

The Grand Playmaker

Every so often TIE sits down with its old friend, former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, to talk about the world. As always, he doesn't disappoint.



Lawrence Eagleburger,
*Secretary of State
under President George
H.W. Bush.*

What to Make of the French?

I've always believed that fundamentally Charles de Gaulle was trying to restore French pride after World War II by attempting to build a French empire in opposition to the United States. The heart of his whole approach was an attempt to put some strength back into the French psyche, and to create the old France again if he could from a nation that had never recovered from the costs of World War I. The French had fought themselves practically to the point of total exhaustion, never recovering from it either physically or psychologically again. They were really a pathetic performer in the Second World War. And basically de Gaulle succeeded.

De Gaulle's actions irritated a lot of people. He needed America in order to achieve his goal, and he was perfectly prepared to play the game at our cost, including booting us out of France and taking France out of NATO, all the time knowing perfectly well if anything really disastrous happened America would have no choice but to help anyway. But in the long run de Gaulle's actions came at a real cost to the alliance, and to U.S.-French relationships. But he took a country that didn't deserve the position it had and he made it into something.

Of course, this has led to some real problems ever since. The French now have a view of themselves they don't deserve. Nobody remembers

that the French have a veto in the UN Security Council only because of the largess of the United States and the United Kingdom, and that they had a role of the occupation of Berlin only because the United States and the

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United Kingdom were prepared to give it to them. Thus, the French now occupy a position in the UN that their specific gravity doesn't give them any right to.

And now French President Jacques Chirac has grossly overdone it. He made a terrible mistake in opposing the United States over the Iraq situation because now France's real worth is showing in ways that it had not before. France played it as part of that long-term strategy—but I think de Gaulle would have played it quite differently. Chirac and the French nation saw this as an opportunity to take the French-German partnership and try to form it into the nucleus of a Europe in opposition to the United States, and the Germans for a while played the second fiddle to this operation. The Germans are now having second thoughts, and Chirac really made a mistake by telling the East Europeans to shut up and behave themselves. While the East Europeans want into the European Community, they sided with us over Iraq because they know why it is they're free, and because they know in the long run that a Europe centered on France and Germany just isn't enough.

If there was a rationale behind French and German opposition to the Iraq war other than this intestinal reaction, it was the idea that here was a chance to add another building block to Europe—in opposition to the United States—with France as the senior partner and Germany as the junior partner. Of course there

were the commercial concerns, though I don't argue that those were really part of the real reasons for opposition.

How the United States Should Behave As a Superpower

That gets me back to a fundamental point. We Americans must understand that once we became the world's only superpower, under almost any circumstances when we decide to take a controversial position and particularly when we decide to use force, most of the rest of the world will automatically reject our decision simply because they will feel jealousy, concern that we are going to be unwise as they think we Americans always are, and disdain because we throw our weight around and we're unsophisticated.

Balanced against the more legitimate concern about our tendencies toward unilateralism and impatience with consultation is the fundamental fear of the American imperial tendency. This preemptive war becomes an element of American foreign policy. As the world's only superpower, nobody can really stand in our way, and now that there's no Soviet Union for the rest of the world to be scared about, they are scared about us.

Rating Tony the Tiger

Prime Minister Tony Blair has shown remarkable courage. He honestly believes in what he's done. Also, try to imagine a British prime minister turning his back on the connection between our two countries. He would

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have been able to manage it in public relations terms at first, because obviously his own Labour Party and probably the body politic in the United Kingdom would have supported him because they didn't like the war. The Conservatives would have given him hell. But over the longer term, I cannot conceive of how a British prime minister could have stood against that traditional relationship for very long.

The Administration's Shifting Objectives

We've certainly shifted from the original objective being to get at terrorists and deal with them. We have expanded the notion of U.S. security to include states which shelter or aid terrorists. One of the things the Administration has done brilliantly but without much factual support is to link Saddam Hussein to terrorism. By dealing with Saddam we're still dealing with terrorism. I'll buy that if it got us where we needed to go.

