

Overcoming Asymmetry in U.S. Relations with the Middle East
A Strategic Paradigm of Engagement

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Extended Abstract:

The asymmetrical relationship between the United States and the various countries of the Middle East, as well as the violence that it inspires in fringe groups throughout the world, is one of the most salient features of American foreign policy today. With events such as 9/11 in this country, as well as the London bombings in England and the Madrid bombings in Spain, western audiences have come to interpret terrorist acts as relating to all who adhere to Islamic belief structures, despite the clear evidence that this is the work of fanatics that have come under the influence of perverted interpretations of the Koran and Islamic culture and responsibility. Sacred words and ideals, while intended to lead individuals to a peaceful life serving God have been twisted and are now used by these groups as virulent tools of destruction, which has in turn complicated political ties between the United States and an admittedly poor, but nevertheless strategically important region of the world.

Counterterrorism in this context is thus a difficult task in that it requires the American government and military to walk a thin line between respecting Arabic history and culture on the one hand, and fighting a combination of different forms of terrorism in our involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq on the other. It also stains strategic negotiations with other key players in the region, such as Iran, because the use of hard *or* soft power by the U.S. is more complicated than in past standoffs with more comparable adversaries like the former Soviet Union. When negotiating with the latter, after all, the threat of war, while admittedly backed by the threat of nuclear power, was fought between two equal players. The harsh economic realities discovered

after the collapse of communism does not negate the fact that during the Cold War, these two countries were viewed as equal partners and both were charged with finding ways to avoid an encompassing, but conventional world war.

This paper combines elements of Arabic studies and more traditional views of counterterrorism and asymmetric warfare in an attempt to find more holistic approaches to American foreign policy. By separating Islamic culture from the fanatical rhetoric of terrorists, it seeks to provide a new paradigm that will allow more equalized relations with key strategic countries in the Middle East. The approach presented in this paper advocates that rather than approaching these governments from the stance of a superpower – which will inevitably lead to perceptions of imminent threat to the smaller countries of the region, or equally damaging, as condescending attempts to provide charity to a proud region with a history of self-reliance and problematic ties to western forms of modernity – the United States must instead view the Middle East as a region with a rich religious and cultural heritage worthy of engagement and dialogue. By respecting the historic development of Islamic culture, separate from the perverted stance of terrorism, the American government has a chance to change the ever-present power imbalance between the two regions from one of asymmetry to one of strategic commitment.

Introduction:

Politics defies classification. It reflects at one and the same moment the full splendor and the pettiest meanness of man. The blends of emotion and reasoning that activate politics are invariably mixtures of such powerful but workaday ingredients as prestige, honor, loyalty, hatred, aggression, duty, conscience, material advantage, self-interest, and the search for security in all its forms. There is politics of vision and aspiration; and equally politics of desperation and despair.

(Pye, 1065:3)

When considering the quotation by Pye, while it was written in the 1960s, the insight shown about the role of culture within the study of political science should be noted even today, especially when considering the strategic, political relationship between the United States and the diverse countries of the Middle East. Issues debated within International Relations, after all, reflect each of the positions made by Pye, i.e. that political developments germinate and grow from many different realities that reflect both the best and the worst of humankind. Sometimes national decisions are made for purely laudable reasons but have disastrous results for the country in question. Sometimes hasty decisions are made for purely selfish reasons that can have beneficial consequences. Other times countries do what they have to do to survive, despite the consequences. Involved in each of these scenarios is a blend of vision politics and the encompassing desire to avoid desperation, despair and destruction.

The problem with this formula, when considering International Relations, is that all too often, each side conveniently forgets that the same is true of the perceived enemy. Value is placed on

one side of the argument and questions are asked as to why the 'other' culture could be so blind, as to not value the political aspirations and culture found within their state and/or national boundaries. When confronted with images of Islamic terrorism, for example, it is tempting for the average observer to conclude that terrorism is unlike anything that had come before in American history and that military might is the only way to fight the craziness underpinning this type of political violence. If the Muslims in the Middle East are all crazy and violent, so this line of reasoning goes, the United States must preemptively strike first, before they have the chance to attack the U.S. homeland again. After all, according to this oversimplified perspective, all Muslims are portrayed as wanting to kill the infidel, i.e. all Americans, meaning that virtually any person adhering to the Muslim faith is a potential terrorist and someone to be viewed with suspicion.

There are many problems with this type of assessment, some that are readily obvious and some that are not. First, not all Muslims want to kill every American with which they come in contact; in fact, most uphold the principle enshrined in the Koran that suicide is against the will of God and that violence is only acceptable when used in self-defense. Second, not all terrorism is the same. While the average observer is likely to lump various forms of insurgencies together with the transnational form of terrorism associated with al Qaeda, the violent attacks observed throughout the Middle East have a variety of targets and motivations associated with them. Third, in contrast to the comforting thought that the United States *can* eliminate all potential rivals by engaging in preventive/preemptive strikes, this would require more resources (both in terms of military might and human cost) than this democratic country can withstand. Hence, if it is impossible to prevent all forms of political violence directed against the West, and it is unlikely that the United States can force the entire world to do as it does with the resources readily available, the question is what can be done to improve international relations between the 'west and the rest?'

To address this thorny (and very complicated) issue, several questions must be posed and explored. First, is it possible to distinguish between the different forms of political violence used by insurgents and terrorist alike and if so, what can be learned from this? Second, is it possible for the United States to rise above the confusion and initiate a more holistic, culturally-sensitive policy towards the Middle East that does not undermine the country's security and military effectiveness? Third, why is it so difficult for the average American to come to terms with the events in the Middle East, and by association the role that American can (and should) assume in response? Other more strategic questions will be formulated once these basic questions have been considered. The ultimate point to come to is that since the world is becoming increasingly smaller through globalism, meaning that the various countries of the world have no choice but to come into contact one with another, it is no longer a matter of whether or not they should coexist, but rather how they can achieve this despite the differences that exist.

That there are no easy answers, however, does not mean that these issues should not be explored to find more effective and hopefully more successful ways to fight terrorism and still maintain basic, core democratic values. The objective is to find ways to combat the threat that political violence poses without using tactics that are equally horrific. To this end, this paper employs an interdisciplinary approach and synthesizes sources as diverse as the cultural theories of Lucian Pye (written in the 1960s but still relevant today) to more contemporary essays/articles published

in the last five years by the U.S. Army War College (Metz, Brown and Peters). Interspersed throughout are key theories from International Relations ranging from the classical writings of Thucydides to the contemporary arguments made in the aftermath of WWII by Hans Morgenthau.

Understanding the Construction of the Political Other and its Impact on International Relations

“The political socialization process involves not only the deeply instilled attitudes and sentiments of early childhood and family life but also the later experiences of explicit instruction in politics at schools, through exposure to the mass media, and in contact with other politically socializing agents” (Pye, 1965:10). There is also the element of comparison. Defining one’s personality against a perceived other, whether as an individual or a society, is not a new phenomenon. It is instead grounded in the human experience. When deciding what is right or wrong, the growth process from childhood to adulthood, for example, hosts a process where different paths are taken in accordance with, but also against what has been taught from within the family environment. When exposed to different types of people in college, by contrast, behavioral patterns often change and become more specific to the individual, rather than the family unit. When all sides are compared against each other in an inquisitive (as opposed to a judgmental) fashion, this process can be liberating. When, however, the ‘other’ becomes inherently wrong, or more specifically something evil that is challenging one’s entire existence, stereotypes and generalizations become more sinister and difficult to counter. This is particularly the case when considering national conceptions of the political ‘other’ in the international community, given the consequences that can come from certain types of national involvement in world politics. This issue requires unpacking.

If contemporary stereotypes are explored, it appears that westerners, as well as some Christians, view Muslims as fanatical, violent and crazy, without taking the time to learn anything substantial about the Muslim religion. Similarly, Muslims stereotype the West as immoral, arrogant and intent on controlling the political and business culture of the Middle East for their own goals and objectives. While most do not act on these perceptions – some do not even wholly believe them but have never had to test them against the reality of interacting with people of a different faith and/or culture – the acts of a hand-full of extremists have transformed the dialogue between these two cultural and/or religious groups dramatically. Without claiming that even a majority of either side feel this way, these characterizations are nevertheless revealing. In both cases, the idea of the other is a negative one. It is not based on an assessment of commonalities, but rather one of superiority, dismissal and fear. This translates into political programs based on emotional responses rather than objective, strategic rationalism.

This is admittedly (and again) not new. During war, there is a tendency for populations to see the country (or group) against which they are fighting, i.e. the enemy, as a foreign threat, but more specifically as a negative force against which they must struggle and prevail, if life is to continue as before. The ‘enemy other’ is something to be unequivocally avoided, if not destroyed. During the Cold War, to cite one such example, the Russians living within the Soviet Union were characterized as the godless, soulless communist hordes, most poignantly described by former

U.S. president as the ‘evil empire.’ While most of the Russian people, as individuals, wanted the same things as Americans – to put food on their table, have a nice home and raise a healthy family – the Soviets were collectively dismissed as the ‘enemy other’ and left to their fate.

A clearer example of this phenomenon is found through a consideration of the German people from the beginning of the twentieth century and leading through to the end of World War II. The Germans during WWI, more so during and after WWII, were characterized as a single unit, whether the Prussians at the turn of the century, or as the Nazi forces leading into the 1930s and 1940s. Wartime documentaries meant to prepare U.S. soldiers for war, for example, characterized the Germans as ‘brownshirts’ to dehumanize the enemy; they were a threat that was poised to shake the very foundation of the democratic world, if not neutralized. While there were debates about when and how to intervene, Hitler’s intention to dominate Europe, when translated into aggressive policies against Czechoslovakia and Poland, mobilized military action against this threat to ensure that this eventuality did not come to fruition. This in and of itself was justification enough to declare war against the German nation, but the struggle against the Nazis during WWII took on a deeper significance with the discovery of the Nazi concentration camps after the war. When taken together, it was clear that WWII was justified according to various components of conventional warfare and the evolving tenets of international law.

