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Realpolitik Of Democratic Revolution
Part 2: The Bush vision

By Henry C K Liu

Part 1: The Philippines revisited

United States President George W Bush has built his new policy of world democratic revolution on the assumption that democracy in foreign lands would automatically welcome US imperialism in the name of capitalistic free trade. In the Middle East, in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the native land of Osama bin Laden and 15 of the 19 hijackers on September 11, 2001, or even Egypt, democracy, if allowed to be practiced as a free political process that reflects popular opinion and historical conditions, will likely be problematic to US regional and global interests, which includes its and its allies' dependence on low-cost imported oil. The US has repeatedly tried to topple democratically elected governments, the latest example being the Bush White House's efforts to engineer a coup in Venezuela.

In his speech to the National Endowment for Democracy this month, Bush paid homage to former US president Ronald Reagan and his 1980s Westminster Abbey invocations of freedom's allegedly unstoppable momentum against Soviet communism. All through the Cold War, while both camps claimed to defend freedom and their own version of democracy, such noble values were in short supply in practice not just in the Soviet bloc, but also, as Bush acknowledged, in the so-called free world.

The Reagan administration was as much surprised by the sudden implosion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as anyone else, notwithstanding its manipulative exploitation of dissidents and democratic opposition movements in the Soviet Union and across Central and Eastern Europe, turning them from national-liberation movements into Cold War agents to serve US geopolitical interests. Many of these dissidents, hailed as heroic freedom fighters during the Cold War, were promptly forgotten by Washington as soon as the Cold War ended. Others became terrorists against their former supporters, drawing on skills taught by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Washington's willingness to outspend Moscow on nuclear and conventional arms and to maintain strong North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) capabilities were the key factors in bankrupting the Soviet Union, not US democracy.

Defending global US interests in the name of democracy, however conveniently defined, in countries already democratic is hard enough, but it is a cakewalk compared with trying to create new democratic nations, through invasion and occupation, in societies culturally hierarchical, with little democratic heritage in the Western mode. Bush now declares a theme of freedom through peace: "A global nuclear standoff with the Soviet Union ended peacefully, as did the Soviet Union. The nations of Europe are moving toward unity, not dividing into armed camps and descending into genocide." Yet in the next breath, he declares a theme of imposing freedom through war: "Every nation has learned, or should have learned, an important lesson: Freedom is worth fighting for, dying for and standing for, and the advance of freedom leads to peace."

Freedom is worth fighting for and dying for to nationalist freedom fighters, not to expeditionary troops in foreign lands in the absence of an opposing army. Freedom dies with foreign occupation and peace is shattered by war. The historical fact is that the US won the Cold War not through invasion or occupation, or nuclear holocaust, but through a long-term test of economic endurance by bankrupting the USSR in an exorbitant arms race. Since no country is seriously interested in engaging in a new arms race with the US, freedom is now redefined by Bush as freedom to impose US will on a new world order.

Bush also admitted to a historic failure in US policy. Over the past 60 years, the US has sought geopolitical stability through anti-communist regimes that did not set liberty as a priority. But since September 11, Bush has repeatedly chosen security over freedom, adopting the same garrison-state mentality that pushed the Soviet Union toward self-destruction. To support its war in Afghanistan, the US set up military bases in Central Asia the same way it allied with undemocratic anti-communist regimes in its strategy of containment during the Cold War. The US has orchestrated a worldwide crackdown on terrorism with a strategy that promises to swell the ranks of terrorists further.

Bush stressed that he was not prescribing any set formula for democracy for the Middle East, which must be home-grown. Yet the US has treated freedom fighters either as US operatives against other governments or as deadly

enemies against the US. Most Arabs view US promotion of democracy as hypocrisy for its endorsement of Israel's wholesale abuse of Palestinian rights.

Bush's speech reflected the "transformationalist" agenda embraced by Condoleezza Rice, his national security adviser, who in August set out US ambitions to remake the Middle East along neo-conservative lines by using US military power to advance democracy and free markets. It is a policy for political transformation of Arab countries deemed vital to victory in the "war on terrorism".

