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Introduction by Rajan Menon, City College of New York/City University of New York

In *Republic in Peril: American Empire and the Liberal Tradition*, David Hendrickson, a prolific and provocative scholar, offers an eloquent root-and-branch critique of American foreign policy, focusing chiefly on the post-Cold War decades.¹ In essence, Hendrickson contends that the precepts and practices of U.S. statecraft have corroded Americans' liberty at home and increased the threats they face from abroad. Be it the current configuration of U.S. alliances, the worldwide military presence of the United States, American leaders' attempts to reshape—especially by military means—the internal order of states, or the magnitude of expenditure on the national security apparatus, Hendrickson calls for a break with a status quo to which, he believes, Republicans and Democrats are both committed, though not always to the same degree.

Hendrickson's bold book has garnered much praise. But it has also evoked strong critical reactions, on this particular occasion from four foreign policy specialists: Robert Kaufman, James Lebovic, Henry Nau, and Kori Schake. The differences separating Hendrickson and his interlocutors are stark, and they are articulated candidly—and occasionally sharply.

Though Hendrickson's critics do not have identical views, they certainly share more common ground with one another than with him. They disagree with him on many points, but five stand out:

First, has the imperial American foreign policy that Hendrickson attacks eroded freedoms at home and burdened the economy to the extent that he believes, or is the continued pursuit of primacy not only compatible with liberty and equitable prosperity but also essential for national security?

Second, will the forms of retrenchment he favors increase upheaval and even the likelihood of war in the world, or will they bring forth the beneficial effects he expects?

Third, does the United States often violate the rules of the international order and the underlying ideals it prides itself on defending, or does the charge that it does so tantamount to putting the U.S. on the same moral plane with China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea?

Fourth, are the quarrels between the United States and these countries primarily the result of Washington's refusal to take account of, and propensity to undercut, these countries reasonable national security interests, or do the squabbles stem from their undemocratic polities and the aggressive behavior of their leaders?

Finally, has Israel's influence on U.S. policy in the Middle East been profound, and at times even incompatible with American ideals and interests, or does attributing such sway to Israel amount to a pernicious and false conspiracy theory?

Readers will doubtless disagree about who prevails in this debate, Hendrickson or his critics. But few will deny that this Roundtable has enabled a wide-ranging and spirited exchange on the fundamentals of American foreign policy at a time when we need it most.

¹ Full disclosure: I provided an endorsement that appears on the back of his book.

Participants:

David C. Hendrickson is Professor of Political Science at Colorado College, where he has taught since 1983. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Johns Hopkins University in 1982. He is the author of eight books, including *Republic in Peril: American Empire and the Liberal Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (University Press of Kansas, 2009) and *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (University Press of Kansas, 2003). He wrote three books with Robert W. Tucker: *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose* (Council on Foreign Relations, 1992); *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford University Press, 1990), and *The Fall of the First British Empire: Origins of the War of American Independence* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). His work in strategic studies in the 1980s yielded *The Future of American Strategy* (Holmes and Meier, 1987) and *Reforming Defense: The State of American Civil-Military Relations* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). His essays on contemporary American foreign policy have appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *World Policy Journal*, *The National Interest*, *Ethics and International Affairs*, *Survival*, and *Orbis*. He was chair of the Political Science Department at Colorado College in 2000-2003 and 2017-2018. To his growing consternation and dismay, he is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. His current project is to fend off attacks on his latest book.

Rajan Menon is the Anne and Bernard Spitzer Professor in International Relations at the Powell School, City College of New York/City University of New York, and Adjunct Senior Research Scholar at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University. He has been a Fellow at the Carnegie Council on Ethics in International Affairs and the New America Foundation, Academic Fellow at the Carnegie Corporation, and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. His most recent books include *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order*, coauthored with Eugene Rumer (MIT Press, 2015), and *The Conceit of Humanitarian Intervention* (Oxford University Press, 2016). He is currently working on two volumes, *Constructive Realism* and *The Anatomy of Military Disaster*. He has written for the *New York Times Book Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune* (now the *Global New York Times*), *Christian Science Monitor*, *Newsday*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, *Boston Review*, *US News & World Report*, *Tom Dispatch*, and *Washingtonpost.com*.

Robert G. Kaufman is the Robert and Katheryn Dockson Professor of Public Policy at the Pepperdine University School of Foreign Policy. He is the author of four books and has signed a contract with University of Kentucky Press to write his fifth, tentatively titled "What Trump's Principled Realism Means for American Grand Strategy." He is also working on a book with Bruce Benson, the President of the University of Colorado, on how to change the University Culture. Kaufman is also the author of many scholarly articles, commentary, and essays, including for *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Fox*. Kaufman received his BA, MA, M.Phil, and Ph.D. from Columbia University, his JD from Georgetown University, and his LLM in alternative dispute resolution for Pepperdine University Law School.

