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Author's Response from Joan Hoff

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

The theme of American exceptionalism and its many contradictions from the time of the Puritans to George W. Bush has received a good amount of scholarly attention in the past decade.¹ This may reflect in part the disposition of President Bush to revive some of the Wilsonian principles of spreading democracy and global capitalism as well as his tendency to adopt the Wilsonian self-righteousness of “I am right, you are wrong” in responding to domestic and foreign critics. Historians, moreover, despite their self-proclaimed preoccupation with the past do live in the present and allow presentist concerns to influence their topics and assessments. A presidential election during a continuing “War on Terror,” and unresolved conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, also attracts historians who are predisposed to look back into the American DNA for policies, attitudes, and cultural patterns that have shaped American inclinations and policies in international relations.²

Joan Hoff brings an impressive number of prior studies to her interpretive study of 20th century U.S. diplomacy. Her earlier works including, in chronological order, *American Business and Foreign Policy, 1920-1933* (1971); *Ideology and Economics: U.S. Relations with the Soviet Union, 1918-1933* (1974); *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (1975); and *Nixon Reconsidered* (1994) exhibit aspects of both the revisionism of the late 1960s and 1970s as well as Hoff’s own independent perspective. These earlier works also are present in different sections of her new book. Hoff’s interest in and concerns about the role of the U.S. presidency is also reflected in her service as CEO and President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency and her earlier role as Director of the Contemporary History Institute at Ohio University.

Professor Hoff offers a striking thesis in *A Faustian Foreign Policy from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush* that raises a number of issues for debate from her central thesis to her assessment of American leaders since Wilson. Hoff asserts that from the Puritans to

¹ For a few recent examples, see Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construct of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (1993); Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (1995); Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained & Wielded Global Domiance* (2007); and Walter Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2008). Hunt and Hixson’s books were featured in H-Diplo roundtables this year and may be viewed on the H-Diplo roundtables web site, at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/>.

² For a variety of perspectives, see Walter Russell Mead’s *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (2001) which explores four different contributions to a successful American foreign policy tradition; John Lewis Gaddis’ *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (2004) which examines, in a series of lectures, the precedents for the Bush Doctrine of 2001 in John Quincy Adams’ advocacy of preemption, unilateralism, and hegemony in response to the British capture and burning of the Capitol and White House in August 1814; and Robert Kagan’s *Dangerous Nation: America’s Place in the World from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the 20th Century* (2006), which has also been featured in a roundtable, which gives less weight to a sense of exceptionalism as opposed to the impact of America’s desire for conquest and its revolutionary ideology and liberal, commercial society. A projected second volume for the 20th century would most likely disagree with Hixson and Hoff on the sources and impact of America’s role in world affairs.

President Bush, Americans have believed in a “mythical view of America as an exceptional nation with God always on its side” (2-3). This sense of exceptionalism, according to Hoff, led to a belief in self-righteous superiority, and the importance of protecting America and its principles when they “were perceived to be rejected or ignored or under attack.” “Exceptionalism is also at the core of the singular American belief in its foreordained prosperity at the core of the victim mentality and loss of innocence expressed by its politicians and pundits every time American experiences a major domestic or foreign policy setback or disaster.” Linked with Hoff’s thesis is the theme that in the 20th century, starting with Woodrow Wilson, American leaders have entered into “pacts with the devil’ in foreign policy matters, ... ‘a series of mini-Faustian bargains’ to impose American values and win foreign policy conflicts at any cost,” particularly during the Cold War and, surprisingly, even more so in the “wake of September 11 as the United States embraced any unsavory government that promised to fight terrorism.” (4)³ The most pervasive pattern in U.S. diplomacy since the Wilson era, according to Hoff, has been its tendency to “act unilaterally whenever possible and to cooperate with other nations only when absolutely necessary.” Washington followed a course of independent internationalism since Wilson, and resorted to collective diplomacy only in times of crisis with an “exaggerated moralistic fervor” that “exposes the exceptionalism that prevails whether the United States is acting cooperatively or unilaterally. (8)

The reviewers are not in complete agreement with Professor Hoff’s approach, and Tom Nichols in particular articulates a number of reservations about Hoff’s approach and the persuasiveness of her critique. Hoff does force readers to confront her critical analysis and to address some issues that generally receive little assessment such as how American leaders since Wilson have handled minority rights, most notably Wilson in WWI, the WWII solution of moving minorities, and post-Cold War problems such as Bosnia and Kosovo.

1.) On exceptionalism, Catherine Forslund and Erika Kuhlman endorse Hoff’s placing of this concept at the center of American attitudes on foreign affairs. Hoff recognizes that the U.S. “is not alone in developing and nurturing the notion that it is a force for good; all nation-states have their self-serving creation myths,” and Hoff suggests that these myths “are absolutely essential for the body politic in any country to function collectively.” (1) What troubles Hoff the most is that American leaders have articulated these myths and at the same time contradicted them with Faustian bargains. Is this behavior any different from any other major power’s policies and actions? Is Hoff asking the U.S. to be “exceptional,” to be unique as a major power, to eschew unilateral actions, pursuit of its interests and security concerns? Hoff is looking for ethical standards in foreign policy and does not find them in U.S. presidential decisions from Harry Truman’s use of the atomic bombs to end the war with Japan in 1945 and a whole range of decisions in the Cold War. (pp. 92-95) Hoff, for example, criticizes U.S. economic and political foreign policies in the

³ H-Diplo members may recall the roundtable on Tony Smith’s *A Pact with the Devil: Washington’s Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (2007) which leaves Faust out of the title but shares with Hoff a very critical focus on President Bush’s policies and the support he received from neoconservatives and neoliberals. Hoff devotes far more attention to the pre-2000 origins of American attitudes and policies and directs most of her critical attention to neoconservatives.

1920s and 1930s as following an “erratic independent international course,” a Faustian approach of “selfishly short-sighted commercial and financial transactions.” In the contemporary context of Chinese economic policies and the breakdown of the international negotiations to lower trade barriers, U.S. policies look pretty similar to those of other nation states. (pp. 68-74)

2.) Related to exceptionalism is Kuhlman’s reservation about Hoff’s distinction between morals and ethics, “claiming that morality is a matter of personal choice ... whereas ethics represent public, rather than private, rules and cultural standards governing the conduct of countries and usually embodied in custom, law, and national policy. (p. 18 and 2) Kuhlman asks for more consideration of the role of presidents who make the decisions and contribute human agency to the standards and laws of society. “Sidelining the individuals who make public laws and policies tends to obscure human agency,” she notes, “making the laws seem immutable and divinely-inspired, which is the basis of the American exceptionalism against which Hoff argues.” (2) A realist would question whether Hoff is herself advocating a new form of exceptionalism in which the U.S. becomes different from other nation states as it has claimed to be since the Puritans. In her conclusion, Hoff advances the demand for ethical and efficient behavior from the next American President, from advisers and from Congress, and reflection and repentance for past Faustian behavior: “Unless the United States, having won the Cold War without its soul intact, can now magnanimously admit that its goals and Faustian tactics in that conflict were not always ethical, it may end up wondering later in this century why it lost the post-Cold War world.” (pp. 191-201) In her response, Hoff responds at length to Kuhlman’s reservations on the relationship between private morality and public ethics. (1-2)

3.) Wilson is at the center of Hoff’s thesis on the impact of exceptionalism and her subthemes on the negative impact of race, religious beliefs, economic concerns, and executive domination of foreign policy. (pp. 41-60) Wilson certainly fits Hoff’s critique and she does distinguish between “good” and “bad” Wilsonian diplomacy with a good rating applied to “liberal capitalistic internationalism based on free trade, self-determination, international organization, and collective security.” The bad side appears in “ingrained racism, suspicion of nationalist revolutions, unilateral interventionism and blind anti-Communism.” (p. 61) Hoff also has an important subtheme on the use, misuse, and abuse of the Wilsonian legacy by neoconservatives to whom she devotes extensive critical attention from their origins in response to the détente policies of Richard Nixon to their role in Bush’s wars. On the other hand, Hoff devotes little analysis to Wilson’s response to WWI and U.S. intervention beyond brief comments about Wilson being unneutral and excessively rigid in his stubborn refusal to “retreat from the myth of universal principles involving American honor and prestige entirely of his own making. World War I simply allowed him to repossess the jeremiad of exceptionalism in order to denounce sin and call for redemption of the world through American leadership.” (pp. 45-46) Robert W. Tucker’s *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America’s Neutrality, 1914-1917* (2007), a not uncritical realist assessment of Wilson’s diplomacy provides a more complex assessment of Wilson’s response to the war, British economic reprisals on U.S. interests and rights, and the German submarine challenge than Hoff offers in a couple of pages--

perhaps a drawback of any strongly-argued thesis that lumps so much together in 200 pages.⁴

4.) Tom Nichols raises a number of reservations about Hoff's assessment of U.S. diplomacy in WWII and the Cold War with emphasis on the issue of whether or not Hoff gives sufficient recognition to the impact of the international environment and challenges to U.S. interests from other nation states, most notably Japan, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union. "Overall, Hoff's treatment of World War II illustrates the great problem in her narrative," Nichols stresses, "which I would call the 'invisible enemy.' *A Faustian Foreign Policy* is completely centered on the United States, and mostly on its executive branch of government. It's as if no other nations exist, and have no impact on anything that happens within North America's comfortable embrace." (4) Making use of Frederick Marks' and Eric Alterman's⁵ critiques of FDR's lies and misstatements on U.S. policy toward Japan and Nazi Germany, Hoff places FDR in the Wilsonian "bad" diplomacy camp which FDR compounds with his "series of questionable unilateral and multilateral bargains at summit meetings." (pp. 80-91) What is minimized is the degree to which FDR was forced by security concerns, economic considerations, and postwar hopes to build a lasting peace to respond to the challenges raised by Japan, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union. For example, in her assessment of FDR's response to Japan, Hoff correctly notes that FDR resisted pressures to crack down over Japanese expansion in China. What Hoff omits is the impact of Japan's move into Northern Indochina in 1940 and Southern Indochina in 1941 in precipitating a change in FDR's willingness to take meaningful action against Japan that increasingly risked war. Not until the end of the discussion on pp. 85-86 does Hoff mention Japan's offer to withdraw from Indochina in return for a removal of the freeze on Japanese assets and a resumption of Japanese purchases of critical oil supplies. The even more serious threat of Hitler to American allies, and not implausibly, the U.S. itself receives even less analysis.

