

# The Principled Conservative in 21st Century America

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Principled. adj. based on or having (esp. praiseworthy) principles of behavior.

Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, 1998.

“These are my principles. If you don’t like them, I have others.”

Groucho Marx

Introduction

While this book addresses some serious issues, it’s not overly serious or else depression might set in. Now is not the time to panic, but the truth is that a strange, weird assortment of leftists, socialists, “progressives” (i.e. those too cowardly to call themselves liberals), and jihadists are doing their best to destroy America and ruin the world in the process. Some are doing so intentionally, others inadvertently. However, to stand on a street corner shouting about this would only draw stares and questions about your sanity. In politics and public policy, the best strategy is humor that highlights the folly of one’s opponents. This book attempts—in a mildly humorous vein—to illustrate that principled conservatism offers the right ideas that can revitalize America. This is especially so because opposition to such ideas does not hold up to close scrutiny. But a principled conservative understands human nature and how emotions, repeated (but wrong) mantras, and wishful thinking can cause well-meaning people to embrace bad ideas.

When looking at the nature of public policy issues confronting America in the 21st century, I am often perplexed why the vast majority of all Americans are not aligned with conservative political principles. Even though self-described conservatives consistently outnumber liberals two-to-one in opinion polls, this does not translate into consistent electoral success for conservative candidates. But I am used to political frustration, being a distinct, singular, and often overlooked minority: a Republican Jew.<sup>1</sup>

Sharing conservative political views does not of course mean reaching the same conclusion on every public policy issue. It does mean we should start from a set of fundamental principles that would help us reach a consensus in many areas of public policy and at least guide one's thinking in other areas. For those claiming to be independents or traditional liberals, the heart of the matter is that they really do not understand what it means to be a principled conservative.

This book seeks to remedy this shortcoming and reclaim the moral high ground on the basic principles that should guide public policy matters in 21st century America for those who consider themselves to be principled conservatives. Twenty-first century Americans should be proud to say "I am a principled conservative" and for all to understand precisely what this means, from political campaigns to social conversations. From tee-shirts to bumper stickers to Facebook pages, perhaps in the near future to be labeled "PC" would become a positive short-hand for "principled conservative" versus "politically correct." I understand the present reality that the brand name of conservatism took a beating of sorts in the first decade of the 21st century. This book does not attempt to dissect why or if such criticisms were always valid. I do submit, however, that part of the problem is a lack of clear communication and consistency of principles.

There is no denying that negative branding of conservatism is attributable in part to the predominant mainstream media liberal bias. Think about how conservatives are usually portrayed in the mainstream media: we always want to "turn the clock back" (presumably to oppress women and minorities); we favor big business over the working man; we seek military spending expansion to help defense contractors; we are intolerant of different cultures and civilizations; we are anti-science; we hate gays and lesbians; we are anti-intellectual; anti-feminist; etc. All these perceptions are gross distortions of reality and often downright wrong. Anyone who reads this book with an open mind, while not necessarily agreeing with every principle and conclusion, will better understand the actual principled conservative vision for 21st century America. It is also hoped that many will contrast it favorably to the prevailing and predominant liberal mind-set in the media.

The reader may have noticed in this brief introduction that the terms liberal and conservative have already been thrown around as though everyone knows their precise definition. While this book does not attempt to create a "new and improved" brand name for conservatism, I do assert that the historically astute reader will notice that the principled conservative in 21st century America is closer to the traditional 20th century liberal than today's self-proclaimed liberal or "progressive." This is not a new observation. Ronald Reagan summarized it concisely when he stated "I didn't leave the Democratic Party, it left me." Today's principled conservative—consistent with yesteryear's traditional liberal—is interested in preserving individual liberty and promoting freedom in all countries. In contrast, today's self-proclaimed liberal is often pretty darn close to socialist in domestic policy, and in the foreign policy arena is hopelessly addicted to the United Nations and making peace with tyrants at any cost to avoid military conflict. Liberals too, of course, have problems with a negative brand name. At present many have reverted to calling themselves "progressives," wrapping themselves in positive early 20th century initiatives like banning child labor (good) while ignoring progressivism's obsession with social engineering and big government (bad). I would point out that conservatives are proud enough to be called what we are. We are not running and hiding as are liberals from their justifiably unpopular philosophy. But there is of course a strong reason for this; conservative principles are in line with what a vast majority of Americans believe. In contrast, liberals/progressives constantly have to play a shell game to hide their true views and long-term intentions, knowing them to be widely unpopular. We hear them rail a lot about "special interests" that prevent their social engineering dreams from becoming a reality. Perhaps "utopians" would be a better term for them? However, this book attempts to lay out the principled conservative vision, not to sell socialism to the masses. We'll leave that task to President Obama.

