A Florentine in Baghdad:
Codevilla on the War on Terror

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1. Introduction

If the soul of Machiavelli, "flown beyond the Alps," could return to comment on the United States' current "war on terror," he might write a book very much like Angelo Codevilla's *No Victory, No Peace*.[1]

I mean that observation both as a compliment and as a complaint. Codevilla's book shares many of the virtues of Machiavelli's writings, including keen political analysis and a genuine, if rather narrowly defined, love of liberty. (The similarities are not coincidental; Codevilla often quotes Machiavelli, and has penned a translation of *Il Principe*.) But *No Victory, No Peace* also shares what from my own perspective (Aristotelian in ethics, libertarian in social theory) are the two chief shortcomings or limitations of Machiavellian political analysis; the result is a book that is an almost perfect fifty-fifty mix of *bonum* and *malum*.[2]

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[1] Angelo M. Codevilla, *No Victory, No Peace* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

[2] This may be the appropriate point at which to note two minor errors: More than once, Codevilla advises the U.S. to imitate the dog's method of distinguishing friend from foe, as described by Plato in the *Republic* (II. 375d-376c). I think Codevilla cannot have read this passage very carefully; for in Plato's text—indeed, in the very excerpt that Codevilla quotes (p. 121)—it is quite clear that the dog distinguishes friend from foe *not* on the basis of whether someone is beneficial or harmful to its interests, but instead on the basis of whether someone is familiar or unfamiliar. Thus, says Plato, the dog treats harmless strangers as enemies, and familiars who mean it no good as friends—presumably not a policy that Codevilla would recommend for the United States. (Though it does sound rather like the policy the U.S. has actually followed for much of the past century—and Codevilla's own recommended policy of treating all neutrals as enemies [p. 122] seems equally suicidal.) Plato is commending the dog's attitude as a model for obedient soldiers, *not* for the philosopher-kings—and it is the *latter* who set foreign policy and thereby decide who shall be treated as friends or as foes. (Plato's description of the dog's attitude as "philosophical" is meant as a *joke*; hostility toward whatever one does not know may express love of the *known*, but it does not express, nor would Plato have thought it expressed, love of *knowledge*—

2. The Limits of Machiavellianism

The first flaw in the Machiavellian approach is, famously, its amoralism: its willingness to sacrifice principle to expediency, to "let the end justify the means." As we shall see, Codevilla unfortunately shares this approach; he seeks the moral high ground, however, by quoting not Machiavelli but Aristotle on its behalf: "Aristotle defines prudence as the application of means most apt to achieve the good end" (p. 89). But Aristotle, unlike Machiavelli, draws the all-important distinction between *instrumental* and *constitutive* means; the former are related externally, the latter internally, to the end sought. In fact, the *Nicomachean Ethics* opens with this distinction: "A certain difference appears among ends; for some *are* the activities, while others are certain products *beyond* these" (*NE* I, 1094a4-6). And like Plato in the *Republic*, Aristotle argues that morality is a constitutive rather than a merely instrumental means to the good life; it follows that any attempt to sacrifice principle to expediency must be self-defeating, since nothing will count as the desired end unless it is sought through virtuous means. As Aristotle explains later in the *Ethics*: "Pleasures are choiceworthy, but not if obtained from these sources, just as wealth is choiceworthy, but not if gained through betrayal, or as health is choiceworthy, but not if produced through eating no matter what" (*NE* X, 1173b25-28).[3] Likewise, in the *Politics* Aristotle considers whether it could be permissible to seize power by unjust means in order to position oneself to promote the good more effectively; his answer is that such a project depends on the *false* assumption that "the most choiceworthy of things really can come about for those who rob and use force." In fact, the end no longer counts as good if achieved by unjust means; thus, "he who transgresses could by no means make right, later on, the amount by which he has already deviated from virtue" (*Pol.* VII, 1325a34-b7). Aristotelianism and Machiavellianism are not a viable combination.

