

IMPERIAL DIPLOMACY

*Parag Khanna**

When John Brady Kiesling, a senior political counselor at the U.S. embassy in Athens, publicly resigned in February after a distinguished career in the Foreign Service, he wrote that the Bush administration's diplomacy appears to be guided by the Latin dictum *oderint dum metuant*, "Let them hate us so long as they fear." (as reprinted in *The New York Times*, 27 February 2003) Indeed, surveys worldwide indicate an overwhelming perception that the Pentagon dominates American foreign policy-making, exemplified by Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz in his statement that the U.S. must "end states who sponsor terrorism." But the current debate between the State Department and Pentagon over whose world-view holds sway over the course of American foreign policy suggests a dangerous assumption that the two institutions' priorities are mutually exclusive. In reality, as the current efforts in Iraq to secure and legitimate an American established order demonstrate, neither will succeed in its mission without the support of the other. In other words, America is more likely to achieve its objectives when force backs diplomacy rather than substitutes for it.

The replacement in May of Major General Jay Garner with former State Department counter-terrorism official Paul Bremer as head of operations in Iraq is an example of this co-dependency: the military can disarm lingering opposition, but it falls to the State Department to represent the American presence as a temporary stabilizing, not permanently occupying, force. This story of appointing the so-called "Mayor of Baghdad" tells us that even empires must rely on more than military power to achieve their objectives. After all, was not the lesson of September 11 that military dominance alone cannot purchase total security?

In the current US administration, the State Department has been scorned for valuing international consensus over geopolitical results. Yet a principle lesson from the post-war experience in Iraq thus far is to gain much needed international support for reestablishing order and expediting reconstruction, the active participation of allies and regional powers is essential. The unifying purpose of American diplomacy, therefore, must be to change the perception of its global agenda, and modify the means used to implement it. This cause can be advanced immediately by rethinking diplomacy in three critical areas: public diplomacy, peacemaking efforts and engagement with international institutions. America's expanding military presence in the Middle East and elsewhere requires an equally robust diplomatic apparatus to justify foreign policy decisions and minimize hostile backlash. Diplomatic strength in peacemaking can help avoid the interventions and foreign occupations the military loathes. And finally, to accomplish the long-term goal of delegitimizing international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, credible international support for enforceable treaties and norms is the only way to assure that America is not alone in crisis after crisis in the coming years. Thus diplomacy complements, not contradicts, military force.

Habla con ellos

Since Thucydides wrote that the Peloponnesian War was inevitable because of the fear Athenian power caused in Sparta, it has never been disputed that power and perceptions of power lay the foundation for international relations. For the foreseeable future, American power so utterly dominates all other states' capability combined that a balancing military coalition, even if one could be assembled, would be futile. But diplomacy is the art of getting people to do what you want *without* killing them. The rift between the State Department and Pentagon has thus overshadowed the reality that policy coherence is as much about coordination and dialogue with international partners as domestic bureaucracies: the enduring purpose of diplomacy is to serve as a bridge to other governments around the world for political dialogue and cooperation. It therefore complements military power in serving the national interest because, to paraphrase the Golden Rule, if Washington shows more respect for the agendas of others, they are more likely to respond to its objectives. Unfortunately, a recent survey conducted in thirty countries shows that less than 35 percent of people abroad believe the U.S. considers their nations' interests in making its foreign policy. As Edward Rhodes has observed, "The effort to create a global, liberal empire is already bringing us into conflict with our friends around the world—with those who share the very values we seek to advance and spread." (*Survival*, Spring 2003)

America's half-hearted diplomatic efforts of the past year have given the impression that America has forgotten how to achieve its goals in ways other than by force. Currently, the ubiquity of the "preconsuls of war" embodied in America's regional CINCs lends the impression that the Pentagon dominates American diplomacy, indicating to the rest of the world a lack of interest in negotiation. German foreign minister Joschka Fischer has admonished that American diplomacy treats alliance partners like satellites. Indeed, the Pentagon's strong-arming of NATO ally Turkey for rapid acquiescence to usage of the Incirlik airbase for the invasion of Iraq wrought serious damage to the solid U.S.-Turkish relationship the United States has nurtured for years.