This book does not aim to merely provide a list of conservative principles, but to clarify key principles and explain how they can be applied to contemporary public policy issues. The underlying conservative principles girding this discussion are certainly not brand new insights by the author. Rather, they build upon basic conservative political principles such as the following:

□ All individuals yearn for and deserve individual liberty, political freedom, and the right to retain the fruits of their labor for their family;

- Government primarily exists to protect individual liberty and prevent encroachment of such, not to solve every social problem under the sun or moon;
- A permanent class of politicians enriching themselves in public service is never a good idea;
- Free trade across national borders leads to prosperity; conversely, open borders and unrestricted immigration leads to societal disaster;
- Since entrepreneurs create the most jobs in America, businesses should have the freedom to start with minimal government interference;
- Generally consumers make better choices than government dictates; hence government should almost never have a role in determining or influencing individual consumer purchase decisions;
- On private matters such as family, sex, etc., the government should usually just leave us alone;
- The free enterprise system is the most productive supplier of human needs and economic justice;
- All individuals are entitled to equal rights, justice and opportunities, and they should assume their responsibilities as citizens in a free society;
- Fiscal responsibility and budgetary restraints must be exercised at all levels of government because citizens demand accountability and results, not just platitudes and good intentions;
- The federal government must preserve individual liberty by observing constitutional limitations;
- Peace is best preserved through a strong national defense; and,
- Government should protect freedom of worship of all faiths, and while not endorsing or establishing any official religion, should not be anti-religion.

Besides embracing classical liberal notions of liberty and freedom and the use of government to protect those freedoms, the principled conservative is also a practical realist—understanding of human nature and highly skeptical of utopian schemes to perfect humanity or of the government’s capability to solve social problems. While the above statements sound like good common sense, they stand in stark contrast to how many American liberals/progressives view the world in the 21st century.

This book builds upon these principles for a starting point in analyzing important issues America faces today and for the remainder of the 21st century. If the reader starts from a socialist, class-based Marxist/leftist perspective, she will find little to like in the above principles. But after we discard that thankfully extremely tiny minority of misguided fools, I ask the moderate, the independent, or the self-proclaimed “mainstream liberal” to consider how closely some of the above principles might be consistent with your own world view. Read the rest of this book with an open mind and consider the different public policy conclusions usually reached when starting from such principles. For those self-proclaimed conservatives, do not assume that you already know every conclusion that will be reached. In some areas, this book challenges what is often portrayed as the appropriate conservative position. I suspect there are some things in this book with which self-professed liberals/progressives will agree, and with which self-professed conservatives will disagree. I do so not to gain favor with my liberal friends and gain admission to their cocktail parties, but to be truer to the vision of a principled conservative. My aim is not to be deliberately provocative, but to analyze and synthesize what should be the standing ground of the principled conservative. I do not attempt to reach a moderate position simply to achieve political consensus. And it is acknowledged that on some policy issues, principled conservatives may arrive at different policy recommendations because the principles do not yield a precise answer to every policy question that exists. The hope is that they do offer guidance and direction on many critical issues. For example, if a core principle is that government spending (absent a world war!) generally helps only a small number of individuals and firms who receive government contracts without spurring growth in private sector employment, you are less likely to be enthusiastic about an economic stimulus package than someone who believes the government can create jobs by simply spending more money.