5.) Hoff's revisionist account on the Cold War receives a similar critique from Nichols with respect to the absence of the adversaries, the Soviet Union, China, and their allies from Cuba to North Korea. "The Soviet Union all but vanishes from her account," Nichols complains, "and Hoff instead chides each administration for its hubris and sins, while giving the reader little sense of the challenges or even outright threats to American security her parade of culpable presidents faced." (5) With increasing access to primary sources on the Soviet side of the Cold War, recent studies demonstrate the multi-sided nature of the Cold War conflict with shifting security, economic, ideological, bureaucratic, domestic political

⁴ For the H-Diplo roundtable on Tucker's book, which included reviews by Christopher Ball, John Milton Cooper, Jr., Ross Kennedy, Elizabeth McKillen, and Klaus Schwabe, see <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/WilsonGreatWar-Roundtable.pdf>.

⁵ See Eric Alterman, *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences* (2005) and the H-Diplo Roundtable [<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/>] and Frederick W. Marks, III, *Wind over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt* (1988).

and inter-alliance calculations on both sides.⁶ Hoff correctly points out the many miscalculations, Faustian bargains, ill-fated interventions around the globe, economic and human costs, and undesirable domestic consequences of U.S. Cold War policies. The author also addresses Nichols' critique in her response. (3)

6.) The post-Cold War period through the current Bush presidency poses a number of challenges to any author, most notably a lack of perspective, political and emotional involvements, and an absence of primary sources. Hoff confronts this in her assessment of Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush where she has to rely on a few memoirs and news articles. Neither Clinton nor Bush come off very well with Bush's decision to mobilize a coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait ultimately reduced to a covert desire to control Middle Eastern oil. (pp. 135-136) Clinton is criticized for not making a systematic overhaul of U.S. policy and engaging in the most interventions since Wilson. (pp. 145-155)

7.) In Chapter 7 "Flaunting Faustian Foreign Policy" Hoff finds probably the best example for her thesis and Faustian metaphor. During the past seven years President George W. Bush has exhibited all of the undesirable characteristics of leadership that Hoff criticizes----religiosity, self-righteous moralism, excessive advocacy of global capitalism, and democracy--- the "bad" diplomacy of Wilson and his successors without any "good" diplomacy. Neoconservatives move to center stage, and Hoff dispatches them with rapid fire after giving them more credit for the "War on Terror", Afghanistan, Iraq and the domestic impact than the September 11th attack. Hoff's provides a limited analysis of the transforming impact of September 11th and Afghanistan. She does not set up a "back door to war" scenario similar to what FDR's conservative critics launched over Pearl Harbor, but she does give little significance to the impact of September 11th. (See p. 193 as an exception to this point) The international dimension of this attack and presence of the self-proclaimed instigators, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban regime, is omitted as are continuing terrorist activities. Regardless of how poorly or successfully Bush, his neoconservative advisers, and Condoleezza Rice evaluated the challenges, implemented policy unilaterally or in an "independent internationalist" approach, and moved swiftly from "victory" in Afghanistan to Iraq and Saddam Hussein, the context and international environment and challenge needs to be considered.⁷

8.) So what is Hoff's solution to *A Faustian Foreign Policy*? The author sees little promise for change in the Republican party as neoconservatives and moderates battle

⁶ See Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The inside Story of an American Adversary* (2006); Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (2007); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (2005). Roundtables are available online on the three books.

⁷ The post-Cold War period will be featured in at least four Fall/Winter roundtables on Andrew Bacevitch's *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008); Henry Brands' *From Berlin to Baghdad: America's Search for Purpose in the Post-Cold War World* (2008); Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier's *American Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11: The Misunderstood Years Between the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Start of the War on Terror* (2008); and Lloyd Gardner's *The Long Road to Baghdad: A History of American Foreign Policy since the 1970s* (2008).

against each other. Hoff advocates ethical and efficient behavior from the next President and Congress. Most important would be a genuine conversion to a “truly global cooperative foreign policy rather than continuing to practice independent internationalism.” (p. 201) Kuhlman would like more analysis of the background of the leaders who brought a Faustian policy, particularly a gendered analysis along the lines of Robert Dean’s *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (2001), and a sustained effort to broaden the “singular perspectives of elite policymakers” by bringing in the perspectives of women and “others traditionally marginalized in foreign relations.” In her response Hoff addresses this issue in depth, noting that past women policy makers from Jeane Kirkpatrick to Condoleezza Rice and recent presidential candidate, Senator Hillary Clinton, “who succeed almost always do so by emulating male standards” and follow the “macho foreign policies of their male colleagues.” (2-3)

Participants:

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Carolyn Eisenberg is a professor of U.S. diplomatic history at Hofstra University. She is the author of *Drawing the Line: the American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-49*. She is presently completing a new book on Nixon, Kissinger, and the National Security State.

Catherine Forslund is Associate Professor of History at Rockford College. She earned her Ph.D. at Washington University in Modern American and U.S. Diplomatic History. She has published *Anna Chennault: Informal Diplomacy and Asian Relations, Biographies in American Foreign Policy* (2002); and has a book under review, *War are a College at War: Young American Women Fight WWII*, with Christine Bruun and Mary Weaks-Baxter. She is currently working on *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Modern Victorian First Lady, Modern First Ladies Series* under contract with the University Press of Kansas.

Erika Kuhlman received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Washington State University and is currently an Associate Professor of History and Director of Women Studies at Idaho State University. She has been researching and writing on issues of gender, war, and peace for over ten years. Her first book *Petticoats and White Feathers* was published by Greenwood Press in 1997. Her article “American Doughboys and German /Fräuleins/: Sexuality, Patriarchy, and Privilege in the American-Occupied Rhineland, 1918-1923” appeared in the *Journal of Military History* in October 2007, and she is the author of *Reconstructing Patriarchy after the Great War: Women, Gender, and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). She and Kimberly Jensen of

Western Oregon University are editing an anthology of essays titled *Women and Transnational Activism in Historical Perspective*, under contract with Brill Publishers.

Thomas M. Nichols is Professor of National Security Affairs at the United States Naval War College in Newport, RI, where he also holds the Forrest Sherman Chair of Public Diplomacy. He previously taught international relations and Soviet/Russian affairs at Dartmouth and Georgetown. He was personal staff for defense and security affairs in the United States Senate to the late Sen. John Heinz of Pennsylvania, and served as a Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. He is currently a Fellow with a joint appointment in the International Security Program and the Project on Managing the Atom at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is also a senior associate of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs in New York, and a fellow of the International History Institute at Boston University. His most recent book, about the revolutionary changes taking place in how nations go to war, is *Eve of Destruction: The Coming Age of Preventive War* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Reacting to the Russian foray into Georgia this past summer, President Bush earnestly observed: “Bullying and intimidation are not acceptable ways to conduct foreign policy in the 21st Century.” The lack of irony in this pronouncement is less noteworthy than the absence of press or public hilarity. How can this President utter such nonsense and get away with it?

As author Joan Hoff suggests in her new book, *A Faustian Foreign Policy*, this distinctive blend of Presidential sanctimony and fraudulent claims has deep historical roots. And while she clearly registers the extremity of the current Bush White House, in her densely argued narrative she identifies longstanding patterns, which help to frame the absurdities and contradictions of the present.

Hoff begins with the familiar observation that from its origins in Puritan Massachusetts, the myth of moral “exceptionalism” has been the accompaniment of American expansion. In the aftermath of World War I, as American military and economic power grew, this helped to legitimize the propensity for cutting “deals with the devil in order to maintain an expanding list of global goals.” Like Goethe’s Faust, American leaders from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush have “failed to acknowledge the often dirty-diplomatic deals they made” lest this shred the mantle of innocence, so central to the national identity and to their larger purposes. Moreover, this distorted self-definition was associated with a set of pernicious assumptions: the notion that democracy and capitalism were integrally related and could be imposed by force; that the “unfettered pursuit of trade is a pre-requisite for world peace”; and that “the United States can create a lasting New World order in which it is the sole, unchallenged hegemonic force.”

On the basis of these flawed notions, twentieth century American presidents have followed a path of “unilateral internationalism.” By this Hoff means that wherever possible they have made unilateral decisions, but reserve the right to invoke collective responsibility when the United States is unable to achieve important goals on its own. Not surprisingly, this sort of foreign policy has been matched by a dramatic growth in the power of the President and the progressive undermining of constitutional “checks and balances.” Moreover the unacknowledged “Faustian bargains” have exacted a harsh price from citizens of foreign nations and quite often from the American people. It is these hidden, ethically compromised choices, which form a connecting thread in her narrative.

This relatively short book represents a distillation of Hoff’s decades of study of U.S. foreign policy and the modern Presidency. The result is a sharply critical, provocative work that raises fundamental questions. Each of the chronologically organized chapters engages long-standing historical debates surrounding specific periods and is rich in insight, analysis and interesting examples. In what might have seemed an obscure reference, in Hoff’s chapter on the Bush administration, she calls attention to the construction of a pipeline linking the oil of the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean. Virtually unnoticed, the White House had allocated \$100 million to train and equip a Caspian Guard that could protect the

pipeline, running from Azerbaijan, through Georgia and on to Turkey. This little detail finds its way into Hoff's account because she is acutely aware of U.S. economic and military expansion into the areas of the former Soviet Union and how problematic this might be. Moreover, one of the strengths of this book is an especially thoughtful consideration of the issue of "self-determination," nationalism and minority rights as an ongoing challenge for American presidents and an ongoing problem in international relations.

While each of the chapters is valuable in its own right, a certain ambiguity surrounds the larger interpretive themes. Hoff quite boldly injects morality into the discussion of U.S. foreign policy and does not shy away from ethical judgment. A central paradox for her is precisely the overheated moralistic rhetoric of modern American presidents, which is so often associated with appalling deeds. Yet it might have been helpful if she had been more explicit about the ethical standard she is using. Early in the book, she points out that morality "is largely a personal guide for private behavior and often involves self-sacrifice." Therefore the term is "almost always misused when applied to any country's foreign policy." Fair enough, but with this caveat in mind, it is difficult to understand the basis for repeated statements that various policy choices constitute a breach of ethics. By what criterion is a given policy "Faustian?"

