

sovereignty. The United States, being the best and most powerful country in the world—a moral authority—should not be asking anybody else what to do. We should be using our military power.

This belief comes together with a set of metaphors that have run foreign policy for a long time. There is a common metaphor learned in graduate school classes on international relations. It is called the rational actor metaphor. It is the basis of classical “realist” international relations theory, and in turn it assumes another metaphor: that every nation is a person. Therefore there are “rogue states,” there are “friendly nations,” and so on. And there is a national interest.

What does it mean, in this worldview, to act in your self-interest? In the most basic sense it means that you act in ways that will help you be healthy and strong. In the same way, by the metaphor that a nation is a person, it is good for a nation to be healthy (that is, economically healthy—defined as having a large GDP) and strong (that is, militarily strong). It is not necessary that all the individuals in the country be healthy, but the companies should be, and the country as a whole should have a lot of money. That is the idea.

The question is: How do you maximize your self-interest? That is what foreign policy is about: maximizing self-interest—not working for the interest of all. The rational actor metaphor says that every actor, every person, is rational, and that it is irrational to act against your self-interest. Therefore it is rational for every person to act to maximize self-interest. Then by the further metaphor that nations are persons (“friendly nations,” “rogue states,” “enemy nations,” and so on), there are adult nations and child nations, where adulthood is industrialization. The child nations are called “developing” nations or “underdeveloped” states. Those, again in this view, are the backward ones. And what should we do? If you are a strict father, you tell the children how to develop, tell them what rules they should follow, and punish them when they do wrong. That is, you operate using, say, the policies of the International Monetary Fund.

And who is in the United Nations? Most of the United Nations consists of developing and underdeveloped countries. That means they are metaphorical children. Now let’s go back to the State of the Union address. Should the