

The Bush Doctrine and Neoconservatism: A Chinese Perspective

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I. THE BUSH DOCTRINE AS THE CULMINATION OF THE U.S. POST-COLD WAR GRAND STRATEGY

On June 1, 2002, in an address at West Point, U.S. President George W. Bush announced a new set of foreign policy principles that has come to be known as the “Bush Doctrine.” The doctrine consists of three basic elements. First, the United States would no longer rely solely on “Cold War doctrines of containment and deterrence,” but would instead pursue a strategy of preemptive intervention in order to “take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge.” Second, the United States would concentrate on exporting democracy, since “the requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa, Latin America, and the entire Islamic world.” Finally, the United States would maintain its military supremacy beyond challenge, “thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.”¹ In September 2002, the Bush administration released the National Security Strategy of the United States, which formalized these three elements of the Bush Doctrine: preemptive strike, promotion of democracy, and military supremacy.

It was widely reported in the Western press that the Bush Doctrine had strong roots in the neoconservative school of thought in the United States. Early drafts of former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz’s report *Defense Planning Guidance* contained the three basic elements of the Bush Doctrine as early as 1992. In 1997, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol, and Robert Kagan founded the Project for the New American Century.² In August 18, 1997, Irving Kristol, the father of William Kristol and U.S. neoconservatism, predicted the rise of the neocon-

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1. LAWRENCE KAPLAN & WILLIAM KRISTOL, *THE WAR OVER IRAQ: SADDAM’S TYRANNY AND AMERICA’S MISSION* 74 (2003).

2. The Project for the New American Century, at <http://www.newamericancentury.org> (last visited Apr. 25, 2005).

servative ideology in a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled “The Emerging American Imperium”:

One of these days, the American people are going to awaken to the fact that we have become an imperial nation, even though public opinion and all of our political traditions are hostile to the idea. It is no overweening ambition on our part that has defined our destiny in this way, nor is it any kind of conspiracy by a foreign policy elite. It happened because the world wanted it to happen, needed it to happen, and signaled this need by a long series of relatively minor crises that could not be resolved except by some American involvement.³

In light of the similarity of their views, it does not seem surprising that George W. Bush awarded Irving Kristol the Presidential Medal of Freedom on July 9, 2002.

The preemptive strategy articulated by the Bush administration is not a recent creation. Rather it has ancient roots reaching as far back as the Roman Empire and was a key Roman Imperial tactic that Cicero forcefully advocated:

How can you believe that the man who has lived so licentiously up to the present time will not proceed to every extreme of insolence, if he shall also secure the authority given by arms? Do not, then, wait until you have suffered some such treatment and then rue it, but be on your guard before you suffer; for it is rash to allow dangers to come upon you and then to repent of it, when you might have anticipated them⁴

The similarity between the sentiments expressed by Cicero in the above passage and the Bush administration’s recent rhetoric allude to the idea that there are some Classical scholars among the neoconservatives.⁵

Many scholars have since explored the far-reaching implications of the Bush doctrine, but few have addressed the doctrine from a Chinese perspective. How have Chinese intellectuals perceived and responded to the Bush Doctrine? Naturally, there are many divergent viewpoints, but the main perspective can be easily identified. Chinese scholars have emphasized the continuity of the Bush Doctrine with President Clinton’s foreign policy, and consider the Bush Doctrine as the culmination and maturation of the United States’ post-Cold War grand strategy.

The Chinese perspective stands in sharp contrast to the view that certain leading European intellectuals have expressed. For example, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has stressed the radical nature and grave implications of the Bush Doctrine: “The United States has, with the Iraq war, . . .

3. Irving Kristol, *The Emerging American Imperium*, WALL ST. J., Aug. 18, 1997, at A14.

4. RICHARD TUCK, *THE RIGHTS OF WAR AND PEACE*, 21 (1999).

5. See SAUL BELLOW, *RAVELSTEIN* 58–59 (2000) (a novel about the relationship between Paul Wolfowitz and Allan Bloom). Additionally, Donald Kagan, the father of Robert Kagan, is a leading scholar of the Roman Empire at Yale.

given up the role of a guarantor of power in international law; with its violation thereof she sets future superpowers a disastrous example. . . . Let's not kid ourselves: America's normative authority lies shattered."⁶ In other words, Habermas and many other European intellectuals perceive the Bush Doctrine as breaking off from Clinton's foreign policy.