James H. Lebovic is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University. He has published widely on defense policy, deterrence strategy, military budgets and procurement, foreign aid, democracy and human rights, and international conflict. He is the author of six books including *Planning to Fail: The U.S. Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), *Flawed Logics: Strategic Nuclear Arms Control from Truman to Obama* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), *The Limits of US Military Capability: Lessons from Vietnam and Iraq* (Johns Hopkins

University Press, 2010), and *Deterring International Terrorism and Rogue States: US National Security Policy after 9/11* (Routledge, 2007).

Henry R. Nau is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University. He holds a B.S. degree in Economics, Politics and Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). His books include *Perspectives on International Relations* (Sage, 2018), *Conservative Internationalism* (Princeton University Press, 2013, 2015), *At Home Abroad* (Cornell, 2002), and *The Myth of America's Decline* (Oxford University Press, 1990). Previously, he taught at Williams College (1971-1973) and as Visiting Professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS, Stanford, and Columbia Universities. From January 1981 to July 1983, he served on President Reagan's National Security Council as senior staff member responsible for international economic affairs. Among other duties he was the White House sherpa for the Annual G-7 Economic Summits at Ottawa (1981), Versailles (1982), and Williamsburg (1983) and a special summit with developing countries at Cancun, Mexico (1982). Dr. Nau also served, in 1975-1977, as Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs in the Department of State. In 1977, he received the State Department's Superior Honor Award. And in 2016 the Japanese Government awarded him The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon acknowledging his efforts as director from 1989-2016 of the US-Japan-South Korea Legislative Exchange Program, semiannual meetings among the Members of the three legislatures. He served two years as a Lieutenant in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC. His current project is a book on Ronald Reagan and his library.

Kori Schake is the Deputy Director-General of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. She was a Ph.D. student of Thomas Schelling's at the University of Maryland. She is the author of *Safe Passage: the Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Harvard University Press, 2017). Her current project is thinking about whether the liberal order is sustainable without American leadership.

Review by Robert G. Kaufman, Pepperdine University

Should the United States remain militarily preeminent and deeply engaged in the world? Or does the arrogance of American power rather than the enmity of its adversaries pose the greatest threat to peace, prosperity, and the robustness of American civil liberties? David Hendrickson and I disagree profoundly. In my opinion, he overestimates the cost and underestimates the benefits of deep American political, military, and economic engagement in the world,¹ and underestimates the risk of strategic retrenchment and the capacity of the United States easily to bear the burden of restoring a generous margin of American military preponderance that is necessary if not sufficient for vindicating the national interest, rightly understood. Hendrickson's policy prescriptions—strategic devolution, withdrawal, a near exclusive reliance on international law, and soft rather than hard power with NATO and the Mutual Defense Treaty with Japan becoming pale facsimiles of military alliances—would compound the dangers his renunciation of muscular internationalism strives to avert.

This review starts with the redeeming aspects of *Republic in Peril* before summarizing its main argument then addressing its major shortcomings in tone and content. Although I agree with Hendrickson's peers who derive more robustly internationalist implications from the statecraft of Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, namely, contingent neutrality, Hendrickson's exemplary scholarship on the early American Republic that emphasizes limits and modesty merits a respectful hearing.² Hendrickson rightly criticizes the disproportionate time, energy, and resources the United States has devoted to the Middle East, especially now that the U.S. energy boom has rendered that tumultuous region less geopolitically significant than it was during the Cold War and in its immediate aftermath (194). I applaud, too, the cardinal importance Hendrickson accords to the principle of state sovereignty, though not as a categorical imperative as he does (66-72). The cheers end here.

I

Hendrickson goes substantially beyond even President Barack Obama's Dangerous Doctrine in renouncing the role of what Josef Joffe calls the world's default power, defeating and deterring hegemonic threats in vital geopolitical regions, catalyzing the spread and sustenance of stable liberal democracy where possible through trade and alliances rather than territorial acquisition, and striving imperfectly to choose the lesser moral and geopolitical evil when no good alternative exists.³ Hendrickson's *Republic in Peril: America and the Liberal*

¹ For an excellent analysis of the benefits of the United States remaining deeply engaged in the world economically, politically, and militarily, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). For an excellent analysis of the dangers of retreat and retrenchment, see Robert J. Lieber, *Retreat and its Consequences: American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

² For scholars who derive more robust implications about Washington's and Hamilton's principles and practices for contemporary American foreign policy, see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 99-130; Stephen F. Knott, *Alexander Hamilton and the Persistence of Myth* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 141-188, 213-228.

³ Josef Joffe, *The Myth of American Decline: Politics, Economics, and a half Century of False Prophecies* (New York: Liveright, 2014), 246-260. For a full-throated critique of Obama's grand strategy, see Robert G. Kaufman, *Dangerous*

Tradition assails what he deems the overly militarized, unsustainable, and hubristic trajectory of America's post-Cold War foreign policy, though Hendrickson implicitly repudiates, too, the muscular internationalism of America's two most vigilant Cold War Presidents—Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan (161-172).