Despite the \$30 billion aid package offered to Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan bowed to domestic pressure and denied access for American aircraft and ground troops. America's tactics nonetheless potentially undermined Turkish democracy by creating a situation in which the Turkish military might have felt it necessary to interfere with the political process. As Tony Judt observed, "Real power is influence and example, backed up by understated reminders of military force. When a great power has to buy its allies, bribe its friends and blackmail its critics, something is amiss." (NYRB, 10 April)

Despite the emerging swath of U.S. military activity from Qatar to Karachi, it is unwise to confuse presence with influence. As illustrated by numerous recent terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan, even the military is vulnerable to continued—and mounting—political tension in many Arab states. No matter how legitimate the invasion of Iraq proves to be, the use of military force virtually guarantees a vicious cycle of recriminating acts of terrorism and military aggression. Additionally, with the accelerated withdrawal of American forces from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, the strategic ramifications of aggressive diplomacy become clear. As former ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chas Freeman has written, "Allies are questioning more seriously whether American bases still serve their interests" given that America is "indifferent and unwilling to consider their views." (NYT, Feb 26, 2003) American diplomacy therefore cannot be viewed as an exercise in domination if it is to succeed in gaining support for American priorities. As Zbigniew Brzezinski recently stated, "preponderance is not the same as omnipotence—and that's why America needs allies." This backing is critical particularly in light of the transnational nature of today's preeminent threats: terrorism and weapons

proliferation. Where these twin risks intersect—Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan and potentially other states—working with allies is preferable to going it alone both for burden-sharing and to mitigate anti-American backlash. Military power can achieve the removal of dictators like Saddam Hussein, but only *diplomatic* power projection, backed by the threat of military force, can win the U.S. more allies than enemies in confronting future threats.

Furthermore, though America's power cannot be countered militarily, what the rest of the world has on its side is the steady emergence of a norm prohibiting inter-state war without UN approval. Over the millennia, the evolution of a "super-ego" of international norms has considerably altered expectations of proper behavior, even for the greatest powers. The potential destructiveness of war today, the termination of numerous major civil wars, and the consolidation of states in the developing world have all contributed to this disposition, which Anne Simon has termed the "death of conquest." (National Interest, Spring 2003) As a result, growing concern over America's historically unparalleled military power—and of the Bush administration's intentions for that power—has inspired worldwide political resistance to constrain its use. Contrary to leading American opinion, the year-long diplomatic struggle in the sandbox of the UN Security Council delayed the March invasion of Iraq not due to the ineffectiveness of the body in building consensus, but rather the opposite: American power is considered to be more dangerous than even the tyranny it targets, and war—particularly preventive war—is by no means inevitable. In lacking the patience to gain indisputable legal sanction for the invasion of Iraq (which Security Council Resolution 1441 did not provide), America exacerbated the already poisoned perception on the "World Street" that it aspires to global hegemony. As Kiesling's resignation letter further explained, "Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson." In other words, America's "soft power" is dissipated as quickly as its "hard power" is deployed. American diplomacy therefore seems adrift given the postmodern need to justify military intervention to the "second superpower" of global public opinion, which still awaits an explanation from the Bush administration on how the Iraq invasion meets the legal criteria for preemptive strike of imminence and proportionality.

Yet American policy-makers still assume a benign image of American values and way of life, expressed in such statements as, "They hate us because they hate our freedoms." Ironically, the contradictory claim, "They want to be like us," is simultaneously heard. In reality, repressed populations do want freedom, a voice in their governance and economic opportunity, but they may not want what they judge to be American social values, special-interest driven politics, and exploitative corporate capitalism. Around the world today, American liberty is caricatured by the treatment of Afghan prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, its economy equated to Enron, and its politics coterminous with Christian conservatism. Public diplomacy, therefore, should be driven not by the attempt to "sell" or "brand" American society and foreign policies to international audiences, but rather to *disassociate* the values of liberty and tolerance from their American incarnations. It is preferable that democracy take hold within the context of cultural choice. As President Kennedy remarked, "There cannot be an American solution to every world problem." Furthermore, Europe's slow path to geopolitical self-assertion has highlighted its views on environmental sustainability, international law and social welfare are more congenial to foreigners and more readily exportable than their American variants. Adopting a more concerned stance on environmental issues and foreign development assistance, as well as revisiting the International Criminal Court, would greatly enhance America's global credibility as it attempts to pressure foreign countries to adhere to liberal norms.