This book is also a very practical effort, which will not delve very heavily into political philosophy as compared to other recent efforts in this area.<sup>2</sup> This book is more of a primer. It is also understood that every principle

cannot be turned into immediate policy, given the normal course of political negotiations and compromises. For example, if the principled conservative believes that the government should not be in the business of subsidizing prices for sellers of consumer products, does that mean every price subsidy scheme ever devised by Congress gets repealed tomorrow or we go home crying? Of course not.

I firmly believe that America today at its heart is a centrist country, not easily definable in policy preferences as conservative or liberal. Some might even call it pragmatic—Americans like solutions and the “average person” doesn’t spend a lot of time having academic debates on political philosophy or the nature of man and the state. Political enthusiasm has always been about a compelling vision for the future. People generally do not take time away from work, family, recreation, etc., for bland or non-inspiring reasons. To succeed politically, conservatives must convince such folks that our ideas are an optimistic vision of the future that will result in better government, a strong economy, and a safe country. Conservative optimism may seem a contradiction to some, since conservatives typically view the world as it is (not as a possible utopia) and can easily come across as negative, cynical, and pessimistic. Perhaps that is the nature of being conservative, although conservatives who point to the relentless optimism and spirit of President Reagan would disagree. The reader may also note that while the principled conservative often stands at odds to what the current Democratic party believes in, it is also sometimes contrary to Republican party positions. The goal here is to stay consistent with these principles even though in some cases it means convincing your political friends that they are on the wrong path.

My purpose in writing this book is not to describe the history of the conservative movement in 20th century America, punch holes in every bit of liberal dogma, or give political advice for electoral “messaging.” Many others have written (or consulted) with far greater skill and insight on these matters than I profess to offer.

What I do offer is a fairly concise overview of a principled conservative vision for 21st century America that I believe will appeal to a wide range of individuals—especially those who give thoughtful attention to the big questions of our time (or at least wish to take a “time out” from the vast amounts of time we all spend following entertainment and/or sports, and the gossip surrounding those who participate). Such questions include:

- How can we obtain peace at home and abroad?
- How can we foster greater opportunities for success for our children?
- What does a fair society mean? Is it the same as “social justice?”
- What does it mean to be an American?
- Can a society of multiple religions and non-believers exist peacefully?

My hope is that many Americans of all political persuasions will find something compelling and agreeable for them in the world view of the principled conservative. It should be a uniting exercise and this is important because much is at stake in making America a more perfect union in the 21st century. As the world’s oldest and most successful self-governing democratic republic<sup>3</sup> it is in the interest of all Americans, and indeed all lovers of freedom around the world, to do everything in our power to ensure America’s success and continued existence into the next millennium.

While this introduction began on a very pessimistic note, now is not the time to abandon hope that things can be turned around. But it’s going to take a lot of persuasion and hard work and persistence. This book by no means has all the answers or even the most eloquent arguments. But, it does have a lot of things you can use to state your case and make sure you elect more principled conservatives to political office. Not the author per se, although I will consider hefty consulting and speaking engagements.

## Chapter 1

### Military might and foreign policy

Superior American military strength is always the best idea. It goes hand-in-hand with effective diplomacy to promote national security and peace. However, we must marginalize the United Nations.

Because we have an all-volunteer army, most Americans today have never served in the military. Hardly anyone particularly relishes the idea of being shot at, and few would profess to any special personal bravery.

However, it is difficult to imagine living in a prosperous American society in the 21st century without the protection of a strong military. Probably all but the most hard-line leftists would bemoan the importance of American military power. You would be hard-pressed to find a successful American politician to suggest that we don't need it. But if you press further there are some fundamental policy choices to be made under this state of affairs, choices that distinguish those who treat American military strength seriously versus those who merely give it lip service.

Conservatives are often stereotyped as militarist or war-mongering because we favor a strong military. This position is contrasted to touchy-feely liberals who love to ask "wouldn't we all be better off beating our swords into plowshares and living in peace and harmony?" Think about how much money we would save on military expenditures! But of course this dream of an earthly paradise has no basis in reality. We would not need a military if men and women were angels. That is not the case, however, because human perfection is contrary to human nature. Conservatives might be called cynical for simply accepting the fact that America must always be in a state of armed readiness for the protection of its citizens.