Instead, Hendrickson proposes an alternative strategy of retrenchment that would de-fang America's global alliance system, which he would retain in name only, conceding to China dominance in the Western Pacific, recognizing Russia's 'legitimate' claims in East Central Europe, especially Ukraine, conciliating Iran and treating it as a normal power rather than a rogue regime, while putting great distance between the United States and Israel, which he denounces as undemocratic, immoral, militaristic, a corruptor of American politics, and a strategic liability of epic proportions. Hendrickson grounds his critique and policy prescriptions in his versions of the Republican modesty of the Founders, and international law (175-210). By his reckoning, *res ipsa loquitur*; the burdens and liabilities of remaining the world's default power vastly outweigh the costs and risks of strategic withdrawal (13-14, 172-175).

Hendrickson radiates supreme but unexamined confidence in the benign intentions of America's major illiberal adversaries, China, Russia, and Iran, blaming American truculence as the main source of rising tensions that a more accommodating U.S. policy could avert. "A retrenchment of the U.S. Strategic Frontier against Russia and China, if undertaken in a friendly spirit," Hendrickson assures us, "would not be destabilizing at all: it could rather be a formula for a new stability and a "structure of peace" (213).

Hendrickson rationalizes, for example, Russia's relentless subversion of Ukraine's independence as an understandable reaction to America's illegal and unwise interference in Ukrainian politics, "offering the Ukrainians the promise of support and encouragement for the overthrow of the Yanukovitch by the Maidan." (185) Not even Russia's blatant and systematic attempt to delegitimize the outcome of America's 2016 election causes Hendrickson to question his conviction that the threat of Russian domination "exists only in the overheated imaginations of the Security caucus who cannot tell the difference between a boundary dispute and Napoleonic Admissions." On the contrary, Hendrickson equates "alleged Russian machinations in the 2016 election" to American machinations in Russian affairs," among them the key wrong done by the United States "in supporting the overthrow of a democratically elected government" in Ukraine "outside of democratic procedures (186).

In the Indo-Pacific, Hendrickson urges the United States "to stop contesting China's military superiority within its home waters (the first island chain which includes Japan and Taiwan) and to concede China's "primary responsibility for maintaining freedom of navigation in that domain" (109). Hendrickson thereby dismisses the mounting concerns across the region, not only among the United States' traditional democratic allies, but also prospective ones such as India and even Vietnam, that an increasingly authoritarian, aggressive, and ambitious China strives for hegemony. Many statesmen and scholars (this writer included) believe that only an American-led alliance system can credibly deter this threat (108-109). Hendrickson labels the Pentagon's air sea battle plan a "deeply disturbing" strategy, "deeply threatening to a Chinese point of view (108-109). Presumably, he would oppose the Trump Administration's military buildup aimed at restoring, from the Administration's point of view, the credibility of American deterrence that the Obama

Doctrine: How Obama's Grand Strategy Weakened America (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016). For the best defense, see Derek Chollet, *The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).

Administration's determination to downsize the American military badly eroded. Hendrickson downplays as well the significance of China's claim to the South China Sea, proclaiming that China has a better legal case in the dispute with Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and considers comparatively minor the concrete U.S. interests in the ultimate ambitions of China's territorial claims compared with the benefits he claims will accrue if the U.S. acquiesces to the Nine Dash Line in order to facilitate the greater good of Sino-American peace (108-109).

Hendrickson evinces no doubt that adequate substitutes exist for American power in the remote chance that dangerous hegemonic threats will arise. Barring American provocation, he does not foresee such threats arising. Hendrickson calls for the United States categorically to respect state sovereignty, rely on international law rather than force, and to act with greater humility. In his view, the United States should categorically abjure pressing in any way for regime change in other countries and cease under any circumstances from interfering in the domestic politics of other nations, while renouncing the quest for military preeminence that is leading it into imperial temptation that menaces its civil liberties, security, and prosperity (98-103).

Hendrickson also exhorts the United States to disengage strategically from the Middle East. He criticizes the Trump Administration, American hawks, Neoconservatives, Saudi Arabia, and Israel for demonizing radical Islam in general and Iran in particular, where "majority opinion led by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani does not... want the bomb" (120). Even if Iran were developing nuclear weapons, Hendrickson rules out military action, advocating that the U.S. rely on deterrent strategies adopted during the Cold War (120). Hendrickson hails the Obama Administration's nuclear accord with Iran as a signal diplomatic achievement warding off "the real danger... preventive war from Israel or the United States [that] even the hypothetical capacity for Iran to build a bomb could invite. Instead of backing its allies '100 percent,' Hendrickson urges the U.S. to restrain them, abandoning them to "their own good fortunes... if they prove incapable of restraint (199).