International law, to demonstrate this principle, is characterized as a “series of interrelated normative statements ... backed by a promise of coercion” that are generally accepted as the framework for international security and the peaceful interaction of states. The intention of international law is to provide a way to forge a compromise between the “unavoidable tension [that exists] ... between the aim of maintaining the state and maximizing power, on the one hand, and of preserving the international system, on the other” (Coplin, 1965, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:303-304).¹ Given that the state is the basic functioning of the international system, it stands that international security rests on maintaining state borders, meaning that conventional warfare is justified when current borders are threatened by another, more aggression state intent on domination and/or subjugation of surrounding countries. This has culminated in the idea of collective security, whereby all states are responsible for the security of those around them, or as described by Inis (1964, reprinted in Williams, *et al*, 2006, 290), there is a “proposition that aggressive and unlawful use of force by any nation against any nation will be met by the combined force of all other nation.”

In this regard, Hitler’s aggressive attitude towards the countries around him, whether justified in terms of cultural oneness (as with Austria and the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia) or because of the need for *Lebensraum* (as with Poland), was unacceptable and thus warranted a collective response from the international community. To reiterate, however, with the discovery of the concentration camps after the war, war against Germany was also legitimated in the international community through the prism of the Just War Theory.

¹ Coplin (1965, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:303) describes domestic law as a framework for society that aids in the socialization of the individual. It does this by providing an ‘authoritative mode’ by which the “the ideals and purposes, the acceptable roles and actions, as well as the very processes of the societies” are communicated to the citizens of that country. The success or failure of social policies thus relies on both factual and normative ideas generated by domestic legal principles that in turn help build consensus within the population about various social, political and economic policies underpinning the overarching institutional framework of society

The Just War Theory is grounded in western and Christian ideals that build from principles dating from medieval times and germinating in the doctrine of St. Augustine. Often forgotten, however, is that this theory also draws heavily on ancient Greek philosophy, as well as precepts from the Islamic holy text, the Koran. According to this theory, various strict criteria must be met, before a declaration of war can be considered just (see Mingst, 2004:217):

- There must be a just cause (self-defense or the defense of others, or a massive violation of human rights).
- There must a declaration of intent by a competent authority (currently interpreted as the Security Council).
- The leaders need to have the correct intentions, desiring to end abuses and establish a just peace.
- Leaders must have exhausted all other possibilities for ending the abuse, employing war as a last resort.
- Forces need to be rapidly removed after the humanitarian objectives have been secured.

Since Hitler's action necessitated the defense of the Polish, Czechs and Slovaks, *and* involved a massive violation of human rights against the Jews living in Germany (among others), WWII is easily classified as justifiable by both conventional and moral terms. More contemporary conflicts have been less straightforward, in particular because of the media coverage involved.

At the theoretical level, there are a couple of problems with these assessments that are not immediately obvious, but nevertheless lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges of counterinsurgency. For one, to again cite Coplin (1965; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:308-310) the concept of international law is in a state of "arrested ambiguity" in that it is caught somewhere between the 'old,' including principles such as legal equality, war spoils and territorial jurisdiction and the 'new,' which include the autonomy of international organizations and transnational activity. What this means is that international law developed in response to the negotiation of treaties and changing borders at the end of military conflicts, but is now used to mediate situations where borders are to remain sovereign and absolute. This creates problems for realists, who believe that self-interest and the pursuit of power lie at the heart of a country's foreign policy. To again cite Inis (1964; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:296-298), collective security allows for little ambiguity, since it is "directed against undue power" whether that be at the hands of a "giant which threatens to grow to earth-shaking proportions or by a pygmy which has scant prospect of becoming a major factor in world politics." Of consequence of this policy, states must reject both "pacifism and the right to use war as an instrument of national policy, while standing ready to resort to force for the fulfillment of their international obligation."

The second problem is interrelated to the first and is entangled with the idea that borders are sovereign and immutable. As explained by Majeski, for example, when people are in trouble, financially or personally, they always have the ability to move somewhere else, or to locate and use different types of resources to better their circumstances. A state, by contrast, is a fixed entity. Unlike people, nation-states do not have the ability to relocate, or often to even procure different types of resources, meaning that they must find other ways to survive. It follows that this would often involve fighting against those around them to try and improve the standard of living of their people. In the international community, given the rigidity of the state system, this

too is unacceptable (Majeski, 2004:457). According to the principles of collective security, whenever a state oversteps its boundaries and invades a neighboring country, the remaining countries in the world are expected to respond in such a way that the aggressive country retreats back into the existing borders. From the perspective of the country that has just been invaded, this makes perfect sense. From the perspective of the aggressor, given that they invaded in the first place to try and secure more sustainable resources, this is a problem. A country will work to ensure its survival, so what happens when there is no other way to survive than accept the terms dictated by a larger power.

The conclusion drawn by Organski (1968; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:287) when considering these dilemmas is that international politics is currently guaranteed by “two erroneous assumptions,” one of which is that “nations are fundamentally static units whose power is not changed from within.” Within this framework, stronger states may be content with an unchanging balance of power, but smaller states are often threatened by a perceived loss of influence and security. If the only recourse to strengthen your country, or even secure its survival, rests on increasing stockpiles of armaments, conquering and subjugating new territories or winning allies, it stands to reason that states “cannot actually gain in power without infringing upon the rights of other nations.” Problems quickly emerge when this scenario is tied to the former concept of collective security, where the various countries of the world have the responsibility to band together and challenge the aggressor to recant and return to the previous state of normality. Given that states are expected to fight for their survival, this arrangement allows no legitimate way for a state to overcome its own internal problems without engaging in actions that cause it to be at political odds with the rest of the countries in the world. A permanent dilemma is thus created in that political strength is still calculated according to military might and the associated victories in warfare, “but war is viewed as a breakdown of the system,” one that must be overcome in the final analysis.

A third dimension/problem is found when the element of asymmetry is added to the equation. During the Cold War, by contrast, as concluded by John Lewis Gaddis (1986; reprinted in Mingst & Snyder, 2001:14-15), stability in the world came from several factors, the relative strength of the two superpowers, especially in terms of the nuclear capabilities of the U.S. and the former U.S.S.R., but more specifically because of the fact that they were geographically distanced one from the other and not economically dependent in any significant way. For this reason, “geographical remoteness” helped to ensure that there was no real chance that disputes would emerge such as those witnessed over Alsace-Lorraine, the Polish Corridor, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and/or Jerusalem. For the purposes of this paper, however, the perceived parity of strength between the two superpowers is important to note, primarily because of the implications this holds for the conception of war. In this stable environment, the norms and established practices associated with conventional warfare – a struggle between two fairly symmetrical antagonists, each trying to exert its power over the other in a short-term conflict with a clear start and finish that ends in a return to stability and normalcy (Metz, 2007:4) – prevail and are understandable to all involved.

This type of environment created predictability and stability, since all the actors had defined roles to play. What does this mean exactly, especially given the massive inequalities found between the economic development of the former Soviet Union and its satellites and the United

States at the end of the Cold War? To be reiterated is the fact that during the Cold War, these inequalities were not obvious and the former U.S.S.R. was seen as an equal to the U.S., most notably with regard to the exploration of space and in the area of nuclear capabilities. Not only was Sputnik launched into space before similar missions from the United States, but America “lost its monopoly on nuclear weapons in 1949 when the USSR achieved a secure nuclear retaliatory capability.” Through a series of arms negotiations, the two superpowers achieved what Payne and Walton term a *strategic stability*, whereby neither side was able to “achieve a useful nuclear advantage over the other.”

As described by Brown (2006:16), the bipolarity of the Cold War system inhered not just in the existence of two countries more powerful than any of the rest, but also in the massive gravitational pull ... by each superpower on others.” The result of this was a political environment characterized by a “condition of two-sided polarization,” whereby the superpowers were expected to take care of their own affairs, while simultaneously guaranteeing the security of those countries choosing to align themselves to them and operate within their sphere of influence. The fight between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was thus seen as one waged between equals, meaning that it involved a sense of symmetry. When, for example, former U.S. President stood in front of the Berlin Wall and charged Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, the world viewed this as something akin to a sibling rivalry, where Gorbachev had the final say in whether or not he pursued that course of action. While there are those that say that Reagan won the Cold War, after all, this overlooks the steps taken by Gorbachev domestically that ultimately led to the overthrow of the Soviet system. Whatever the origins of this change, however, the fight (when viewed from the international community) was pursued by more conventional means whereby negotiations preceded any consideration of open warfare, but if combat broke out, it would have definable goals and a definite timeframe. This is not the case with the Middle East, which brings up the issue of how to define and interpret asymmetrical warfare and what this means to American foreign policy in the next few decades.

The Nature of Asymmetric Warfare

There are different forms of warfare ranging from conventional and unconventional to limited and asymmetrical warfare. This section starts with a brief review of how these various forms differ, which leads into a discussion revolving around two questions: 1) what insight can these theories provide for the United States and its ongoing engagement in the Middle East; and 2) why should the United States care about such concerns given the superior strength of the U.S. military. At the most basic level, a distinction must be made between conventional and unconventional warfare. Conventional warfare is the most common form of conflict between states. It is normally fought openly between two (or more) powers of at least comparable size and military/economic capacity. In this form of warfare, strategic military plans target the military personnel, facilities and resources of the opposing army using clear-cut goals and objectives. Because the two sides are comparable in these areas, troops meet on the battle field and fight until one side has gained enough of an advantage that the battle ends either through a clear-cut victory over the adversary or a cessation of hostilities and the implementation of a peace treaty. Unlike in the more traditional settings, modern conventional warfare does not

culminate in change state borders. If anything, given the tenets of international law, many modern wars aim to restore borders that have been unlawfully violated by a larger aggressor. Unconventional warfare, by contrast, may still target military sites, not through open combat, but rather through covert or guerilla tactics meant to “spread subversion and propaganda” throughout enemy territory. This brings the terms symmetric and asymmetric into the discussion, whereby size differentials become an important component of analysis. Stated briefly, symmetrical warfare is more commonly associated with conventional warfare tactics are employed because it is symmetrical. Asymmetrical warfare, by contrast, because of the size differential differs with unconventional warfare, where the smaller country wants to defend its territory, but to do so, it must find less conventional ways to try and gain the advantage over a much larger army. As explained by Mingst: Asymmetric warfare involves “organizing, thinking and acting differently from adversaries in order to exploit their weaknesses, seize the initiative, increase one’s freedom of action, or maximize one’s own advantages” (Mingst, 2004:211-212; see also Michaud, 2005:36). Included within asymmetrical warfare are insurgencies and or rogue groups that employ terrorist and/or guerilla warfare tactics in unfamiliar terrains, all of which change the dynamic of American efforts to defend against this type of strategic threat.