The second, less famous flaw in the Machiavellian approach is its failure to understand the relationship between state or military power and the civil order which it governs. Machiavelli, like most thinkers outside the libertarian and antistatist traditions, views power as *creative*; he fails to grasp the essentially *parasitic* and *epiphenomenal* nature of power—because he had so little understanding of the nature of the self-organizing civil and voluntary order *upon* which power is parasitic and epiphenomenal. (His grasp of economic phenomena, for example, is appallingly limited in comparison with

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rather the opposite.) On a lesser note, Condoleezza Rice's name is misspelled throughout the book.

[3] Presumably, Aristotle is thinking of cannibalism.

that of his contemporaries, the Scholastics of Salamanca).[4] Hence, despite his keen insights into *how* power operates, Machiavelli never really saw his way into *what* power essentially *is*, and so he missed the *radical dependence* of power on the civil and voluntary order. That is why, for all Machiavelli's brilliance, the greatest political thinker of the sixteenth century was not Machiavelli but La Boétie.[5]

Codevilla's analysis, as we'll see, shares the limitations of Machiavelli's in this regard. For Codevilla military violence is "the *ultima ratio*, the decisive argument, on earth. Mankind's great questions are decided by war" (p. 58). Yet on a libertarian analysis military power, far from being "ultimate," is causally *downstream* from most of the decisive factors. As Isabel Paterson reminds us:

> The head of power lies back of the dam. It is not in the army but in the nation, for it consists of surplus production, in both personnel and materials. An army in being is withdrawn from production, and can function only on a continuous supply from the civil life of the nation. It is an end-appliance. . . . Military science as such considers only the action of the end-appliance, and is at a loss when armies become ineffective. . . . Military theory is largely meaningless because it deals with the conduct of armies in being, regardless of the civil order from which they are drawn.[6]

These two Machiavellian errors—one about the relation between means and ends, the other about the relation between power and civil order—will unfortunately prove to vitiate much of Codevilla's analysis.

3. Codevilla: Enemy of the State

But let's start with what Codevilla gets right. A large portion of the book is devoted to a trenchant dissection of the Bush administration's (actually both Bush administrations') many foreign policy blunders; Codevilla makes a persuasive case for the conclusion that the United States' "war on terror," like the first Gulf War a decade earlier, has been waged with little or

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[4] See Murray N. Rothbard, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith: An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, Volume I* (Edward Elgar, 1995), ch. 4; and Alejandro Chafuen, *Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics* (Lexington, 2003).

[5] Étienne de la Boétie, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz (Black Rose, 2003).

[6] Isabel Paterson, *The God of the Machine* (Transaction, 1993), pp. 262-65.

no attention to such questions as *what* the ultimate intended outcome is and *how* the government's measures are supposed to bring that outcome about. There's little to say about this aspect of the book besides "amen."[7]

Codevilla's policy proposals, both foreign and domestic, are also informed to a surprising extent by libertarian insights: he understands that legalizing drugs would (and formerly did) reduce street violence (p. 127), that allowing airline passengers to carry firearms would (and formerly did) reduce the threat of hijacking (pp. 42, 129), and that economic sanctions against a dictatorship hurt only its subjects and not the dictator (p. 174); he recognizes, and deplores, the fact that, under the so-called "Patriot Act," the government is empowered to "designate any organization or association as 'terrorist,'" and "does not have to justify its designation to anyone" (p. 131); and his discussion of the relation between religious heresy and political totalitarianism (Appendix B) reads like straight Murray Rothbard.[8] Codevilla does not succumb to the illusion of top-down social engineering: "Native regimes may change cultures over generations, but the notion that foreigners who cannot even speak the language can do it in a few years is a pipe dream" (p. viii). He sees that the "democratization" of Iraq would mean only the oppression of minority factions by the majority faction (p. 155), and so he instead favors the libertarian remedy for factional strife: devolution and partition (p. 56); these proposals could have come from Frances Kendall and Leon Louw,[9] or from Hans-Hermann Hoppe.[10] Likewise, in good libertarian fashion he (apparently) rejects imperialist, colonialist, and nation-building adventures: "[C]reating liberal democratic mentalities is beyond the capacity of any foreign power," and that in any case "America's peace does not require that foreigners be like us in any way" (p. 11). For Codevilla, "our peace, our victory, does not require that the peoples of Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine, or indeed any other part of the world become democratic, free, or decent," nor does it depend on "any two foreign

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[7] I am skeptical, though, concerning Codevilla's claim that the Bush administration was for a long time irresolute about whether it wanted to invade Iraq. Administration officials may have dithered in the meetings Codevilla describes, but the direction of national policy is rarely determined in those sorts of meetings.