But this is not a cynical or pessimistic vision. American military might helps protect the freedom not only of Americans but many around the world. The principled conservative believes that the more people can live without fear of attack by hostile enemies, or a repressive totalitarian government, the more they will prosper and see the benefits of peace and prosperity over war. The principled conservative must always be the first to argue that without the safety and security of one's person and property, nothing else matters. It is a prerequisite to the pursuit of happiness, and must always be the highest priority of government. Such protection is basic to liberty and a clear measure of whether we would deem a government just or unjust:

"The first and chief design of every system of government is to maintain justice: to prevent the members of society from encroaching on one another's property, or seizing what is not their own. The design here is to give each one the secure and peaceable possession of his own property."<sup>4</sup>

The principled conservative understands that America would not exist in its current state without strong military protection. The most compelling case in the 20th century was prevailing in World War II over the militarist national socialism as practiced by Nazi Germany. In the aftermath of 9-11, fortunately there has not been a series of repeated successful terrorist attacks on American soil precisely because of our military might. Whether that can continue remains unseen, but to those who suggest dropping our guard, the principled conservative would politely inquire as to what planet they are living on? The only folks who should be pushing for a lackadaisical approach to national defense are jihadists (and other enemies of America) or Americans who have a societal suicide wish.<sup>5</sup>

However, we cannot simply leave things with the premise that American military might is important. Even very liberal politicians will say the same thing, even if their understanding of what this means and how to use it in practice are much different from the principled conservative approach.

Engagement in armed conflict should never be taken lightly, but neither should it be abhorred at all costs when the alternatives are worse (and options must include preemptive war).

Many recent political debates have focused on the appropriate uses of American military might. Is preemptive (or preventive) war acceptable? Can the U.S. invade a sovereign country to fight terrorism without an open invitation from the prevailing government and/or authorization from the United Nations? Conservatives tend to poke fun at liberals with the jab that liberals are for a necessary war—they just oppose whatever war is on the table for consideration at any given time. But this runs the risk of making conservatives seem eager for war. Even with advanced technology and sophisticated techniques to minimize collateral damage, war is brutal for both the combatants and civilians. It is never to be taken or pursued lightly. The principled conservative must acknowledge these costs. We are not opposed to diplomacy or to carefully weighing all options short of a military intervention. And if an intervention is warranted, planning must be prudently brilliant in order to both minimize the loss of American soldiers and civilian casualties. Indeed, the two basic Monday-morning quarterbacking policy arguments over the Bush Administration's decision to initiate war in Iraq are: 1) was military intervention necessary? and 2) was there a comprehensive plan in place to ensure success during and after the military conflict? The principled conservative position should be that a preemptive war is sometimes

regrettably necessary. Not often, not usually, but it should not be ruled out unilaterally. Thus, while reasonable principled conservatives could reach the opposite policy conclusion on whether the Iraq war was a necessary preemptive war, we would stand united in opposition to those who argue that preemptive or preventive war is never necessary. While President George W. Bush may not have been the greatest articulator of the doctrine, the principled conservative must point out that without the option of preemptive war in the 21st century, the benefits of American military might well be under-utilized or utilized too late—all to the detriment of freedom and safety.

Since war is never to be taken lightly but rather always considered with regret and sadness, it bears repeating that the principled conservative does not seek war. We do understand the terrible costs of war in both human misery and enormous government expenditures. It is not the way we wish things to be, but it is sometimes necessary. What the principled conservative can say is that by having the military option always available, as part of diplomacy, we may in fact avoid the escalation of conflicts and potentially nip problems in the bud before they develop into a full-scale war.

The contortions and reflexive gagging of some on the issue of preemptive war is perplexing because it's likely that 90+ percent of all Americans would agree with the sentiments Clemenza expressed in *The Godfather*:

“You know, you gotta stop them at the beginning. Like they should have stopped Hitler at Munich, they should never let him get away with that, they was just asking for trouble.”

