

Custodial Diplomacy: Obligations of International Security and the Demise of Multilateral Strategy

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Abstract: This article argues the point that foreign decision making in the United States demonstrates a strong public display of religion based on ideals that emanate from choices that have been made to build America into a competing international force. These are not passive decisions, but urgent choices related to pressing issues of presumed security. They become doctrines of policy—ideals that may not be diverted from by subsequent leadership without great risk. Within a background of early development in the Monroe Doctrine and international expansion in 1898 through the perceived turning point of NSC-68 to current practices in the Bush Doctrine, this article will demonstrate that American policy has consistently been to take custody of an increasing part of the geopolitical landscape because of foundational moral ideals. Once understood as the grafting of an overarching moral rubric into foreign ambitions, the current approach in President Bush’s National Security Strategy discloses the reason for the loss of a multilateral international strategy.

In 1951, George Kennan noted that American “action in the field of foreign policy is cumulative; it merges with a swelling stream of other human happenings; and we cannot trace its effects with any exactness once it has entered the fluid substance of history.”¹ While this proposition appears as an inevitable truth, there remains a unique quality to the foreign policy approach that has accumulated over the 230 years of American history. Rooted in the “City on the Hill” message of the Puritans, the eventual United States sought to define space in global geopolitical structures from its earliest years to its current approach to diplomacy. Within that “fluid substance of history” emerges an American tradition of foreign policy that extends by diplomacy that which it defends within religious concepts of custodial obligation. Once understood as the fruit of the grafting of an overarching moral rubric into foreign ambitions, the current approach in President Bush’s *National Security Strategy* discloses the reason for the loss of a multilateral international strategy.

¹ George Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (University of Chicago Press, 1951), 50.

This article argues the point that foreign decision making in the United States has never been secularized; it remains the most public display of religion in the socio-political terrain. Even the 2002 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) consented to the idea that “our own history is a long struggle to live up to our ideals.”² These ideals emanate from those choices that administrations have made to build America into a competing international force and eventually into the superpower of the present time. Ideals here, while not clarified in the *NSS*, allude to the principles of democracy and national self-determination that has been the bell ringer of policy since the Declaration of Independence. These are not passive decisions, but urgent choices related to pressing issues of presumed security. They become doctrines of policy—ideals that may not be diverted from by subsequent leadership without great risk. Within a background of early development through the perceived turning point of the post-WWII period to current practices, this article will demonstrate that American policy has consistently been to take custody of an increasing part of the geopolitical landscape because of foundational moral ideals.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

In the early nineteenth century, European leaders organized and implemented most geopolitical decisions. In a bold stroke of impotent genius, the United States announced the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 to make its first quest for extended control over areas outside its borders. While American capacities for enforcement of this “doctrine” were well below European strength, it was not an empty proclamation. The United States had defined a willingness to secure sections of territory through processes that yielded success without danger—call it diplomacy. While leaders like Metternich mentioned his concern for the spread of American doctrines into the Eurocentric realms of power, his ambitions remained several thousand miles away from the western hemisphere.³ By the revolutions of 1830, localized violence distracted European attention to much more pressing issues in various cities on their home continent.

The American effort to secure hegemony in the western hemisphere initiated patterns of diplomatic control for future administrations. Perceived threats to security generated the Monroe Doctrine; moreover, it was that Doctrine that established the obligation of custody. In the name of American goodness, all Latin American countries required protection from the wayward European

² George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 3.

³ Robin Winks, *The Cold War: From Yalta to Cuba* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 38.

bullies. American leadership positioned the country as the security force for “allies” to the South. As Bush noted in the *NSS*, American “actions will always be to eliminate a specific threat to the United States or our allies and friends.”⁴ At the time, the threat was Europe and the allies were any other country in need of American “leadership” for democracy and self-determination in Latin America.