That goes especially for Israeli, which Hendrickson accuses of "ferocious enmity... Profuse in its use of extraterritoriality and violent methods" (208). What needs to happen above all, in his view, is for the Israelis to "learn—or relearn—the rule of proportion in the use of force and they need to employ more humanitarian methods" (209). Hendrickson takes as a given rather than a contested proposition the illegality of Israeli occupation of the entire West Bank, blaming Israel exclusively for the failure to achieve a peace based on the two-state solution. Hendrickson not only sees zero strategic value in America's relationship with Israel but also casts doubt on the moral case for support, questioning "Israel's credentials as a liberal democracy" as deeply suspect (207). Like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, Hendrickson indicts the baleful and disproportionate impact of the Israel Lobby without defining what it is—making the lobby protean, implying that anyone who strongly supports Israel is a member working for a particular rather than the national interest (47-50).⁴ The perennial ferocity and enmity of Israel's adversaries—including the Palestinian entities in all their configuration—does not enter Hendrickson's calculus, which stipulates exclusive Israeli responsibility for the failure to achieve a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Although Hendrickson concedes that for the time being his proposed alternative strategy faces a very stiff wind, he predicts a "day of reckoning, exposing the artificiality of America's world position. "Whereupon, his

⁴ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007).

foreign policy preference, which is grounded in modesty and restraint rather than “imperial overstretch,” will look more attractive (217).

II

Hendrickson woefully depreciates the benefits and exaggerates the liabilities arising from the United States remaining militarily preeminent and deeply engaged in the world. Stephen C. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth sum up these huge benefits nicely. Muscular internationalism helps “prevent the outbreak of conflict in the world’s most important regions, keeps the global economy humming, and makes international cooperation easier.”⁵

Hendrickson’s strategy risks casting that all away, imperiling America’s national interest as it is rightly understood. Past experience does not bode well for the foreign and military policies Hendrickson champions. As Samuel Huntington discovered, a significant correlation exists between “the rise and fall of American power in the world and the rise and fall of liberty and democracy in the world. That correlation also exists for the rise and fall of American prosperity. The U.S. economy thrives in periods of deep engagement and struggles when the U.S. retrenches.”⁶ After World War I, American withdrawal, retrenchment, and military demobilization did not make the world more prosperous and more free, but rather safe for Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism. After World War II, the United States did not make the same mistake. American power proved indispensable not only for winning the Cold War against an empire that was existentially dangerous, but for provisionally extending the democratic zone of peace that is so felicitous for American interests into Eastern Europe.⁷ Overall, the mistakes muscular internationalism has wrought pale in comparison to its towering successes, even in the post-Cold War years, and even stipulating that Iraq was a mistake (I argue unlike Hendrickson that the United States’ greatest mistake there was President Obama’s premature withdrawal, snatching defeat from the jaws of victory).⁸

Hendrickson’s strategy of retrenchment also defies the imperatives of geopolitics, maximizing the number and severity of the threats the U.S. is likely to face. Henry Kissinger encapsulates the geopolitical logic dictating America’s vital and enduring interest in preventing a hostile hegemon from dominating any of the world’s major power centers, the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East: “Geopolitically, America is an Island off the shore of a large landmass of Eurasia, where resources and population far exceed the United States. The domination by a single power of either of Eurasia’s two principle spheres—Europe or Asia—remains a good

⁵ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Lean Forward: In Defense of America Engagement,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2013), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2012-11-30/lean-forward>.

⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 246-250.

⁷ Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 270-279.

⁸ Kaufman, *Dangerous Doctrine*, 108-110.

definition of strategic danger to America... For such a grouping would have the capability to outstrip America economically, and the end, militarily.”⁹

If the U.S. adopts policies based upon Hendrickson’s aversion to risk, it will invite aggression in the most vital geopolitical regions of the world where American power will remain a necessary if not sufficient condition to defeat and deter dangerous hegemony. For the foreseeable future, the Indo-Pacific region lacks the capability and Europe the political will to deter an increasingly illiberal revisionist expansionist China and Russia without the United States taking the lead in a robust democratic alliance system economically, and, especially, militarily.¹⁰ Allies, especially decent democratic ones, can make an indispensable contribution in these regions supplementing, but not substituting for American hard power. The balance of power that Hendrickson touts as an alternative does not operate as automatically or effectively as he suggests. As Robert Haddick observes, the strategy of “offshore balancing” that is so appealing to neorealists such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt has typically increased the likelihood that the United States would have to intervene under unfavorable circumstances.¹¹ Consider, for example, Europe’s calamitous failure to balance effectively to stop Hitler during the 1930’s because of the insidious combination of misperception, domestic weakness, ideology, buck-passing and wishful thinking impeding timely balancing.¹²

The poor record of what I have called Obama’s ‘Dangerous Doctrine’ offers a grim preview of the hardships Hendrickson’s foreign policy would bring.¹³ President Obama’s assumptions and foreign policy ambitions resembled Hendrickson’s, at least as first cousins if not twins. Senator Marco Rubio’s critical assessment of the Obama years mirrors mine:

“President Obama entered office believing America was too hard on our adversaries, too engaged in many places.... He enacted hundreds of billions of dollars in defense cuts that left our Army on track to be at pre-World War II levels, our Navy at pre-World War I levels, and our Airforce with the smallest and oldest combat force in history. He demonstrated a disregard for our moral purpose that at times flirted with distain. He criticized America for having arrogance and the audacity to dictate our terms to any nations. From his reset with Russia, to his open hand to Iran, to his unreciprocated opening to Cuba, he has embraced regimes that systematically oppose every principle our nation has long championed. The

⁹ Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 813.

