

Hello to all,

There's a lot of political discourse and debate going on in America and around the world right now, most of it related to the U.S. and Iraq. Both ends of the political spectrum are well represented.

I've got a lot of friends on the left, some of whom believe there is no economic problem that couldn't be solved by increased taxes on the rich, and no domestic or international political problem that couldn't be solved by a big group hug and another verse of Kumbaya.

I've got lots of friends on the right, some of whom believe there is no economic problem that couldn't be solved by lower taxes, and no domestic or international political problem that couldn't be solved by larger caliber weaponry or a few well-placed nukes.

I'm firmly in the middle, somewhere between these ends of the spectrum.

Regarding the current debate, I believe the following things:

**First**, some things are inevitable. Regardless of whether we go to war with Iraq or not, there are thousands of trained and competent people here and abroad who have sworn to destroy our way of life. The only reason we haven't heard from them lately is that an attack now would weaken the position of those who oppose the U.S. on the world stage. The people who hate us are not stupid. They are not going to do anything now to create any sympathy for us. The threat level might as well be green, as nothing is going to happen prior to the beginning of the war, should it come. If a war happens, any attacks on America will be rationalized as a justified response and an inevitable outcome of the war.

Our enemies are very well educated, very techno-savvy, very competent with weapons of all types, capable of perfectly blending into our society, and know our weaknesses intimately.

Most importantly, these people are not going away. They nurse grudges for centuries. They are still working on paybacks for losing Spain in 1492. Unlike us, they don't get bored with a story after two thirty-minute news cycles. They will be gunning for us long after our children's children are gone. We either need to capitulate, put all the women in potato sacks, and start hitting our knees five times a day, or settle in for a very, very long struggle.

America has grown very complacent since 9/11. Our brief respite won't last much longer.

**Second**, we shouldn't get so upset at France. If anything, they deserve our pity rather than our outrage. They are a former empire, reduced to the role of a spoiled, bratty child, desperately clinging to the last vestiges of prestige and power they have, their nuclear weapons and their permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. Their long history of opposition to U.S. policy is the only way they have of being important to anybody outside their former colonial empire. Their role in opposing the war in Iraq has nothing to do with justice, peace or any high-minded ethical crusade. They are forming a political bloc to offset the strength of the dominant power, the U.S. It is merely the latest move in the "Great Game" of geopolitics that they used to dominate, along with Great Britain and Russia.

Before shouting insults at them against a background of grainy black and white photos of Utah beach, remember that it takes only a cursory reading of history to reveal that France has all the long-term loyalty and commitment of Elizabeth Taylor. As soon as it is to her advantage, she will spurn her current lovers, Germany, Russia and China, and jump into bed with whoever will advance her self-interest. She is not to be shamed for this; every other country on the planet has done, and will do, exactly the same if it is in their interests to do so. Nevertheless, it is sad to see

such a once noble nation reduced to being little more than North Korea with electricity and cheese.

**Third**, Germany is tagging along in this not due to any recent mass conversion to pacifism, but due strictly to domestic politics. In the immortal words of Tip O'Neil, "all politics are local." Gerhard Schroeder, the current chancellor, barely won reelection last year after a last minute, virulent anti-American campaign pulled him from behind to a narrow victory. In recent months, he was in danger of losing the leadership position of his party, the Social Democrats, because his party was getting spanked in local elections. He responded by forming the anti-war marriage of convenience with French president Jacques Chirac. Newspaper photos of the recent anti-war protests in Germany showed marchers holding large hate-mongering, anti-American banners with Schroeder's Social Democrat party logo prominently displayed in the lower right corner. This may seem a little crass for what was supposed to be unbiased elections and spontaneous protests, but as in all politics, it's all about obtaining, retaining and leveraging power.

