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Imperial Presidency

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It goes without saying that what happens in the US has an enormous impact on the rest of the world – and conversely: what happens in the rest of the world cannot fail to have an impact on the US, in several ways. First, it sets constraints on what even the most powerful state can do. And second, it influences the domestic US component of "the second superpower," as the New York Times ruefully described world public opinion after the huge protests before the Iraq invasion. Those protests were a critically important historical event, not only because of their unprecedented scale, but also because it was the first time in hundreds of years of the history of Europe and its North American offshoots that a war was massively protested even before it was officially launched. We may recall, by comparison, the war against South Vietnam launched by JFK in 1962, brutal and barbaric from the outset: bombing, chemical warfare to destroy food crops so as to starve out the civilian support for the indigenous resistance, programs to drive millions of people to virtual concentration camps or urban slums to eliminate its popular base. By the time protests reached a substantial scale, the highly respected and quite hawkish Vietnam specialist and military historian Bernard Fall wondered whether "Viet-Nam as a cultural

and historic entity" would escape "extinction" as "the countryside literally dies under the blows of the largest military machine ever unleashed on an area of this size" – particularly South Vietnam, always the main target of the US assault. And when protest did finally develop, many years too late, it was mostly directed against the peripheral crimes: the extension of the war against the South to the rest of Indochina – hideous crimes, but lesser ones.

It's quite important to remember how much the world has changed since then – as almost always, not as a result of gifts from benevolent leaders, but through deeply committed popular struggle, far too late in developing, but ultimately effective. One consequence was that the US government could not declare a national emergency, which should have been healthy for the economy, as during World War II when public support was very high. Johnson had to fight a "guns-and-butter" war, buying off an unwilling population, harming the economy, ultimately leading the business classes to turn against the war as too costly, after the Tet Offensive of January 1968 showed that it would go on a long time. The memoirs of Hitler's economic Czar Albert Speer describe a similar problem. The Nazis could not trust their population, and therefore could not fight as disciplined a war as their democratic enemies, possibly affecting the outcome seriously, given their technological lead. There were also concerns among US elites about rising social and political consciousness stimulated by the activism of the '60s, much of it reaction to the miserable crimes in Indochina, then at last arousing popular indignation. We learn from the last sections of the *Pentagon Papers* that after the Tet offensive, the military command was reluctant to agree to the President's call for further troop deployments, wanting to be sure that "sufficient forces would still be available for civil disorder control" in the US, and fearing that escalation might run the risk of "provoking a domestic crisis of unprecedented proportions."

The Reagan administration – the current administration or their immediate mentors — assumed that the problem of an independent

aroused population had been overcome, and apparently planned to follow the Kennedy model of the early 1960s in Central America. But they backed off in the face of unanticipated public protest, turning instead to "clandestine war" employing murderous security forces and a huge international terror network. The consequences were terrible, but not as bad as B-52s and mass murder operations of the kind that were peaking when John Kerry was deep in the Mekong Delta in the South, by then largely devastated. The popular reaction to even the "clandestine war," so called, broke entirely new ground. The solidarity movements for Central America, now in many parts of the world, are again something new in Western history.

State managers cannot fail to pay attention to such matters. Routinely, a newly elected President requests an intelligence evaluation of the world situation. In 1989, when Bush I took office, a part was leaked. It warned that when attacking "much weaker enemies" – the only sensible target – the US must win "decisively and rapidly." Delay might "undercut political support," recognized to be thin, a great change since the Kennedy-Johnson years when the attack on Indochina, while never popular, aroused little reaction for many years.

The world is pretty awful today, but it is far better than yesterday, not only with regard to unwillingness to tolerate aggression, but also in many other ways, which we now tend to take for granted. There are very important lessons here, which should always be uppermost in our minds – for the same reason they are suppressed in the elite culture.

We might tarry for a moment to recall Canada's role in the Indochina wars, some of the worst crimes of the last century. Canada was a member of the International Control Commission for Indochina, theoretically neutral, in fact spying for the aggressors. We learn from recently released Canadian archives that Canada felt "some misgivings about some specific USA military measures against [North Vietnam]," but "supports purposes and objectives

of USA policy" in opposing North Vietnamese "aggression of [a] special type." This Vietnamese aggression against Vietnam must not be allowed to succeed, not only because of the possible consequences in Vietnam, still not facing the threat of "extinction" at this time, but also because if Vietnam survives "as a viable cultural and historic entity," the aggression of the Vietnamese might set a precedent "for other so-called liberation wars." The concept of Vietnamese aggression in Vietnam against the American defenders of the country has interesting precedents, which out of politeness I will not mention. It is particularly striking because the Canadian observers surely were aware that at the time there were more US mercenaries in South Vietnam as part of the invading US army than there were North Vietnamese – even if we assume that somehow North Vietnamese are not allowed in Vietnam. And the US mercenaries, along with the far greater US army, were threatening South Vietnam with "extinction" by mass terror operations right at the heart of the country, while the North Vietnamese "aggressors" were at the periphery, mainly trying to draw the invading forces to the borders, at a time when North Vietnam too was being bombed. That remained true, according to the Pentagon, until many years after these Canadian government reports.