In places, it is difficult to discern how Hoff is connecting the ideology of American "exceptionalism," the grandiose nature of Presidential ambitions and the "Faustian bargains" that they readily make. There is no lack of evidence for any of these phenomena and after eight years of George W. Bush, any knowledgeable observer can readily perceive them, even if the broader public is deceived. But how do these elements fit together? It is at this intersection where the sharpest historical controversies are to be found.

It may be instructive to focus on one broad example. In her discussion of the Cold War, Hoff reflects that a "multitude of mistakes, contradictions and Faustian deals, mixed with genuine humanitarian intentions on the part of the United States" came to characterize the Cold War era. From the outset, President Truman's disdain for diplomacy and preference for military pressure needlessly exacerbated the conflict with the Soviet Union. To some extent this was a matter of personality – "his predilection for rash judgments and hasty decision." It was also a result of bureaucratic ideology and "a Cold War mindset."

The obvious, albeit familiar question is what role did Soviet actions or external events play in the unfolding rivalry? Hoff identifies certain real problems that U.S. policy-makers faced in the aftermath of the Second World War. Chief among them was "how to compete with communism and socialism as social systems, and also as political models, especially in war-torn Europe." Although they had ample data to prove that the USSR did not pose a significant military threat, Truman and his cohorts chose to speak and act as if it did. The underlying reason for militarizing the competition was "their ideological fear that the American political and economic lifestyle could not prevail at home unless it prevailed abroad."

With the exception of the Marshall Plan, in which West European actors were able to assert significant control, the overall thrust of American policy in the competition with the USSR

was to undermine the ability of other nations to make their own decisions. The more typical result, as exemplified by Hoff's discussion of U.S. actions in Iran and Angola, was to trample indigenous forces and to produce greater violence and hardship for the people in those societies. While harboring delusions that it was promoting democracy, free trade and international cooperation, "the all-consuming drive to triumph over Communism at any cost...(led) the United States to become the world's largest national security state. In the process, Faustian bargains and rampant independent internationalism often prevailed over both common sense and democratic, humanitarian considerations."

Hoff's elliptical discussion of Cold War dynamics contains many astute observations. However, as an explanation of this sweep of events it seems problematic. While American Presidents have regularly exaggerated the Soviet danger, in much the way that George W. Bush has whipped up near hysteria about international terrorism, Hoff simply sidesteps the topic of Soviet behavior. If not a military threat, in what sense was the USSR a threat to the United States at the beginning, and after it developed a formidable nuclear arsenal, what impact did this have? It is certainly relevant that once the Cold War ended, U.S. militarism accelerated and its geopolitical objectives became even more ambitious. But these developments, as important as they are, do not eliminate the need to discuss the Soviet role during the four decades of bi-polar hostilities.

A more fundamental question is to what extent "the Faustian bargains" of the Cold War were the result of longstanding "myths" about U.S. "exceptionalism" and moral superiority? Throughout the book, the author intimates a causal connection. And yet the case for this is elusive. There is no doubt that such posturing by American Presidents from Woodrow Wilson to Bush Jr. have been extraordinarily effective in mobilizing popular consent for dubious policies. This partly explains how President Bush can say with a straight face that "bullying and intimidation" are not acceptable in the 21st Century. And it also provides insight into those Presidents from Truman to Bush who have been mesmerized by their own inflated rhetoric. But does it explain the choices that were made? In her many specific examples, Hoff shows in some detail how ideology interacts with material interests to produce a particular outcome. Yet it is not clear what she means to say about the broader pattern and how the arguments fit together.

These questions notwithstanding, *A Faustian Foreign Policy* is an engaging and important book, which seems particularly apt at this crossroads moment in American foreign policy.

The subtitle of Joan Hoff's latest book contradicts what lies within, for "dreams of perfectibility" could imply good news. What she delivers instead is a scathing critique of how every president from Woodrow Wilson onward has used U.S. foundational principles (favored by God, spreader of civilization, selflessness, foreordained prosperity) on a path to power which ended in the erosion of those very principles. In short, Hoff shows how the moral suasion of a nation based on rule of law has been destroyed by Faustian bargains of immense proportions, which threw laws to the wind in pursuit of U.S. power. She describes what each president did to erode the U.S. soul in order to achieve U.S. ends and how the negative (sometimes unintended) consequences of such actions have come home to roost. Such an analysis is very timely.

Tracing the root of today's U.S. foreign policy problems to Wilson's "about face" placing "economic expediency" ahead of rule of law, grounds Hoff's argument in decades of U.S. action. (40-41) This is the real strength of Hoff's analysis—her detailed litany of abused American principles through the presidencies of almost a dozen men who, Hoff shows, twisted and manipulated moral arguments to support the ends of building U.S. power during the Cold War and beyond. With specific examples from each president's foreign policy, the weight of Hoff's evidence is preponderant. Whether through her analysis of how the concept of American exceptionalism separated the U.S. from Europe until World War I, or by her evocation of the clashing post-WWII visions of the "American Century" vs. the "People's Century," or her indictment of free trade policy, Hoff makes her point from numerous examples of U.S. Faustian activities, mostly attributed to presidential leadership and direction.

Many historians have long noted the expansion of presidential power throughout the twentieth century, including Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Richard E. Neustadt, Robert Dallek, Lewis L. Gould, Doris Kearns Goodwin, or Michael A. Genovese to name a few. To this Hoff adds the weight of her arguments while extensively quoting the works of a wide range of historians. The importance of this component of the book is illustrated by the 56 pages of endnotes and the 25 page bibliography. The way Hoff quotes from so many others to present her argument seamlessly as part of a mosaic describing what came before is another asset of the book. The cumulative effect of evidence from so many events and so many historians' analysis is powerful.

The Faustian metaphor is perfect for Hoff's arguments. She has no difficulty placing so many Presidents in the role of Faust, and uses a wealth of examples as her evidence. The sheer number of bargains for power at the expense of national principles is almost overwhelming. Actions such as Wilson's attempts to push a U.S. defined world view on reluctant allies, or Franklin Roosevelt's various secret war-time commitments, or Harry Truman's view of the post-war world as a zero-sum game with the Soviet Union, or Dwight Eisenhower's frequent use of covert operations to change foreign governments that met with U.S. disfavor, and many more tell the story up to today's forty-third president who has,

according to Hoff, made perhaps the ultimate Faustian bargain from which there may be no easy return.

How George W. Bush has benefitted from the growth of presidential power due to the Faustian efforts of his predecessors—and even expanded the Faustian equation—takes up almost one-quarter of the book. No other president gets such extensive treatment which perhaps indicates Hoff's real point in writing this text. As an indictment of the Bush administration's policies since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the book succeeds admirably. That the current president squandered the immensity of global good will bestowed upon the United States after 9-11 and in fact reversed the feelings is one of Hoff's strongest examples of presidential Faustian behavior. Rather than just relying on presidential action of years past—many unfamiliar to the average citizen—Hoff's use of today's headlines makes her work that much more valuable and relevant to the public in particular.

If there must be a criticism of Hoff's book, it might be her creation of a largely one-sided argument. She leaves nothing to the reader's imagination, instead laying every Faustian card on the table. She rarely posits any other interpretation of an event beyond one that indicates a selling out of American principles. From the first pages, it is clear that Hoff desires a different path for American foreign policy than the one the nation currently travels and all her evidence makes that case. Specifically, Hoff's view of Bush administration foreign policy is evident in her in-depth coverage of the war on terrorism. The pros and cons of Hoff's approach and assessments can be debated. Some would argue that historians should remain purely dispassionate analysts. However, if historical analysis is the art of presenting historical evidence and argument to convince the reader of a particular conclusion, Hoff certainly achieved that goal. Is it inappropriate for Hoff to have gone beyond the dispassionate? Perhaps in the interests of saving the nation—not just its security—it is time more historians do just that.

The Personal and the Political

Joan Hoff's admirable new book uses a deal-with-the-devil metaphor to explain the choices made by U.S. presidents and other policymakers in formulating and acting upon foreign policy primarily in the twentieth century. For Hoff, Faustian bargains best describe how the United States has dealt with international relations from 1920 to 2007. When American political leaders interpreted U.S. power as unlimited (and in some cases divinely sanctioned) with the demise of their only remaining enemy, the Soviet Union, at the end of the Cold War, they attempted to recreate the world in their own image. Moreover, since the enhanced presidential powers that arose during that conflict have been ratcheted up by President George W. Bush, unrestrained American hegemony has continued into the twenty-first century.

Hoff poses the inevitability of a commensurate decline in U.S. power in the remaining decades of this century as an open question, but she ends her book with a plea for a new generation of political leaders who will reverse the current course of U.S. foreign policy, a course that she believes has been based upon an inherited, mythic sense of American exceptionalism. On the eve of his own destruction, Dr. Faust finally recognizes that human powers are limited; Hoff concludes that American political leaders must also reassess the history of U.S. foreign policy and accept the limitations of American preeminence. However, Faust ascends to the highest realm of heaven only through the forgiveness of and reconciliation with his betrayed lover Margaret, and not as a result of his own enlightenment. Whether the United States will cultivate a path toward reconciliation and justice or continue to pursue "victory" in Iraq in an unending, unwinnable "war on terror," alongside its imposition of free trade on foreign countries in the name of democracy, may depend on who those new political leaders will be.

Hoff deftly interweaves her Faustian metaphor with her subthemes of the racial underpinnings of American foreign policy, the waxing and waning of U.S. executive power relative to Congressional power, the unintended consequences of American foreign policy, the consistency with which policymakers have relied uncritically on the notion of American exceptionalism, and finally the related theme of the recurrence of religion as an explanation for why the United States does what it does. The infusion of religion with foreign relations will not strike today's readers as surprising, but in her nonpartisan way, Hoff traces the thread of religious intonations from Woodrow Wilson's murmurings to the U.S. Senate about the Versailles Treaty ["It [the treaty] has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God...", (45)] to the Republican publicist Henry R. Luce's pronouncement that "God has founded America as a global beacon of freedom" (92), to George W. Bush's divinely ordained foreign policy in relation to the September 11 attacks and the war in Iraq. In addition to the president confirming that his response to the 2001 bombings were "part of God's plan" (189), Hoff reveals the ways in which Bush personalizes his policy decisions by turning to his gut instincts and shunning any advice that runs counter to his intuition (including a refusal to see a delegation from the National Council of Churches which

opposed the invasion of Iraq). Bush did not invent personal international politics, however; Lyndon Johnson personalized the Vietnam war (speaking of guts, at least he had the courage to refuse to run again in 1968 when his policies in Southeast Asia undermined the Great Society), and Jimmy Carter identified too strongly with the American hostages held in Iran, according to Hoff.

