



THE CARNEGIE COUNCIL COVERS THE NEW WAR



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The most distinguishing feature of the “new war” on terrorism is the moral framework in which it has

been cast. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration abandoned its rhetoric of arch-realism – emphasizing core national interests over humanitarian concerns – for one of robust moralism. Confronting terrorism and its supporting “axis of evil” is now the central organizing principle of American foreign policy, setting the stage for military campaigns first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. Yet the approach raises inevitable questions.

This essay presents the three main questions that have emerged from the pages of the Carnegie Council’s <INPPING> newsletter since its launch in September of 2001 – on the very eve of the new war – and also summarizes the range of opinions voiced at the Council’s public forums during that time.

DOES A NEW WAR NECESSARILY MEAN NEW RULES?

Last September the Bush administration presented a National Security Strategy document declaring a doctrine of pre-emptive, or “preventive,” military action. The doctrine is based on the premise that the old approach to security is no longer acceptable – in the age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, the risk of inaction is greater than the risk of action.

<INPPING> carried this story in one of its first issues, excerpting a speech by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Henry Shelton to an audience convened by the Council at Georgetown University a few weeks after September 11. General Shelton argued that the “rules have changed since the attacks of September 11th, as the circumstances under which we defined the lawful use of force no longer exist.” Given its overwhelming military might, the United States is unlikely to be engaged in conventional warfare with another nation state. Rather, it must face a new class of enemy consisting of non-state actors who flout the traditional conventions of war by targeting civilians – and who are threatening to use nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

And if asymmetrical warfare is one rationale driving the argument for new rules, another is the nature

of modern weaponry. The new generation of high-tech weapons – as exemplified by the drone, an unmanned aircraft with a remarkably precise camera and data transmission capability, now outfitted with guided missiles – makes possible precision

attacks at low cost in terms of lives lost and collateral damage. From this perspective, some argued that a military campaign on Iraq would be more humane than another ten years of economic sanctions.

For all of the discussion of evolving legal norms and rules, attention inevitably circled back to the primary question on everyone’s mind in the spring of 2003: has the taboo truly been lifted on preventive war? As Carnegie Council fellow Scott Silverstone pointed out at a recent Council meeting, it remains unclear the extent to which “the logic of preventive war has trumped the ethical limits that seem to have prevented the United States from engaging in this particular form of war in the past.” The tragic events of September 11, along with new technological capabilities, may have precipitated a shift in the moral climate for the use of force; but we cannot yet be sure whether that climate change is permanent.

IS THE STRATEGY OF FORGING A “COALITION OF THE WILLING” MORALLY SOUND?

Appearing at the Council several months before September 11, former national security advisor Tony Lake described a nightmare scenario whereby a government or group of non-state actors attacks the United States without even claiming responsibility. “This would put the president of the United States in an extremely difficult position, because if he were to respond without proof, the United States would rightly be blasted at the UN Security Council, General Assembly, and in our own newspapers. On the other hand, if you’re pretty sure they did it and everybody knows it but because you can’t prove it, and you don’t respond, then you have lost.”

President Bush faced a variation on this nightmare immediately after September 11. He wanted to deliver an unambiguous message: Nothing justifies terrorism, period. At the same time, however, it was unclear to whom and by what means America should deliver this message as it had not been attacked by another nation-state, and it was for some time unclear who its attackers had been. Even when it became known that al-Qaeda had been responsible, military strategists faced the challenge of distinguishing among terrorist organizations, the states from which they operate, and the societies that produce them.