The religious tradition of caretaking is best described in Grant Wacker’s essay, “Uneasy in Zion: Evangelicals in Postmodern Society.” Wacker defines two competing forces in conservative religion—the custodial ideal and the plural ideal. The custodial ideal “assumes that society is organic and that civil authorities have a custodial responsibility for the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of the organism.”⁵ The spiritual side of this ideal could not be conceded to the liberal modernists who gained doctrinal control of the mainline denominations. The plural ideal, however, serves as a check on public morality and private religion.⁶ These ideals have been long traditions of American history and, to Wacker, have met with intense adjustment because of advanced modernization. In foreign policy, the custodial trend emerges as the means by which American leadership justifies international ambitions.

American international traditions like the Monroe Doctrine approach geopolitical zones as dynamic organisms that can change without notice. The ideology within these zones must be conformed to patterns which connect to U.S. ambitions. The physical side of custodial diplomacy then procures necessary power to enforce this compliance. This idea of caretaking as custodians in foreign policy mirrors a similar history that occurred in the early twentieth century American religion. When the liberals encroached in prominent denominations, conservatives fought for a time, but then secured the available landscape of doctrinal control their fluctuating power allowed. In foreign policy, the liberals are merely those nations whose ideologies conflict with our models and national goals. These goals are the affirming values of democracy and self-determination. As such, controlling the public interests of the nation yielded to the religious practice of securing the landscape. In the transaction of moving custody from doctrinal battles to geopolitics, America replaced hegemonic ambitions for truth. Just as religious leaders of significant institutions sought to maintain custody of important commissions and doctrine, the presumptive custodial nature of this practice led American diplomacy to predetermined patterns of action.

⁴ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 16.

⁵ Grant Wacker, “Uneasy in Zion: Evangelicals in Postmodern Society,” in George Marsden, ed. *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984) 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

For several decades, the Monroe Doctrine remained latent within American foreign policy grids for national advancement. Internal struggles and Civil War forced a withdrawal from advancement in foreign policy. But when the allies of Latin America needed aid in 1898, a renewed enthusiasm for the Doctrine emerged and structured aggressive policy responses. The onslaught of war in 1898 across the Spanish Empire generated specific territories for American interests. It also pushed the Monroe Doctrine to its edge of relevance as ambitions traveled east to China. Though Europe had been involved in China for decades, American interest demonstrated ambitions beyond the Doctrine. Kennan declared it the first expansion of sovereignty outside the North American continent.⁷ Certainly not a move for national protection, China reflected American interests of a more religious sense. It was the land of the “dying millions” of Hudson Taylor and stories of the great work of God across the churches of the country.

Of all the foreign policy icons from the conservative past, the thinking of George Kennan illuminates trends from 1898. He argued that American expansion at that point showed that there was “not much of solemn and careful deliberation, not much prudent and orderly measuring of the national interest.”⁸ With a large dose of moral ideology from Woodrow Wilson over the next twenty years, Kennan worked to remove the foundational past of American international thinking and devise a realist’s assessment of security and priorities. As Norman Graebner understood, “Kennan’s effort to extricate American foreign policy from its ideological context was reflected in the proposals . . . under his leadership.”⁹ Consequently, while Kennan offered the system of containment for Soviet concerns, he did so outside the normal processes of American diplomacy. He was open to measuring value in territory under American control rather than marking out larger chunks of the geopolitical world under American custody. Hence, Kennan’s strongpoint theory of containment failed to capture the thinking of U.S. leadership.

Instead, American custodial diplomacy found its expression in NSC-68—the Truman policy that embedded containment into the American past. True security for America included an obligation to export the ideals of the country to all parts of the world within America’s reach and nurture it to maturity (democracy and self-determination). Casting aside the territory secured by the Red Menace, American diplomacy under the Cold War included perimeter defense, aggressive ideals in the “third world” zones, and a repeated form of the Monroe Doctrine

⁷ George Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (University of Chicago Press, 1951), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ Norman Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.), 43.

with friends and allies. In what Kennan called a “too rigid application of containment,” the United States sought to advance its zone of hegemony to all potential converts of democracy.¹⁰