Further complicating this analysis is the inclusion of transnational considerations into the discussion. Much of the terrorist activity undertaken in the name of religious ideals is not conducted by states, but rather by interrelated terrorist cells operating across national borders. These groups are united by their core beliefs, which during the Cold War were often related to spreading communism throughout the world, but have more recently revolved around objectives meant to create conditions that are conducive to restoring the Golden Age of Islam in the Middle East, as witnessed in the rise of Al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The resistance demanded of these groups is to a larger enemy, which in this case is the west, most prominently represented by the United States.

One factor that immediately distinguishes transnational actors and organizations is that they do not operate within defined borders, meaning those involved have less constraint to worry with than states. While interstate cooperation has long characterized terrorist activities, the Internet has given rise to transnational organizational activities that easily “transcend borders,” which in turn has “greatly facilitated the spread of virtual subcultures” by giving easier access to on-line training courses and manuals and allowing diversified groups to interact with each other and formulate more sophisticated planning strategies (Kiras, 2002:227). These strategies are further enhanced by the fact that such groups are formerly not bound by treaties, human rights constraints or other political restraints facing established countries in the world. They also the added advantage that they have enhanced opportunities to gain support and resources from a variety of state and non-state actors, meaning that it is more difficult for a single country, whether the United States or otherwise, to combat them effectively, i.e. to strike critical strategic sites with the potential to cripple the efforts of a transnational terrorist organization. Sanctions are also problematic since these must be taken against states and well-established banking organizations to be effective. If a state (and/or banking group) is sanctioned, these groups will find other ways to fund their activities and support their cause.

The primary strength of transnational organizations such as Al Qaeda, however, is their ability to adopt the qualities of a “virtual network operating as a leaderless resistance.” Why, exactly? It is

extremely difficult to target and/or eliminate the leadership of such a group, since it is widely dispersed and consists of many different intertwined cells capable of operating with or within the direct contact of a single leadership figure. Individuals and/or groups in leaderless organizations “operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction.” This is particularly important in this day and age when enhanced surveillance capabilities used by states can easily zero in on hierarchical leadership structures and thereby eliminate the threat. In leaderless organizations, “leaders do not issue orders or pay operatives; instead, they inspire small cells or individuals to take action on their own initiative” (Stern, 2003; reprinted in Art & Jervis, 2005:434). In the case of al Qaeda, for example, it is now debated whether the death of Osama bin Laden would have any real impact on their operations, since it is so highly decentralized and able to operate independently of any other faction. Take the London subway bombings in 2005 as an example, where locally born and raised youth of Middle Eastern descent gained inspiration from Al Qaeda and took action against their own people in the UK.

What does this mean, exactly? Transnational groups differ from states precisely because they do not have to worry about the same type of political and economic restraints that prevent (both overtly and covertly) most states from engaging in destructive behavior. A state, to expand on this point, is constrained on many levels by virtue of what constitutes it as such. Unlike transnational groups, states are territorially defined and operate according to integrated political and economic norms within the international community. Whether ascribing fully to international organizations/bodies (such as the United Nations or the International Criminal Court), for example, they are not free to do as they please, whatever might be said. To cite one example, if a state decides to bomb another country, it would face almost immediate consequences. Either the country under attack would respond in kind or, if they lacked the resources, it is equally possible that the aggressive state would face bombing raids from or war with a united coalition of countries in the international community. In this case, sanctions can be implemented with the aim of forcing a state to reconsider its actions. There are admittedly debates about the effectiveness of sanctions, i.e. they hurt the average citizen and not the leadership of a state, but these are not the only possible political tools available to the world community.

When a state is involved, there are clear military targets and leadership figures to target and threaten with imminent consequences. When international law is breached, there are moreover clear channels to be followed before war is enacted, but more importantly, there is a clear enemy to be targeted. There is also the possibility that individual states will not have to engage in military combat alone, since the international community has the legitimacy to respond to cases that breach international law. Even more comforting, however, is the promise of a clear beginning to hostilities, followed by an unambiguous conclusion to combat that culminates in the designation of the winners and the losers. Stated briefly, in cases of conventional warfare, there is a clear aggressor with clear strategic targets and the promise of an end to open hostilities in a reasonable period of time.

In cases of unconventional warfare, by contrast, the targets are less obvious, the end goal is seemingly less obtainable and the timeframe involved is calculated in terms of years and decades, rather than months and years. Because they are characterized by mobility and

anonymity, these groups are ultimately successful when given enough time to “sap the resolve of its adversary and build a conventional force capable of seizing control of the state.” Using Mao Zedong’s strategies for guerilla warfare, Baylis outlines three sequential phases that determine the success or failure of insurgents: the strategic defensive, the stalemate and the strategic offensive. The intention of this sequence is that insurgents start with the strategic defensive phase, during which they employ “tactical offensives” – as opposed to outright battles with the government – meant to strain government resources to the breaking point, whereby the cost of engagement is more than the potential gains. After this point, insurgents will engage in selected battles meant to further reduce their legitimacy with the people of the country and thereby cause the government to change tactics and start focusing on defensive strategic programs; this is the stalemate period. During the strategic offensive stage, which can take a long period of time to eventuate, the insurgents find ways to “employ overwhelming force to destroy weakened government forces occupying defensive positions.” The conclusion drawn by Baylis when considering Mao Zedong: “Endless struggle without an obvious victory eventually leads to the exhaustion, collapse, or withdrawal of the enemy” (Kiras, 2002:212-217). Insurgents have, after all, used terrorism and guerilla tactics in the operational sense, deterring those who supported the government and creating an environment of violence and insecurity to erode public trust in the regime (Metz, 2007:7-8).

What this means, to cite Schelling (1966; reprinted in Mingst & Snyder, 2001:242), is that modern forms of unconventional warfare are more complicated than a mere “contest of strength,” they are instead now better described as a protracted struggle characterized by the principles of “endurance, nerve, obstinacy and pain.” Hence, to overcome the enemy, larger powers must do more than charge in with their guns blazing; they must now be able to sustain their military force over longer periods of time, despite the democratic will of the people at home. Underpinning this shift is the fact that contemporary wars are now more often than not between actors of different sizes, are internal disturbances or they involve border disputes by different ethnic groups. Why? When conventional warfare is mobilized, the states involved will usually formulate a treaty or international diplomatic solution in an attempt to not completely destroy each other. Each of the combatants in this scenario have more to lose than their honor, which in turn makes it unlikely that extreme solutions will be sought, provided the conflict is not part of a larger world war. Because this is not true with asymmetrical forms of combat, the larger powers in the world, despite their military and economic strength, must change their strategies, if they are to be successful in the longer-term, but more on this in the next section.

Before continuing, one other point must be considered, that state interests and the objectives of insurgents and/or terrorist groups can converge, thereby simplifying certain aspects of asymmetrical warfare while complicating others. On the one hand, for example, if a transnational organization is clearly working with a recognized state, such as the links that existed between the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda, more conventional forms of warfare can be used to attack the perpetrators of terrorist activities against a particular state. The logic employed here is that any attack on the political infrastructure of the state will help to weaken the groups that rely on that state’s protection and/or support. This is one of the reasons why fewer international objections were voiced against the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, as opposed to the subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq. While it is unlikely that Saddam Hussein would have

condemned the Al Qaeda attacks on the U.S., there were clear reasons why he would not do it overtly, i.e. the certainty that such links would bring imminent attack on his country.

Ties between states and transnational groups, however, are not always straightforward or easy to quantify, leading to the conclusion that states cannot be held responsible for the actions of smaller rogue groups. The argument is that guerilla tactics and terrorist attacks cannot be blamed on states, since states are not the ones employing them. In one sense this is true since states are not always able to eradicate such groups, especially those states suffering from low levels of autonomy and state capacity. This does not completely excuse states from fighting against rogue groups, which cannot be fully eradicated, but should be instead contained, meaning that if a state is not making efforts to contain terrorist activities, it could just as easily be enabling them. Concerted efforts must be made to eliminate all safe havens are eliminated, or at least minimized to help in the fight against the spread of terrorism.

Other times, it is not even possible in these cases to separate fully the type of asymmetrical warfare enacted by states and the transnational operations of insurgencies and terrorist groups. There are, after all, many historical cases of state-terrorism, where a state has direct ties with a terrorist group. In these cases, to cite Whittaker (2002:11-17), states can either harbor an individual terrorist, turn a blind eye to training camps within its borders or it can actually “back covert terrorist methods to contain a larger threat.” Clear examples of this can be found in the contemporary political actions of states such as Libya and Syria. Following 9/11, to take this line of reasoning further, the reason why attacks on Afghanistan were less problematic than those on Iraq stem from the fact that there were clear, unambiguous links between the Taliban and al Qaeda. Other cases have been less clear. For example, there were persistent rumors that Pakistan, an ally of the U.S., was simply overlooking al Qaeda training camps in certain less-hospital regions of the country. In this case, while not directly harboring these groups, the authorities were accused of not actively looking for these terrorist training camps, which in turn allowed them to continue operating.

The Impact of Transnational Warfare on American Foreign Policy

During the 18th and 19th centuries, most conflicts were primarily cases of conventional warfare. Each of the combatants had individual strengths and weaknesses, but they were (for the most part) fairly equal in the final equation, since they were all states with comparable economic, political and military strength. As outlined by Hammes (2004:16-24), there were three generations of war during this period, each predicated on changes in technology and the capacity of the warring states. The *first generation* of war was associated with the Napoleonic wars. It emerged in conjunction with the shift from the feudal system in Europe to one based on the development of nation-states. A second dimension was added to the change process here when the invention of gunpowder, lightweight artillery, etc. and advances in agriculture and transportation are also factored into the equation. The *second generation* of war is associated with the changing tactics (in particular of the French army) leading into World War I. This type of warfare was characterized by machineguns and rifled artillery, as employed in trench warfare. The *third generation* of war is associated with the German Wehrmacht and its use of the Blitzkrieg (lightning war), whereby “speed and surprise” were the key tactics used “to bypass

the enemy's lines and collapse their forces from the rear." The stabilizing factor in each of these generations of war, however, is that they were all fought by states, on a definable battlefield involving battles that had clear objectives, a discernible beginning and an agreed upon end.