¹⁰ For a superb book making this argument in detail, see Michael R. Auslin, *The End of the Asian Century: War, Stagnation, and the Risks to the World’s Most Dynamic Region* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 151-223.

¹¹ Robert Haddick, *Fire on Water: China and the Future of the Pacific* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014), 42; Stephen M. Walt, “Offshore Balancing: An Idea Whose Time Has Come,” *Foreign Policy*, 2 November 2011, www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/02/offshore_balancing_an_idea_whose_time_has_come; John J. Mearsheimer, “A Return to Offshore Balancing,” *Newsweek*, 30 December 2008, <https://www.newsweek.com/return-offshore-balancing-82925>.

¹² Robert G. Kaufman, “To Balance or To Bandwagon? Alignment Decision in 1930’s Europe,” *Security Studies* 1:3 (Spring 1992): 417-447.

¹³ For a dissenting view to mine, see Chollet’s *The Long Game*.

deterioration of our physical and ideological strength has led to a world far more dangerous than when President Obama entered office.”¹⁴

Add to that the deteriorating military balance President Trump inherited in East Asia arising from the interaction of China’s two-decade prodigious military buildup, the Obama Administration’s military build-down, and the hollowness of the President’s Asia Pivot that was long on rhetoric but short on resources. Obama left office with apprehension soaring in the Indo-Pacific that that declining American power credibility and commitment would lead the way for Beijing to dominate the most geopolitically important region in the world. According to a Pew Foundation survey, large majorities in many Asian countries fear that China’s territorial ambitions could lead to war. America’s existing and prospective allies in the region, including India, urged Obama to little avail to do far more to counter what they perceive to be China’s swelling arrogance and ambition.¹⁵

In the Department of Defense’s 2018 summary of the National Defense Strategy, Secretary of Defense James Mattis likewise identified the “central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security as *the reemergence of long-term strategic competition* by ... revisionist powers. It is increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nation’s economic, military, and security decisions. China is leveraging military modernization, influence, operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific Region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future.¹⁶

Yet Hendrickson proposes to embrace the worst features of Obama’s Dangerous Doctrine, worrying more about the arrogance of American power than about its revisionist rivals. How would that make the United States and the world more secure?¹⁷

Nor, despite Hendrickson’s declamations otherwise, is maintaining America’s role as the world’s default power “Imperial Overstretch” beyond its means (217). Although America’s share of the world’s GDP has decreased in recent decades, the United States will still remain by most reliable measures the first among not-so-equal powers for many years to come. Collectively, the United States and its real and prospective democratic allies in East Asia have ample resources to sustain what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill

¹⁴ Marco Rubio, “Marco Rubio’s Foreign Policy Vision,” New York, 13 May 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/event/marco-rubios-foreign-policy-vision>.

¹⁵ Auslin, *The End of the Asian Century*, 13-55.

¹⁶ James Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge*, n.d., <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

¹⁷ Hendrickson exaggerates the continuities between Obama and his predecessors. The differences dwarf the similarities (1-3).

called an imbalance of power favoring the forces of freedom.¹⁸ Hal Brands estimates that the United States would need to increase its defense spending to only 4% of the GDP (4.5 by my reckoning) to restore preponderance of power that Obama's Doctrine eroded and Hendrickson's even more radical version of strategic retrenchment would eviscerate.¹⁹ That is well within the United States' means, indeed, it is quite modest by post-World War II standards. The defense budget's share of federal spending fell to below 15 percent under Obama, compared to 52 percent under John F. Kennedy and 29 percent under Ronald Reagan. Look instead to the voracious growth of domestic spending, especially on entitlements as the prime culprit for the massive and burgeoning Federal Deficit.²⁰

As Charles Krauthammer rightly put it, American decline is a choice, depending upon what we do and do not do at home and abroad.²¹ Not even China—hands down the United States' most formidable great power challenger—is destined to surpass it, unless the U.S. allows it to do so. Josef Joffe argues convincingly, based on the lessons of history and the particulars of China's illiberal, increasingly repressive political system, that China's economic power will level out just as Japan, Western Europe, Korea, and Taiwan failed to sustain the rapid pace of the early decades of their economic miracles. Despite the anemic economic growth during the Obama years, the United States stands a good chance of remaining number one because of the inherent strengths of America's vast free market system, healthy demographics, a huge potential reserve of energy, which the Trump Administration's free market policies have unleashed, and a vastly superior education system grounded in freedom of inquiry, all of which an increasingly authoritarian, aging China, where the state controls and commands the lion's share of the economy, sorely lacks. The looming problems include a "shrinking pool of working-age men and women and a rapidly aging population likely to slow economic growth significantly."²² Nor do authoritarian modernizations typically end well, particularly without political liberalization which this current Chinese leadership resists ferociously. A despotic system such as China's eventually "freezes up and turns upon itself, devouring the seeds of spectacular growth and finally producing stagnation."²³

The mounting authoritarianism, corruption, and demographic crisis of Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime makes Russia's prognosis even worse, unless the weakness and disarray of the Western alliance enables his grandiose ambitions. Since Putin took power, Russia has increasingly become a basket case that the revenues generated from Russia's extractive industries can no longer mask as world energy prices decline and

¹⁸ Robert G. Kaufman, *In Defense of the Bush Doctrine* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 12.

