

**NEW AMERICAN STRATEGIES FOR SECURITY AND PEACE
OCTOBER 28-29, 2003 - WASHINGTON, D.C.
#MR9 - JOHN PODESTA, LEONE, KUTNER**

ROBERT KUTTNER

RK: I think it's no exaggeration to say that we have been part of a genuinely historic event this past twenty-four hours. We have heard not only a coherent critique of the Bush Administration foreign policy. But more importantly we've heard a coherent, plausible alternative that will make us safer as a people and as a nation. We've heard it from distinguished experts who represent the bipartisan mainstream in foreign policy going all the way back to the Kennedy Administration.

If you start with the period that began after World War II there have always been people on the fringe of foreign policy, people who to start World War III in the 1940's while the United States still had a nuclear monopoly. But of course instead we got Truman and Cannon and containment. There were people who wanted to extend the Korean War to China. But instead Eisenhower went to Korea and ended the war.

There were people who wanted to play nuclear roulette in the Cuban Missile Crisis. There were people who

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wanted to use nuclear weapons to bomb Hanoi into the Stone Age. But in every case the foreign policy extremists were marginalized until this administration. The stakes are extremely high. It is not only our adversaries who are in peril in the United States of America. But is some of the people with their hands on the levers of power.

In a recent column I quoted the old saying that "God watches out for fools, drunkards and the United States." Being a good journalist and having Google at my disposal I decided to look it up and I was startled to learn that the author of that quote was one Otto Von Bismarck. Of course Bismarck in the 1880's was looking back on the first century of this republic's existence.

It's fortunate habit of fighting its way out of sticky situations. But that saying was a retrospective assessment and not a future guarantee. Unless the people who are in charge of this country know what they're doing we are in a very precarious situation. I think this conference represents a coming together

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of distinguished experts who have a better foreign policy, one that combines prudence with toughness, and we are not going away.

The American Prospect, The Century Foundation, and the Center for American Progress as our next venture will be challenging the neo-conservatives to a series of debates because I think their ideology can withstand neither logic nor scrutiny when measured against actual events. We will continue a website that will display papers including articles from the *Prospect* and papers produced by the other two organizations and the extraordinary remarks of Zbigniew Brzezinski.

I invite all of you and your institutions to continue to be part of this. We're going to give the right-wing think tanks a run for their money, and they have a lot more money than we do. That reminds me to thank the benefactors who made this event possible. I want to leave you with one final thought. I heard a reporter say aren't you papering over some of the fault lines? Aren't you papering over some of the disagreements? Aren't there people on your side who are still suffering from the Vietnam syndrome? Who

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are still a little bit isolationist or a little bit uncomfortable with the use of force?

I think if you look back on the 1990's it was a decade when force was combined with prudence. It's not the use of force. It's the reckless use of force that trouble most of us. Even though this is a bi-partisan event, I think it's instructive to compare what we've heard over the past twenty-four hours with what we've seen in the Democratic candidates' debates.

There's something about the debate format that impels candidates to product differentiate, to exaggerate differences among themselves. I would venture to say that if any of the first tier Democratic candidates had been at this event going from Joe Lieberman to Howard Dean, the policy that you heard espoused here would be the policy that they would embrace, and the people who you heard representing the bi-partisan consensus would be the people to whom they would turn.

I would add that that also describes probably half the Republicans in Congress who when they welcomed George Bush to the White House did not really bargain for the kind of extremist neo-con policy that ensured. So I

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thank you for coming. I think this has been a genuinely historic event if not a kind of a tipping point in which our side gained confidence and courage and coherence, and there will be more.

Finally, let me thank my two partners. We will continue this effort with your help. Thank you so much. (Applause)