The president went on to say that the US has adopted "a new policy" for the Middle East and singled out, as countries that must change, not just traditional US adversaries such as Syria and Iran, but allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The president's vision was an attempt to fuse US ambitions in the Islamic world - new benign, secular governments in Iraq and Afghanistan; an Arab-Israeli peace based on roadmap diplomacy; as well as political and economic openings in a wide swath of Islamic countries from North Africa to South Asia - with the wider rubric of promoting democracy around the world, including socialist China. Bush pledged a new momentum to foster broad change comparable to the end of communism in Eastern Europe, implying a long-range agenda to dismember China in the name of self-determination of national minorities.

In keeping with the Trotskyite pedigree of US neo-conservatism that has assumed the role of presidential tutor, Bush, the simple student, is committing the US to nothing less than a Trotskyite world revolution of democracy and free markets, instead of a Stalinist strategy of capitalism in one country. Unfortunately, freedom cannot come in the form of guided missiles delivered by Black Hawk helicopters and democracy in distant lands cannot be created from fielding candidates nominated by Washington, notwithstanding Trotsky's historic role as father of the Red Army.

"The United States has adopted a new policy: a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. This strategy requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before. And it will yield the same results," Bush vowed. The president used postwar Germany and Japan as examples to prove his point. Even though both Germany and Japan had strong democratic traditions prior to being taken over by fascist parties after World War I, the early election returns in both countries after World War II so favored socialist candidates that US occupation authorities quickly had to release fascist war prisoners from jail and back them with funds and political support to save both Japan and West Germany from democratically elected leftist governments. In Japan, the US kept the Emperor despite his less-than-titular role in the planning and persecution of the war. There was no regime change in Japan as in Bush's aim for the "axis of evil".

In their book *Gold Warriors: America's Secret Recovery of Yamashita's Gold*, Sterling and Peggy Seagrave detailed how the US government sought to exonerate the emperor and his imperial relatives from any responsibility for the war. By 1948, it was seeking to restore the wartime ruling class to positions of power (Japan's wartime minister of munitions, Nobusuke Kishi, for example, was prime minister from 1957-60). The US keeps many of its archives concerned with postwar Japan highly classified, in violation of its own laws. John Foster Dulles, president Harry Truman's special envoy to Japan charged with ending the occupation, wrote the peace treaty of 1951 in such a way that most former prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian victims of Japan are prevented from obtaining any form of compensation from either the Japanese government, which confiscated their wealth, or private Japanese corporations, which profited from their slave labor. He did so in perfect secrecy and forced the other Allies to accept his draft (except for China and Russia, which did not sign).

Almost as soon as the war was over, US forces began to discover stupendous caches of Japanese war treasure. General Douglas MacArthur, in charge of the occupation, reported finding "great hoards of gold, silver, precious stones, foreign postage stamps, engraving plates and ... currency not legal in Japan". Leaving uninvestigated, by US policy, the official theft perpetrated by the Japanese occupation authorities in China, US occupation officials, in the name of law and order, nevertheless arrested underworld boss Yoshio Kodama, who had worked in China during the war, selling opium and supervising the collection and shipment to Japan of strategic industrial metals such as tungsten, titanium and platinum. Japan was by far the largest opium procurer in Asia throughout the first half of the 20th century, initially in its colony of Korea and then in Manchuria, which it seized in 1931. Kodama returned to Japan after the war immensely rich. Before going to prison he transferred most of his booty to Ichiro Hatoyama and Ichiro Kono, conservative politicians who used the proceeds to finance the newly created Liberal Party, precursor of the Liberal Democratic Party that has ruled Japan almost uninterruptedly since 1949. When Kodama was released from prison, also in 1949, he went to work for the CIA and later became the chief agent in Japan for the Lockheed Aircraft Co, bribing and blackmailing politicians to buy the Lockheed F-104 fighter and the L1011 airliner. With his stolen wealth, underworld ties and history as a supporter of militarism, Kodama became one of the godfathers of pro-American one-party rule in Japan.

He was not alone in his war profiteering. One of the Seagraves' more controversial contentions is that the looting of Asia took place under the supervision of the imperial household. This contradicts the American fiction that the emperor was a pacifist and a mere figurehead observer of the war. The Seagraves convincingly argue that after Japan's full-scale invasion of China on July 7, 1937, Emperor Hirohito appointed one of his brothers, Prince Chichibu, to head a secret organization called Kin No Yuri (Golden Lily) whose function was to ensure that contraband was properly accounted for and not diverted by military officers or other insiders, such as Kodama, for their own enrichment. Putting an imperial prince in charge was a guarantee that everyone, even the most senior commanders, would follow orders and that the emperor personally would become immensely rich.