Hoff's choice of Woodrow Wilson as the founding father of Faustian U.S. foreign policy is an apt one. Wilson boasted that his League of Nations would usher in self-determination and free trade capitalism around the world. But he neglected to reveal the economic underpinnings of his own foreign policy: for example, before intervention in the First World War he insisted that the United States' rights as a neutral nation be honored by the warring powers, even though he had subjective economic dealings with those same belligerents. More recently, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others in the George W. Bush Administration steadfastly denied that the 2003 invasion of Iraq had anything to do with oil, even though a little over a year after Saddam Hussein started pricing oil in Euros rather than dollars President Bush began accusing Iraq of harboring weapons of mass destruction (indeed, the U.S. government enabled U.S. companies to sell pesticides used in chemical warfare to Iraq and then tried to cover up Hussein's gassing of Kurdish populations throughout the 1980s; talk about unintended consequences – this phrase could be removed). Overall, Hoff sees a pattern of obfuscated economic interests underlying U.S. foreign policy, in addition to an ingrained racism. Wilson's foreign policy decisions were tainted with his sense of "paternalistic imperialism," as in his declaration that Latin Americans, like African Americans, were wards of the state, (36-37). Presidencies from Wilson's to the current postmodern, "imponderable" presidency (imponderable because of its power and complexity) have wrapped themselves in secrecy, and, according to Hoff, most Americans are in a state of denial about their nation's imperialist designs.

One perplexing part of Hoff's thesis comes in her book's introduction. She attempts to distinguish between morals and ethics, claiming that morality is a matter of personal choice to believe in certain values, whereas ethics represent "public, rather than private, rules and cultural standards governing the conduct of countries and is usually embodied in custom, law, and national policy" (18). Nations cannot adhere to the moral standards lived up to by individuals, she states, but they should nevertheless not adopt unethical practices (Hoff conflates morality with non-negotiable moral absolutism, which she rightly claims is anathema to diplomacy). But morals and ethics cannot be so neatly dissected. Individual persons, not omnipotent powers, make those public rules, standards, and laws, and Hoff explores the ways in which presidents personalized their foreign policy choices. Both ethics (defined as the evaluation of human conduct in the light of moral principles) and morals involve a search for right and wrong, and good and bad -- Hoff herself distinguishes between "good" Wilsonian diplomacy and "bad" Wilsonian policies, (10-11; 61). Perhaps some distinction can be made between individual standards of conduct and those agreed-upon standards that people living in societies adopt and that are reflected in laws, but sidelining the individuals who make public laws and policies tends to obscure human agency, making the laws seem immutable and divinely-inspired, which is the basis of the American exceptionalism against which Hoff argues.

Perhaps Americans need not only new political leaders, but also foreign policymakers who are differently trained. In calling for a “self-critical, rather than triumphal” foreign policy (7), Hoff implements [utilizes?] words and phrases that describe individual character traits. Yet, with the exception of her discussion of the impact of Wilson’s religious upbringing on his foreign policy decisions, and of the career paths of neo-conservatives such as George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Condoleezza Rice, Hoff’s book primarily analyzes policymakers as a whole, rather than as individuals. For example, she writes “U.S. foreign policy experts ...have retreated to, and seem only capable of perfecting, actions that prevailed during the height of the Cold War with a hubris typical of conquerors” (9), and “In order to do any of these things, the United States would have had to act like a mature economic power when it remained a juvenile, lacking the necessary experience to conduct itself in less selfish ways” (70). The question as to how individual U.S. foreign policymakers and those advising presidential administrations became arrogant and selfish—whether by training or upbringing—is generally not broached.

Hoff calls into question the “rational actor theory of history” which postulates that events unfold when people respond logically to their circumstances, noting that most scholars now understand that decision-making bodies generate a momentum of their own that can induce action. Nevertheless, an analysis of the backgrounds of the individuals (as well as of the groups) enlivening her study could provide more illuminating explanations for the interpretations put forth by elite policymakers. Discussing the rise of neo-conservatism, for example, Hoff writes, “He [neo-conservative Fritz A. G. Kraemer, Henry Kissinger’s foreign policy mentor] saw ‘provocative weakness’ in the Munich deal between Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler.... He saw institutional weakness at work in the September 11 attacks because the terrorists did not think they had to fear any hard reaction from the United States or its allies after years of ‘deficient will power’” (128). Indeed, the words “weakness” and “hubris,” along with “humiliation,” “honor,” and “impotence,” appear often in Hoff’s prose, but with little analysis of the impact of policymakers’ obsessive fears of being seen as weak. For a gendered analysis of the individuals who produced policies such as containment and how they were trained, readers may wish to turn to Robert D. Dean’s *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* and Frank Costigliola’s article “‘Unceasing Pressure for Penetration’: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War.”¹ Dean asserts that the socialization of foreign policy elites—the imperial brotherhood—in private, eastern schools nurtured a sense of chivalric martial duty and a masculine code of honor and civic duty. Costigliola demonstrates that the “exuberant homosociality” of a fraternity of U.S. diplomats at the embassy in Moscow and their Russian counterparts (similar to the atmosphere in the all-male prep schools attended by Dean’s imperial brotherhood) intensified anti-Soviet feelings when Soviet officials suddenly instituted a policy of isolating foreigners from the

¹ Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Frank Costigliola, “‘Unceasing Pressure for Penetration’: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War” *Journal of American History* Vol. 83, no. 4 (March 1997): 1309-1339.

Russian people (1318). For both Dean and Costigliola, the private lives of diplomats and foreign relations experts cannot easily be separated from the policies they made.

In her epilogue, Hoff writes, “America needs political leaders who, instead of endorsing more unilateral diplomatic actions, can see what a calamity some past foreign policies have been and what unintended consequences (blowback) they have produced” (203). Feminist historians and political theorists have argued that eschewing the singular perspectives of elite policymakers can be accomplished by taking the perspectives of women, and others traditionally marginalized in foreign relations, into consideration. For example, U.S. Ambassadors Swanee Hunt and Donald K. Steinberg have called for the elevation of women within foreign policy establishments to aid in postwar reconciliation processes, not merely to provide gender equity, but because “women’s issues” are really issues of national importance.² Recognizing that the private and the public are interconnected may help bring about the new political leadership that the United States so desperately needs in the twenty-first century.

² Donald K. Steinberg, *Conflict, Gender, and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Field* (San Diego: University of San Diego Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, 2004), 16-17; Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, “Women Waging Peace: Inclusive Security,” *Foreign Policy* 124 (2001): 38.

Review by Tom Nichols, Naval War College

Joan Hoff's book is a severe indictment not only of the phenomenon of American exceptionalism, but of the presidents whom she claims have symbiotically fostered that exceptionalism toward the aggrandizement of American power in general and the widening of the power of the American presidency in particular. Her thesis is that Americans, since the founding of their nation, have convinced themselves of their own specialness, and that this religiously-generated addiction to a myth of exceptionalism has been the justification for a repellent and hypocritical foreign policy that has predictably generated international hatred against the United States. The "Faustian Bargain" of Hoff's title represents a desire by Americans and their leaders to preserve the nearly unlimited supremacy and reach of the United States forever, regardless of the human or moral costs. Like the literary Faust's damnable bargain with Hell, it is an attempt to capture an illusory moment of perfection, the search to preserve a moment of power and happiness through a deal that is not only unnatural and unsustainable, but sordid and debasing even in the moment of putative triumph.

It is a powerful, if not new, argument, and Hoff presents it with determination and passion. But there is little in the way of new evidence or novel interpretation (at least with regard to the major thesis), and in the end, those who agree with Hoff's particular line of argument will find the book comfortable enough, while those who do not are unlikely to be convinced.

But readers of all persuasions might find this a troubling book from a scholarly standpoint. A fair number of questionable assertions are compounded by odd omissions, distracting lapses in organization, and some outright errors of basic fact. One of the flaws of *A Faustian Foreign Policy* is that it could have benefitted from a more rigorous editorial hand. Hoff's work is undeniably thought-provoking, but it suffers from serious flaws as a work of scholarship, including a tendency to read more as a series of partisan complaints rather than a scholarly analysis.

This is especially noticeable in the occasionally intemperate and condescending tone that distracts from Professor Hoff's larger argument. To take but one of many examples, Hoff dismisses the American electorate itself by arguing that the American people don't want "smarties" as president and that part of the reason the presidency has become "imponderable" to the average person is "the appearance of less-than-qualified candidates based on male-model good looks." (115) While it is hard to argue that Americans prefer candidates who do not put on intellectual airs—and who would?—there are quite a few Ivy League degrees to be found among America's presidents and their competitors, many of whom would hardly qualify as male models. In any case, it is unclear what it could mean to say that Americans find their presidential institutions "imponderable;" Hoff does not name her "male-model" candidates—Jack Kennedy, perhaps?—nor does she explain what their "qualifications" ought to be.

Many of these kinds of sweeping assertions are given without evidence or citation, a problem to which I will return below.

I. From the Great War to the Good War to the Cold War

I am not an historian of World War I and so I will not dwell on Hoff's treatment of the conflict. I will note just a few fundamental errors and digressions that distract from Hoff's main argument about the corrosiveness of American exceptionalism.

Hoff's treatment of Wilson's intervention in Russia, for one, is oversimplified, and reads as though this were an American project to invade Russia, a humanitarian intervention gone awry somehow (when in fact several Allied nations invaded Russia in the wake of Russia's withdrawal from the war). This is followed by a fairly simple factual error: Hoff refers to Wilson acquiescing in the non-recognition of the "Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republics," and says this was the "name of the USSR until 1922." (57) In fact the Russian Soviet Federation Socialist Republic was the core of the former Russian Empire; after a grinding civil war, the RSFSR was one of several Soviet republics that comprised the USSR, an error that might seem small, but would matter quite a bit to a Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbek or any of the other peoples of the former USSR.

Likewise, in an unneeded digression, Professor Hoff offers that the Great Depression was not as "devastating" for the USSR as for most other nations, since the "Soviet Union...had remained outside of the reemerging economically interdependent system of the 1920s..." (77) What is the point of this observation? It is technically true, but misleading: Professor Hoff neglects to tell us that by 1929 the Soviet Union—so happily insulated from the ugliness of a capitalist depression—had embarked on the insanity of forced collectivization, which would produce one of the greatest famines in all of human history. Why bring up the USSR at this point in the narrative only to ignore what almost anyone with a familiarity of that period would know?