Each of the preceding generations of war is in direct contrast to the evolution of what Hammes characterizes the *fourth generation* of war. This generation of war has its roots in Mao Tse Tung's resistance in China during the early 20th century, as epitomized in the wars the U.S. is fighting in the ongoing war against terror. For Hammes, as this type of warfare is the only one noted to be effective when fighting against a superior military/political entity, it challenges "the state's monopoly of force and returns to the uncontrolled combat of pre-modern times." Under these conditions, rather than fighting according to predictable, conventional means, groups within smaller states use tactics meant to use their strengths against the hierarchical tendencies of the larger power and thereby "weaken the technologically advanced opponent's will to win." For Hammes, the fourth generation of war thus effectively "blurs the lines between war and politics, soldier and civilian, peace and conflict, battlefield and safe zones." In this politically-charged environment, any individual has the potential to be a combatant, any situation has the capacity to promote violence and any city center can thereby be transformed into a battlefield. Each of these elements conforms to the discussion of asymmetrical warfare discussed in the preceding section.

The common thread through all of these generations of war is the *idea* of war and the technological advances that made each new generation possible. With regard to the first idea, states and the people that populate them have historically engaged in warfare for a variety of reasons ranging from personal gain to survival. And while the fourth generation of war may seem to be wholly different from those that came before, the difference here is not that this new form of combat has emerged for the first time in history but rather that a situation has now emerged where the major western powers have to respond to the threat posed by smaller countries and the insurgents and/or terrorists that harbor plans to attack larger powers using whatever means necessary to gain the advantage. This brings the second element into focus, i.e. that technological advances associated with the modernization process have come to the point that weapons of mass destruction are now potentially available to whatever group and or rogue nation that might want them. While this admittedly allows the larger power the ability to accomplish a normal mission of a conventional warfare battle with far less resources and troops, it also gives the enemy combatant the capacity to quickly disband and disappear from the battlefield, thereby complicating the response needed to fight these forces.

Hammes clearly marks the beginning of the fourth generation before this point, many interpreted 9/11 as the "opening shots in the first war of the 21st century," at which time western observers were "shocked that dozens of people were willing to sacrifice their own lives, and the lives of thousands of others" in the name of religious ideals (Kiras, 2002:209), no matter how far away from the original principles the attackers might have strayed. Since this was the first time that such a dramatic stand was taken on U.S. soil, a wave of shock spread throughout the country and immediate action was demanded against the perpetrators of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Moreover, despite attempts by the administration to separate the terrorists from Muslims more generally, this created an atmosphere where people realized that they knew very little about the Islamic faith outside of what they associated with the terrorist attackers. This created a serious dilemma for the Bush administration, how to defend the U.S.

homeland against another terrorist attack without alienating Muslim populations both within and without the United States.

One of the reasons why this process was so difficult came from the false impression that the events of 9/11 were wholly different from anything that the world had seen before. Such a conclusion highlights that even in light of the terrorist activities of homegrown terrorists, i.e. Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City and the mail bombs sent by the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski to name only two, the American people had been spared the spate of terrorist activities common throughout the twentieth century in Europe and the Middle East and were thus unprepared for the emotions that followed this attack. While characterizing a significant loss of innocent life, these acts were neither the most deadly recorded in world history nor completely unique from those that came before. Beginning at the beginning of the twentieth century, after all, political aspirations of independence spawned violence in Northern Ireland against the British government that spanned most of the century. Then, throughout the Cold War, various incidents can be found where radical communists launched a war against the capitalists in countries such as Germany and Italy to try and show the German and Italian people how repressive the western democratic governments were in reality, and while death was not an integral part of their attacks, these individuals were certainly not afraid to die for their ideals. More than this, while associated with an act of war, it cannot be forgotten that the Japanese kamikaze bombers in Pearl Harbor willingly sacrificed their lives in Pearl Harbor in an attempt to save their country from attack.

Terrorism in the name of religion was moreover not new, as noted by the many different attacks and plane high-jacking during the 1970s and 1980s, before Ronald Reagan declared the initial phase of the U.S. war on terrorism. Nevertheless, these attacks represented a seemingly new threat on the United States that required an alternative way of waging war against a faceless enemy that held completely different ideals from the American people. Because it appeared that a new brand of terrorism had finally emerged in which the terrorists were bent on “wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents” by whatever means necessary, including sacrificing their own lives in the name of their ideals. In light of the perceived differences between *these* terrorists and other violent criminals, the impression was created that it would be impossible to negotiate with them, as they were not interested in the types of incentives usually mobilized in civilized society (Kegley & Raymond, 2005:90). Whereas, if this logic is followed, normal citizens will be dissuaded from criminal activity if they realize that certain rights of citizenship will be revoked, terrorists had nothing to lose and would thus not respond to this type of interrogation or political pressure. It was moreover deemed an unsavory option to negotiate with the same terrorists that had killed many innocent people in New York City and Washington D.C. Again, this approach confused the ideal of negotiating with actual terrorists holding hostages and engaging in diplomatic talks with countries and individuals that may or may not support terrorist activities in an attempt to find out whether or not they were friend or foe. It was nevertheless a key factor facing the Bush administration immediately following 9/11.

When calls emerged for the formulation of new strategies with which to engage the U.S. military effectively in the changed political environment, George W. Bush responded with the formulation of the *Bush Doctrine*, which posited the following objectives and/or principles:

- The foreign policy of a country can be predicted by how the domestic regime treats its own people. The conclusion here was that “brutal dictators will seek to dominate their neighbors, sponsor terrorism and threaten the U.S.”
- Following on from the first element, there was a renewed belief that if domestic politics dominates foreign policy agendas, democratic regimes should be created in as many countries around the world as possible.

The logic employed by Bush is that democratic development was the key to overcoming the terrorist threat because in this type of environment, minorities are protected and given the opportunity to participate in the political process and can find legal channels to address whatever wrongs they might perceive against them (Jervis, 2005:439). Hence, it is generally agreed upon that democratic development is a laudable goal for all countries of the world, since it has been noted that western democracies are more prosperous, do not tend to fight protracted wars against each other and host alternative legal and/or diplomatic channels in which to settle disputes.

Theoretical support is provided for this conclusion by the *Democratic Peace Thesis*, which posits that democracies avoid outright violent conflict with each other to settle disputes because (see Amstutz, 1999:194):

- 1) Violence is an illegitimate course of action given the guiding principles of democracy;
- 2) Democracies have “structural and institutional constraints that impair centralized, autocratic decision-making”; and
- 3) Normative principles and cultural traditions exist that mitigate against violent tendencies and towards peaceful conflict resolution programs.

Given the levels of education that are common within western democracies, the people within a democracy are unlikely to support protracted, violent and seemingly pointless wars (Rowen, 1996:307-313), especially when American soldiers start to die. For these reasons, the Bush administration formulated policies based in the principle that the world would be a safer place if democracy were implemented in key strategic countries throughout the world such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The underlying assumption was that if dictatorial regimes were eliminated, the people would automatically move towards democracy. This in turn led to the conclusion that it would be acceptable to remove such obstacles, whatever the means, so long as the intentions were right.

The question was thus not what needed to be done but rather how, when and by whom it would be done. Considering the last point first, which ties in with a sense of American exceptionalism, it was asserted that after 9/11, the time had come whereby the U.S. not only had an interest in spreading democracy, but rather an obligation to do it for the benefit of the entire world. Supporting this idea was the assumption that the modernization process, as experienced by the western world would benefit the lesser developed countries (LDCs) in several ways. First, it has already been mentioned that the democratic peace thesis posited that the world would be a more peaceful place, if more countries adopted a democratic government. Second, it was assumed that because the west was successful in its pursuit of modernism, western countries had the experience and knowledge to help LDCs avoid problems with their democratic consolidation. Third, as highlighted by Jervis (2005:439), the terrorist attacks on NYC and Washington D.C. created a situation in which western countries viewed themselves as having been given a unique

opportunity (perhaps even a mandate) to transform international politics, which leads into the fourth point, that the U.S. would lead the way.

To this end, the United States under the Bush administration adopted an approach that claimed that any country that did not support the American approach to the war on terror was actually acting against the interests of the world community. Krauthammer (2005:463-464), for example, concludes that “the boldness of these policies [was] breathtaking”; it moreover created the impression for vulnerable countries around the world that the “arbitrary application of American power” was possible. Nye (??), building on the work of William Safire, argues that the unilateral approach espoused by the Bush Doctrine presupposed that because the United States was promoting democratic peace throughout the world and it was a benevolent power, it should be accepted that the ends justified the means. This involved “an assertive damn-the torpedoes approach to promoting American values” through the use of preemptive strikes that would remove dictatorial leaders from non-democratic countries and thereby host the consolidation of liberal democratic norms within that country. Even those unilateralists that were not interested in promoting democracy abroad still supported these developments in the name of protecting American values and U.S. sovereignty, even when that involved the circumvention of international law. Returning to Jervis (2005:439), in the final equation, it was concluded that the United States should “act unilaterally when necessary,” to ensure the success of the mission and secure the defeat of the terrorists.

The Bush Doctrine thus included elements to make this happen, preventative and/or preemptive strikes, which were deemed wholly necessary given the stereotype that all terrorists “are fanatics and there is nothing that they value” that can be threatened by the West. Since these individuals had shown themselves prepared to commit suicide in the name of enacting their terrorist, any credible responses had to come before the action had been taken. According to this doctrine, the U.S. had to be “ready to wage preventive wars and to act against emerging threats before they are fully formed” (Jervis, 2005:439). Prevention in these cases was the only way, since it was clearly too late to do anything about the threat after the terrorist had already set off a bomb in a crowded marketplace or place of business.

