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Brookhiser:
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to Freedom**

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Wood:
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Thoreau**

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The Parthenon



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WHILE THE STORM CLOUDS GATHER*



And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.

—Joel 2:25

FOR A CENTURY, THE MYRIAD OF OFFICIALS, former officials, and academics at hundreds of centers, schools, foundations, and institutes who make up America's foreign policy establishment have supposed that America's peace would result from international order, and that securing such an order must be our foreign policy's main task. A quarter-century after President George H.W. Bush sent a half-million troops to the Persian

Gulf to establish America as the leader of "a new world order," we have suffered growing disorder among and within nations, and increasing disrespect for America. In fact, any nation's peace—along with history's rare instances of order—is the temporary result of individual peoples pursuing their own agendas. That is because peoples live and die for their own version of peace rather than for any international order.

We Americans now find ourselves immersed in quarrels within and among peoples from the earth's farthest reaches. A majority of us demands less involvement in those quarrels, and more effectiveness against our own enemies. Above all, Americans want peace, especially at home. Far from contradictory or unreasonable, these desires are aspects of the same sensible determination to leave others' business to them, while doing a better job minding our own.

Distinguishing our business from others' is only part of the solution to our problem. For a generation, the U.S. government's indecisive military action has squandered the respect of friends and enemies alike. There should be no illusion that mere policy can overcome this deadly legacy, or that it can be overcome entirely. Restoring "the years that

the locust hath eaten," will require character and good fortune, even more than intellect, to an extent available only through divine grace.

How do we refocus American statecraft to its proper principles while confronting the consequences of having long neglected them, as the clouds of war gather? Like all who find themselves in trouble, Americans had best reflect on how we got into our present fix before making our next move.

Dreaming and Ruling

ALREADY IN 1951, GEORGE F. KENNAN's history of American diplomacy (*American Diplomacy, 1900–1950*) had noted that, though Americans in 1900 could not imagine any threats from abroad, 50 years later they could hardly think of anything else. Why had America become less safe and more anxious even as it had become much more powerful? Because in the intervening half-century it had replaced the founding generation's focus on affairs that are peculiarly America's own with attempts to manage the affairs of other peoples—a departure from statesmanship's natural focus that entailed a host of troubles.

* The opening lines of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," introduced by singer Kate Smith on Armistice Day in 1938:

While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free.
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.
God bless America,
Land that I love.
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with a light from above.
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam,
God bless America, my home sweet home.



The original rationale for confusing America's interest with mankind's had been that great power requires it. But Theodore Roosevelt, the first president who wielded America's new power abroad, had done so while keeping a sharp focus on America's own interest. He mediated peace between Russia and Japan for America's sake, not theirs, and regarded the Philippines and the Caribbean as outworks of America's defense.

This is worlds away from how imperialists such as Republican Senator Albert Beveridge viewed the results of the Spanish-American war: "self-government and internal development have been the dominant notes of our first century; administration and the development of other lands will be the dominant notes of our second century." Had T.R. won his bid for the White House in 1912, he would have joined the Great War strictly to prevent America's Atlantic frontier from being monopolized by a hostile power. Instead, Woodrow Wilson turned the Great War into World War I in order to make the world safe for democracy, in concert with other nations that he gratuitously imagined to be similarly inclined.

A hundred years later, we know all too well what we got from trying to improve the world by reordering it: a century of war and upheaval that cost hundreds of millions of innocent lives.

Each of our foreign policy establishment's several factions imagines that all peoples are interested in adopting its particular recipe for order and progress. For liberal internationalists it is secular, technocratic, socio-economic development; for realists it's predictable, self-interested, moderate behavior; and for neoconservatives, democracy. These Americans aim to put an end to mankind's history of brutal contention by guiding the nations along their preferred paths. Thinking this way has led them to discount the foreignness of foreigners—the real differences between religions, civilizations, and regimes—and to disrespect the reality of *diversity* in the dictionary meaning of the word, and to indulge their fantasies.

Foremost among their fantasies is the notion that they can accomplish great things without bothering to square the ends sought with the means necessary to achieve them. The millions, billions, and now trillions of dollars available to U.S. officials, the lure that America has ever exerted on mankind, the prestige that our incomparably efficient and generous armed forces have won for America, the eagerness of foreigners to seek American help for their own ends and in their own quarrels—all have tempted policymakers to think of themselves as possessing the wisdom and

the right to pull mankind's strings. Since Wilson's time, and especially since World War II, this has led American officials to undertake projects that they could not or would not carry to success, and the failures of which have defined America as impotent.

In 1919, Woodrow Wilson said that America had no other purpose than to serve mankind. At the Paris Peace Conference that concluded World War I he imagined that he could pacify all nations for all time by promoting democracy, order, and progress. But the borders he brokered spawned wars that have yet to end, while his pursuit of Progressive fantasies reaped Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, and Mao. Yet those fantasies remain our bipartisan ruling class's orthodoxy.

The Republicans of the '20s made war on (mostly American) armaments and brokered yet more treaties. Their guarantee of China's territorial integrity, made as they were divesting themselves of the capacity or the intention of enforcing it, helped to bring on war in the Pacific. Their efforts to rescue the Versailles Treaty's economic follies with inflationary loans helped sow the Great Depression.