[8] Rothbard, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*, pp. 146-64; and Murray Rothbard, *Classical Economics: An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, Volume II* (Edward Elgar, 1995), pp. 299-368.

[9] Frances Kendall and Leon Louw, *After Apartheid: The Solution to South Africa* (ICS Press, 1987).

[10] Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy—The God That Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order* (Transaction, 2001).

governments being at peace with each other," nor yet on "the existence of friendly regimes in any country whatsoever"—luckily, he adds, the United States has "neither the power nor the right" to bring such desiderata about, and so must instead find a way to live peacefully in "a world of alien regimes and religions" (pp. 50-51).

Alas, all this makes Codevilla's approach sound less interventionist than it is—but more on that anon.

Codevilla's libertarian impulses again come to the fore when discussing the United States' domestic security response to the 9/11 attacks. Despite his remarkable claim that "William F. Buckley Jr. has been more correct about more things than any person alive" (p. 84), Codevilla evidently does not share the sentiment of Buckley's famous pronouncement that "we have to accept Big Government for the duration—for neither an offensive nor a defensive war can be waged given our present government skills except through the instrumentality of a totalitarian bureaucracy within our shores."[11] Quoting the Department of Homeland Security's description of terrorism as "an inescapable reality of life in the twenty-first century," and "a permanent condition to which America and the entire world must adjust" (p. 128), Codevilla responds:

> Common sense says that victory means living without worry that some foreigners might kill us on behalf of their causes, but also without having to bow to domestic bureaucrats and cops . . . . It means not changing the tradition by which the government of the United States treats citizens as its masters rather than as potential enemies. . . . The Homeland Security office's vision of the future for ourselves and our children and our children's children involves identification cards for all, with biometric data and up-to-the-minute records of travel, employment, finances, etc., to be used to authorize access to places that are vulnerable to terrorist attack. This means that never again will the government simply trust citizens to go into a government office, a large building, a stadium, an airplane, or for that matter merely to walk around without what the Germans call *Ausweis*—papers. (pp. 40-41)

As Codevilla points out, suspending such ordinary liberties for an *indefinite* future presupposes that "the enemy will never be defeated" (p. 41).

He also rightly sees post-9/11 curtailments of liberty as the continuation of a pre-9/11 trend:

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[11] William F. Buckley, Jr., "A Young Republican View," *Commonweal*, January 25, 1952.

> The militarization of police [has gone] hand in hand with what might
> be called the securitization of America, and the near-outlawing of
> guns in the hands of private individuals. People younger than forty
> have no memory of an America in which anyone could enter and
> roam public buildings at will, where security codes and badges were
> unknown . . . . The nightly news and the movies inured a generation
> of Americans to squads of fatigue-clad masked-man sporting the
> word "Police" or "Federal Agent" on their backs, shouting "go, go,
> go!" to one another as they rushed into "situations." It has become
> routine, and almost acceptable, for such people to shoot unarmed
> citizens because "I thought he might have a gun." . . . None of this
> had made America safer. . . . The Bush team's response to September
> 11 was not to question the trends of the previous quarter-century, but
> to accentuate them. (p. 130)

Yet not only are security measures largely ineffective, but such measures
"actually magnify the effects" when, for example, they "shut down airports on
receipt of threats or merely on the basis of technical glitches in the security
system itself" (p. 42).

