



Dr. Clifford A. Kiracofe: "The Bush Administration's alien neo-imperial mindset must be rejected by Americans concerned about a future worth looking forward to."

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The U.S.A. Confronts A Multipolar World

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I am delighted to be here today with you in Berlin and heartily thank our hosts for this fine opportunity for constructive dialogue.

In an increasingly multipolar and multicultural world, a recurrence to constructive American foreign policy traditions is necessary if Washington is to avoid increasing isolation and irrelevance. The Bush Administration's alien neo-imperial mindset must be rejected by Americans concerned about a

future worth looking forward to, and Lyn is certainly leading the way on that one.

Today, major geopolitical developments are taking place at the great power level, as well as within regions, and Eurasia in particular, as the world defensively adjusts to a hegemonic American foreign policy. Intensified Chinese relations with Iran, ASEAN, and Latin America suggest prudent strategic calculations as do intensified relations between Russia, India, and China; as well as India's most recent arrangements with Iran, in the all-important energy sector.

Will the United States continue a neo-imperial foreign policy during the second George W. Bush Administration? Observers who expect continuity say yes, while others note the shifting correlation of forces at the opening of the 21st Century may well constrain Washington's advocates of an extreme forward policy. An understanding of several prominent schools of strategic thought in United States policy debates—primacy (also termed dominance), cooperative security, and selective engagement—is essential to realistic answers to such fundamental questions.¹ Structural domestic factors influencing United States policy, particularly in the Middle East, also must be taken into consideration. A frank assessment may well indicate that it is beyond the power of the United States to pursue further a neo-imperial policy and that such a policy undermines its long term national security interests. Nonetheless, the second Bush Administration appears poised to continue the policy of its first four years, and strategic thought in the United States is in disarray owing to lack of consensus and theoretical sophistication. This lack of consensus itself raises questions about the ability of the United States to develop and effectively implement a long-term comprehensive, systematic, and integrated national strategy to advantageously manage its security interests in an increasingly complex multipolar world.

When the so-called "bipolar world" ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union during 1990-91, a sharp policy debate emerged in the United States. At issue was the nature of the post-Cold War international system, "unipolar" or

1. Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, 21 (1996/87).

“multipolar,” and the implications for United States policy. Within this context, there were profound differences about the implications of the systemic change for United States foreign policy and grand strategy. Three strategic options emerged: “primacy,” “cooperative security,” and “selective engagement.” Isolation, although not a serious strategic option for the United States, has its advocates at the margins of the policy debate.

The Clinton Administration adopted cooperative security, which stresses multilateralism but also recommends coercive diplomacy and intervention. And we’ve discussed the Balkans here, today, in the Yugoslav case. Selective engagement stressing moderation, prudence, and a certain multilateralism was the earlier approach of the George H.W. Bush Administration, as reflected by Secretary of State James Baker. But the George W. Bush Administration adopted primacy, a neo-imperial strategy which had in fact been promoted at the end of the George H.W. Bush Administration by then Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney and his assistant Paul Wolfowitz. The strategy of primacy is closely associated with the extremist neo-conservative policy network which operates in both political parties, among hardline Republicans as well as among hardline Democratic circles.

The extremist neo-conservative policy network was guided, in part, by Zbigniew Brzezinski’s geopolitical ideas, particularly as he expressed them in his 1997 book, called *The Global Chessboard*—and the central concept of that, is of course the strategic encirclement of Russia. This extremist foreign policy network was endorsed and protected by Vice President Richard Cheney, in the first George W. Bush Administration, which is why this particular network of intellectuals has had such great influence. It’s protected by the Vice President himself, who for decades has relied on these individuals for his own defense and foreign policy positions. Former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice—a student of the father of Mrs. Albright, another Secretary of State of ours—who is now our Secretary of State, was supposed by many to be aligned with the selective engagement camp, but she quickly fell into line with the primacy or the hegemonic camp. It is an open question today whether the second Bush Administration will be constrained during the next four years, by external and internal factors, to move away from primacy and toward selective engagement in a multipolar world. My own comments today, proceed from the view that the post-war international system is multipolar.

The thoughtful British specialist Barry Buzan suggests the emergence of an international system—“international society” as he phrases it—composed of one superpower and four great powers (EU, China, Russia, Japan), with India as a “rising transregional” power.² Some, however, may consider

2. Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers. World Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2004).

the “superpower” category overrated or distorting, as the criterion usually considered is primarily military. The United States has well-known and significant economic problems, that Lyn has been very forceful on emphasizing, such as persistent budget deficits, unsustainable current account deficits, unemployment, deindustrialization, and a low savings rate. Additionally, the United States has significant internal social issues such as mass illegal immigration (and we’re talking in the millions), crime and growing prison populations, an aging population (demographics), and rising poverty. Finally, “soft power” assets of the United States are increasingly called into question as world opinion rejects Washington’s perceived neo-imperial foreign policy, imposition of economic globalization, and imposition of alien cultural “values.”

