

Four More Years

Both parties remain in thrall to the Bush Doctrine.

By Tony Smith

FIVE YEARS AFTER the invasion of Iraq—arguably the most momentous mistake in the history of American foreign policy—what have we learned? Maybe nothing. The current administration is still mired in the mindset that brought about this calamity, and for all their attempts to distance themselves from an unpopular president, have John McCain or Barack Obama really renounced the Bush Doctrine?

Issued in a series of speeches and documents during 2002, the Bush Doctrine was the most complex and coherent of the many presidential statements of its kind. Its grand design rested on the conviction that America's military primacy conferred a right to reorganize hostile or failed states into free-market democracies. The result promised to be an enduring world order of peace in freedom under American leadership. The doctrine legitimized the invasion of Iraq, but its goal was global dominion.

This bid for world hegemony rested on three propositions. First, the world can be divided into democracies and tyrannies, with the former being repositories of virtue and the latter home to all that is evil. Second, the United States holds the key to a peaceful order applicable to virtually all peoples and places, and a conversion from tyranny to freedom is an operation the U.S. can conduct. Third, where possible to expand the world's zone of peace, the United States will act with force multilaterally to take over hostile or failed states or preemptively and unilaterally if so obliged. To win the peace that follows

the victory of arms, the U.S. is prepared to occupy foreign peoples for their own good as well as our own.

The Iraq War put those tenets to the test, and the verdict is in: we do not have the power—and may not have the interest—to sponsor democratic governments wherever they are lacking, and a modern form of progressive imperialism aimed at reconstructing post-conflict states is far more likely to turn nationalist forces against us than to rally international opinion in our favor.

The question, then, is where John McCain and Barack Obama stand. Will they extend or eliminate the Bush Doctrine?

With the Republican candidate, there is little doubt. Since 1993, McCain has been chairman of the International Republican Institute, a part of the National Endowment for Democracy. Under IRI auspices, he was intimately involved in efforts to advance democratic ideology long before Bush gave any thought to such matters. Neoconservatives like William Kristol preferred McCain in the 2000 Republican primaries for just this reason.

He has chosen as his top foreign-policy adviser Randy Scheunemann, once a board member of the neoconservative Project for the New American Century. Scheunemann also helped create the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (among whose members were Sens. Joseph Lieberman and John McCain), participated in the drafting of the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, joined the Project for Transitional Democracies, and was

briefly a consultant to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on Iraq policy.

Given his background and contacts, there should be no surprise that McCain endorses all three elements of the Bush Doctrine. He entitled his article in the November-December 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs* "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," writing, "The protection and promotion of the democratic ideal, at home and abroad, will be the surest source of security and peace for the century that lies before us." Accordingly, McCain would create a global League of Democracies to deal with human rights and democracy promotion worldwide through military means. In Asia, our natural allies would be market democracies, "But until China moves toward political liberalization, our relationship will be based on periodically shared interests rather than on the bedrock of shared values." Given Russian revanchism, "we need a new Western approach" to handling Moscow, including reinforcing the solidarity of NATO and expelling Russia from the G-8.

McCain's March 26 speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council displayed an especially militant commitment to the Bush Doctrine. America should organize "a global coalition for peace and freedom. ... We must help expand the power and reach of freedom, using all our many strengths as a free people." Looking at the Middle East, he declared that while Turkey, Israel, India, and Indonesia are democratic, "Iraq and Afghanistan lie at the heart of that region. And whether they eventually become stable democra-

cies themselves, or allowed to sink back into chaos and extremism, will determine not only the fate of that critical part of the world, but our fate as well.”

He has called for an expansion of the Army and Marine Corps by 150,000 troops, an increase in Special Forces, and an Army Advisory Corps of 20,000 to work with military establishments abroad. McCain has also proposed a “civilian ‘surge’” capable of tasks ranging from institutional reconstruction to anti-terrorism in post-conflict situations. Given the training of these civilians in foreign languages and culture, they might emerge as something of a Colonial Office.