In order to adhere to international law, the policies of preventive and preemptive war had to be justified in such a way that it did not matter that national boundaries are viewed as unchanging and external states cannot intervene in national affairs unless violence has crossed recognized boundaries. In the cases of preventive and preemptive wars, established states in the western world claim a “right to wage war on the grounds of the dangers posed by the erratic behavior of other states” (Michaud, 2005:37), especially with the onset of nuclear weapons. Glennon (2005:80), for example, deems the idea that states can only engage in aggressive behavior in cases of clear self-defense is outdated and does not provide a credible defense against terrorist and rogue groups. An alternative, according to this perspective, is that a threat only has to be imminent to justify preemptive strikes meant to disarm a country and not allow it the opportunity to attack in the near future (Art, 2005:142-144). The overarching belief was that “American security required the U.S. to act in ways others cannot and must not,” if international security was to be maintained (Jervis, 2005:439) and democracy was to be spread successfully throughout the world. Parallels can be found here with Hans Morgenthau’s conception of the balancer in a multipolar system, where balance is maintained when one country rises above the rest and

ensures that the system is working in harmony without overly pushing any single agenda (Morgenthau, 1973; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:282-284). When the consolidation process did not go as smoothly as planned, however, questions emerged about the reasons why the Iraqi people did not swarm to the streets welcoming American-style democracy without delay or challenges. It is to this question that the debate now turns.

The Complicated Nature of Democratic Consolidation

The Bush Doctrine was premised on the laudable goals related to the consolidation of democracy around the world to try and secure the rewards of the democratic peace thesis, specifically international harmony among a concert of cooperative democratic states. To achieve the desired goals, the United States was to assume the leadership role of a coalition of western states against any rogue nation intent on using terrorism to destroy western interests and values. As desirable as a coalition of the willing was, however, the Bush Doctrine made it clear that the United States would respond to the events of 9/11 on its own, if necessary to promote democratic development at the international level. Preventive and preemptive strikes were part of this plan and were to be used against whatever country proved to be a threat to international stability and peace either because of its ties to terrorist groups in the world. Given the successful post-war re-construction of Europe after WWII, the democratic consolidation in the CEE after the collapse of communism, the unparalleled success of the U.S. in the first Gulf War the cessation of war in Yugoslavia and the progress made in Afghanistan, it was assumed that these objectives would be as easily obtained in other cultural settings. As often happens, however, theoretical ideals are often more difficult to achieve in actual practice than initially anticipated. This section will begin by discussing the perception that the historical development of western nation-states, the U.S. in particular, holds the key to the consolidation of advanced democracies in all the countries of the world, which will in turn help expose some of the common fallacies of the Bush Doctrine.

To begin, Mrozek (1998:87) offers the following explanation for such sentiments, one based in the thought patterns evolving from the Enlightenment:

“The statement that ‘all men are created equal’ is just one rhetorical example of the belief that human nature dictates one ideal form of government which in turn suggests one ideal way of making war and securing peace. The Enlightenment spirit, then, is all about the application of one set of rules and one set of expectations to all peoples and all situations.”

Clearly the United States is not alone in this sentiment, as most western countries share this bias and have been engaged in some form of colonial expansion in the not-so-distant past. More than this, while most countries of the world have adopted aspects of the Enlightenment and modernization process, the LDCs have had varying levels of success that seemingly stem directly from the rejection of the western trajectory of change associated with the move from modernization to post-modernism.

The phrase ‘all men are created equal’ is nevertheless directly linked to the American political ideal and will help explain the emergence *and* persistence of the idea of American exceptionalism. Using logic similar to that used by Britain during its colonization period, most Americans came to believe during the 20th century, as the U.S. consolidated a dominate role in

international politics, that the “American way of life has universal values that can be spread and will benefit the entire world” (Jervis, 2005:439). Underpinning this conclusion has been a persistent belief in the unique nature and mission of the United States government and its role in the world since gaining independence. Exploring this idea further, American colonists were bold enough to declare independence at a time when being a subject of the King/Queen was unquestioned. Class distinctions were moreover eliminated, if not in practice (since wealthy, white landowners dominated colonial politics), then at least in spirit, as encapsulated in the creed that all men are endowed with certain inalienable rights that cannot be taken away by the government.

The paradox involved here is that the very type of success that ensured the independence of the thirteen original colonies was a form of asymmetrical warfare, i.e. there was little chance that a motley group of farmers with guns should have ever been able to defeat the mighty, extremely well-organized British army, at least if the conventional norms of warfare were upheld. Nevertheless, as each passing generation seemed to bring more prosperity and security those that came after them, it was commonly accepted that this was the best trajectory for the development of the democratic ideal. When viewed in retrospect, such important events as the Civil War, the Great Depression and the violence of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, to name only three, seem to have been temporary aberrations in the otherwise progressive evolution of the country. More than this, the past two centuries have seen Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, most of which are predicated on the struggle to extend the American democratic ideal and opportunity to increasing sections of American society ranging from the freed African American slaves in the 1860s to women in the early 20th century.

Problematically, the fact that American independence from Britain was an unprecedented political move for the time does mean that the historical development of American democracy was something that would apply to all countries in the world regardless of their unique cultural and historical development. It was, after all, not even something that spontaneously emerged in the United States, although many act as if it was and hold American democracy as the archetypal blueprint for international change. Even a brief look at the trials and setbacks of successive minority groups, as they struggled (and continue to struggle) to obtain the inalienable rights guaranteed them by the U.S. Constitution, clearly demonstrates this point. More than this, the evolution of the United States government was predicated on the writings, thoughts and actions of the country’s founding fathers and the fighting spirit of the average Americans, meaning that democracy in the U.S. developed over time according to homegrown principles and was not implemented by an external power.

Given that grassroots support is important to the consolidation of democracy, the objective of protecting western sovereignty by promoting democratic growth in LDCs becomes increasingly complicated. Pye (1965:4), for example, poses the following questions that while written in the 1960s, are easily transferrable to today. When considering the promotion of democracy around the world, Pye asks:

- Are there links between traditional values and modern practices for the stability and maintenance of the political order?
- Is it possible to accelerate and direct political change external from the country?
- How can traditional societies be best transformed into democratic polities?

Bringing the questions together, it must be remembered that democracy is not meant to be as efficient as an authoritarian government since it is predicated on the will of the people. Hence, if the people are crucial to democratic development and consolidation, is it possible for an external power to implement liberal democratic ideals in a less-than-democratic way, i.e. through the use of military might to depose dictatorial leaders?

These questions were admittedly overlooked at the end of the 20th century. Western Europe, including post-war Germany, was able to rebuild after WWII with help from the funds distributed throughout Europe under the U.S.-led Marshall Plan. More specific to the discussion at hand, however, the collapse of communism in 1989-1991 led some observers to conclude that the merits of liberal democracies had been confirmed and that given the opportunity, all countries would adopt democratic principles if only non-democratic leaders were taken out of power. Consider, for example, that this was a time when Fukuyama dramatically declared as the *End of History*, as predicated on the “unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism” witnessed throughout Europe and the “total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to western liberalism” (Fukuyama, 1989; reprinted in O’Neil & Rogowski, 2006:459). This requires brief unpacking, as the move in central and eastern Europe (CEE) towards democracy will help illustrate certain pros and cons of trying to guide democratic development externally.

Looking specifically at the democratization of CEE countries in the early 1990s, various points can be surmised that help explain why the western powers so blatantly underestimated the challenges associated with introducing democracy into the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11. First, CEE countries chose to pursue democratic leadership immediately following the collapse of communism, most dramatically symbolized by the breaching of the Berlin Wall. As a result, some concluded that the world had changed such that the only obstacles standing in the way of democratic development in a country are associated with the leadership of non-democratic regimes. Given their historical background, and their recent experience with Soviet domination, CEE countries moreover took steps to consolidate western liberal democratic practices and norms, thereby solidifying the perception that such decisions were logical and predictable. Overlooked in this analysis is an understanding of the grassroots movement towards and support for this type of political development after years of repression at the hands of the Soviets, but this was not the only area that this impression applied.

Arguments are made, especially in the United States that Ronald Reagan should be credited with the ending of the Cold War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which in effect downplays the role assumed in the process by Mikhail Gorbachev, the former (and last) General Secretary of the former Soviet Union. This creates the impression that external influences can be decisive in the consolidation of democratic regimes. Whether or not Reagan challenging Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall actually led to its destruction does not diminish the fact that this impression exists. Again, this sentiment is not restricted to the United States, as even those that do not view Reagan’s role as decisive still point to the guiding influence of the European Union leading to full membership.

For many west Europeans, the use of conditionality has been viewed, not only as preconditions for CEE membership in the EU, but as guidelines that have been critical to the post-1989 democratic development throughout the region more generally. Regional success in this area has

even been touted as prime examples of the reform potential of *democratic consolidation through integration* (Dimitrova & Pridham, 2004:91-93). The logic involved here is clear: through the offer of EU membership, the various CEE countries were encouraged to implement particular democratic norms in a timely fashion, rather than embarking on less stable paths to democracy that might lead to authoritarianism or worse. The dangers associated with the collapse of the former Yugoslavia seemed to reinforce the importance of this course of action.

When viewed from this perspective, the countries of the CEE were provided with a ‘unique set’ of conditions for membership that encompassed all spheres ranging from the political and institutional, to the legal and economic areas of governance (Johnson, 2005:111), which in turn guaranteed their success. Some analysts have subsequently described EU enlargement as representative of, but more importantly defined by the rules of ‘external governance’; in short, the EU ‘pays the reward if the target government complies with the conditions and withholds the reward if it fails to comply’. As a result of this, the use of *conditionality* has been touted as the ‘most prominent feature’ of recent expansion projects, with this strategy meant (in theory) to ensure that any new member of the EU would have the capacity to compete within Europe with a minimum amount of adjustment after accession (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004:661; see also Bojkov, 2004:518; and Smith, 2003).

A potential problem is that there can be a stark difference between the idea of enforced democratic consolidation and the idea that a choice has been made to pursue EU membership despite the costs. Helen Wallace explores this discrepancy, arguing that there must be a distinction made between the ‘natural’ process of *Europeanization*, as marked by a gradual, but genuine adherence by the political elite of a particular country to west European models, and the pre-accession phenomenon of *EU-ization*, where political and economic change in the accession country is driven almost exclusively by the ‘desire for EU membership’. For Wallace, the most serious concern is that the process of EU-ization will not build autonomy and capacity for coherent political competition in the target countries, but will merely dictate the terms of accession and democratic consolidation according to EU procedural norms, and more significantly without negotiation (Wallace, cited in Malovà & Haughton, 2002:186). The underlying logic here is that whenever changes are dictated by external means, there is an increased chance that they will be ineffective, or at the least less sustainable in the longer-term. In this case, it is completely overlooked that both the Europeanization process and the EU-ization process worked precisely because the CEE countries were interested in pursuing both developmental processes simultaneously. The bureaucratic guidance worked, in short, because the people in these countries were interested in gaining EU membership and joining the ranks of other consolidated, advanced democracies. So contextualized, it is difficult to apply the same logic to other regions of the world that have less cultural and historical ties to the West.