The emperor also posted Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda, a first cousin, to the staff of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and later as his personal liaison officer to the Saigon headquarters of General Count Hisaichi Terauchi, to supervise looting and ensure that the proceeds were shipped to Japan in areas under Terauchi's control. Although assigned to Saigon, Takeda worked almost exclusively in the Philippines as second in command to Chichibu. Hirohito named Prince Yasuhiko Asaka, his uncle, to be deputy commander of the Central China Area Army, in which capacity he commanded the final assault on Nanking, the Chinese capital, between December 2 and December 6, 1937, and allegedly gave the order to "kill all captives". The Japanese removed some 6,000 tons of gold from the Chinese government treasury. All three princes were graduates of the military academy and all three survived the war with no consequences.

On orders from Washington, the gold from several Golden Lily vaults in the Philippines was trucked to warehouses at the US bases. According to the Seagraves, financial experts from the newly formed CIA used a Philippine operative by the name of Santa Romana to deposit the gold in 176 reliable banks in 42 different countries to keep the identity of the true owners secret. Once the gold was in their vaults, the banks would issue certificates that are even more negotiable than the dollar, being backed by gold itself. With this rich source of cash, the CIA set up slush funds to influence politics in Japan, Greece, Italy, Britain, Australia and many other places around the world. For example, money from what was called the M-Fund (named after Major-General William Marquat of MacArthur's staff) was secretly employed to pay for Japan's initial rearmament after the outbreak of the Korean War, since the Japanese Diet refused to appropriate money for the purpose on the ground it was unconstitutional. So much for Japanese democracy ordained by Washington.

Going on to Baghdad

Even moderate Arabs were reported to have greeted the Bush speech with scorn, noting that he did not mention the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory or his still-unexplained decision to wage undeclared war on Iraq. They felt that Bush was simply shoring up domestic acceptance of his troubled Iraq policy and his stalled global "war on terrorism" with high-sounding principles to improve his chances of re-election next November.

Bush's speech reflected the view of neo-conservative policy wonks in his administration that a strong unilateral foreign policy based on extremist ideology and backed by overwhelming force is right for the US as the world's sole superpower. Yet democracy is merely a political process toward a number of possible alternative social orders, not a religious attainment in itself. Its desirability is measured by the effect the democratic process has on people's lives and welfare and on peace in the world. A decision to wage war does not make it acceptable simply because it is democratically derived. Democracy can fail, and has done so in the past, as in cases of the democratic election of leaders turned dictators.

Democracy cannot be imposed on a people by armed invasion and occupation, nor can it operate without real freedom of the press, free from control by the moneyed class. Many wars have been fought among countries with democratic governments in the West. The British Empire rationalized its existence behind the mask of British democracy. Democracy in the Third World will not necessarily support imperialism or capitalism, except in those locations already thoroughly victimized by the cultural hegemony of imperialism. It is also highly questionable whether political democracy is possible without economic democracy. Freedom from want precedes all other forms of freedom.

Bush's faith in the ability of the US to extirpate tyranny and implant freedom in the Middle East departs from well-established US policy, which did not always profess belief in the region's democratic potential, as Robert Blecher, professor of history at the University of Richmond, observed in his essay "Intellectuals, Democracy and American Empire" last March. Blecher pointed out that at the time of the 1991 Gulf War, Mideast experts in the US such as Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes supported the first Bush administration's position that the US should not aim to democratize the Middle East.

Colin Powell, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the administration of president George Bush Sr, told a press briefing in 1992: "Saddam Hussein is a terrible person; he is a threat to his own people. I think his people would be better off with a different leader, but there is this sort of romantic notion that if Saddam Hussein got hit by a bus tomorrow, some Jeffersonian democrat is waiting in the wings to hold popular elections. You're going to get - guess what - probably

another Saddam Hussein. It will take a little while for them to paint the pictures all over the walls again but there should be no illusions about the nature of that country or its society. And the American people and all of the people who second-guess us now would have been outraged if we had gone on to Baghdad and we found ourselves in Baghdad with American soldiers patrolling the streets two years later still looking for Jefferson,” he said to laughter from the audience.

