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THE GOOD FIGHT:

LIBERALS, CONSERVATIVES, AND THE WAR ON TERROR

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I want to welcome everyone here today. I want to welcome back my dear colleague, Peter Beinart. We held this event for many reasons, one of which is we missed him so much and we wanted him back at Brookings. And also, my friend, Tod Lindberg.

I want to begin by noting that, as a journalist, I always like to be on top of the news. So, this morning, by I suppose an act of the spirit, a review of this book popped into my email queue that Peter was not aware of. I actually think it is an important review because it says a lot about what Peter has accomplished in this book. It is by another Todd with somewhat different views than Tod Lindberg, Todd Gitlin who is a professor at Columbia University and was an opponent of the Iraq War that Peter endorsed. I just want to read the first paragraph because I think it will give an indication of why Peter's book is so rich and so worthy of attention, discussion, and debate.

Todd Gitlin begins: "Like Francis Fukuyama before him, Peter Beinart, with his book, is trying to dig himself out of the trap he dug with his own catchy article that led to the book."

Now you begin that and say, this is going to be a piece trashing Peter; not at all.

Todd goes on: "But this is not an empty provocation. It is a contribution. Beinart's manifesto is stimulating. It is by no means flawless."

You can cut that out when you put it on the back of the paperback.

"It is by no means flawless, but it helps along a necessary discussion about what

liberals are obliged to say and do about American foreign policy, for we are so obligated, and I doubt there are more than a few handfuls in the United States of America who disagree, although there are some so deranged by George W. Bush as to refuse to agree for fear that if they agree with him that the U.S lies north of Mexico, say, they're selling out. Here are just a few observations," and Todd goes on.

That is the beginning of the discussion of Peter.

Peter is the sort of person who makes you really jealous when you read his resume. He graduated from Yale University in 1993, and he won both Rhodes and Marshall Scholarships, both a Rhodes and a Marshall Scholarship for graduate study at Oxford University. Now, liberals are supposed to believe in the redistribution of wealth, privilege, and opportunity, and I am pleased to say that this resume also reports that he declined the Marshall Scholarship, therefore redistributing it to some other worthy person.

He was our own Steve Hess, our Senior Fellow and dear colleague, Steve Hess's intern for a year. Is that right? For a year. He was a reporter/researcher at *The New Republic* before attending University College Oxford. He got his Master's degree in International Relations. He returned to *The New Republic* as Managing Editor. He was a Senior Editor in June of 1997 and became Editor two years later. He writes the TRB column in *The New Republic* which is reprinted in Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post* and other newspapers. He writes a monthly column for the *Washington Post* distributed by its syndicate. And he has written just about everywhere else in the world except, as you would see if you read the book, in Pravda. He has appeared on television many times on everything from the Al Franken to the Hugh Hewitt Show.

I am going to say one word about his book before I go.

I also want to introduce my friend, Tod Lindberg, who is kind enough to join us. There is some debate over whether you should go after Peter from the Left or the Right. We decided to have somebody go at him from the Right. I suspect there are people in the audience who might choose the other way around, and we will have a serious question period here.

Tod is a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is Editor of the Hoover Institution's *Policy Review* which is very interesting. I read it. I am an avid reader. It is a bimonthly journal of essays, social criticism, and reviews. His areas of research include Political Theory in American Politics. He is the Editor of *Beyond Paradise and Power: Europe, America, and the Future of a Troubled Partnership*. He is a contributing Editor to the *Weekly Standard*. He has a weekly column in the *Washington Times* where he edits the editorial page. He is also General Editor with Peter Berkowitz of the Hoover Institution Press' series, *Hoover Studies in Politics, Economics, and Society* published in association with Roman and Littlefield.

I admire Peter's struggle with liberalism because I think it is an absolutely necessary debate for our time. Peter and I share a deep affection for Reinhold Neiber, and I just want to cite a Neiber citation from his book. Talk about nuance, listen to this. Neiber, in talking about American power in the world said, "We must take and must continue to take morally hazardous actions to preserve our civilization."

This is back at the beginning of the Cold War in the 1940s. "We must exercise our power, but we ought neither to believe that a nation is capable of perfect disinterestedness

in its exercise nor become complacent about particular degrees of interest and passion which corrupt the justice by which the exercise of power is legitimized."

In some ways, you might say this book is about saying that nuance is strong and not weak. I think that what Peter is arguing, as I take it, is for a foreign policy that is vigorous in the legitimate use of power but scrupulous about whether its use is indeed legitimate. It is bold in defending freedom but thoughtful about making sure that it is defended in ways that actually advance its cause. It is questioning of our own motives, but it is also opposed to allowing a legitimate self-questioning to paralyze us in times of crisis. It is a hard balance to maintain. It is an essential balance to maintain. I salute Peter in trying to help us figure out how we can do it.

I give you Peter Beinart.

MR. BEINART: It is really a pleasure to be here. It is true that this book did come in part out of my grappling with my support for the Iraq War which I grappled with throughout the whole writing of the book and ended up writing a mea culpa for. Since the book came out, someone asked me recently how I could have been so wrong about something so important so young in my life. I said I have always been precocious. Some people, it takes them many, many decades to get something so wrong.

This book was also a product of Brookings, a place that I came to, working for Stephen Hess when I was probably about the age of some of the interns who might be here in the audience. I spent a lot of time at the Brookings salad bar, trying to find the lightest vegetables since they measured by the pound and I didn't have very much money. It was just an enormous honor and privilege to be able to come back for most of last year to write

this book and to be surrounded by Pietro and Tom Mann and E.J., whom I had always looked to and had inspirations from and then I was sharing a hall with.

The book was also inspired, to some degree, by something that George W. Bush said and something that David Brooks said. The line of George W. Bush kind of haunted me in the days of the Kerry election, and I was wrong about that, too. I was sure Kerry was going to win. It was "You may not always agree with me, but at least you know where I stand."

The line of David Brooks was something along the lines of "Liberals may talk very well about health care policy, but they don't know who they want to put on their ties."

Again, before I came to Brookings, I never wore a tie. So that hadn't been a particularly big problem for me, but his point was that liberals were good on policy but not good on their own intellectual history. I began to think. I was down the hall from kind of a glittering exception to that general rule, E.J., who did such a masterful job of tracing both conservative and liberal intellectual history in *Why Americans Hate Politics*, but that was really written at a time when domestic politics were more dominant in the American political spectrum, the American political debate than they are today. I began to feel that particularly on foreign policy, liberals had a very, very strong sense of what they did not like but not a very good sense of what they believed and particularly how it connected to their own traditions.

That led to a very reactive, as Todd Gitlin nicely pointed out, axiom that whatever George W. Bush is for, we are against. That was particularly brought home to me in the debate over the Dubai ports deal where Democratic politicians, with the encouragement of not all liberal commentators but quite a few, decided that they were going to demagogue

this issue, even though all the experts basically said there is no national security threat here. It seemed to me that this should be exactly the kind of thing that liberals should take as an opportunity to show that this is not a war against Islam, and I think that liberals and Democrats to some degree ran off a cliff on that because the intellectual void had been filled simply by hostility to George W. Bush.

It was a little like the Democrats' Panama Canal moment. Finally, the Democrats after having suffered at the hands of jingoism for all these years, couldn't imagine their good fortune at the fact that they could be against the experts and on the side of the populist jingoistic impulses of the American people, but I thought it was wrong.

I also thought that looking at the Democratic national security document that came out several months ago, that again I thought had a lot of good principles in it but what was striking to me was that it had very little about democracy promotion whatsoever. It was really, in some ways, a purely reactive document. What has George W. Bush not done? He has not killed Osama bin Laden. We want to spend more on Homeland Security. But no larger vision and a series of policies I think the only thing they really had in common was they were opposite of what George W. Bush was doing.

I went rummaging around in the history of the early Cold War in particular, thinking about how liberals responded to this new era in American national security, and I tried to tell a story of a liberalism that has an argument with both the Left and the Right. It is hard to tell both of those stories in one talk like this, so I am going to focus more on liberalism's argument or conversation with the Right, even though in some ways the book has gotten more attention for what I talk about in liberalism's argument with the Left, but I am sure

we will get into that as well.