American foreign policy under NSC-68 reflected an expanded form of the “City on a Hill.” It validated the Monroe Doctrine and the military expansion of 1898 in order “to demonstrate that our own faith in freedom is a burning and fighting faith.”¹¹ Truman’s plan was not generated to contain communism, but to advance American ideals into areas not yet penetrated. Using the definition of atheistic communism as a launching point, American leadership orchestrated a plan to advance its foreign reach into any area outside the control of the Kremlin. It was the Soviet Union that needed to be contained, not communism itself. As historian Sara Sale notes, “Communists who rejected Stalin’s leadership deserved support.”¹² With the Soviets placed in the antagonist position, the United States could advance its “diplomacy” over the rest of the endangered world.

For the new containment to matriculate, the danger had to be exploited. In NSC-68, the writers note that “any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled.”¹³ Further, it declares that “the issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.”¹⁴ Educated citizens were charged with the call to restrain the menace or face the end of the world. It was a struggle between good and evil in the most crucial moment of history. To that generation, the Soviet “system becomes God, and submission to the will of God becomes submission to the will of the system.”¹⁵ Therefore, “it demands that we make the attempt, and accept the risks inherent in it, to bring about order and justice by means consistent with the principles of freedom and democracy.”¹⁶ With a relentless beast like Stalin, all other nations would need to be on the alert and strengthen their defensive systems. But like the

¹⁰ George Kennan, “Eyewitness Testimony,” in Ernest May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1993), 94.

¹¹ Dean Acheson, “Acheson’s Speech in Washington, 1950,” in Norman Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.), 156.

¹² Sara Sale, *The Shaping of Containment: Harry S. Truman, the National Security Council, and the Cold War* (Saint James, NY: Brandywine Press, 1998), 8.

¹³ “NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, April 14, 1950,” in Ernest May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1993), 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

Monroe Doctrine, NSC-68 promoted American presence into new territories through ideology—a moral dilemma where American presence was measured against the alternative and gained a foothold.

American oversight in the geopolitical realm enlarged greatly in Cold War systems of understanding. Defining endangered space, generating access to secure the threatened spaces through goodwill, and fulfilling obligations to advance American ideals led to the American presence on a global scale in the postwar world. Emily Rosenberg uncovered the problems in such a thought process: “binary constructions of meaning strip human experience of nuance, shading, relational shifts, or complexities. Only absolutes, certainties, and mutually exclusive categories remain.”¹⁷ The absolute of evil remained the most prominent prong of the American program. The reality of the Soviet system meant that an increasing American ideological presence was required to confront it. This continued the legacy of America’s “transcendent mission” in foreign diplomacy.¹⁸ The connection between America’s ambitions and its willingness to confront the evils of the world should not be lost as a means to gain advantage in the geopolitical environment.

POLICY THROUGH MISSIONARIES

While containment policies shifted from Kennan to the more custodial NSC-68, American foreign policy made pragmatic adjustments to supposedly secular ground in the 1940s. Elevated into the position as the caretaker of the world’s dangers, the American government set out to restructure the decimated regions of the postwar world. Devising a program to reconstruct the newfound opening in Japan, U.S. foreign policies deepened its strong connection to American moral patterns through missionary activities. This development established another religious core structure in the rubric that American diplomacy is built and is illuminated in the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM, became The Evangelical Alliance Mission in 1949).¹⁹ At this juncture, “faith” missions like SAM displayed more Americanization than their more political mainline counterparts. Their conservative stand in theology agreed more with the conservative political

¹⁷ Emily S. Rosenberg, “U. S. Cultural History,” in Ernest May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1993), 162.

¹⁸ Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy*, 129.

