A Pact With The Devil:
Washington's Bid for World Supremacy
and the Betrayal of the American Promise

Roundtable Review

Reviewed Works:

Tony Smith. A Pact With The Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy
and the Betrayal of the American Promise. New York: Routledge, March
(electronic).

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Stable URL: http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/APactWithTheDevil-
Roundtable.pdf

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http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/
7 November 2007
I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this H-Diplo electronic Roundtable. Before taking up the points made by individual reviewers good enough to give serious consideration to my book *A Pact with the Devil: Washington’s Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise*, let me make some preliminary observations.

My book is on the intellectual origins of the American decision to invade Iraq, ideas which were rather fully formed, I maintain, by the late 1990s. It took the characters in top policy-making decisions in the Bush administration and the attack of 9/11 to convert these ideas into public policy, but the Bush Doctrine was not quickly thought up after the terrorist attack. Rather, it existed in all its dimensions before George W. Bush ever entered the White House, indeed before he was a candidate for the presidency.

Put differently, the Bush Doctrine (especially as laid out in the National Security Strategy of September 2002, but also as argued in numerous presidential statements from June 2002 and still today) was the most ideologically complex presidential doctrine ever issued. And it was momentous in its consequences, as the attack on Iraq reveals. Hence understanding the logic of this framework for foreign policy is critical if we are to understand why the invasion occurred and how we should think about the future of America in the world in light of this disastrous undertaking.

Robert Jervis is quite right, then, to call my book a contribution to intellectual history, more specifically to the way in which liberal internationalism, or Wilsonianism, as an ideology changed over time and especially after the implosion of the Soviet empire and Union between 1989 and 1991. Liberal internationalism was already robust, to be sure, for the presidency of Ronald Reagan had made it a bipartisan consensus, but it took victory in the Cold War (along with the Gulf War in 1991) for it to become persuasive that it was not so much the degree of power the U.S. possessed that caused it to triumph so much as the style of its power—its appeal to democratic governments and open economies that worked to give it strength across so many dimensions.
Ideology has always been interesting to me. In my first book on French decolonization, *The French Stake in Algeria* (Cornell, 1978), I argued for the existence of a "colonial consensus" that made withdrawal from Indochina and Algeria difficult for Paris. That is, the problems of the French Fourth Republic did not come from its divisions, as we so often heard, but more from its unity (that itself could be traced by most clearly to the thinking of Charles de Gaulle). In a later book, *Thinking Like A Communist: State and Legitimacy in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (Norton, 1987), I looked at the origins and evolution of the idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," the founding argument for the legitimacy of single party rule under communism. The ways ideas come to be structured political arguments was also basic to my books *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, 1994), and *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Harvard, 2000).

In *America’s Mission* and a series of articles I published on liberal internationalism, I became aware of the ideological cast of Wilsonianism. Still, in comparison with Marxism-Leninism, liberal internationalism was a somewhat thin affair (we might be thankful for that) during the Cold War years. This problem was to be rectified in the 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As I was among the first to note, Washington’s victory over Moscow was also the triumph of liberal internationalism over proletarian internationalism. That is, the Cold War had been an ideological, as well as a state-centered, struggle, a secular war of religions, if you will.

What then occurred might well have been predicted: their victory in hand, liberal internationalists began to make greater and greater claims for their ideas, formulating them in an increasingly ideological fashion and looking for state power to put them in to practice. While generally sympathetic to liberalism in world affairs, I was nonetheless somewhat taken aback by the self-confidence liberal theory came to acquire. What I was even less prepared for was the way neoconservatives picked up on neoliberal thinking in the late 1990s, the ultimate result being the intellectual origins of the Bush Doctrine well before George W. Bush himself became America’s 43rd president. The marriage of first cousins—neoconservatism and neoliberalism—remains with us today in both parties, among the Democrats as among the Republicans. One needs only look at the many publications of the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) to see a group of liberal intellectuals (including Anne-Marie Slaughter, Kenneth Pollack, Larry Diamond and a host of others) whose differences with the neoconservatives are relatively minor.

Where these ideas came from, how they came to be combined in what is called the Bush Doctrine, and what they meant—and still mean—for American foreign policy is the subject of my book.