In short, with McCain and his closest advisers in office, the major tenets of the Bush Doctrine would remain fully in force. But the other side of the aisle doesn’t offer the alternative many voters presume.

Barack Obama is certainly more critical than McCain of the Bush foreign policy, but he is definitely not embracing the George McGovern slogan “Come Home, America.” Speaking to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in April 2007, Obama declared that his administration would open “a new chapter in American leadership” and that our task is to “lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good. ... America’s larger purpose in the world is to promote the spread of freedom—that is the yearning of all who live in the shadow of tyranny and despair.” Accordingly, he called for increased foreign aid to address root causes of poverty and failed states as well as for the expansion of the Army and Marine Corps by 92,000 to have “a 21st century military to stay on the offense from Djibouti to Kandahar.”

In *Foreign Affairs* in July-August 2007, under the title “Renewing American Leadership,” Obama called for appropriating \$50 billion annually for “Building just, secure, democratic societies” for

troubled parts of the world: “We can help build accountable institutions that deliver services and opportunity: strong legislatures, independent judiciaries, honest police forces, free presses, vibrant civil societies ... freedom from want.”

Unlike McCain and Bush, he does not draw rigid distinctions between virtuous democracies and menacing tyrannies. But neither does he talk about reducing America’s role in world affairs, holding the line on the military budget, curtailing foreign aid, or avoiding the occupation of foreign countries in order to democratize them. Just the opposite. Like McCain and similarly to the Bush Doctrine, Obama appears to believe that a strong military backing the expansion of democratic government and free markets should be basic elements of American foreign policy.

LONG BEFORE **BUSH WAS CO-OPTED BY NEOCONSERVATIVES**, THE NOTION OF AMERICA AS **“THE INDISPENSABLE NATION”** WAS ANNOUNCED IN FEBRUARY 1998 BY A **DEMOCRAT**.

We should not be surprised. Not only has this kind of talk become the vernacular of American politics lest one be labeled an “isolationist,” but it aligns with powerful currents within the Democratic Party. Long before Bush was co-opted by neoconservatives, the notion of America as “the indispensable nation” was announced in February 1998 by a Democrat, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further into the future.” There’s little reason to think that Albright, reported to be on Obama’s foreign-policy advisory team, has revised her opinion.

There are two interpretations of “indispensable nation.” One points to the disproportionate role America plays on the world stage and calls for a responsible exercise of power. In matters involv-

ing international trade, global environmental issues, nuclear proliferation, or humanitarian peacekeeping operations, American involvement—indeed, American leadership—is critical.

The other construction is far grander, holding that the United States has, or could and should have, dominion over world affairs. This spin assumes that the silver bullet to provide world peace comes through the promotion of free-market democracies, by military means if necessary, under the good offices of the United States.

This takes us back to the assumptions of the Bush Doctrine. On one hand, the United States possesses a military “beyond challenge,” as President Bush said throughout 2002. Thanks to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demonstrated capacity of American

arms in the Gulf War in 1991 and the Balkans in 1999, we arrived at a “unipolar moment,” one that should be stretched to become a “unipolar epoch,” according to neoconservative columnist Charles Krauthammer. Iraq has indeed been a bump, on the road, both McCain and Obama realize, but under their command the United States should expect to retain its military primacy.

Yet power without purpose is ephemeral. Thus the Freedom Agenda and its promise of prosperity and peace, a formulation from which neither McCain nor Obama dissents.

This bipartisan consensus is not accidental. The neoconservatives who authored the doctrine tapped into a deep wellspring of the American psyche, from its religious conviction that we are “a shining city upon the hill” to the Enlightenment’s secular creed that the American

experience—especially its liberal democratic Constitution—provides an inspiration to others to follow. With Woodrow Wilson, a plan was put forward “to make the world safe for democracy” by promoting open markets and democratic government globally. After World War II, the United States accepted leadership of the “free world,” and with the creation of the European Union and the defeat of the Soviet Union, the notion grew that not so much a country as a way of being—free-market democracy—could be the wave of the future. American leadership was nonetheless necessary: we were the indispensable nation.

