

For the United States government to shrug off those deaths with expressions of regret or offers of monetary compensation simply confirms the worst that others have come to believe: that Americans are callous and arrogant with little regard for the lives of Muslims.

In depicting the attack on the World Trade Center as the opening volley of a global war—a reprise of Dec. 7, 1941—the Bush administration spun the awful events of that day in the wrong direction. The Islamists may nurse bizarre dreams of restoring the caliphate, but their existing claim to political legitimacy is marginal. Al-Qaeda is not the Wehrmacht or the Red Army; it is an international conspiracy, one that committed a singularly heinous crime. Osama bin Laden is not Hitler or Stalin—as a historical figure he comes nowhere near their baneful significance. He is a Mafioso.

When gangs besiege a neighborhood, the authorities send in more cops. If the authorities are smart, they insist upon the cops playing by the rules. Winning back the streets means taking the thugs out of circulation while protecting those who obey the laws. Coercion wielded without restraint only makes matters worse.

So too with the threat posed by radical Islam. Preventing a recurrence of 9/11 requires not war on a global scale, but the sustained, relentless enforcement of international norms. The task requires not an army but a posse. Rather than invasions and stand-off missile attacks, we need police and intelligence agencies, backed by special-operations forces, bringing the perpetrators of terror to justice, while taking care not to incite more Muslims to join the Islamist cause.

On Sept. 11, 2001, the law-enforcement approach to dealing with the Islamist conspiracy did fail. Yet it failed not because such an approach is inherently defective but as a result of incompetence

and ineptitude at the highest levels of the United States government, evident in both Democratic and Republican administrations.

By the time this essay appears, the Bush administration will have moved on. As far as official Washington is concerned, the nameless, faceless dead of Damadola are already forgotten. Our warrior-president will continue to insist that we have no choice but to press on, seemingly blind to the moral havoc wreaked by his war and oblivious to the extent to which he is playing into the hands of our adversaries.

But our own interests demand that we not forget those whom we have killed. At Damadola we have handed the Islamists a victory of considerable proportions, further enflaming antipathy toward the U.S. in Pakistan and among Muslims generally. And the lesson to be taken from this self-inflicted defeat is clear: four bloody years into President Bush's war, the time to think anew is at hand. ■

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Don't Democratize

Deterrence worked with the Soviets. Why not Iran?

By John Laughland

LET US ASSUME, for the sake of argument, that the neoconservative view of the world is correct. The world contains a number of states dedicated to threatening U.S. allies and perpetrating terrorist attacks. Although the war on terror has already involved the invasion of two major Muslim countries (Afghanistan and Iraq), a third country, Iran, has now emerged as a new threat. The proposed solution is the democratization of the whole planet—in George W. Bush's words, “the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

During most of the Cold War, the hawks whom we now call neoconservatives dismissed all talk of resolving international disputes through treaties or international organizations. They scoffed at the sight of Jimmy Carter leading the geriatric Leonid Brezhnev by the arm to sign the latest bilateral arms-reduction treaty. They insisted that Soviet

expansionism needed to be contained by military might. Yet even while Ronald Reagan and Caspar Weinberger proactively stepped full throttle on military spending to defeat the Soviets, no one suggested pre-emptively attacking their nuclear installations.

That belief was known as the doctrine of deterrence. Since the end of the Cold War it has been consigned to the dustbin of history. Today's neocons do not conclude from the possibility that Iran might obtain the bomb that countermeasures must be taken to deter her from ever using it. Instead, they bleat that Iran is infringing the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty—one of the stupidest treaties ever to have entered the annals of diplomacy because it elevates hypocrisy to a principle of international law by saying that only some states are allowed to have nuclear warheads—just as they alleged, falsely, that

Saddam Hussein's sin was to have violated some 12-year-old and largely forgotten Security Council resolutions.