Before moving to a consideration of the specific points made by each person good enough to submit a review, let me make a comment general to them all. Jeff Taliaferro wonders if I am not more distant from liberal internationalism now than I realize I am. Bruce Kuklick
and Doug Macdonald accuse me of what we might call a “flip flop,” after the way the term was applied to John Kerry. That is, I used to be a starry-eyed liberal but am now totally opposed to the doctrine, as if I were a lapsed communist contributing my thoughts to The God That Failed.

In fact, I was never naïve as to the shortcomings of liberal internationalism—my book *America’s Mission* is clear that Wilson made a mess of his interventions in the Caribbean and that Guatemala, Iran, and Vietnam were mistakes of the first order from the 1950s to the 1970s. And these days, I still support a progressive American foreign policy with support for human rights and democracy promotion where this country can be effective without being imperialistic.

What has changed, however, is not so much me as Wilsonianism itself. As I tried to lay out in detail in the book, an evolution set in after the collapse of Soviet communism whereby political theorists in a variety of fields—international relations theory, comparative political theory, and international jurisprudence—made claims for liberal internationalism of a sort never before entertained. The result was that superpower America now had a super-ideology to warrant its expansive ambitions. Perhaps the worm had always been in the fruit, but now the worm was destroying the fruit.

A final remark. Professors Kuklick and Macdonald appear to think that writing intellectual history of this sort is not so demanding as doing more complex historical investigations. They have kinder things to say, as a result, for *America’s Mission* than for the volume under review. In fact, writing *A Pact with the Devil* was a formidable challenge. It required seeing the Bush Doctrine for what it was—not boiler plate rhetoric but a considered, complex, and highly dangerous formulation of Washington’s intentions, something neither Kuklick nor Macdonald appears to understand as terribly important in and of itself. However, tracking the structure of this Doctrine required seeing the emergence of an ideological doctrine from disparate sources in a series of highly charged theoretical literatures that had been produced by neoliberal scholars many of whom I knew.

To put it mildly, most of these neolibs have not been happy with the book. Their strongest charge is that the composite portrait drawn of them is unfair; that the neoconservatives brought all of these ideas together in to a single ideology, but not them. My reply is that they were all part of a collective conscience, a “spirit of the times” or *zeitgeist*, that contributed to the decision to invade Iraq by providing critical building blocks to the Bush Doctrine. More, many of these liberal intellectuals were players in the PPI or the DLC. They cannot so easily wash their hands of their support for the Bush Doctrine for the only substantive difference this group had with official Washington was their opposition to American “unilateralism” and their preference that American imperialism have multilateral support. The Bush Doctrine is a Wilsonian document, no doubt about it, but of a cast of thought impossible to imagine before the 1990s.
Macdonald seems aware of this at some level and so deplores my “accusatory tone” and references to “pathology,” a feeling Kuklick echoes with his statement that “when events recede into the past, their valence changes” so that he is “suspicious of the moralistic rush to judgment” in this book. Jervis is quite right to say that the liberals analyzed in the book feel that their ideas have been “distorted and defamed,” as several have written me in intemperate messages. But just as the press, the military, the clergy, and the CIA (among others) have some explaining to do, so do the intellectuals however much they might like to deny their involvement in the makings of this calamity. To his credit, Taliaferro understands from the perspective of realist theory and analysis the tragedy of the human condition and the enormity of what the Bush Doctrine has brought into being. Jervis, too, alludes constantly to the “corrupting” influence of unaccountable power. The damage done has not only been to Iraq and our relations with the Muslim world. Domestically, with the rise of an imperial presidency, and internationally, as the repercussions of the American defeat play themselves out not only in the Middle East but also in South Asia (whither Pakistan?), East Asia (whither China?), Europe (whither Russia?), and with energy and the environment, momentous questions that are going unaddressed because of a focus on the debacle in Iraq are with us on every side. The future grows darker by the day.