The diplomatic historians who have explored the Canadian archives have not reported any misgivings about the attack against South Vietnam, which by the time of these internal communications, was demolishing the country. The distinguished statesman Lester Pearson had gone far beyond. He informed the House of Commons in the early 1950s that "aggression" by the Vietnamese against France in Vietnam is only one element of worldwide "communist aggression," and that "Soviet colonial authority in Indochina" appeared to be stronger than that of France – that's when France was attempting (with US support) to reconquer its former Indochinese colonies, with not a Russian anywhere in the neighborhood, and not even any contacts, as the CIA had to concede after a desperate effort to find them. One

rarely discussed, for reasons that are not hard to discern. Both recent history and public attitudes suggest some pretty straightforward and quite conservative strategies for short-term activism on the part of those who don't want to wait for China to save us from "ultimate doom." We enjoy great privilege and freedom, remarkable by comparative and historical standards. That legacy was not granted from above: it was won by dedicated struggle, which does not reduce to pushing a lever every few years. We can of course abandon that legacy, and take the easy way of pessimism: everything is hopeless, so I'll quit. Or we can make use of that legacy to work to create – in part re-create – the basis for a functioning democratic culture, in which the public plays some role in determining policies, not only in the political arena from which it is largely excluded, but also in the crucial economic arena, from which it is excluded in principle.

These are hardly radical ideas. They were articulated clearly, for example, by the leading twentieth century social philosopher in the US, John Dewey, who pointed out that until "industrial feudalism" is replaced by "industrial democracy," politics will remain "the shadow cast by big business over society." Dewey was as "American as apple pie," in the familiar phrase. He was in fact drawing from a long tradition of thought and action that had developed independently in working class culture from the origins of the industrial revolution — right where I live, near Boston. Such ideas remain just below the surface, and can become a living part of our societies, cultures, and institutions. But like other victories for justice and freedom over the centuries, that will not happen by itself. One of the clearest lessons of history, including recent history, is that rights are not granted; they are won. The rest is up to us.

ues. We have to temper the messianic idealism of Bush and Blair with some sober realism, the London *Financial Times* advised.

The interesting fact is that it was presupposed uncritically across the spectrum that the messianic vision must be the goal of the invasion, not this silly business about WMD and al-Qaeda, no longer credible to elite opinion. What is the evidence that the US and Britain are guided by the messianic vision? There is indeed evidence, a single piece of evidence: our Leaders proclaimed it. What more could be needed?

There is one sector of opinion that had a different view: Iraqis. Just as the messianic vision was unveiled in Washington to reverent applause, a US-run poll of Baghdadis was released. Some agreed with the near-unanimous stand of Western elite opinion: that the goal of the invasion was to bring democracy to Iraq. One percent. Five percent thought the goal was to help Iraqis. The majority assumed the obvious: the US wants to control Iraq's resources and use its base there to reorganize the region in its interest. Baghdadis agree that there is a problem of cultural backwardness: in the West, not in Iraq.

Actually, their views were more nuanced. Though 1% believed that the goal of the invasion was to bring democracy, about half felt that the US wanted democracy – but would not allow Iraqis to run their democracy "without U.S. pressure and influence." They understand the quintessentially American faith very well, perhaps because it was also the quintessentially British faith while Britain's boot was on their necks. They don't have to know the history of Wilsonian idealism, or Britain's noble counterpart, or France's civilizing mission, or the even more exalted vision of Japanese fascists, and many others – probably also close to a historical universal. Their own experience is enough.

It is not unusual for those at the wrong end of the club to have a clearer picture of reality than those who wield it.

At the outset I mentioned the notable successes of popular struggles in the past decades, very clear if we think about it a little, but

has to search pretty far to find more fervent devotion to imperial crimes than Pearson's declarations.

Without forgetting the very significant progress towards more civilized societies in past years, and the reasons for it, let's focus nevertheless on the present, and on the notions of imperial sovereignty now being crafted. It is not surprising that as the population becomes more civilized, power systems become more extreme in their efforts to control the "great beast" (as the Founding Fathers called the people). And the great beast is indeed frightening: I'll return to majority views on major issues, which are so far to the left of the spectrum of elite commentary and the electoral arena that they cannot even be reported – another fact that teaches important lessons to those who do not like what is being done in their names.

The conception of presidential sovereignty crafted by the radical statist reactionaries of the Bush administration is so extreme that it has drawn unprecedented criticism in the most sober and respected establishment circles. These ideas were transmitted to the President by the newly appointed Attorney-General, Alberto Gonzales – who is depicted as a moderate in the press. They are discussed by the respected constitutional law professor Sanford Levinson in the current issue of the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Levinson writes that the conception is based on the principle that "There exists no norm that is applicable to chaos." The quote, Levinson comments, is from Carl Schmitt, the leading German philosopher of law during the Nazi period, who Levinson describes as "the true éminence grise of the Bush administration." The administration, advised by Gonzales, has articulated "a view of presidential authority that is all too close to the power that Schmitt was willing to accord his own Führer," Levinson writes.