Why is the Chinese perspective on the Bush Doctrine so different from that of the Europeans? Is it because China opposed NATO intervention in Kosovo whereas Habermas supported it? Of course, for many Chinese, America never possessed the normative authority that Habermas described. In this Article, I wish to outline some deeper geopolitical and philosophical reasons behind the Chinese view of the Bush Doctrine.

II. GEOPOLITICAL REASONS FOR THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

The Cold War ended in Europe, but has not fully ended in East Asia. Few readers of Western newspapers know that the Korean War never formally ended—there was only a cease-fire agreement, but no peace treaty. The distrust among all major powers in the region runs deep. Many states, such as Japan and Taiwan, worry about China as a rising economic and political power. China remains concerned that Taiwan will seek independence with the backing of the United States and Japan. In this geopolitical environment, China is naturally more sensitive than Europe about America's aggressive unilateralism.

Interestingly, some neoconservative writers appear to echo the Chinese view about the continuity between the Bush Doctrine and Clinton's foreign policy. For example, Kaplan and Kristol highlight that "Bush would hardly be acting without precedent if he acted unilaterally against Saddam. After all, President Clinton resorted to force without U.N. approval on several occasions, each time receiving the support of [Senator] Daschle and his fellow Democrats." Kaplan and Kristol also quote Richard Holbrooke as saying: "Act without the Security Council, or don't act at all."⁷

Madeleine Albright's proud proclamation that, "we are the indispensable nation, we stand tall—we see further into the future," also left a lasting imprint on Chinese observers of international politics. Additionally, former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski explained the U.S. grand strategy as an attempt "to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals (Europe) . . . to keep barbarians from coming together." Thus, from the Chinese perspective, the Bush Doctrine is only one more step along the same trajectory of U.S. grand strategic thinking.

In response to the Bush Doctrine, China has made several efforts to counterbalance the one-sided power of the United States. So far, China has made

6. See Jürgen Habermas, *Was bedeutet der Denkmalsturz?*, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, Apr. 17, 2003 (Feuilleton), at 33.

7. KAPLAN & KRISTOL, *supra* note 1, at 90.

the following four efforts: (1) using its power in the U.N. Security Council to seek peaceful solutions; (2) supporting the euro by diversifying China's foreign currency holdings; (3) developing Asian trade and monetary cooperation; and (4) developing trade and security cooperation with Russia and neighboring states in Central Asia (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or Shanghai Six).

However, the Chinese counterbalancing effort has been very limited thus far. Generally, China has kept a low profile in international affairs, so as not to be perceived as a threat. This can be illustrated by examining China's voting patterns in the U.N. Security Council's Resolution Veto Records:

USSR/ Russia	120	In the first 10 years of the U.N., the Soviet Union vetoed 79 resolutions. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it has only used its veto power twice to oppose intervention: once in Cyprus (1993) and the other in Bosnia (1994).
U.S.	76	The United States vetoed 35 resolutions criticizing Israel. It has been the lone voice in blocking resolutions 53 times.
U.K.	32	Twenty-three of the United Kingdom's 32 vetoes have been on resolutions also vetoed by the United States. The U.K. only vetoed a resolution alone 7 times, and each of these resolutions pertained to Rhodesia, later to become Zimbabwe.
France	18	Thirteen of France's 18 vetoes have been on resolutions also vetoed by the U.S. and U.K. France has vetoed two resolutions alongside the U.K.—both on the Suez crisis in 1956.
China	5	From 1946–1971, the Republic of China (Taiwan) occupied the Chinese seat at the U.N., where it used its veto only once, to block Mongolia's application for U.N. membership. In 1972, China vetoed two resolutions: one on Bangladesh's petition to join the United Nations and one on the Middle East peace process. In 1997, China blocked the deployment of 155 U.N. observers to Guatemala to verify a cease-fire and in 1999, blocked the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia.

As the chart above indicates, China has used its veto power only five times since it became a member of the U.N. Security Council (and most of those vetoes related to the Taiwan issue), in contrast to the more liberal exercise of veto power by the Soviet Union/Russia (120 times) and the United States (76 times).

