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#### OPINION

### Joe Scarborough: Realist

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MSNBC commentator, Joe Scarborough, has been showing up at the Cato Institute delivering judgments about the GOP, George W. Bush and the war in Afghanistan. His most recent pronouncement, titled "Showing Restraint Abroad," was published in the Summer 2010 issue of *Cato's Letter* and may be accessed at this [podcast](#).

I'm drawn to Scarborough's MSNBC program, "Morning Joe," because the lineup of liberal intellectuals covers a range of ideologues on the left from poseurs to provocateurs and Joe himself sits above it all, occasionally expressing his views on foreign policy, spending, and President Obama. The business plan for Morning Joe is "love thy neighbor," even if he or she is a liberal ideologue. So a long train of liberal wonks appear on *Morning Joe* and each is greeted with a loving embrace.

But, outside of that framework, Joe expresses himself directly.

In "Showing Restraint Abroad," he writes, "...those who are still arguing, in 2010, that we can somehow export democracy across the globe, or rebuild countries on the other side of the globe in our image, are the people we have to call out today, tomorrow, and every day as the dangerous radicals they are. History has proven them and their worldview to be dangerous and radical."

Admittedly, Joe works for a network in competition with Fox News where Charles Krauthammer and Bill Kristol are part of Roger Ailes' style of Republican journalism. That business plan includes Karl Rove and others who pay slavish obeisance to the imperial wars of President George W. Bush. So Joe's jab at "dangerous radicals" is aimed squarely at Fox News and the neoconservatives that gravitate to power, money, imperial foreign policy, aggressive militarism and well-compensated appearances on Fox.

In several essays I've argued along similar lines to those taken up by Joe Scarborough. I suggest that the younger Kristol and elder Podhoretz and his son represent a revival of Gnosticism that, curiously, the elder Kristol knew to be an intellectual dead end.

Modern Gnosticism seeks to replace reality with possible realities. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this found expression in the socialist dreams of Lenin, Mao and, in America, Wilsonian idealism and the desire to make the world safe for democracy. Though Bill Kristol was trained to understand that seeking possible realities as opposed to real possibilities was symptomatic of a spiritual disorder, that weakness somehow worked its way into the thought processes of this otherwise intelligent younger Kristol and led him to call for establishing democratic regimes in the Middle East--by force!

Realists like Joe Scarborough may not like how those regimes act toward their own people, or that they threaten the state of Israel, but there are a lot of oligarchs out there and an imperial foreign policy that seeks to replace them with democratic regimes will put American servicemen in harm's way to achieve an impossible ideal.

That is not in the American interest.

Joe Scarborough doesn't use the term, but he's a realist and concerned that we conservatives are now identified in the popular mind with the unrealistic use of military force.

True conservatives, of course, abhor war and most certainly imperial wars that waste American lives. So it's good to see that Joe Scarborough is speaking up, and taking on the radicals who destroyed the Republican brand and who aim to push the United States into attacking Iran.

Ultimately, there may be good reasons to do precisely that, but be realistic. It will take combined Israel and American action involving a nuclear attack on Iran's hardened nuclear facilities, at least 20,000 Special Forces and casualties approaching 60%. If Bill Kristol, Charles Krauthammer and Norman Podhoretz think the American people will stand for that, they are more spiritually diseased than they appear.

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