One rarely hears such words from the heart of the establishment.

The same issue of the journal carries an article by two prominent strategic analysts on the "transformation of the military," a central component of the new doctrines of imperial sovereignty: the rapid

expansion of offensive weaponry, including militarization of space – joined apparently by Canada — and other measures designed to place the entire world at risk of instant annihilation. These have already elicited the anticipated reactions by Russia and recently China. The analysts conclude that these US programs may lead to "ultimate doom." They express their hope that a coalition of peace-loving states will coalesce as a counter to US militarism and aggressiveness, led by – China. We've come to a pretty pass when such sentiments are voiced in sober respectable circles not given to hyperbole. And when faith in American democracy is so slight that they look to China to save us from marching towards ultimate doom. It's up to the second superpower to decide whether that contempt for the great beast is warranted.

Going back to Gonzales, he transmitted to the President the conclusions of the Justice Dept that the President has the authority to rescind the Geneva Conventions — the supreme law of the land, the foundation of modern international humanitarian law. And Gonzales, who was then Bush's legal counsel, advised him that this would be a good idea, because rescinding the Conventions "substantially reduces the threat of domestic criminal prosecution [of administration officials] under the War Crimes Act" of 1996, which carries the death penalty for "grave breaches" of Geneva Conventions.

We can see right on today's front pages why the Justice Department was right to be concerned that the President and his advisers might be subject to death penalty under the laws passed by the Republican Congress in 1996 – and of course under the principles of the Nuremberg Tribunal, if anyone took them seriously.

Two weeks ago, the NY Times featured a front-page story reporting the conquest of the Falluja General Hospital. It reported that "Patients and hospital employees were rushed out of rooms by armed soldiers and ordered to sit or lie on the floor while troops tied their hands behind their backs." An accompanying photograph depicted the scene. That was presented as an important achievement. "The offensive also shut down what officers said was a pro-

treme example was Paul Wolfowitz, who berated the Turkish military for not compelling the government to follow Washington's orders, and demanded that they apologize and publicly recognize that the goal of a properly functioning democracy is to help America. Small wonder that the liberal press hails him as the "Idealist-in-Chief" leading the crusade for democracy (David Ignatius, veteran Washington Post correspondent and editor), a vocation well grounded in the rest of his gruesome record, kept carefully under wraps.

In other ways too, the operative concept of democracy is scarcely concealed. The lead think-piece in the NY Times on the death of Yasser Arafat opened by saying that "the post-Arafat era will be the latest test of a quintessentially American article of faith: that elections provide legitimacy even to the frailest institutions." In the final paragraph, on the continuation page, we read that Washington "resisted new national elections among the Palestinians" because Arafat would win and gain "a fresher mandate" and elections "might help give credibility and authority to Hamas" as well.

In other words, democracy is fine if the results come out the right way; otherwise, to the flames. That is "the quintessential faith." The evidence is so overwhelming it is pointless even to review it – at least, for those who care about such matters as historical fact, or even what is conceded publicly.

To take just one crucial current example of the same doctrines, a year ago, after other pretexts for invading Iraq had collapsed, Bush's speech writers had to come up with something to replace them. They settled on what the liberal press calls "the president's messianic vision to bring democracy" to Iraq, the Middle East, the whole world. The reactions were intriguing. They ranged from rapturous acclaim for the vision, which proved that this was the most noble war in history (Ignatius), to critics, who agreed that the vision was noble and inspiring, but might be beyond our reach: Iraqi culture is just not ready for such progress towards our civilized val-

not create a new government program" – what the majority want, so it appears. But it is politically impossible and there is too little political support, meaning that the insurance companies, HMOs, pharmaceutical industries, Wall Street, etc., are opposed.

It is notable that these views are held by people in virtual isolation. They rarely hear them, and though the question is not asked in the published polls, it is likely that respondents regard their own views as idiosyncratic. Their preferences do not enter into the political campaigns, and only marginally into articulate opinion in media and journals. The same extends to other domains, and raises important questions about a "democratic deficit" in the world's most important state, to adopt the phrase we use for others.

What would the results of the election have been if the parties, either of them, had been willing to articulate people's concerns on the issues they regard as vitally important? Or if these issues could enter into public discussion within the mainstream? We can only speculate about that, but we do know that it does not happen, and that the facts are scarcely even reported. It seems reasonable to suppose that fear of the great beast is rather deep.