The key figure, the guy for the ties in this story is Reinhold Neiber, who I think had a remarkably relevant criticism of both what he would call the purist Left and the self-deluding Right. The conservative story that I think Neiber was reacting against — and I was very struck by going back and reading conservative intellectuals from the 1950s — had to do with self-doubt. Many people have argued that the roots of George W. Bush's foreign policy since 9/11 lie in the origins of neoconservatism. George Packer has made this argument, for instance, that it really comes out of Scoop Jackson's office or something like that in the early 1970s.

But what really struck me were the similarities between key conservative intellectuals in the 1950s — particularly James Burnham, the most important foreign policy intellectual in the national review orbit, also Whittaker Chambers and Buckley himself, and even the rhetoric of someone like John Foster Dulles, even though in practice, he often acted quite differently — and what you hear from conservatives today.

What really struck me was the conservative terror of self-doubt, this looking at America's enemies, the Nazis and now the Communists, and seeing that what made them so formidable was not their economic power or their military power but their strength of will, their fanatical absolute self-confidence, their absolute conviction that they represented right and we represented wrong, that they represented good and we represented evil. Conservatives were looking at America and saying: We see no such strength of will here. We see a society that inclines towards relativism, that lacks moral clarity.

Again, we tend to think about this as a conversation that takes place after Vietnam,

but what really struck me again and again was how much a part of what the conservative narrative of the 1950s, the idea that the New Deal which had pushed America toward socialism and had led America down the road to serfdom in the famous phrase, had blurred the distinction between American freedom and Soviet Communism, and that it needed to be very clearly restored if America was going to be able to prevail because ultimately this was a test of will. Very smart Conservatives supported Joe McCarthy while recognizing that he was kind of a thug. I think because they felt like finally someone has drawn the essential line in the sand, saying that communism will not be tolerated in institutions of American life.

Again, after Vietnam, the sense that America has lost, has fallen prey to self-doubt, that we don't believe in our virtue anymore. Then Ronald Reagan coming in and saying, famously, the age of self-doubt is over.

Then again, George W. Bush, after 9/11, I think particularly one of the things that distinguished conservative and liberal reactions to 9/11 was the sense you got was mostly conservative. William Bennett wrote a book purely about this point called *Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terror*, that basically one of our potential great weaknesses in this new struggle, as in the 1990s in particular when the Baby Boomers had taken over power, and we had become a society of moral relativists, a society that lacks the ability for moral judgment, and that ultimately is what makes us weak.

George W. Bush famously refers to the Axis of Evil, referring back to Reagan's 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, talking about an evil empire. Reagan, in that speech, is quoting Whittaker Chambers from *Witness* in the 1950s. You see this

kind of conservative lineage about the importance of the role of government restoring America's will and restoring America's faith in itself and telling Americans that we really represent good in a struggle of good and evil.

I think that has inclined conservatives — I am talking about the conservative movement. The conservative movement has at times been quite far from the center of the Republic Party as it was in the 1950s and 1960s but the conservative movement which has obviously gained more and more power in the Republic government — to look very, very skeptically and with great worry about criticisms that the United States was not living up to its ideals. Again, if you believe that America is weak of will and that self-doubt is one of our great Achilles heels, the suggestion that in fact we are really not so great after all, that we are doing these things that don't necessarily mean that we are acting up to our ideals is potentially a very sinister attack on our weakest point, our strength of will, which will create ripples of self-doubt that will be very debilitating in our ability to struggle against our enemies.

The conservative story that I try to take from Neiber and then apply, I think says something quite different. It says that in a strange way it is precisely our recognition that we are not inherently good that makes us potentially a great nation. It is precisely the recognition that we are fallible that leads us to struggle against the injustice that is in our own society and is in ourselves and leads us to become a better country. What makes America an exceptional nation is not the fact that we are destined to be an exceptional nation, not the fact that we inherently represent virtue in a struggle of good and evil, but precisely because we recognize the fact that it is not fated, that it is not destined that we do

the kinds of the things that the predatory powers of the past and that our enemies do not do. Ultimately, it is precisely because we recognize that it is not inevitable that we are better than our enemies, that we become better than our enemies because we don't fall prey to what he would have called the self-deluding idealism of thinking that everything that is done in a just cause is in fact just. For him, that was the essential difference between the United States and the Communists, but it was also, very importantly, ultimately the source of strength for the United States.

A key part of the liberal story, going back even further, of course, than I start my story in 1946, is the idea of the interdependence, the idea that the United States can guarantee neither its security nor its prosperity on its own which leads to this continual effort to build international institutions which will allow the United States to come together with other nations to manage the international systems. But I think where Neiber adds something very, very important is the idea that it is not only that we need the help of other countries to manage problems but in fact that we want it.

John Eikenberry of Princeton has written very eloquently about this in his *Concept of Strategic Restraint*, that we, in fact, want restraints on our power precisely because we don't want imperial temptation, because we recognize that as a fallible nation that we can be corrupted by the temptations of absolute power as well.

George Kent had this wonderful kind of idea that the Soviet Union, for all its superficial differences, was an empire and that empires always cracked from the periphery. If the United States could resist the imperial temptation, if we could build a relationship with Western Europe, obviously, we were less successful and admirable often in doing that

in the Third World, but if we can build a relationship with Western Europe and perhaps East Asia that was based on consent, on persuasion, not on command, that in fact our alliance would be flexible enough to endure.

So you see the United States, at the end of World War II, famously with 50 percent of the world's GDP, making a conscious decision to bind its power within international institutions like NATO. Historians like John Lewis Gaddis have pointed out how remarkable it was if you look at the decisionmaking within NATO, how striking it was how much power the Europeans had in various decisions that NATO took even though, given the facts on the ground, they should have been entitled to very little power at all.

The second point, which I think is very important rhetorically for liberals who have been scratching our heads since George W. Bush's very beautiful second inaugural speech where he picked up the Wilsonian kind of mantle and talks about spreading freedom around the world, is to recognize that the people I am writing about, that I talk about in the first chapter of my book, "Neiber: Americans for Democratic Action," did not talk about the United States and American democracy as a fixed model for the world. Arthur Schlessinger, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Reinhold Neiber would not have said in 1953 that we represented a fixed model of democracy for the world. George W. Bush's speeches have a tendency to suggest that we stand behind the finish line that we have crossed, and we wave to the benighted countries of the world, particularly the Islamic world, and we encourage them to come onto our side.

The liberal vision that in fact, if anything inspires the world and the United States, it is America's own struggle against its own capacity for injustice to become a better nation,

that we are fellow strugglers for democracy with other countries, and that it is precisely that we are not complacent about our actions. Precisely because not being complacent about your own actions and struggling to become a better society, precisely because that is hard, and lecturing other countries is easy, that is really what can inspire people around the world.

One of the most moving things for me when I was researching this book was a column by the Jordanian journalist, Rami Khoury, where he says, "If you want to understand what inspires the democracy movement in the Middle East today from the United States, don't look at George W. Bush's speeches. Look at the Civil Rights Movement between 1956 and 1964," because people in the Muslim world saw the most powerful, prosperous country on Earth still struggling and acknowledging its own capacity for injustice and struggling to become a better nation.

I think, clearly, in a world where our actions are ever more scrutinized through communication technologies by others, this is in some ways even more relevant to today. Chester Bowles, who was Kennedy's Deputy Secretary of State, said, "The world will see us as no better than we really are," and the world can see us in all our nakedness much more easily today than they could even at that time.

Another point that I think is very critical in the liberal story, and it comes out particularly powerfully in John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign against Richard Nixon and struck me as having relevance to today, was this idea that ultimately unless America became a stronger country at home, we would not be able to bear the burdens of freedom around the world. Kennedy loved these nautical metaphors which, I think after John

Kerry's windsurfing expedition, we should probably put aside. He was always saying things like, "If we lie at anchor at home, the tide of freedom will go out around the world."

In Kennedy's first debate with Richard Nixon, which was the domestic policy debate — and I think this really could have been lessons for John Kerry in the domestic policy debate — he gets the first question in Chicago where the debate is being held, and he says, "This is the domestic policy debate, but I want to start by saying that Nikita Khrushchev is in New York tonight, and everything I am going to say about domestic policy bears on our ability to be a strong enough nation to compete with the Soviet Union and to bear the burdens of freedom around the world." Then he talks about American industrial capacity. He talks about poverty he has seen in West Virginia. He talks about black children not graduating from high school.