Both France and Germany are maximizing the "all politics are local" aspects of this situation. By opposing the start of war, they gain favor with domestic constituencies. During and after the war, they can ring their hands and claim they did all they could to avert the tragedy, while secretly cutting backroom deals to get what remains of the spoils. Both countries have a large Muslim immigrant population, Germany's primarily Turkish, France's primarily North African. Both have large segments of their populations who are openly or covertly anti-American. Both have large segments of their populations who would love to see America's power and influence in the world further reduced, particularly in the tragically irrelevant France. By playing the role of opponents to the war, even if they know the war is inevitable, the French and German governments increase popular support at home. As a bonus, they score big points with the Arab Middle East, with which both have long standing cultural and very lucrative economic relationships.

The first humorous part of this is how naïve the French are about the Germans. On a recent visit to Germany the newspapers were filled with headlines about the new alignment of the French and German governments. Joint declarations claimed the two countries will co-develop foreign policy, share embassies in foreign countries and combine parts of their governments in a grand "merger of equals." I think the French would do well to read "Taken for a Ride," the story of the "merger of equals" of Germany's Daimler Benz and America's Chrysler. As a recent lawsuit filed by a major Chrysler shareholder has reinforced, it was a takeover of the cruelest and most cynical kind. You'd think after a few invasions the French would have learned that the Germans don't do "equal."

The second humorous part of this is the French/German definition of multilateralism. They complain endlessly about America's unilateralism, and how the integrity of the multilateralist process and international institutions must be maintained. Then the new and candidate members of the European Union had the audacity to oppose the French/German proposal for the new structure of European government. Next, to add insult to injury, they actually supported the U.S. over the French/German position on Iraq. Chirac struck back, saying that these nations were "ill bred," and "poorly brought up." He issued a clear threat that they better learn how to follow their betters, fall into line, and show proper respect for their superiors, or face the prospect of not joining the EU party that only France and Germany were qualified to lead. France and Germany are consistently adamant that the U.S. should follow the multilateral path, except when it comes to North Korea, where they favor a unilateral approach by the U.S. Again, we shouldn't be angered by these situations, attitudes and double standards. They are a normal part of the international and domestic political game.

The third humorous part of this is the posturing by France and Russia relative to the potential war in Iraq. Do you think France and Russia are opposing a U.S. war in Iraq on humanitarian grounds? To preserve world peace? To protect the validity of the U.N.? Or perhaps to preserve and protect the government of Saddam Hussein, with which they each have tens to hundreds of

billions of dollars in oil contracts that can only be exercised if a) the U.N. sanctions against Iraq are dropped and b) the Hussein Baathist regime, which signed the contracts with French and Russian companies, stays in power. In order for the sanctions to be dropped, Hussein must be proved to be in compliance with U.N. resolutions. For this, there is unending support by France and Russia for endless inspections. In order for Hussein to stay in power and their oil contracts to be realized, there is unending support in France and Russia to delay the Americans until they lose interest or are overwhelmed by the opposition to war. In the meantime, Iraq is dangling the Qurna oil field contract, worth at least \$15 billion dollars, as a carrot to those nations willing to assist it in holding off the Americans and ending the U.N. sanctions. In addition, France and Russia are Iraq's largest arms supplier, with Saddam still owing Moscow some \$4 billion dollars for his last batch of weapons. For economies such as France's, stumbling along at a projected growth rate of .9%, and Russia's, whose per capita GDP is lower than American Samoa, the prospect of getting shut out of the last major oil bonanza in the Middle East is chilling, and certainly worth a good bit of double dealing and hypocrisy.

As frustrating as this may be, it is important to remember that everything we complain about France, Germany and Russia doing now, America has done in the past. (Those who subscribe to loyalist positions in American domestic partisan politics could learn from this. Everything you accuse your opposing party of doing, has been done by yours, and worse.) A critical reading of history reveals that there is no honor or virtue in global politics. In contrast, it is all one big coin operated game whose only goal is to obtain and retain power, except where it takes occasional diversions into graft, corruption, personal grandeur and megalomania. All the platitudes about high-minded ideals that are trotted out by various governments are merely PR window dressing on the cold, hard facts that lie behind international geopolitics. Politicians seize power or are elected to protect the interests of their power base or their nations. They will form whatever alliances, oppose any dominant power, and make any back-room deals against their "allies" as is required to accomplish this goal. France does it, Germany does it, America does it. We need to look past the short term, tactical situation and realize that in the long view of history, the politicians are merely doing what they were elected to do: protect the interests of their power base and nations. Best to follow the old adage "like sausage, it is best to enjoy the end result of laws and politics and not know the details of their formation."