Turning to World War II itself, Professor Hoff again makes claims (and in a few cases, serious charges) that needed further elaboration and evidence. Her discussions of U.S. policy toward Japan, and the dropping of the atomic bomb, are particularly illustrative in this regard.

It is certainly Professor Hoff's right to refer to the bombing of Hiroshima as "state terrorism." The lines on this issue have long been starkly drawn between those who believe dropping the bomb saved lives, and those who believe that dropping the bomb was essentially the indiscriminate murder of thousands of innocents.

Professor Hoff, however, is not content merely to place herself with the proponents of the latter view, but instead adds a needlessly condescending dismissal of those who might disagree with her, and of older veterans in particular, deriding "the common perception of veterans serving at the time who believed with utmost conviction that their lives were saved by the atomic bomb." (97)

Before continuing, let me add a full disclosure at this point: my own father was stationed in California, awaiting deployment to the invasion of Japan, and for years later was one of those veterans who was grateful for the dropping of the bomb, even while retaining—as I do—an utter abhorrence of nuclear weapons. Perhaps that colors my own view on the matter; I'd like to think I am more objective than that, but I fully understand Professor Hoff's point about the difficulty of WWII veterans and their families to think of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as terrorism.

With that said, however, Professor Hoff does not engage the larger argument about the bomb, choosing instead to dismiss the “unsophisticated defense of an indefensible weapon.” She rejects estimates that invading Japan would have cost nearly half a million lives, and instead insists the number is closer to 50,000, or maybe even 250,000, but certainly not 500,000—as though an assurance that a long and bloody invasion of Japan that would “only” kill 50,000 men (or roughly, something like an additional 12% more U.S. casualties than all that had been taken up till that time) would somehow itself be an argument against dropping the bomb and making short work of the war.

Here, I have to raise an objection here about the way Hoff's notes are written, which in turn raises the question of editing practices. Hoff claims, for example, that there were “estimates available to Truman” that put casualties in the 50,000 range; I would like to read that evidence (and I'm sure it must exist), but her footnote, like so many of her citations, is a compiled listing of many sources—in some cases, ten or more, with some books cited in their entirety—tacked on at the end of a large paragraph. A reader who wishes to replicate her research would have to slog through thousands of pages to find the specific points she raises. This is a disservice to the reader, as such dense citations bury important needles in rather tall haystacks.

In any case, the grisly math of competing casualty figures misses a far more important question, and one to which a historian—especially one so keen to levy judgments on historical figures—should be more attuned: what did Truman and his advisors think would happen *at the time*, and what were they willing to accept? Would even *one* more Allied death have been worth not dropping the bomb, in the minds of the President and his advisors, after four brutal years of the worst fighting in the history of the human race?

Instead, Professor Hoff tells us that such “unsophisticated” arguments leave a “vague, uneasy feeling” in “many of those without adult memories of the Second World War.” (97)

This kind of statement is a personalization of history that threatens to short-circuit any possibility of scholarly discussion. It instead invites argument by competing emotionalism, with Hoff, in effect, asking us to balance the elation of American soldiers in 1945 against the “vague” queasiness of people who now, apparently, know better.

Nor do the decisions leading up to the bomb get much more thoughtful treatment. Indeed, Professor Hoff is critical of the fact that no one seriously considered *not* using the bomb, as though the entire Manhattan Project were merely an exercise of some sort. It is difficult to imagine how it could not have been seen as an option, or even the best option at the time.

She does not ask whether it was historically possible, in the circumstances, for anyone to suggest to the President that taking another 50,000 casualties—or a quarter of a million, tops—should be endured rather than drop a single bomb, particularly after years of aerial firebombing that were as horrible (and more lengthy and costly) as the Little Boy or the Fat Man. (And as Hoff herself points out, firebombing did not exactly cause a lot of sleepless nights for American leaders.)

Hoff argues that the use of the bomb was immoral in part because it was dropped on an already defeated power. This last, like so many of Hoff's observations, is given as a flat assertion: *Japan was already defeated*. But was it? Was there an outcome in the Pacific in 1945 that would *not* have been predicated on occupation and regime change, which is what Japan refused to accept as the emblem of defeat? Japan's imperial dreams had been pounded into ashes, but the Imperial government was not beaten and Japan had not yet been subjected to occupation, as the Germans were so justly required to endure. But then, Hoff also wonders about how different the world would have been had Henry Wallace, of all people, been president. No doubt it would have been different, indeed.

Speaking of Wallace, the problem of tone and judgment again comes to the fore when Hoff blithely tars him and others in this passage: "Wallace, Morgenthau, Stimson, and...Knox—endorsed a strong, and probably racist, anti-Japanese policy [in the summer of 1941]." (85)

Again, the question of editing standards rears its head: does an author get to label historical figures as racists by adding the careful wobble-word "probably?" Either Hoff has evidence that this was a racist policy, or she doesn't. If she doesn't have hard evidence, but wants to elaborate on her suspicions, then by all means she should do so. Otherwise, one can only wonder why that passage was not flagged for further query at an earlier stage.

Overall, Hoff's treatment of World War II illustrates the great problem in her narrative, which I would call "the invisible enemy." *A Faustian Foreign Policy* is completely centered on the United States, and mostly on its executive branch of government. It's as if no other nations exist, and have no impact on anything that happens within North America's comfortable embrace.

In discussing American policy in 1941, for example, Hoff pays no attention to Japanese actions in China—a country to which the United States at the time, rightly or wrongly, had a rather romanticized attachment—nor to any other hostile Japanese activity. The enemy, whether Japan or the Soviet Union, is for the most part utterly invisible throughout the book. This makes it easy for Hoff to reach self-generated conclusions about how the decision-makers of 1941 and later were apparently motivated by racism and by economic concerns, and not by anything *actually taking place in the world*.

But then, in the context of Hoff's apparent worldview, the "invisible enemy" makes sense. Professor Hoff dismisses World War II as something less than a struggle for the fate of the planet itself and instead avers that the war was nothing more than generic "military dictatorships" trying to "expand their control." (93)

A younger or less informed reader might conclude that World War II was just a foolish dustup among empires, and not a cataclysmic confrontation with a genocidal maniac in one theater and a racist empire in the other. But to acknowledge the severity of the stakes in World War II would force Professor Hoff to have a bit less condescension about, and a bit more sympathy for, the choices Western leaders faced in those dark years. Instead, she reduces a desperate conflict to just so much imperial jostling and chest-thumping—even down to repeating the now-discredited canard that “unconditional surrender” was just a phrase FDR tossed off in a fit of “bravado” in the middle of the war. (88)

The “invisible enemy” problem creates a kind of tone-deafness to foreign policy as a problem of existing *alternatives* rather than idealized *choices*. (It is an old maxim of planning: No matter what strategy one chooses, the enemy always gets a vote, too.) Unfortunately, the absence of a context in which the enemy is making choices as well becomes even more evident and problematic in Professor Hoff’s treatment of the Cold War.

II. The Early Cold War

In fairness, Professor Hoff gives credit to the United States as a nation whose impulses, at least at times, are fundamentally good and humane. But when Hoff singles out the presidential conduct of the Cold War as the greatest and most soul-warping influence on American foreign policy, the Soviet Union all but vanishes from her account and Hoff instead chides each administration for its hubris and sins, while giving the reader little sense of the challenges or even outright threats to American security her parade of culpable presidents faced.

Eliminating the Soviet pieces from the chessboard, for example, has an important impact on the narrative, since the idea of a “Faustian bargain” only carries moral stigma if it is a completely free choice for self-gain. By removing the Cold War context, Professor Hoff frees herself to recontextualize American foreign policy and to criticize the actions of American policymakers whose choices, once they are no longer rooted in an actual conflict, naturally seem far more disturbing, and even criminal. Much like the absence of the Japanese from the decision to go to war or to drop the bomb, the erasing of the Soviet Union from the Cold War leaves U.S. actions appearing more horrible and senseless—and let us stipulate that some of them in fact *were* horrible and senseless—than they actually were.

This makes it very difficult to get to the issue of the intent or overall direction of American foreign policy in Professor Hoff’s book, because we never get a clear look at the ultimate Cold War target of that diplomacy. Hoff laments, for example, the sudden cachet of NSC-68, but neglects to reflect on the outright war of aggression launched by Soviet-sponsored forces in Korea just months after its promulgation. While on the one hand admitting that there was some sort of major global struggle going on in the background, Professor Hoff is more concerned with how often the United States tried during the latter part of the 20th century to gain control of various resources around the world—as if those two phenomena were not somehow related, other than the former being the thin rationalization for the latter.

Indeed, much of Hoff's argument about the Cold War at the outset of the book is centered on her belief that the United States has not, in effect, repented of its sins. Hoff argues that America has been too busy glorifying in post Cold War "triumphalism"—a word that increasingly seems only to connote scholarly irritation regarding inconvenient revelations about the Cold War—and so, in her view, the American people have not been willing to see how Washington's actions during the Cold War really explain why the rest of the world hates the United States.

(On this last point, Hoff strongly rejects the argument that hatred of America reflects any "abstract" civilizational clash, or a fear of freedom or democracy. She is apparently unaware of pronouncements by some of the militant groups fighting in Iraq that democracy itself is un-Islamic and an apostasy.¹ But that is another argument for another day.)

It is a revealing moment in the narrative about the Cold War when Professor Hoff writes "that in fighting the Cold War the United States entered into a number of Faustian bargains and deceived the American public about them because ideological victory *and/or* control of resources became more important than either ethical or humanitarian principles" [emphasis added]. (14)

That inclusion of "and/or" is a crucial qualification in Hoff's argument, one that allows her to conflate two very different images of the Cold War. Fighting for ideological victory over a dedicated opponent—one who practically doesn't exist in Hoff's abbreviated and elliptical retelling of the Cold War—is a very different matter than fighting solely for control of resources. Distinguishing between the two is crucial. To fudge the difference is to avoid the central moral question of the Cold War—what was acceptable in fighting for global survival?—and instead to replace it with a raw economic calculation that makes no sense outside of the context of the war itself or the times in which it was fought.