¹⁹ See Jon DePriest, *Send the Light: TEAM and the Evangelical Mission, 1890-1975* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse Publishers, 2007) for more detailed information.

orientation of anti-communism, never tiring of citing the Communist denunciation of religion as the opiate of the people.²⁰

By the end of World War II, a shortsighted containment concept aimed to use China as a perimeter around Russia in order to secure a western presence in Asia.²¹ Neglecting both the ability and the inclination of traditional Chinese culture, American policy sorely missed in its projections for success. Instead, the Communist revolution overwhelmed the nationalists because the average Chinese person thought of the revolution as a distinctly Chinese movement.²² The loss of China, however, ignited an opportunity to rebuild Japan as the hub of western ideals. Culturally, Japan held better potential to carry the American hope of a western presence. They already demonstrated the capacity to act as a nation with the “same degree of patriotic mobilization that nationalism called forth among western peoples.”²³ Japan became the best hope for westernization of Asia.

Much of the information the United States knew about the developing power of the Japanese Empire came from evacuated missionaries. Historian William Hutchison showed that missionaries became “the chief interpreters of remote cultures for the people at home, and as such played a central role in the shaping of American public attitudes.”²⁴ For the American government, any insight into the opponent’s thoughts and patterns of life could be beneficial. Prewar insight led to postwar agency. The utilization of missionaries as tools for Japanese reconstruction was extensive. General MacArthur called for one thousand missionaries to instill American moral values and to educate the Japanese people.²⁵ Hull’s Department of State granted passport and visa facilities to all members of selected mission organizations for travel to and from Japan. In the *United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan*, Japanese people were to be “encouraged to develop a desire for individual liberties and respect for fundamental human rights, particularly the freedoms of religion, assembly, speech, and the press.”²⁶ The religious component fell to the missionary organizations.

²⁰ John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 318.

²¹ John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).

²² *Ibid.*, 333.

²³ *Ibid.*, 558.

²⁴ William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.

²⁵ *Missionary Broadcaster* 26:1 (1950), 4.

²⁶ *The United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan* (Appendix 6) in Herbert Feis, *Contest Over Japan*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 168.

Japan brought rejuvenation to the Scandinavian Alliance Mission—like pioneering all over again. Once the first team settled, Director David Johnson advised that the Mission “must advance! Reinforcements must be provided! Native or national Christians must be trained and equipped to carry the gospel to their own people.”²⁷ By 1949, they achieved the initial goal of twenty-five. According to Johnson, Japan exhibited signs of being “more receptive to the gospel now than it was a year and a half ago. . . . In the communities being entered with the gospel, there is the further need of church buildings or meeting halls. Nothing elaborate is demanded.”²⁸ Overall, growth proceeded with caution, as the destroyed communities of Japan could not facilitate a large influx of missionary activity. More than half of the homes had been destroyed, leaving the missionaries to live in temporary housing.²⁹

These missionaries conducted their work within governmental guidelines, blurring cultural distinctiveness. As historian Richard Pierard argued, “evangelicals from the U.S. bought heavily into the war-induced revival of civil religion, and most of them engaged in a syncretic confusion of Christianity and Americanism.”³⁰ Once working with the government’s plan, the missionaries became uncertain on whether to advance a biblical mandate or the military reconstruction mandate. In this syncretism, missionaries demonstrated what Andrew Walls called “a curious political naiveté, as though by constantly asserting that church and state were separate they have somehow stripped mission activity of political significance.”³¹ By the time the foundation had been established for missionary activity in Japan, a combination of intertwining ambitions for both the evangelical mission and Americanization combined.

In order to accomplish this massive task, the SAM joined the reconstruction plans of the American government. The integration of foreign policy and missionary goals is particularly fascinating in this venture. As historian James Reed noted in his critical study of the missionary influence on East Asia policy during William Jennings Bryan time as Secretary of State, “the Missionary Mind

²⁷ *Missionary Broadcaster* 22:5 (1946), 3.

²⁸ *Missionary Broadcaster* 25:4 (1949), 4.

²⁹ *Missionary Broadcaster* 24:11 (1948), 3.

³⁰ Richard Pierard, “Pax Americana and the Evangelical Missionary Advance,” in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 155-179: 165.