Today, as we face the specter of countries that are harboring and supporting terrorists who intend to do great harm to Americans and citizens of other western democracies, it would appear to be societal suicide to sit around and wait for attacks before taking action. The principled conservative should point out that to dither and debate over whether preemptive wars are sometimes necessary is an exercise in mental masturbation that the nation can ill afford. The debate should simply be on the merits of whether a particular preemptive war option should be pursued.

#### American Weapons and Personnel Must Always be the Best

Another ongoing policy debate over the American military is how much we need to spend and what to spend it on to successfully defend American interests around the world. The political debate over resources needed to protect and fight has almost become a parody. Conservatives typically assert that liberals want to kill off every expensive new weapons program (especially missile defense) no matter the benefits, content to fight each new war with the technology of the previous war. Liberals typically pull up the Eisenhower “military-industrial complex” speech on YouTube® and warn of the dangers of throwing money away to satisfy defense contractors and the Pentagon budget.

But what to fight with is a fundamental question and one where the principled conservative should boldly proclaim a better vision of the future. Conservatives, despite the philosophy of preserving and conserving the best elements of a civilized society, eagerly embrace the benefits of science and technology where they can build a better and safer society. What better example than military weapons and defense technology?

Before we go down this road, it must be acknowledged that some will dredge up the charge of conservatives being enamored of a Star Wars-type universe of high technology warfare.<sup>6</sup> This is not the vision we seek. We seek a safer society where human life can be better protected with less risk to civilians and our fighting men and women. This goal can best be achieved via superior weapons technology, as opposed to the leftist notion of arms control, disarmament, and a “nuclear-free” world. The principled conservative should boldly point out that the concept of arms control and related themes is an utterly foolhardy endeavor; it is the foreign policy equivalent to domestic policy arguments to restrict guns. Given that criminals always seem to wind up getting guns from the black market, what rational person thinks that a totalitarian regime will disarm in the interests of world peace? So why do some argue that America should start destroying its nuclear stockpiles at the earliest opportunity and encourage other nations to do likewise? Yet these arguments are made and conservatives are portrayed again as uncaring, as if we would actually like countries to be nuked by any particularly destructive weapons, nuclear or otherwise.

The principled conservative is not in love with weapons or the need to have them. Indeed, the protection is pursued reluctantly but out of necessity. Since the protection is needed, the two overwhelming objectives should be to have far more than any other nation, and have technology that far outclasses any other nation on earth. It may not be a perfect state of affairs, but it is reality. Unless the free and democratic protect themselves, rights can be usurped. And to reiterate, we live on the planet earth, not an Eden or utopia.

Further, we must realize that America is in fact the world's policeman and the world is better off for this role. Once this is understood, the question about how to protect freedom and how to spend our defense budget is clearer. Although this is not to suggest it is always obvious as to what types of weapons systems are needed. We know there will always be military infighting and legitimate policy debates over the merits of competing weapons systems. We can never know in advance if the general who argues for a new and bold fighting innovation is a visionary, an utter fool or somewhere in between. But conservatives can posit some guiding principles.

First, new technology must always be embraced and fully exploited. Nowhere is this better illustrated than the area of missile defense. Perhaps the greatest threat is from a rogue totalitarian state or terrorist groups (obviously in many cases aided and abetted by rogue states). It is interesting that while some like to bash conservatives as being anti-science, it is often the same crowd who seem to constantly and pessimistically expect that science will never lead to an effective missile defense system. But just look how wrong they have been in light of the technical advances in missile defense even in the short time since President Reagan promoted the concept in the 1980's (naturally derisively dubbed "Star Wars" by many liberals). The principled conservative should point out that common sense dictates that the highest national defense priority should be against the greatest risk—missile attack. And yes, this includes developing weapons for use in outer space. If that is the best way to develop a missile defense, strike capability and/or destruction of enemy communications, we would be fools not to pursue it vigorously.

Air and naval superiority will continue to be critical, meaning that improvements in planes and ships should generally be pursued, including maintenance of existing fleets and squadrons. It is hard to imagine such forces becoming unnecessary in the foreseeable future. Sure, some should be built at a greater rate than others, but to cut promising models for current savings only to be caught short-handed in a future conflict would also be a foolhardy strategy.