To its credit, the Bush administration succeeded in producing a widely accepted plan for immediate action. There was strong international consensus on three issues: global condemnation of terrorist tactics, relentless pursuit of the al-Qaeda network, and the need for regime change in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

But as Carnegie Council President Joel Rosenthal wrote in the May/June 2003 <INPPING>, all of this



changed on March 19, 2003, with the launching of Operation Iraqi Freedom – a dramatic new turn in the war on terrorism. In launching a campaign to disarm and liberate Iraq, the Bush administration crossed two thresholds, one strategic and the other diplomatic. Strategically, the administration delivered on its promise to act in self-defense absent an actual – or even imminent – armed attack, against threats from weapons of mass destruction. Diplomatically, the United States demonstrated its willingness to act outside of the UN Security Council and in the face of considerable opposition. Some saw this as courageous leadership, others as short sighted.

We heard both sides of the debate at the Council's public programs. Leading conservative thinkers William Kristol and Robert Kagan argued that the time had come for the United States to embrace its unipolar status, whether or not its allies agreed. European countries are in any event unlikely to support U.S. military actions given that they are now in a "post-militaristic" phase, mistakenly believing that diplomacy alone can solve the problems posed by dictators like Saddam Hussein.

But support for a go-it-alone-if-necessary approach to waging war also came from the liberal corner, with Michael Walzer and Peter Maass pointing out that calling on the UN has become an excuse for inaction: "As the Afghan campaign showed, the United States doesn't need other countries if there is a job to do." Walzer's assertion "Whoever can act, should" could be taken as a general endorsement of coalitions of the willing for the sake of humanitarian aims, though not necessarily applying to Iraq in the spring of 2003.

At the same time, there was no shortage of dissenting voices – again on both sides of the political spectrum. Charles Kupchan, an expert on geopolitics, upheld the classic liberal view when urging the United States to recommit to international institutions because they "are the lifeblood of a world that doesn't operate by the savage rules of the balance of power." Kupchan's warning that the Bush administration was "scuttling the UN at its own peril" resonated with the stinging indictment of American unilateralism delivered by conservative critic Clyde Prestowitz at another recent Council program. Prestowitz expressed consternation that the Bush administration had jettisoned traditional alliances in favor of coalitions of the willing, squandering the stock of goodwill other coun-

tries had toward the United States in the aftermath of September 11.

So was the United States right to go into Iraq with its ad hoc, limited coalition? The verdict is still out on this, though most commentators agreed that ideally, the task of reconstructing Iraq could serve to rebuild the strong international consensus that launched the war on terrorism in the first place. After all, much of the work to combat terrorism involves pursuing terrorists across borders, which requires cooperation among countries. As Wesley Clark put it when delivering the Council's Morgenthau Lecture in May: "It's not about military force if you want to win the war on terror. That's the easy part. It's about working together with other nations in police and law enforcement activities."

DOES REGIME CHANGE CARRY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF NATION-BUILDING?

Another idea raised in <INPPING> and at other Council forums was that to be morally acceptable, regime change has to be coupled with nation-building. As the journalist Tom Friedman puts it, "If you break it, you own it." Likewise, Brian Orend, in an article for *Ethics & International Affairs*, suggested that because war so radically alters the victim state's political system and society, a just war must seek to restore more than simply the status quo; it must also create conditions for a "more secure possession of rights."

There are no clear guidelines on ways of achieving justice after war – this despite recent attempts following interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and Afghanistan. Prior to the war on Iraq, there was some talk in the Bush administration of studying successful historical models – such as the Marshall Plan for Europe and the occupation of Japan – for inspiration.

But as Tony Lang and Mary-Lea Cox wrote in <INPPING> at the end of last year, the German and Japanese examples may not be adaptable to Iraq – or anywhere else. What might prove more helpful, they suggested, would be to look at recent advances in the justice-related areas of war crimes trials, truth commissions, and governmental restructuring. At a minimum, that would prompt the United States to ask the right questions in developing a plan for reconstruction.

