

Losing the Cold War one election at a time....

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There is an old Latin proverb, *E fructu arbor cognoscitur*; the tree can be recognized by its fruits. If we are truly living in an era of liberal peace, than we should be able to measure the promise of liberty in the sweet taste of the fruit of democracy. The U.S. 'victory' at the end of the Cold War was suppose to usher in a new era. As President Bush says again and again in his campaign 'freedom is on the march'. If this is true, the spread of democracy and free markets now central to the Bush administration's strategy in the 'war on terror' should be a fact of life for much of the world. Yet for the majority of the citizens of the former Soviet Union, Africa, Asia and the Middle East that fruit has a sour taste, the bitterness of the failed promise of democracy.

As Americans go to the polls, they should think not of the choice between two leaders, but of the path of liberty since the end of the Cold War. If you look at the Freedom House's map of political freedom you will see a dark stain of despotism stretching from North Africa to the China Sea. The majority of the world's citizens live not in democracy, but in the absence of liberty. They eat rotten fruit. More than Islamic extremism, it is the acute awareness by the world community of the failure of the liberal peace that drives rising tide of anti-U.S. sediment around the world.

In order to choose the new leaders of the 21st century, we have to reconstruct history. There was no victor in the Cold War, just as there now is no grand liberal peace ending history before our eyes. The United States loses the Cold War every time a despot parades fraudulent elections as a triumph of democratization. The supposed unleashing of democracy that was to be the end of history has simply not happened in the former Soviet Union, much of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Contrary to President Bush's mantra, freedom is not on the march. Of the fifteen republics created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, only the three Baltic states have emerged as genuine democratic nations that uphold liberty. Putin is taking cues from the all but dictator in name of Belarus while Ukraine is entering elections in which the opposition candidate has already been mysteriously poisoned and his supporters routinely beaten. Central Asia is governed by strong-man enigmas, while the Caucasus is stalled, locked in the politics of fear. A great

stagnation hangs over the Middle East as aging kings and a lost generation of Arab Nationalists hold onto the pursue strings of power at the expense of an increasingly disenfranchised populace.

The United States loses the Cold War and by extension the ‘war on terror’ one election at time, year after year. The failure to cultivate the liberal peace from within each country and culture as opposed to the brutal reality of forced democratization in Iraq is furthering rotting the tree of democracy. Rather than winning the ‘war on terror’, it further erodes the false sense of victory driving post-cold war policy. This false sense of victory must stop with this election. The U.S. needs to reconcile national and human security in the conduct of its foreign policy. As long as we continue to separate security from justice, all efforts to democratize the Middle East as a cure all for terrorism will reek of hypocrisy.

The old battles of the Cold War will only be won by supporting free and fair elections the world over. To win Cold War and by extension the ‘war on terror’, the U.S. has to reinvest in the promise of liberty that its founders made to the world over two hundred years ago. It is no longer acceptable to ignore the trespasses of our allies in places like Russia, the Middle East, Pakistan or Uzbekistan. Rulers who don’t respect their citizens make bad leaders, and bad leaders produce poor policy. We can’t craft successful strategy to win the ‘war on terror’ out of rotten fruit. The tree of democracy can not weather the continued absence of justice.

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