Even if democratization was an easier process, and it was accepted that the U.S. should take the leading role, there is still the question of how it would be enacted. In this case, the use of preventive measures was touted as a way to protect U.S. national interests, while concurrently encouraging other countries to adopt a democratic government. Consider the following scenario, where one country continually prepares for war in an attempt to protect national values. In this type of situation, the preparation for war often precedes the outbreak of violence, since states are unable to bolster their own security “without menacing, or even attacking” other states viewed as

adversaries. A coupling of democratic principles and preventive war is thus difficult since an inherent tension exists between the two principles. Why? It is difficult to convince smaller countries that they should democratize when democratic ideals are promoted through the use of distinctively undemocratic means. Even less-than-democratic leaders realize the problems associated with this course of action, with Bismarck describing the use of preventive war as akin to “committing suicide from fear of death” (Jervis, 2005a:179-180).

To counter this idea, realists argue that because of the unique position of the United States in the world, it can act as Morgenthau’s balancer (Morgenthau, 1973; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:282-284), if and only if it does not come across as an imperial power. Any military action must therefore be directed at ways to “maintain the stability and relative tranquility of the current international system by enforcing, maintaining and extending the current peace” (Krauthammer, 2005, 467-468), rather than tactics to amass power and wealth. Rather than being seen as the protector of the weak, premature aggression against a weaker adversary makes the larger power seem a menace and a threat to all, if given enough time. The tendency here is for other smaller countries to band together against the possibility that a day will come when the larger power will turn its attention on them and compromise their national integrity. In short, preventive strikes do not instill trust in the international community. It is for this reason that Morgenthau argues that diplomacy, while more uncertain, is better, as it creates the illusion that change is taking place despite the presence of the balance, not because of it. This can be seen when the Marshall Plan is considered, as it worked in Europe in the aftermath of WWII, when the U.S. provided Europe with money to rebuild but did not explicitly state how the money should be used. Without grassroots participation and ownership by the people most directly involved, the transformation process will suffer from mixed results at best, it will fail at worst.

Does a Country with a Superior Military Force Have to Be Concerned with Such Issues?

As maintained by Mrozek (1998:86-87), the implementation of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ military policy in America has often come into difficulties, since it inevitably stumbles “over the distinctive conditions and different mentalities encountered in specific conflicts.” Changes happen, but more needs to be done to strengthen the soft power side of American foreign policy to match the hard power used thus far in the war on terror. What is soft power? For Nye, it is the “staple of democratic politics” in that it is a way to exert power on another country without wasting valuable resources. To elaborate his point, Nye argues that soft power is based on three primary resources: 1) the culture of a country, which is “attractive to others” and includes elements that others choose to follow voluntarily; 2) the political values of a country, such as democracy and the associated respect for human rights; and 3) the foreign policies of a country that focus on alternative resources such as economic influence and strength rather than mere military might (Nye, 2005:2-11). Tying these points together, soft power is the ability to convince countries that they *want* to follow the lead of the United States without the American government having to force them to with more conventional forms of warfare.

Soft power has been a part of American foreign policy throughout history, but it has always been buttressed by the threat of hard power options. Teddy Roosevelt once said, for example, that the U.S. should ‘tread softly but carry a big stick,’ thus implying that diplomatic action should be the

first initiative attempted in any international disagreement, but that military might should be held in reserve in case the initial contact was unsuccessful. The logical conclusion here is that “a world in which the accomplishments of soft power are not protected by the availability of hard power, and by the willingness to use it in defense of those accomplishments, is not an ‘unconquerable’ world at all. It is a profoundly vulnerable world” (Weigel, 2005:64). As sound as this approach is, however, it appears that because of the vulnerability involved when soft power is attempted has led some critics to conclude that hard power is always the better option, if a country is to avoid seeming weak in the international community. Expanding on this idea, Mrozek (1998:86) argues that while “the American military experience is rich in cases where asymmetry in technology, resources, strategic vision, and other critically important elements have been determinative, whether accounting for victory or defeat,” it is now considered a tactic that is only used by enemies that are barbarous, who are “not playing fair ... [and are] refusing to follow organizationally superior states.” A sentiment that can now be heard: since America is the preeminent example of a democracy, and it is fighting to democratize the world and thereby make it a better place, why would other countries resist its influence? The conclusion is often that there must be something inherently wrong with the other state, if this decision is made.

Again, this is nothing new. Such sentiments are, after all, found as early as the writings of Thucydides about the Peloponnesian War. In this work, written in 431 BCE and reprinted in Williams *et al* (2004:40-48), Thucydides outlines a possible dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians, whereby the larger power (Athens) tries to reason with the Melians about why they should submit and do what is asked of them. This dialogue is useful when attempting to analyze the relationship between the United States and the Middle East. Using arguments that the Athenians considered both “persuasive and incontrovertible,” the Athenian leaders made it plain that resistance on the part of the Melians would only bring about the unnecessary destructions of their country, whereas cooperation would guarantee their security and stability. The assumption that they could do this came from the old-world logic that “when ... discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” for practical reasons.

Found within the sub-text of the dialogue between the Athenians and the Melians, however, is an understanding that even in the face of certain defeat, smaller powers are often likely to try and defend their sovereignty and national honor. When the Melians see nothing coming from surrender except slavery, for example, the Melian leaders make it completely clear that they intend to fight, arguing that “fortune sometimes makes the odds more level than could be expected from the difference in numbers of the two sides. And if we surrender, then all our hope is lost at once, whereas, so long as we remain in action, there is still a hope that we may yet stand upright.” Hence, while the Athenians insist that there should be no sense of “honor on one side and shame on the other” when it is a question of survival, the prospect that the Melians are involved in a fight they cannot win does not render the most practical outcome. That they ultimately lose the fight does not diminish their determination to resist their impending doom in the first place.

What exactly is Thucydides trying to say in this passage? One perspective is that he is almost presenting a comedy of errors, where the Melians are doomed to play the buffoon that is too

simple-minded to choose the path that everyone can see is the most logical. After all, the path that they choose does indeed lead to their ruin. From the Athenian point of view, this assessment makes sense. The fact remains, however, that Thucydides does not present the Melians in this light, but instead presents them in a heroic stance, albeit a tragic one. Rather than simplistic arguments on the part of the Melians, Thucydides has the people of this small island talk about issues such as “fair play and just dealing,” while at the same time giving the impression that it would be better for the Athenians to accept them as neutral and impartial observers to the events taking place around them. When the Athenians counter that they have no choice but to use military force against the Melians, since (from their perspective) any form of democracy would show them as weak and ineffective and thereby undermine their reputation for military and political strength. The Melians counter this by asking: ‘Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time, you will attack them too?’

What does this mean in the final equation? Whereas everything might point to the idea that smaller powers will automatically yield to the leadership of larger powers, this is not always the case. If a smaller power sees no other option but to fight or be destroyed, they will use whatever means are available to try and protect their borders and livelihood in the longer-term. The explanation provided by Metz (2007a:73): “sometimes honor, justice, and revenge matter more than schools, roads, and jobs,” especially if the insurgents are seen as giving them security and outside forces are seen as destroying that. This may not seem rational from the larger power, especially as it is often the case that these states believe their influence to be beneficial for the success of the smaller country. Sincerity of intent does not always translate into favorable results for all involved and, even when they do, such developments can still come across as a form of subjugation to the smaller country. Consider, for example, the response of the people in the Middle East to modernization. While desiring prosperity and valuing development, many Middle Eastern countries have resisted adopting western values in total, preferring instead to maintain their cultural integrity and pride. This returns to the idea that democratization relies on grassroots support, which must coincide with the cultural context in which it emerges, if it is to be successful. As summarized by Amanat (2001:25-26), many people in the Arab world feel that their cultural values are “under siege from the modern world,” as symbolized by the United States. Accordingly, “the Arab world has been radical in its politics, monolithic in its approach, and defiant towards the West.” It is not that they do not want to succeed in the international arena, only that they want to do it on their own terms.

This still does not answer the question of whether or not America should care about the countries of the Middle East, since they do not pose a realistic military or economic threat to the U.S. From this perspective, especially as asymmetry will always be part of the equation given the size differentials involved, such an approach to American foreign policy analysis towards the Middle East seems overly complicated. If Thucydides were alone in his assessment, perhaps American foreign policy could be simplified and only rely on hard power options. Problematically for inflexible unilateralists, he was not. A similar theme is, after all, taken up by Robert Jervis (1988; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:487), who clearly argues the following:

“A country could rationally go to war even though it was certain it would lose. ... [When] faced with the choice of giving up territory to a stronger rival or losing it through a war, the state

might choose war because of considerations of honor, domestic politics, or international reputation. Honor is self-explanatory, although ... it seems strange to modern ears."

History is instead replete with examples of smaller countries that resisted even the threat of being overrun and conquered by larger powers, if at all possible. Cuba, for example, actively resisted U.S. intervention in its affairs from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. While hosting policies that are counter to American interests, Fidel Castro strategically adopted a Marxist orientation to his political program to formulate a lucrative alternative to a western liberal democratic system for consolidation within Cuba (Quirk, 1993:247); and to deter future American intervention in Cuban politics (Dinerstein, 1971:4). Other examples would be the Vietcong during the Vietnam War, the mujahedeen in Afghanistan against the former Soviet Union, and even the United States against the British army during the war of independence. To reiterate, there was little chance that the American colonists could rally enough defense to substantiate their threat to achieve independence from the U.K. given the significant size differential between the two countries at that time in the country's history. The meaning here is that asymmetrical conflict has been a part of the development of the United States as it expanded over the centuries to operate as a dominant power in international politics. Rather than drawing inspiration from the past, however, many of the lessons of how to harness asymmetrical warfare have been forgotten as the American army expanded and professionalized exponentially during the twentieth century (see Mrozek, 1998, 86). Historical analysis might thus be better served if it led to the unique understanding of asymmetrical warfare provided by it, i.e. that smaller powers can only be underestimated at the larger power's peril.