But Hoff has an ever larger complaint about unwillingness of the U.S. to accept the USSR as a power like itself. Apparently echoing Mario Del Pero, Hoff says that the Cold War was "a forty year conflict in which Americans and Russians did not recognize each other as legitimate enemies—as *justi hostes*." (Del Pero wrote in early 2001 that the Cold War was "a total and absolute conflict between two antagonistic, but equally universalistic, models that did not acknowledge each other as legitimate enemies, as *justi hostes*."²) Implicit in this, of course, is the idea that the Americans should have accepted the Soviet Union as a legitimate combatant, although Hoff does not explain why.

This is puzzling because Hoff rejects the idea that American pressure brought down the USSR, and instead clings to largely internal explanations of the Soviet collapse. But that

¹ Fawaz Gerges, "Zarqawi And the D-Word," January 30, 2005, online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46419-2005Jan29.html>.

² Mario Del Pero, "The United States and "Psychological Warfare" in Italy, 1948–1955, *Journal of American History* 87.4 (March 2001): 1304-1334. http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/87.4/del_pero.html.

raises a paradox: if the USSR was brought down by its own inner corruption and by the hand of its own people, what obligation did the United States incur to treat it as a legitimate entity of *any* kind? If, after over seven decades, its own people didn't see the USSR as legitimate, why was it incumbent upon the Americans to grant to Moscow what its own subjects would not?

Hoff goes on to identify the presidency—both its occupants and the voters who tolerated them—as captured during the Cold War by some sort of “neo-conservative” plot to create a nearly-invincible executive branch capable of conducting perpetual war without justice or quarter. And it is here that Hoff's book begins increasingly to lose focus.

Hoff, for example, identifies the Truman Doctrine and its author as having “precipitously set in motion the unethical, ideological, and militaristic aspects of the Cold War.” Again, there is almost no glimpse of the Soviet Union to be found in any of this; the Truman Doctrine, Hoff charges, “laid the groundwork for American opposition to legitimate nationalist anticolonial movements for the remainder of the Cold War.” (100) To see Greece as an anticolonial struggle is, to say the least, arguable. But Hoff ends with the simple pronouncement that in the wake of Greece, the die was cast: “And thus the Cold War began.”

III. A Note on Executive Power

There can be no arguing with Hoff's main point—it is a relatively uncontroversial one—that the national security state gave rise to an increasingly powerful presidency. But Hoff, who is herself a student of the presidency, tells that story in a particularly ominous way.

She notes, for example, that in 1983 the Supreme Court struck down the idea of a legislative veto, which she seems to imply was at least one weak cudgel with which Congress could keep the president in line (and whose overturning weakened arguments for the 1973 War Powers Resolution).

But this is an incomplete account, and there is more to the story. The defeat of the legislative veto came from a large majority led by the left side of the Court, not from the conservatives (or “neo-cons”). The decision involved an obscure immigration case, *INS v Chadha*, and the opinion rejecting the legislative veto was 7-2, with Burger, Marshall, Blackmun, Powell, Stevens, O'Connor, and Brennan in the majority, and White and Rehnquist dissenting. It is hard to see how this amounted to a right-wing undermining of Congressional power.

The book also does not take into account the role of Congress, which is reticent to accept responsibility for foreign policy (what Professor Gordon Silverstein has called Congressional “blame avoidance”) and whose members are often eager to punt the tough decisions back to the White House, regardless of party.³ But again, this kind of more

³ See Gordon Silverstein, *Imbalance of Powers* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

complicated explanation runs counter to the more simple tale of failed morals that Hoff presents.

IV. The Cold War...Again

Hoff's view of the Cold War is partly standard revisionism, but in other places it is colored by intriguing but questionable assertions.

Like Eric Alterman, for example, Hoff argues that the Cuban missile crisis could have been avoided if JFK had just privately called Khrushchev and made a deal (an argument better made by Alterman, in my view, even if I disagree with it). But Hoff goes a step farther and argues that JFK was sitting on the evidence so that he could use it in the November 1962 midterm election. (116) I was confused by this assertion: is Hoff arguing that JFK intended to keep the Cuban missiles a secret, and then reveal them publicly to use them as an issue in November? How could the presence of missiles in Cuba have *helped* the Democrats in 1962? (Once again, as is often the case in Hoff's notes, there is no direct citation provided here; instead, Hoff in a later footnote at the end of the paragraph cites some fifteen sources in general on the Cuban crisis.)

If I find it odd that I am in the unaccustomed position of defending Jack Kennedy, I find it stranger still to be defending Jimmy Carter, against whom Hoff also levels accusations that mix errors of fact with highly questionable analysis. Hoff writes that Carter decided to support the mujahidin, "later the Taliban," as though the two groups were one and the same and only the name changed. But there was really no such coherent movement as "the Taliban" in the 1970s; the mujahidin were an amalgam of several groups, some of whom would be friendly to the U.S., and others—like bin Laden and his al-Qaeda—who would emerge from the Afghan wreckage and turn their attention to the United States once the USSR had been vanquished. But once again, Hoff neglects this complicated story and simply leaves the reader with the misleading, and even false, impression that the United States chose the Taliban as its champion in Afghanistan.

Hoff then levels a charge against Jimmy Carter that is genuinely amazing. The object of Carter's July 1979 order (under the influence of Zbigniew Brzezinski) to begin aiding "the Taliban," Hoff writes, was "to entice the Soviets to intervene [in Afghanistan]," so that Carter could then later "self-righteously" proclaim the Carter Doctrine regarding the Persian Gulf. (117)

Hoff presents no evidence for this strong assertion. Not even the *Soviets*, to my knowledge, have ever made this accusation. If it is true that a Machiavellian Jimmy Carter actually intended to sucker the USSR into moving into Afghanistan, it is an extraordinary revelation (and would demand further research to explain why Washington was caught so flat-footed when the invasion finally took place).

The relevant Soviet materials on this matter, a great number of which are available in English and online at the Cold War International History Project, could have tempered Professor Hoff's argument. In early September 2008, I authored a review for H-DIPLO of a

CWIHP paper, published last year, on the internal Soviet deliberations on the invasion written by a senior Soviet general; I am not sure if the piece was available when Hoff wrote the book, but it was not the first article to note that Soviet leaders were far less concerned with anything Carter might have done in mid-1979, and were far more worried about what had been going on internally in Afghanistan for nearly two years before. (Top secret reports to the Soviet Central Committee in the fall of 1979, for example, do not mention American aid, but rather excoriate the incompetence of the Afghan civilian leadership and the shoddy state of the Afghan military.)⁴

But again, this kind of assertion allows the narrative to move forward: Hoff then argues that U.S. aid to Afghanistan actually *prevented* the end of the Cold War, a view that ignores significant previous work, both in the West and Russia, that suggests the exact opposite: that the burden of the Afghan war helped propel Gorbachev to power and hastened the implosion of the USSR.

In any event, at this point in the story, the nefarious “neo-conservatives” begin to make their debut, and the book loses its main thread of organization about Wilsonianism and instead becomes a litany of complaints in general about the presidential conduct of foreign policy.

Hoff presents the “neo-cons” as a kind of Republican Party plot, led by what she calls “new Jacobins” who have, to use her word, “infiltrated” the U.S. Government and are out to radicalize American foreign policy. (Her broad use of the term is strong evidence that “neo-conservative” has lost most of its meaning other than as a label of opprobrium.)

In terms of Hoff’s understanding of the Cold War and “neocons,” there is simply too much to go into here. To take a few small examples, however, if Professor Hoff wishes to refer to “neo-cons” as “Jacobins,” that is one thing; to try to pin on them, as she does, the collapse of détente, the debate over the nuclear “window of vulnerability” (which dates back to the early 1970s), and Ford’s 1976 presidential loss —again, as if there had been no Soviet Union out there actually deploying SS-18 missiles or violently squashing dissident movements—is simply too much, especially without significant supporting evidence. (Also, it should be noted that former President Ford is usually referred to as “Jerry” Ford, not “Gerry,” as she has it in the book.) (114)

In another instance, Hoff accuses Reagan advisor Richard Pipes of plumping the Soviet threat by consciously allowing the mistranslation of Russian-language sources, but again she provides no citation to back this very personal charge of professional misconduct. (130) To give Professor Hoff the benefit of the doubt, I can only assume she is referring to the well-known and ongoing debate in the 1970s and 1980s between Pipes and Ambassador Raymond Garthoff, both of whom accused the other of not understanding the

⁴ Tom Nichols, H-Diplo Article Review No. 191, September 2, 2008; review of Alexander Liakhovskiy, “Inside the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the Seizure of Kabul, December 1979,” *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* #51. <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Nichols-Liakhovskiy.pdf>. See especially pp. 6-12.

arcana (or proper translation) of writings by Soviet defense thinkers. But given Hoff's elliptical account, I can only guess that this is the controversy she had in mind.

Hoff goes on to argue that Mikhail Gorbachev's support for the 1991 Gulf War, and Yeltsin's general acquiescence toward U.S. foreign policy, was predicated on, essentially, blackmail: Western foreign aid, she writes "guaranteed" Gorbachev's cooperation, but she again offers no evidence and does not refer to any of the sources written by those in the former Soviet leadership. George H.W. Bush's loss of the 1992 election after successfully gliding the Cold War to a soft landing, is attributed (once again with no evidence cited) to the neo-cons.

Hoff is particularly critical of the Project for a New American Century, a group of conservatives who had called on Clinton to remove Saddam Hussein in 1998. But while she tells the reader about the 1998 open letter from PNAC to Clinton, she neglects to report the Iraq Liberation Act of that same year, which Congress passed by a whopping, lopsided, and bipartisan margin of 360-38 in the House, unanimous consent in the Senate, and which was signed into law by Clinton—who himself was pounding the presidential lectern about the gathering danger in Iraq—thus making it the official policy of the United States that Saddam Hussein should be removed from power.

Hoff also writes that from "this neo-con point of view, September 11 was heaven-sent because it provided the needed excuse for executing the PNAC blueprint for U.S. world domination." (139) I cannot comment on the idea that anyone would think of 9/11 as "heaven-sent," but as Hoff later refers to *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward as "ever the front man for the most extreme of the neo-conservatives," I think it is fair to note that we are clearly in some unusual interpretive territory on the whole issue. (198)

And yet, Hoff later undermines her own argument at the last minute, telling us that these same neo-cons were "reject[ed] in midstream" by Reagan and disregarded by both Bush 41 and Clinton. (140) Given the weight she accords to the neo-cons in the making of foreign policy, this is a strange caveat; were they the architects of U.S. foreign policy, or weren't they?