In over thirty years of publishing books and articles, I have never had a review of my work as perceptive as that provided in Robert Jervis’s essay. Not that he is without criticisms. But he has the message of the book exactly right: under the impulse of what today is called liberal internationalism, or Wilsonianism, the mainstream American foreign policy political tradition evolved over time from a largely progressive formulation of what the U.S. position should be in world affairs to a doctrine of progressive imperialism ideologically expressed by some clever center-left political scientists whose arguments ultimately became basic to the intellectual appeal of the Bush Doctrine.

As a result of this development, in the annals of presidential doctrines the Bush Doctrine figures among “the greats,” if by that we mean a framework for action that has had enormous consequences for the conduct of our country on the world stage. The jury is still out, of course, but we can certainly rank it already above the Reagan, Eisenhower, Carter, Monroe, or Nixon Doctrines, and historians may well come to place it on a par with the Truman Doctrine in terms of its consequence. If we consider Washington’s Farewell Address or Wilson’s Fourteen Points or FDR’s Atlantic Charter and the Declaration on Liberated Europe, the Bush Doctrine still remains a candidate of distinction for its historical importance. It is a powerful expression of American nationalism converted into an international mission. Its complex yet coherent reading of the past, present and future, combined with its attention to military, political, moral, economic and social issues is unprecedented among presidential doctrines. Here for the first time, the United States is unquestionably possessed of an ideological statement of its place in world history, whatever definition you choose to give to the word “ideology.” As a Weltanschauung, the Bush Doctrine has no peers and is destined to remain a subject of interest for generations to come. Its influence looms over the 2008 presidential race as it is endorsed by most
Republicans (and especially John McCain) and also by Democrats (especially Hillary Clinton).

Still, Jervis is quite right that those approaching the understanding of world affairs from other frameworks may not find the study of ideas in and of themselves to be very persuasive in explaining the course of human events. Marxists would point to class interest; realists to the calculus of power; religions of every stripe to the role of hubris in human affairs. I wholeheartedly agree. Although my book had as its focus the way a set of ideas came to justify a bid for world supremacy, I see no incompatibility between my view and those of others.

Thus, the Bush Doctrine’s emphasis on open, integrated, deregulated world markets (not to speak of control over critical energy resources) certainly plays to the Marxist view of its origins in corporate America. As left analysts have maintained correctly for some time now, Washington’s concern for promoting “democracy” is in practice all too often a code word for supporting regimes that will cooperate with an American dominated world order. However, Marxists might recall Marx’s own emphasis on the need for ideological justification of class interest in *The German Ideology* and the development of this argument about a century later by Antonio Gramsci.

So far as realist insights are concerned, I am clear in book that I do not take the liberal internationalist argument at face value but as a mask to justify the expansion of American power. To be sure, Wilsonians like Anne-Marie Slaughter or Larry Diamond or John Lewis Gaddis surely believe in good faith what they say. In this respect, they are more naïve than most neoconservatives, although at times I find myself persuaded reading Robert Kagan, say, that he too genuinely, indeed passionately, believes what he is arguing. Or one might consider, as Paul Berman does in *Power and the Idealists*, the many foreigners (he does not talk about Tony Blair, however) who unreservedly backed the American invasion of Iraq, including the current French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner. Or again, even Thomas L. Friedman, usually referred to as our country’s most influential foreign policy correspondent, probably really subscribed to the nonsense he for years published on an almost weekly basis. Still, the realist point that when a state acts it usually does so based on power calculations is one I do not dispute. Surely Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld along with the President are evidence of that. Probably Condoleezza Rice as well. And most neoconservatives, as they will readily agree, subscribe to realist principles of statecraft, the iron fist in the velvet glove of the Bush Doctrine.

My own position is somewhat closer to that subscribed to by all of the world religions with which I am familiar: that pride comes before the fall. Bucked up by victory in the Cold War (and in the Gulf War), self-righteous to a degree on the blessings of open markets, human rights and democratic government for world freedom, justice, prosperity and peace, and eager for personal advancement, neoliberals could make common cause with neoconservatives (the romance was cemented for most by joint opposition to Milosevic in the mid 1990s) and in doing so join up with Christian Jacksonians well represented by then
Texas governor George W. Bush (Michael Lind’s *Made in Texas* is excellent on this last point).