The international system, therefore, well may be considered to contain a number of great powers of varying weight and varying regional and global reach. As international life is dynamic, not static, international relations are conducted in a constant flux and the older Russian term “correlation of forces” is not without a certain utility today in a world of rapid change.

Friedrich Meinecke

As we are meeting in Berlin, I think it appropriate to recall a great German historian, Friedrich Meinecke. With the Bush Administration’s neo-imperial *Machtpolitik* [power politics] in mind, let us consider a few key points made by Meinecke in the wake of World War I.

The fundamental modern European academic analysis of “reason of state,” the realist theory of politics, is *Die Idee der Staatsräson*, which was written by the German historian Meinecke in 1924.³ Meinecke was the student of the towering figure of German historical realism, Leopold von Ranke. Meinecke, the German realist, is clear about the relation of the state to the international system. He says, “It is only within the family-like community of States that the individual State itself can prosper in the long run”—the point, I think, that Lyn certainly was making earlier in the day.

Indeed, Meinecke affirms that the European sense of community, “which provided the underlying assumption for Ranke’s assessment of the European power-conflicts, and which was the fine beneficial after-effect of the mediaeval idea of a *Corpus Christianum*, must be recovered once again.” Meinecke the German realist does not reject the idea of an international organization to promote peaceful relations among nations, and Meinecke the German realist does not reject reason. He says of the ideal of the League of Nations,

3. Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism, The Doctrine of Raison D’État and Its Place in Modern History*, Douglas Scott, trans., (London: Routledge, and Kegan, Paul, 1957). A helpful analysis of Meinecke is presented in Richard W. Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power, The Political Ideas of Friedrich Meinecke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

that it is “part of the very essence of reason that it should strive to exert its influence over nature and set up such an ideal for itself.”

Meinecke rejects the glorification of violence and the power struggle, stating, “the naturalistic forces of historical life will be sufficient to ensure that we do not achieve peace on Earth so quickly; there is no need to strengthen them further with any doctrine which glorifies war and power-conflicts,” which is precisely the doctrine that neo-conservatives are operating on in Washington, today. Further, Meinecke rejects crude Darwinian and Spencerian analogies employed in describing the international system. He says that the moral justification of the strong over the weak “could now be easily misused” and it could be “replaced and coarsened by a Darwinistic naturalism—all the more so when the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman arrived.” Meinecke, in 1924 said, “Together with the false idealization of power politics, there must also cease to be a deification of the state.”

International Law

The rejection of international law and international institutions is another feature of the Bush neo-imperial agenda.⁴ Why? This is very important to understand. This traces back to the influence of Carl Schmitt, the Nazi professor of law and juridical studies, on the contemporary American intellectuals and the neo-conservative movement. If you want to know why Mr. Gonzales, who’s now nominated for Attorney Generalship, rejected the Geneva Conventions, you have only to examine the relationship between Carl Schmitt’s legal philosophy, and the neo-conservative—and also, some of our law schools have even gone so far as to start teaching and reviving Carl Schmitt’s legal doctrines, if you can imagine that, here in Europe; it’s hard enough for us to imagine that, at home.

As one of the greatest American authorities on international law and United States diplomacy, John Bassett Moore, wrote a century ago, “besides exerting an influence in favor of liberty and independence, American diplomacy was also employed in the advancement of the principle of legality. American statesmen sought to regulate the relations of nations by law, not only as a measure for the protection of the weak against the strong, but also as the only means of assuring the peace of the world.”⁵ The Bush Administration’s rejection of international law as mere “legalism” is in line with the

Nietzschean *Machtpolitik* of Nazi Germany and Carl Schmitt, and does not square with the traditions and practice of the United States, which has respected the role of law in international relations and sought to enhance it.