There is certainly a linkage between terrorism and the obtaining of weapons of mass destruction. It is states which provide the weapons to the terrorists, and if terrorists ever get weapons of mass destruction they probably won't build them themselves. You could still argue that you're dealing with terrorists when you deal with the states that provide these terrorists with weapons. But there is no question we have slid from one to the other.

North Korea Maybe Next?

I think the next item on the agenda is North Korea. I'm not sure the Administration will consider it an urgent objective, but North Korea has now publicly stated that it will provide weapons—including nuclear

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weapons—to other states, and implicit in that is to terrorists. Under those circumstances, the North Koreans have asked for it. If you're going to deal with the possibility of terrorist organizations obtaining weapons of

mass destruction, North Korea has given those organizations an open invitation. You can legitimately make

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the point that terrorism and the way in which we deal with some states are a package, that by doing one we're doing both. What I'm worried about is whether having focused on the states we lose focus on the terrorist organizations themselves.

The North Koreans need to be very careful. I don't think you can predict anything with regard to North Koreans. They're so different because they are so isolated, so out of tune with anything that anybody of a civilized nature would be part of.

Chinese Blunders

The Chinese should have no interest whatsoever in a nuclear-armed North Korea. The Chinese now agreeing to be with us at our talks with the North Koreans gives me some hope that maybe they will grow up on this. I think they have been absurd. Usually they are more sophisticated.

The Chinese need to get it into their heads that if this confrontation goes on very long with the North Koreans, the Japanese are going to invest in their military. I've heard from a Japanese contact that Japan is in the process of moving toward a policy of greater expenditure on defense. A younger generation of Japanese politicians doesn't view the past the same way the older politicians did. Japan is going to be more muscled—though not in opposition to the United States. He hoped this would be something the United States would accept, and the Bush Administration will probably welcome it, but a more liberal administration could have some problems. If the Chinese aren't careful, the Japanese will start talking about the need for nuclear weapons. And somewhere down that road they may even start hearing from some Americans the comment, "Maybe that's not a bad idea." The question is whether

the Chinese are smart enough to understand and therefore to get engaged on the side of bringing the North Koreans under some kind of control. Right now, I don't think they are.

The Unpredictable Russian Relationship

I find the direction of U.S. relations with Russia very hard to predict. In the long run the Russians can't afford to get too crosswise with us, and it's not in our interest to get too crossways with them. We'll kind of plod along but I don't think there's going to be anything surprising.

Regarding Russian opposition to the war in Iraq, as a former superpower they must have had the worst kind of gastric reaction to what the United States was doing simply because there was nothing the Russians could do about it. Not too long ago that they were major players in these sorts of things. They lent billions of dollars to Iraq that they want to get paid off. Also, they've got Chechnya to continue to worry about.

They will realize they've got to come back. And they will. I was interested in the fact that the Chinese didn't react any more than they did.

The Less Intimate European Relationship

There will be some relatively noticeable shifts certainly in our relations with the United Nations, and probably with NATO to a degree although that's more difficult to predict because we'll still want to keep that going.

When you get down to it, what are our relations with France? The French could cause trouble. Most likely, our relationship with France is going to be proper but that's about it.

It's going to be interesting to see what will happen to the relationship with Germany. Already German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is more nervous and it could be awkward for both of us. But I do think we're going to cut some troops now stationed in Germany, and end up putting them into Poland. That's going to lead to some changes in the way we relate to Eastern Europe, and the Germans are going to take very serious

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weapons of mass destruction. I was highly critical until President Bush gave his brilliant speech to the UN on September 12, 2002. If you look at that speech, he never mentioned nuclear weapons. He set things in a different context.

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WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY DAVID BOHRER

notice and wonder what that all means. Our relationship with Western Europe will become less intimate, although the economic relationship will continue.