Beginning in 1933, Franklin Roosevelt's Democrats dreamt of a grand alliance with the Soviet Union for world progress. No dream has proved more fateful to modern America. As the distinguished historian Robert Conquest has noted, the conjunction of dreaming and ruling is deadly. Ignoring Communism's ruthless, hostile character, Roosevelt's brains trust reduced America's aims in World War II to persuading Stalin to share their dream. This ended up misleading a substantial portion of his followers into blaming their fellow Americans for the Cold War, and divided us along lines that endure to our day, sowing evermore discord.

In 1950, the Truman Administration chose to spend over 36,000 American lives in Korea to achieve a stalemate rather than defeat the aggression by which Stalin and Mao were breaking the U.S. policy of "containment." This made sense only in the progressive dream of world order through a grand alliance. In light of this dream, Korea had to be fought in that disastrous way because it was "the wrong war in the wrong place against the wrong enemy." Policymakers showed how uninterested they were in America's own business by not fighting, or even defining, what they considered to be the right war for containment. When Senator Robert Taft argued in *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (1951), and General Douglas MacArthur repeated to Congress, that America should fight only for its own interest and for victory or not at all, America's foreign policy elite denounced them as dinosaurs.

No Victory, No Enemies

BY THE 1960S, THE NOTION OF FIGHTING for our victory and our peace or not at all had become intellectually as well as politically incorrect. Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957) and *The Necessity for Choice* (1961) applied (and translated into readable English) economist Thomas Schelling's teachings that human conflict takes place within an inescapable matrix of choices that rationally precludes any but limited objectives. Together, these books became our ruling class's bible of international affairs. That bible's priests tried to counter the Communist world's conquest of South Vietnam without ever trying to defeat its sponsors militarily. "There is no victory in Vietnam, for anybody," said President Lyndon Johnson. North Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Union, thought otherwise.

So did Senator Barry Goldwater, who told the country as plainly as he could that if the Vietnam war was worth fighting, it was worth fighting to victory, but that if it was not worth fighting to victory it was not worth fighting at all. Our bipartisan ruling class called him an unsophisticated warmonger.

Our ruling class, convinced as it was that the world operated as Kissinger and Schelling said it did, thought it inappropriate to identify any set of persons as the enemy whose elimination or constraint would bring us peace. And so, President Johnson identified America's enemies in the world as "poverty, ignorance, hunger, and disease." This also reflected our ruling class's view of Vietnam as a contest of rival strategies for social engineering. Accordingly, the U.S. armed forces were ordered to hold the line while civilian nation-builders did the decisive work. Our military did not make war on North Vietnam, nor even cut it off from Soviet and Chinese supplies. The Vietnam war has remained, farcically, the paradigm of America's foreign policy. Not once in the ensuing 40 years of military engagements has the U.S. government identified any enemy whose elimination would bring us peace. Keeping good relations with the governments that supply, or otherwise support, enemies-in-arms has taken precedence over our own troops' lives.

During the 1960s and '70s U.S. foreign policy's Rooseveltian priority, now labeled "détente," sought to integrate the Communist world into the world order. As a token of good faith, the U.S. removed from Europe the strategic nuclear forces that had been the mainstay of its defense, dismantled our air defenses, decided against defending against ballistic missiles, and increased trade with and extended



untied loans to the Soviet Union. In 1961 the U.S. lodged verbal objections to the building of the Berlin Wall instead of enforcing its contractual right to tear it down. In 1962, as part of the price for ending the Cuban Missile Crisis, the U.S. guaranteed the survival of Fidel Castro's Soviet-supported regime. "*Ils ne sont pas sérieux*"—They are not serious—said Charles De Gaulle. So far and so fast did faith in America fall that, whereas in 1960 U.S. allies had lobbied for a stronger American policy toward the Soviets, by 1970 they had become the principal lobbyists for a softer one.

Détente ended in a near-disaster. By 1980 the Carter Administration, though disinclined to do so, acknowledged that the Soviets had achieved dangerous superiority in strategic weaponry, and felt compelled to start a major rearmament program.

Impotent Meddling

TINKERING ABROAD CAUSED MANY DISASTERS, increasing Third World countries' troubles and diminishing respect for America. During the 1940s and '50s American action in these countries had been all about opposing Communists. By the 1960s it had turned to trying to reengineer local societies according to our ruling class's changing political, social, and economic priorities. Politically, this meant trying to forge warring local factions into coalition governments. Socially, it meant secularization and the division of land holdings among the regime's enemies. Economically, it meant increased government regulation financed and guided by the U.S., plus high tariffs to foster "import substitution," meaning the replacement of foreign imports with domestic production.

In Iran, the shah's U.S.-sponsored "white revolution" of secularization and Westernization led to the black-robed Ayatollah Khomeini's seizure of power, backed by the Soviet Union. In Indonesia, the U.S. supported the dictator Sukarno until it supported a coup against him that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. In Chile, U.S. support for leftist Christian Democrats produced rule by the socialist-Communist Salvador Allende, widespread hunger, and the bloody military coup that reversed it. In Italy, U.S. pressure for including Communist allies in the country's ruling coalition government led to the government's tolerance of the "Red Brigade" terrorists, until they wore out their welcome by assassinating the country's prime minister in the course of a major guerrilla war.