Diplomacy by other means

It is worth asking why American politicians, famous for their political savvy, deprive their diplomats of the same resources to communicate with vast and diverse audiences abroad? In the United States, foreign policy has not traditionally been an election issue, but the dangerous combination of rising anti-American forces, inadequate public diplomacy, and lack of American leadership in using international organizations to its advantage have created a sense of insecurity which could make having a comprehensive diplomatic vision an important issue for voters. British Prime Minister Tony Blair has proven to be a master of diplomatic tactics. Despite his domestic unpopularity as America's sole true ally in the war against Iraq, he has won global admiration for speaking out on the importance of UN support for the future Iraqi administration and advocating a return to peace negotiations in the Middle East. In contrast, according to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, George Bush lost a global popularity contest to Saddam Hussein.

The fact that America remains highly unpopular despite the victory in Iraq reinforces the notion that achieving America's geopolitical agenda will require a different approach to diplomacy. International outrage over the unilateral use of force has substantially diminished American credibility with foreign governments, particularly those whose support is by definition necessary for legitimate, assertive backing of anti-terrorist and anti-proliferation norms: Russia, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other important states. Over fifty years ago, Sir Basil Liddell Hart warned that "It is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire." The Bush administration's doctrine of "anticipatory self-defense" may reassure some Americans, but it strikes fear in the hearts of many others who anticipate an encroaching American empire and may spark a vicious cycle of resentment and recriminating acts of terrorism and military aggression. There is therefore no better opportunity for American diplomacy to embody President Teddy Roosevelt's favorite West African proverb: "Speak softly, but carry a big stick."

At a time of such low American credibility due to accusations of unilateralism and outrage over the use of force, the U.S. must invest political resources in high visibility international issues. Specifically, it must contribute far more to capacity-building and the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, work diplomatically to strengthen international treaties against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, assert global statesmanship in resolving dangerous conflicts, and maintain its long-term leadership position by advancing United Nations reform. Seizing on these key issues will vastly improve the perception of America as a team player, facilitating the attainment of its broader foreign policy goals.

First, a realistic and manageable blueprint for enhancing America's diplomatic strength must begin with rethinking the diplomatic component of its current priorities: the campaign against terrorist groups and the reconstruction of political order in Afghanistan and Iraq. In efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and delegitimize international terrorism, the support of Middle Eastern regimes such as Syria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia is critical, but their cooperation depends less on American power itself as on the perception that it is not being used recklessly. Failed states and illiberal regimes in the Middle East and Islamic world are the frontlines of both the struggle against nuclear proliferation and fundamentalist terrorism, but Arab media have portrayed America's occupation of Iraq as a prelude to a hegemonic quest for domination of the Middle East. To counter these analogies to Western crusaders, the U.S. must promote the establishment of liberal institutions in these states through supporting the emergence of free media in Egypt, Iran, Syria and elsewhere. Particularly in Saudi Arabia, whose citizens have become victims of terrorist attacks in recent months, there is growing demand for openness and transparency.

As a candidate in 2000, President Bush asserted, "If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us. If we're a humble nation but strong, they'll welcome us." Nation-building is therefore equal parts perception and reality: by addressing the needs of foreign populations even when their governments do not, American credibility is increased. In confronting accusations that the Bush administration seeks to expropriate Iraqi oil profits, it must set up revenue sharing funds to distribute these profits to the Iraqi people. Does not the *National Security Strategy* state that "Including all the world's poor in an expanding circle of development—and opportunity—is a moral imperative," one of the top priorities of U.S. international policy? American leaders have become increasingly aware that their values and ideologies can neither be exported nor imposed, and no Western-style institutions will carry a favorable image unless their presence delivers on the Maslowian needs of disenfranchised populations: medical care, nutrition, shelter, security, and welfare. This is what Senator J. William Fulbright meant in stating that America should "serve as an intelligent example for the world through material helpfulness without moral presumption." Short of this, the people of Iraq and Afghanistan will not feel liberated but occupied, and mistrust of America in the Middle East and even amongst our allies will increase. Thus far, America has failed to do this. The Pentagon has closed the Peacekeeping Institute of the Army War College, and delayed sending reconstruction units (mostly relegated to the Army reserves) until after the fighting was over. Yet as Les Gelb has noted, "Moral matters... are now a constant force which cannot be overlooked when it comes to policy effectiveness abroad or political support at home." ("The Rise of Ethics in Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2003)

Secondly, American leadership in peacemaking in volatile regions has always been critical to enhancing its foreign image, which can create greater geopolitical leverage. For example, despite the current state of affairs in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, President Clinton remains revered for his exceptionally personal commitment to peace in the region. The Bush administration has taken things a step further with the unequivocal support for the creation of a Palestinian state. Diplomats and experts concur that a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict is essential to anti-proliferation efforts in the region because it would address the perceived security risks on both sides. However, the administration must accelerate its efforts or risk these aims being treated with continued skepticism. In supporting the implementation of the April "Road Map," the United States should work more closely with the European Union, which has begun to view America's position as an impediment rather than an aid to peace.

