsequently withdrawn). It then demanded from NATO members separate bilateral pacts with the United States, and said that failure to comply would threaten the American relationship with the recalcitrants in all other areas. These were grossly excessive reactions. Opposition that might have been made on the basis of a principled adherence to the demands of international security was turned, in the administration's skillful hands, into a symbol of the very reasoning to which the world objects: We get to make the rules, but do not think they should apply to us. Unless we get our way, even in minor episodes, we'll shut down the system of international cooperation. Such dictatorial language is both insufferable and unnecessary, and our allies have every right to protest it.

If a sincere commitment to internationalism does not require us to embrace the ICC, it also cannot make us responsible for the settlement of intractable conflicts that are in fact beyond our power to resolve. A seldom-remarked liability of the imperial role is that it encourages what a British observer, D. W. Brogan, once called "the illusion of American omnipotence." As with the problem of theodicy—Why does God allow evil in the world?—an imperial America that celebrates its unbounded power is going to get repeatedly the same question.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a case in point. It needs no proof to show the desirability of settling this conflict, and it seems just as obvious that any settlement will constitute some variation on the terms Israeli and Palestinian negotiators came close to in the final days of the Clinton administration. At the same time, the ability of the United States to impose such a settlement is virtually nil in current circumstances. Taking the limiting case, in which we laid out the terms of a "just" settlement and threatened unacceptable consequences to the parties if they didn't take it, the basis for success seems altogether lacking.

First, such an American initiative would reward the Palestinian recourse to suicide bombers, with their wanton and indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civil society. Those are methods that we, along with our friends, have an interest and a duty to oppose stoutly. Second, the Palestinians are on present evidence incapable of constituting a unified authority that can bring the terrorist attacks to an end. Even if we delivered the Palestinian leadership, the Palestinians cannot deliver themselves. Finally, the threat to abandon Israel would risk serious consequences in both the short and the long term. To pressure Israel to give up the settlements for peace, when peace is in prospect, is one thing, but to threaten abandonment when the Palestinians have chosen war is quite another. In addition to various lateral hazards—the absence of support

in American public opinion, the likely strengthening of the extreme right in Israeli politics—such a threat would also compromise what is likely to be an essential ingredient of any future settlement: an Israeli conviction that Israel will not be isolated when its existence is imperiled and can thus safely make the sacrifices necessary for peace.

Given those constraints on policy, an American diktat would inevitably recoil on the dictator (and this at home as well as abroad). As the mediator of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States is indeed “the indispensable nation,” but it cannot bring a settlement of that dispute unless the parties to the conflict want it. On present evidence, they don’t.

The Iraqi Test

The immediate test of the American commitment to the norms and institutions of international society comes not in these areas but in the administration’s approach to the use of force in the ongoing war on terrorism. From the first moments after the September massacres, the administration has wanted to extend its net as widely as possible. It has foreseen a series of wars, a battle of long duration and various campaigns, and it has laid bare the strategic doctrine that would justify these wars. Though styled a doctrine of “preemption,” it is actually a doctrine of preventive war. Preventive war is when force is used only when it is apparent that the enemy is on the verge of striking, “leaving no moment for deliberation.” Preventive war is the first use of force to avert a more remote though still ostensibly formidable danger. It has a simple liturgy, historically sanctioned in the endless wars of the European state system. War, the advocates of prevention say, is inevitable anyway, so let’s fight it under circumstances of our own choosing. In the present case, we are told that once Iraq or other evil states develop the capability to hit us, they will hit us. Ergo, we must

strike to avert the threatened calamity, and sooner rather than later.

Such a war is entirely distinguishable in justification from that which toppled al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Then the United States justifiably made war in response to direct attacks on its soil. Since Saddam’s complicity in those attacks has not been alleged by the administration, and cannot plausibly be inferred from the evidence thus far available, the justification for the war must rest on the aforementioned logic of prevention. That may not seem like much of a difference, but it is the difference in law between offensive and defensive war, and between aggression and self-defense. It is directly contrary to the principle that so often was the rallying cry of American internationalism in the twentieth century.

Deterrence won’t work against a madman such as Saddam, say the advocates of preventive war. They give no persuasive reasons, however, for their verdict. The cruelties and massacres that Saddam has committed while in power confirm rather than disprove the idea that he continues to place his survival and that of his regime at the top of his priorities. Indeed, there is only one circumstance in which one must anticipate his use of any and all means: in the bunker, facing the end of his regime and himself—in the course, that is, of a war to do him in. There is considerable uncertainty over where Iraq stands in its ability to make use of chemical or biological agents currently in its possession, or at what point it could achieve a nuclear capability. But since Saddam’s use of such weapons is most likely in the course of a war to eliminate him, and not likely at all as a “bolt from the blue,” preventive war is a gambler’s substitute for the safer method of containment and deterrence. The risk is not negligible that the first use of force could bring on the very mass destruction we fear. If that occurs anywhere as a consequence of the war, even in Iraq, the remedy must be judged far worse than the disease.

Despite being in a much more favorable military position in 2002 than in 1990, when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia, we take no consolation from our undoubted ability to destroy the regime in the event it did lash out. The loss of faith in deterrence was a marked feature of the last phase of the Cold War, one to which both left and right made important contributions, but its record during that long conflict is far better than the historical record of preventive war. Having lost faith in deterrence, the Bush administration has an almost touching faith in the ability of war to solve our security problems. Forgotten is the old lesson that war is capable of enormous surprises and unexpected consequences, and that even victory can spawn among the defeated social consequences that constitute a profound barrier to a durable peace. Forgotten, too, is that the same things now said of Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong Il were once said of Stalin, Khrushchev, and Mao, and preventive war against their regimes was urged upon the United States with arguments no different from those used today. Was it unwise for successive administrations to resist those pleas?