The focus on technology should not overlook the human element and the noble calling of those who serve in the military. They are heroes and should always be respected as such. Right now, the volunteer armed forces meet national defense needs. Ironically, most Americans benefit as free riders from those who put their life on the line; the rest of us debate military strategy from a safe distance. Does that mean principled conservatives should call for a return to the draft? After all, mandatory military service, including remaining in the active reserves until age 45, has been cited as a major factor in the tremendous economic growth and innovation in Israel.<sup>7</sup> However, there are far too many downsides to that policy for America, especially for the principled conservative who abhors mandates and "forced volunteerism." But the principled conservative view is to make military service as attractive as possible, via existing scholarships and continued care given to the quality of military life, and letting the individual decide whether to serve. We must never again have any qualms about making military service as important and prestigious as possible. For example, consistent with the Supreme Court's thinking and Congressional legislation, no college campus that receives any federal aid should ever be allowed to deny the opportunity for military recruitment on campus. While conservatives cannot clean up the rampant collegiate faculty knee-jerk socialism in one swoop (that will probably require the retirements of many aging radical baby boomers), this is an important step. It is a simple principle that all young people deciding whether they wish to serve should have access to all the relevant information in making such a decision. And maybe learning more about how America's military protects freedom around the world, versus the America (and Israel)-bashing from so many leftist faculty, wouldn't be such a bad thing either!

The United Nations (U.N.) should play no role in American decision-making over the use of armed force<sup>8</sup>; further, America needs to put some competitive pressures on the U.N. and also distance herself from this misguided institution.

Quite simply, the principled conservative says the U.S. Constitution already settles the decision of whether and when America engages in a military conflict, not the U.N. We will not explore a detailed analysis of whether Presidents have properly followed the war powers provisions of the Constitution in numerous instances (they have not) or whether authorizations of military force (versus outright “war”) are acceptable under the Constitution. The bottom line is that under the Constitution it must always be based on actions of the President with oversight and approval by Congress, not a foreign government or organization—even one where America maintains a membership card. The principled conservative does recommend a refocus on Constitutional provisions and is inclined to disfavor undeclared wars, police actions and resolutions authorizing the use of force. Some have argued that the formal declaration of war is an obsolete or outmoded constitutional process that should be ignored. But we do so at great peril to the Constitution and the democratic process. The phrase “war” conjures up the seriousness of the enterprise and the necessity of gaining the acceptance of the American people via their elected representatives in Congress. We have seen the harmful consequences when military conflict is pursued and continued without the overwhelming support of the American people. Hence, the principled conservative wants an open and serious debate on such matters, throwing out the challenge that if the declaration of war is not relevant to modern times, then we should amend the Constitution to institute a better process. It should be embarrassing and unacceptable that every sustained and lengthy military intervention since World War II (Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Bosnia, Korea) has been pursued absent a formal declaration of war. The principled conservative says either follow the Constitution or fix it via amendment, but don’t ignore it:

“The principled constitutional interpreter must bite the bullet, swallow hard, and be willing to say that much of our nation’s actual practice with respect to the power to declare war in fact has been unconstitutional. So much the worse for our nation’s practice.<sup>9</sup>

It is apparent that one of the main lines of debate over wars in the 21st century will be the scope of American autonomy versus international bodies like the U.N. The principled conservative has an opportunity to clearly explain how our principles resolve this matter constitutionally, with common sense, with American uniqueness, and in the best interests of our country. If we do not make the case, no one else will. America is an exceptional country that will continue to operate as a world power and world’s policeman with the support and advice from like-minded countries, but never beholden to the U.N. Now some might argue that this pushes America into a role not contemplated by and indeed far beyond constitutional authority. And didn’t we just argue above about respecting the constitutional procedures for declaring war? But, the Constitution provides the power for the common defense and the facts of the 21st century are that the common defense of America requires America to be the world’s policeman. The two oceans and distances no longer protect America from foreign encroachment.