He seems to me extremely important in two ways. The first is America's macroeconomic strength. This is obviously a story that many people have told at places like Brookings and will continue to tell, the question about how the United States, given our fiscal policies in which we pass large upper income tax cuts that threaten to hemorrhage revenue just at the time when the Baby Boomers retire. There is a fundamental contradiction between that and our effort to prosecute a long war in which we are going to have a very large sustained military budget and very, very high sustained Homeland Security spending, not to mention the kind of foreign aid efforts that the 9/11 Commission and the Arab Human Development Report suggested that Omer Taspinar here at Brookings has written very, very well about the need to try to do something for economic development and educational opportunity in the Muslim world and the way that

is fundamentally at odds with the defunding of government which is part of the conservative project, Grover Norquist's project, in the past couple of decades.

Beyond that, individual economic security is absolutely critical to America's ability to sustain a long term engagement in the world. One of the reasons the United States could be so comparatively generous, not just in the Marshall Plan which is an astonishing amount of money in comparative terms, but even something, although less successful, like the Alliance for Progress which is really a lot of money. I think the ability to do that has something to do with the fact that the life of average Americans, particularly working class Americans, gets dramatically better between 1947 and 1973, particularly if you think of Americans looking back to 1947 to the Depression and thinking that another depression could well be around the corner, to see where American's lives go between there and the mid-1970s. The APSA did a wonderful volume on this which shows that it is not just that average standards of living went up but the working class rise was actually a higher percentile than middle and upper class Americans.

I think that one of the great dangers for liberals, it seems to me, is to talk about foreign policy in isolation and without the recognition that we do the kinds of things that people on the domestic side of Brookings have talked about, which is basically try to talk about how we repair a social compact in which people used to rely on employers to provide health care and defined benefit pensions and no longer do anymore. The government really has not stepped into, in a creative way, that reality. The average two-parent American family works 12 weeks more per year than it did in 1969 because the only way people have maintained a middle class standard of living is for women to enter into the workforce in

very, very large numbers which puts enormous strain on families.

As Jacob Hacker writes about in his very, very good upcoming book, *The Great Risk Shift*, the number of bankruptcies is up dramatically amongst middle class Americans and economic instability is up dramatically. If liberals try to preach generosity abroad in a society where many middle class Americans don't feel there is very much generosity at home, ultimately, we will continually be faced with nativist, populist backlashes of people saying, "What are you doing for me in my backyard?"

The last point I want to make is to say something a little more concretely about what I think this means today. As I said earlier, one of the great recognitions of Cold War liberals and earlier than the Cold War with Roosevelt and even Wilson, was this recognition of interdependence; the recognition that America could not secure its prosperity or its security alone. They had seen depression and fascism emerge from Europe and imperil the United States.

It seems to me a core reality of the world today -- and this is certainly not an idea that I have come up with myself. It's an idea that many, many people have explicated much better than me. One of the core realities of the world today is that we are much more interdependent than ever before, that there are many more pathologies often encapsulated in far fewer people from much weaker countries that can threaten the United States in many more ways. An obscure country like Afghanistan can incubate the jihadists of 9/11. A rural village in China can incubate a pandemic that spreads across the world. The Thai banking system can collapse and almost plunge the world into recession.

Tony Blair talks about this a great deal, and yet it has not really migrated across the

Atlantic to the Democratic Party in the United States. What Blair called in a 1999 speech in the wake of Kosovo, a doctrine of international community, meaning that we had to become more involved, not less involved, in how other countries govern themselves because countries that don't govern themselves well are more of a threat to us than they ever were before. We need to be more involved in trying to create an international standard for governments to govern themselves in a whole range of ways — economically, in public health, in human rights.

The Neiberian insight, which I think is the critical complement to that, perhaps one that someone like me did not recognize nearly well enough as I was in the wake of the Iraq War. The Neiberian insight in response to that is that if America tries to do too much alone, we then start to look to the world like an empire. It is not just that our capacities are limited as we have all seen that they are, but it is in fact, as Neiber famously said, "We should not expect the world to take our good intentions on faith." We should not delude ourselves in thinking we can unilaterally act, tinker under the hoods of other countries without being corrupted by our own self-interest that will in fact lead other countries to think we are not benevolent.

The way you square that circle, the way the liberals of the early Cold War squared that circle was the building of powerful international institutions and the recognition that in fact the more aggressively, the more proactively America wants to act in the world, the more powerful the institutions that we act through have to become. I think this is one of the failures of the Clinton Administration and certainly the Bush Administration which has wanted to go in exactly the opposite direction, that this should be a new era of international

institution building.

There needs to be a great deal of work about what the international institutions are going to be that can allow legitimate intervention, legitimate standard setting in extreme cases, even intervention into the sovereignty of other countries to prevent other countries from incubating pathologies that will strike the United States in a legitimate way. A critical part of that is the recognition that the United States does not stand outside of those institutions, setting its own standard for what is morally right in how it governs itself, but we see ourselves as part of that, recognizing that we aspire to a higher standard ourselves, that we are part of this discussion, and we do not stand above and beyond this discussion. We say, yes, you live up to a higher standard, but for us, any suggestion that we might have to improve our behavior in order to make an international institution work is met by trotting out John Bolton.

I think it is precisely that action that produces such anger and hypocrisy and undoes the efforts, even when the Bush Administration is actually promoting the right series of reforms to the U.N. The general notion that the United States itself defines its moral law and the rest of the world has to live by things like the International Conventions has been so debilitating to the United States.

In my view, there is a history starting from the late 1940s of conservatives oscillating between an isolationism that you saw reappear in the 1990s and a kind of neoimperialism. What joins the two--even though one is very ambitious and then one is very modest--what joins the two is the rejection of interdependence, the lack of belief that in fact America needs profound cooperation, institutionalized cooperation; not coalitions of the willing but

institutionalized cooperation in order to secure itself.

I think, and this is just a guess about the future, that will be the greater challenge for liberals in the future than the neoimperial project that George W. Bush started embarking on after 9/11 and fell apart sometime last year. Particularly if a Democrat becomes President, we may see a conservative politics which is more like the conservative politics of the 1990s. The choice really I think will be between a liberal internationalism which involves aggressive American action in the world but acting legitimately through international institutions or all of the kind of discussions you are starting to hear today about immigration, even about energy independence which is really about a way of allowing America to withdraw from a part of the world that we think is irredeemable.

I think Americans, many Americans, have come to the conclusion that the world wants nothing from us anymore. We have given it our best shot, and in fact, they want us to pack our bags and go home.

When I do talk to non-Americans, I hear something somewhat different. I often hear a phrase, something along the lines of "When do we get America back? When do we get back the country that, by trying to make itself a better society, actually inspired us to become better societies at home and that inspired us to go and work and make our own societies better?"

That is the mission that my book tries to lay out. Thank you again so much for having me.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: Listening to Peter makes me want to sit here and recite Kennedy's

inaugural address. Now to argue against any self-doubt and to insist that his idealism is not self-deluding, I give you Tod Lindberg.

MR. LINDBERG: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. LINDBERG: I believe I am cast in the role of the conservative ambassador to the Brookings Institution for this occasion. Unfortunately, I am miscast somewhat in that role.

Let me begin by saying what a good book I think Peter Beinart has written, and I commend it to all of you. It is unfailingly interesting. It is the right length, which is to say it is a compact and concise book of well chosen words, and it is very smart. I also would like to suggest that its quarrel is not with me.

Now, when I read Peter's history of liberal internationalism, I feel like I am reading a part of my own history, but that is because I am from a different "the Right" than perhaps some of the other folks that Peter is talking about in this book. My history is a neoconservative history. By the way, this is a neoconservative history in the sense that it is a description of the principles of internationalism, of commitment to American values, of commitment to the spread of freedom, etcetera, that once were absolutely and unquestionably the property of the mainstream of the Democratic Party and then became something different. That mainstream changed, and Peter tells that story very well, too. Again, I think it is not, in certain respects, as a main narrative line, it is not necessarily that dissimilar from the line that was being offered by way of explanation for the origins of the neoconservatives in the late 1970s and perhaps early 1980s and my own history.