Today's New Preventive War

September 11 has had a more lasting impact on the American psyche than I thought in the sense that preventive war went down more easily this last time. How long it will last, I don't know, but it has changed the way Americans look at these things. Americans see terrorist attacks such as those on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centers as the kind of threat that permits the exercise of preventive war because it is perceived as sim-

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ply heading off the next chapter in this war that's being waged against us. How many preventive wars have we ever fought before? Not one clearly defined as such.



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When we went into Iraq the first time, I was intimately involved in the process leading up to it and I know how much trouble we thought we were going to have with the Congress. It was a close vote. We debated whether we should even go to the Congress. The President always knew we would need to, but some of his advisers were afraid we'd lose and therefore didn't want to go at all. My point is, at that time we knew the American body politic was going to be a big problem. Remember that Vietnam had jaundiced American opinion. When we first went into Vietnam it was not a big debate, but the fact that it went on and on and we lost 50,000 people changed our attitude.

Lead-up to the Iraq War

I was very unhappy when we started talking about invading Iraq and I said so on television a number of times. I was unhappy particularly with the way Vice President Cheney put this stuff out at first, with chest thumping and a lot of references to weapons of mass destruction. I was highly critical until President Bush gave his brilliant speech to the UN on September 12, 2002. If you look at that speech, he never mentioned nuclear weapons. He set things in a different context. Although I continue to be very worried about weapons of mass destruction, I did not think we were putting our best foot forward using that explanation. But it probably didn't make a bit of difference what we said because as the world's only superpower, the most brilliant diplomacy in the world would not have made much difference.

All of this hoopla from Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) on one hand and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich on the other about American diplomacy having failed is nonsense. We got that first

resolution out of the Security Council which took some fairly superb diplomacy. Regarding Gingrich's attack on the State Department for diplomatic failure leading up to Iraq, I don't think it was a case of his being used by someone on the Defense Department side. I happen to like Newt Gingrich a great deal. He has a very good mind but at the same time sometimes he has an

overactive thyroid and I think this is one of those times.

We didn't get the second resolution from the United Nations. We demonstrated that we were doing our damndest to go the multilateral way if we could, but if we couldn't, we were going to do it on our own. Our actions made it very clear that the United Nations was simply not prepared to deal with these kinds of cases, and that opting out was simply not an answer. We had other alternatives. We didn't mislead anybody. The nuances were not played very well in terms of how we presented our case. The fundamentals were reasonably well played, but I don't think we could have convinced them under any circumstances.

The Future of the United Nations

Clearly our roles with the UN and NATO are going to change. I'm not sure how. We're not going to put ourselves in a position where we could be subject to a French veto under every circumstance. We are going to play the United Nations differently, and that arouses these fears on the other side. On the one hand we are frustrated with a system that limits our abilities to do what we think is right at a time of crisis, and on the other hand the rest of the world—and some of them sensible countries—are

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worried that the United States will simply go and do things that more sensible people say we shouldn't do. There can be times when both sides could be correct. The end result is the UN is no longer a sensible place to find reasonable constraints to put upon us.

The Powell vs. Rumsfeld Feud

This is not the first time we've seen this kind of struggle between the Secretaries of Defense and State. I've been through more than one of them. But they're not a good thing for the country. I don't believe the State Department ought to be running everything having to do with foreign policy, anymore than the Pentagon ought to be running everything having to do with military policy, especially when military policy infringes on relations between countries. I believe the President of the United States ought to be in the position to dominate it all. Frankly, the President is not well served when his Cabinet members are fighting with each other in public.

Some of this is more press than real. For instance, I don't see Secretary Powell actually spending a lot of his time talking to the press. I don't like how the two departments seem to be able to get the differences between the two Secretaries into the press a lot. Staff members two or three levels down have been talking to the press and it does not serve the President well when that happens.

For the press to test what we did on a day-to-day basis in Iraq and describe it as a failure one day and a success the next is just gross. They ought to judge it on a six-month basis at a minimum. It was a great Pentagon success. But to say this guy's up, this guy's down, and describe the State Department and Secretary Colin Powell as a success because he got one UN resolution, and then as a failure because he didn't get the second

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one, is absolute nonsense. That's not the way to judge success of a Secretary of State. You judge your success over a period of time. The question now is how Colin Powell does in the carrying out the policy after this war

in terms of trying to build support for what we've done and are going to do.