V. After the Cold War

The rest of the book suffers from a significant loss of focus, which is unfortunate, since Hoff does in fact put her finger on some of the most important problems facing American foreign policy in the 1990s and after, especially regarding issues of sovereignty and human rights (where I find myself in strong agreement with her).

But none of this really gets fleshed out; the book turns into a meandering criticism of Bill Clinton's arms sales, his "ethically suspect" inaction in Rwanda, Hoff's objections to NATO expansion (which I share), and a short retelling of the Kosovo war. While she tries to wedge this into her earlier language about Faustian bargains, the metaphor falls apart, and might even be unnecessary. Maybe Bill Clinton just wasn't very good at foreign policy, or maybe the problems were too complicated for any one government to solve. The European track record in this period was little better.

When Hoff gets to George W. Bush, she begins with his domestic policies, an odd choice in a book about foreign affairs. Her point, apparently, is that Bush was linking his projects at home with his misconduct abroad. But to do so, she resorts to what I would characterize as misleading writing. Bush, she writes,

seemed to be indicating to Americans that he would take care of the terrorists and make decisions to keep the country safe “without involving the courts, Congress, or the press.” (158)

She then goes on: “There is something implicitly hypocritical, paternalistic, and antidemocratic about this approach to governing.”

Had Bush said what was quoted, that would indeed be a terrible and worrisome opinion. The problem is, Bush didn’t say it...Ted Koppel did. To quote a critic, then to criticize the critic’s characterization of the subject’s policy, might work as a rhetorical device, but it is not responsible writing. (For the record, the name of the *New York Times* columnist Hoff quotes in this section is Paul *Krugman*, not *Kringman*.)

Hoff also repeats an old rumor about Bush: that he had only ever traveled to Mexico before becoming President. (160) This kind of charge reveals both a carelessness and a partisanship that undermines Hoff’s analysis. Bush’s father, after all, had been both President and Ambassador to China, and even a quick check at Google would have turned up a *Washington Post* story chiding Barack Obama for making the same claim, when in fact Bush, according to the *Post*, “had made at least brief trips to many parts of the world (including Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America)” before becoming President.⁵

The rhetoric in the last pages accelerates: when Bush misquotes a Psalm during a speech, Hoff notes that he is “inadvertently exchanging himself for God” (her source for this, apparently, being a comment by a graduate student at a conference). (187) Or: “Bush talks evangelical talk as no other president has, including Jimmy Carter.” One might think that Abraham Lincoln would be a contender for that honor. In the midst of all this is a jarringly out of place section on the evangelical concept of the Rapture. What it has to do with Bush or his presidency—or anything, really, to do with this book—is unclear.

The Bush Doctrine, which one might think would be more central to Hoff’s argument, is disposed of in two disjointed pages that amount to saying that it is the most arrogant and evil version of American exceptionalism—an argument that may well be true, but is also in need of fuller explication. Hoff ends by exhorting Bush to “extract himself” from the “tentacles” of the neo-conservatives and thus save his legacy.

In the end, *A Faustian Foreign Policy* is a missed opportunity. While I do not agree with Hoff’s emphasis on American exceptionalism, it is an argument worth pursuing. But Hoff’s

⁵ “Obama Tells a Fib,” *The Washington Post* online, November 28, 2007, http://blog.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2007/11/obama_tells_a_whopper_1.html

book sacrifices too much context, inserts too much questionable analysis, and leaves aside too much evidence, to make a convincing a case for the sin of exceptionalism. Likewise, the moralizing tone of the book is so stark that it washes out a great deal of the complexity of the making of foreign policy.

Has America so utterly lost its way? Even Faust was not irredeemable; his questing nature finally led to mercy and forgiveness from God Himself. Hopefully, America's motives for fighting the Cold War, and its unavoidable leadership in the 21st century, are not as sordid and bleak as Joan Hoff sees them, but readers searching for a more textured discussion of those questions will not find it in this book.

Writers of any synthetic work open themselves to criticism ranging from lack of evidence and scholarly substance to advocating interpretations that contradict reviewers' published opinions. Therefore, one author's deductive thesis can be viewed as another's antithesis. This dialectic can only be resolved if together they come up with a synthesis satisfactory to both. Since Thomas M. Nichols considers my book "a series of partisan complaints rather than a scholarly analysis" there is little I can do to convince him otherwise except to write a less "sordid and bleak" revisionist account of U.S. foreign policy. I leave that task to Nichols and other U.S. foreign policy specialists who draw more affirmative conclusions from the Cold War than I do, and advocate, as the foundation for twenty-first century foreign policy, fighting similar ideological wars for spreading the same "exceptional" American values as we did after 1945.

I would have to write an entirely different and entirely dispassionate book to address all of Nichols's subjective criticisms about my "personalization of history," series of "partisan complaints," attacks on presidential conduct of foreign policy, and my refusal to view the United States as always fighting good battle in the "clash of civilizations" for freedom and democracy. So I will only deal with them tangentially in these remarks.

Catherine Forslund correctly points out that after reading my book, some "would argue that historians should remain purely dispassionate analysts." However, she also notes that perhaps it is time that historians take on timely controversial topics. I briefly list some of the constructive global results American diplomacy during the Cold War, but I make it clear that since they constitute the mainstream interpretation of the years 1945 to 1989, I did not think they needed reiteration. She logically does question, however, why my "scathing critique" contradicts the subtitle: "Dreams of Perfectibility." The answer is simple. The publisher wanted the work to be entitled, "Dreams of Perfectibility" and only after two months of arguing was I am to convince the powers that be that the book had nothing to do with dreams of perfectibility (the word perfectibility does not appear at all in the work). It was kept as a subtitle for some inexplicable reason. As far as I can determine the phrase was first applied to U.S. diplomacy by the late James Chace, former editor of *Foreign Affairs*, who taught a class at Bard College by that name and later published an article using that same title. I concur that the subtitle is a gross misnomer.

Both Carolyn Eisenberg and Erika Kuhlman question the relationship I pose between private morality and public ethics. Most ethicists I read and talked with while writing this book warned me against making this distinction for the very reason that Kuhlman points out: political figures and bureaucrats often bring their private morals to bear on public policy. At the global level, ethics now consists of customary and formal international law as propounded by UN resolutions and covenants, the World Court, and in various war crimes tribunals. Recently, ethics was embodied in the International Criminal Court which the United State has refused to join. However, when a nation breaches such fora by relying primarily on pious individual personal morality, as I believe Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, and George W. Bush did, then their private morality must be faulted, especially if

such unethical or illegal international actions produce inhumane results. That U.S. presidents have usually rationalized such policies through the murky lens of moralistic exceptionalism does not excuse or obscure their human agency—a concern of Kuhlman. Their actual or inadvertent hypocrisy in doing so simply underscores the agency of certain elite policymakers whether they be presidents, secretaries of state or influential bureaucrats such as Fritz A. G. Kraemer and Andrew W. Marshall. When presidents and policy makers insert their exaggerated private fears about military weakness and their own moral superiority into the diplomacy of the United States and insist that it is the product of a rational assessment of national interest, their foreign policies must be criticized and reevaluated if the country is ever to abandon its mythical God-given belief in its good intentions, endless prosperity (until October 2008), innocence in the face of evil forces, commitment to only just causes, and law-abiding uniqueness among nations.

There is nothing unique about conflating private morality and personal fears with politics or domestic and foreign policies because the personal is political. Macho actions have dominated American diplomacy from its inception and have almost always resulted in public praise and “Great” or “Near Great” ratings for presidents.¹¹ But average citizens are not in positions where such conflation makes much difference for the country’s well being. When policymakers do it they must be held responsible on ethical grounds. There would be no reason to analyze Bush’s private moral religious views if they did not result in unethical foreign policies. He is not unique among American presidents when he uses coded biblical terms to obtain popular support, but in today’s world religion is affecting the global policies of many nations, including the United States, as perhaps never before. To promote extreme actions such as preemptive wars, torture, and massive surveillance by using the apocalyptic language of faith and fear so appealing to millions of evangelical Christians and true believers in the Rapture is dangerous and irresponsible.

Further, I cannot agree that “the elevation of women within foreign policy establishments” as advocated by those quoted in Kuhlman’s review would alleviate the problem of conflating the private with the public in foreign policy. My critique of the careers of Jeane Kirkpatrick, Madeleine Albright, and Condoleezza Rice reveals that, as in academe, other professions, and the business world, women who succeed almost always do so by emulating male standards. All four women succeeded by exhibiting views approved by the dominant masculine culture. Therefore they, and American women who tried to influence U.S. foreign policy before them, usually ended up following the macho foreign policies of their male colleagues, even if they also stressed cultural values, rhetoric, and persuasion through candid negotiations instead of economic or military force.² Hillary Clinton’s

¹ American Historical Association (AHA) panel on “Should Historians Rank the Presidents?” January 4, 2008.

² Hoff, “Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice: The Woman Question and U.S. Foreign Policy,” in Priscilla Roberts and He Peiqun, eds., in *Bonds Across Borders: Women, China, and International Relations in the Modern World* (Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 104-135; and *idem*, “Of Mice and Men,” in Edward P. Crapol, ed., *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Book, 1992), pp. 173-88.

aggressive diplomatic statements during the presidential primary campaign reflected this capitulation to male standards of acceptance within diplomatic circles.

I agree with Kuhlman that Cold War diplomacy and language were highly male gendered, yet women in the foreign policy establishment then or now have seldom played a significant role in countering such gendered diplomacy. One of the reasons for this is that second wave equal rights feminists did not promote a female-centered view of American society or foreign policy. Instead, and at best, the equal rights approach of second wave feminists encouraged more women to act as men in order to achieve more equal status. For this reason the equal rights approach will never significantly transform domestic economic or political institutions and, especially the diplomatic corps, into completely female-friendly operations.