My hope was that Pat Moynihan would challenge Jimmy Carter for the primary nomination in 1980. That was my ideal scenario and that this would represent the kind of rebirth that Peter now encourages in the present moment of the kind of robust, forward-looking, pro-American, internationalist, freedom-supporting Scoop Jackson wing of the Democratic Party. Well, that didn't come to pass, and when it didn't come to pass, I came some years later to Washington in order to fight the Cold War which is what I thought I would be doing for the rest of my life and found myself having essentially switched sides or switched parties. The reason that I did that then is because it seems to me that the people who were serious at that point about these kinds of values and the promotion of those kinds of principles were mainly on the other side at that point.

I say this with no particular regret except that it would be better, in my view, if there were a greater degree of unity around these kinds of values in the country at the present moment, and that unity is not with us. The chief reasons are two. One, which Peter I think talked about, and that is the fragmentation on the conservative side of the spectrum. The Iraq War has been traumatic in many respects and not least in its providing I think two simultaneous breakdowns — one on the conservative side, the Republican side, and one also on the Democratic side. We will talk a little bit more about that, too.

I wanted to just remind us a little bit of life and where we stood. I wanted to read a little passage, before I talk in more detail about Peter's book, about Iraq. This is a statement that a number of people signed.

"There should be no question of our common determination to help the Iraqi people establish a peaceful, stable, united, prosperous, and Democratic Iraq free of weapons of

mass destruction. We must help build an Iraq that is governed by a pluralistic system representative of all Iraqis and fully committed to the Rule of Law, the rights of all its citizens, and the betterment of all its people. Such an Iraq will be a force for regional stability, rather than conflict, and participate in the Democratic development of the region."

Now I am going to tell you some of the people who signed that statement. They will be familiar to the audience here. They included Ron Asmus, Ivo Daalder, Peter Galbraith, Phil Gordon, Martin Indyk, let's see, Jim Lindsey, Will Marshall, Michael O'Hanlon, Dennis Ross, Jim Steinberg. They also included me, Bruce Jackson, Bill Crystal, Bob Kagan, etcetera. So there was kind of a fairly well balanced sense of commitment of the sort that is I think what Peter, in his book, is trying rekindle. At the same time, if that strikes you now as wildly optimistic in terms of its envisioning what might lie ahead for Iraq and what Iraq might be capable of becoming and on what kind of timetable, there was plenty of that kind of misplaced optimism on both sides, and I think that becomes relevant.

I was a student of Allan Bloom at the University of Chicago. One of the things we always did is we liked to go to the actual text, read passages, scrutinize them carefully. And so, I am going to do a little of that, but I think what I really want to show you is a couple of things that are additional elements that need to be taken into consideration once you have read Peter's excellent book.

I think there are two main critiques of the Bush policy on freedom promotion and democracy promotion. One, I would probably attribute to Frank Fukuyama which is insufficient to the difficulties that social engineering entails of changing cultures, of getting people who have very different views of how they want their societies to be operated to

come around. Secondly, I suppose, would be the Beinart critique, and that would essentially be an insufficient appreciation of the need to nation building and the difficulty of the task. It is not enough, as Peter quite rightly argues in his book, to remove the impediments to democracy in the expectation that therefore democracy will flourish. To the extent that we reached some conclusions like that from our experience with Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s that we thought were in some way exportable to the Middle East, we have found out differently. I think both of those criticisms are actually quite interesting.

However, Peter also says this, and I think it is important to come to terms with this, which is he says in the liberal narrative, America can be patient because time is on democracy's side. I think that is a questionable proposition for the reasons that actually adhere in the critique that he has made throughout this book. It is not clear to me that time is on democracy's side. I think that risks sort of valorizing a view of democracy as an inevitable outcome, one that can be achieved more or less organically as a result of properties inherent in the international system. I don't think that is true. I think that is very much a kind of naturalistic fallacy with respect to democracy.

It is similar to the one that I think misguided us on the direction of Russia, which is to say there is something like a natural market economy that would emerge organically and readily and easily if only the socialist impediment to it were removed and privatization took place. Again, you live and learn.

A few passages I want to highlight just for the sake of explaining why the real quarrel that Peter has is not with me but with the Left wing of the Democratic Party.

Peter writes, “From the Middle East to Southeast Asia, from the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, the United States may need to enter stateless zones, capture or kill the jihadists taking refuge there, and stay long enough to rebuild the state.”

Well, I agree with that, but I think there are probably an awful lot of people on the Democratic side of the aisle that would be highly skeptical about that and who would think that that is a task that is in certain respects even more ambitious than the task of constructing a democracy in Iraq.

Peter writes of Kosovo, the Kosovo example, “As an alliance of 26 democracies, NATO has at least as much moral authority as the Security Council.”

As it happens, I agree with that, too, but there, I think not only do you have a number of Democrats in this country who don’t agree with it, but I also think there are a large number of other countries and governments, including NATO governments, that do not share the view that NATO has as much moral authority as the United Nations Security Council.

I highlight these passages not for the purpose of making specific criticisms but to point to a problem. The problem is that there is very great deal of difficulty in pursuing a policy that is as freedom-promoting as Peter and I, if I may, would like it to be but nevertheless susceptible to retaining the legitimacy that would be ideal. It is too easy in this debate, I think, to be in favor of good things and unfortunately against bad things. The real world is one in which there are ferocious tradeoffs.

Kosovo is still, although I think I can say with quite a great deal of precision what we did in Kosovo is we prevented genocide in Kosovo. Nevertheless, there are those who

would say that was an illegal war, and their opinions are not inconsequential internationally either, and they will result in a lingering suspicion and distrust that is organic, that is part of the system, and that is not going to be so easy, even under an ideally administered United States government.

I would hardly say that the administration of American foreign policy under the Bush Administration has approached the ideal. But even under an ideal government, if we could imagine it, the structural characteristics of the system are going to create an ongoing set of difficulties.

I very much want to get to the discussion. I wish Peter the best of luck, not only with this book but with what I think is a very interesting and complicated conversation that will be taking place within the Democratic Party over the next couple of years and one that I will be watching with great interest. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank Tod. By the way, for any liberal bloggers who choose to criticize Peter under the theory that all publicity is good publicity, Tod gave them the excellent lead for their commentary. "This is a neoconservative history," Tod says. "The real quarrel Peter has is not with me but with the Left wing of the Democratic Party."

I put that on the table, actually, because we wanted to give each of you perhaps five minutes to reply to each other. I thought that was a point I would love for you to reply to.

I will tell you the one question which I wanted to ask each of you, and I will just put it on the table now, is: Given that you and Tod have a number of shared commitments in common, why did you decide that the war was a mistake, and why has Tod, as far as I can

tell, not yet decided that the war was a mistake? That would be for later, but I would like for you to talk to each other.

MR. BEINART: Shall we sit here and do it?

MR. DIONNE: Whichever you prefer.

MR. BEINART: Tod is actually not the only one to claim me as a neoconservative. Jacob Halpern in the *L.A. Times* made the same point. It is funny, though, if asked to explain the difference, I would mirror what Bill Kristol has said in explaining why he does not consider himself a Wilsonian, and I think he makes the right point which is he says, Woodrow Wilson was a believer in international institutions. I think he has put it something like weak-kneed multilateralism, but that is basically the point.

MR. DIONNE: You are defending weak-kneed multilateralism?

MR. BEINART: That is right. As I read it and I actually think as Crystal reads it, the liberal international tradition from Wilson through Roosevelt and Truman is set. John Eikenberry, again, makes this point very well. It is centrally about the creation and promotion of international institutions to manage global problems and given legitimacy to American power. The promotion of democracy and freedom is a central part but is only one part of that.

I think what neoconservatives have done, and there are some very exceptionally talented people who consider themselves neoconservatives, what I would respectfully suggest they have done is they have cleaved one from the other and taken the democracy promotion outside of the framework of international institutions because of an insufficient appreciation of the limits of American capacity. Also to go back to the Neiberian critique,

an insufficient recognition of the importance of America being able to show the world that it is legitimate by creating restraints on its power, rather than believing our idealism, our good works alone legitimize our behavior. Once the rest of the world has seen what a great job we have done, then they will recognize that we were right after all, that we had their interests at heart.

