



## ***The Free Congress Commentary***

### ***The Next Conservatism #32: The Grand Strategic Context, Part 1***

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One of the topics the next conservatism will have to address with some urgency is grand strategy. Grand strategy is a country's overarching idea about how it intends to relate to the rest of the world.

Currently, America's grand strategy is to press "democratic capitalism" on the rest of the world, by force of arms if necessary. Not only has that grand strategy led us into a morass in Iraq, it has greatly undermined our moral standing almost everywhere. As Russell Kirk wrote, the surest way to make someone your enemy is to tell him you are going to remake him in your image for his own good.

By the end of the Bush administration, if not before, it will be clear that America needs a different grand strategy. The next conservatism will have to offer one. But before we can offer a new grand strategy, we need to understand the grand strategic context – the environment with which our grand strategy will have to deal. Paul Weyrich asked me to lay out the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grand strategic context as I see it in this and the next column.

In my view, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be shaped on the grand strategic level by a collision between two vast forces, the Fourth Generation of Modern War and Brave New World. The forces of the Fourth Generation are non-state elements such as al Qaeda and other "terrorists," as well as gangs, waves of immigrants from other cultures and anyone else who is willing to fight for something other than a state.

As I said in an earlier column, conservatives have to grasp that with the advent of Fourth Generation war, we are facing the greatest change in armed conflict since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. That treaty gave states a monopoly on war. The Fourth Generation is marked by the state's loss of that monopoly and the rise of non-state elements that can fight states and win.

At the heart of this vast change is not a military but a political, social and moral development, a crisis of legitimacy of the state itself. All over the world, including in America, people are withdrawing their primary loyalty from the state and giving it to a wide variety of other things, of many different kinds: to families, clans,

tribes, ethnic groups and races, gangs, ideologies, “causes” such as environmentalism and “animal rights,” religions and so on. Many people who would never fight for their state are willing, even eager, to fight for their new primary loyalty.

The result of this shift in loyalties will be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century marked not by “the end of history” that some advocates of American empire have projected, but the return of history, specifically the return of a world similar to Europe between the end of the Middle Ages and the rise of the state. As the state recedes and in some places disappears, life will become nasty, brutish and short. We already see this in places such as West Africa, Somalia, and Iraq, where the state has either vanished or become a fiction, merely a name adopted by one of the many gangs of armed robbers. Where the forces of the Fourth Generation prevail, the Dark Ages will return, and they may once again last for centuries.

The threat represented by the Fourth Generation is easy for most conservatives, and most Americans, to grasp. We are told that we are fighting just that threat in Iraq. In reality, it was our invasion that destroyed the Iraqi state and turned Mesopotamia into a happy hunting ground for a variety of Islamic, non-state, Fourth Generation elements.

Here we see the point where the grand strategic context grows difficult for American conservatives. We want to accept the Washington Establishment’s assurances that the counter to the Fourth Generation is more American troops, more American intervention abroad to promote “democratic capitalism.”

But that is not the reality. The reality is that the Fourth Generation’s main enemy is not the America that most conservatives identify with, a culturally Christian American republic, but another force just as sinister as the Fourth Generation itself: Brave New World. In my next column, I will address that aspect of the grand strategic context.

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