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Introduction by: Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

Reviewers:
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Richard Saull, Queen Mary, University of London.

Author’s Response by Timothy J. Lynch and Robert S. Singh


Contents

Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge ......................... 2
Review by Robert J. Lieber, Georgetown University ............................................................... 6
Review by Joshua Muravchik, Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies ................................................................. 9
Review by Richard Saull, Queen Mary, University of London ............................................. 12
Author’s Response by Timothy J. Lynch and Robert S. Singh, University of London .......... 16

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H-Diplo has devoted considerable attention in roundtables to George W. Bush’s strategy and the war on terror as well as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the context of the election of 2008. A number of authors have focused on what strategy the next administration should pursue on these and other foreign policy issues. In Winning the Right War: The Path to Security for America and the World, Philip Gordon offers extensive criticism of the Bush administration’s implementation, focus and priorities, and rhetoric and recommended Cold War containment as an alternative strategy. In Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy against Gold Terror, Ian Shapiro agrees with Gordon that the Bush doctrine with its focus on rogue states like the members of the “Axis of Evil”—Iran, North Korea, and Iraq—and terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, represented an unsustainable departure in U.S. national security policy. Most recently, Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro edited a collection, To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine, in which the ten contributors moved beyond a critique of Bush’s strategy to present their own strategy statements for the next administration.¹

What has been missing in this dialog has been an assessment that endorses Bush’s strategy as outlined in the National Security Strategy documents of 2002 and 2006 and implemented during his administration. In After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy, Timothy J. Lynch and Robert S. Singh take up this challenge and make a forceful case for both the strategy and the strong likelihood that the next administration will pursue essentially the same grand strategy. As with many recent studies on U.S. policy that address the Bush administration, Lynch and Singh start their analysis by placing Bush in an American foreign policy tradition that includes exceptionalism from geographical insularity and expansionism, security and trade as central concerns, multilateralism when it suits American interests, and a disposition to confront ideological adversaries with moralistic crusades. (pp. 17-45) Within these traditions reinforced by the Cold War experience that heightened executive power in foreign policy vis-à-vis Congress, that bolstered the use of force to deal with national security threats, and confirmed a selective use of multilateral institutions to achieve U.S. objectives, Lynch and Singh believe that Bush’s successor, inheriting the same traditions and the continuing challenges posed by radical Islam and states with weapons of mass destruction that could make them available to groups such as al-Qaeda, will have to pursue the same policies in what they describe as the “Second Cold War”. Just as Cold War Presidents from Harry Truman to George H.W. Bush ended up following the main strategic guidelines of containment despite personal preferences to shift to “roll back” or detente or victory versus containment, Lynch and Singh predict that the new President will pursue the main outlines of the Bush strategy.

¹ The roundtables on these books and others that evaluate Bush’s strategy may be located on the H-Diplo webpage under Roundtables at http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/. A forthcoming (in July 2009) roundtable on G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Tony Smith’s The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-First Century (2009) will discuss the relationship between the ideals of Wilson and Bush and the traditions of liberal internationalism.
As President Barack Obama moves past his first 100 days in office, there is already some limited evidence to use for an evaluation of the authors’ prediction of continuity. Furthermore, the interpretations mentioned above tend to support a degree of continuity between Bush and his successor even if they disagree significantly on the wisdom of some of Bush’s decisions, such as the launching of the Iraq war without having achieved sufficient pacification and stability in Afghanistan if that was possible. The reviewers discuss several of these issues and have some reservations on Lynch and Singh’s evaluations which the authors address in their response.

1) Robert Lieber, Joshua Muravchik, and Richard Saull agree that the election of Barack Obama will not bring a significant break in the evolving policies of the Bush administration, especially considering some of its shifts since 2006 in rhetoric concerning its relationships with allies, willingness to negotiate with Iran and North Korea on WMD, and its attitude to intractable problems such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Muravchik, for example, welcomes this thesis especially considering that the challenge of defeating jihadist Islam involves far more than missile strikes on al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan and, ultimately, will depend on the reform of Islam and modernization of Arab and Muslim societies. Although Gordon, Shapiro, and most of the authors in the Leffler and Legro collection disagree significantly with Lynch and Singh’s endorsement of Bush’s “war on terror” with respect to its rhetoric, the constitutional challenges raised by the White House on the matters of surveillance and the treatment of prisoners, as well as other related policies, very few suggest that the next President should withdraw the United States from a leadership role in dealing with al-Qaeda and other groups with global aims who are willing to use terrorist methods, as well as with states such as Iran and North Korea who have or may be pursuing WMD.

2) The reviewers do question some of the authors’ terminology, most notably their effort to transform the “war on terror” into a “Second Cold War.” Lieber recognizes their effort to identify a similarity with respect to “a long campaign needing to be waged in many different areas and forms,” but the differences between the two conflicts may be more significant as developed by Richard Saull, who emphasizes that the war on terror is focused on “groups within some Muslim states” and that unlike the Cold War, political Islam offers no ideological, economic, or geopolitical challenge to the U.S. and its allies.