Tinkering continues to characterize American political action abroad. Just as the U.S. overthrew South Vietnam's elected president

Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963 to form a "more inclusive" government that it judged a more suitable partner in limited military action (Diem was arguing for real war), in 2014 the U.S. "eased out" Iraq's elected Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in hopes of finding a less sectarian, more inclusive substitute. At the same time, we worked against Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, whom we had previously chosen. Our officials covered each maneuver with talk of democracy. Each produced puppets more pliable but, so far at least, hardly more functional. Each move lowered respect for America.

During the 1960s and '70s our government also set the pattern for its response to terrorism. Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Cuba's Fidel Castro pioneered modern terrorism, betting that they could use forces that they inspired, organized, and praised—but for which they denied responsibility—in order to bloody enemies and weaken resistance to their causes without suffering retaliation. Terror-masters can win that bet only so long and insofar as their victims prefer suffering terror to fighting back. Nasser and Castro, for

Failure to return to popular government as originally understood would be more terrible than any series of terrorist attacks

their part, were acting as part of a larger enterprise coordinated by the Soviet Union.

There was nothing secret about it; the details appeared monthly in the pages of *World Marxist Review*, published in Prague, to which every Soviet-line revolutionary movement contributed. By 1965 terrorists had hurt Americans' and allied interests in the Third World sufficiently that the Soviet Union organized the terrorists formally into the "Tricontinental Organization." Its founding conference was held in Havana in January 1966 under the banner of a globe resting on crossed submachine guns. Its purpose was to mobilize or otherwise inspire any and all who would hurt Americans for any reason. The U.S. government's response was to assert that the growing number of terrorist acts committed against us and our allies were the responsibility of those who committed them rather than part of any general struggle. Our response remains so today.

When American leftists hijacked airplanes to Havana, and Castro refused to return them, Republican President Richard Nixon chose not to hold him responsible but rather

to forbid Americans from taking weapons on airplanes and to admonish passengers not to resist any future assaults. Castro had won his bet. Americans obeyed compliantly until September 11, on United Airlines Flight 93. When the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), acting partly on Egypt's and the Soviet Union's behalf, hijacked Israeli airliners and perpetrated massacres, the U.S. government pressured Israel to moderate its retaliation against Egypt. The PLO won its bet, doubled down, and started killing Americans, including in 1973 the U.S. ambassador to Sudan, Cleo A. Noel, Jr.

The U.S. doubled down, too, in its own blinkered way. Its response was to open clandestine contacts with, to finance, and eventually to empower the PLO in the hope of moderating it. In 1982, as Israel was in the process of destroying the PLO in its last redoubt in Beirut, the U.S. government rescued the remnant and transplanted it to Tunis. Then it sent Marines to pacify Beirut. When Syria's agents killed 241 of them in 1983, the U.S. did nothing at all to Syria. Of course the memorable precedent had already been set. After Iran occupied the American embassy in 1979 and imprisoned our diplomats for months on end—a textbook act of war—President Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, did not respond with war. When Republican President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office in 1981, the hostages were released that same day—but he did not respond with punitive war, either. No surprise that, for more than a generation, those who enable and encourage terrorism against America have had reason to believe they hold a winning hand.

So long as the Soviet Union lasted, Americans who feared confronting terrorism's ultimate backer argued that doing so risked nuclear war. By 1991, however, the Soviet Union had died of its congenital diseases and anti-American terrorism was so widespread, and had proved to be so safe and profitable (today, American taxpayers finance the PLO's schools even as their textbooks teach hate for America), that any number of regimes were supporting it in some way. In short, the Tricontinental Organization's ambition had been fulfilled far less because of anything the organization ever did than because the U.S. government's feeble anti-terror policies had made terrorism so attractive.

Another Vietnam

THE U.S. HAS CONTINUED TO ATTRIBUTE acts of terrorism to individuals and specific organizations. It attributed 9/11, and terrorism itself, to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Truth is, while anti-American ter-



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rorism was born and raised by certain governments, and still has roots both material and psychological in many existing regimes, and though individual organizations are of some importance, the phenomenon has transcended all of those factors.

In 1960 the Muslims who engaged in anti-American terrorism did so mainly for secular political reasons. Between the mid-1970s and 2000 anti-American terrorism took on the aspect of civilizational war. Now, it is transcending even that, and is becoming the *raison d'être* of countless persons who feel hatred for America for any number of personal reasons. Until recently, for example, some men (and women) became terrorists because they were Muslim. Now, some become Muslim as an excuse for acting out their hatred of and disdain for Americans. The terrorism that plagues us is becoming merely one of the things that happen to nations that lose the respect of others—including sectors of their own populations.

Thus, even as bin Laden disappeared into irrelevance long before dying, and the bulk of those who ever saw him or communicated with him were killed, and as terrorists and terrorist acts increased by an order of magnitude, our ruling class has engaged in a fruitless, partisan debate about whether or not al-Qaeda or some other organization has been fought effectively.