A decade later, the US has “gone on to Baghdad” and now is looking for Thomas Jefferson. And no one is laughing. Saddam has yet to get hit by a bus, not even a Hummer or a guided missile. Democracy had not figured high on the list of US priorities in foreign policy for the past decade or even most of the past five. After promising democratic reforms in return for US backing, the al-Sabah family of Kuwait failed to reinstate the constitution, delayed elections for the National Assembly and still does not permit women to vote. United Press International reported on July 5, 1991, that when questioned about the ruling family’s poor record, the elder Bush retorted, “The war wasn’t fought about democracy in Kuwait.” Privately, the Kuwaitis were getting the same message. Nazir al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador, was quoted: “I saw the president the other day on Friday [June 7, 1991] and he walked up to me in the White House and said: ‘Listen, Mr Ambassador, we didn’t fight this war for democracy or those [war] trials. Don’t be intimidated by what’s going on’.”

James Schlesinger, a former defense secretary and the US’s first energy secretary, on numerous occasions clearly defined the US position on democracy in the Middle East: that the US had no serious intention of changing the political system of Saudi Arabia. Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum and founder of Campus Watch, a website dedicated to policing Middle East scholars against unacceptable views, wrote in the European edition of the Wall Street Journal on January 23, 1991, that Saddam’s successor would be someone in the military. Succession would be based on power, Pipes predicted, not democratic principles, and a stable, defensible and non-belligerent Iraq was the best conceivable outcome. Democracy did not figure in the equation. If the Iraqi regime was to be overthrown, it would be through a popular uprising, not foreign intervention. It was now (in 1991) up to the Iraqis themselves to dispose of Saddam and his evil clique. Such a result was likely, Pipes thought. On the first anniversary of the first Gulf War, Pipes inaccurately predicted in the Philadelphia Inquirer on January 16, 1992, that Desert Storm was likely to lead to Saddam’s eventual overthrow by the Iraqi people. Events turned out quite the opposite.

Like Powell, Pipes in late 1991 preferred to see Saddam remain in power: “Iraqis, their neighbors and the outside world have all been served reasonably well by the delicate balance of power of the past nine months which leaves Iraq neither too strong nor too weak. And we still are. Yet this balance is a one-time thing; when undone, it is permanently gone. Now, as then, getting rid of Saddam increases the prospects of Iraqi civil war, Iranian and Syrian expansionism, Kurdish irredentism and Turkish instability. Do we really want to open these cans of worms?” These cans are now wide open, and according to Bush the younger, out will pop the worms of democracy and freedom.

The only way to avoid those consequences of toppling Saddam, according to Pipes, was a very intrusive and protracted US military presence in Iraq. He counseled against such a course: “And here we revert to last year’s dilemma: after American forces directly unseat Saddam and occupy Iraq, what next? There were no good answers to this question in 1990, and there are none today [1991]. [The Middle East] is also a region which marches to its own beat, and nearly immune to such happy global developments as democratization, increased respect for human rights and greater scope for the market ... Details shift but the basic picture remains surprisingly stagnant. Americans should learn to keep their aspirations modest when it comes to the Middle East. With the exception of the Middle East’s two democracies, Turkey and Israel, Washington should keep its distance. To get too involved permits the misdeeds and failures of others to become our own. Our will and our means are limited: we probably cannot reconstruct Iraq as we did Japan or Germany. Nor is our example likely to prevail; Egyptians and Saudis have little use for our political system.”

A decade after the 1991 Gulf War, Pipes has abandoned his previous concerns about the complications that would arise from a US occupation of Iraq. In an article “The risks are overrated”, in the New York Post on December 3, 2001, he urged Bush to move on Baghdad. In 2002, on Buchanan and Press on MSNBC, he directly contradicted his earlier comments about the potential for Arab democracy: “It’s in our interests that they modernize and it’s in our interests to help them modernize, and I think we know how. We are very modern and we can help them. Look, we’ve done that elsewhere. Look, for example, at Japan. We defeated the Japanese and then we guided them towards a democracy. We did the same with Germany. We should be doing the same thing with Iraq.” In an article in Asia Times Online recently, Pipes wrote: “However matters develop, this gamble is typical of a president exceptionally willing to take risks to shake up the status quo” ([Bush and a democratic Middle East](#), November 12).