3) The reviewers would welcome more development by Lynch and Singh of their argument that the new President will continue Bush’s policies because they have been successful with the major exception of the management of the Iraq occupation. (The authors completed their book as Washington implemented the new surge strategy in Iraq.) Muravchik notes that there are always alternative policies that may or may not work and expresses the most reservations on the authors’ statement that long-term success will depend on reform of Islam. “When, if ever, has Islam been reformed in the past, and by what means and in what space of time,” Muravchik asks. Saull expresses more serious reservations, noting a “Manichean and monochromatic world view of ‘good versus evil’” similar to the rhetoric of the Bush White House, and an unwillingness to consider the possible negative consequences of Bush’s reliance on military force on civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan,
and Pakistan as well as on more general attitudes toward the United States in the Muslim world and the Middle East. Is long-term success in undermining radical Islam feasible if the U.S. relies excessively on force versus soft power? (2) Saull also questions the authors’ evaluation of democratization as a significant method in the war on terror, noting the contradictions in defining and supporting democracy in both the Cold War and the current Middle East conflict as well as, specifically, with Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. forces have “provided spaces for the building of the structures and processes of democratic governance.” (4) Yet Saull concludes that “US policy in post-Saddam Iraq has, at best bungled, if not acted to deliberately limit the democratic potential of post-Baathist Iraq” with its overall management of the “democratization programme”, and its “ideological prejudices and neoliberal assumptions within it.” (3-4)

Lynch and Singh view the Iraq war as “seriously mismanaged but not misconceived—an unsound execution of a sound doctrine.” (148) Characteristically, the authors address the critics of the decision to go to war without engaging in the worn-out White House and neo-conservative references to a connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. Instead, the authors emphasize Hussein’s “megalomaniacal and inhumane personality,” his lack of restraint or respect for any standards of state conduct, and his “consistent record of territorial expansionism.” (166) In contrast with authors such as Gordon and Shapiro who suggest that Hussein was contained with minimal costs, Lynch and Singh emphasize that the UN sanctions were eroding and Hussein would shortly have been able to pursue WMD and step up his assistance to various terrorist groups. What receives considerably less analysis is the Afghanistan conflict. The authors do note that the Iraq war “deflected attention from Afghanistan,” (175) but they don’t discuss in depth the repercussions in Afghanistan, the expansion of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan and escalating conflict in that country. In an ironic sense this has contributed, at least in the short run, to the authors’ thesis of continuity as President Obama finds himself withdrawing troops from Iraq to have more troops to send into Afghanistan and stepping up the pressure on Pakistan to deal with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. With an economy in a full-recession and instability endemic in a pre-modern Afghanistan, the appeal of an exit strategy may ultimately undermine Lynch and Singh’s forces of continuity shaping U.S. policy and blow back into Iraq as well.

Participants:

**Timothy J. Lynch** is Senior Lecturer in US Foreign Policy at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, School of Advanced Study, University of London. He is the author of *Turf War: The Clinton Administration and Northern Ireland* (Ashgate, 2004) and, with Robert Singh, *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). He is currently writing a history of US foreign policy after the cold war for the Cambridge Essential Histories Series and a book on the American response to surprise attack (*Days of Infamy*). A Fulbright scholar, he holds a PhD in political science from Boston College.

**Robert S. Singh** is Professor of Politics at the Department of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College, University of London. He is the co-editor of *The Bush Doctrine and the

Joshua Muravchik is a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies and the author of numerous books and articles on international politics. His new book, *The Next Founders: Voices of Democracy in the Middle East,* will be published by Encounter in April.

Richard Saull is Senior Lecturer in International Politics, Department of Politics, Queen Mary, University of London. His major publication include *Rethinking Theory and History in the Cold War* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); *The Cold War and After* (London: Pluto Press, 2007); Co-editor, *The War on Terrorism and the American ‘Empire’ After the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2005). Saull is currently working on a book-length project on the historical sociology of far-right political movements in Western Europe tracing the international dimensions of their origin and evolution from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary era.
Political scientists and diplomatic historians may well look back on much of the literature published during the past eight years with a sense of chagrin. With some notable exceptions, a good deal of the writing about American foreign policy and grand strategy during the administration of George W. Bush has been characterized more by polemic and hyperbole than by measured and dispassionate assessment.

In this context, Lynch and Singh’s *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy* arrives as a refreshing contribution and a welcome rejoinder to much of the conventional wisdom. Contrary to those who have viewed the Bush era as a radical departure from post-World War II and post-Cold War American foreign policy, Lynch and Singh make a serious case for their thesis that important elements of the Bush doctrine will outlast the former American president and that fundamental components of the doctrine are indeed consistent with U.S. foreign policy tradition.

In their book, published some six months prior to the end of the Bush administration, they do not rely on unicausal explanations, but instead show how such factors as the appeal of primacy, the particular character of U.S. internationalism, American exceptionalism, and the lack of good alternatives, in addition to a very serious overall threat, combine to reinforce this continuity. While they do not wholly depersonalize the subject, they make an important and original contribution in moving the debate about American foreign policy beyond the stale and repetitive obsession with the presidency and personality of George W. Bush.