¹⁹ Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 2018), 127-150.

²⁰ Kaufman, *Dangerous Doctrine*, 23-24.

²¹ Charles Krauthammer, "Decline is a Choice: The New Liberalism and American Ascendency," *Weekly Standard*, 19 October 2009, <https://www.weeklystandard.com/charles-krauthammer/decline-is-a-choice-270813>.

²² Joffe, *The Myth of American Decline*, 33-45.

²³ Joseph Joffe, "China's Coming Economic Slowdown," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 October 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304402104579151511303083436>.

the United States realizes its potential as an energy superpower. The Russian economy stagnates, marinating in corruption. Russians are leaving in droves. The Russian population continues to shrink. Putin's answer is to expand and repress rather than retrench and reform Russia's way out of this predicament. His reach will exceed his grasp so long as the West has the fortitude and foresight to call Putin's bluff by vigilantly containing his proclaimed ambition to reverse the outcome of the Cold War. When Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union a great tragedy, this encapsulated the divergence between Russian and American interests unpropitious for the type of conciliatory policies Hendrickson advocates, especially for Ukraine.²⁴

In his 1997 book, *The Great Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski foresaw why Putin would consider domination of Ukraine as pivotal for his grand design: "Ukraine, a new and important space on the European chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independence country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia would cease to be a Eurasian Empire. . . . However, if Russia regains control over Ukraine, with major resources as well as access to the Black sea, Russia automatically regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia."²⁵ Ultimately, the United States has a vital strategic interest in maintaining the territorial integrity of a pro-Western Ukraine. As F. Stephen Larrabee and Peter N. Wilson well put it, "a pro-Western Ukraine closely tied to Europe would alter the strategic balance in Central Europe and pose significant obstacles to Putin's goals of reestablishing Russia as a great Eurasian power."²⁶

American ideals and self-interest coincide in Ukraine. No other people has suffered so much and so long from Soviet tyranny and Russian oppression. Although no one knows for sure whether a neo-Reaganite strategy of across the board pressure would tame Russian ambitions eventually forcing the regime to reform or collapse, muscular American containment would steeply reduce the odds of future Russian aggression directed at America's allies in East Central Europe. The bankruptcy of Obama's conciliatory reset and President Trump's early flirtations with Putin underscore the imprudence of Hendrickson's prescriptions of more accommodation and even less America hard power.

So, Hendrickson's strategy of retrenchment is neither the necessity nor the virtue he claims.

III

The gravest shortcoming of *Republic in Peril* is Hendrickson's propensity to ignore, dismiss, or denigrate reputable scholars and honorable statesmen who disagree with his highly contested assumptions that he takes

²⁴ Ilan Berman, *Implosion: The End of Russia and What it Means for America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2013), 1-41; Fredrick W. Kagan, "Russia, The Kremlin's Many Revisions," in Gary J. Schmitt ed., *Rise of the Revisionists: Russia, China, and Iran* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2018), 12-44.

²⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geopolitical Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 98-99.

²⁶ F. Stephen Larrabee and Peter A. Wilson, "Calling Putin's Bluff," *National Interest*, 12 April 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/calling-putins-bluff-10233>.

as self-evident.²⁷ Even stipulating for the sake of argument that Hendrickson is right and others wrong about China's, Russia's or Iran's intentions; even stipulating that he is right and others wrong about the need and ability for the United States to remain the world's default power; even stipulating that a democratic Israel is hardly perfect and is a legitimate target for criticism, Hendrickson's book deserves a stern rebuke for the ad hominem way the author goes about making his case, substituting proclamations for evidence and argument. Hendrickson does not cite in his text or notes the abundant analysis countering his sanguine assumptions about Russia's, China's, Iran's, or the Palestinian Authority's benign intentions, and he musters only a few citations even of those experts who agree with him.²⁸

Take, for example, Hendrickson's high praise for the Iran Deal that I oppose with equal vigor. Is it true to claim that all opponents of the Deal unfairly demonize Iran, as Hendrickson claims? Also, is there no legitimate question about whether President Rouhani is truly a moderate, and whether he is but a dissembler using negotiations as a way to wage war by other means, tranquilizing the West to the gathering Iranian danger?²⁹ Former Secretaries of State Kissinger and George Schultz seem to think so, warning that "Ayatollah Khameni described the nuclear talks as part of an eternal religious struggle in which negotiation was a form of combat and compromise was forbidden."³⁰ Even many defenders of the deal concede the legitimacy and goodwill of well-informed opponents. Writing in the *New York Times*, the reliably pro-Obama Thomas Friedman conceded nevertheless in his tepid defense of the Iran Deal that "it is stunning... how well the Iranians, sitting alone on their side of the table, have played a weak hand.... When the time comes, I'm hiring Ali Khameni to sell my house... when you signal to the guy on the other side of the table you're not willing to either blow him up or blow him off—to get up and walk away—you reduce yourself to just an equal and get the best bad deal money can buy."³¹