The “war on terror” that President George W. Bush declared against nobody in particular largely reprised the Vietnam war. U.S. armed forces occupied Afghanistan and Iraq as they had occupied South Vietnam, and attempted to rid these countries of certain unsavory organizations and individuals. As in Vietnam, the U.S. government tried to pacify local warring factions and to broker coalition governments among them, all the while reforming the economy and society. Only nowadays, in keeping with its own evolving identity, our government fights “violent extremism” by denying any and all absolute truths (too divisive), as well as by foisting onto the rest of the world its own support for feminism and homosexuality. Not surprisingly, most of the Afghans and Iraqis who have fought us have done so because Americans got in the way of their local struggles and because our coarsening way of life is a moral affront to them.

At the same time, our ruling class directed “homeland security” (nominally) against all citizens equally rather than discriminately, against plausible enemies. It told Americans to trust one another less than ever, while trusting the authorities more. By branding as politically incorrect the obvious security focus on Muslims, our elites made the designation “dangerous extremists” a matter of their own likes and dislikes. The ruling class’s new

powers and discretion compounded its Wilsonian sense of entitlement to reform lesser folk. Accordingly, the decisions about who are the public’s true enemies continue to spring ominously from the private prejudices and interests, the partisan friendships and enmities, of the officials who make them.

Hence, computer searches find that the term “extremist” correlates in the major newspapers with “conservative” or “right-wing” at twelve times the rate it does with “liberal” or “left-wing”; and the Department of Homeland Security compiles dossiers against “pro-lifers” and such “antigovernment activists” as “homeschoolers” and “gun owners.” Why shouldn’t officials from the Internal Revenue Service to the Federal Elections Commission act according to what they hear from their superiors and what they read in the best media about who and what endangers America? Thus is the war on terror drawing Americans into a spiral of domestic strife.

The American statesmen of both parties who for the past hundred years thought that America’s peace and mission would be served by improving and reordering mankind got it backward: that effort has ended up undermining our national identity and fomenting war among ourselves. No amount of persuasion, inducement, or force could ever have made “democracy safe” among diverse peoples with unsteady and undemocratic political and religious sentiments. What’s more, because the understanding of freedom is not just divergent but often contradictory among different peoples, the latest version of American statesmen’s confusion of our own good with mankind’s—encapsulated in George W. Bush’s Second Inaugural statement that America cannot be free until the rest of the world is free as well—effectively condemns our country to a foreign policy athwart reality, one that cannot achieve the “peace among ourselves and with all nations” of which Abraham Lincoln spoke.

In 1900, former Secretary of State Richard Olney warned Americans that

[No great power]...can afford to regard itself as a sort of missionary nation charged with the rectification of errors and the redress of wrongs the world over. Were the United States to enter upon its new international role with the serious purpose of carrying out any such theory, it would not merely be laughed at but voted a nuisance by all other nations—and treated accordingly.

Olney’s prediction has come true. Why should anyone respect the United States today? And what are we going to do about it?

Swearing Allegiance

IN ORDER FOR AMERICA TO BE FREE AT home and respected abroad, the next generation of statesmen must dedicate themselves to recovering and applying the ways in which Americans once understood their country’s greatness. The connection between the danger and disdain that are ours today and our ruling class’s ideas is not accidental—any more than the safety and honor we once enjoyed were accidental to our statesmen’s ideas from George Washington to Theodore Roosevelt.

The ultimate source of our current dysfunction is our elites’ belief that they are morally and intellectually entitled to “nation-build” peoples abroad and Americans at home, whom they likewise deplore. In what may have been his most revealing speech, President Wilson urged his listeners in October 1914 to be their brothers’ keepers at home and abroad:

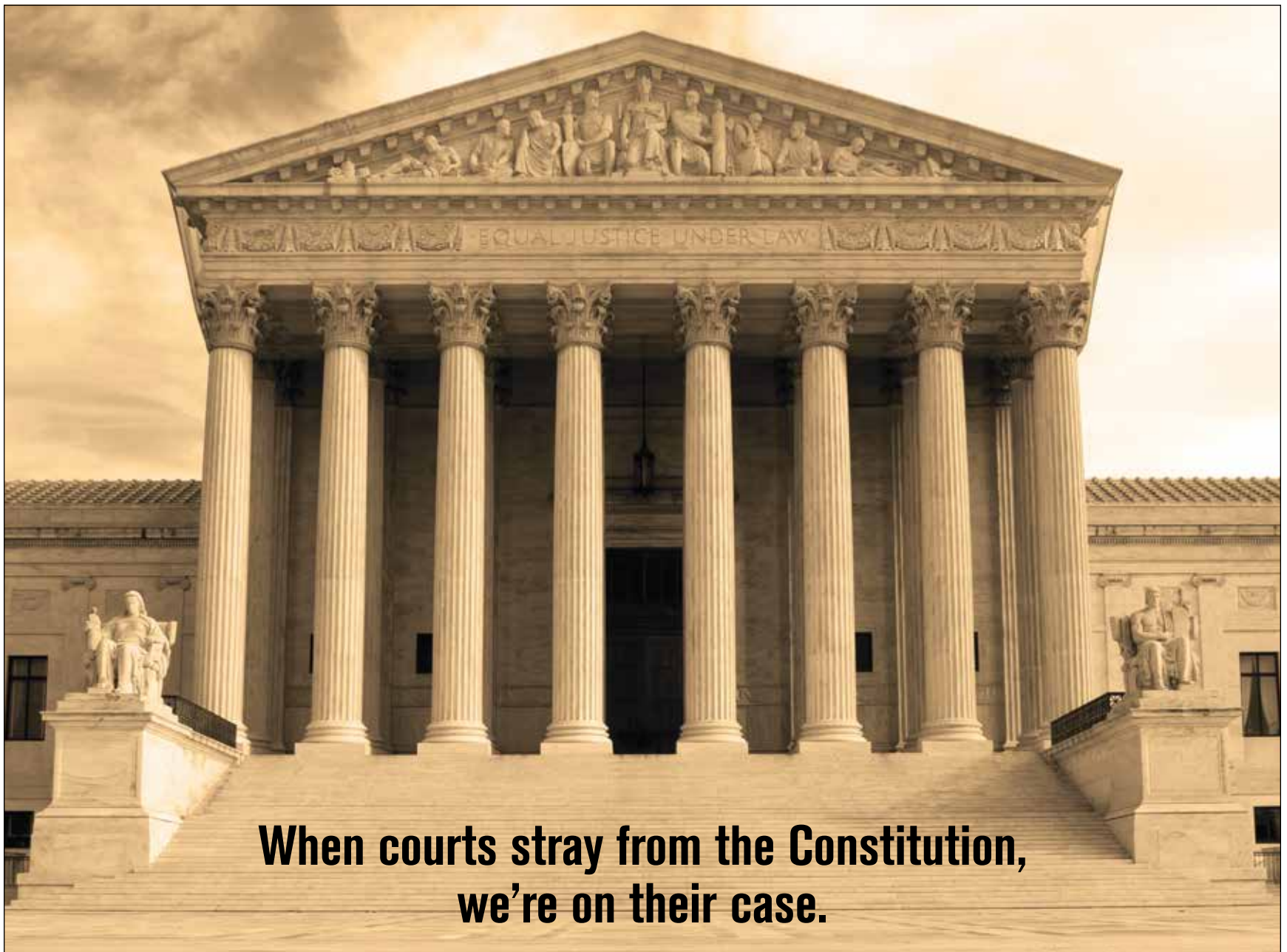
I remember a classmate of mine saying, “Why, man, can’t you let anything alone?” I said, “I let everything alone that you can show me is not itself moving in the wrong direction, but I am not going to let those things alone that I see are going downhill.”

Wilson and his successors have behaved as presumptive masters to all peoples, even those they were elected to serve.

America needs statesmen who view themselves as faithful representatives of our identity rather than as potentates entitled to reshape it, and who respect the discrete identities of foreign peoples. This begins with holding fast to the Declaration of Independence’s basic point: since “all men are created equal,” none has the right to rule another without his consent. Our government has fouled our lives and those of foreigners by pretending to possess rights and capacities it does not have. The remedy lies in focusing it onto its legitimate ends—that is, to guard America’s peace and to win its wars.

The domestic side of the “war on terror” has underlined how far our bipartisan ruling class has departed from what the founders called popular government (now called democracy). Failure to return to popular government as originally understood would be more terrible than any series of terrorist attacks.

During World War II and the Cold War, the U.S. government trusted the American people to guard the home front against enemies whose capacity for infiltration and terror far exceeded anything of which today’s terrorists are capable. (A revealing exception was FDR’s internment of Japanese-Americans, motivated by labor and business resentment



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of Japanese-American success rather than by any threat they posed.) Today we are told to follow our government in trusting only those with badges around their necks. Mistrust of government-wary Americans verges on hostility. Increasingly, the American people reciprocate that hostility. No democracy can survive this way.

Our ruling class defines as “extremism” the common-sense observation that America’s terrorist enemies are Muslims acting on behalf of causes promoted by many Muslim regimes and supported, to various degrees, by millions of Muslims. It indicts as “extremism” the American people’s resistance to its mandates of politically correct thoughts, words, and deeds.

Only a renewed dedication to following the people’s common sense can restore true security at home. The only proper way to designate against whom we must protect ourselves at home—in practice, how to do “profiling” properly—is to follow our Constitution. That means public debates followed by elections followed by the legislative process that culminates in votes and laws, as well as in administration of laws that respects the sovereign people’s sense.

Turning back from the past century’s misguided foreign policy does not mean trying to wash our hands of the world, any more than it means clipping the American eagle’s talons or turning it into an ostrich. On the contrary. Reearning respect will surely require the use of more power than a nation would need that had not already squandered so much of it. Backlogs of bad judgment, of inattention to vital interests, and of defeat can be worked off only by examples of good judgment and by victories that inspire confidence.

Overseas, our ruling class has assumed that terrorism is the work of “rogues” and that most if not all religions, nations, cultures, and subcultures are fundamentally inclined to peace and international order. In reality, what happens among foreigners results from characteristics and choices that are irreducibly their own; we Americans cannot “nation-build” others into something they are not. Respect for their separate character, as well as for our own, requires us to hold responsible those who are powerful among them when their policies and proxies injure us.