Speaking of the U.N., justifiably a favorite target of conservative wrath, bold changes in America’s relationship with the U.N. are in order. The principled conservative believes the U.N.’s problems are essentially not correctable in its current state.<sup>10</sup> The principled conservative would favor an association of western democracies, a competing organization to the U.N. where admission is limited to those countries that meet the basic criteria of a rule of law, elected government, individual freedom, and free trade. Once such an organization is established and operational, the U.S. and fellow association countries can determine the benefits of whether to continue their U.N. membership. One suspects that this type of organizational competition will motivate the U.N. to mend some of their more egregious habits, starting with their gratuitous bashing of America and Israel. The principled conservative should not hesitate to point out that the U.N. monster was brought to life by FDR at Yalta in exchange for Russian membership, leaving Eastern Europe to suffer under Soviet enslavement. Hardly a moralistic start! The principled conservative observes that the U.N. cannot effectively police the world and usually fails miserably in this task. Often even its relief efforts, while laudatory in theory, are diverted or wasted in practice. Yet some have almost a religious-like faith in the U.N. While conservatives are bashed for wanting to fight Star Wars in outer space, the U.N. has become the magical, earth-based United Federation of Planets from Star Trek. Anyone who denies we should move in this direction versus maintaining sovereign nations is derided as a backwards thinking Luddite by the U.N.’s fan club.

Should the principled conservative object to the peaceful nations of the world organizing themselves together for common interests? Of course not. The concept of an association of western democracies suggested above would be such an effort.<sup>11</sup> But would such an organization eventually evolve into world government or a



governing organization like the unelected European Union? No, this could only happen with the consent of the governed, a right the principled conservative always preserves at any cost. We must follow the U.S. Constitution and not surrender national sovereignty. If at some future point there is a compelling reason to grant governance powers of some degree to such an association of democracies, or even to formally remake it into a governmental body, here's a simple process to follow: put it to the American people via a Constitutional amendment. The objection of the difficulty of amending the Constitution is a vapid argument. If something as hypothesized above is such a wonderful idea, then why wouldn't two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states support an amendment? This is also a compelling way to demonstrate that the Constitution is a living, working, breathing document—not in the way that some liberals fantasize—but in a democratic matter. It can change with the times—but with the consent of the governed, not by ceding national sovereignty to any unelected organization.

To gain momentum and enthusiasm for such an association of western democracies (which should be a very prestigious group that every country should aspire to join), the principled conservative would certainly support the following membership criteria that best describes the essence of what it means to be a western democracy:

- Individual liberty;
- Political democracy—meaning elected, representative government;
- Rule of law;
- Liberal capitalism and free trade;
- Human rights;
- Cultural freedom but belief in European cultural heritage emanating from the renaissance and ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>12</sup>

Being the world's policeman does not make America an empire in any traditional or rational use of the word.<sup>13</sup>

Some will object to the association of western democracies concept and the world policeman role, arguing that America will be viewed as an arrogant and militarist empire, only willing to surround herself with “yes man” countries. This will allegedly hurt our ability to protect national interests.

This is a dangerously misguided viewpoint. It is the foreign policy version of the leftist domestic proclivity to hate the rich and successful. Since other countries will despise the U.S. for being powerful and rich, some suggest we shouldn't hurt their feelings but instead should apologize and try to be less rich and powerful. And apparently the only way to do so is to take our lumps at the U.N. and not impose our style of government or way of life on others. Simply keep paying those U.N. dues, and keep those foreign aid checks coming! The principled conservative believes we do not have to apologize because America is a force for good in the world, and most enslaved people around the globe would (and often do) die to obtain the type of freedom we often take for granted. Promoting a competitive alternative to the U.N. and downplaying the U.N. is not a particularly radical concept or difficult question. It's almost a no-brainer. And it can also get America out of the business of pressuring a democracy like Israel to cut a “peace deal” with a terrorist state that can hardly be expected to adhere to the terms of any legal agreement.

The more fundamental philosophical question is whether it is possible to be a benign, enlightened democratic republic while maintaining a powerful military and a world police role. The principled conservative, being a student of history, should examine this carefully because it is apparent few such nations have ever existed or existed for very long.