Next to resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is no better venue for America to demonstrate its commitment to peacemaking than South Asia. After India's and Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests, the United States declared that the Indian subcontinent with its flashpoint Kashmir was the most dangerous place in the world. A combination of events beginning with Pakistan's failed Kargil incursion in 1999 and continuing through America's robust post-September 11 presence there has created simultaneous, unprecedented American leverage over both India and Pakistan. Though India has traditionally resisted outside mediation of the Kashmir dispute, concerns over the stability of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, fears of renewed escalation, and the precarious link to America's counter-proliferation priority provide the impetus for increased pressure on both countries to directly address proposals for a Kashmir settlement. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's recent visit to Kashmir and invitation to begin direct talks with Pakistan on its status was a critical step, no doubt taken after some American urging.

Furthermore, after North Korea's admission of nuclear weapons possession, revamped diplomacy in cooperation with China, Russia, Japan and South Korea will be critical to disarming a state whose

leader, Kim Jong Il, is considered far more irrational than Saddam Hussein. North Korea's notoriously phrased statements accusing the U.S. of "war hysteria" and "nuclear hostility" sadly represent the views of many citizens of far more transparent societies around the world. With China and Russia as traditional North Korean patrons, a military solution to the stalemate stands no chance of receiving support from the Security Council. Instead, to diffuse the nuclear stalemate, America must issue security guarantees collectively with all regional powers. (James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen, "How to Deal with North Korea," *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2003)

In these three hotspots, a sincere and visible affirmation of American commitment to peaceful conflict resolution requires the allocation of greater resources for diplomatic efforts and greater coordination not only between the State Department, Pentagon and National Security Council, but internationally with key allies. "Coalitions of the willing" are an appropriate strategy for regional conflicts where great powers need to lean on key players to keep them in line, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Kashmir dispute and North Korea being perfect examples. But importantly, the potential for serious military escalation in all three cases suggests that diplomacy is a more prudent and sensible course of action than overt military force.

Structural adjustment

But to maintain its long-term leadership position and successfully delegitimize international terrorism and weapons proliferation, the U.S. must recommit to the reform of international organizations. The United Nations—as the world's super-ego—has come to represent the vision of a world of cooperation and peace, even despite its vast institutional shortcomings. At its founding, U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull held the institution to be the key to the "fulfillment of humanity's highest aspirations." Never before have virtually all dimensions of social behavior been so codified, ratified in thousands of international conventions and treaties protecting the sanctity of all forms of life, the dignity of all races, of both genders, and the freedom of all peoples to enjoy economic and political opportunity freed from the "scourge of war." Thus, even where most member states fall short, or even outright contradict, the UN's ambitious blueprints for global peace and stability, its normative appeal remains near universal. Not surprisingly then, where the United States veers from the path prescribed by these international norms—on issues ranging from climate change to missile defense to preventive war—it invites scorn and suspicion. Furthermore, the UN—through the High Commissioner for Refugees, its Development Program, UNICEF and the World Food Program, for example—does much of the dirty work in democracy building and good governance in dozens of countries where American presence is weak, thus preventing them from becoming the failed states or rogue regimes of the future.

Even if Russia, China and France were to concede that the U.S.-led attack to oust Saddam Hussein was "illegal but legitimate," (Anne-Marie Slaughter, NYT, 3/18/03), the purpose of multilateral diplomacy is to avert war, even if most effective by threatening it. The Security Council has therefore become the site of normative apotheosis, where the unholy alliance of French self-aggrandizement, Sino-Russian angst over American interventionism (with outside help from the so-called global peace movement) succeeded in backing the U.S. into a corner from which the Bush administration ultimately unleashed its militant liberalism. As a result, a number of American congressmen and conservative commentators have urged the path of stupendous diplomatic breach: withdrawal from the United Nations. But this would only further erode American credibility and isolate it from the very institution which can best serve its normative goals. As Joseph Nye has written, "Countries that are more credible are more likely to be believed and then followed." America should therefore choose the doctrine of "integration"

articulated by outgoing State Department official Richard Haass, which seeks to “include other countries, organizations, and peoples in arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with the interests and values we share with our partners—values such as rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property rights, equal justice, religious tolerance—and in which these values and their benefits are enjoyed as widely as possible...” Integration is about creating consensus, not flouting it.