The operative concept of democracy is revealed very clearly in other ways as well. Perhaps the most extraordinary was the distinction between Old and New Europe in the run-up to the Iraq war. The criterion for membership was so sharp and clear that it took real discipline to miss it. Old Europe – the bad guys – were the governments that took the same stand as the large majority of the population. New Europe – the exciting hope for a democratic future – were the Churchillian leaders like Berlusconi and Aznar who disregarded even larger majorities of the population and submissively took their orders from Crawford Texas. The most dramatic case was Turkey, where, to everyone's surprise, the government actually followed the will of 95% of the population. The official administration moderate, Colin Powell, immediately announced harsh punishment for this crime. Turkey was bitterly condemned in the national press for lacking "democratic credentials." The most ex-

paganda weapon for the militants: Falluja General Hospital, with its stream of reports of civilian casualties." And these "inflated" figures – inflated because our Dear Leader so declares – were "inflaming opinion throughout the country" and the region, driving up "the political costs of the conflict." The word "conflict" is a common euphemism for US aggression, as when we read on the same pages that the US must now rebuild "what the conflict just destroyed": just "the conflict," with no agent, like a hurricane.

Let's go back to the picture and story about the closing of the "propaganda weapon." There are some relevant documents, including the Geneva Conventions, which state: "Fixed establishments and mobile medical units of the Medical Service may in no circumstances be attacked, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict." So page one of the world's leading newspaper is cheerfully depicting war crimes for which the political leadership could be sentenced to death under US law. No wonder the new moderate Attorney-General warned the President that he should use the constitutional authority concocted by the Justice Department to rescind the supreme law of the land, adopting the concept of presidential sovereignty devised by Hitler's primary legal adviser, "the true éminence grise of the Bush administration," according to a distinguished conservative authority on constitutional law, writing in perhaps the most respectable and sober journal in the country.

The world's greatest newspaper also tells us that the US military "achieved nearly all their objectives well ahead of schedule," leaving "much of the city in smoking ruins." But it was not a complete success. There is little evidence of dead "packrats" in their "warrens" or the streets, which remains "an enduring mystery." The embedded reporters did find a body of a dead woman, though it is "not known whether she was an Iraqi or a foreigner," apparently the only question that comes to mind.

The front-page account quotes a Marine commander who says that "It ought to go down in the history books." Perhaps it should.

If so, we know on just what page of history it will go down, and who will be right beside it, along with those who praise or for that matter even tolerate it. At least, we know that if we are capable of honesty.

One might mention at least some of the recent counterparts that immediately come to mind, like the Russian destruction of Grozny 10 years ago, a city of about the same size. Or Srebrenica, almost universally described as "genocide" in the West. In that case, as we know in detail from the Dutch government report and other sources, the Muslim enclave in Serb territory, inadequately protected, was used as a base for attacks against Serb villages, and when the anticipated reaction took place, it was horrendous. The Serbs drove out all but military age men, and then moved in to kill them. There are differences with Falluja. Women and children were not bombed out of Srebrenica, but trucked out, and there will be no extensive efforts to exhume the last corpse of the packrats in their warrens in Falluja. There are other differences, arguably unfair to the Serbs.

It could be argued that all this is irrelevant. The Nuremberg Tribunal, spelling out the UN Charter, declared that initiation of a war of aggression is "the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole" – hence the war crimes in Falluja and Abu Ghraib, the doubling of acute malnutrition among children since the invasion (now at the level of Burundi, far higher than Haiti or Uganda), and all the rest of the atrocities. Those judged to have played any role in the supreme crime — for example, the German Foreign Minister – were sentenced to death by hanging. The Tokyo Tribunal was far more severe. There is a very important book on the topic by Canadian international lawyer Michael Mandel, who reviews in convincing detail how the powerful are self-immunized from international law.

In fact, the Nuremberg Tribunal itself established this principle. To bring the Nazi criminals to justice, it was necessary to devise

What about actual public attitudes? Again, right before the election, major studies were released reporting them – and when we look at the results, barely reported, we see right away why it is a good idea to base elections on deceit, very much as in the fake markets of the doctrinal system. Here are a few examples.

A considerable majority believe that the US should accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and the World Court; sign the Kyoto protocols; allow the UN to take the lead in international crises (including security, reconstruction, and political transition in Iraq); rely on diplomatic and economic measures more than military ones in the "war on terror"; and use force only if there is "strong evidence that the country is in imminent danger of being attacked," thus rejecting the bipartisan consensus on "preemptive war" and adopting a rather conventional interpretation of the UN Charter. A majority even favor giving up the Security Council veto. Overwhelming majorities favor expansion of purely domestic programs: primarily health care (80%), but also aid to education and Social Security. Similar results have long been found in these studies, carried out by the most reputable organizations that monitor public opinion.

In other mainstream polls, about 80% favor guaranteed health care even if it would raise taxes – a national health care system is likely to reduce expenses considerably, avoiding the heavy costs of bureaucracy, supervision, paperwork, etc., some of the factors that render the US privatized system the most inefficient in the industrial world. Public opinion has been similar for a long time, with numbers varying depending on how questions are asked. The facts are sometimes discussed in the press, with public preferences noted but dismissed as "politically impossible." That happened again on the eve of the 2004 elections. A few days before (Oct. 31), the NY Times reported that "there is so little political support for government intervention in the health care market in the United States that Senator John Kerry took pains in a recent presidential debate to say that his plan for expanding access to health insurance would

Recall the concern of Canadian "neutral observers" in the ICC over the possible precedent of Vietnamese aggression in Vietnam, traceable to similar roots, we learn in the US documentary record. And quite a common feature of aggression, subversion, and state-sponsored international terrorism masked in Cold War rhetoric when those pretexts were available.