A combination of Thucydides, Morgenthau and Nye would be a good lesson to be applied to and understood in the context of the current conflict. Intersecting with the points above by Thucydides – that larger powers cannot just overrun smaller countries and expect them to do exactly what they tell them to do just because they are stronger militarily – is the political insight offered by Morgenthau and Nye respectively. Morgenthau, for example, while known primarily for his 'principles of political realism' that discuss objective laws and how they pertain to the study of power, also touches on issues of soft power, even if they are not couched in these terms. His *4 Tasks of Diplomacy*, to start with, argue that diplomatic endeavors are important when considering power relationships between states, but they must be "divested of the crusading spirit" and must consider the perspective of the other countries involved in potential conflict situations. He goes on to say that "all nations are tempted ... to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purposes of the universe," whether that be tied to religious ideals or a more secular understanding of the universal value of democracy. For Morgenthau, this is problematic since power and its use must be understood in the political and cultural environment in which it emerges, if it is to be effective in the longer-term. More than this, when maintaining that countries should be willing to find compromises with other countries on all issues that do not directly relate to national security considerations, Morgenthau again highlights the necessity and use of diplomacy (Morgenthau, 1973, reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006:57-62; see also Tickner, 2007:17).

Finally, Nye provides a critical third dimension to this debate. In his article "Limits on American Power", he clearly argues that "if the United States wants to remain strong, Americans need also to pay attention to ... soft power," which he defines as those national attributes that make

countries “want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, [and] aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness.” His intention, rather than trying to deny the importance of hard power, is to show that the two are interrelated and complement each other. Without soft power, smaller nations are likely to become suspicious of the military intentions of the United States and how it relates to their longer-term sovereignty and stability. Without hard power, by contrast, smaller states will not believe that the larger power has the ability to assert its power. It is instead a healthy combination of the two that helps to overcome adversity and conflict (Nye, 2002; reprinted in Williams *et al*, 2006: 710-713). Without this combination, hard power will ultimately find its limits at the most inopportune time. It has, after all, already been shown that conflicts now last years, even decades and that asymmetrical warfare allows combatant enemies the luxury of choosing their battles and then disappearing out of sight until conditions are more favorable for them. Extended timeframes thus give the advantage to the smaller power, if the larger power does not see its potential limits (such as having enough soldiers to invade multiple countries over a protracted period of time) and adapt its strategic planning accordingly.

According to this argument, the United States will have more success, and will lose less resources (economic, military and population) while still having the capacity to *help* set the agenda of other countries. If the people of the smaller country *want* to adopt democracy, they will. It will more importantly have more chance of consolidation and success, if it is a grassroots level movement emerges internal to these countries that complement the course desired by the larger power. This would require the *guidance* of the larger power, rather than the use of force and military might. Moore (2009:9) expands this idea and designates success as dependent on “national and regional strategic guidance,” whereby the larger power translates local knowledge into “actionable plans” coordinating the concerns of the people with the strategic interests of the larger power. Taking it a step further, and perhaps adding a contentious element to the debate, the prospect for success will also involve the United States understanding that democracy is a process that can lead to many different trajectories. Just because the countries of the Middle East might choose a different type of democratic institutional structure that includes aspects that seem foreign to U.S. observers, it does not automatically mean that democracy and Islam are incompatible, or that they will choose to adopt a fully Americanized vision of democracy. Such patience is difficult at a time when results are expected immediately and are globalized enough to have overcome the maturation process that was an important part of democratic consolidation and growth in the West. Metz (2007a:72) concurs, arguing:

“If the U.S. is to be effective, it must be capable of long-term engagement, crossing presidential administrations, congresses, and the careers of the military and civilian officials who actually undertake the effort. This is difficult but vital. Despite the best efforts, when a unit which and developed local knowledge and contacts is replaced, effectiveness diminishes, ... for awhile.”

This realization is vitally important and supports the argument that rather the U.S. must find alternative ways to engage the Middle East as a region within the confines of global politics. As stated from the outset, rather than approaching these governments from the stance of a superpower – which will inevitably lead to perceptions of imminent threat to the smaller countries of the region, or equally damaging, as condescending attempts to provide charity to a proud region with a history of self-reliance and problematic ties to western forms of modernity – the United States must instead view the Middle East as a region with a rich religious and cultural

heritage worthy of engagement and dialogue. By respecting the historic development of Islamic culture, separate from the perverted stance of terrorism, the American government has a chance to change the ever-present power imbalance between the two regions from one of asymmetry to one of strategic commitment. The question is how to do this.

Applying these lessons to the Islamic World

When dealing with mistrust between the Islamic world and the West, it is easy to dismiss the problems as developing from an incompatibility between Islam and democracy, which in turn seemingly signals, to cite Samuel Huntington, a ‘clash of civilizations’ that cannot be overcome. At the root of this divide is a mutual misunderstanding about where the animosity begins. Those in the West look to the events of 9/11 in the United States or the London subway bombings in ?? and conclude that the Islamic world is riddled with violence that is ultimately directed at the United States. Conversely, it seems that the people of the Middle East are so consumed with religious piety that they cannot overcome what they view as the moral decay of the West due to capitalist decadence and the secular erosion of morality. While this may explain certain aspects of why radical elements on both sides dismiss the possibility of a diplomatic relationship developing, the key elements of this debate are somewhat different when policy concerns are considered.

At this level, a primary obstacle to overcome is the problem of asymmetry, which is something that must be overcome, since a dialogue cannot exist between unequal parties. Unlike the situation during the Cold War where there was a sense of parity between the Communist Bloc and the West, any directive from the West, no matter how well-intentioned, has the potential to be viewed as imperialist meddling, which will in turn prompt resistance. Because of this type of relationship, mistrust has emerged on both sides, thereby complicating the political and military cooperation between the two. To overcome this, U.S. foreign and military policy must reflect more than a simple assertion of hard power strength. While it is unlikely that the Middle East will soon compete with the West economically or militarily, at least when conventional warfare tactics are considered, there are other ways to normalize relations and allow the leadership found in each of the regional governments to gain ownership of the democratic process and thereby instill a feeling of empowerment within the local populations.

One of the first steps is for the West to recognize the historical and cultural heritage of this region and allow them the opportunity to pursue forms of modernization and democracy that fit their cultural context. These lessons are once again not new. As argued by Lucian Pye in 1965:

“Each generation must receive its politics from the previous one, each must react against that process to find its own politics, and the total process must follow the laws that govern the development of the individual personality and the general culture of a society” (Pye, 1965:7).

The same consideration must currently be made regarding the regional, historical and religious traditions found in these Middle Eastern societies, where the precedent heralded by successive generations is embodied in the myths and realities of the Ottoman Empire (centered in what is now modern day Turkey), the Qajar Empires (centered in what is modern-day Iran) and the associated ‘golden age’ of Islam. The common argument asserted by both devout Muslims and

individuals espousing radical Islam is that the region, to remain true to the Islamic ideal, must return to the purity and morality attributed to the 'golden age,' when the Islamic world was respected, strong and successful. It was, after all, a time when the Middle East led the way culturally and intellectually, which was then seemingly lost abruptly with the international changes witnessed at the turn of the twentieth century. With the onset of industrialization at the close of the preceding century, the drive for colonization and the discovery of and increasing need for crude oil by western powers, the West became increasingly interested in Middle Eastern affairs, meaning that the countries of the Middle East could no longer ignore the emergent political presence and subsequent dominance of the West leading into the twentieth century. This requires a brief explanation.

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the last vestiges of greatness were seemingly lost, especially given the chaotic political atmosphere resulting from the end of World War I and the subsequent onset of WWII. When combined with the increased need for oil to run the British navy and the discovery of large oil deposits in the Middle East, this region became more than a passageway between Europe, in particular Britain, and India. In a short period of time, the various countries of this region were granted at least nominal levels of autonomy, if not outright independence, but this immediately came into conflict with the realities of having recently become an area of interest to the capitalist, business gains of the West.

For example, just because the Ottoman and Qajar Empires were on the verge of collapse does not mean that this reality was readily apparent to the people within its boundaries, much less easily processed afterwards. Questions begin to emerge as to why and how a strong empire could ultimately fail to the point that it collapses. Doubts are then compounded by the chaos associated with the collapse of the existing, overarching administrative structure. Within this atmosphere, societies, which had to find ways to simultaneously stabilize their country while implementing effective ways to govern the people through the act of state-building, faced immediate difficulties. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, as explained by Dankwart Rustow, the countries of the Middle East were considered backward politically when compared against the "historically unique culture of industrial society that had its roots in the Europe of the Renaissance" (Rustow, 1965:171), which when combined with the technological superiority displayed by the West, created a situation whereby regional ethnic groups that had once prospered economically, politically and socially were told how to modernize and democratize by powers outside the regional boundaries. Within this atmosphere, different opinions existed about the best way to proceed into the twentieth century.

With the end of WWI, state borders were administratively applied to a region by foreign powers without explicit cooperation from the people most directly affected. Through a policy of self-determination, as outlined by Michael Gasper (2011:40-41), three new republics emerged (Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia) and seven semi-colonial political entities called mandates (Iraq, Jordan [Transjordan], Syria, Israel [Palestine] and Lebanon). While the scope of this article is not wide enough to explore the different patterns of development fully, it must be acknowledged that from the 1920s onward, especially leading to the end of WWII and the establishment of Israel as an independent state, various tactics and responses emerged as the Middle East struggled to come to terms with its newly demoted place in the world and the technological changes associated with the western experience of modernization that could no longer be ignored. This

became particularly acute with the increased need for crude oil in the western powers, which in turn led to further western involvement in the state-building attempts undertaken throughout the region. Despite these changes, it must be remembered, to cite Fareed Zakaria (2001) that the tension between the West and the Middle East did not begin immediately. Zakaria even maintains that “in the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed unimaginable that the US and the Arab world would end up locked in a cultural clash,” as the countries of the Middle East each pursued modernization and cooperation with western powers, albeit with different consequences.