But America does not conquer other countries. Take our recent actions in Iraq as an example. The U.S. literally came, saw, overthrew a totalitarian government, helped the country transition to the post-Saddam era, learned the hard realities of why a counter-insurgency strategy is necessary, and then ramped down and pretty much left. Leaving behind the people of Iraq as the only Muslim-majority democracy in that region of the world. Was that cultural imperialism? The principled conservative would say it gave the Iraqi people an opportunity for freedom, while removing a tyrant who not only mistreated and mass murdered his own people but constantly

threatened (or in some cases like Kuwait actually harmed) the peace and security of other countries. Whether that war was justified or in the best interests of America to pursue is beyond the purview of this book, as is cataloguing the many factual contradictions of the leftist “blood for oil” conspiracy fanatics. The point is that after an overwhelming military victory, America did not act as an empire.

America does not interfere with peaceful democratic countries or wage wars with them. One never picks up the paper or reads an online news headline about America going to war with Canada, Australia, or Brazil. It’s just not going to happen. Democracies rarely if ever go to war against each other. No doubt part of the explanation is that when political leaders are accountable to the electorate this forms a powerful incentive not to do something rash and stupid. In contrast, countries which America has engaged in armed conflict in the past 50 years were not exactly bastions of democracy and freedom. Our message is clear—boundaries and sovereignty are only encroached when another country steps out of line. Contrary to how an empire would operate, we do not demand tribute; conversely, we give out foreign aid and lots of it. We do not pick the governors. The elections are up to the people of the countries, as they have been in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those governments are by no means perfect, but are so much better than their predecessors. Yes, America is a unique world power, but is not an empire. We are also willing to share world police duties with other western democracies. Such shared partnerships for peace and prosperity further demonstrate how America’s actions could not be further removed from that of traditional empire-building.

The principled conservative does acknowledge that we would like other countries to adopt our style of government and the basic tenets of our civilization. We need not be shy to say that, while we respect other cultures, we do think our way of life is better. The principled conservative truly believes in American values and will not apologize for promoting them around the world. At this point in history, it is indeed the role and responsibility of America to promote Western civilization.

This American role as policeman and leader of Western civilization and western democracies will guide many foreign policy decisions as to alliances. For example, what better friends to celebrate and support than the recently resurrected democratic republics of Eastern Europe, countries whose friendship and sympathy to American interests have been forged by their bitter enslavement by Communism for forty years? Conversely, to expect friendly and normal diplomatic relations with countries like Iran and North Korea, totalitarian terror states, gives them an aura of credibility and legitimacy they do not deserve. Can or should America in its interest support democratic revolutions in such countries? In the name of freedom, absolutely! The principled conservative find it ironic that so many liberals raised on the four freedoms of FDR consistently reject the concept that we should pull out all stops to make those things happen in non-free or slave societies. Perhaps part of this hesitation is that it would legitimize the thought that America is an exceptional country and that our way of government and freedom is right. To reiterate, the principled conservative vision is that you are damned right it’s the best way and it’s the only way if we hope to actually achieve world peace, as well as dignity and freedom for every human being on the planet.

Diplomacy has its place, but only if backed by military strength and strong principles; don’t expect successful negotiations with tyrants.

The principled conservative should not rashly criticize diplomacy, just the ill-conceived and/or naive use of it. And this will require several fundamental shifts in diplomacy, starting with the basic concept that America and other western democracies simply do not need to respect the opinions and sovereignty of totalitarian police states. Such states have forfeited their rights to such respect.

The “no respect to tyrants” doctrine<sup>14</sup> means America promises no respect for sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs. To the contrary, America should make clear that we support freedom-loving people everywhere, and in an unelected totalitarian police state (which as of this writing would clearly include North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Burma/Myanmar, Syria and many others) we make no apology for offering aid and support to their internal dissidents, explicit and implicit, overt and covert. We will not just give lip service to freedom. The principled conservative American vision should be that we are the international beacon of freedom. We also must separate the popular culture issues from the individual liberty issues. America is not “exporting”—at least through direct government action—our popular culture. Individuals around the world should be free to

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