In the academic jargon of international-relations theory, therefore, the hawks have shifted from realism to idealism. Whereas previously they believed that the only reality in international relations was force, they are now drenched in that universalist faith in international institutions that is usually associated with the arch-idealist Woodrow Wilson. To be sure, some neocons bluster against the UN, but President Bush's stated goal of liberating the whole of humanity is far closer to the one-world ideology that inspired the creation of the League of Nations than it is to the pessimistic *realpolitik* of Henry Kissinger.

The main difference between Woodrow Wilson and the neocons today is that the universalist ideology that they use to liquidate recalcitrant societies contains a double strychnine dose of one-world economic globalization plus the homogenized trash culture of MTV and its associated vices of drugs and sex. Western opponents of the "evil empire" were right when they calculated that the slab-faced old Commies sitting behind desks in Moscow would be no match for the pony-tailed new Commies who sang with John Lennon, "Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do, Nothing to kill or die for, No religion too." Just as the walls of Jericho were brought down by trumpets, and just as General Noriega was flushed out of the Papal Nunciature in Managua in 1989 by blaring rock music, so what remained of social conservatism behind the Berlin Wall was instantly dissolved by the hideous cacophony of Western postmodernism.

This abandonment of deterrence shows that political-ideological leveling out, what the Nazis called *Gleichschaltung*, is the key to the neocon view of the world. Whereas deterrence assumed that the existence, somewhere in the

world, of unfriendly and even evil regimes was as certain as death and taxes, and that a wise government consequently needed to keep such threats at bay, the neocons today believe that the very existence of hostile or even non-aligned regimes is a threat. Deterrence assumed a certain degree of political pluralism on the planet, whereas neocons believe with George W. Bush that "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands." Today's neocons are the modern Athenians who told the inhabitants of Melos that their neutrality in the war against Sparta was intolerable.

Neocons believe, as George W. Bush said in 2002, that the great struggles of the 20th century have ended in the decisive victory of "a single sustainable model for national success." They welcomed the end of the Cold War precisely because it overcame the division of the world into competing political systems and seemed to create in its place the beginnings of a monolithic unipolar world system with America and American values—especially universal human rights—as its ideological core. Islam presents an obstacle to the full realization of this goal and this is why neocons have now announced that they intend to "democratize" the whole of the Middle East as well.

Yet it is these underlying beliefs about the international system that give the lie to the neocon claim to want to democratize the planet. Even if we leave aside the abuses committed in the name of democratization—from 1953, when the CIA overthrew Prime Minister Mossadegh of Iran, to 2004, when spooky American technicians of regime change installed a friendly government in Kiev—it is simply incredible that a plan for worldwide democratization should now involve singling out Iran as an enemy. For the Islamic Republic of Iran is undoubtedly one of the most advanced democracies in the Muslim world.

Such a statement will doubtless surprise those who think of Iran as groaning under the yoke of a stifling theocracy and who associate it with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. But there is no denying that the normal state institutions of the Islamic Republic are impeccably democratic. The president and the legislature are directly elected by universal suffrage, including women; the political system is extremely vibrant, the latest presidential election having been far more hotly contested than the equivalent one in 2005 in Egypt; there is a basically free press, in which politicians including the president are frequently criticized, and the Iranian constitution gives equal rights to all citizens irrespective of race or sex, forbids the investigation of individuals' beliefs and the state inspection of letters or other forms of private communication, and guarantees *habeas corpus*, the presumption of innocence, and equality before the law. The Islamic Republic's political system is at the very antipodes of the absolute monarchy that reigns in neighboring Saudi Arabia, America's ally. There are no elements of democracy whatever in that country's national political life, which is why many Iranian leaders, including the fiery president, regard it as disgracefully backward.