The Bush Administration, Codevilla charges, has not offered "a
reasonable plan for victory, for returning the country to the tranquility of
September 10," but has instead "asked Americans for indefinite tolerance of
restrictions on their freedom" (pp. 49-50). For Codevilla, this amounts to a
confession of American defeat: it is the losers, not the winners, who "have to
change the way they live" (p. 3). An American victory, by contrast, would
mean "living a quiet and peaceable life, if possible even less troubled by the
troubles of other parts of the world, even freer from searches and sirens"; all
government policies on terrorism should be "judged by how they relate to that
end" (p. 50). "The minimum definition of the peace America sought by war
was safety from terrorism" (p. 17). "The sign of victory over terrorism will be
the removal of security measures" (p. 58).

What Codevilla says here is to be applauded; yet I think there is a
certain naïveté in Codevilla's facile conflation of victory for the American
people with victory for the American *government*, under the package-deal
notion of victory for something called "America." The growth of intrusive
security measures represents a defeat for a nation's civilian population, but it
is most decidedly a *victory* for the nation's government—since every
government is in a sense at war with its subjects[12] and so tends to seek greater

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[12] As Locke explains (*Second Treatise* III, sec. 17), any government not resting on free
consent is in a state of war with those it governs. And as Lysander Spooner shows (*No*

coercive control over their activities. Certainly, the U.S. government has in many respects proceeded incompetently since 9/11—unsurprisingly, given the perverse informational constraints that any monopoly faces (Libertarianism 101)—but the move to boost searches and surveillance is not a symptom of that incompetence, but rather an eagerly sought opportunity. (After all, monopolies generate perverse *incentival* constraints as well: again, Libertarianism 101.)

Codevilla does note that government officials have "enjoyed the new powers for their own sake" (p. 122), as part of a "reality that many are too happy to accept" (p. 128). Well, yes; as Robert Higgs reminds us, state power grows by a ratchet effect: governments increase their powers during crises—wars, depressions, natural disasters—but rarely decrease their powers, at least to the same level, once the crisis has passed.[13] Or in Randolph Bourne's concise phrase, "War is the health of the state."[14] Yet to the extent that Codevilla recognizes this dynamic, he seems to treat it not as a characteristic feature of state power throughout known history, but as something novel: "America fought Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union without treating the public as potential enemies" (p. 41). Oh, really? Has Codevilla never heard of the Japanese-American internment camps?[15] The McCormack-Dickstein and Dies committees? The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)? The U.S. Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO)? Later in the book Codevilla himself admits—with evident approval!—that "at the time of World Wars I and II American society, with the government's help, required the German American community to cleanse itself of sympathizers with Germany" (p. 131). How was this shameful episode not a case of government treating its citizens, its alleged "masters," as potential enemies?

With regard to the "war on terror," Codevilla rightly maintains that pursuing a specific organization like al-Qaeda is unlikely to produce a significant increase in U.S. security. "Evidence of its central role in anti-

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Treason No. VI: The Constitution of No Authority[1870]), no government rests on free consent.

[13] Robert Higgs, *Crisis and Leviathan: Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

[14] Randolph S. Bourne, "The State," p. 71, in Bourne, *The War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays, 1915-1919*, ed. Carl Resek (Hackett, 1999), pp. 65-104.

[15] Less famously, there were German-American and Italian-American camps, too. See Karen E. Ebel and Arthur D. Jacobs, "Justice Should Not Be War's Final Casualty," available online at http://www.foitimes.com/internment/Justice.html.

American terror was always weak," and "neither it nor any other organization is the source of hate and contempt for America" (p. 134). In any case, he convincingly argues, terrorism is so easy that it is virtually impossible to guard against it so long as terrorists have the will to attack. Hence, the U.S. must instead address the root cause of such attacks.

This is fine so far. But it is in his identification of this root cause, and in his prescription for dealing with it, that Codevilla's analysis begins, as I see it, to succumb to the two fatal flaws of the Machiavellian approach.