In making their case, Lynch and Singh display a nuanced grasp of the subject matter and bring to bear an impressive command of the relevant cases and literature. These accomplishments are all the more impressive in that the two authors are non-Americans – both are on the faculty of the University of London. Moreover, and in welcome contrast to the turgid style that afflicts so much contemporary scholarship, they write fluidly and with wit about the subject matter at hand.

Their argument against assessing the Bush policy as a radical departure is bound to be controversial, but the authors stake their argument for “essential continuity in the architecture of US foreign policy after Bush” on what they describe as “five strong foundations” (257):

- “the severity of the clear and present security threat from internationalist Islamism;
- the continuance of American primacy and a unipolar world;
- the appeal of a distinctly American internationalism as the best strategy to preserve this primacy, alongside the unappealing nature of the alternative prescriptions;
- the combined and reinvigorated bipartisan support for the Second Cold War ‘beyond the desert’s edge’; and
• the resilience and vitality of American exceptionalism.” (257)

Of these foundations, the authors’ assumption about future bipartisanship may be on less solid ground than the others. Moreover, their terminology for the continuing struggle against violent radical jihadism as the “Second Cold War,” may not be the most suitable label, though their underlying logic in envisaging a long campaign needing to be waged in many different arenas and forms remains plausible.

In deploying their argument, Lynch and Singh set out a number of telling critiques to the recent literature. They are especially critical of what they term, “The contortions of realism in the face of the war on terror,” which they note “are captured in the oxymoronic title of a book by Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman: Ethical Realism. (88) They note that this, and by implication much related realist writing, “is a manifesto to the men who used to run American foreign policy, including especially those in the Bush Sr, administration.” (88) Here they quote approvingly George Packer’s acid observation that those are the same officials who “abandoned Afghanistan to civil war and al Qaeda, allowed Saddam to massacre his own people, and concluded that genocide in the Balkans was none of America’s business.”

At the same time, they are critical of liberal international relations theory, which in their words, “asserts that empathy, commonality, and interconnectedness make the world a more pacific place.” (94). And they make it a point to note that “the al Qaeda plot was hatched during the Clinton presidency” and that “9/11 was born against Clinton not Bush.” (94)

Nor do the authors mince words about the Iraq War. While they take issue with the Bush administration’s conduct of the campaign, they describe its purpose unapologetically: “The American liberation of Iraq was seriously mismanaged but not misconceived – an unsound execution of a sound doctrine.” This proposition is bound to be debated for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the authors are merciless in reminding readers how much of the debate about the origins of the war has been carelessly framed: “…despite the efforts of distinguished scholars to impress the point on students of international relations, Iraq was not a ‘neoconservative’ war. It was not declared without debate. It was not imposed on an unsuspecting and innocent American nation by a cabal of bellicose and naïve warmongers. The decision to go to war was made by a war cabinet comprising Bush, Cheney, Powell, Rice and Rumsfeld –none of whom could be counted a neoconservative.” (155) And they remind readers that leading Democratic Senators, including those who later ran for the party’s 2008 presidential nomination, voted for the congressional use of force resolution, and that important centrist and even liberal public intellectuals, journals and newspapers initially supported the case for war.

They close their argument with the prophecy that, “Those expecting a return to ‘normalcy’ in American diplomacy after Bush should prepare for disappointment; Bush was a very normal president.” (228) And, unapologetically, they conclude the book with the words,

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“September 11 invoked precedent not transformation. He [Bush] was no more capable of escaping America’s strategic culture and ideological imperatives after 9/11 than any of the presidents before him. Thus, by default and by design, the Bush administration imitated the foreign policy of its predecessors. His successors will do the same. The war on terror – the Second Cold War – has had its Truman. We await its Reagan.” (297)

The extent to which the foreign policy of the Obama presidency will evolve in the direction indicated by Lynch and Singh remains to be seen, though in its first few months the administration certainly has not undertaken the kind of abrupt substantive departures that its most ardent supporters may have wished during the campaign. In any case, the authors have made a strong case for the way in which history, geopolitics and strategic necessity create imperatives for policy continuity. They have written an original, serious, and important book.
George W. Bush has been one of the most reviled of recent Presidents, and he has poll ratings to match. But with the “surge” in Iraq giving signs of having snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, a number of observers have begun to argue that he will be rated more kindly in hindsight than he has been in real time. “There’s more ferment about the Bush legacy than is sometimes acknowledged,” concluded a recent summary in the *Washington Post*.

Now a book-length presentation of this point has arrived from, of all sources, the groves of British academe, where Bush is hardly more popular than, say, global warming. Timothy J. Lynch and Robert S. Singh, both of whom teach at the University of London, couch their defense of Bush in the form of a meditation on what will follow after his administration. Their surprising conclusion: “None of the key elements of the Bush Doctrine … will be abandoned in practice by successor administrations, whatever their rhetorical recalibrations and tactical adjustments.

“Why not? Because, Lynch and Singh answer, Bush’s analysis of the challenge that the United States faces from Islamic terrorists was basically correct. Like it or not, a “second cold war,” no more of its choosing than the first one, has been thrust upon the U.S. The authors prefer the term “second cold war” to “World War IV” — favored by Norman Podhoretz, R. James Woolsey, and others — because it emphasizes the ideological dimension that, in their judgment, was more in the forefront of our contest with Soviet Communism than it was in World Wars I and II. And much like its predecessor, they write, this second cold war is destined to last for a long time.”