In short, the Age of Terror emanating from states, from would-be states, and from so-called failed states in no way eliminates the ancient rules of foreign relations. The first of these, from which all others follow, is to safeguard our way of life from foreign interference. That means pursuing peace by all means that may be required to keep us safe in our independence. As *The Federalist* explains, we intend to give no offense to foreigners, and

suffer none ourselves. Or, as Theodore Roosevelt put it a century later, we must speak softly and carry a big stick.

George Washington, to whom we owe so much else, put the same truth this way: “Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all.” That is because our overriding business with foreign nations is to have as little trouble as possible with them. Washington named no substantive objectives for our foreign relations—only peace. He had learned the hard way in the 1790s that involvement in others’ wars hazards peace among Americans themselves. We ought to be learning that, too. Since quarrels and wars are sometimes unavoidable, John Quincy Adams warned that we must “enter the lists in no cause other than our own.” Any peace depends on the character of whoever wins the war.

Keeping *our* peace and winning *our* wars is both the end and the means of securing respect. In peace and war, this means never letting favors go unrewarded or injuries unavenged, making commitments smaller than the capacity to fulfill them, and fulfilling the ones that we make.

Reciprocal respect is the aim of peaceful foreign relations. “Reciprocity” may well have been the word that America’s founding generation used most often in describing its international aims. Gauging the extent to which reciprocity is possible is as much a challenge in our time as it was in theirs. Accepting the reality of others’ sovereignty over their own business is the prerequisite for reciprocity. The distinction between “our business” and “their business” is the natural limiting principle of international affairs (as it is of interpersonal affairs). While others may forbear much that we might do in our own interest, they will not stand for anything we might presume to do in theirs.

Because our peace, like anyone’s, depends on the power to defend it, military preparedness is the first priority of our business. Our preparedness must match any possible conflict in which our business may involve us. For example, it is imprudent and self-discrediting to involve America in controversies with powers capable of launching ballistic missiles at us until and unless we have a respectable anti-missile defense. In our time, a geopolitics worthy of respect has to be backed by missile defense.

Force, in all its forms, is fundamental to respect. Whether any foreigners like us or hate us is strictly their business. We have zero say over what they may or may not find offensive. But whether anyone fears offending us is our inalienable responsibility.

Especially when we judge an item of business to require the use of force, the pursuit of

peace by the most rapid means possible must be the guiding principle of our military operations. This is because the preservation of our character transcends all other business, and because history does not record instances of people’s mores improving in wartime.

The Muslim World

HAVING BEEN GOVERNED BADLY FOR so long, America begins to resemble Rome in the 4th century A.D., as described by Montesquieu: “there was no people so small or weak that it could not do them harm.”

Guarding ourselves from the dangers emanating from Muslim civilization’s decay is the least of our problems, though it is emblematic of them all. These dangers stem not so much from any resources, strength, or attractiveness on the part of our enemies as they do from our own bad judgment and weakness of character.

Objectively, the Muslim world is no more a geopolitical challenge today than it was two centuries ago. Even less than when Napoleon conquered Egypt could any Muslim army today contend with a major Western one. A nuclear-armed Iran, though more formidable than now, would be no exception. None of today’s Muslim countries feed themselves. They produce a smaller (and declining) proportion of the world’s goods and services than in colonial days. It is no coincidence that the onset of terror from the Muslim world coincided with the U.S. and British governments’ disastrous decisions between 1966 and 1973 to accede to these countries’ assertion of sovereignty over the oil on which they happen to sit, to the production of which they do not contribute, and the revenues from which they misuse grossly. Easily, we could restore Muslim countries to the abject poverty they earn. The bitter divisions among Muslim potentates are just as easily exploited. The few among them who are willing to die in religious-political frenzy can be accommodated. No outsiders envy their way of life. Without mixing with them, we could do whatever we pleased to whoever among them would defy us, and to the few among ourselves who sympathize with them.

Why then have troubles from that part of mankind consumed our attention in this century? Ridding ourselves of them would not require doing all we could. The minimum would suffice, namely, to hold the potentates in any given place, whose identities are known publicly, responsible *with their lives* for any incitement or anything else that comes from those places that we consider injurious to us. This is consistent with international law as well as with common sense, and does not



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require any sort of occupation of hostile territory. Secondly, today's Muslim world being even more consumed by internecine warfare than it has been in many centuries, the beginning of wisdom for us is to recognize that this warfare is their business, and not to interfere with its bloody and exhausting course.

Protecting ourselves from the troubles of the Muslim world requires that our officials dispense with crippling political correctness, and face reality. The U.S. government's official position, as President Obama has stated repeatedly, is that the self-declared Islamic State is not Islamic. But the people who run I.S. and who actually have Islamic credentials think otherwise. Undersecretary of State Rick Stengel's statement that "ISIL is bereft of ideas, they're bankrupt of ideas. It's not an organization that is animated by ideas," only confuses ourselves.

Being clear with ourselves, that orthodox Islam—never mind the Wahabi version that rules Saudi Arabia and the Sunni Gulf states—dictates savage cruelty toward any resistance to its rule, should, at the very least, keep our government from continuing to empower, enrich, and accredit persons who have done, are doing, and will continue to do harm to us. A new generation of statesmen must dispel their predecessors' dreams that the Muslim world, and the entire "Third World," will rise to new ways of life superior in justice and morality to our own. Once we recognize who these peoples are and resolve to defend our principles and identity, that set of storm clouds will loom small.