American leadership on the dormant issue of Security Council reform will not only allay fears heard around the world that the U.S. seeks the demise of the United Nations, but can instead reconstruct the Council to better serve its interests and reflect its liberal democratic values. The original United Nations had only 51 members and now has 189, yet the Security Council was only expanded once in 1963. A more America friendly Security Council would continue to have the United States, Russia and China as permanent members, but would include Japan and India as well, the former a long-time ally and the latter an essential future ally (its polite opposition to the war in Iraq notwithstanding). With the inclusion of Japan and India, the U.S. can diminish the influence of French posturing, work around Chinese intransigence, and outweigh Russian opposition by gaining support from other strong states. The French and British seats would be collapsed into one permanent seat to be rotated between them and Germany, and a new permanent seat would be created for the European Union, to be occupied by the country holding EU presidency. Having long argued for a strong geopolitical voice for the EU, France would face a choice between selfishly blocking such a proposal or achieving that vision, under heavy pressure from new powers which stand to gain from such a package reform.

Furthermore, in reforming the Security Council, a more prominent role for regional organizations can result in deepened diplomacy within them as they work towards common positions. Therefore, permanent seats should be allocated to the Organization of African Unity, Organization of American States, ASEAN, the League of Arab States and the nascent African Union, each representing on a rotating basis by their member-states. In a more fairly demographically and geographically redistributed Security Council, rotations of non-permanent members (elected from the currently existing geographic groupings) would remain biannual. The inclusion of permanent seats for developing countries and regions would greatly enhance perceptions of American sincerity towards historically neglected states who truly value their voice in the United Nations. Though America lacks a collection of allies strong enough to build a global concert of powers, restructuring the Security Council along these lines will allow the U.S. to transcend the present deadlock where, in the words of Edward Luck, “the Permanent Five deny the validity of one another’s security concerns and posture for public approval.” (“Making the World Safe for Hypocrisy,” *New York Times*, 22 March 2003)

Proposals for Security Council reform have already been put forth in various iterations by nations reflecting their own interests, but none have emerged as a clear alternative to the present situation, though all agree that this is sorely needed. Michael Glennon recently argued that “Institutions cannot be expected to correct the distortions that are embedded in their own structures.” However, only the United States can—if it retains its standing in the United Nations by paying its dues and restoring a robust diplomatic presence—push through reform which reflects its core interests of democracy, human rights and counter-terrorism. The United States International Leadership Act of 2003, currently under consideration in the House of Representatives, praises the utility of multilateral institutions in achieving key American foreign policy objectives. It would require the U.S. to pay its approximately \$1 billion in arrears, and calls for the creation of a “Democracy Caucus” within the General Assembly to ensure that “regional institutions develop and apply democratic standards to member states.” Such a collective would also assist the U.S. in reasserting its leadership in the Human Rights Commission

(from which it was unceremoniously dumped in 2001) and the Commission on Disarmament (currently chaired by Iraq), and strengthen the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to combat terrorist groups by sanctioning their state sponsors. By this mechanism the U.S. can emphasize that although there is no world *government*, being a recognized member of the global community means *governing* according to certain evolved principles of *governance*. But France, Germany and Russia are democracies, and they opposed the U.S. war in Iraq. Thus a “Democracy Caucus” is not the final solution to America’s diplomatic woes, but it is a start. Investing in greater training in multilateral diplomacy and negotiation, though less sexy than the founding of a new faction within the General Assembly, is an equally important component in maximizing America’s voice, vote and influence.

War is not the continuation of politics by other means; it is the cessation of politics, the abandonment of diplomacy. In an age where the use of force across borders frequently evokes resentment and revenge, America should become more creative in its diplomacy by pretending it has its potent military hand tied behind its back. In steering a course between realistic visions of America’s role in the post-Cold War and post-September 11 world ranging from selective engagement to comprehensive submission to an international system of checks and balances, diplomacy, not warfare, will necessarily become the weapon of choice to accomplish America’s global agenda of democracy promotion, curbing international terrorism and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Written in the context of the Cold War, Raymond Aron’s words still ring true: “Greatness is no longer indissolubly linked to military force, because the superpowers can no longer use their weapons without causing their own destruction...” America’s imperial power will be judged by whether it used to reinforce the norms of self-determination and international cooperation or to suppress them, in other words, whether it serves the rest of the world or attempts to subsume it. Such are the great expectations for the world’s greatest power today.

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