Hence, there is discomfiting news for all those who were looking forward to January 2009 as the end of the Bush years. That date, observe Lynch and Singh, “marks only the end of the beginning of an epochal struggle.” What is more, they believe they can discern, through the din of reproach directed at Bush, the strains of an incipient national consensus on the matter. This emergent consensus is based on a confluence of factors: the undeniable severity of the threat; the continuance of America’s global primacy; the “appeal of a distinctly American internationalism”; bipartisan support for the war on terror even if not the Iraq war; and the “vitality of American exceptionalism,” in which “values as well as interests have been, and will remain, crucial components of American policies.”

In short, not only will the conflict endure but so will Bush’s approach to it. For one thing, “there is nothing viable with which to replace it.” For another, it is “working.” In saying this, Lynch and Singh are not referring to the situation in Iraq, since their book was written when U.S. fortunes there were still at a low ebb. Instead, they have in mind the relative dearth of terror attacks against the West and the initially encouraging impact of Bush’s democratization policies on the Muslim Middle East.
But even concerning Iraq, Lynch and Singh insist that the war was “not misconceived” but rather “seriously mismanaged.” They cite such apparent mistakes as the deploying of too few troops and disbanding the Iraqi army, and they offer an especially biting judgment of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who, in “abandoning the Powell doctrine of overwhelming force, ... committed an error of cardinal magnitude.” But they also rebut a range of other criticisms of Bush’s policies in Iraq.

Wryly, Lynch and Singh mock European leftists who, “rather than organize to meet a realized and growing danger [i.e., terrorism], obsess about a predicted one [i.e., global warming]” — and who march in absurd protest against America for the sin of overthrowing a “fascist dictatorship.” They also skewer the anti-Bush (and anti-Israel) polemicists Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer:

“All of the world’s most respected realist scholars have determined to condemn the war on terror on the basis of its foreign reception. Rather than unpopularity being an unfortunate byproduct of the pursuit of the national interest, it is now, by definition it appears, a negation of the national interest.... For liberals to pore over polling data to find empirical evidence of the unpopularity of the war on terror is not unusual. For realists to join them is a denial of the theoretical clarity of realism itself.” (93)

As for the warnings of the so-called realists that American “unilateralism” will cause others to band together against the U.S., Lynch and Singh point out that no such coalescence has occurred, for the simple reason that the impediments to it are too great and likely to remain so.

All of this is delivered in the matter-of-fact tone that is more characteristic of British discourse than American, and without any trace of self-consciousness or defensive hand-wringing. The thesis is one with which I feel great sympathy, although here and there I would have wished for greater precision or deeper explication.

Lynch and Singh assert, for instance, that there is no alternative to Bush’s policies because those policies are working. But this is something of a non-sequitur. The world does not lack for examples of wise or prudent ideas replaced or defeated by foolish or unworkable ones. More important, the assertion that Bush’s policies are indeed working could use sturdier proofs than Lynch and Singh provide. In the absence of such proofs, it might have been wiser to advance a more modest claim — namely, that no substantive alternatives to Bush’s main policies have in fact been proposed, which is reason enough to give them time to demonstrate their efficacy.

A second contention needing development is the authors’ assertion that success in the U.S. struggle requires the “reform of Islam.” This cries out for a digression. When, if ever, has Islam been reformed in the past, and by what means and in what space of time? In the same breath, Lynch and Singh cite the need for “steps toward genuine self-government” (emphasis added). This would seem to imply that political change may be an even more distant goal than religious change. I would have thought the reverse. Either way, though, one wants to hear more.
Finally, even if Lynch and Singh are right that Bush’s successor, whether Republican or Democrat, will find himself compelled to prosecute the second cold war along the lines set by Bush, how reassuring is that to those who believe in these policies? As President, Jimmy Carter found that, despite his longing to lead America away from the “inordinate fear of Communism,” he could not unilaterally end the cold war, yet he waged it so halfheartedly and incompetently that the U.S. was in the process of losing until the American people replaced Carter with Ronald Reagan (Commencement address at Notre Dame University, June 1977). This latest cold war has been visited upon the United States by an enemy who has already demonstrated his deadliness. If it fails to prosecute it with the utmost vigor and seriousness of purpose, it will be inviting disaster.

Still, these are relatively small complaints. To critics and decriers of the Bush doctrine, two well-versed scholars have forcefully posed the question: if not this, then what? In doing so, they have provided a most welcome tonic to the shrill election-year demagogy that has filled the American air.
The post-Cold War conceptualisation of American foreign policy has been characterised by a number of analytical shifts corresponding with and – in consequence – seemingly triggered by the changes in the party/individual occupying the White House. Thus the liberal internationalist trilogy of human rights, free trade and democratic enlargement encapsulated in the term ‘globalization’ defined the discussion US foreign policy during the Clinton era, whilst with the so-called ‘Bush turn’ in US foreign policy after the 9/11 attacks witnessed the ‘mainstreaming’ of the concepts of ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’ to conceptualise the global projection of American power. With Barak Obama’s arrival and the deepening of the global financial-economic crisis centred on the American financial system, the Anglo-American commentariat are already beginning to claim that the combination of the financial crises and the distinct political and ideological vision of Obama will see a further shift in American foreign policy away from the unilateralism and militarism associated with Bush to a scaling back of US global military power projection, a reduction in the ‘democratic’ political ambitions of the war on terror and a greater involvement with multilateral institutions as a way of realizing US international objectives.