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It took hard theorizing in the 1990s in the greatest American universities to convert this conviction into a coherent, persuasive ideology. While neoconservatives within the ranks of the Republican Party authored the Bush Doctrine, its intellectual heft derived from concepts developed by academics usually on the Left. Here were the liberal hawks, the progressive imperialists, many of whom have Obama’s ear just as the neo-conservatives have McCain’s.

The concept liberal international-relations experts began to call “democratic peace theory”—defended empirically by Bruce Russett at Yale, theoretically by Andrew Moravcsik at Princeton, and philosophically by John Rawls at Harvard—held that democracies, especially if they have open market economies, are unlikely to go to war with one another.

At the same time, liberals such as Larry Diamond at Stanford formulated a “democratic transition theory,” which overcame the skepticism of an earlier era that liberal democratic government could easily sink roots in just about any part of

the world. A door was open through which most peoples might pass. What was desirable according to democratic peace theory was practically possible.

The final push toward progressive imperialism came thanks to liberal jurists such as Thomas Franck at NYU and Anne-Marie Slaughter at Princeton. In their hands, sovereignty was redefined so that non-democratic regimes that engaged in gross human-rights abuses or amassed weapons of mass destruction might be treated like slave ships or pirates of old and attacked. The “right to intervene” in such circumstances became a “duty to intervene.”

Today such thinking is called “R2P,” signifying a state’s “responsibility to protect” its population from harm, failing which it may be taken over by the liberal world and refashioned into a peace-keeping, free-market democracy.

With these three concepts, a witches’ brew had been concocted. Not only was democratic government deemed morally superior and in the national interest of the United States to see take root, but its expansion was possible and force might be used to accomplish this mission. The formulation of this ideology by intellectuals who were largely supporters of the Democratic Party meant that when the Bush Doctrine was eventually introduced by neoconservatives, it would have bipartisan support. This first became evident when both parties criticized the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic and called on the Clinton administration for intervention.

But pride goeth before the fall. Whatever the success of American arms at certain recent points—from the defeat of the Taliban in 2001 to the taking of

Baghdad in 2003—the death and destruction caused by American intervention, and the weakness of military preparedness, strategy, and tactics for the long haul, are now apparent for all to see. The United States most certainly remains the paramount military power in world affairs. But winning the war was not enough to guarantee winning the peace that momentarily followed. Combining the conviction that America enjoyed unrivalled power with the self-righteous assurance that it had a master plan with which to remake foreign domestic order, and as a consequence reconfigure the entire international system, the Bush Doctrine was a manifest case of imperial hubris.

The problems should be apparent. Peoples who had never known democratic rule would find themselves possessed of unfamiliar political institutions resting on the consent of the governed. Civil orders that had never negotiated a social contract among their various factions—ethnic, religious, or linguistic—would be called upon to exhibit measures of trust and cooperation that they had never before exhibited. Economic arrangements that had favored unaccountable patronage and privilege would give way to market forces and foreign participation. Ancient cultural practices sanctified by familiarity and religious belief—especially the place of women so that the family itself was to be remade—would evolve new ways of understanding individual and group rights and responsibilities. And all this would occur under the benevolent compulsion of American force, which might be mistrusted as more interested in Iraqi oil or Israel’s security than in the well-being of the locals. Progressive imperialism has always held more appeal for those who practice it than those who suffer it.

Today’s backers of the Bush Doctrine claim that the execution of policy was to blame for the American failures in Iraq

and Afghanistan—not the ideas that underpinned the vision of a new world order based on a benevolent American hegemony. So the neoconservatives defend themselves from responsibility for the calamity in the Middle East. Plenty of Democrats keep them company.