4. Codevilla: Master of War

For Codevilla, terrorist organizations cannot be effective except insofar as they receive support from like-minded regimes. Thus Codevilla identifies the governments of Syria, Palestine, and quondam Iraq as "the effective cause of global terrorism" (p. 54), occasionally adding the nominally "friendly" Saudi regime as well.[16] (While he insists that by "regime" he means something broader than "government," in practice he seems to use the terms interchangeably, and his examples of the components of "regimes" are almost invariably governmental.) Thus Codevilla supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and favors similar treatment for Syria and Palestine.[17]

The object of military action should be the destruction of the regime itself. Codevilla opposes indiscriminate killing of the civilian population—less for moral than for prudential reasons: far from undermining support for the Nazi regime, he notes, "carpet-bombing German cities . . . was the only thing that persuaded ordinary Germans that they and the Nazis were in the same boat" (p. 55). The target should thus be not the populace generally, but the ruling elite at the top, those who constitute the regime—and "killing regimes means killing their members":

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[16] God forbid that he should expand the list; still, I'm as puzzled as Norman Podhoretz (p. 79) and David Tucker (p. 82) are as to why Iran isn't included—surely its connections to terrorism are more robust than Iraq's were. Afghanistan also gets a free ride; why is it only *Arab* (rather than, say, Islamic) countries that make it into Codevilla's crosshairs?

[17] Declaring war against Syria, Codevilla assures us, "would most likely produce a palace coup in Damascus—by one part of the regime eager to save itself by selling out the others" (p. 57). But why didn't this happen in Iraq? As for Palestine, Codevilla blithely suggests that Israel cut off the Palestinian government's access to "electricity . . . telecommunications, water, food and fuel" (p. 57). Despite Codevilla's concern for targeting the rulers, it's hard to see how this wouldn't constitute waging war against Palestine's civilian population.

>Each of the regimes consists of some 2,000 people. These include officials of the ruling party, officers in the security forces down to the level of colonel, plus all the general officers of the armed forces. These also include top government officials, officials of the major economic units, the media, and of course the leaders of the party's "social organizations" (labor, youth, women's professional, etc.). (p. 55)

A page later he adds that once a regime's leader and his "subordinates" are captured, "it is essential that all be denounced, tried and hanged . . . . The list of people executed should follow the party-government's organization chart as clearly as possible" (p. 56).

Is Codevilla including his entire two thousand regime members—*including those in "economic units," "the media," and "labor, youth, [and] women's professional" organizations*—among the "subordinates" to be butchered? He doesn't clearly say so, but that certainly seems to be the implication: "[U]ndoing an enemy regime means the dramatic demise of the several thousand people who give a country its character at any given time" (p. 3). Just as Codevilla here slides into a Machiavellian confusion about means and ends in his willingness to inflict such a disproportionate response on such relatively tenuous accessories,[18] so he simultaneously slides into a Machiavellian confusion about the nature of power in supposing that the character of an entire country could seriously be determined by a few thousand people, as though these few thousand were supermen who could overpower unwilling millions by their own personal might. La Boétie's lesson should never be lost sight of: The governing few do not, because they cannot, determine the character of the societies they rule; rather, it is the reverse.

Nor will Codevilla's recommended bloodshed necessarily even be confined to his ruling two thousand; while describing the "commitment to spare innocent civilians" as "admirable," Codevilla maintains that such a commitment has "inadvertently created a safety zone for would-be enemies." Hence he concludes that, all "admirable" considerations apparently aside, "war against a regime must be fearsomely indiscriminate," so as to "cause even its committed members . . . to run away from it"[19] (p. 160; I note that

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[18] For an Aristotelian libertarian case against punishment of any sort, see Roderick T. Long, "The Irrelevance of Responsibility," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 118-45.

[19] For a critique of such "collateral damage," see Roderick T. Long, "The Justice and Prudence of War: Toward a Libertarian Analysis," elsewhere in this issue.

"indiscriminate" killing has gone from imprudent on p. 55 to necessary on p. 160).

5. No Justice, No Peace

Codevilla's analysis suffers, as I've said, from both of the two chief limitations of Machiavellian political theory. First is the amoralist refusal to take into account any relation between means and ends other than the instrumental. For example, Codevilla favors military action to "ensure that nothing broadcast or printed in the Arab world incite[s] to terrorism" (p. 159), and includes the television network *al-Jazeera* as a problem demanding a military solution. (I *think* he advocates targeting the governments that influence such media outlets, rather than targeting the media outlets directly, but it's not clear.) Codevilla grants that "[m]aking war to shut down TV stations and newspapers may sound extraordinary," but replies that "what is proper in war depends on what the problem is that the war addresses" (p. 59).