It is in within this context that After Bush enters the fray. Lynch and Singh, two British academics based in the University of London, outline an argument that takes issue with the way in which the discussion of American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War has been characterised by such analytical shifts. Thus, whilst recognising the policy innovations of the Bush administration they argue that in both domestic and foreign policy, the Bush administration is comparable with US policy traditions during and after the Cold War, notably in the autonomy of Presidential power vis-à-vis the Congress in the conduct of foreign policy, in relying on the use of force to deal with national security threats and in only using multilateral institutions when they facilitate the effective realization of American foreign policy objectives. As well as setting out to contextualise the policies of the Bush administration – with the implicit assumption that Gore would have reacted in a very similar fashion to the 9/11 attacks – Lynch and Singh also defend two further positions. First, that any successor to Bush (Obama) will continue with the essential policy direction and instruments of the Bush era and, secondly, and much more controversially, that the main reason why this will be so is because – in spite of some setbacks and failings – the war on terror, or what they prefer to term ‘the Second Cold War,’ has been rather successful.

Whilst Lynch and Singh’s situating of the policy innovations of the Bush administration within the broader and longer-term contours of American foreign policy rests on firm scholarly ground – it is not presidential elections or terrorist attacks that trigger fundamental geopolitical and ideological realignments in a state’s international relations, American or otherwise – the other two arguments have much less scholarly foundation. Indeed, the prediction of the continuation of the unilateral and militarised war on terror by Obama and, that such a policy is the only effective means of ‘securing the [American] homeland’ because it has demonstrated a number of successes since 2001, is less a
substantively articulated analytical position and more an act of political and ideological faith.

This is not just reflected in the substance of Lynch and Singh’s argument but also in the manner of its delivery. Their general defence of the efficacy and the moral and political legitimacy of the deployment of American military power to deal with security threats and their particular admiration for ‘shock and awe’ in Afghanistan and Iraq is delivered in a text permeated by a Manichean and monochromatic worldview of ‘good versus evil’ mimicking the rhetoric of those that they admire. Indeed, much of the text reads as a pre-emptive polemical strike against those publications likely to emerge over the coming months and years that are likely to offer a more balanced and much more critical evaluation of the Bush era.

The depiction of a world on the precipice of apocalyptic violence carried out by fanatical Islamist terrorists provides the justification for their defence of the war on terror and their tendency to downplay (see page 94: “The war is not a public relations exercise. It is no surprise to find that messy campaigns, like Iraq ... offend the people they are meant to liberate”) the human casualties of not only US violence, but also the way in which the deployment of US military power since 2001 has contributed to instabilities within states – notably Pakistan – that has accentuated inter-ethnic and sectarian conflicts. The problem here is not just the apparently cavalier attitude towards the many non-combatant casualties of American military power, but the failure to question the effectiveness of the war on terror’s use of force to secure US objectives. It is not enough to assess the impact of the war on terror on the basis of a lack of ‘another 9/11’ on the United States. A more nuanced account would embrace a wider set of criteria that included political developments in those locales subject to the logic of the war on terror.

Despite their defence of the use of force as the principal means to prosecute the struggle against Islamist terrorism Lynch and Singh do seem to recognise that any long-term success in weakening the bases of terrorism within the Islamic world (p.208) requires “not so much winning as changing hearts and minds that must occur.” Unfortunately, the authors do not see any contradiction in this reasonable assessment with the perceived injustices associated with the war on terror and actions carried out by or acquiesced to by the United States in the Muslim world and the Middle East in particular. Whilst Lynch and Singh either ignore or refuse to accept the idea that US policy could be associated with injustices in the Islamic world, since late 2001, survey after survey of public attitudes have continued to demonstrate that that is precisely what most Muslims (and many non-Muslims) think about the US. How this is going to change with the continuation of the war on terror is, to say the least, difficult to believe.

The highly partisan tone of the book is also particularly evident in their dismissals of the main academic schools theorizing American foreign policy. Indeed, it is here where the lack of serious scholarly engagement is particularly exposed, notably their failure to fully engage with liberal-institutionalist readings of American foreign policy in particular. Whilst their engagement with mainstream accounts of US foreign policy is found wanting their ‘discussion’ of critical and leftist accounts of American global power is one of dismissal and
caricature. Since when has Tariq Ali been the bell-wether of Marxist-informed academic accounts of US global power?