Those who expect Barack Obama to depart from the outlines of our current foreign policy forget its deep roots on the Left and underestimate the elite cadre within the Democratic Party urging him to embrace the pretensions of the Bush Doctrine. Liberal hawks working under the auspices of the Progressive Policy Institute of the Democratic Leadership Council (sometimes collaborating with the neoconservative Project for the New American Century) include Michael McFaul, Ronald Asmus, Larry Diamond, Philip Gordon, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Kenneth Pollack. Sens. Hillary Clinton, Joseph Lieberman, Joseph Biden, Evan Bayh, and John Kerry have all been publicly associated. The most active member from the House has been Rahm Emanuel.

In document after document, PPI has pledged allegiance to the task of defending the zone of democratic peace by moving failed states and societies into the camp of market democracies. As a PPI report entitled “Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy” put it in October 2003, the Bush administration “has not been ambitious or imaginative enough” when it comes to the “belief that America can best defend itself by building a world safe for individual liberty and democracy.” This statement received explicit, public support from Biden, Obama’s running mate.

In March 2004, PPI members Asmus and McFaul published a policy brief on Iraq entitled “Let’s Get Serious About Democracy in the Greater Middle East.” Its core propositions duplicated exactly the neoconservative refrain: the war on

terrorism “must be won politically and with ideas. We need a grand strategy to help these countries transform themselves into the kinds of societies that focus on the needs of their peoples—ones that do not produce people who want to kill us and have the capacity to do so.” To achieve their mission, Asmus and McFaul called for NATO’s involvement in the American-led occupation of the Middle East, a hefty increase in budget appropriations for groups such as the National Endowment for Democracy, and the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Democracy Promotion.

The president of the PPI since its inception in 1989 has been Will Marshall, whose policy prescriptions include:

- “Stay and Win in Iraq”: “The escalating violence prompted facile and mostly misleading analogies between Iraq and Vietnam.”
- “Thinking Bigger”: “Turn NATO into a new anti-terrorist alliance.”
- “Valuing Patriotism”: Democrats “more than anything else need to show the country a party unified behind a new patriotism—a progressive patriotism determined to succeed in Iraq and win the war on terror; to close a yawning cultural gap between Democrats and the military, and to summon a new spirit of national service and national sacrifice.”

In spring 2006, PPI brought out a volume edited by Marshall entitled *With All Our Might: A Progressive Strategy for Defeating Jihadism and Defending Liberty*. The introduction read:

We are committed to preserving America’s military preeminence. We recognize that a strong military undergirds U.S. global leadership. ... Progressives must champion liberal democracy in deed, not just in rhetoric, as an integral part of a strategy for preventing conflict,

promoting prosperity, and defending human dignity. ... We believe Democrats must reclaim, not abandon, their own tradition of muscular liberalism. ... Progressives and Democrats must not give up the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad just because President Bush has paid it lip service. Advancing democracy—in practice, not just in rhetoric—is fundamentally the Democrats’ legacy, the Democrats’ cause, and the Democrats’ responsibility.

PPI is far from the only group of intellectuals within the Democratic Party championing ideas recycled from the Bush Doctrine. Peter Beinart expressed these same opinions in his book *The Good Fight: Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again*. Similarly, at Princeton, John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter in 2006 brought out a report entitled “Forging a World of Liberty Under Law.” Among its recommendations: a “Concert of Democracies” should be founded to provide a multilateral military force to impose liberal democratic ways on governments that were not up to “PAR,” that is, “popular, accountable, and rights-regarding.”

Obama is surrounded by phalanxes of experts bidding to offer him advice that would keep him under the influence of the Bush Doctrine. There is James Dobbins, the director of Rand’s International Security and Defense Policy Center, who has worked for both the Clinton and Bush administrations and is the editor of two Rand primers on how to run countries taken over by the U.S. military: *The Beginner’s Guide to Nation-Building* (2007), and *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (2003). Or again, Thomas Carothers at the Carnegie Endowment

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Court Historian

Andrew Roberts, the Anglosphere's greatest modern mythologist, may be perfectly suited to sanitize the Bush presidency.