Risk is an issue of probability much analyzed by financial market participants. There is a line beyond which risk turns into suicide, such as jumping out a window from the 60th floor without a parachute. The democracies in Europe are among the most vocal opposition to the US invasion of Iraq. Even Turkey, a democratic, secular Islamic state, faced internal popular

resistance to its government's effort to support US plans in the Iraq war. This new talk of democracy is seen around the world as a device for creating client states that will manipulate popular will to further US interests. Douglas Feith, now an under secretary of defense, recommended to an [American Enterprise Institute](#) (AEI) conference on October 14, 1998, that the US should push a notion of democracy built around limited government and personal freedoms, not majority rule. The Bush administration, despite all its rhetoric on freedom, is moving toward intrusive government and curtailed personal freedom in the name of national security.

Blecher also recounted Richard Haass, director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, as having described in 1997 the notion that the US would be the world's only great power as beyond reach. "It simply is not doable." In terms of democracy, he stated forthrightly in a speech titled "Towards Greater Democracy in the Muslim World", given at the Council on Foreign Relations: "Primacy cannot be confused with hegemony. The United States cannot compel others to become more democratic." After 2002, he became a spokesman for what the US could do, instead of what it could not do, to spread democracy: "By failing to help foster gradual paths to democratization in many of our important relationships - by creating what might be called a democratic exception - we missed an opportunity to help these countries become more stable, more prosperous, more peaceful and more adaptable to the stresses of a globalizing world. It is not in our interest - or that of the people living in the Muslim world - for the United States to continue this exception. US policy will be more actively engaged in supporting democratic trends in the Muslim world than ever before."

Robert S Greenberger, in a Wall Street Journal report on October 8, 1990, headlined "Calls for democracy in the Middle East are creating a dilemma for White House", described Fouad Ajami, another Princeton-trained Mideast expert, as having railed against the prospect of the US bringing democracy to the Middle East: "The US is in the Gulf to defend order ... We're not there to impose our rules. The injection of questions of democracy into the debate is completely inappropriate." Yet 13 years later, Blecher found Ajami advocating precisely such an injection. In a recent article in Foreign Affairs, Ajami rejected the restraint with which the US conducted itself in 1991, arguing that the dread of nation-building must be cast aside. Ajami threw in his lot with those who envisage a more profound US role in Arab political life: the spearheading of a reformist project that seeks to modernize and transform the Arab political landscape.

Our choice is clear

Bernard Lewis in 1990, laying the roots for Samuel Huntington's later theme, wrote that the world faced a clash of civilizations that pitted Judeo-Christian culture against Muslim culture. Yet Islam is not monolithic, Lewis pointed out, as fundamentalism is only one of many Islamic traditions: "There are others, more tolerant, more open, that helped to inspire the great achievements of Islamic civilization in the past, and we may hope that these other traditions will in time prevail." Blecher saw violent Islam as specifically having shaped Lewis's recent cultural theorizing and authorizing his prescriptions for US policy, yet Lewis was more catholic in presenting the dilemmas that confronted the region in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War: "There will be a hard struggle, in which we of the West can do little or nothing. Even the attempt might do harm, for these are issues that Muslims must decide among themselves," Lewis wrote in "The roots of Muslim rage", Atlantic Monthly, September 1990.

In *The Arabs in History*, Lewis wrote in 1950 that Arabs, faced with problems of readjustment, had three choices: taking on some version of modern civilization, rejecting the West and all its works, pursuing the mirage of a return to the lost theocratic ideal or renewing their society from within, or meeting the West on terms of equal cooperation.

Lewis wrote in the Wall Street Journal on April 11, 1991: "It may turn out that the civil war that destroyed Lebanon was a pilot project for the whole region, and that with very few exceptions states will disintegrate into a chaos of squabbling, fi

of bribery, cajolery, blackmail and force, and find their way to the freer and better life to which they have so long aspired. The important change is that the choice is now their own." And not a gift from Washington.