However, China's "low profile" policy does not mean that its perspective on the Bush Doctrine and the U.S. grand strategy has no real policy effects. Indeed, the increasing cooperation between China and the European Union may be the most important response to the Bush Doctrine on the part of either China or the European Union.⁸

III. PHILOSOPHICAL REASONS FOR THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

The Chinese belief in the continuity of the Bush and Clinton administrations is based on the observation that neoconservatism and liberalism share a vision of the United States as the "Redeemer Nation." Here, the United States is endowed with "Special Providence" for acting as the world's protector. Moreover, both Clinton and Bush grounded their foreign policies on the theory of "democratic peace" (i.e., that democracies do not go to war with each other), and the principle that human rights are higher than national sovereignty, as evidenced by the Bush Doctrine's commitment to democracy promotion in the name of human rights.

The continuity between neoconservatism and liberalism is highlighted by the forward-looking nature of American neoconservatism, which stands in sharp contrast to British conservatism. In the words of Michael Oakeshott, a leading thinker in the British conservative movement:

What is esteemed [in conservatism] is the present; and it is esteemed not on account of its connections with a remote antiquity, nor because it is recognized to be more admirable than any possible alternative, but on account of its familiarity. . . . To be conservative, then, is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant . . . the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss.

8. The policy paper adopted by the E.U. Commission on September 10, 2003 sets out a framework intended to guide E.U. policy toward China over the next two to three years. The paper identifies six priorities for relations in the coming years, including sharing responsibilities in promoting global governance, supporting China's transition to an open society based upon the rule of law and respect for human rights, and promoting China's economic opening domestically and internationally. The paper also contains a number of concrete proposals to enhance E.U.-China relations in key areas, including economic and trade relations and China's internal reform process. *See* Press Release, European Union, E.U.-China: Commission Adopts New Strategy for a Maturing Partnership, *available at* <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/03/1231&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (last visited Apr. 27, 2005).

It is revealing that Irving Kristol, one of the original American neoconservatives, explicitly rejected Michael Oakeshott's conservatism focusing on the present. Kristol declared that Oakeshott

is irredeemably secular, as I—being a Jewish conservative—am not It is impossible for any religious person to have the kinds of attitudes toward the past and the future that Oakeshott's conservative disposition celebrates. Our Scriptures and our daily prayer book link us to the past and to the future with an intensity lacking in Oakeshott's vision.⁹

If exemplary among neoconservatives, Kristol's statement suggests that American neoconservatism is in fact forward-looking, perhaps even revolutionary. Like many American liberals, neoconservatives also believe in the validity of the so-called "democratic peace theory."

The "democratic peace" theory was first proposed by Princeton political scientist Michael Doyle in the 1980s and gained prominence among U.S. policymakers in the early 1990s as a justification for exporting democracy. Its main contention is that "[l]iberal States do maintain peace among themselves" while "these republics would engage in wars with nonrepublics." The reason that democracies do not go to war with each other is because their "[i]nstitutional features lead to caution."¹⁰ Since the consent of the citizenry is required in a democracy, elected leaders are usually careful to not act too brashly. Doyle claimed that his "democratic peace theory" originated with Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay "Perpetual Peace." However, I argue that Doyle fundamentally misunderstands Kant's thesis. As Kant explains,

[T]he consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise. For this would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war, such as doing the fighting themselves, . . . having to take upon themselves a burden of debt which will embitter peace itself and which can never be paid off on account of the constant threat of new wars.¹¹

It is clear that Kant's reasons for the republics' reluctance to go to war are two-fold: citizens had to fight for themselves and they had to bear the burden of public debt. Neither of these two reasons applies to today's democracies with large professional armies and the capacity to issue large amounts of foreign debt. Specifically, Kant's thesis cannot explain U.S. foreign policy, given that the United States has the world's largest professional military and debtor economy.