In the Bush Administration, there are some tragic examples of this — in Iraq, the Bush Administration not seeing it as necessary to tell the Iraqis that we were not going to build permanent military bases and not think it necessary to do something very public and dramatic at the beginning to suggest that we were not really after their oil because I think partly they had a lot of difficulty imagining that that would actually be what Iraqis thought, but that is exactly what Iraqis thought. To go further, Iraqis were not entirely wrong in that thought.

Larry Diamond's book, *Squandered Victory*, is wonderful on this point. He talks about, in fact, how complicated it was to disentangle good, idealistic American intentions — it is such a Neiberian document, that book — from the influence, from the way in which they were undermined suddenly by American self-interest, America doing things that were in its interest and perhaps not in Iraq's interest.

That, I think, fundamentally goes to some of the other points that Tod raised in his very, very thoughtful response which is that these actions in stateless zones, the project of rebuilding failed states, it will be a failure if the United States is doing that alone. Tod is right. It is an extremely ambitious business. I recommend it, partly because of the moral and humanitarian issues involved, but also because I do believe that there are really very,

very grave dangers to the United States from such failed societies in a world where technology of communication and transport gets better and better and better and allows smaller groups of people to do kinds of things that can threaten others more and more easily. That is a very important, it seems to me, empirical difference.

Some people might genuinely think that liberal, humanitarian types like me are wildly exaggerating the dangers that we face. That is a valuable realist argument, but I take the other side from it. I believe that really the only way the United States can do it is by building much more powerful international institutions. The big question then becomes: How do you strengthen the United Nations to allow it to act?

Mark Mallach Brown made this point, and he is right. He is drawing on the work of James Dobbin. Actually, the U.N.'s peacekeeping has been pretty successful, given the amount of resources they have had to work with. But, in fact, it could be much, much more successful if we were willing to get behind it. You could also think about the way in which you could partner NATO with regional organizations, so that you had some kind of local legitimacy. You can think of how you try to build up a group like the Community for Democracies, thinking about how you build in legitimacy for actions when you can't always get U.N. approval.

I don't think that U.N. approval can be the test. It wasn't the test for Harry Truman in 1947 when we wanted to aid Greece and Turkey. It wasn't the test for Bill Clinton. It seems to me the more democratic legitimacy you can create through international institutions, through NATO or partnering with other organizations from the developing world, the more pressure you can put on China and Russia not to veto because they know

that we have a legitimate alternative option if the U.N. doesn't work out.

I guess that goes, finally, to E.J.'s point about why I decided I was wrong on Iraq. Partly, it was a simple empirical question that I began to think that, had I had greater intellectual imagination, I could have realized by March of 2003 that my assumption that Saddam was trying to get a nuclear weapons program which made have been a reasonable assumption in the fall of 2002 but was not such a reasonable assumption by March of 2003 because of what the international inspectors were finding or, more accurately, not finding.

Beyond that, because I did not sufficiently recognize the interconnection between the war's lack of legitimacy around the world and its lack of legitimacy in Iraq, the recognition that in fact the legitimacy of the world ricocheted back into Iraq in all kinds of complicated but very important ways. There was a reason that Sistani was only willing to talk to people from the U.N. and never willing to talk the United States. It was only the U.N. during that period when they were engaged briefly that they were able to organize the elections that took place, precisely because the Iraqis knew that the U.N., for all its failings, would not try to turn Iraq into a 51st state, that it did not have an imperial capacity, whereas that is the way they began to view us very soon. That is how I came to the difficult decision that I had been wrong about that.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much.

Tod? Do you want to reclaim Peter as a neocon or get him off the hook?

MR. LINDBERG: When Mike Isikoff's book on *Uncovering Clinton* came out, I heard him tell David Tell at the *Weekly Standard*, "Right wing praise I do not need just at the moment."

MR. DIONNE: Now you let the cat out of the bag.

MR. LINDBERG: The institutional stuff, I think that deserves a serious response because I think that is a serious issue on the table. I think that it is fair to say there is an element of Republican or conservative or Bush Administration foreign policymaking and thinking that can fairly be described as unilateralist, which is to say doctrinally unilateral, acting out of a preference to work alone because others constitute an encumbrance. I do think that is real.

By the way, Peter cites some very good examples of this. For example, post-9/11, the NATO invocation of Article V in relation to the attack and the offer of assistance in Afghanistan, an offer that was essentially spurned by the United States until afterwards. Of course, now NATO is indeed very active in Afghanistan.

There is, however, an element of that story that Peter has not fully done justice to which is the segment within the Administration that regards that as a pretty serious mistake at the time, made in the heat of the moment, thinking about the complexities of taking military action against a country often described as the graveyard of empires. Entire armies march out into the northern territories and are never seen again and so forth. What do we do?

I agree that it was a mistake. I thought it was a mistake at the time. I thought it would not entail too high an additional cost to try to bring others in, but bad call.

There are a number of other instances of this. Obviously, the highhandedness with which we rejected the Kyoto Treaty, the highhandedness with which we rejected the International Criminal Court, these were not distinguished moments in American

diplomacy even if you happen to agree with the outcome. But again, I don't think that the sentiment that those were mistakes is confined solely to the Democratic side of the aisle at the moment. I say you live and learn. Sometimes you live and you don't learn. That is another problem. In those cases, I think you have seen a pretty consequential reversal of course from the Bush Administration.

Iran is obviously a consequential example of that. You could say that the Bush Administration is kidding and that its real intentions are other, but I am afraid I really don't think so. I think the Bush Administration has been persuaded that it needs others in order to have a successful Iran policy, whether that consists of a combination of carrots and sticks that persuade the Iranians to give up a nuclear weapons program, what is clearly a nuclear weapons program, or whether that effort fails, and ultimately you have to think about whether we are prepared to tolerate Iran with a nuclear weapon. This is the action now of an Administration that realizes it is not able to answer that question unilaterally.

I always preface getting into debates about Iraq with the statement that I really hate to get into debates about Iraq, but fine.

I think that statement that I read at the beginning is illustrative of the problem, and the problem is that, in certain respects, we know what we know because we did what we did and if we had not, we wouldn't. If the inspections had continued, the problem would have been a crisis within all the intelligence services that had agreed on these assessments. It would have been behind the scenes. It would have been very difficult to figure it out. I don't know what the outcome of that would have been.

I think you need to separate two questions of the Iraq War. The first question is the

security question which is the suspicion that these weapons are there, the worry they will fall into the hands of those without a return address or something, and that was a very serious issue. The contention that we would have gone into Iraq without that security concern being foremost in various minds, is absurd. It is just not likely.

The question then became if you go, well, then what do you owe to the people of Iraq? Would it be appropriate to solve your security problem by, for example, turning to the next Baathist thug, giving him the keys to the place, saying, "Okay, we took out your buddy, Saddam; you know what is going to happen to you if you mess around with weapons of mass destruction; good luck to you; please continue whatever pattern of repression you think is appropriate"? Well, no, that was not acceptable.

The reason we wrote these letters is that we wanted to ensure, or the reason I did was I wanted to make a very serious statement that we owed at least the best effort we could make on behalf of an Iraq that would be described as stable, democratic, pluralist, Rule of Law, equal rights, etcetera.

Were we naïve? Well, clearly, there are a lot of Iraqis who would like to have a democracy. I think there is a real political process in Iraq, but there are a lot of Iraqis who would rather fight. I don't think that even if we had a broader multinational coalition in Iraq that we would have changed the equation consequentially.

Sistani is not the problem. Sistani can talk to whomever he wishes. He is a constructive force in Iraq. He has been so since —

(Interruption)

That he chooses to communicate not directly with the United States but with

others is fine. The U.N. was in Iraq. The bombing of the U.N. took the U.N. completely by surprise. The U.N. thought it had this internal intrinsic legitimacy to it that the opponents, the real problem in Iraq were never willing to agree to.

I have no principle opposition to the pursuit of international institutionalist approaches to try to deal with these problems. I am in favor of it. I am not optimistic that it constitutes a sufficiently different and better approach or that it is going to solve a lot of the problems that we have across a variety of areas.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

For a while there, I thought Tod had solved the semantic confusion. Peter is not a neoconservative. Tod is a Peter Beinart liberal. But we can take that from there.