As should be obvious there is much to take issue with in the substance of the book. However, I will finish my review with some comments on two substantive claims made by Lynch and Singh and which form core components of their broader argument defending the war on terror. First, the idea that the war on terror should be understood as the ‘Second Cold War’ and, secondly, the way in which they characterise the process of democratization. Regarding the former, the idea that the war on terror should be conceptualised (rather than understood as a political slogan) as a Second Cold War seems to be more of a political device to help legitimise the US struggle against radical Islam than an analytically appropriate way of comparing that struggle with the Cold War. According to Lynch and Singh the discussion of the war on terror parallels the academic discussion of the Cold War in a number of ways (pp.9-15): the disagreements over the appropriate historical point at which each conflict started; over the duration of each conflict; about the nature of the conflicts; the global character of each; the divisions within the enemy camps; and the agency involved. Although some of the points mentioned by the authors do bear some comparison (such a comparison could also be applied to other historical periods) this is not enough for the idea of a Second Cold War to be taken seriously as an analytical term.

The Cold War was global, the struggle against political Islam is not. Rather, the war on terror is prosecuted against groups within some Muslim states. The political dynamic of the Cold War was driven by a series of revolutionary struggles that saw revolutionary movements capture state power shifting the Cold War from an ideological to an economic and geopolitical struggle. This is signally absent from the war on terror. Political Islam does not offer a serious socio-economic challenge to the globalization of capitalist development in the way – short-lived though it was – that state socialism did. Further, it offers no geopolitical challenge, and the question of the Islamist bomb – terrible though any future attack might be – does not bear comparison with the mutually assured destruction of the Cold War. Finally, with regard to the tensions and divisions within the Atlantic Alliance over the war on terror in general and the Anglo-American attack on Iraq in particular; these indicate a key difference in the perceptions of West European publics and political from the Cold War era. Thus, whilst the Cold War was founded on Western unity, hence America’s ‘empire by invitation,’ this is something absent (notwithstanding the distinction – at the elite level – between Afghanistan and Iraq) in the war on terror. The war on terror is, then, at best, an Anglophone struggle rather than a Western or liberal-democratic one.

What of Lynch and Singh’s discussion of democratization as an aspect of US foreign policy and a ‘weapon’ of the war on terror? There are a number of issues here. First, is the failure to articulate the contradictions within American foreign policy in general and the war in terror in particular over American support for democratization in authoritarian and dictatorial states. Thus, the Cold War record is glossed over and the continued support for such regimes and the back-tracking on democratization in the Middle East is accepted by Lynch and Singh on strategic expediency and the amoral principle of ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’ (surely this could have been applied to Nazi Germany with regard to the USSR?). Further, and to correct Lynch and Singh, American support for democratization and the
struggles of democratic forces during the Cold War was ambivalent at best and, in a number of cases directly hostile. How else is one to make sense of the original intervention in Indochina and the provision of diplomatic support and covert assistance for numerous coups and insurgencies against democratic governments in Chile, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Iran, Indonesia and Western Europe in the name of anti-communism? Thus, any threat to private property rights was – bizarrely – deemed anti-democratic thus justifying hostility and intervention regardless of popular and democratic endorsement.

This leads onto the assumption that pervades After Bush that democratization can only be realized with American support – usually through the use of force in defeating dictators. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan the defeats of Saddam and the Taliban have obviously provided spaces for the building of the structures and processes of democratic governance, which should not be under-estimated. However, as developments in both countries have demonstrated the process of democratization is not only a messier and more paradoxical business than implied by the clarity of regime defeat, it also rests – indeed its success or failure – on the role played by local social forces sometimes acting against US interests. Indeed, as a number of scholars – one or two cited favourably by Lynch and Singh – have made clear, US policy in post-Saddam Iraq has, at best bungled, if not acted to deliberately limit the democratic potential of post-Baathist Iraq. Although Lynch and Singh do accept some failings in the ‘tactics’ of the war on terror as applied to Iraq, their criticisms concern poor planning and insufficient military capacity in the immediate post-Saddam period and not that of the Bush administration’s management of the Iraqi ‘democratization programme’ nor the ideological prejudices and neoliberal assumptions within it.

To sum up, then, After Bush is a bold and ambitious intervention into the discussion of American foreign policy and the Bush era in particular. However, while it seeks to be taken seriously as a scholarly intervention, it is more likely to be seen as a polemical defence of the Bush administration and its war on terror. Unfortunately, whilst Lynch and Singh begin After Bush by recognizing the partisanship in much of the discussion of the record of the Bush administration, they themselves fall foul to this temptation producing a rather one-dimensional account. This ends up replicating the failings of those that they seek to challenge.
We are very grateful to H-Diplo for hosting this discussion of our book, *After Bush*, to Thomas Maddux for organizing this, and to the three reviewers for their commentaries. Since two of these are broadly in agreement with our central thesis, we propose first to respond to the qualifications and queries raised in these reviews, before devoting the bulk of our response to the third, more critical commentary.

It is a privilege to be reviewed by such distinguished American thinkers as Robert Lieber and Joshua Muravchik. For two Brits to write a book that defends the Bush Doctrine, published six months before the departure of one of the most polarizing presidents in American history, and before the advent of one of the most popular, was “bound to be controversial”, as Professor Lieber notes. We were aware that *After Bush* was likely to encounter substantial criticism, a function less of the nature or quality of its arguments than of the ideological orthodoxies that brook few challenges in much of contemporary academia. In this, we have not been disappointed. Despite this, we remain hopeful that a dispassionate reading of our work will indeed see it as “an original, serious and important” contribution, regardless of the differences that readers from across the political spectrum will almost certainly have with elements of our argument.