**Fourth**, as a nation, we need to face the fact that non-proliferation is dead. North Korea has nukes, could be one, could be five, we don't really know how many. Iran will have them soon, if they don't already. Of these two regimes, I trust the Iranians a lot more than I do the Koreans. The Koreans will sell their nukes to Osama, Inc. quicker than you can say "paid for with Saudi oil money." I believe the Iranians are more likely to leverage their nukes for regional dominance, and resist a quick sale to the Taliban. After all, the Iranians have a lot more to lose in a counterstrike than the North Koreans, and they need the money a lot less.

The non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction situation is equally bleak. It is so easy to alter domestic production facilities to produce biological and chemical weapons; there are too many nations with this capability to count.

Bottom line: we will soon experience weapons of mass destruction on U.S. soil. And they will not come conveniently delivered via a ballistic missile that is easily traceable to its country of origin. It will show up unexpectedly, with little or no way to know who was behind it. We need to wake up to this reality and get ready for it. What was once unthinkable will soon be our destiny.

**Fifth**, we need to update the U.N. How can anyone explain or justify Great Britain and France having permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council? WWII ended over 55 years ago. We are trying to manage today's world with yesterday's "to the winner goes the spoils" political structure. Permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council should be reserved for the dominant nations from each major civilization, such as China, India, Russia and the U.S. The Islamic world, Africa and

Latin America would probably have to use a rotating seat, as there are structural and cultural difficulties in assigning a permanent seat to Iran (Shiite vs. Sunni Muslim), South Africa (apartheid hangover) and Brazil (Portuguese speaking vs. Spanish speaking) respectively. Due to the changing demographic profile of the U.S., and our diverging political systems (capitalism vs. socialism), Europe is becoming very separate from America in the civilizational sense. Consequently, you could make a strong case for a representative on the council from the E.U. government. It would be entirely inappropriate, considering the ongoing political and economic consolidation of Europe, to seat an individual European country. The old world is dead and gone, we need to update the structure of the U.N. to reflect today's realities, or I fear it will not survive much longer as an institution.

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Is my story "What Will Be" inevitable? Given the ongoing and unstoppable breakdown of non-proliferation, the first few sections are getting perilously close to unavoidable. The end, obviously, is much in doubt.

I believe we can take the following additional steps to turn "What Will Be" into "What Might Have Been."

- 1) The U.S. should cut all aid to Israel until the Israelis implement a two state solution, with an autonomous, independent Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, connected by an open and secure transportation corridor. The U.S. should match, dollar for dollar, aid to Israel with aid to the Palestinian state. A Palestinian hospital, school and economic development project should match every American fighter, helicopter and missile in Israel. From the Arab and Islamic perspective, the Palestinian issue is not one of the problems in the Middle East, it is THE problem. Nothing will change until that situation is stabilized. In order to do so, the people who have literally built careers on the conflict, i.e. Sharon, Arafat, and all their professional conflict-enhancers and extenders, must be removed from the stage. Most importantly, America must take charge of its Israel / Palestinian policy. For too long, the far right ultra orthodox Israeli tail has been wagging the American foreign policy dog.
- 2) We need to be realistic about what we are trying to do in the Middle East. About the stupidest thing we could do in the short term is install democracies. Who do you think is going to be elected? Radical fundamentalist Islamists will sweep every fair election in that region. Until you defuse the situation by ending nightly broadcasts of dead Palestinians, nothing can be done in this regard. Even then, it will take generations to overcome the distrust, hatred and beliefs about the West, and especially America. As an example, a 2002 survey showed that a majority of Arabs believe the Israeli secret police and the CIA executed the World Trade Center attacks on 9/11. This level of paranoia and subscription to conspiracy theories is not going to go away via magical applications of Western values and democracy. Like most other regions of the world, the peoples of the Middle East have their own cultures, which they believe to be vastly superior to ours.
- 3) We need to be realistic about a post-war Iraq. Remember Yugoslavia? After Tito, the communist strongman who held it together through brutal repression, disappeared, it descended into inter-clan, inter-religious and inter-secular warfare for over a decade. Iraq could easily be Yugoslavia, take two. Iraq was not a country before some British and French functionaries drew arbitrary lines on a map in London and Paris during WWI. It did not arise out of the wishes of its own peoples, its own aspirations, natural borders, traditional tribal boundaries, or in response to the overthrow of a foreign power. It arose due to the angle of the rulers on a drawing room map, beneath the swirling smoke of cigars, to the tune of clinking brandy glasses. As such, it is extremely unlikely that an illegitimate country born of colonial foreign meddling can be successfully sustained by idealistic concepts of a pluralistic democracy. Blood is thicker than water, and tribal, religious and economic loyalties are much thicker than any administration that America, the West, or the U.N. can impose. We need to address the lack of a nation for the world's