I want to open it up to the audience. In the spirit of John F. Kennedy, ask not what Peter Beinart can say to you but what you can say to Peter Beinart. So who wants to start? Over here, please. I should have introduced you, but if everybody can introduce themselves.

MR. SMITH: Bruce Smith from George Mason University and former Brookings.

This, if I may say with some credentials, having been at Brookings for 20 years, seems to me often what one sees when Brookings is discussing public policy issues. It is the Left talking with itself and thinking that it is really reflecting the Right.

MR. LINDBERG: I ought to sue you for libel.

MR. SMITH: With apologies to Tod because I think he was getting at the point here, but what really is critical, it seems to me, E.J. and Peter, is that there is a very crazy idea at the root of Peter's whole approach. It is much like the Democrat's idea of defense policy

in the 1980s. The Democrats were always for the next weapons system, not for the one that we were voting on now. Oh, we are against that one, but somewhere along the future, we will find one that we are in favor of.

To think that we are going to go around and be internationalist and intervene in Darfur and intervene in Sahel and run around in the Horn of Africa is just bizarre. First, you have to dispose somehow of what is going to happen in Iraq. We are in Iraq. How are we going to get out of Iraq? Are we going to run from Iraq and then say, oh, well, forget about that one; now we are starting over? You have to start your foreign policy with where we are now, and that is we are in Iraq, and we are in Afghanistan, and we are trying to make sense of Iran.

I think the Administration is trying to do the right thing. The only thing they might do there is have a broad recognition of Iran. Bush go to Iran, the way Nixon went to China. But to think that somehow, oh, let's forget Iraq and then we will start over again, is bizarre.

MR. BEINART: I wasn't suggesting that we forget Iraq. Actually, to suggest that I think I was wrong in my support of the war is not to say that I think we should leave Iraq tomorrow and give up on it. I don't think those things are mutual. In fact, the more one can disentangle the debate about whether we should have gone to war in the first place and what we should do now, the better. I wrote a column suggesting that we would be better off trying to find someone who opposed the war in Iraq to begin with to be Secretary of Defense precisely because if they then said we need to stay a while longer, I think it would be disentangled from this very, very toxic debate about whether you supported the war to begin with.

My own view on Iraq, and I claim no special expertise, and I find it incredibly difficult from the news reporting to feel like I have a decent sense of what is really going on in that country because journalists have so much difficulty traveling around freely would be that, as Tod pointed out, we asked these people to go to the polls and vote. They did so in pretty large numbers and risked their lives. They elected a government, a government that is acutely aware, presumably, of how our presence in their country delegitimizes it; a government that is struggling to be multisectarian and multiconventional. If that government still said to the United States that we want you to stay for a while longer, we will eventually hit a point in Iraq where the army says we will have to start drawing down to preserve the United States military.

It is a question of national honor in my view. If that government of Iraq wants us to stay a bit longer because they believe it is their best chance of any hope of success, and that government is our only hope of success in Iraq, then I think we should be willing to stay a while longer. So that is my view on Iraq. It is not something I get into a lot in the book, but I don't think I am suggesting that we should ignore or somehow leave the issue.

MR. LOVELL: Thank you. I am Mack Lovell of George Washington University.

My question, I would like to direct to Tod. You spoke often of democracy as being the right thing to do or the moral thing to do. I think in other approaches, democracy over time has worked better. It has been more effective. It is not a matter of right or wrong. And there are some times when democracy is not the answer. I think 50 years from now, China will be a democracy. I am not sure it would be wise for them to be a democracy today. They have too much to do and every Chinese wants to do it in their own way.

I wonder if you could address that question of whether democracy really is, as I believe, an effective long term solution or whether it is a moral solution.

MR. LINDBERG: The moral case does come down to the question of a view of freedom and equality. It is the values embodied, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or for that matter, our Declaration of Independence. I don't say that this is necessarily a natural law or natural rights view, but it is something about what is most satisfying to people.

But let's be very careful. I mean we are talking not just about democracy in the sense of elections. We are talking about democracy in the sense of, well, frankly, liberalism in the full range of connotations which that may have. I was at a conference in Madrid with the Spanish liberals who are, of course, the conservatives in Spain, but nevertheless liberal. That captures something that is very important.

I think it is important to know how hard a task you face. The task in relation to the Middle East, in relation to China is difficult, no question about that. It was not so difficult in Central and Eastern Europe and even in parts of the former Soviet Union which had no real tradition of independence from Moscow. Maybe this pertains to Islam versus something else. Maybe those are questions.

But then again, you see this phenomenon which Peter has described and that I was talking about of people really wanting to turn out to vote, even under adverse circumstances. I think you need a process that does not break faith with that aspiration but at the same time is cognizant of the difficulties.

I earlier remarked that one must be wary of being in favor of good things against bad

things, and I would be susceptible to that charge here. There are prudential considerations that have to be weighed in relation to these things. I completely agree with you on that.

The question of whether time is on your side or not, while I don't think there is a general answer to it, probably in specific cases, does have accessible answers to it. There may be places that look like they have potential to improve without undue influence by the United States over time only on the condition that one not act too forcefully. I do think that in general most places that are not ready for, so to speak, liberal democracy are ready for a next step toward liberal democracy, and it is the focus on that next step to expand the democratic space or the liberal space and to contract the tyrannical or authoritarian or totalitarian space — one step, one push in favor and one push against. I think that is where we need to be thinking about where to make policy.

MR. DIONNE: Peter, can I ask you something because that question put in my mind something I wanted to ask you eventually. There is something very peculiar about this debate among liberals.

MR. BEINART: Not including Tod in that.

MR. DIONNE: We will make him a liberal if he wants to be. He is a Spanish liberal, we have learned.

The peculiarity is that imagine a world in which 9/11 had happened under a Democratic president, it is possible that such a president would have gone to Afghanistan. Even though you take some shots or in the original article, you took some shots at parts of the Left that opposed Afghanistan, really very few liberals or people on the Left opposed Afghanistan. It was generally seen that this is a legitimate response to an attack on us.

Then if there had not been the Iraq War or the Iraq War had not happened in the way that it happened, that you would have had a president who either would have taken time to build alliances, might have sent more troops to do it right.

It seems to me in a funny way your book is trying to tie a whole series of knots that have been tied, so that liberals can start over and almost have the debate over. I would just like your analysis, having thought about this very seriously for a year, how do you judge the nature of the debate among liberals? In principle, I think a lot of even Left liberals who are against the war in Iraq heartily agree with your argument that America needs to act in the world and needs to do so with more alliances and through new international institutions.

MR. BEINART: Yes, I think that is exactly right, and I try to talk about this a little bit in the second to the last chapter of the book. I think it is absolutely right. What happened in the 1990s if you look at the polls was that the gap between conservative or Republican hawkishness and liberal or Democratic dovishness basically disappeared. No one was paying attention to any foreign policy at all.

MR. DIONNE: Except for Tod.

MR. BEINART: Except for Tod.

But when Pew did these polls about North Korean and Haiti, they found that there was virtually no more difference. In fact, Al Gore wanted to spend more on the military in 2007, and George Bush was talking about a humble policy in which we withdrew from the rest of the world.

I think you are right. Had Al Gore been in power, he probably would have gone into Afghanistan. You would have had a partisan debate which would have looked more like

the partisan debate of the 1950s in a way in which Democrats might have been, in certain ways, more hawkish than Republicans.

I think you are right. For the first year after 9/11, liberal voices that basically said something along the lines of: "This anti-jihadist struggle is really mostly the product of what America itself has done. It is being hyped by George W. Bush. It is not really our struggle," were very weak. There were some. I identify Michael Moore, and I criticize MoveOn.org for its statement against Afghanistan that basically they would support military action but not any military action that killed innocent civilians in Kabul because of what Schlessinger called the doe-faced liberalism that suggests you have to be so morally pure that you can never act at all.