In a word, as I have always supported meshing together as many insights as possible from different theoretical positions, I accept Jervis’s point that those from families outside liberalism or constructivism (to which one might add feminism, as the macho component of the Bush Doctrine is glaringly apparent) may feel the essential well-springs of American action have not been adequately identified by my book. So be it. I do not dispute their insights but would only ask that they consider the role of pride in world affairs (something that can be for the good, of course) and the teachings about hubris that are as old as human thought. William Pfaff and Chalmers Johnson, two men whom I consider to be outstanding writers on our current condition but whom I unfortunately neglected to cite in my book, can give abundant examples alongside my own of the full range of difficulties engendered by the Bush Doctrine—in domestic affairs as well as foreign policy, and in areas apparently far removed from Iraq or the Middle East as South Asia, China, Russia, and the environment where the catastrophe of the American intervention in Iraq will have important consequences.

Jervis’s particular strength is that he is both a realist and a student of human psychology. Thus, he has always known that “ideas matter,” but he has always seen that blending ideas to emotions and interests is the key to telling the story. *Misperception* has been a special concern of his so that he naturally has gravitated to an interest in the Bush Doctrine, which he finds “deviating from any reasonable conception of self-interest,” “hard to explain by standard rational theories.”

As a realist who is also a psychologist, the Bush Doctrine is obviously a laboratory for Jervis’s thinking. “Material forces are not unimportant; the transformation of liberalism...was made possible by the growth of American power,” he writes. “But the uses to which this power was put was strongly influenced by the liberal worldview.” Moving from this, Jervis looks at the levels and the timing of different perspectives American leaders had after 9/11. In doing so he accords real importance to my argument that the intoxicating ideas of liberal peace and transition theories contributed to the formulation of the Bush Doctrine, but he looks for other factors as well.

I think Jervis is quite right in making such a nuanced suggestion and giving examples of how different personalities at different moments conceived or reconceived world politics, all the while operating under “the corrupting nature of power.” But he might want to step back from 9/11 to 11/9, that is to November 9, 1989, the date the Germans have selected to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall. Here was the period of triumph if ever there was one, here the moment when pride could be unbounded, here the historical marker that engendered the change in thinking among American liberal intellectuals as they reformulated American nationalism into a mission to democratize (and capitalize) the world. The bookmarks, then, of emotion, interest, and ideology would seem to run from 11/9 to 9/11—from the rise to the fall of America as the world’s superpower.

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Jervis closes his discussion of the psychology of power by referring to Lord Acton's famous phrase about the corrupting influence of absolute power. In doing so he joins with the major thesis of my book, to wit that arrogance was at the origin of our failure, a story as old as history. Some of that arrogance originated in Texas among the macho, bible-thumping, gun-toting people I grew up with along with George W. Bush. Some of it came from the neoconservative thinking that can be traced back to a first generation in the late 1930s through the 1940s before it evolved in to what we know it to be today. But the strongest contribution to this new mood of progressive imperialism came, I would maintain, from the bien-pensant liberal internationalists of the center-left, a group that may very well move in to power after the elections of 2008. Jervis is quite right to be concerned, as am I, that despite the wide recognition that Iraq has been a disaster, “crusading liberalism” may move in to an even more vicious form should another terrorist attack occur and/or war with Iran develop. In the minds of these Wilsonians, it was not the Bush Doctrine itself that should be criticized but its operationalization by the Pentagon. In more competent hands, those of the neolibs gathered around the Democratic Party, the dream lives on.

Bruce Kuklick has two major criticisms. First, he insists that the imperialist worm was in the Wilsonian fruit from the beginning; it did not get put there only after the fall of the Soviet Union. But I agree. It was always part and parcel of the dream that America could reform the world, that in fact this country would engage in imperialist manipulations that contradicted what might be seen as its assumptions that were hypocritical (as in the case of Guatemala or Iran, for example), or naïve (as in the case of the Dominican Republic, say). I never thought the effort to push democracy abroad “has been an unalloyed good,” as he puts it. America's Mission is clear on this point. I do not understand why I am accused of something I have manifestly criticized myself.