Successful defiance remains intolerable, ranked far higher as a priority than combating terror, just another illustration of principles that are well-established, internally rational, clear enough to the victims, but not perceptible among the agents who describe the events and debate the reasons. The clamor about revelations of Bush administration priorities by insiders (Clarke, O'Neil), and the extensive 9–11 hearings in Washington, are just further illustrations of this curious inability to perceive the obvious, even to entertain it as a possibility.

Let's return to the great beast. US public opinion is studied with great care and depth. Studies released right before the election showed that those planning to vote for Bush assumed that Republican Party shared their views, even though the Party explicitly rejected them. Pretty much the same was true of Kerry supporters, unless we give a very sympathetic interpretation of occasional vague statements that most voters had probably never even heard. The major concerns of Kerry supporters were economy and health care, and they assumed that he shared their views on these matters, just as Bush voters assumed, with comparable justification, that Republicans shared their views.

In brief, those who bothered to vote mostly accepted the imagery concocted by the PR industry, which had only the vaguest resemblance to reality. That's apart from the more wealthy, who tend to vote their class interests. Though details are not yet available, it is a reasonable surmise that the wealthy may have expressed their gratitude to their benefactors in the White House with even higher votes for them in 2004 than in 2000, possibly accounting for much of the small differences.

definitions of "war crime" and "crime against humanity." How this was done is explained by Telford Taylor, chief counsel for the prosecution and a distinguished international lawyer and historian:

> Since both sides in World War II had played the terrible game of urban destruction – the Allies far more successfully – there was no basis for criminal charges against Germans or Japanese, and in fact no such charges were brought… Aerial bombardment had been used so extensively and ruthlessly on the Allied side as well as the Axis side that neither at Nuremberg nor Tokyo was the issue made a part of the trials.

The operative definition of "crime" is: "Crime that you carried out but we did not." To underscore the fact, Nazi war criminals were absolved if the defense could show that their US counterparts carried out the same crimes.

Taylor concludes that "to punish the foe – especially the vanquished foe – for conduct in which the enforcer nation has engaged, would be so grossly inequitable as to discredit the laws themselves." That is correct, but the operative definition also discredits the laws themselves, along with all subsequent tribunals. Taylor provides this background as part of his explanation of why US bombing in Vietnam was not a war crime. His argument is plausible, further discrediting the laws themselves. Some of the subsequent judicial inquiries are discredited in perhaps even more extreme ways, such as the Yugoslavia vs. NATO case now being adjudicated by the International Court of Justice. The US was excused, correctly, on the basis of its argument that it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Court in this case. The reason is that when the US finally signed the Genocide Convention (which is at issue here) after 40 years, it did so with a reservation stating that it is inapplicable to the United States.

In an outraged comment on the efforts of Justice Department lawyers to demonstrate that the President has the right to authorize torture, Yale Law School Dean Howard Koh said that "The notion that the president has the constitutional power to permit torture is like saying he has the constitutional power to commit genocide." The President's legal advisers, and the new Attorney-General, should have little difficulty arguing that the President does indeed have that right – if the second superpower permits him to exercise it.

The sacred doctrine of self-immunization is sure to hold of the trial of Saddam Hussein, if it is ever held. We see that every time that Bush, Blair, and other worthies in government and commentary lament over the terrible crimes of Saddam Hussein, always bravely omitting the words: "with our help, because we did not care." Surely no tribunal will be permitted to address the fact that US presidents from Kennedy until today, along with French presidents and British Prime Ministers, and Western business, have been complicit in Saddam's crimes, sometimes in horrendous ways, including current incumbents and their mentors. In setting up the Saddam tribunal, the State Department consulted US legal expert Prof. Charif Bassiouni, recently quoted as saying: "All efforts are being made to have a tribunal whose judiciary is not independent but controlled, and by controlled I mean that the political manipulators of the tribunal have to make sure the US and other western powers are not brought in cause. This makes it look like victor's vengeance: it makes it seem targeted, selected, unfair. It's a subterfuge." We hardly need to be told.

The pretext for US-UK aggression in Iraq is what is called the right of "anticipatory self-defense," now sometimes called "preemptive war" in a radical perversion of that concept. The right of anticipatory self-defense was affirmed officially in the Bush administration National Security Strategy of September 2002, declaring Washington's right to resort to force to eliminate any potential challenge to its global dominance. The NSS was widely criticized among the

House informed Congress that *four* are assigned to tracking the finances of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, while almost two dozen are dedicated to enforcing the embargo against Cuba – incidentally, declared illegal by every relevant international organization, even the usually compliant Organization of American States. From 1990 to 2003, OFAC informed Congress, there were 93 terrorism-related investigations with $9000 in fines; and 11,000 Cuba-related investigations with $8 million in fines. No interest was aroused among those now pondering the puzzling question of whether the Bush administration — and its predecessors — downgraded the war on terror in favor of other priorities.