I think what has happened in the last couple of years, and this has been a point of somewhat bitter contention between me and some of my liberal critics, is that that sentiment has risen quite significantly, and I cite a number of polls to suggest this: The Center for American Progress Century Foundation poll which asked people about their foreign policy priorities and found that Americans and conservatives both say that destroying the Al-Qaeda network is priority number one; self-described liberals rate it number ten. Or the MIT Survey that showed that less than 60 percent of Democrats now say that they would refight the Afghan War or that they would use military force to destroy a terrorist camp.

The response that I tend to get from my liberal critics is that these are very temporary aberrations fueled of the extreme hostilities George W. Bush. I agree they are fueled by the extreme hostilities of George W. Bush in Iraq, and I would go further that I, as someone

who supported the Iraq War, perhaps bear some blame for this reaction. But then what I try to say to them is that these counter-reactions can be very, very dangerous, politically debilitating.

Fifteen years after the end of Vietnam, the Democratic Party went off a cliff in opposing the Gulf War because that was the overwhelming criticism through which they saw that military conflict, and I think they got other things wrong because of that as well. Iraq may not have the same enduring effect, but I am struck by the degree to which those instincts were there after 9/11 on the Left have been dissipated in the overwhelming focus on animosity towards George W. Bush and not just on military course. The polling which shows traditionally Democrats more supportive of foreign aid, basically, shows the two parties are pretty much even. The Pew polls show that Democrats are about twice as likely to say America should not be involved in the world as Republicans. So there is some reason to believe right now that liberals and Democrats in the public have moved away from this. I hope they will move back, but I don't think one can simply say it is inevitable.

MR. DIONNE: How much time do we have? Fifteen minutes. Can I bring in a few voices at a time because I would like to get in as many folks as I could. Can we do Jackson up here? You have the mic. Go ahead and then we will bring the mic up here.

MR. KIMMICH: Michael Kimmich(?), Catholic University.

I have a historical question. For Cold War liberals, the good fight was a fight for Western civilization, and that has since been quite an unfashionable term on the Left. Do you think that is irrelevant to the War on Terror or is that something that liberals have to rediscover as they rediscover Cold War liberalism?

MR. DIONNE: The perfect question from a professor at Catholic University. Thank you very much. Jackson, over here.

MR. COLIN: Hi, Rick Colin (?) with the Century Foundation.

I am very sympathetic, Peter, to your argument for a Truman approach to foreign policy among the Democrats. I am wondering if you have something in the book about the realities of the constituent groups within the Democratic Party because American labor was very strong behind the Cold War and now the AFL-CIO is disintegrating and the leadership had changed even before that in their support of a hawkish foreign policy. What constituency groups within the Democratic Party could help bring about the vision that you are talking about?

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank Rick who I just called Jackson because he looks like a friend of mine, but he is a Jacksonian Democrat sort of. So I hope he forgives me.

Why don't we take those two, and then we will go to the gentleman back there?

MR. BEINART: I actually found conservatives using more often the language of the Cold War as a fight for Western civilization than liberals, not that there were no liberals that used that phrase. I think Neiber himself was fairly cynical in some ways about non-Western societies supporting democracy. But once you started to have the debates about decolonization starting in the 1950s and the 1960s, my sense of it was that it was conservatives who were more likely to take the view that, in fact, these societies were really not ready for it and that this represented a loss of will by the West to retreat — Burnham made this point a lot in his 1964 book, *Suicide of the West*, just the title itself — whereas liberals were by and large, not just the 1970s McGovern liberals, but John F.

Kennedy liberals, at least rhetorically. Kennedy gave this great speech about Algeria where he basically said America has to be on the side of anti-imperialist forces.

I think that suggests some recognition amongst Cold War liberals that what has been borne out and with which neo-conservatives would heartily agree is that there is no iron law which says that non-Western societies cannot become liberal democracies. All kinds of different societies have different kind of problems in becoming, given their own particular history, culture, state of economic development, but there is certainly no iron law that confines us to Western Christian civilization.

I do think that liberals were in that period and again should be more focused, and Blair is much more, on the way that a struggle for liberal democracy has to be a struggle for economic opportunity and against economic despair. The conservatives in the Cold War were more likely to disparage that connection, to see liberals who talked about communism's roots in poverty as people who are not willing to face the evil of communism itself. I think you find some of that today amongst conservatives, although not all conservatives, whereas I think when Blair talks about the interconnection of economic development and political freedom, he is speaking the language which is closer to what the Arab Human Development Report talks about, which is Marchand's notion of development is freedom, which is more in line with the liberal tradition.

On the constituency groups, it is very true that labor is an incredibly important part of this story that I tell in my book. The decline and change in the nature of labor, one of the reasons the Democratic Party in some ways can be more cohesive today is the kind of people who are in labor unions are not as culturally different from the rest of the

Democratic Party as they were. They are more female. They are more minority. The public sector unions were big supporters of Howard Dean, what we think about as the hard hat unionists who might have been sympathetic to Scoop Jackson or even George Wallace are not around nearly as much anymore.

Some might think this is naïve, but I actually think that if you are looking for energy in the Democratic Party today, what you have to look to is the groups that are organizing on the web, this explosion of activism amongst mostly upper middle class or at least middle class, sometimes quite young, white liberals, not that they are all that, but that is the large group of them. They are becoming a very, very organized important force. What I think is interesting about them and what the Pew poll found when they profiled the Dean activists was a significant generational divide amongst Dean supporters between Baby Boomers and younger Dean supporters. The Baby Boomers were less supportive of gay rights, but they were also considerably more dovish on foreign policy, interestingly. The younger Dean supporters were more hawkish on foreign policy. There weren't enough questions to really get into the nuances, but there was a clear divide at that time about whether we should withdraw from Iraq, questions about preemptive use of force, which leads me to believe there is no lack of idealism in these communities.

It seems to me that one of the great challenges is to tap into this sense of idealism and desire to make the Democratic Party into a movement which is what these people want to do, but to push it beyond simply the destruction of George W. Bush and the Republican Party, to push it beyond that into these questions of how we, in fact, create a better world — this is what Irving Howe talked about as two-sided politics, and this goes back to the

heart of what Schlessinger was talking about — recognizing that liberals have two struggles. They have a struggle against conservatives who have a different vision of society, and they have a struggle against totalitarianism, and the two are not the same. The one cannot be seen as a subset of the other. Even though there is tension between the two, both have to be prosecuted in order for liberalism to have its true meaning.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. By the way, when Kennedy gave that speech about Algeria, he turned to an aide afterward and said, "There goes the French vote," which actually mattered in Massachusetts, once upon a time.

Mr. Mitchell up here and the gentleman back there and the gentleman in the back, let's do those three if we could and then somebody just keep telling me where we are on time. Thank you.

MR. MITCHELL: Gary Mitchell from the *Mitchell Report*.

I want to come back to your closing comment in your opening remarks, which for me was certainly the most poignant, and that was "When do we get America back?" that refrain that you hear.

MR. DIONNE: When he runs for President, that is the line he is going to use.

MR. MITCHELL: I want to turn that question and ask you either, whether or in the book or here today, you have given that some thought and what it would look like to get America back. Said another way, is the "When do we get America back?" notion as simple as the day that Bush and Cheney and Rumsfield leave, or is it a broader and more institutional set of dysfunctionalities that have led us to this place?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Hang on just a second. That gentleman there and then

the young man against the wall. Sir?

MR. ALLEN: Michael Allen, National Endowment for Democracy.

As a Blairite Brit, I find myself both profoundly agreeing and disagreeing with both of the speakers. If we sat here long enough, maybe we could plan a third way.

In the absence of time, I have to say that Peter made a very convincing case for muscular liberalism or Cold War liberalism as a body of ideas and I think a robust and still relevant body of ideas, but a very weak case for identifying the political vehicle that could carry these ideas. I was profoundly depressed by his last response which seemed to me to suggest at least this network so-called of rootless, largely bourgeois, what we in Britain would call anoraks, sitting in front of their computers could possibly be the equivalent vehicle of what was a robust, largely blue collar, populist in certain respects, but nevertheless at root, a Democratic Party as you would say of the 1950s. When one thinks of the strength of muscular liberalisms in the 1940s and 1950s, it was an incredibly robust, politically robust, intellectually robust and because of its mass base in the Labor Party and what was then a mass Democratic Party, socially robust set of ideas that was able to survive a set of crises from the Berlin blockade, McCarthyism, in 1956 the Korean War right up until Vietnam where, of course, it all fractured.