Still, the Wilsonian effort was not always either hypocritical or naïve. Take, for example, the Marshall Plan and European Union. The American contribution to European sanity and union may yet come unraveled, but it was based on essentially Wilsonian ideas that were able to bear fruit. The expansion of NATO, interventions in the Balkans or East Timor, a sense of affinity with Israel, Taiwan, or South Korea once democratized seem to me to fall in to the same category.

What is so disturbing to me about the period after 1991, however, is that liberal internationalism evolved in to a much more idealistic, utopian, and ideological direction than it had ever before possessed. It is thus the Wilsonianism of the Cold War years that I would defend against that of its children who after 1991 became intoxicated by its promise thanks to developments such as democratic peace theory, which bid fair to making liberal internationalism a theory of world affairs as potent as Marxism-Leninism once had been. But Kuklick will have none of this. Apparently liberal internationalism is all bunk or all valid. Any effort to see it more complexly is “a superficial version of diplomatic history.” Yet while it is quite true that Guatemala, Iran, and Vietnam show the vacuity of American talk about freedom, peace, and democracy, U.S. policy toward Western Europe and Japan
were far more progressive and positive. If that is having it both ways, better this than what seems to me an insistence that it was always good or always hypocritical. The “superficial version of diplomatic history” seems to me rather to be Kuklick’s for whom liberal internationalism is always nay, nay or yea, yea, a simplistic point of view that I am surprised to hear him endorse.

Kuklick’s second point expresses much doubt that intellectuals’ ideas have much bearing on foreign policy. He would have it that political elites remain immune from what I call the “food chain” of ideas that lead from academic ivory towers and their publications to public policy makers. Obviously Kuklick’s argument is right on its face; policy-makers are responding to such a complicated set of pressures and emotions that to single out intellectuals alone would be a grievous error. Still, ideas matter, and the ideas that undergird the Bush Doctrine are as sophisticated a set—to my mind a more complex and coherent set—than any that has ever been pronounced “doctrinally” in the history of US foreign policy. Are we then to think that ideas simply don’t matter in the conduct of American foreign policy, that instead we should discuss biography or chance history or interest defined solely in terms of power? To do this would be to deny world religions or their secular equivalents—Marxism-Leninism for example—the ability to link up with nationalism and move history.

Where did the ideas that launched the invasion of Iraq come from? Not from the minds of Bush and company, to be sure, but from gifted Wilsonian academics, most of them to the left of the Republican Party, then recast by neoconservatives into a frankly imperialist doctrine. Had these ideas not existed, would the Bush Doctrine have had the heft it did in domestic opinion? I doubt it. Of course the lies and spins about weapons of mass destruction and al-Qaeda’s links to Saddam were important. But for an elite, more was required. To explain the character of these deadly ideas—their imperial hubris—was the intention of the book.

Kuklick dismisses the intellectual history of the Bush Doctrine, in favor it would seem of an elite personality style and the trauma of 9/11, but only at his peril. Apparently for him, ideas don’t matter. Yet if ever in the history of U.S. foreign policy an ideological stance has mattered, it was in the Bush Doctrine. How can we discuss the invasion of Iraq without invoking ideas? Has Kuklick tried to see the logic of the vision that makes the Bush Doctrine such a compelling position, however flawed in fact it is? The failure to take the Bush Doctrine seriously as an ideological pronouncement is the failure of Kuklick’s argument. It also guarantees his inability to understand the debates that are now breaking out in the 2008 election cycle as we ask what went wrong and how we might do things differently.

Doug Macdonald also sees me as having “changed sides” with respect to the promises of liberal internationalism. However, I still believe that liberal internationalism has had its triumphs consonant with Enlightenment hopes in the spread of reason and freedom. I remain convinced that human rights matter morally and can have positive benefits for
America in world affairs. But once the 1990s arrived in earnest, and Wilsonian scholars began to polish their conceptual tools, a danger became more manifest that Wilsonianism could be an imperialist doctrine. During the Cold War, in the struggle with Marxism-Leninism, many American intellectuals had longed for themselves to have a doctrine so strong, so authoritative, and ultimately so redemptive as that of their opponents. Now their moment had arrived.