Why should the Treasury Department devote vastly more energy to strangling Cuba than to the war on terror? The US is a uniquely open society; we therefore have quite a lot of information about state planning. The basic reasons were explained in secret documents 40 years ago, when the Kennedy administration sought to bring "the terrors of the earth" to Cuba, as historian and Kennedy confidante Arthur Schlesinger recounted in his biography of Robert Kennedy, who ran the terror operations as his highest priority. State Department planners warned that the "very existence" of the Castro regime is "successful defiance" of US policies going back 150 years, to the Monroe Doctrine; no Russians, but intolerable defiance of the master of the hemisphere. Furthermore, this successful defiance encourages others, who might be infected by the "Castro idea of taking matters into their own hands," Schlesinger had warned incoming President Kennedy, summarizing the report of the President's Latin American mission. These dangers are particularly grave, Schlesinger elaborated, when "the distribution of land and other forms of national wealth greatly favors the propertied classes … and the poor and underprivileged, stimulated by the example of the Cuban revolution, are now demanding opportunities for a decent living." The whole system of domination might unravel if the idea of taking matters into one's own hands spreads its evil tentacles.

ago. In the same vein, Zbigniew Brzezinski recently wrote that control over Iraq gives the US "critical leverage" over European and Asian economies, a major concern of planners since World War II.

Rivals are to keep to their "regional responsibilities" within the "overall framework of order" managed by the US, as Kissinger instructed them in his "Year of Europe" address 30 years ago. That is even more urgent today, as the major rivals threaten to move in an independent course, maybe even united. The EU and China became each other's leading trading partners in 2004, and those ties are becoming tighter, including the world's second largest economy, Japan. Critical leverage is more important than ever for world control in the tripolar world that has been evolving for over 30 years. In comparison, the threat of terror is a minor consideration – though the threat is known to be awesome; long before 9–11 it was understood that sooner or later, the Jihadist terror organized by the US and its allies in the 1980s is likely to combine with WMD, with horrifying consequences.

Notice that the crucial issue with regard to Middle East oil – about 2/3 of estimated world resources, and unusually easy to extract — is control, not access. US policies towards the Middle East were the same when it was a net exporter of oil, and remain the same today when US intelligence projects that the US itself will rely on more stable Atlantic Basin resources, including Canada, which forfeited its right to control its own resources in NAFTA. Policies would be likely to be about the same if the US were to switch to renewable energy. The need to control the "stupendous source of strategic power" and to gain "profits beyond the dreams of avarice" would remain. Jockeying over Central Asia and pipeline routes reflects similar concerns.

There are plenty of other illustrations of the same ranking of priorities. To mention one, the Treasury Department has a bureau (OFAC, Office of Foreign Assets Control) that is assigned the task of investigating suspicious financial transfers, a crucial component of the "war on terror." OFAC has 120 employees. Last April, the White

foreign policy elite, beginning with an article right away in the main establishment journal *Foreign Affairs*, warning that "the new imperial grand strategy" could be very dangerous. Criticism continued, again at an unprecedented level, but on narrow grounds: not that the doctrine itself was wrong, but rather its style and manner of presentation. Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright summed the criticism up accurately, also in *FA*. She pointed out that every President has such a doctrine in his back pocket, but it is simply foolish to smash people in the face with it and to implement it in a manner that will infuriate even allies. That is threatening to US interests, and therefore wrong.

Albright knew, of course, that Clinton had a similar doctrine. The Clinton doctrine advocated "unilateral use of military power" to defend vital interests, such as "ensuring uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies and strategic resources," without even the pretexts that Bush and Blair devised. Taken literally, the Clinton doctrine is more expansive than Bush's NSS. But the more expansive Clinton doctrine was barely even reported. It was presented with the right style, and implemented less brazenly.

Henry Kissinger described the Bush doctrine as "revolutionary," pointing out that it undermines the 17th century Westphalian system of international order, and of course the UN Charter and international law. He approved of the doctrine but with reservations about style and tactics, and with a crucial qualification: it cannot be "a universal principle available to every nation." Rather, the right of aggression must be reserved to the US, perhaps delegated to chosen clients. We must forcefully reject the principle of universality: that we apply to ourselves the same standards we do to others, more stringent ones if we are serious. Kissinger is to be praised for his honesty in forthrightly articulating prevailing doctrine, usually concealed in professions of virtuous intent and tortured legalisms. And he understands his educated audience. As he doubtless expected, there was no reaction.