20 million Kurds, and we need to recognize that Iraq will probably need to Balkanize back into its native constituent parts of Kurd, Shia and Sunni to have any shot at peace in the region.

- 4) We need to understand our status versus different cultures. Most Americans mindlessly drink up the pap churned out by American media about the U.S. being the “lone superpower” and assume that our power allows us to stand unopposed and unchallenged. Actually, America’s power relative to the rest of the world has been in decline for some time. The united Europe equals our size as an economic market. China is fast surpassing us as the dominant civilization. By moving most of our manufacturing and software development offshore, we have become, in many ways, an empty shell of an economy. We are quickly approaching the time when our remaining roles in the world economy will be to produce banal entertainment, stamp out fast food, be the beat cop who is called in whenever somebody needs roughing up, and buy a lot of stuff to support the export economies of Japan, China and East Asia. We must come to terms with our diminishing power relative to the rest of the world, and transition gracefully into a role as one of many important players in the world. Let’s not end up a pathetic example of faded glory like France, reduced to being little more than a barking obstructionist in the otherwise peaceful night of the world stage.
- 5) We must gain energy independence from the Arab Middle East. We will never be oil import free, but we can completely alter our domestic and foreign policies by ending our dependency on a region that is so hostile to our interests and to us. We need to stop giving billions of dollars a year to people who are using our money to set up schools to teach anti-Western lies and hatred, to fund terrorists who are killing us and our families, and to fund weapons of mass destruction development and deployment. We can do this by taking the following steps:
  - a. Declare a “Manhattan project” or “race to the moon” for independence from Arab Middle East oil supplies by 2013. This was the greatest missed political and policy opportunity after 9/11. It must not be missed after the next attack. In response to that attack, the American public will be ready to sacrifice, if those sacrifices achieve a specific goal. Think for a moment of what differences would exist in our domestic and foreign policy if we were not dependent on oil from our enemies. What oppressive regimes would we not uphold? What religious extremists would not receive our billions? What money flowing out to secure, purchase and protect Middle Eastern oil could be applied to domestic issues? There are few aspects of our foreign and domestic policy that would not be altered, enlightened or enhanced by the end of dependence on Arab Middle Eastern oil. We will not realize all the benefits in the near term. Like our forefathers, we need to sacrifice today for the benefit of the generations to follow.
  - b. Increase the cost of gasoline to \$4 a gallon over a seven-year period. Everywhere else I’ve been in the world, gas is usually about \$4 a gallon. There’s a reason people drive more efficient cars there. We should take the difference between the normal retail price and \$4 a gallon and dedicate it to tax credits and research grants for fuel cells and other alternative power sources, with the emphasis on fuel cells. We can also apply a portion of these funds to tax credits and subsidies for the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles and mass transit fares and development.
  - c. Be realistic about alternative energy technologies. In the last week I’ve two read news stories with quotes from environmentalists, including the Sierra Club, related to alternative energy. These quotes included “emission free electric cars,” and “the technology exists today for fuel cell vehicles,” and, paraphrasing here, “if it wasn’t for the auto industry, we’d have them on the streets now.” The blind acceptance of, and lack of fact checking, by the American media for any environmentalist’s statement aside, this level of naiveté will not move us any closer to an alternative fuel future. Electric cars are not emission free. Most of the electricity generated in the U.S. comes from plants that produce emissions. The technology for fuel cell cars exists today only in laboratories and concept cars.