By R.J. Stove

CONNOISSEURS OF HOMICIDAL book reviews have long treasured the virtuosic evisceration that British immunologist Sir Peter Medawar performed in 1950 on Teilhard de Chardin, that once fashionable Gallic mountebank. Of Teilhard's *The Phenomenon of Man*, Medawar remarked, "its author can be excused of dishonesty only on the grounds that before deceiving others he has taken great pains to deceive himself."

Sir Peter's slashing verdict inevitably comes to a mind confronted with the work of currently hip British neocon Andrew Roberts. The historian has an influential admirer in George W. Bush, who after meeting Roberts in a London restaurant invited him to a second date in the White House. "To prove how serious he was," *Vanity Fair's* Vicky Ward reported, "Bush wrote down his personal phone number." Roberts's website boasts that at their later meeting, "he and his wife spent 40 minutes alone with President Bush in the Oval Office." Rumors of a presidential biography—or ghosted autobiography—soon took flight.

Roberts's newfound vogue rests almost entirely upon *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*. Whether this 754-page blockbuster is the most mendacious tract marketed as non-fiction within the last decade, or whether Roberts genuinely believes the tripe he spouts therein, is among our era's more conspicuous literary puzzles. Nonetheless, this apparent dichotomy proves to be a distinction without a difference.

Looking for candor in Roberts's agitprop is as absurd as seeking it in presentations from Madison Avenue. That is precisely what Roberts has become: not a historian at all but an advertising agent, whose account happens to be the Anglosphere and whose moralizing is as stridently simpleminded as Brecht's.

To expect in Roberts's effusions the smallest nuance or humility makes hunting for four-leaf clovers seem like an intelligent use of one's time. He is incorrigible. Not only must every good deed of British or American rule be lauded till the skies resound with it, but so must every deed that is morally ambiguous or downright repellent.

The Amritsar carnage of 1919, where British forces under Gen. Reginald Dyer slew 379 unarmed Indians? Absolutely justified, according to Roberts, who curiously deduces that but for Dyer, "many more than 379 people would have lost their lives." Hitting prostrate Germany with the Treaty of Versailles? Totally warranted: the only good Kraut is a dead Kraut. Herding Boer women and children into concentration camps, where 35,000 of them perished? Way to go: the only good Boer is a dead Boer. Interning Belfast Catholics, without anything so vulgar as a trial, for no other reason than that they were Belfast Catholics? Yep, the only good bog-trotter ... well, finish the sentence yourself.

FDR's obeisance to Stalin? All the better to defeat America First "fascists." (Roberts has "fascists" on the brain,

having spent pages feverishly denouncing the prewar Teutonophile naïveté of long forgotten British historian Sir Arthur Bryant, while administering to tenured Leninist head-kickers Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm polite slaps on the wrist.) FDR the compulsive lecher? Actively commendable: Roberts hopes "the great man did indeed find some happiness with his lissome secretary." Bombing Germany and Japan into glue? Bring it on. Sinking the General Belgrano during the Falklands crisis? Cool. NATO massacring Serbs? Megacool. Almost everything in modern politics that even (or especially) Britain's and America's authentic well-wishers consider a cause of shame, Roberts regards as a crowning splendor.

Curiously, he fails to carry this attitude to its logical conclusion by applauding Harold Macmillan's public-spirited labors in 1945 to give anticommunist refugees firsthand experience of Uncle Joe's compassion; or by demanding that Lieutenant Calley's philanthropic My Lai endeavors be rewarded with a Nobel Peace Prize; or by cheering the 1969 British blockades that released a million skeletal Biafrans from the perils of obesity; or by praising *Roe v. Wade* for having rescued 48 million Americans since 1973 from the terrifying trauma of being born. No doubt a second edition will rectify these gaps.

It is tempting to make an entire article not only from Roberts's forensic amorality but from his outright factual inepti-