While pursuing modernization independently in an attempt to respond to the changing political atmosphere, the experience of each was markedly different. For example, because countries, including Egypt and Iran, pursued secular practices quickly, the people started to feel disoriented, which in turn fostered disgruntled forces within society to oppose the onset of modernization, which they spuriously associated with the process of westernization. The reason for this: The people of the Middle East felt exploited as the West laid claim to the oil reserves discovered in the region by virtue of the money and technical expertise offered to help extract it. In turn, feelings of exploitation and disorientation from the accelerated speed of societal and political change throughout the region gave a sense of legitimacy to radical groups claiming to speak in terms of a lost Islamic purity.

While such simplified conclusions are not wholly fair to the West, and they emerged in stages and in various countries throughout the Middle East between the 1920s and the 1970s, the associated feelings of alienation became deeply entrenched within many disenfranchised groups throughout the region and created the foundation for the future development of radicalized Islam. To individuals with no hope for the future here on earth, the fact that many of the problems were actually created by the practices of their own leaders, i.e. they withheld the benefits of capitalist enterprises with their people to secure their own political autonomy, did not seem to matter, since it is easier to blame external elements for internal problems. Again, such conclusions were not fair, but myth often trumps reality in such situations. As a result, groups including the Muslim Brotherhood and individuals including Sayyid Qutb found different ways to express the same thought, that the only way to regain legitimacy would be to return to the principles developed during the golden age and resist the compromising influence of the west. For Qutb, the Koran included passages that “supported the violent overthrow of an errant state,” whether in the western world or in the Middle East. In this context, a “dichotomous view of the world” developed, which was divided in endless conflict between the forces of “good and evil” and was over time eventually perverted to elevate “violent jihad to the status of a sixth pillar of Islam, even though this went completely against the basic tenets of the Koran forbidding suicide and murder outside the limits of self-defense (Zeidan, in Rubin, Rubin, 12-14; see also Zakaria, 2001).

Why? While some countries benefited nicely from cooperating with the West, other countries such as Egypt and Iran perceived the changes as too radical, too fast and too contrary to the basic principles of Islam, as least according to their conservative interpretation of the political developments of the golden age. The idea embedded within this perspective was that westernization not only tempted Muslims to turn to secular ideas that were contrary to Islamic purity, but (more specifically) the new political and economic arrangements were viewed as akin to a sense of lost sovereignty, whereby the people were no longer free to choose an independent

path towards modernity geared towards the cultural heritage of the various countries and people. This reaction is explained by Fareed Zakaria, who explains that the same process of modernization, which is viewed as a wholly positive phenomenon in the West, brought mixed blessings (at best) to the countries of the Middle East, outright poverty and repression (at worst). Indeed, most Arab states succumbed to authoritarian principles of governance, with some even becoming “oppressive police states.” When viewed in these terms, it becomes clear that globalization and modernization in the Arab world is what Zakaria terms the “critic’s caricature of globalization,” whereby Arabs are bombarded with western ideas and products, but are often unable to afford to own any of them and thereby become disillusioned with what they see happening around them. As concluded by Zakaria, modernization “takes more than strongmen and oil money. Importing stuff is easy – Cadillacs and McDonalds, etc – but adapting to the working of democracy is difficult” (Zakaria, 2001, 410-411).

Focusing on the final thought, there are different factors that come together to show that the consolidation of democracy is difficult. For one, while it is an evolutionary process, it is fraught with complications and obstacles in the beginning. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, elections are just the first step in the process. To ensure that the elections actually mean something constructive, a stable governance system (encompassing political, economic and legal norms) must be established that is viewed as legitimate and autonomous in the eyes of the people. According to the social contract theory, the government must be able to provide at least the basic benefits of sovereignty, if the people are expected to submit to its authority, whatever the citizen rights ascribed. This includes such basic elements as safeguarding service delivery in the country to finding strategies to better guarantee the people’s safety, if the people are to be expected to not turn to less legitimate sources, i.e. organized crime and/or terrorist groups, as provides of basic everyday needs, such as finding employment and being able to feed and shelter a family, as well as for an enhanced sense of security. Democratization is, however, even more. For the government to find a way to provide these social guarantees, it requires the new leadership to find ways to cooperate with the repressive groups that were in power before the regime change, meaning that they are the ones with the political and economic experience to stabilize the country during the transitional period. Even more precariously, the new leadership must simultaneously overcome the distrust of the people about their capacity to do all of the above, while concurrently courting international support, acceptance and legitimacy, which is in itself a difficult task.

The bottom line, and the most problematic aspect of this facet of the debate, revolves around the individual historical legacies of the different countries involved and the emotional responses that this evokes from the dominating powers in the international community, i.e. western governments, their leaders *and* the voting electorate that makes up the populations of these countries. In the current atmosphere, there was an assumption that if difficult regimes were removed, i.e. the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the people would flock to the streets and embrace democracy, just as the people of central Europe did after the fall of communism. This comparison involves a false analogy, however, given the cultural similarities shared between post-communist central Europe and the countries of the European Union, not to mention the promise of security and prosperity associated with gaining EU membership, once the process of democratization was complete.

When considering the Middle East, by contrast, because modernization is viewed as westernization, which is in turn associated with exploitation and a loss of sovereignty, it is not difficult to see that the allure of democracy would also fall victim to over-generalizations, which would in turn compromise its speedy implementation. Expanding on this idea, given the historical legacy involved, the people of the Middle East may not be rejecting modernity as such, but rather the top-down implementation of the variation found in the West, meaning that the objections might well be temporary and something to be overcome in the future. As this explanation does little to quell the doubts of western governments about the prospects of successful democratic consolidation, more analysis must be undertaken to find ways to overcome these disparate assessments of progress. For example, such a lack of understanding stems from the fact that the people in the West have their own preconceived ideas about Islam, which leads them to believe that because the people in the Middle East seem reluctant to embrace western-style democracy, not to mention that they seem to instead support the status quo and the existing authoritarian regimes, democracy must be completely incompatible with Islam.

The indifference of western audiences is then translated into despair, or more precisely fear, when the continued use of violence in the region is considered, especially after the attacks in New York, Washington D.C. and London in the last decade. For many in the West, insecurity and a lack of commonality lead them to see the choice by certain segments of the Middle East to support the Taliban or Hamas as straightforward enough to couch in the over-simplified maxim that violence must be enshrined in Islam, rather than understanding that Islam is spiritually no more supportive of the use of violence to solve problems than any other religious text of Christianity or Judaism. Lost to this interpretation is that political violence and terrorist acts have been embraced by selected groups either to advance their political goals through an insurgency campaign, or alternatively out of despair that negotiation will change anything given the hopelessness of life here on earth.

Without condoning either of these responses, the use of violence must be viewed within this context, if a more holistic approach is to be found in diplomatic relationships between the West and the Middle East. Without it, there will be tendency to completely discount the combination of hard and soft power, which will in turn compromise the effectiveness of the involvement of American troops within international affairs. Hence, given the nature of the international world today, American citizens must understand that the current war against terrorism and repression within the international community cannot be fought by conventional means, i.e. because it is fought sporadically but purposefully by transnational extremists and not the majority of the people living in specified countries of the Middle East. The promotion of a more holistic understanding of the various Middle Eastern cultures is thus paramount. The war campaign must be fought against those that pervert the religious and cultural traditions of this region and not the majority of the families that simply want to provide a better life for their children, just as most Americans do.

A step in this direction would come with the recognition that the processes of modernization and democratization were far less straightforward and automatic in the West as the history books seem to convey. Instead, taking the experience of the United States as a comparative example, the industrialization / modernization process was accompanied by periods of blatant exploitation

of factory workers and the minority groups that predominantly filled these jobs leading into and throughout the twentieth century. The bodies of female factory workers women laying on the ground in front of the Triangle Shirt-Waist factory in New York in 1911 after jumping from a burning factory that had been locked to keep productivity up is but one example. The sight of burning crosses during the 1960s, not to mention news of murdered civil rights workers, the burned remains of three helpless girls in a church destroyed by hatred and average citizens like Rosa Parks being locked in jail for sitting in the front of a bus, provide other visual examples of the problems associated with ensuring democracy is more than a hollow principle for everyone in American society. Even from a more state-oriented perspective, it cannot be forgotten that the United States was riddled by civil war a century before, whereby Americans took sides and fought against each other about how to best characterize the American ideal. Even a cursory look at the Amendments to the US constitution demonstrate this process, as all but two are related to issues that have either helped define the nature and operation of the US government more clearly, or have provided the basic steps needed to allow increasing numbers of minorities to participate in the American political process and thereby receive the 'full' rights of citizenship enshrined in this document.

The point to be taken here is that democracy is not an end goal, but is instead an evolutionary process that requires the countries to find economic *and* political compromises that allow the government to remain stable over the longer-term, while at the same time guaranteeing the rights of the people. More specifically, it requires recognition by those in the west that modernization was not a fully linear process, but rather developed in different ways within the different countries throughout Europe, North America and Australia, not to mention that it is a tale including embarrassing historical moments of repression, discrimination and violence. If this understanding is then transferred to the analysis of this process in the Middle East, it will be easier to imagine a future where Islamic countries find ways to reconcile religious/spiritual issues with those of secular religious governance. It will moreover allow for a more holistic interpretation of the rich cultural heritage of the Middle East and its potential to re-integrate into the international community, whether or not the democratic path chosen does not exactly mirror those taken by the western powers. The key is to find ways to agree to disagree on issues that do not directly impact diplomatic and political cooperation, which will then given the West more legitimacy to take tough military stands on issues that indeed compromise the continued security and peace of the international community. With a combination of hard and soft power, the strongest conventional armies of the world will find flexible ways to deal with the newly emergent insurgencies appearing throughout the less-developed regions of the international community in more holistic ways that both respect and respond to the rich cultural heritage found in the Middle East. This will, in turn, hopefully generate a sense of empowerment to the countries of the Middle East that will make the respective governments and their people find alternative ways to embrace modernization, rather than reject it outright because of a lack of understanding of the benefits to be had. The specifics of how this will happen, as well as the types of governmental strategies that would best allow the West to participate in this process without dictating it (i.e. military counterinsurgency plans and diplomatic entreaties between governments), are thereby posited as crucial areas of future research in the area of international strategic studies.

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