Honda is demonstrating a few prototypes in the U.S. market, but widespread implementation is years away. Why can't we have them this year? First, the automotive industry is among the most highly regulated industries in the U.S., you can't just slap something together and shove it out on the road. Second, it takes person-centuries of human resources investment to research, engineer, develop, produce, distribute, maintain, resell and recycle a new vehicle type, not to mention the financial, technical and manufacturing investment requirements. Third, plants and tooling must be engineered to produce them, parts and supplier networks must be structured, and an entire fuel storage, delivery and marketing infrastructure must be developed. Just because Ballard Fuel Systems, the Canadian company at the forefront of fuel cell development, demonstrates a proof-of-concept or prototype vehicle does not mean that the "technology exists today" and we could all have them in our garages if only Detroit would let us. It is possible for us to achieve this goal, but the reality is, it will not happen overnight, much to the chagrin of many starry-eyed idealists and "all corporations are evil" activists. Most importantly, there is a fundamental rule in the automotive world: The industry will build what people buy. The sooner the market demands alternative fuel and high mileage vehicles, the sooner they will be built at an affordable cost. Until then, don't blame the auto industry for producing the gas hogs that everyone wants to buy.

- d. Leverage the oil companies to form the supply chain for the fuel cell based transportation network. In the political reality of America, alternative energy and fuel cells are a non-starter if they spell the doom of the oil industry, regardless of who is president. Big Oil must have a place at the table, and must have a way to survive and thrive in a new non-oil-centric world. All things considered, anyone interested in alternative energy should consider it a triumph that President Bush, a kid from Midland Texas in the heart of the Texas oil patch, championed fuel cells in his last State of the Union speech. That was a watershed moment from the public policy standpoint, but it will only add up to real change if the economic interests of the oil industry, and the hundreds of thousands of jobs it represents, are respected and accommodated. "It's the economy, stupid," was the rallying cry that got Bill Clinton elected. The motto still holds true. Unless we take care of the fundamental segments and stakeholders of the economy during the transition to alternative energy based transportation, nothing will ever happen.
- e. Decrease our per capita energy use. You've all seen the statistics of how we use more energy per person than any other society. We also have the most developed society, and are the most geographically dispersed advanced economy, but these aspects are not often considered. Regardless, we need to stop buying low mileage per gallon vehicles such as monster SUVs when we don't go anywhere more off-road than the grass parking lot at the kid's soccer game. Station wagons have a lower center of gravity, so they handle better, get better gas mileage and are statistically safer (fewer rollovers offset the truck vs. car SUV advantage). If you really need to carry eight kids at a time, then OK, get an SUV. I think the other 80-90% of us could sacrifice and get something more efficient. There are countless other ways we could all reduce our individual and collective energy use, and in this area we could stand to learn some lessons from the Europeans. Yes, I realize we don't live in places where the streets are tiny; there's no place to park; gas costs \$4 per gallon; there is ubiquitous, efficient, interconnected and affordable mass transit; the towns are three miles apart; and you can drive across three countries in an afternoon, but we could still learn some things about energy efficiency from them. We need to reduce or replace 25% of our oil supply. I believe if we had this specific goal to achieve, with the reward of freeing ourselves from those who fund our children's murderers, most of us would gladly do it.
- f. Maximize domestic production. We need to get the maximum amount of domestic energy we can. Oil extraction technologies and techniques have

advanced significantly since the early days of arctic and offshore exploration and production. As the recent National Academy of Sciences report on arctic oil exploration showed, today's techniques allow a much smaller impact and long-term footprint. The report also pointed out that the much ballyhooed and feared massive oil spills have not happened in all the years we've been producing oil on the North Slope. There will be environmental impacts. However, we must balance the level of impact on one herd of caribou against the fate of our nation. Additional exploration is not the only answer, and the sacrifice here must be matched by reduction in our per capita energy use for this to be politically viable. We can't drill our way out of this mess, but we must do what we can to increase domestic supplies.