Lieber notes that the foundation of bipartisanship that we identify as one of the bases for continuity in US foreign policy post-Bush may be less solid than we suggest. We take this important qualification in good spirit. The growing distance between the views of active partisans in the two main parties has indeed encompassed questions of foreign policy over recent years and fed into increasing partisan divergence in the approval ratings of presidents – a phenomenon that long pre-dated George W. Bush and has already extended into the administration of President Obama. How far this threatens to undermine the robustness of the US approach to global threats remains to be seen. As Lieber observes, while it has made significant changes in style and “atmospherics”, the Obama administration has not, thus far, abandoned the core elements of US foreign policy that its most ardent supporters hoped to witness. Whether the combination of a continued military effort in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and elsewhere with a more emollient public diplomacy amounts to a change of substance rather than symbolism is perhaps questionable. Whether maintaining domestic American support for ‘overseas contingency operations’ to prevent ‘man-caused disasters’ is tenable is even more so. But we remain cautiously optimistic that the American political class will resist the more utopian prescriptions of the activist base in the face of very serious, and urgent, national security challenges, ones that the American public may have become dangerously complacent towards.

While expressing sympathy for our central arguments, Joshua Muravchik wished for “greater precision or deeper explication” on some aspects of our case. We are happy to oblige as best we can. One such task – providing empirical proof that the Bush Doctrine has ‘worked’ – is inevitably contentious. As we make plain throughout *After Bush*, the execution of a sound grand strategy was severely compromised by at times woeful mismanagement. The Afghanistan-Pakistan fault-line remains a grievous security threat, al Qaeda and its
allies and affiliates remain active in planning attacks on the US and the West, and Iraq remains unstable. But hundreds of terrorists have been killed or incarcerated, al Qaeda has not re-established an effective haven for its operations, and the US homeland has not been attacked again. These are achievements that are impressive and, as such, deserve recognition. That more could and should have been achieved, at less cost, is a thesis with which we concur. But part of the problem with discussions of Bush has been the tendency both to attribute all the world’s ills to him while maintaining that a different president could have resolved those ills. As the new administration is discovering, the facts of international politics are especially stubborn things. We do not, and cannot, know how many terrorist plots have been foiled but we do know that counter-terrorist cooperation, interdiction of WMD via the Proliferation Security Initiative, and on-going military efforts by the US have precluded further attacks.

We take on board Muravchik’s sceptical points about the question of Islam and political reform. In the book, we stressed that these were generational issues of exceeding complexity. But our prescriptions were hardly naive or optimistic ones. As the current turmoil in Pakistan indicates, and as the broader sectarian, ethnic and religious divides across the Middle East once more confirm, the predicament that the West finds itself in is as much an intra- as an inter-civilisational conflict. In the absence of the reformation of mosque and state, such conflicts will continue to plague the region and, in turn, a West whose involvement therein cannot be discontinued by a move to a ‘green economy’, however feasible the latter may or may not be. Our cautious suggestion was that the US and the West could assist the modernisation of the region, the opening up of markets, and moves to self-government that reconcile Islam and the non-negotiable rights of human dignity. But we were explicit in noting that the momentum for such moves had to be predominantly internal, that indigenous democratisation movements faced acute dilemmas in seeking or accepting outside support, and that the timeline for reform – religious or political – was not synchronized with the urgency of the security challenges the US and its allies confront.

Unlike Lieber and Muravchik, the British Marxist scholar Richard Saull finds little that is congenial in our work. That is hardly a surprise. Nonetheless, we take seriously our colleague’s challenge. Four points, in particular, merit explicit rebuttals.

First, the suggestion that our work was intended as a “preventive strike” against other publications “likely to emerge” about the Bush foreign policy is simply obtuse, ignoring the plethora of critical books – overwhelming hostile, though of varying scholarly worth – already produced about Bush, the Bush Doctrine, and US foreign policy. After Bush was a response to this voluminous outpouring, one that we hope – as Lieber notes – displays a firm grounding in this critical discussion, even if it departs from much of its normative orthodoxy. It was intended neither as a defence of the president, nor of figures whom we allegedly admire, nor of all his policies, and we draw attention to the many errors of implementation, style, and public diplomacy that occurred on his watch. The initial occupation of Iraq was a disaster and we do not defend it in the book. Instead, the book seeks to locate the Bush Doctrine within the broader parameters of US history, foreign relations and national security praxis.
Second, the book is deemed to be ‘permeated by a Manichean and monochromatic worldview’. Such a charge, typical as it may be, cannot be sustained by a serious reading of our work. Not only do we note the multiplicity of security threats facing the US and the West today, but we also emphasise the degree to which the US has intervened to protect Muslims since 1991 and the complexity of forces shaping and reshaping the Middle East. Do we take seriously the terrorist atrocities wrought by Islamist groups from Buenos Aires to Bali for the past decades? Absolutely. Do we entertain the possibility that such groups would, if they could marry capacity to intention, wreak far greater devastation? Definitely. Do we reject a moral relativism that places on a par Western military interventions that tragically entail non-combatant fatalities and Islamist terror expressly intended to cause maximum civilian deaths? We do. As we argue in the book, it is one of the ironies of the contemporary era that leftists and liberals who claim to prize universal values such as human rights now seem instead to embrace a Kissingerian realism. If repudiating that case is to be insufficiently cosmopolitan, we must regretfully accept the charge.