Where I once saw “America the Good,” he asserts, now I see “America the Demented.” But I never saw America as wholly good—my book America’s Mission to which he refers makes it clear that I thought US interventions in Guatemala, Iran, and Vietnam were indefensible in any terms, and certainly not from a Wilsonian position. Nor did I fail to see that American policy toward the Dominican Republic, whether under Wilson or Johnson, was other than a failure. Macdonald has set up a straw horse, then set it afire.

More, it wasn’t so much that I changed sides as that liberal internationalism did in the 1990s, when it became possessed of notions like “democratic peace theory” and so became more ideological and imperialist than ever before in its history. In a chapter devoted to the evolution of liberal theory wherein I give it five historical stages, I tried to make this clear. It is not I who am “singing a different song” but Wilsonian theory and practice as it evolved after the Cold War. A major point of the book, which Macdonald apparently missed, was the evolution of theory over time with special emphasis on the 1990s.

Macdonald appears to believe that being polemical is inappropriate for academic exchanges (unless, apparently, like him, one can be polemically anti-polemical). Surely he is correct when it comes to those who sling mud or fail to see nuance and detail. But in the case of contemporary liberal internationalism, we are confronted with an ideology that has been made flesh in the invasion of Iraq, with threats now against Iran. The Bush Doctrine, that is, is an ideological pronouncement without parallel in American history. Nuance is off the table; ideas have been forged in to an instrument of war. The result is that polemic against the ideas so assembled is appropriate, indeed necessary, in my opinion. That Macdonald would charge me with being “downright accusatory” when talking of the likes of Larry Diamond or Thomas Friedman might be seen as a compliment, not as a put down. He even cites opinion surveys to show how benighted the Muslims of the world remain with respect to 9/11, as if this were relevant to the case at hand. It only can be, as I see it, if Macdonald is still saluting American benevolence in trying to free them from what he calls their “appalling ignorance, aided and abetted...by their illiberal regimes.” Apparently Macdonald is still signing on to the goal of liberating the Muslims with armed force. He doesn’t use the word “pathological” to describe the Muslim world, but there are certainly many who have who supported the invasion.

Take Macdonald’s criticism that while I oppose the attack on Saddam in the name of liberal internationalism, I support the attack on Milosevic on these very terms, or nearly. Yet surely motive and situation matter. It was one thing to attack Serbia, with the backing of NATO and the idea of bringing a modicum of human rights and democracy to the Balkans,
and to attack Saddam in a far more difficult circumstances and with the ultimate ambition of redeeming the “Broader Middle East” and perhaps Russia and China thereafter. The notion that one can be selective in supporting a liberal policy strikes me as commonsensical. Milosevic was not Saddam, hence policy could be liberal in the first but not in the second. This is an elementary distinction.

What Macdonald fails to see is the difference in liberal internationalism (including democracy promotion) as a set of values and the adoption of this position as an imperialist standard by the Bush Doctrine. So he finds democracy an appealing doctrine nearly everywhere but then seems bothered that someone criticizes its appropriation for a progressive war.

That democracy promotion has in most instances degenerated into an arm of American imperialism through the NED or AID seems to me to be evident. That it need not be so everywhere—as in some of the instances Macdonald cites—does not strike me as surprising. Like him, I endorse the help brought to Africa or East Timor by outsiders concerned that peoples there who suffer from oppression or anarchy find a better life. And I agree that democracy may have a universal appeal, as his references to Mandela, among others, indicates. Yet to think that all efforts to create such political regimes will be disinterested, or that such efforts may not be the sheep's clothing that covers the wolf's body, as Macdonald seems to think, strikes me as naive in the extreme. One might have said the same of Marxism—that it has universal values subscribed to by serious thinkers in very different circumstances, yet that in the wrong hands (that of Moscow prior to the 1980s, for example) it had “pathological” elements as well.

In other words, it is quite beside the point to argue, as Macdonald does, that liberalism has advocates everywhere. It has and it does, quite obviously. The question of my book is whether this creed can be formulated in to a doctrine of state power, then used imperialistically, as the Bush Doctrine most clearly illustrates it can. And when this happens, what then of its proponents? How many “good Marxists,” the equivalent of Macdonald’s good liberals, only came to see the error of their ways when they discovered what Soviet power was about? How many good liberals today are learning the hard way what their ideas can mean when wielded by Washington? How many of them still have this lesson to learn?