His understanding of his audience was illustrated again, rather dramatically, last May, when Kissinger-Nixon tapes were released, over Kissinger's strong objections. There was a report in the world's leading newspaper. It mentioned in passing the orders to bomb Cambodia that Kissinger transmitted from Nixon to the military commanders. In Kissinger's words, "A massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. Anything that flies on anything that moves." It is rare for a call for horrendous war crimes – what we would not hesitate to call "genocide" if others were responsible – to be so stark and explicit. It may be more than rare; it would be interesting to see if there is anything like it in archival records. The publication elicited no reaction, refuting Dean Koh. Apparently, it is taken for granted in the elite culture that the President and his National Security Adviser *do* have the right to order genocide.

Imagine the reaction if the prosecutors at the Milosevic Tribunal could find anything remotely similar. They would be overjoyed, the trial would be over, Milosevic would receive several life sentences, the death penalty if the Tribunal adhered to US law. But that is *them*, not *us*. The distinction is a core principle of the elite intellectual culture in the West – and in fact, throughout history quite generally.

The principle of universality is the most elementary of moral truisms. It is the foundation of "Just War theory" and in fact of every system of morality deserving of anything but contempt. Rejection of such moral truisms is so deeply rooted in the intellectual culture as to be invisible. To illustrate again how deeply entrenched it is, let's return to the principle of "anticipatory self-defense," adopted as legitimate by both political organizations in the US, and across virtually the entire spectrum of articulate opinion, apart from the usual margins. The principle has some immediate corollaries. If the US is granted the right of "anticipatory self-defense" against terror, then, certainly, Cuba, Nicaragua, and a host of others have long been entitled to carry out terrorist acts within the US because there is no doubt of its involvement in very serious terrorist at-

him, and the rest of the folksy manner. After all, it wouldn't do to present him as a spoiled frat boy from Yale who became rich and powerful thanks to his rich and powerful connections. Rather, the imagery has to be an ordinary guy just like us, who'll protect us, and who shares our "moral values," more so than the windsurfing goose-hunter who can be accused of faking his medals.

Bush received a large majority among voters who said they were concerned primarily with "moral values" and "terrorism." We learn all we have to know about the moral values of the administration by reading the pages of the business press the day after the election, describing the "euphoria" in board rooms – not because CEOs are opposed to gay marriage. Or by observing the principle, hardly concealed, that the very serious costs incurred by the Bush planners, in their dedicated service to power and wealth, are to be transferred to our children and grandchildren, including fiscal costs, environmental destruction, and perhaps "ultimate doom." These are the moral values, loud and clear.

The commitment of Bush planners to "defense against terrorism" is illustrated most dramatically, perhaps, by their decision to escalate the threat of terror, as had been predicted even by their own intelligence agencies, not because they enjoy terrorist attacks against Americans, but because it is, plainly, a low priority for them — surely as compared with such goals as establishing secure military bases in a dependent client state at the heart of the world's energy resources, recognized since World War II as the "most strategically important area of the world," "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history." It is critically important to ensure that "profits beyond the dreams of avarice" – to quote a leading history of the oil industry – flow in the right directions: to US energy corporations, the Treasury Department, US high tech (militarized) industry and huge construction firms, and so on. And even more important is the stupendous strategic power. Having a firm hand on the spigot guarantees "veto power" over rivals, as George Kennan pointed out over 50 years

by imagery. It has hardly surprising that the same dedication to deceit and similar techniques should prevail when they are assigned the task of selling candidates, so as to undermine democracy.

That's hardly a secret. Corporations do not spend hundreds of billions of dollars in advertising every year to inform the public of the facts – say, listing the properties of next year's cars, as would happen in an unimaginable market society based on rational choice by informed consumers. Observing that doctrine of the faith would be simple and cheap. But deceit is quite expensive: complex graphics showing the car with a sexy actress, or a sports hero, or climbing a sheer cliff, or some other device to project an image that might deceive the consumer into buying this car instead of the virtually identical one produced by a competitor. The same is true of elections, run by the same Public Relations industry. The goal is to project images, and deceive the public into accepting them, while sidelining issues – for good reasons, to which I'll return.

The population seems to grasp the nature of the performance. Right before the 2000 elections, about 75% regarded it as virtually meaningless, some game involving rich contributors, party managers, and candidates who are trained to project images that conceal issues but might pick up some votes – probably the reason why the "stolen election" was an elite concern that did not seem to arouse much public interest; if elections have about as much significance as flipping a coin to pick the King, who cares if the coin was biased? Right before the 2004 election, about 10% of voters said their choice would based on the candidate's "agendas/ideas/platforms/goals"; 6% for Bush voters, 13% for Kerry voters. For the rest, the choice would be based on what the industry calls "qualities" and "values." Does the candidate project the image of a strong leader, the kind of guy you'd like to meet in a bar, someone who really cares about you and is just like you? It wouldn't be surprising to learn that Bush is carefully trained to say "nucular" and "misunderestimate" and the other silliness that intellectuals like to ridicule. That's probably about as real as the ranch constructed for

tacks against them, extensively documented in impeccable sources, and in the case of Nicaragua, even condemned by the World Court and the Security Council (in two resolutions that the US vetoed, with Britain loyally abstaining). The conclusion that Cuba and Nicaragua, among many others, have long had the right to carry out terrorist atrocities in the US is of course utterly outrageous, and advocated by no one. And thanks to our self-determined immunity from moral truisms, there is no fear that anyone will draw the outrageous conclusions.