Well, yes, according to Machiavelli, Hobbes, and those of like mind; but according to the natural law tradition of Aristotle, Aquinas, and their modern successors, what is proper in war depends also on the inherent, not just the instrumental, character of the means. Moral considerations such as freedom of speech are not a luxury, to be tossed aside when serious considerations arise; they *are* the most serious consideration.

The fundamental divide between the Machiavelli-Hobbes tradition, on the one hand, and the Aristotle-Aquinas tradition, on the other, lies in whether success is defined in purely worldly terms or not; for the former it is, for the latter it isn't. This issue has relatively little to do with whether one believes in a personal afterlife: Aquinas did, Aristotle didn't, but they were on the *same* side of the divide that concerns us here. What's at stake, rather, is the character of success in *this* life. Are moral considerations *part* of the human good, or something external to it? If the latter, as the Machiavelli-Hobbes view maintains, then such considerations will inevitably be embraced only when they promote, and quickly rejected whenever they hinder, the achievement of this thinly conceived good. But on the Aristotle-Aquinas view, with its thicker conception of the good, the requirements of virtue are essential constituents of a successful life, and the suggestion that moral considerations might hinder practical success is as unintelligible as the suggestion that lack of corners might hinder circularity.[20] Codevilla seems to feel some pull toward both the Machiavelli-Hobbes and the Aristotle-Aquinas traditions; but a man cannot serve two masters.

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[20] For further discussion, see Roderick T. Long, *Reason and Value: Aristotle versus Rand* (Objectivist Center, 2000).

Moreover, Codevilla's recommendations are vulnerable not only to moral objections, but to purely pragmatic ones as well. His proposal to fight terrorism by destroying Arab governments depends crucially on the assumption that private terrorism requires state support. But does it? Codevilla finds it absurd that "a private organization could freely organize worldwide mayhem from Arab police states without being one of their tools" (p. 66). But mightn't this judgment be symptomatic of the second Machiavellian flaw—the tendency to exaggerate the effectiveness of state power and to underestimate the effectiveness of nongovernmental cooperation? Codevilla offers some evidence (p. 70) for thinking that the 9/11 hijackers must have received state support, but he also quotes equally plausible contrary arguments (pp. 81-82) from defense analyst David Tucker. In any case, even assuming that they *in fact* received such support, if terrorism is as easy as Codevilla maintains, then such support hardly seems *necessary*. Indeed, what 9/11 demonstrated above all was the tremendous power available to ordinary individuals (terrorists, on the one hand, passengers, on the other) and the relative impotence of the state apparatus.

Sometimes Codevilla argues that the most crucial support that terrorists receive from regimes is not material assistance but *inspiration*:

> No one argued that the Soviet Union recruited every Communist, pulled every string on Communism's behalf throughout the world. It did not have to, any more than the sun has to reach down and turn every sunflower to make it follow its path. . . . Communists and Nazis everywhere ceased to be a problem when the regimes that inspired them died. (p. 98)

Maybe so; but communism and Nazism were political faiths, explicitly bound up with the destinies of particular governmental institutions, while Wahhabism, for example, is not; nor, I might add, did communism and Nazism offer their martyrs much in the way of a glorious afterlife. In any case, how would Codevilla explain the nineteenth century's robust history of bombings and assassinations carried out by dedicated communists and socialists, in Russia and elsewhere, in the absence of any favorable state to provide either material assistance or inspiration?

If Codevilla is mistaken about the dependence of private terrorism on state sponsorship, then his proposal to invade Arab countries and carry out a Bloodbath of the Bureaucrats would simply give private terrorists *more* grievances, provoking rather than dispiriting them, and would thus make the world a more, not less, dangerous place.

Why do so many people in the Islamic world hate the United States enough to give their lives in terrorist acts against it? Are their grievances

legitimate or illegitimate?[21]   And to whatever extent their grievances *are* legitimate, would redressing those grievances make the U.S. safer by defusing such hatred, or less safe by emboldening its enemies?