9. IRVING KRISTOL, *NEOCONSERVATIVE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA* 374 (1995).

10. Michael Doyle, *Liberalism and World Politics*, *AM. POL. SCI. REV.* 1151, 1151–69 (1986).

11. IMMANUEL KANT, *KANT: POLITICAL WRITINGS* 100 (2d ed. 1991).

I also contend that the “democratic peace” theory is empirically wrong. As Kenneth Waltz points out, the fact that the United States often overthrows democratically elected leaders (such as Salvador Allende of Chile and Juan Bosch of the Dominican Republic) “cast[s] doubt on the democratic peace thesis.”¹² But more importantly, Doyle’s claim that liberal states only go to war with nonrepublics instead of other liberal states¹³ totally misrepresents Kant’s idea—Kant’s two reasons for a republic’s reluctance for going to war say nothing about the nature of the enemy.¹⁴

It is rather surprising then that Doyle’s empirically incorrect scholarship on Kant’s perpetual peace has gained such a wide acceptance in academic and policy circles. Maybe the only answer to this puzzle is that Doyle used “democratic peace theory” to justify the imperial project. Doyle states that “the protection of cosmopolitan Liberal rights thus bred a demand for imperial rule that violated the liberty of Native Americans, Africans and Asians.”¹⁵ But, as Georg Cavallar points out, Kant actually argues against the European imperial project by stating that the cosmopolitan rights of hospitality must not be enforced: “The natives can turn strangers away on condition that this does not cause their death. The (European) strangers in turn are obliged to behave ‘in a peaceable manner,’ and if they don’t, the natives act ‘wisely’ if they place restrictions on them.”¹⁶

Doyle’s neoconservative theory also fails to address Kant’s fifth thesis on “perpetual peace,” which states “no States shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state.”¹⁷ Why? Kant’s answer is very clear: “the interference of external powers would be a violation of the rights of an independent people which is merely struggling with its internal ills. Such interference would be an active offence and would make the autonomy of all other states insecure.”¹⁸ Though Kant did not consider Prussia a republic during his time, he did not advocate foreign interference in the internal affairs of Prussia, as indicated by his statement that “[f]or a people which occupies extended territories in Europe may feel that monarchy is the only kind of constitution which can enable it to preserve its own existence between powerful neighbors.”¹⁹

It is interesting to observe that Kant’s non-interference principle is remarkably similar in spirit to the Chinese Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These principles were first advanced by the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai when he met with an Indian delegation in December 1953. At the

12. Kenneth Waltz, *Structural Realism after the Cold War*, in *AMERICAN UNRIVALED: THE FUTURE OF THE BALANCE OF POWER* 34 (G. John Ikenberry ed., 2002).

13. See Doyle, *supra* note 10, at 1159.

14. See Georg Cavallar, *Kantian Perspective on Democratic Peace: Alternatives to Doyle*, *REV. INT’L STUD.* 233 (2001).

15. MICHAEL DOYLE, *WAYS OF WAR AND PEACE* 27 (1997).

16. Cavallar, *supra* note 14, at 241.

17. KANT, *supra* note 11, at 96.

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.* at 183.

first Asian-African conference (the Bandung Conference) held in April 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai reiterated these principles, which were later incorporated into the declarations of the Conference. Collectively, these principles came to be called the Bandung spirit.

In 1982, these Five Principles were written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China: (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual nonaggression; (3) noninterference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence.

As China's Minister of Foreign Affairs explained,

Both history and the current international developments since World War II have shown that practices of defining friends and enemy according to differences in social system and values through forming "camps," "groups," "the big family," and "alliances" invariably fail. Only by observing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence can normal state to state relations be maintained and a just international order be established. The establishment of a new international order based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence will surely safeguard world peace and promote common development and human progress.

On its face, the Chinese "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" doctrine contradicts the tenets behind the Bush Doctrine of preemptive intervention, democracy export, and military supremacy. However, this certainly does not mean that China should not democratize. Rather, China must face the challenge of democratic innovations both in economic and political spheres. As Frantz Fanon stated: "If we wish to turn Africa into a new Europe, then let us leave the destiny of our countries to Europeans. They will know how to do it better than the most gifted among us."²⁰

Thus, the best response to the Bush Doctrine is for the new generation of Chinese intellectuals, policymakers, and common people to develop new institutions of democracy and a market economy, thereby contributing to the progress of human civilization beyond the narrow horizon of development implied by the Bush Doctrine.

20. FRANTZ FANON, *THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH* 312 (1965).