²⁷ For instance, Hendrickson not only traduces President Bush and Vice-President Cheney, but ignores the reputable academic defenses of them, which certainly should have been acknowledged in his notes. See, for example, Stephen F. Knott, *Rush to Judgement: George W. Bush, the War on Terror, and His Critics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Robert G. Kaufman, *In Defense of the Bush Doctrine* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

²⁸ For brevity's sake, the names of only a few of the scholars will have to suffice. There are no references to Arthur Waldon, Michael Pillsbury, Gordon Chang, Aaron Friedberg, or Robert Kaplan on China; Ephraim Karsh, Reuel Marc Gerecht, or Bernard Lewis on the Middle East; Ilan Berman, Gary Kasparov, David Satter, or Richard Pipes on Russia and the Soviet Union; Mark Moyar, Walter Russell Mead, Victor Davis Hanson, Robert Kagan, Robert Lieber, or Henry Nau on American Foreign policy. This is but a preliminary list. To be fair, Hendrickson typically does not cite authorities who support him either.

²⁹ Reul Marc Gerecht, "Iran: The Shi'ite Imperial Power," Schmitt, ed., *Rise of the Revisionists*, 45-68.

³⁰ Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Schultz, "The Iran Deal and Its Consequences, *Wall Street Journal*, 7 April 2015, www.wsj.com/articles/the-iran-deal-and-its-consequences-1428447582.

³¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "A Good or Bad Deal?" *New York Times*, 1 July 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/01/opinion/thomas-friedman-a-good-bad-deal.html>.

Hendrickson loses all sense of fairness and proportion vilifying Republican hawks of all varieties (count me as one), neoconservatives, and defenders of Israel of any complexion. This passage distills the unsavory essence of substituting reactive devaluation for rational argument:

“None of the wrangling over what was important in 2003—oil or Israel—should overshadow the obvious and commanding responsibility for the war of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. The U.S. President and Vice President did have a long involvement in the oil industry. Though neither is Jewish, both were closely aligned with the Israel lobby. For them, however, neither explanation suffices. They were American militarists bred in the heartlands. They are fairly considered the pawns of nothing but their own illusions—principally, the unlimited faith in the transformative power to bestow freedom and democracy, combined with an exaggerated fear of the enemy they demonized. A heady mixture of American militarism and Israeli solicitation best explain the Iraq War (118-19).

Oliver Stone’s conspiracy drenched movie *JFK* seems balanced by comparison. One does not quite know where to begin to repudiate such sayings and insinuations by Hendrickson. For starters, there is not a single reference or citation in the text or notes acknowledging that reputable and informed people would consider it character assassination to denigrate President Bush 43 and Cheney as “pawns of their own illusions.” Ugly becomes uglier when Hendrickson implies insidiously that Bush and Cheney not being Jewish requires explanation—that the Israel lobby he leaves undefined and protean consists mainly of Jews manipulating the process to pursue their narrow agenda at the expense of the national interest.

That is an outrageous assertion. Walter Russell Mead, for instance, demolishes the depiction of the Israel lobby presented by John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, Pat Buchanan, and Ron Paul, all of whom Hendrickson thanks as being intellectual inspirations in the acknowledgments (220), and whose arguments on the Lobby Hendrickson repeats.³² Mead demonstrates that the high levels of support Israel enjoys run broad and deep, even more so among evangelical Christians than in the American Jewish community. Why then demonize supporters of Israel who happen to disagree with Hendrickson’s views on what they consider a democratic, Israel. Was Richard Nixon, no philo-semite, part of the Israel Lobby? As he explained to me, Nixon considered Israel a strategic asset, a major reason for his decision to order the airlift spelling the difference between victory and defeat in the Yom Kippur War of 1973.³³ Was Ronald Reagan another captive of the Israel lobby? An unstinting supporter of Israel since 1948, Reagan wrote in his Memoirs, *An American Life*, that “I’ve believed many things in my life but no conviction I’ve ever held has been stronger than my belief that the United States must ensure the survival of Israel.”³⁴ Or what about Hendrickson’s former boss,

³² Walter Russell Mead, “The Jerusalem Syndrome: Decoding the Israel Lobby,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2017), www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2007-11-01/jerusalem-syndrome; Walter Russell Mead, “The New Israel and the Old: Why Gentile Americans Back the Jewish State,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2008, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/israel/2008-06-01/new-israel-and-old; See also Walter Russell Mead, *The Ark of the Covenant: The United States, Israel, and the Fate of the Jewish People* (New York: Knopf, forthcoming).

³³ Kaufman Interview with Richard M. Nixon, Saddle River, New Jersey, 11 June 1993.