The same cannot be said about our other foreign policy problems.

Greater Challenges

RUSSIA'S ATTEMPT TO RECONSTITUTE as much as it can of the old Soviet Union poses a classic geopolitical challenge: the possibility that all of Europe might be dominated by a hostile power. Russia's leaders think in Soviet terms and possess a major stock of nuclear arms. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the awful possibility that any quarrel with Russia might involve nuclear war, our resistance to its expansion is highly unlikely to lead to nuclear war because the use of such weapons would be counterproductive to Russia's purpose.

Meeting Russia's challenge, somewhat like meeting the Muslim world's, depends less on military force than on mustering our own political resolve. Today, Russia is weak: its army's reach is short, its fragile economy consists of oil and arms. It has to sell oil and gas more urgently than others have to buy them,

and is vulnerable to shifts in energy prices. Its oligarchic rulers sit uneasily atop a declining, cynical population. Its main asset in its drive against Ukraine, the Baltics, Belarus, and Georgia is these states' near total lack of military power and correct sense that their European neighbors to the west will not help them. The Poles, in turn, and with an awful sense of *déjà vu*, recognize that Germany would rather work with "the Bear" than help Poland defend itself.

Western Europe's readiness to acquiesce to Russia's domination of the former Soviet Empire makes it all too clear that, were Russia to succeed, Europe would not resist any demands that Russia might make. Thus Russia would become Eurasia's hegemon, radiating power into the Atlantic. This is the danger for us. But we must be clear about the nature of the problem: which is not Russia's power, but rather the civilizational collapse of Europe's capacity to resist Russia, or the Islamic world, or anything else for that matter. This means that in order to safeguard our Atlantic flank, which is of high interest, we will have to act without the help, and often in defiance, of some of the countries whose independence we must protect.

Though the U.S. cannot exert decisive military force deep in Eurasia, it does not need to do so, much less to fight Russia militarily anywhere. Supplying military hardware to the peoples who are threatened directly by Russian military power would be enough to make them nuts sufficiently hard for the Russians to crack as to make doing so a daunting domestic problem for Russia's rulers. America's main leverage against Russia's resumption of something like the Soviet Union is economic. We have the decisive power to cut Russia off from the world through secondary economic sanctions. The affected countries would protest vigorously, but none could afford to cut themselves off from dealing with America and with all the others who do. Russia would have no choice but to yield, and fast.

We have not employed this decisive instrument of statecraft for the same reason Western Europe is acquiescing in the new Russian empire: imposing major sanctions would result in many of our own citizens losing business. Until now, politically influential business interests, in league with their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere, have made sure that such economic sanctions as the U.S. government applies cause little if any economic disruption to their bottom line. Both Republican and Democratic administrations have used non-disruptive sanctions to express displeasure at Russia's expansion first in Georgia and then in Ukraine, but cheap sanctions are not serious, and serious ones are not cheap.

Our choice regarding the Russian storm that is moving toward the Atlantic is straightforward: we can stop it, probably without bloodshed, by bending short-term economic interest to long-term geopolitical interest, or we can continue the kind of crony capitalism that prefers making money over keeping our peace.

With regard to China's drive for hegemony over the Western Pacific, our choices are anything but simple, and are fraught with all manner of danger. They are a severe test of statesmanship.

Our war in the Pacific 70 years ago resulted from ill-considered involvement in the region's ancient animosities. Though our victory buried them under our overwhelming power, the rise first of Japan and then of South Korea and Southeast Asia to productivity and wealth, and since then of China to power and ambition, is making the *pax Americana*—from which we and others have benefited—a thing of the past. To avoid repeating the errors of the 1920s and '30s, we must resolve to bring our ends and means into balance.

Our post-1945 commitments in the region remain, even as our power to fulfill them declines in absolute terms and especially in relation to China's. Without exception, the region's governments fear China. Many have territorial contentions with it and racial animosities toward it. The decline of American power is leading Japan ever closer to building military forces to rival China's. The Philippines scramble to hold onto what remains of U.S. power there. Taiwan and Singapore worry. South Korea, for its part, is listening to China's increasingly un-subtle offer to broker the Korean peninsula's unification if South Korea will exchange its security alliance with the U.S. for one with China, oriented against Japan.

Danger of Chinese hegemony, of war among the countries of the region, of alignments that might well shift against us, and of our own military intervention under unfavorable circumstances is all the more serious because the military capabilities are great on all sides. Yet any possible confrontation would take place in the context of the massive economic interdependence (even symbiosis) between the countries of the region and between them and ourselves.

The military situation is straightforward: China's strategy is to prevent interference by the United States and to establish military control over the western Pacific some hundreds of miles offshore and over as many of the islands there as possible. It has developed and is perfecting ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as aircraft and submarines optimized to do just that. It intends its small but growing force of

intercontinental ballistic missiles to force the U.S. to realize that protecting Taiwan, Japan, and other nations in the region risks the destruction of American cities. China has anti-satellite weapons with which it would try to destroy the space-based communications and intelligence assets on which the U.S. military relies. In response, though our government has “pivoted” naval and air forces from other regions to the Pacific, the total U.S. military inventory in the region continues to decline.