Blecher saw Lewis as updating the decline theory, that is, the notion that the Ottoman Empire was once a great civilization but began a steady and uninterrupted decline in the 16th century. In Lewis's view, Arab problems of readjustment (1950) and their spiral of hate and rage (2003) stem from their inability to cope with the modern world. Yet in reality, it is not modernity that Arabs cannot cope with, but the Western abduction of modernity.

US hegemony, for Lewis, offers the hope of rescuing the fallen Arab people from their state of degradation. Not only will the US promote values of freedom and democracy, it promises salvation as the one power that can stand against the inexorable historical trajectory that is pulling the Middle East downward. George W Bush articulated this historical mission. For Lewis and Bush, ever since Ottoman vitality petered out four centuries ago, the West has provided the ideas,

inspiration and means to move the Middle East into the modern world - never mind that the ideas came in the form of cultural imperialism, the inspiration in the form of Calvinist capitalism and the means in the form of military invasion. Left to their own devices, Arabs are destined to remain in the misery they have chosen for themselves.

There is an obvious gap in Lewis's interpretation of history. If four centuries of Western intervention in the Middle East did not bring modernization and prosperity, where is the logic that a few more decades of US hegemony will reverse the historical trajectory? Lewis does not see misery in the Middle East as the result of a century of Western imperialism forcibly imposed on the Arab nation. This explains why Lewis wrote in "Islam and liberal democracy: A historical overview", *Journal of Democracy* (July 2, 1996), when internal opposition constituted the only possible path to toppling Saddam, that in Iraq and Syria, an overthrow of the dictators was unlikely to lead to the immediate establishment of a workable democracy.

Lewis offers a *raison d'être* for US hegemony in the Middle East. Paul Wolfowitz, the Bush administration's most vocal proponent for toppling Saddam, told a conference in Tel Aviv: "Bernard has taught [us] how to understand the complex and important history of the Middle East and use it to guide us where we will go next to build a better world for generations." In 1998, Lewis signed an open letter to president Bill Clinton that called for the toppling of Saddam with a massive bombing campaign and, if need be, ground troops. Co-signers included not only the neoconservative pundits William Kristol and Robert Kagan, and ultra-hawk Richard Perle, but also Bush appointees who have since shaped the administration's policy: Elliott Abrams, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Douglas Feith, Zalmay Khalilzad, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, a who's who list of key architects in Bush's wars on Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lewis was invited to participate in a meeting of the Defense Advisory Board on September 19, 2001, a week after the September 11 events, and subsequent meetings with Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. Supporting Wolfowitz's agenda to attack Iraq, Lewis was reported by the *Wall Street Journal* as endorsing the line that the US was guilty of betrayals of the Iraqi people when it failed to support their uprisings in both 1991 and 1995, promoting Iraqi oppositional groups as politically viable, and as the best hope for stable democracy in the Middle East. Anthony Lewis reported that Bernard Lewis told Bush and Cheney, and other officials, that the time had come to act for the peoples of Iraq. By late 2002, as the US war machine geared up, he told a [conference](#) at AEI that he was cautiously optimistic about the prospect for developing a democratic regime in Iraq. In the April 7, 2002, *Jerusalem Post*, Lewis was quoted as being very optimistic about a postwar Iraq: "I see the possibility of a genuinely enlightened and progressive and - yes, I will say the word democratic regime arising in a post-Saddam Iraq." Blecher viewed Lewis as having remained consistent in his assessment that even the most optimistic of scenarios will come to pass slowly. In 1996, he wrote: "Democracy cannot be born like Aphrodite from the sea foam. It comes in slow stages." Writing in *Forward* on October 11, 2002, Lewis asserted that the US could not simply install an American-style democracy; it was unrealistic to think that a political system can be engineered overnight, especially if it appeared to be the result of "forced change by an external force". Blecher continued: "Today, however, the US can create the conditions under which Iraqi and Middle Eastern peoples might make, at long last, the correct choice. US tutelage will arrest their centuries-long period of decline and restore the grandeur of antiquity. For the Lewis of 2003, unlike the Lewis of 1990, the West has an active role to play in this process. The agnostic has become a believer." Still, Lewis has not provided any justification that the invasion and occupation of Iraq has accelerated this possibly century-long process of indigenous choice.