Codevilla seems to give every possible answer to these questions. "Why do people hate?" he asks, and replies:

> Sometimes, because they have suffered what they consider to be wrongs. America's Founders counseled us to have as little political intercourse as possible with foreign peoples, not to interfere with their affairs, precisely because we have little control over what others will consider offenses. (p. 98)

Here Codevilla acknowledges—rightly, I would say—the possible role of U.S. foreign policy in provoking terrorism (though his tone and wording tend to suggest that it's some sort of *quirk* of these inscrutable foreigners to take offense at being invaded, exploited, bombed, or starved).[22] But then he takes it back:

> Mostly however, people hate not because of anything others do . . . but because they tend to blame others for their own unhappiness. . . . [S]uch attitudes are the problems of the people who have them. We can't change them. . . . Muslim rage . . . comes from resentment of their own failures, and is very much their problem. (pp. 98-99)

Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that to the extent that the U.S. and other Western powers bear responsibility for Arab anti-Americanism, it's by being too *nice*: Terrorism, Codevilla maintains, is the result of the mistaken beliefs on the part of "Western elites" that "colonialism is wrong" and "war is passé" (p. 59). Codevilla seems of two minds about colonialism, advising against it in some portions of his book and longing nostalgically for its return in other portions. But the claim that Western elites have rejected colonialism and war is fantastic: The United States and most other Western countries have troops all over the world, intervene militarily in country after country, and constantly

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[21] It should be unnecessary to say that a terrorist's grievances may be legitimate even if his terroristic response to them is not.

[22] This tendency to trivialize Arab grievances rears its head more than once. While properly critical of the brutal treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, for instance, Codevilla downplays its seriousness by calling it "slight mistreatment" (would it seem so slight if it had befallen him or his loved ones?) and seems more exercised over its tactical and strategic than over its moral shortcomings (pp. 147-48).

strive to maintain or expand their spheres of influence. *Colonialism and war are what Western elites are all about.*[23]

Yet elsewhere in the book, by contrast, Codevilla is suddenly happy to acknowledge that, after all, the Arabs *do* have legitimate grievances and that redressing those grievances *would* help to defuse anti-American sentiment:

> Americans can do more to abate the hate that comes from political contact with the Arab world. Since mid-twentieth century, regimes that ape Western ways and are somehow supported by Western powers, especially by the U.S., have worsened the Arabs' miseries. The rise of political Islam against these regimes has prompted Westerners, and especially Americans, to increase that support—and that misery. . . . The way to reduce hate is to practice arms' length diplomacy . . . . (pp. 157-58)

So Codevilla says in *this* passage. But he also says the following:

> True, we had something to do with establishing those very regimes. To that extent, Arabs have a legitimate beef against us. But we cannot do anything that would force them to hate us less. Even if, God forbid, we were to fulfill their most strident demand—turn ourselves into raging Jew-haters, and destroy Israel for them—we would earn not less hate but even more contempt. (p. 99)

For Codevilla, "the easiest way to encourage terrorism is to attempt to deal with 'the root causes of resentment against us' by granting some of the demands of our enemies" (p. 58).[24]

So what *is* Codevilla's view about the role of the U.S. in provoking anti-American hatred and terrorism in the Arab world? Apparently, he holds all of the following views:

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[23] See, *e.g.*, Joseph R. Stromberg, "The Role of State Monopoly Capitalism in the American Empire," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2001), pp. 57–93, available online at http://www.mises.org/journals/jls/15_3/15_3_3.pdf; and Joseph Stromberg, "Sovereignty, International Law, and the Triumph of Anglo-American Cunning," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 29-93, available online at http://www.mises.org/journals/jls/18_4/18_4_2.pdf.

[24] But what if—as Codevilla seems to acknowledge—some of these enemies' demands are *just*, are measures that Americans are morally obligated to take anyway? Should the U.S. flout its moral obligations for reasons of expediency?

1. The U.S. bears no causal responsibility for the hatred.
2. The U.S. has provoked the hatred by being too non-interventionist.
3. The U.S. has provoked the hatred by being too interventionist and
      3a. can diminish it by redressing grievances.
      3b. can only increase it by redressing grievances.