- g. Secure a reliable supply of foreign oil to carry us through the coming decade of transition to alternative fuel. In my opinion, the current Islamic oil producing regimes are doomed. It is only a matter of time, probably a short time, regardless of if we invade Iraq or not, before these regimes fall to the fundamentalist Islamists. Together, these Middle Eastern Arab countries currently represent about 25% of our oil supply. When the fundamentalists take over, we are going to lose a quarter of our oil supply. Overnight. This is a shock that will destroy our economy and our way of life, which just happens to be the goal of the Islamists. We need a reliable supply of oil for the next five to ten years while we make our transition away from Middle Eastern oil. A ruthless dictator (who everyone in the Middle East happens to hate, except when it is in their interests to deny it) is sitting on oil reserves that more than meet our needs. Based on his past behavior, which he shows no genuine sign of changing, as soon as the U.N. sanctions are removed, he's going to sell his oil to fund the development of more weapons. Based on his past behavior, he is very likely to ensure they are used to attack us and most certainly will use them to dominate the Middle East. Every week he smuggles out hundreds of millions of dollars worth of oil. This money is flowing directly into his personal coffers, estimated to hold some 25 to 30 billion dollars, money that is used to pay the families of suicide bombers, support terrorist organizations and fund weapons programs. He is using his oil against our interests. He will continue to use it against us. We should take him out and get a guaranteed deal to buy the oil from the new government for the next five to ten years. Yes its ugly. Yes, its antiethical to all the platitudes and high ideals all nations trot out to justify involvement in military campaigns. And yes, its realpolitik. Both sides need to put away all the PR rationale used to justify and oppose this war. Let's state clearly that we're not going to war to install democracy in the Middle East. Conversely, let's all admit the inspections are nothing more than Saddam's game of Three Card Monte. We need to get realistic about what it really takes to defend our interests in a geopolitical context. It's not about platitudes. It's about pragmatism. For us, just as it is for France and Russia, it's about petroleum. However, from the perspective of our long term national interests, if we go to war merely to trade Saudi oil for Iraqi oil, we've gained nothing. This war only makes sense strategically if we use it as a means to bridge ourselves to the goal of being Middle East oil free.
- 6) We need to beware of extremists. We have seen the Islamic world hijacked by fundamentalists with a worldview rooted in 1200 A.D. We need to pay attention to who gets our attention and support here at home. People who are divisive, who seek to polarize, who draw their power base from the extreme ends of the political spectrum, who play partisan politics at the expense of our national interest, who care more about the next life than they do for the consequences of their actions in this one, all deserve close and enduring scrutiny. As we undergo the attacks to come, some more horrific than we can possibly now imagine, it will be easy to fall under the spell of people offering simple solutions to complex problems. Let us learn from history in this regard, so as to not repeat those mistakes.

I hope that my story never becomes "What Will Be." But I believe that if we don't wake up to some pragmatic domestic and international political, cultural, and military realities, we are headed inexorably toward that end.

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All of my opinions expressed and reflected here and in "What Will Be" are based on my life experiences, the experiences of my friends and family, my travel to other lands, daily newspapers, very little TV news, and the countless books and magazines I've read. I realize that my views are still pretty ethnocentric, and I've got a lot to learn about other peoples, cultures, and governments. To further this learning, I plan to spend as much time as I can in the non-Western civilizations of the world during the next two years. We are starting with China and Africa this Fall.

I'll let you know what I learn along the way.

Be well,  
Doug