More importantly, the U.S. has no military strategy for safeguarding the aircraft carriers that would be its principal instrument in a military confrontation. We have no defenses against China’s long-range missiles and no means of defending our Pacific bases against the medium-range missiles that would be aimed at them.

U.S. officials have emphasized their faith that China’s rise as a world power is driven by enlightened self-interest and that it will lead to its internal liberalization as well as good global citizenship. None of its neighbors is persuaded. China’s political system, driven as it is by ruthless, amoral, intra-oligarchic competition, seems likelier to be moderated by the seriousness of opposition to its immoderate behavior—if by anything.

As always, the more complex the challenge the more that wise statesmen must rely on the fundamentals of their craft. The American Founders lived by the maxim “if you would have peace, prepare for war”—and so should we. Preparing to defeat China’s military plans furthers rather than contradicts our desire to continue mutually beneficial economic relations with it.

Not least of the perversions of statecraft that compose Henry Kissinger’s legacy is the concept of “creative ambiguity.” The current generation of officials has accustomed themselves to imprecision in policymaking and diplomacy, believing that they thereby “preserve their options.” No, they create options for others. A new generation of statesmen, reversing Kissinger’s baleful legacy, should strive for the utmost clarity in our relations with China. Serious, clear, unambiguous policy that communicates clearly to all what the United States is ready, willing, and able to do is the key to such peace as may be possible.

Let us follow the example of John Quincy Adams’s relations with Russia, the despotism par excellence of his day, which had proclaimed the supremacy of monarchical over republican ways and had signaled its intention to expand its settlements in North America. Adams, wanting peace and friendship with the tsar while keeping more of his settlements out of North America and asserting our own identity, left no

doubt in Russia’s mind about where America stood on these matters. Today’s America has far more sticks and carrots than Adams did. But these are valid only insofar as they answer, precisely and satisfactorily, the questions in the minds of the governments with which we deal. What plans and means do we have to defeat what possible Chinese military moves? Does China understand what our limits are? Does everyone else? Does China, and do others, understand what our objectives in the Pacific are and that our means match our ends? Do we have in mind and can we sustain a relationship with Japan that satisfies its concerns? Just as Adams left no doubt about where America stood, neither should any statesmen today leave any doubt in Chinese minds.

A Prayer

AS THE STORM CLOUDS GATHER IN THE Pacific, America’s shrinking navy has allocated \$3.5 billion to develop biofuels so that it can meet its goal of drawing half its energy from renewable sources by the year 2020. That is because the current administration deems what it calls “anthropogenic climate change” to be the most serious problem the country faces.

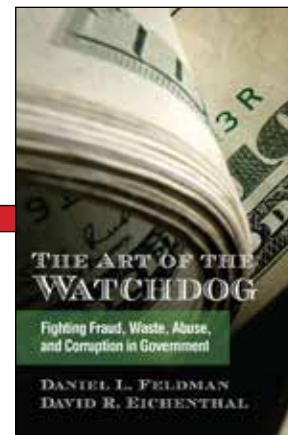
As the self-declared Islamic State—Saddam Hussein’s security cadre leading Wahabi faithful from around the globe—beheads Americans in what used to be Syria and Iraq and invites others to imitate it, America’s president trumpets his intention to “destroy” it while the U.S. armed forces carry out an average of six air sorties per day against it destroying mostly empty buildings.

As Russia’s regular forces drop pretenses of being Ukrainian dissidents and run over a Ukrainian army that the United States had persuaded to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for a guarantee of security, the U.S. government’s assistance to Ukraine consists of “non-lethal equipment” featuring our army’s disgusting MREs, “meals ready to eat.” At least it might have treated the beleaguered Ukrainian military to rations from France or Italy.

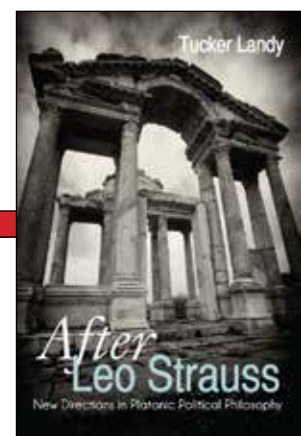
To restore respect and secure peace, America would have to be governed very differently from the way it has been for a long time. Let us pray that God may “Stand beside her and guide her / Through the night with a light from above.”

Angelo M. Codevilla is a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute, professor emeritus of International Relations at Boston University, and the author, most recently, of To Make and Keep Peace: Among Ourselves and with All Nations (Hoover Institution Press).

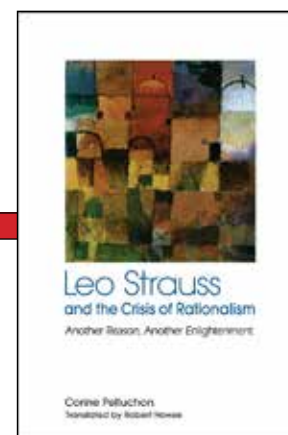
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