None of this is to deny that there is a case for finishing the job left undone at the end of the Gulf War. The way that war ended created a far-from-ideal situation. War, it turned out, was not the father of peace. Instead hot war was followed by a decade of quasi-war, continued sanctions, and much Iraqi misery. Unexpectedly, the legacy of the Gulf War was a situation that allowed neither an American advance nor an American retreat. So long as Saddam stayed in power, we would not give up the sanctions; absent another act of Iraqi aggression, however, there was also little prospect of reconstituting the powerful army that stood on Baghdad's doorstep in 1991. Strategically, this stalemate seemed to offer no serious threats to American interests, but morally and psychologically it was considered satisfactory

proof in the Arab world that the United States viewed with cold indifference the suffering of the Iraqi masses, a political fact that was not changed by American declarations that it was entirely Saddam's fault and that we had nothing to do in the matter.

It will be unpopular to say so, but the Gulf War and its aftermath played an important role in the inculcation of that implacable hatred that led to 9/11. The use of American power in the region was simply unprecedented. For the first time, the offshore maritime power made a huge commitment on land, and used force on a scale that was off the charts in comparison with its past record in the Arab world. The terrible suffering to both soldiers and civilians spawned by the war was the soil in which Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda formed their hideous purpose, and it counted at least as much as—I think more than—their hatred of the Jews or their outrage over the defilement of Saudi soil by American troops.

Would it be different this time around? Would America succeed in reconstructing the Iraqi regime, providing security for its peoples and the possibility of a new democratic start? That seems a dubious hope on which to pin a campaign, and the war in Afghanistan holds a lesson in this regard. Though it was apparent from the first moments that success in establishing a stable regime in that country would be a crucial test of American policy, the administration consistently subordinated that objective to the American way of war. Until its recent volte-face, the administration rejected not only American participation in a peacekeeping force but the extension of the force beyond Kabul and the offers of participation (since rescinded) of our European allies. Well after al-Qaeda and the Taliban were routed, when securing a stable government in Afghanistan was clearly the objective to which military operations should have been subordinated, the United States continued to operate under rules of engagement that were more appropriate to the intensive days

of the war—to the acute embarrassment of the Karzai government and at serious cost to its political viability.

Those failures were not accidental. At bottom they are rooted in an American approach to war that is singularly ill-fitted to the purposes of political reconstruction. This cherishes aerial attack as the instrument of our deliverance, and is profoundly hostile to exposing American ground forces. In this view, war is conceived as a short and sharp engagement, and the purpose of American arms is to rout the enemy and then get out. The idea that war is but the beginning of a long engagement, that commitment to war, if it is to be justified, must also be a commitment to peace and political reconstruction, because these alone can atone for the massive killing that war entails—such a view does not express a deep conviction even among U.S. elites, and the American people at large have no truck with it. Though such an aim would undoubtedly be incumbent on us were we to depose Saddam Hussein, it could easily get lost in the chapter of accidents normally incident to war and occupation.

For the American people, the case for a second Iraqi war must ultimately rest not on visions of peace through conquest and enlightened imperial administration but on the ground of “ultimate national security.” Such is where Henry Kissinger has placed the case for deposing Saddam. Kissinger acknowledges that preventive war to stop the development of weapons of mass destruction is a revolutionary departure from the past, but he is sufficiently alarmed by the danger (and sufficiently enthralled by a very optimistic reading of the regional political consequences flowing from the use of force) to recommend that policy. He has apparently forgotten a maxim of his first book, *A World Restored*, that “the distinguishing feature of a revolutionary power is not that it feels threatened—such feeling is inherent in the nature of international relations based on sovereign states—but that nothing can reassure

it. Only absolute security—the neutralization of the opponent—is considered a sufficient guarantee, and thus the desire of one power for absolute security means absolute insecurity for all the others.”

That depiction of the malady of the revolutionary power increasingly fits the United States; the inability to be reassured is reflected not only in the emerging doctrine of preventive war but also in the breakout from the ABM Treaty and overzealous measures for homeland security. The quest for absolute security is not only unreasonable in itself and productive of mischievous consequences for our own policy; it also gravely undermines the capacity of the United States to mediate intractable conflicts in whose peaceful resolution we have a stake. The advice the United States tenders to an India made insecure by terrorism and frightened by the development of nuclear weapons by its Pakistani adversary can then only be “Do as we say, not as we do.” That principle, if we may call it a principle, can only serve to undermine the efficacy of American diplomacy.

Safe Harbor

When September 11 occurred, the event was so shocking as to convince American leaders that we had entered a new age, and indeed the broad outlines of the new American policy have been revolutionary. They involve, in detail and in gross, a rejection of previous standards and doctrines that have long defined American statecraft and diplomacy. The embrace of preventive war is one such transgression; the rejection of containment and deterrence another; the feigned regard but real contempt for multilateralism is a third. The president has enjoyed near unlimited scope for carving out the long-term response to September 11. So far as the future of American strategy is concerned, this is what he has done with it.

There is another way. Rather than in the repudiation of past precepts, it consists in the cultivation of those standards, doctrines,

and principles that have accompanied America's rise to its present unparalleled position. Much as Americans found consolation for the terror in the bosom of their families and friends, and clung to them like a raft in a shipwreck, so must policy find in the past traditions of the United States the basis for a safe harbor. Especially in revolutionary times, it is a cardinal error to repudiate the past and to make a clean break from it, and

all such attempts to do so in history are simply a catalog of disasters. As a token of the clean break, moral, legal, and institutional restraints often go under in times of war and revolutionary crisis, as they threaten to go under here. Only in retrospect do people come to understand that it is precisely in those times when such restraints are most needed. ●