that has been a leading light of liberalism ever since. "Ask yourself: Who is a truly influential liberal mind in our culture?" writes Peretz. "Whose ideas challenge and whose ideals inspire? Whose books and articles are read and passed around? There's no one, really."

Once there were such giants as Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), "the most penetrating thinker of the old liberalism." But Niebuhr, with his pessimistic view of human nature, is largely forgotten in liberal circles these days. "However gripping his illuminations, however much they may have been validated by history," says Peretz, "liberals have no patience for such pessimism." Religion in general has been in bad odor with many liberals in recent years, notes Dionne, a columnist for *The Washington Post*. "How strange it is that American liberalism, nourished by faith and inspired by the scriptures from the days of abolitionism, is now defined—by its enemies but occasionally by its friends—as implacably hostile to religion."

Liberals no longer have "a vision of the good society," laments Peretz. For years now, "the liberal agenda has looked and sounded like little more than a bookkeeping exercise. We want to spend more, they [conservatives] less. In the end, the numbers do not clarify; they confuse. Almost no one can explain any principle behind the cost differences."

Chait, a senior editor at the magazine, sees the absence of "a deeper set of philosophical principles" underlying liberalism as a strength. Unlike conservatives, he says, liberals do not make the size of government a matter of dogma. "Liberals only support larger government if they have some reason to believe that it will lead to material improvement in people's lives." Its aversion to dogma makes liberalism "superior as a practical governing philosophy."

"But there are grand matters that need to be addressed," insists Peretz, "and the grandest one is what we owe each other as Americans." Instead of taking on that difficult task, he says, liberals continue reflexively to defend every last liberal governmental program of the past and to seek comfort in leftover themes from the 1960s—the struggle for civil rights and the dangers posed by the exercise of U.S. power. They refuse to recognize the immense gains that blacks have made over the past three decades. And though they no longer regard revolutionaries as axiomatically virtuous, many still won't face up to the full evil of communism—or to the present need to combat Islamic fanaticism and Arab terrorism. "Liberalism now needs to be liberated from many of its own illusions and delusions," Peretz contends.

Yet even without its other difficulties, "liberalism still would have been undermined" by dramatic changes in the international economy since the 1960s, says Judis, a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Facing stiffer competition from abroad, U.S. manufacturers fought harder against unionization and federal regulation. And as businesses moved manufacturing jobs overseas and hired immigrants for service jobs at home, labor unions—a crucial force for liberal reform—lost much of their clout. "To revive liberalism fully—to enjoy a period not only of liberal agitation, but of substantial reform—would probably require a national upheaval similar to what happened in the 1930s and 1960s," Judis writes. That "doesn't appear imminent."

Foreign Policy & Defense

What War on Terror?

"The 'War on Terror': Good Cause, Wrong Concept" by Gilles Andréani, in *Survival* (Winter 2004–05), International Institute for Strategic Studies, Arundel House, 13–15 Arundel St., Temple Pl., London WC2R 3DX, England.

The global war on terror has become such an accepted part of America's foreign-policy thinking that the Pentagon has created an acronym for it (GWOT), and two service medals to honor those engaged in the struggle. What began as a metaphor has evolved

without careful thought into a strategic reality that has led America down the wrong path, asserts Andréani, head of policy planning in the French foreign ministry and adjunct professor at Paris II University.

It *did* make sense to define the campaign to root out Al Qaeda in Afghanistan after 9/11 as a war on terror. As in other efforts of this kind in Northern Ireland and Algeria, the terrorists operated inside clear territorial areas, making it possible to conduct full-blown counterinsurgency operations in a defined space. But in combating today's loosely knit global networks, with no geographic center, speaking of a "war" only exaggerates the importance of military operations in dealing with the threat.

Merging that war with the effort to contain rogue states is another source of trouble. The Bush administration worries that a rogue state will provide terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. But such states acquire such weapons, at great cost, in order to intimidate their neighbors or gain leverage against the United States, Andréani says, and they see the terrorists more clearly than Washington does: They're "not about to give their most cherished toys to madmen they do not control."

Attempting to confront these different threats with the single doctrine of "preventive war" makes no sense. And carrying the war to Iraq has "worried the United States' partners and undermined the antiterrorist coalition," while whipping up anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East.

One of the most negative consequences of America's war against terror, according to Andréani, has been U.S. treatment of prisoners. By failing to treat its enemies as mere criminals, the United States has awarded them undue status, and by categorizing prisoners as "unlawful combatants" and depriving them of the protections of the Geneva Conventions and U.S. criminal law, America has besmirched itself. "In this 'war' without limit in time or space," the door is open to limitless abuses: "Where is the theater of operations? How will we know when the war has ended?"

Andréani hopes that as the United States devises new strategies, it "does not mistake terrorism for a new form of warfare to be met with a rigid set of military answers." Such thinking can produce blinders, as it did decades ago when Western military leaders intensively studied the challenging new tactics of guerrillas in Southeast Asia and, disastrously, missed the crucial larger point that these revolutionary movements were rooted more deeply in nationalism than in communist ideology.

Andréani acknowledges that the United States has tried to tackle the underlying causes of terrorism, especially in its campaign to spread democracy. But the war on terrorism "has detracted from the consideration of some urgent political problems that fuel Middle East terrorism, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." Most Arabs continue to view Islamic terrorists as criminals rather than liberators, and the United States should do everything that it can to reinforce that conviction.

Push It to the Max

"American Maximalism" by Stephen Sestanovich, in *The National Interest* (Spring 2005), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

You've seen the cartoons: President George W. Bush has a six-shooter and a 10-gallon hat, and he's off on yet another bonehead adventure. Instead of building consensus and playing by the rules, the critics wail, Washington ignores its traditional allies, defines its struggles with its adversaries in all-or-nothing terms, and stubbornly pursues its own far-reaching goals. Yes, that's the Bush administration's approach—but it's no dramatic departure from recent U.S. practice, says Sestanovich, a professor of international diplomacy at Columbia University and U.S. ambassador-at-large for the states of the former Soviet Union during the Clinton administration's second term. And the approach of the last few decades has consistently worked.