I realize that U.S. Ambassadors Swanee Hunt and Donald K. Steinberg urge the “elevation of women within foreign policy establishments to aid in post [cold] war reconciliation processes,” but down to the present all diplomats receive the same masculine training and rise among policymakers only if they embrace male values. It is gender as much as what underpins the education of diplomats that determines their world views. Perhaps if females reached critical masses in political and diplomatic circles they would demonstrate their ability to operate differently from men because of their interest in issues affecting women and children and their supposed neuro-endocrinic aversion to competition and propensity for collegiality.³

This digression into feminism and foreign policy does not address Eisenberg’s or Nichols’s concern about my neglect of the Soviet Union’s general conduct and many actions during the Cold War. I think I more than adequately establish that Truman and his civilian advisers militarized the conflict with the USSR even before that country posed a viable military threat. After that both countries fought the ideological Cold War through proxy wars using Third World countries to stage covert and overt interventions—each using victim-speak language to disguise their socio-economic strategic intent to ensure that the new world order would be based on either capitalism or communism. I provide specific examples of Soviet actions in Angola, Iran, and Afghanistan, but do not provide a checklist of antagonistic Soviet behavior because until Nixon, outside of the limited 1963 nuclear test ban treaty, there was no significant engagement or negotiations with the USSR. Détente scarcely survived that administration and until Mikhail Gorbachev came to power there was little constructive contact with the “evil empire.”

Nichols seems to think the United States fought the Cold War exclusively for non-material ideological reasons for what he calls “global survival,” as though control of resources and other economic goals were not involved. No standard definition of ideology excludes an economic component except in the minds of those who think that the Soviet Union should not have been viewed as a “legitimate combatant” or communism as a feasible economic model in theory as capitalism. Neither system works as advertized when corrupted by human greed and incompetence. Nichols insists that ideology must be separated from

³ Sandra Tsing Loh, “Should Women Rule?” *The Atlantic*, November 2008, pp. 120-30.

material considerations of the American tactics and strategy used in fighting the Cold War. This sounds very much like the way the Bush administration is currently denying that oil has anything to do with the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the refusal to deal with Iran and other nations designated as fostering terrorism. All foes and allies deserve to be engaged. I think that the “invisible enemy” is the United States when it tries to impose its values and economic system on the world because of its “divinely sanctioned national greatness,” while Nichols views such actions as those of an idealistic nation altruistically trying to “save the planet itself.” I base my argument on what Sacvan Bercovitch has described as the mythical foundation of American national identity or simply put: the “myth of America” to which Nichols apparently subscribes.

A more cogent criticism of my book is the question Eisenberg raises about the causal relationship between the Faustian bargains of the Cold War and the myths of American exceptionalism and sense of moral and economic superiority. I admit that causation is often in the eye of the analyst, but I attempt to make the connection by showing that economic as well as non-material ideological considerations based on American exceptionalism were paramount in much of U.S. diplomacy before the Cold War. However, following 1945 both our ideological and economic superiority appeared threatened by the presumed postwar popularity of state socialism and communism in parts of the war-torn world.

Instead of rationally evaluating these threats on a case-by-case basis to determine which were real and which were not, the United States made unilateral public presidential proclamations and issued private policy papers based on the “universalistic, moralistic theory of anti-communist containment” contained in NSC-68. This document established a long-lasting “negotiating posture that required Soviet capitulation” before there could be any reconciliation—not unlike the current Bush administration’s position in refusing to negotiate with Iran until it meets certain conditions. By exaggerating fears about the Soviet Union’s intentions and military strength, especially after it became a nuclear power, presidents and policymakers contrived to dichotomize the world.

Exceptionalism with its many historical mythical definitions does not have to be specifically invoked as a causal factor when taking actions to defend the United States materially and militarily. The war on communism like the current war on terrorism is rooted in the myth of American exceptionalism in all of its manifestations and the assumption that the country will prevail as it did over the Soviet Union. Unless the Cold War is viewed as an aberration or at least as a flawed example of foreign policy, winning it will continue to dominate the triumphal thinking of policymakers and the United States will make the same unsavory diplomatic mistakes as has been the case since 9/11.

I did not intend this to be a multi-archival work, but it does contain many multi-citation footnotes to which Nichols objects. In almost every case I cite not only specific pages for the items in any given footnote and usually indicate the pages from which I have taken quotations. When I cite an entire book without pages it is because the book generally supports what I have said in the text that is footnoted. Nichols questions my source for Zbigniew Brzezinski’s advice to Carter about funneling of aid to the mujahidin, later the

Taliban, in Afghanistan, but it can be found in the first citation of that footnote in a self-congratulatory interview that Brzezinski gave to *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1998. There are only four citations in that footnote and anyone could check it. I do not assert that this aid was the sole reason for the Soviet invasion, but continued aid under Reagan certainly delayed an end to the decade-long Afghan-Soviet war and this logically represented an extension of the Cold War. I did not say that it “prevented the end of the Cold War.” I said that it guaranteed U.S. arms to Pakistan which inefficiently funneled them to the mujahidin, thus marking the beginning of a largely privatized and ideologically stateless resistance in the Middle East based on Islamic fundamentalism. This, in turn, ultimately contributed to the rise of bin Laden and other Arab extremists against the “infidel” foreign policy of the United States.

It is the religious blowback of American interference in the Afghan-Soviet war that makes it significant-- not that the war propelled Gorbachev to power. The Soviet Union would have imploded with or without Gorbachev's belated reforms and Reagan did not single-handedly bring it about as claimed by the neo-conservatives because he declared under their tutelage that the USSR was an “evil empire” and began a massive American arms buildup. I use multi-citation footnotes for all of these interpretations that Nichols chooses to ignore in favor of his own sources.

This criticism of my footnotes is particularly irksome in relation to Chapter Four where I criticize Truman's use of the atomic bomb. The sources I cite for projected American losses can all be found in footnote number nine where I specifically say that I have concluded that Barton J. Bernstein's work on such figures is correct. The Bernstein articles in that footnote clearly address the casualty ranges in the text. Moreover, the debate over the dropping of the atomic bomb is an ongoing one in the discipline as the Spring 1995 issue of *Diplomatic History*, the roundtable conducted on H-Diplo in January 2006 and the 2008 October H-Diplo comments demonstrate. In contrast to many scholars, Nichols believes there is no reason to debate Truman's decision either for ethical or strategic reasons. Not surprisingly, he sent this post to H-Diplo on October 11: “Why is it so difficult for so many revisionist historians to accept the simplest explanation of the use of the bomb: that Truman hoped it would end the war as soon as possible with as few Allied casualties as possible?”⁴ It appears that for him the case has been closed on this subject for some time as has any criticism of the way in which the United States conducted itself during the Cold War.

While Nichols agrees that there has been an increase in presidential power during the Cold War which I think threatens the American system of checks and balance system and should be curbed, he asserts that I attribute this to “right-wing” influence. Not so. I clearly indicated that the imperial presidency emerged incrementally under both Democratic and Republican presidents, but became dangerously excessive when after September 11 neo-conservatives in the Bush administration began to propagate the unitary executive theory.

⁴ The item was posted on 14 October 2008 and can be accessed at <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=0810&week=b&msg=pxhhV/ULua079c/5p61fhA&user=&pw=> .

Obviously Congress has not wanted to defend its constitutional prerogatives against aggrandizing executives, with a few notable exceptions: the temporary assertions of legislative power in the mid-1930s, at the end of War in Vietnam and Watergate, and sporadically and ineffectively since 2001.⁵ My point was that presidents have come to think they are beyond congressional, judicial, and public control in the conduct of foreign policy. It makes little difference that the decision in the Supreme Court case I cite denying the right of a legislative veto to Congress in 1983 was decided with liberals in the majority.

This brings me to Nichols's misunderstanding of my description of the postmodern presidency since the 1990s as "imponderable." By definition the term postmodern usually describes obscure issues and topics. I am not describing presidents before that decade and I cite reasons why it is now harder for Americans to recognize the true nature of presidential candidates or their policies in part because of our current dysfunctional media and money-driven electoral system. He simply lumps all of my comments about the how the Cold War has transformed the American presidency into a screed against my general "intemperate and condescending tone." Nonetheless, we cannot reform either our political system or foreign policy without criticizing and admitting the imperfections of both.

Finally, there is my discussion of the "nefarious neo-cons" whom Nichols says I "wish to refer to as 'Jacobins.'" I don't "wish." I am borrowing from a work by Claes G. Ryn, *American the Virtuous: The Crisis of Democracy and the Quest for Empire*, and I credit him in both the text and footnotes. According to Ryn, these new Jacobins view both capitalism (free markets) and democracy as undisputed progressive forces and, thus, "powerful agent[s] for remaking traditional regimes." According to Ryn, they also "want the United States to take preemptive action to dislodge unfriendly regimes and sanitize entire regions of the world... even though the country usually has almost nothing to fear militarily from the regimes singled out for special criticism." The fact that the new Jacobinism appealed not only to powerful financial and political interests and intellectuals who like the idea of an "aggressive foreign policy on behalf of democracy... [but] also to people of more pragmatic but nationalistic outlook who like the idea of their country being able to tell other countries how to behave," gave it considerable credibility after September 11. Above all its "democratist rhetoric... puts a nice gloss on the 'will to power' or 'wish to dominate.'" It also "puts great emphasis on democracy's superiority and missionary task."

My use of the term "neo-conservative" is what Nichols calls a "label of opprobrium." That may be because I think their extreme views, as described by Ryn, have irreparably damaged U.S. foreign policy and irresponsibly supported even more power for the presidency, especially since 9/11. Nichols conveniently ignores the fact that the neocons themselves admitted in a September 2000 report written for Project for the New American Century that their ideas could not be realized fully "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event like a New Pearl Harbor." If this statement alone doesn't deserve my comment that the neo-cons viewed 9/11 as "heaven-sent" I don't know what would. My description of Bob Woodward as a front man for the most extreme of the neo-conservatives

⁵ Jonathan Mahler, "After the Imperial Presidency," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 9, 2008, pp. 42-47, 58-62.

is evident to anyone who has read his books on the Bush presidency with a jaundiced rather than justifying eye. When the neo-cons turned against Bush's incompetent handling of the war in Iraq they began to criticize him and Woodward followed suit.

If Nichols's published views about the Cold War prevail, we will experience a series of cold wars for the rest of the twenty-first century based on what he calls preventive military actions that he thinks succeeded in the 1990s. My book is an attempt to point out that the United States should not continue to take the same unethical actions for the rest of this century that it employed to win the Cold War and I do not think the 1990s provides a good example of successful military interventions that should be emulated. I want the United States to end its self-justification, whether coded in exceptionalist or humanitarian rhetoric. The country and the world need no more American Faustian bargains, and no more denial of our arrogant "will to power." Nichols and I profoundly differ on what kind of U.S. diplomacy may "save the planet."

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