Blecher observed that "like the stewards of US policy, Lewis thinks that political culture can be remade by simply opening the playing field and allowing Iraqis to make the right choice. While some in the State Department do not find the democracy domino theory credible [as reported in the March 14, 2003, *Los Angeles Times*], the neo-conservatives have been assuming that once Iraq gets on the right track, other countries will hop on the democratic bandwagon. Choice, however, has not always been a viable mechanism for change, since at certain moments when peoples of the Middle East have made choices - in Iran in 1953, for example - the US forcibly reversed them. The rhetoric of choice obscures the fact that US policy will necessarily involve the use of military might to ensure its preferred outcome. Administration officials have spoken only vaguely about their plans for specific countries, but when they do, one gets the feeling that the spread of democracy might not be as smooth as their optimistic rhetoric implies. When Under Secretary of State John Bolton found himself in front of a friendly crowd in Israel, for instance, he proclaimed with uncharacteristic forthrightness 'that he has no doubt America will attack Iraq, and that it will be necessary to deal with threats from Syria, Iran and North Korea afterwards' [*Haaretz*, February 18]. Democracy, it seems, will grow out of the barrel of a gun," Blecher mused.

Yet as Blecher noted, "even once the democratic 'choice' is made, US interests will not be assured, since new democratic polities could disregard US cues. French and German democracy has not been a great boon to the current administration. Iraq's non-democratic neighbors are providing the greatest assistance to the US, whereas relatively democratic Turkey has caused consternation among Washington planners. Even beyond the war, continued US support for Israel, demands for basing rights and efforts to extract greater oil profits could inflame public opinion, which in turn would produce

restraints on governmental cooperation. "At the very least, a government accountable to its people would demand concessions from the US in exchange for cooperation, which is perhaps why Douglas Feith recommended that the US should push a notion of democracy built around limited government and personal freedoms, not majority rule. In other words, build a world order of weak minority governments around the world unable to oppose US hegemony. Bernard Lewis is similarly apprehensive about democracy running amok. While he rails against the 'deep-seated, insidious prejudice ... [that] Arabs are incapable of democratic institutions', he nevertheless cautions that 'we should be realistic in our expectations. Democracy is strong medicine, which has to be administered in small gradually increasing doses otherwise you risk killing the patient'; Hitler, after all, came to power 'in a free and fair election'. Lewis worries that that democracy will give Arabs the chance to choose wrongly, disappointing him once again, as they have done repeatedly over his career. For Feith and Lewis, democracy needs to be scaled back, lest the US actually get the robust democracy that the Bush administration claims to want."

Blecher noted that "conservative intellectuals in the US, for their part, have not hesitated to make the right, if Faustian choice, allying themselves with US Empire. They have recently attacked the field of Middle East Studies for failing to pay homage to the 'essentially beneficent role in the world' that the US plays. In dubbing the entire field a 'failure', servants of empire such as Martin Kramer have implied that scholarship on the Middle East is of value only inasmuch as it supports US policy. By this standard, the Iraq hawks have succeeded mightily. Accommodating themselves to the political fashion of the day, they have prioritized political expediency over intellectual rigor and consistency. Middle East academics have been accused of 'groupthink' and illegitimately politicizing their scholarship, but ironically, it is the Iraq hawks whose work is politicized in the most literal sense, reflecting policy groupthink and the Washington consensus. Are Japan and Germany suitable models for reconstructing Iraq? Is the 'injection of the question of democracy' in the Middle East appropriate? Is the region 'amenable to improvements along American lines'? Can the US military create the conditions for democracy? The Iraq hawks now answer these questions in the affirmative even though very little has changed in the region to give hope to the partisans of democracy." And much has happened to keep democracy buried for a long time.

Americans are also facing a critical choice. As former vice president Al Gore said: "The question before us could be of no greater moment: Will we continue to live as a people under the rule of law as embodied in our constitution? Or will we fail future generations, by leaving them a constitution far diminished from the charter of liberty we have inherited from our forebears? Our choice is clear."

Can a people promote freedom around the world by limited freedom at home? The people of the world would welcome a global democratic revolution, but one that the neo-conservative in Washington may not find appetizing. The US-led West is also faced with a critical choice of whether to create a new equitable world order in which terrorism will be deprived of rationalization, or to continue to mask injustice with rhetoric of democracy and freedom and to try to control terrorism with fear generated by overwhelming force. It is time to reverse the historical trajectory of oppression.

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