³¹ Andrew F. Walls, “The American Dimension in the History of the Missionary Movement,” in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 1-25: 16.

continued to exercise a profound effect on policy.”³² In China this meant instant and complete evangelization, while policy in Japan contained broader ambitions. A matching broad-based missionary program that indirectly delivered the gospel message comprised part of a syncretism that included military goals. For the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, it appeared to be a combination of God’s work and the leadership of the United States’ reconstruction team. The evangelical community proclaimed:

*Christian people everywhere should thank God for General MacArthur. He has done more than any other man to further Christianity in Japan. As I think of the continued unrest in the political world today, I wonder if the lives that were sacrificed in the last war were sacrificed in vain. But then when I think of how Japan has been opened for the gospel, I realize that God has again overruled for His glory.*³³

The Mission extended its gratitude directly to MacArthur as a resolution from its 1950 Annual Conference. As written, the organization pledged to “comply with his request in getting as many missionaries as possible into Japan at the earliest possible date.”³⁴ These accolades were not one sided, the United States officials sent letters of commendation to the Scandinavian Alliance Mission as well. General Ridgeway, in a letter to Director Johnson from June 21, 1951, expressed that he was “fully conscious of the great work which your missionaries are carrying on in Japan, and you may be assured that I shall always extend the utmost cooperation to the carrying on of their missionary efforts.”³⁵ In an innovative combination of advancing the gospel through political strategy, SAM’s missionaries and the government formed the backbone of American efforts to remake Japan as a working ally for the United States.

While some agencies, like the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, attempted to push the work into the evangelical realm, many subordinated the gospel to the task of helping a nation in crisis and being the extended hands of God in a needy land. This syncretism in Japan blurred the vision of the Mission. Regardless, the Scandinavian Alliance Mission clearly redesigned their purpose for missionary work. Like the American Bible Society a century earlier, they linked their interests with world developments. As Peter Wosh’s study demonstrated, this

³² James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and East Asia Policy, 1911-1915*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 3.

³³ Chaplain Emanuel Carlson, “Bach and MacArthur,” (tract by The Evangelical Alliance Mission).

³⁴ Sixtieth Annual Conference on May 14-21, 1950.

³⁵ *Missionary Broadcaster* 27:7 (1951), 13.

alignment became a “brilliant strategy for institutional survival.”³⁶ Yet, these kinds of opportunities require collective action at the institutional level to frame the newly chosen vision.³⁷ The Scandinavian Alliance Mission reached into the political realm to rejuvenate their call.

Concurrently, the foreign policy of the United States infused a stronger presence of religiosity into their program of democracy and self-determination. The inclusion of missionaries into the reconstruction program for Japan moved American moral policies within diplomacy from ideals to programs. Using Americanized morality and culturally attuned citizens meant that control over the process of Japan’s reconstruction could be handled at a more localized level, thereby generating another layer of potential success. Diplomacy with an overarching moral core launched the United States forward from World War II through the twentieth century. While more secular versions of foreign policy appeared to be developed (CIA, NSA, etc.), the core values changed little. There remained a strong pull of religious caretaking in the subsequent decades of American foreign policy.

BUSH AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The geopolitical structure of the Cold War allowed American diplomacy to extend into all parts of the world threatened by the Soviets. While that did not always produce desired results (like in Vietnam), it did extend the reach of U.S. interests to every continent. With the ambitions of old and the religious devotion to protect by custody, American culture expanded into most of the world—even into many regions inside the Iron Curtain. In the 1990s, missing the Soviets or the Europeans before them, American foreign policy floundered. It needed an antagonist to continue to develop and expand. On September 11, 2001, a new threat emerged that has ignited the next phase in American foreign policy. With an enemy both in the most secluded regions of this planet and on the streets of the most developed cities in the nation, the United States had an opportunity to culminate its foreign policy trends—and it did.