Macdonald makes this point himself citing Gandhi who when asked what he thought of Western civilization replied, “it would be a good idea.” It is ironic that Macdonald would use this citation as it would better serve to buttress my argument, not his. States possessed of universal ideologies—values of justice and freedom, progress and peace embodied in tried institutions—may be vehicles of human improvement. But given the complexities of history and human nature they may also be vehicles of oppressive imperialism. My argument is not with liberal democracy as a form of government with some universal appeal but rather with its appropriation by Washington as a mask to expand America's power in world affairs. Gandhi had it right.
In his opening words citing Morgenthau and Kennan, Jeffrey Taliaferro would seem to agree with me that the values of liberal internationalism became an imperialist doctrine that was backed to our detriment with the attack on Iraq. Liberals who pretend that they can separate the message from the medium—that they can hold fast to liberalism while denouncing the invasion of Iraq—simply do not understand the full extent of the tragedy of American foreign policy in recent years. In the preceding section, Macdonald’s criticism of my use of the word “pathology” to describe what happened to liberal internationalism after the implosion of the Soviet Union is something that most realists would be more likely to agree is an appropriate term. The self-righteous belief that the United States had a blueprint for world order that would bring about freedom, prosperity and peace combined with a sense that history offered a window of opportunity through which we should charge. The United States did just as Morgenthau and Kennan (and other realists) warned us it might, with the disastrous consequences they so aptly foretold. It is worth adding that Taliaferro was one of those who early on saw the disaster looming.

Yet it seems that Taliaferro would have us dismiss liberalism entirely in favor of realism in the aftermath of this calamity. But this is to overlook the problems realism has with sensing that different regime-types may make for vastly different foreign policies. Democratic peace theory may have its problems, no doubt about it, as I tried to show in my analysis. But it has its insights as well. The strength and the promise of the European Union can be exaggerated, to be sure, but liberals everywhere salute the enormous strides the EU has made and hope to see it assert itself collectively in the future with progressive results regionally or even worldwide. U.S. relations with the EU likewise remain our most important tie, not for reasons of race and religion so much as for the community of values, interests, and institutions based on market democracy that holds us (together with Canada and soon perhaps Mexico) in a single community that we can with some justice still today call “the free world” even if the term may all too soon fade in to history.

Where Taliaferro gives short shrift to any of the liberal promise, I remain committed to the Enlightenment view that democratic peoples have shown themselves usually to be morally and practically superior to others, and that American foreign policy should recognize this reality in its dealings with foreign countries. I also believe that the strength and purpose that can come from multilateralism through international law and a sense of common democratic purpose need to be reinforced, not mocked. By virtue of their theory, realists must remain deeply skeptical of any such “moralism” as “idealism” and “utopianism” and hence potentially dangerous. While I can understand their concern with respect to the Bush Doctrine, in other instances—most notably Occupation policy after World War II—surely another judgment is called for.

Well in to the 1980s, realism was the dominant school of international relations theory in the United States. Then came the rise of liberalism. But as my book maintains, the liberalism of the 1990s was far more self-confident, self-righteous, and pugilistic than it was in earlier times. Its new emphasis on expanding “the pacific union” of democratic
peoples in a “zone of peace,” its confidence that “the democratic transition” could be mastered more easily than an earlier generation supposed, its insistence that genuine sovereignty should rest only on democratic covenants between a state and its people were certainly all exaggerated beliefs. From the megalomania of the Bush Doctrine there is much to be learned to quiet the liberal tendency to believe that we can emerge from Hobbes’s state of nature to Kant’s perpetual peace. Still, there is enough to recommend liberal democracy both domestically and internationally to make us continue to defend it whatever the bitter truths to be learned from the use and abuse of such concepts in the Iraq War.

But for Taliaferro the liberal interregnum—lasting roughly from 1987 to 2003—is to be replaced by a realist restoration. He finds reason for his optimism in my book, and I fear that he is correct. Liberal internationalist thinking contributed in important measure to the greatest mistaken expedition in the history of US foreign policy and there is a price to be paid as a result. That realism should undergo a rebirth of confidence in these trying circumstances is not only natural but to be welcomed.