To be sure, the Iranian constitution also contains peculiar elements found in no other state, most importantly the office of Supreme Leader, who commands the armed forces, appoints the Council of Guardians—a theological body that scrutinizes laws passed by the legislature—and controls the state broadcasting network and the police. These powers are not wielded democratically. But all states contain constitutional elements that are specifically designed to mitigate the effects of direct democracy, the U.S. Supreme Court being the best example of a powerful unelected body that intervenes actively in matters of public policy

in the name of unchangeable principles. And whatever the written provisions in the Iranian constitution, it is undeniable that the country's domestic politics are extremely fluid. Indeed one of the country's main failings is that the various factions battle it out so overtly that the rule of law suffers considerably: Iranian citizens often do not know which way state authority is going to strike next.

Finally, even the theocratic elements in the Iranian constitution themselves draw legitimacy—however bogusly—from the Islamic Revolution's claim to have been a democratic movement. I do not personally care for revolutions of any kind, but there can be little doubt that the 1979 Iranian revolution did in fact succeed because of popular hatred for a dictatorial foreign-backed regime. Add to all this the fact that the form of Islam preached in Iran is itself self-consciously progressive—even conservative Iranian clerics dismiss the Islam of the Taliban or the Wahhabis as atavistic—and you have a country that American democratists ought to embrace as a model for the rest of the Muslim world.

But as the horrified reaction to the election of Hamas in Palestine shows, the neocon commitment to democratization is as much about free choice as are the options offered to a shopkeeper when the Mafia comes round to collect the protection money. "It's up to you," the gangsters say as they crack their knuckles with a nonchalant smirk. "You can do what you like. But your sister over there, now she's a very pretty girl ..." A commitment to democracy implies a commitment to pluralism and to the possibility that people may make choices with which we do not agree. This is precisely why neoconservatives are determined to prevent it. ■

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Food for Thought

Farmers' markets and family meals are essentially conservative.

By Rod Dreher

I GREW UP in a town without a McDonald's. It's hard to express how humiliating this was, to watch fast-food commercials knowing we were condemned to settle for our local hamburger joints. Or worse, home cooking.

I think back to how my mom's counter would groan with fresh tomatoes, green beans, squash, and cucumbers from our own garden—stuff that I wanted nothing to do with because it didn't come from a fast-food joint or from the supermarket. For me, the height of home-prepared culinary delight was a Swanson's TV dinner just like I'd seen in the ads. Unsurprisingly, I was a fat kid.

I didn't give my diet a second thought until I married and moved with my wife Julie to New York City. Suddenly, I felt the obligation to be a grown-up about things, and that meant getting serious about my diet. With the eye-popping bounty of the Union Square farmer's market available to us every Saturday, when farmers from all over the region bring their fruits and vegetables into the heart of the city, we got interested in cooking. I'll never forget the pale green of the creamy sorrel soup Julie made for our first Easter dinner together, and the salty crunch of the crusty leg of lamb we prepared and ate together at the table by the window of our sunny little apartment.

We laugh today, recalling that first year together, lying in bed reading, and me pulling my head out of *Martha Stewart Living* one night and saying, "I had

no idea butter was this interesting." It's easy to make fun of that kind of yuppie talk, but the plain fact was that butter is a lot more interesting than we had ever imagined. Neither of us had been taught to cook, and we really don't blame our mothers. They were raised working-class in the rural South and were hit with a wave of 1950s better-living-through-chemistry propaganda, telling women that traditional cooking was drudge work and that processed food was a status symbol. The same advertising that made me doubt the worth of my town because we couldn't get Dolly Madison snack cakes had worked its wicked enchantment on my mom's generation. Julie and I found ourselves wishing we could spend time with our grandmothers to find out what they knew about cooking that our mothers did not.

As time went on, we got better at cooking and even today, years removed from those magical New York nights, whenever we prepare some of those favorite recipes, I can't help recalling Peggy's laugh, Father Wilson's funny stories, Santo's pulling the cork out of a bottle of Italian red, and the manifold joys of good friends and good feasts.

I'd go to Staubitz, the venerable sawdust-covered butcher shop on Court Street. The succulent taste of that meat would convey in part the pleasure of knowing our butcher and the pleasantries that would pass between us as we talked about meat, the weather, kids, the neighborhood. The bread we'd eat with our