If one ever needed a clear understanding of the foundation of current American foreign policy, they need look no further than the first page of the NSS. President Bush stated clearly that “our nation’s cause has always been larger than

³⁶ Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 151.

³⁷ Mayer N. Zald, “Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing,” in Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261-274: 271.

our Nation's defense."³⁸ Released near the anniversary of 9/11 but on September 17, 2002, the anniversary of the United States Constitution, the NSS details the President's quest for the War on Terror and justifies actions to come. Since its quiet announcement, critics and supporting commentators have held an extended dialog on the intent of the document. Now almost six years later, it appears clear that the document laid out a public plan of action from which the Bush administration has not deviated.

The National Security Strategy gets complicated only in the jargon of political harangue which permeates the analysis found in journals and magazines. It is rather straightforward. As Colin Powell confirmed, "We fight terrorism because we must, but we seek a better world because we can – because it is our desire, and our destiny, to do so. This is why we commit ourselves to democracy, development, global public health, and human rights, as well as to the prerequisite of a solid structure for global peace. These are no high-sounding decorations for our interests. They are our interests, the purposes our power serves."³⁹ For Powell, as for Bush, the obligation of power exerts a calling to consider the largest reach of American goodness. The reach that started in the western hemisphere in the Monroe Doctrine, extended to other continents in 1898 and was controlled in the Cold War, found its culmination in this program to export democracy and self-determination as a means to seek out global peace.

As an initial step in the Bush program, the American military was called to extract the evil dictator of Iraq and assist in the building of a more westernized form of government in the heart of the Middle East. Noting Paul Kennedy's artful understanding of declining power through an "imperial overstretch," several have marked this action as the beginning of the end for U.S. supremacy.⁴⁰ Even noted scholar Leslie Gelb declared that "Iraq is only the latest in a long line of ill-considered and ill-planned American military adventures. Time and again in recent decades the United States has made military commitments after little real debate, with hazy goals and no appetite for the inevitable setbacks."⁴¹ While these are valid points of concern, neither of them grasps the newest development in American policy. It is not about choice of action, if one is to look deeper into the embedded past, it is about where American good can extend into identifiably evil sectors of the globe. Plainly, Iraq fits the American stream of foreign policy action for the past 200 years.

The Bush administration publicly confirms this program: "The president's strategy is rooted, above all, in the promotion of freedom and dignity worldwide."⁴² It is a program that advances the morality of democracy in a moral

³⁸ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 1.

³⁹ Colin Powell, "A Strategy of Partnerships," in *Foreign Affairs* 83:1, 22-34: 34.

⁴⁰ See Loch Johnson, *Seven Sins of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 143 as an example.

⁴¹ Leslie Gelb and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Declare War," in *Atlantic Monthly*, 296:4, 54-56: 54.

⁴² Colin Powell, "A Strategy of Partnerships," 26.

system required to address all areas which fall short of full development. It remains the God-ordained obligation to illuminate the unenlightened through the convergence of power and courage. Those in great need may not even be able to grasp the level of their endangerment; therefore, the program must include the understanding that the “United States should be realistic about its ability to help those who are unwilling or unready to help themselves.”⁴³

To many, the moral component of the NSS rings true. Gelb noted that “morality, values, ethics, universal principles . . . have taken root in the hearts, or at least the minds, of the American foreign policy community. . . dismissed for almost 100 years as ‘Wilsonianism.’”⁴⁴ Finding continuity in Carter and Reagan, Gelb notes that “something approaching a consensus among Democrats and Republicans that morality and values should play a bigger role in U.S. actions abroad.”⁴⁵ Also noting the connection to Wilson, John Lewis Gaddis argues that the “Cold War assumption no longer holds . . . means that the persistence of authoritarianism anywhere can breed resentments that can provoke terrorism that can do us grievous harm. . . the world must be made safe for democracy, because otherwise democracy will not be safe in the world.”⁴⁶ The Bush program is the culmination of these ideas in a world uniquely arranged to advance the next step of American control. In *Commentary*, Joshua Muravchik deftly identifies that “fighting terrorists and maintaining our military superiority are essential to our safety in the here and now; but beyond the urgencies of self-defense, Bush aims to neutralize the threats we face by spreading the balm of democracy.”⁴⁷ Connected to the vision of the past 200 years, the Bush program advances American obligations of goodness to the farthest reaches of the globe. From there, American obligations require the nurturing elements of oversight and a righteous commitment to custodial control.