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It is now fairly clear that with a lot of the Iraq business, the Pentagon is driving the boat more than the State Department. And during the military part of operations there's nothing wrong with that. In the post-war exercise, however, this has got to be a joint effort. It would be a terrible mistake if only one department is by and large in charge. In that regard, veteran diplomat Paul Bremer, as head of the team in charge of political and reconstruction efforts, will be a good and solid citizen if he can cut through this fog of knowing who's giving the orders. He must be supported by both the Pentagon and the State Department, and he must be able to pick up the phone and call President Bush when necessary. If he can't do that, and if he's not clearly in charge, then it's not going to be an easy job.

The question is what do we do with Iraq now that we got it? If there is internecine struggle instead of a common policy devoted to a set of given principles, we're going to fail. And if we fail, it's the worst thing that can happen to us. How we deal with post-war Iraq, and whether we can prove to the rest of the world that we can turn that country over to its citizens in a way that makes us proud of what we've done and makes the Iraqis proud of what we've done for them, is critical to

the whole exercise. If we can't leave that place far better than we found it, then we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Therefore, it is critical to this country and to the Administration that the question of who is running things is sorted out, making it clear that the President's policy will dominate.

The U.S.-Saudi Relationship

Many people, particularly in the State Department, feel that we have to maintain this close relationship with Saudi Arabia because of the oil, and they can't conceive of the United States being a little bit harsh on the Saudis in terms of their behavior. Yet if our occupation of Iraq leads to a more stable, more productive, and more democratic Iraq, that would have a tremendous impact on much of the neighborhood including Saudi Arabia. The Saudis must be scared to death of that. Also, the new Iraqi situation to some degree reduces our dependence on Saudi oil.

Amongst conservative Republicans a fair number are beginning to have a different attitude toward Saudi Arabia. I don't see much change in the State Department's attitude. I don't know about the Pentagon.

Twenty years ago in the State Department I used to read these CIA reports about how the Saudis may be around for only another five years. I do think we are

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probably seeing a lessened closeness of the ties. What that leads to I don't know yet.

Rapping the Syrian Knuckles

It will be interesting to see what kind of a change the Iraq war may make in the Middle East. I'm interested to see how quickly the Syrians behave differently. I don't know how long and how deeply they will behave differently, but it's interesting how quickly they changed their tune at least for a while.

I hope the Administration will tell the Syrians to shut down those terrorist camps in Lebanon. And I hope that if the Syrians don't do it, they get their knuckles rapped. And if they do get their knuckles rapped, it won't take much of a rap before they realize they had better pay attention.

It would be very interesting to see whether this conservative benighted Administration may not have founded a key in the Middle East that our friends on the left have been searching for a very long time. It may be an object lesson, particularly if we now stay the course in terms of keeping a serious eye on the Syrians right now. I've argued for a long time we ought to do a couple of bombing raids in the Bekaa Valley as a reminder that we are keeping an eye on them.

Defining Success in Iraq

How do you define a democracy in the case of Iraq? If you define it as a western democracy, the United States has made a horrible mistake and we'll never get there. Try defining it as something that guarantees Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds are not going to start killing each other, and they're going to have some means of participating in the government of Iraq. But a confederation is not the answer. I once suggested a confederation to an expert on Iraq, and this person wisely said no, because all that does is confirm each group in its separateness. It's much more a question about confirming that each is protected from the bad instincts of the other, and at the same time given an opportunity to participate in choosing a government that will protect the interests of all. There are dozens of different ways to do it, but not necessarily as one man, one vote, and all of the trappings of American democracy. A lot of people in this country will say that's not democracy, and my answer is it may be an Iraqi democracy. Democracy may be the wrong word—perhaps "representative government" is better. But it can't be Saddam Hussein. ◆