A separate but related question is whether a war that aims to bring about regime change can



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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980), author of Politics among Nations, had a long association with the Carnegie Council. In an article for one of the Council's publications, he wrote:

Three historic patterns can be discerned in the relations America has established with the outside world. America has offered itself as a model to the world, it has entered the world as a missionary, and it has confronted the world as a crusader. In recent years, a fourth pattern has been added: America bestrides the world as an imperial power with global responsibilities. In spring of 1965, when I endeavored to define this new pattern of American foreign policy under the heading of "globalism," a national newspaper refused to print my article with the explanation that there was no such thing. In the meantime, the ideologues of the Johnson administration, such as Professors Brzezinski and Rostow, have confirmed my view. They have proclaimed the American decade "a decade of opportunity and responsibility for the United States."

— *Worldview*
JANUARY 1968



also deliver on humanitarian goals. The moving sight of Afghan women celebrating openly in public – a picture of which appeared on one of our most popular <INPPINIG> covers – suggested that the military campaign had brought a victory for human rights. However, as Joe Saunders pointed out in the story that accompanied that photo, liberating the Afghan people from the brutalities of Taliban rule was a secondary motive of the U.S.-led offensive. The United States had been primarily interested in destroying al-Qaeda – which may explain

why it still has not been able to provide a secure environment for Afghan citizens.

In the months leading up to the war on Iraq, humanitarian goals were made explicit, and were given almost equal status to the security goals of that offensive. As President Bush put it in his mid-March war ultimatum, “[W]e believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty. And when the dictator has departed, they can set an example to all the Middle East of a vital and peaceful and self-governing nation.”

Council speakers have expressed widely divergent opinions as to the appropriateness of packaging American ideals together with a strategy for regime change. On the conservative side, William Kristol said he believed that President Bush had sincerely embraced a quasi-Wilsonian vision of rebuilding Iraq as a democratic and free nation. Two leading conservative scholars disagreed with this, however. Andrew Bacevich told a Council audience he was under no illusions as to why the United States was going into Iraq for a second time: because of its imperial ambitions, to secure hegemony in the Persian Gulf. John Mearsheimer was even more skeptical, claiming there was no way preventive war advocates could truly believe in the possibility of bringing democracy to a region with no tradition and experience of democratic rule.

On the liberal side, Peter Maass and Michael Walzer hailed the war on terrorism as “good news for the war to prevent or stop genocide militarily if need be. The American military has shown, particularly in

Afghanistan, and probably will show in Iraq, that it is quite adept at fighting irregular warfare, and irregular warfare is required to stop genocide. That’s the kind of warfare that was required in Bosnia and also would have been required in Rwanda had we chosen to fight the genocide there.”

Former UN peacekeeping commander Romeo Dallaire, by contrast, felt that the focus on Iraq had stolen attention away from truly deserving – yet strategically unimportant – countries such as the DR Congo, where atrocities are taking place daily. Addressing a Council audience this past January, Dallaire upheld the view taken by other leading liberals that an imperial war masquerading as humanitarian intervention undermines international law and UN peacekeeping missions.

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As we approach the second anniversary of September 11, 2001, terrorism is only one of several issues casting a shadow on the global horizon. Other morally troubling issues include the spread of HIV/AIDS (a disease that has already taken 26 million lives worldwide); increased criminal trafficking in human beings; questions of population, environment, and sustainability; and the possibility of new arms races, including in outer space. That said, it is also true that many Americans continue to fear for their security: in particular, they fear the possibility of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons falling into the wrong hands and being used against civilian targets.

While these fears are understandable, there is a danger in becoming so focused on a single threat: it squeezes the space to prepare for the full range of threats to mankind’s survival and well-being. We risk being blindsided by events for which we might otherwise have taken steps to handle or prevent.

As we begin the third year of our newsletter – two years after that momentous September – we expect to be looking at a full range of themes, in addition to continuing our coverage of the moral issues at the core of the still-evolving war on terror.

–<INPPINIG> Editors
@ON THE WEB: RESOURCE LINKS



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Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs
170 East 64th St.
New York, NY 10021-7496

tel: 212/838-4120; fax: 212/752-2432
email: info@cceia.org

www.carnegiecouncil.org