This leads us to the third and fourth sets of concerns raised by Dr. Saull: the Second Cold War analogy and the democratisation issue. On each, we discern a misreading and misrepresentation of our arguments, since our explication of both runs so obviously counter to this reviewer’s readings on any fair assessment.

As we argue in the book, it is one of the striking features of the post-9/11 years that no term for the US-led response to the attacks of that day has won a broad consensus. The Bush administration itself varied its preferred description, with the Pentagon’s ‘Long War’ designation ultimately seeming to win out by the end of Bush’s two terms in office. The Obama administration, like the UK government of Gordon Brown before it, has seemingly abandoned the phrase ‘war on terror’, even though the president has expressly declared the US to be ‘at war’ and has retained – as we predicted in the book – most of the tools for its prosecution. In that regard, Richard Saull may wish to revisit his claim that our “prediction of the continuation of the unilateral and militarised war on terror by Obama and, that such a policy is the only effective means of ‘securing the [American] homeland’ because it has demonstrated a number of successes since 2001, is less a substantively articulated analytical position and more an act of political and ideological faith.” As we anticipated, pace Robert Kagan, the members of the Obama national security team seem to be reminding Europeans that Democratic foreign policy decision-makers – if not the base of the Democratic Party – are by no means exclusive devotees of ‘soft power.’

But, as we also stress, the diminution and, if possible, ultimate elimination of the jihadist threat to the US and the West necessarily involves a battle of ideas as well as blood and treasure. Far from seeing it as an exclusively, or even primarily, military conflict, we expressly acknowledge the salience of the ideological and theological dimensions of the struggle, one that is – like the Cold War – waged on multiple fronts, within as well as between states, and of generational duration. Does that mean that two epochal struggles are exactly similar? Of course not. But the Cold War analogy helps draw attention to both the similarities and dissimilarities of these conflicts, the better to understand them and to wage the current one. As we state in After Bush, just as momentum for change in Eastern
Europe and the Soviet Union required internal pressures, so too does that in the Middle East. The perennial dilemma for the US is how to shape the choices of key states in ways that accelerate rather than retard desired changes.

In this respect, Saull’s faulting us for brushing over past US policies seems mildly perverse. As Bush came to recognize and publicly state, prior US support for stability to facilitate US security had ultimately achieved neither. But the US necessarily, like any state, must attend to the realm of the feasible as well as the desirable. When Saull proposes rhetorically that such a prescription might have suggested that the US could have supported Nazi Germany against the USSR, he ironically proves our point. The US did indeed embrace one of the most odious and barbaric regimes in human history to secure a more pressing end, but that was allying with Stalin to defeat Hitler.

To this end, a fair appraisal of our arguments cannot possibly frame us as endorsing a ‘damn the consequences’ attempt at democratising the Middle East, nor the notion that only US-led or imposed attempts at self-governing reforms can be effective. Even a cursory reading of our text emphatically refutes such claims; in fact the introduction to our chapter on the Middle East (page 190) states: “Indeed, ultimately, Washington can only cajole and nudge a steady reformation of the region’s political, economic and religious transformation. The central force in establishing regimes that are accountable, self-governing, based on the consent of the people and respectful of human dignity must be the people of the Arab and Muslim states themselves.”

All too often in many critiques of the Bush Doctrine, little in the way of a substantive alternative is offered, beyond homilies to ‘engagement’, ‘soft power’, and a distorted understanding of the Declaration of Independence’s ‘decent respect to the opinions of mankind’ that sees this injunction as a cosmopolitan promise to abide by others rather than a nationalist declaratory statement of American intent in the world. The central dilemma that the 9/11 generation faces – as policymakers, scholars, and citizens – is that there are no easy, simple or cost-free answers to confronting the sources and effects of Islamist terror. A fair interpretation of the case that we make cannot, in our view, justify suggestions of a cavalier attitude to civilian casualties or a naïve endorsement of western-style institutions of representative government. But it is incumbent upon critics of our case to explain how a return to the pre-9/11 status quo ante, whether in Afghanistan-Pakistan or the broader Middle East, is likely to achieve security for the US and its allies – or indeed for the non-western populations obliged to endure the misery of terrorists operating in their midst. If it cannot – as we argue – then Bush’s successors will confront the same limited array of options and tools that he did.

In final response to Dr. Saull, we would ask him to identify the scholarly interventions that disagree with him but that he does not dismiss as polemic. Is there a defence of US foreign policy after 9/11 that he is prepared to take seriously? If there is not, we are rather at a loss to know how we might bridge the gap between his economically deterministic worldview and our own.
In sum, as Muravchik notes, the central question that should inform discussions of the Bush Doctrine is, if not this, then what? We reached a fairly clear conclusion in our contribution to this debate and hope that After Bush can serve fair and open-minded readers to do likewise. Our thanks again to all contributors to this roundtable.