We’ve talked a little bit about American history today. I’d like to perhaps conclude with two historical points, trying to tie us into the European cultural experience. I would point out that in the 19th Century, American international legal thought and diplomatic approach was influenced in no small way by the studies of state systems, the international systems of different periods, by distinguished professors at Göttingen University. I am referring, particularly, to the work of Prof. Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760-1842) and his *Handbuch der Geschichte des Europäischen Staatensystems*. In this regard, I would note that an English translation of this work was published in the late 1820s by Prof. George Bancroft (1800-91), the great American historian who had studied under Heeren and others at Göttingen himself for two years, and who had also received his Ph.D. there. Bancroft was a friend of many great German scholars, including Wilhelm von Humboldt. And our Congress selected Professor Bancroft to give the official eulogy on the death of Abraham Lincoln.

Toward Recovery of American Diplomatic Tradition

The political, economic, and military struggle of the European powers—Portugal, Spain, Holland, France, and England—for supremacy in the New World was the cauldron from which the United States ultimately emerged. As Prof. Armin Rappaport has pointed out, a study of the diplomatic history of the United States “does not properly begin in 1776 with the declaration of American independence but reaches back into the colonial period to the time of the earliest settlements.”⁶ Indeed, Prof. Max Savelle has emphasized the early origins of American realism, a realism that does not exclude elements of “idealism,” such as a commitment to the principle of legality. Savelle argued the “early United States diplomacy becomes a synthesis of American, English, and European elements.”⁷ During the first half of the 17th Century, the Thirty Years’ War was raging in Europe and the Westphalia settlement was achieved. “It is particularly in this first half-century of settlement,” Savelle wrote, “that the peculiarly American policies may be said to most clearly to have had their origin.”

A recovery is needed of earlier American perspectives informing its former constructive non-imperial foreign policy tradition, as best embodied by President John Quincy Adams, once our former minister to both Prussia and to Russia. Such

4. For an insightful analysis of the evolution of the law of nations see, Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, Chapter XXVIII, “Law Among Nations,” pp. 245-256. On contemporary use of force from a European perspective, see Barbara Delcourt, “Usage de la Force et Promotion des Valeurs et Normes Internationales Quel(s) Fondement(s) pour la Politique Européenne de Sécurité et de Défense?” *Revue Études Internationales*, 34 (2003).

5. John Bassett Moore, *American Diplomacy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905), pp. 251-252.

6. Armin Rappaport, ed., *Essays in American Diplomacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 1.

7. Max Savelle, “Colonial Origins of American Diplomatic Principles,” *Pacific Historic Review*, 3 (1934).

a recovery would include a review of the positive relations developed with India, China, Russia, Japan, and the Middle East during the 18th and 19th Centuries. At that time, the United States operated quite comfortably within a multipolar and multicultural international society.

I would point out to our friends here from India and China, that our commercial relations with both India and China both began in the year 1784. And thanks to our French friends in India, we were able to negotiate for commerce in Pondicherry, in that particular time—so it was through our French friends, rather than our British rivals.

The first commercial voyages abroad after the War of Independence and Revolution were to China and India in 1784. The first American ship to reach India in this era was the *United States*, which cleared Philadelphia on March 24, 1784 and reached Pondicherry on Dec. 26, 1784.⁸ Trade with Russia reached back as far as the days of Peter the Great, when Virginia tobacco was sold via London.⁹ During the same era, in the Middle East and North Africa, relations were established with Morocco and later with Oman. Constructive commercial and cultural relations were further developed in the Middle East during the 19th Century.¹⁰

We can only imagine how shocked George Bancroft, and many other great Americans of the past including President John Quincy Adams, would be by the depravity of the present Bush Administration, by its neo-imperial policy, and by its reckless disregard for not only international law, but for the long term national interest of the United States itself.

Hopefully conferences such as ours today will provide a basis for a continuing dialogue among cultures and for the construction, in the tradition and spirit of Westphalia, of an international system concerned with the peace and progress of the sovereign states that comprise it. In this regard, I might mention one example of international cooperation, which sometimes people do forget, is the level of scientific cooperation that's been achieved with Antarctica. And that was even at a time during the so-called Cold War.

Thank you for your kind attention.

8. G. Bhagat, *Americans in India 1784-1860* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), pp. xxiii-xxvi.

9. Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., *America, Russia, Hemp and Napoleon. American Trade with Russia and the Baltic, 1783-1812* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965), pp. 2-3; Benjamin Platt Thomas, *Russo-American Relations 1815-1867* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1930).

10. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Beirut: Khayat's College Book Cooperative, 1955); E.A. Speiser, *The United States and the Near East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947); William R. Polk, *The United States and the Arab World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965); Hermann Frederick Eilts, *A Friendship Two Centuries Old: The United States and the Sultanate of Oman* (Washington, D.C.: Sultan Qaboos Center, The Middle East Institute, 1990); W. Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York: The Century Company, 1912).