The fulfillment of this longstanding American ambition emerges most distinctly in the Bush announcement of preemption. With borders removed from the geopolitical arrangement of the past half a millennium, the enemy now lurks within previously controllable space and from within space that used to mean little to American interests. Under the NSS, all parts of global space may be the seedbed of danger. As Bush clarifies, the quest of America now aims at “identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders. While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists.”⁴⁸ In presenting this

⁴³ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 9.

⁴⁴ Leslie Gelb and Justine A. Rosenthal, “The Rise of Ethics in Foreign Policy: Reading a Values Consensus,” in *Foreign Affairs* 82:3, 2-7: 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, “A Grand Strategy of Transformation,” in *Foreign Policy* Vol. 133, *Nov/Dec 2002*, 50-57, 56.

⁴⁷ Joshua Muravchik, “The Bush Manifesto,” in *Commentary* 114:5, 23-31, 29.

⁴⁸ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 6.

new practice, Bush harkens back to the al-Qaeda attacks, noting that “we cannot let our enemies strike first.”⁴⁹ With this doctrine of preemption, the Bush administration advanced the basic structure of the Monroe Doctrine to all inhabited areas.

Naturally, this component of the NSS has prompted the most concern among the Bush critics. Bruce Nussbaum, writing in *Business Week*, put his thoughts this way: “Disdainful arrogance is hardly the right posture for the leader of the free world, but that is the tone of much of the report.”⁵⁰ Gaddis agreed with this position when he wrote that the United States has demonstrated a “whiff of grandiosity about the insistence that one nation’s security is coterminous with that of everyone else.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, this recent position by Gaddis represented a remarkable shift from his earlier statement that the NSS “comes across as more forceful, more carefully crafted, and—unexpectedly—more multilateral than its immediate predecessor.”⁵² It is within this earlier response that the supporters of Bush find his wording to advance a more multilateral and therefore more truly diplomatic approach to foreign policy.

This potential multilateral capacity of the NSS requires a few hidden assumptions—most of them clearly noted in the Gaddis early article in *Foreign Policy*. The first is that “preemption in turn requires hegemony. Although Bush speaks, in his letter of transmittal, of creating ‘a balance of power that favors human freedom’ while forsaking ‘unilateral advantage,’ the body of the NSS makes it clear that ‘our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.’”⁵³ In theory, for the world to sense American multilateral policy, it has to be under the unilateral control of the one superpower. From the unchallenged position of power, the United States can proclaim intentions that must be supported by other powers who would be more interested in national interests of survival than those of choice.

The second requirement for the NSS to work as a multilateral program is reception. Here Gaddis noted that the whole strategy stands or falls on the premise that those in nations whose leaders harm them will prefer American occupation over the current conditions in which they live.⁵⁴ This quest for reception has been the downfall of many American ambitions in foreign affairs and has been passed down through the European past. Native Americans were expected to yield to the culture of the British because they would recognize the superiority of their ideals. The Spanish expected the same in Latin America.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁰ Bruce Nussbaum, “Foreign Policy: Bush is Half Right,” in *Business Week* (October 7, 2002), 46-47, 46.

⁵¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 110.

⁵² John Lewis Gaddis, “A Grand Strategy of Transformation,” 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Instead, there was an unexpected, but strong force of resistance from supposedly inferior cultures to the hegemonic expectations of the supposedly superior. In today's scenario, it means that the Iraqis must be interested in the cultural programs that present themselves as part of the program that America believes all nations should aspired to develop. Reception is the lynchpin to it all—it worked in Japan, but not in Vietnam.