There are still more outrageous ones. No one, for example, celebrates Pearl Harbor day by applauding the fascist leaders of Imperial Japan. But by our standards, the bombing of military bases in the US colonies of Hawaii and the Philippines seems rather innocuous. The Japanese leaders knew that B-17 Flying Fortresses were coming off the Boeing production lines, and were surely familiar with the public discussions in the US explaining how they could be used to incinerate Japan's wooden cities in a war of extermination, flying from Hawaiian and Philippine bases — "to burn out the industrial heart of the Empire with fire-bombing attacks on the teeming bamboo ant heaps," as retired Air Force General Chennault recommended in 1940, a proposal that "simply delighted" President Roosevelt. That's a far more powerful justification for anticipatory self-defense than anything conjured up by Bush-Blair and their associates — and accepted, with tactical reservations, throughout the mainstream of articulate opinion.

Fortunately, we are once again protected from such politically incorrect conclusions by the principled rejection of elementary moral truisms.

Examples can be enumerated virtually at random. To add one last one, consider the most recent act of NATO aggression prior to the US-UK invasion of Iraq: the bombing of Serbia in 1999. The justification is supposed to be that there were no diplomatic options and that it was necessary to stop ongoing genocide. It is not hard to evaluate these claims.

As for diplomatic options, when the bombing began, there were two proposals on the table, a NATO and a Serbian proposal, and after 78 days of bombing a compromise was reached between them – formally at least: it was immediately undermined by NATO. All of this quickly vanished into the mists of unacceptable history, to the limited extent that it was ever reported.

What about ongoing genocide – to use the term that appeared hundreds of times in the press as NATO geared up for war? That is unusually easy to investigate. There are two major documentary studies by the State Department, offered to justify the bombing, along with extensive documentary records from the OSCE, NATO, and other Western sources, and a detailed British Parliamentary Inquiry All agree on the basic facts: the atrocities followed the bombing; they were not its cause. Furthermore, that was predicted by the NATO command, as General Wesley Clark informed the press right away, and confirmed in more detail in his memoirs. The Milosevic indictment, issued during the bombing — surely as a propaganda weapon, despite implausible denials — and relying on US-UK intelligence as announced at once, yields the same conclusion: virtually all the charges are post-bombing. Such annoyances are handled quite easily: the Western documentation is commonly expunged in the media and even scholarship. And the chronology is regularly reversed, so that the anticipated consequences of the bombing are transmuted into its cause. I have reviewed the sordid tale in detail elsewhere, and will skip it here.

There were indeed pre-bombing atrocities, about 2000 killed in the year before the March 1999 bombing, according to Western sources. The British, the most hawkish element of the coalition, make the astonishing claim – hard to believe just on the basis of the balance of forces – that until January 1999, most of the killings were by the Albanian KLA guerrillas, attacking civilians and soldiers in cross-border raids in the hope of eliciting a harsh Serbian response that could be used for propaganda purposes in the West, as they candidly reported, apparently with CIA support in the last

months. Western sources indicate no substantial change until the bombing was announced and the monitors withdrawn a few days before the March bombing. In one of the few works of scholarship that even mentions the unusually rich documentary record, Nicholas Wheeler concludes that 500 of the 2000 were killed by Serbs. He supports the bombing on the grounds that there would have been worse Serbian atrocities had NATO not bombed, eliciting the anticipated crimes. That's the most serious scholarly work. The press, and much of scholarship, choose the easier path of ignoring Western documentation and reversing the chronology. It's an impressive performance, instructive too, at least for those who care about their countries.

It is all too easy to continue. >But the – unpleasantly consistent — record leaves open a crucial question: how does the "great beast" react, the domestic US component of the second superpower?

The conventional answer is that the population approves of all of this, as just shown again by election of George Bush. But as is often the case, a closer look is helpful.

Each candidate received about 30% of the electoral vote, Bush a bit more, Kerry a bit less. General voting patterns – details are not yet available — were close to the 2000 elections; almost the same "red" and "blue" states, in the conventional metaphor. A few percent shift in vote would have meant that Kerry would be in the White House. Neither outcome could tell us much of any significance about the mood of the country, even of voters. Issues of substance were as usual kept out of the campaign, or presented so obscurely that few could understand.

It is important to bear in mind that political campaigns are designed by the same people who sell toothpaste and cars. Their professional concern in their regular vocation is not to provide information. Their goal, rather, is deceit. Their task is to undermine the concept of markets that we are taught to revere, with informed consumers making rational choices (the tales about "entrepreneurial initiative" are no less fanciful).Rather, consumers are to be deceived