When you look at the Democratic Party today, can anybody honestly say that is a political formation with any of those characteristics? Leave aside the Iraq War. If one thinks of a single personification of muscular liberalism today of the kind that you identified in your book, if it is not Joe Lieberman, I can't think of anybody else. Not a single salient figure in the Democratic Party has put his or head above the parapet to stop

the hounding, to use a phrase that we used to use on the Left, the witch hunt, against Joe Lieberman and the Labor Party, the Democratic Party, forgive my Freudian slip.

Again, what is the political vehicle for these ideas, given the weakness of neoconservativism now in the Republican Party? Is there not a real risk in American politics leaving the Democratic Party of a real and sustainable resurgence of a very healthy combination of isolationism and realism that we are already seeing, bringing together conservatives and liberals in groups like the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy?

MR. DIONNE: Sir, I cannot resist. That speech could only be given in a northern accent. Where are you from?

MR. ALLEN: Liverpool.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. The gentlemen in the back?

MR. DUNBAR: Hello, my name is Forest Dunbar, produced at American University, now I am here at Brookings.

I have a much more specific question. I won't go on like that. I am wondering, sort of going off the first question, given this kind of ideology, this sort of interventionalism but also our current position in Iraq, what do you think the appropriate U.S. foreign policy response should be to what is going on right now in Somalia with Mogadishu falling to basically another Islamist regime?

MR. DIONNE: That is a great question. Tod has been kindly reticent for a bit to let Peter go about his business. These would be closing comments because we are hitting our time. Tod, if you could offer responses to these and some of the earlier questions, then I will let Peter close down. He, too, will have to talk in a Liverpool accent in order to

answer that question.

MR. LINDBERG: I will take this opportunity to duck the Somalia question and leave that one for Peter.

MR. DIONNE: Like the administration he supports.

MR. LINDBERG: It seems to be that Bill Clinton had a very important insight running for the presidency in 1992, and that is that he needed to win. He needed to beat the old Democrats with this new Democratic thing. It was not about everybody kind of joining hands which is a charming Democratic tendency and not especially visible on the Republican side. Where Democrats join hands and sing Kumbaya, Republicans march in lockstep. I think those are the competing images.

MR. DIONNE: What do they sing? Never mind.

MR. LINDBERG: There is not a consensus-based process by which Peter is going to win this argument, in my opinion. What is going to have to happen is politicians are going to have to have a fight over these ideas within the Democratic Party. I don't know what the outcome of that is going to be. I don't think it is a foregone conclusion that it won't be resolved in favor of something more to Peter's liking or not.

But what he has laid down here, in addition to the challenge obviously to Conservatives, to Republicans, etcetera is a set of markers, a set of redlines about where Democrats need to go. There is no consensus on this question within the Democratic Party now. There are widely divergent views. If Peter's position is going to prevail, it will only be after, I think, a fight.

MR. BEINART: Let me try to talk about the different questions, all of them

difficult. In terms of the question of how you get America back, to take that perhaps somewhat cheesy line, I think ultimately it seems to me — and actually I should say there is an interesting paper, interesting but depressing paper being written in my point of view, by Charlie Cutcheon (?) and George Towne (?) and Peter Trubowitz (?) at the University of Texas, where they argue that basically people like me are totally wrong. There are all kinds of deep forces in American society that lead to a move away from liberal internationalism, that we don't have the social basis for it, that the international system is not constructed for it, and it is really not mostly about the sins of George W. Bush. It is mostly effect rather than cause of that.

What I would like to believe, what I think about when I say this is America, in some very dramatic and tangible ways, is saying, we do not see our action as virtuous simply by the fact that we are the ones that do them. We do not see American behavior as somehow outside the process of moral judgment that we think should exist in the world on a whole set of questions, either human rights, anti-proliferation, the environment, economics. We see ourselves as part of or as struggling to meet a higher standard, willing to modify our actions in response to higher standards around the world.

Let me put this in tangible form. Let me say something which may make me sound like Norm Chomsky. I do not believe that the idea of an American going before the International Criminal Court, given that the ICC basically says you have enormous opportunity to prosecute your own people, if we are so unwilling, if we are so low that we are not willing to hold ourselves to even a minimal — minimal human rights standards. I do not believe that as a matter of a priori, the idea of an American going before the

International Criminal Court should be considered out of the bounds. We are simply another country. We are a country with a much better record than some, but we are not some paradise that, by nature of being Americans, can never commit human rights abuses. The rest of the world knows it.

I think on the environment and a whole series of questions, that rhetoric, while it may be considered too far to the Left for the political environment now, I would like to see some Democrat actually say that and see how the American people respond. That is at least what I believe, and I think it would strike a chord in the rest of the world.

On the question of the institutional base, look, I would love to see a revival of labor. There is no question about it. I think liberals like me in some ways have not been sufficiently attentive to how we do that, but it is a very, very difficult job, needless to say.

I think it is important when one looks at the post-Dean internet Left, these blogs that have emerged since Dean and that people in Washington talk about so much, by the way, places where I am not a popular person. I may not be quite as unpopular as Joe Lieberman is, but I am a lot more unpopular than E.J. is.

MR. LINDBERG: Although his quotation appears at the top of —

MR. BEINART: Yes, yes, that is true.

MR. LINDBERG: He shrewdly wrote a positive review or at least wrote a good line.

MR. BEINART: I did have a good line in it.

It is a mistake, I think, to see this movement as simply McGovernism 2.0, if only because what strikes me about a lot of the rhetoric that exists on these web sites is their lack of historical perspective, their lack of a genealogy. To listen to the debates on these

web sites often strikes me as to enter a world where history began in 1998 with impeachment, went through the 2000 election, and then the war in Iraq. The DLC, which is an organization that I have a lot of respect for, and even to some degree my own magazine, mistakenly said, "Oh, we have seen these people before. They are the grandchildren of McGovern and the children of the Rainbow Coalition of the 1980s. We know exactly what they believe." But these people do not see themselves as part of that lineage which in some ways makes them harder to argue with because it is hard to understand where they see their own trajectory. But it also creates more opportunities, in fact, to have an argument about the use of American power for good things.

There is a residue of idealism that exists among self-described liberals in the polls, a support for international peacekeeping, for instance, a support for international intervention and humanitarian intervention. Where it stops is where the War on Terror begins. I think it has to be able to cross into this anti-jihadist struggle and see that is a vehicle as well.

I agree with you on Joe Lieberman. I mean Joe Lieberman and I do not agree about everything. I think he has less support of international institutions than I do, but I think many of the attacks on him are for incredibly superficial things, basically the fact that he is too nice to Republicans, and ignore the fact that he has a very strong liberal voting record, and he has been right on a lot of things. He may have been wrong on Iraq, but he was right on the Gulf War. Does he get no credit for that? Does he get no credit for being one of the few people in the Democratic Party who actually authored the Homeland Security Bill, who actually can speak with some depth about national security issues?

On Somalia, I wish I had a great policy prescription. The only thing I would say is,

in my reading of the War on Terror in Africa from groups of people who know a lot more about this than me in the International Crisis Group and elsewhere, the point they made seems to have been very well borne out in Somalia, which was that the United States, by pursuing an overly militarized response, where we basically poured money into arms groups and into militaries, we were actually undermining civil society in various African societies where in fact we needed to be building up civil society and not seeing the War on Terror through such a narrow prism. Ultimately, a much broader understanding of political and economic and social development, rather than a narrowly targeted military effort suggested by our efforts of funding all of these war lords in Somalia, is the long term answer for making sure that part of the world does not become a breeding ground for jihadists.

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank you all for coming. Tod, for joining us; Peter, for writing this book.

In deference to Allen Bloom and the importance of paying attention to the text, I want to close with a quotation from Chairman Beinart. "Generosity at home is the foundation for generosity overseas. Citizenship can be as powerful a force for moral revival as religion, and democracy is not America's gift to the world. It is the goal for which we struggle against the injustice in our own society, in solidarity with those people struggling against the injustice of theirs." Even if your sense of history only begins in 1998, you have to take that idea seriously.

Thank you very much, Peter.

(Applause)

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