If hegemony is challenged or reception is denied, there remains the final prong of the American preemption plan—morality. The assumption that the Bush administration advances is that the American way is the right way. With a willingness to divest itself of national interests and allocate resources for the benefit of others, the United States earns the right to choose between options for development. In Iraq, this means that democracy and self-determination must “stay the course” in order to unseat the evil that harmed innocents in the past. The offering of courage in the form of the lives of American soldiers generates the strongest argument for America's ambition to retain the high moral ground. Once secured, however, there remains the need to generate multilateral support.⁵⁵ Since there exists a stronger than normal willingness to deny American ambition in the current context, most argue that Bush has failed to achieve his goals. This could not be further from the truth.

American foreign policy is not grounded in hegemony, reception, and morality. It is grounded only in hegemony and morality. The tendency to overlook the practice of American disinterest to the receptivity of foreign nations leads many to view American ambitions within multilateral diplomacy. It has not been that way since the Monroe Doctrine, when Latin American countries were corralled into the first extension of American hegemony. A quick jump to Asia and the threat of evil dictators yielded a bifurcated world where American leadership controlled over half the globe. Terrorists' attacks have now triggered the expansion of the same system over the remaining part of the world. American foreign policy has and will continue to reach into zones of hegemony under the guise of moral custody. The blurring of what is national and what is outside national control has been removed. As the NSS puts it, “The distinction between domestic and foreign affairs is diminishing.”⁵⁶

One of the strengths of the NSS is its willingness to put all claims on the table. It recognizes a “distinctly American internationalism” as the foundation for its goals and mission.⁵⁷ It also promotes greater ambitions than the initial moves against al-Qaeda and Iraq. The NSS speaks of a “broad portfolio of military capabilities must also include the ability to defend the homeland, conduct information operations, ensure U. S. access to distant theaters, and protect critical U.S. infrastructure and assets in outer space.”⁵⁸ With the spectrum of global political entities defined as within the hegemonic reach of the United States, it has

⁵⁵ Ibid., 52-53.

⁵⁶ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 31.

⁵⁷ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 1.

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 30.

increased the scope of the American custodial tradition to any perceived threat to national security. Like Monroe and Truman, it will not be President Bush who carries on the doctrine of preemption into the challenges of the future. Nevertheless, while listening to the top presidential candidates debate, it is clear that all of them acquiesce to the new standard for American custodial diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The reason the United States encounters criticism in the world today is because there is an inconsistency between the verbalized doctrines of democracy and self-determination and the actions of preemption. For many, preemption and the hegemonic reach of America demonstrate that the overarching moral pattern has flaws. These doctrines of policy may be coherent for American protection and gain in this world, but as a moral rubric, the inconsistency cries hypocrisy. Corrupted means creates an end that many have seen before—power justified through moral reasoning that falls short of the teachings of Christ.

Political decisions never mean that the best patterns for a living example of Christ are followed. In a purely biblical approach, the ideas of hegemony, reception, and morality as described in this article fail to measure up to the godly example of Christ, who chose to live a life without borders while submitting properly to governing authorities. Paul affirms this as the proper focus of the Christ-follower in Colossians 3 when he encourages us to “set our minds on the things above, not on this earth.” The only preemption the Bible looks to establish in our lives is the willingness to leave the small egocentric empire of our life and assist in the lives of those who need our physical help or spiritual guidance. The Christian who exhibits grace does not attempt to secure territory nor justify a rationale for a moral takeover for any cause. Instead, the Scripture calls us to reconciliation as ambassadors to those whose eternal destiny remains in jeopardy. Reception, however, is clearly a prominent part of the successful life of a Christ follower. Concerns about the response of those within our sphere of influence are paramount. This focus on receptivity of others rather than controlling them or “lording it over them” was the demeanor of Christ in the Gospels. For further reading, I find that Gregory Boyd’s argument in his book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, is the best treatment on this approach from a theological position.

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