At this point, I confess, my hermeneutical skills give out.

     My own view is closest to (3a); perhaps there would still be anti-American resentment in the Arab world in the absence of U.S. military involvement there, but it's a big step from merely feeling resentment to being willing to blow oneself up, and it's hard to believe that bombing and invading Muslim countries has no significant tendency to move Muslims across that gap. If there were no U.S. troops on the soil of any Muslim country and no U.S. involvement anywhere in the Middle East, then how much success would terrorist recruiters have in getting young Muslims ready to kill and die just because some country on the other side of the globe is pretty rich and treats its women like people? Sure, there'd be a few; there are always a few such fanatics anywhere: I remember from my days in Ithaca, New York, the fundamentalist Christian who rammed his truck into a local movie theater—injuring only himself—to protest the showing of *The Last Temptation of Christ*.[25] But destroying Arabic governments isn't going to get rid of the super-fanatics either.

     Codevilla apparently sees the attempt to restrain U.S. power as a "leftist" and "anti-American" phenomenon (p. xi). I would remind him that precisely this attempt lies at the traditional *core* of free-market Americanism—unless Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, William Graham Sumner, E. L. Godkin, Frank Chodorov, and Rothbard were anti-American leftists.[26]

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[25] He later said that he had done it on a sudden pious impulse, and that the possibility of wrecking his truck or injuring himself simply hadn't occurred to him. The mills of Darwin grind slowly . . . .

[26] Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government," *Aesthetic Papers* 1 (1849); Mark Twain, *The War Prayer* (Harper, 1984); William Graham Sumner, "The Conquest of the United States by Spain," in Sumner, *War and Other Essays*, ed. Albert Galloway Keller (Yale University Press, 1919), pp. 295-334; E. L. Godkin, "The Eclipse of Liberalism," *The Nation*, August 9, 1900; Frank Chodorov, *Fugitive Essays: Selected Writings of Frank Chodorov*, ed. Charles H. Hamilton (Liberty Fund, 1980); Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (Collier Macmillan, 1978); Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York University Press, 1998).

Codevilla often writes as though, whatever may have been true in the past, the only choice facing the United States *now* were one between different flavors of interventionism—between siding with Israel and siding with Palestine, for example. But Israel and Palestine are both terrorist states. Why should the U.S. be siding with either of them? (Of course, the United States has sponsored its share of terrorism, too; taking seriously Codevilla's call to "kill the regimes—the ruling classes—of countries that are in any way associated with terrorism" [p. 100] would require making the streets of Washington and Wall Street run with blood. Codevilla's concern with state-sponsored terrorism is curiously selective.) More broadly, why not follow a consistent policy of strategic disengagement—heeding President Washington's advice to avoid "entangling alliances"? Codevilla opines, plausibly enough, that America makes itself a target of terrorism through its "*peculiar combination of intrusiveness and fecklessness*" (p. 13). But he seems more interested in addressing the fecklessness than in undoing the intrusiveness.[27]

Some of Codevilla's remarks suggest he may think that although disengagement might have been an option *once*, and may with luck be so again down the road, given that violence has begun, only a violent solution will end it:

> Once blood is spilled, the previously existing order, the previous peace, is broken forever. What peace will prevail in the end depends on who, by killing and willingness to be killed, can force the other to accept his version. (p. 141)

It is perhaps in this spirit that Codevilla quotes, without commentary, Pericles' advice that "to recede is no longer possible . . . For what you hold is, to speak somewhat plainly, a tyranny; to take it perhaps was wrong, but to let it go is unsafe" (p. 143). Against this (moral considerations aside) I would quote Codevilla's own excellent advice in another context: "When in a hole, the beginning of wisdom is: stop digging" (p. 155).

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[27] For a compelling case for U.S. disengagement, see Jonathan Kwitny, *Endless Enemies: The Making of an Unfriendly World* (Viking, 1986); and John Denson, ed., *The Costs of War: America's Pyrrhic Victories* (Transaction, 1999).