³⁴ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 410.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who fiercely defended Israel during his tenure as U.S. ambassador to the UN and as Senator from the State of New York.³⁵

What Mead wrote about Walt's and Mearsheimer's *Israel Lobby* applies to *Republic in Peril*. "It will give aid and comfort to Anti-Semites, wherever they are found."³⁶ Hendrickson's attempt to preempt criticizing his Israel bashing does not inoculate him from the charge of tendentiousness or employing a double standard that is prevalent throughout the book (47).³⁷ Add President Trump, "outdoing even Cleon in unscrupulousness, though not in eloquence," to the pantheon of Hendrickson's benighted as well as Republican hawks, neoconservatives, and defenders of Israel (211). Contrast Hendrickson's blistering criticisms of Israel with the silence about the ferocity of Israel's adversaries, including the Palestinians, especially Hamas, which deliberately puts civilians in harm's way as part of their grand strategy to delegitimize Israel. Note, too, his solicitude for illiberal, revisionist, anti-American regimes that Freedom House rates far less free than a decent democratic Israel: Russia, China, and Iran that he pronounces a moderate; a North Korean tyranny, in the running for the worst in the world, which, Hendrickson counsels us, needs the United States' understanding for the terrible toll American bombing inflicted during the Korean War (170).

The outstanding work of Peter Berkowitz refutes Hendrickson's incendiary charge that Israel cannot be considered a full-fledged democracy and "must relearn the rule of proportion in the use of force" (209). By any reliable measure, Israel remains by far the freest nation in a region teeming in tyrannies. No other regime in the Middle East protects the fundamental rights of all its citizens to the degree that an Israel under siege does. The Israeli Knesset of 120 members has 18 Arab members and the Israeli Supreme Court has three Arab members.³⁸ All things considered, including the tactics and implacability of its adversaries, Israel has also done a good job striving to minimize civilian casualties.³⁹ Nor is Hendrickson necessarily correct that American support for Israel is an impediment to peace in the Middle East. As Mead observes, "most Arab Rulers now see Palestinian demands as an inconvenient obstacle to a necessary strategic alliance with Israel. The major Gulf States and Egypt apparently have agreed on two goals: The first is to strangle Hamas in Gaza... The

³⁵ Kaufman Interview with Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Washington, D.C., 18 July 1996, when the Senator expostulated at great length on Israel and why he considered his role in defending it one of his proudest achievements.

³⁶ Mead, "The Jerusalem Syndrome."

³⁷ Editorial Board, "The United States Should Push for Disarming of Hamas in Gaza-Israel Ceasefire," *Washington Post*, 23 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-should-push-for-the-disarming-of-hamas-in-gaza-israel-cease-fire/2014/07/23/7c2d1d9e-1284-11e4-8936-26932bcfd6ed_story.html.

³⁸ Peter Berkowitz, "Vilifying Israel, Corrupting the University Campuses, *Real Clear Politics*, 14 April 2018, www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2018/04/14/vilifying_israel_corrupting_the_university_136808.html.

³⁹ Peter Berkowitz, *Israel and the Struggle over the International Laws of War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2012).

second is to press the (Palestinian Authority) to accept the kind of peace Israel has been offering repeatedly and [Palestinian leader] Yasser Arafat and his successors have so far rejected.”⁴⁰

Hendrickson can legitimately disagree with any or all of this without impugning the motives or the loyalty of people who see things differently than he does.

IV

Finally, Hendrickson’s enthusiasm for the efficacy of international law exceeds a sober appreciation of its limits as a substitute for international politics. Much of what passes for international law is not law at all, but aspiration.⁴¹ Even at its most effective, international law is much weaker, much less significant, and much less enforceable than Hendrickson claims it to be. Hendrickson, moreover, disregards international law when his means justifies the end he seeks to achieve. China’s Nine-Dash Line palpably violates the laws of the sea, one of the best developed and most recognized areas of international law. Yet Hendrickson concludes that a fight over the Line simply is not worth the negative blowback (108-109).

Nor is Hendrickson correct in treating sovereignty as absolute. Steven D. Krasner found that, even in the heyday of the Westphalian system, great powers honored sovereignty in the breach in dealing with lesser power.⁴² It is more prudent and in line with historical experience to recast Hendrickson’s legitimate desire to respect state sovereignty as a strong presumption, but not as a categorical imperative.

Democratic peace theory is one of the few robust theories of international politics. Stable liberal democracies do not fight one another, cooperate with each other more, and disagree with each other less, settling the disputes between them that do arise well short of the use of force.⁴³ The spread of stable liberal democracy when possible and prudent, for example, by trade or by alliances, serves American ideals and self-interest. The United States should never go to war because a state does not share its values—only a serious threat to a vital interest or a vital interest of a vital ally justifies that. Nor has the United States ever waged war for democracy alone. Nevertheless, regime change as a war aim is not only legitimate but prudent when the ideology and regime type of the aggressor constitutes the root cause of aggression. Think Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during World War II. Think the Soviet Union during the Cold War.⁴⁴ Ronald Reagan rightly considered the

⁴⁰ Walter Russell Mead, “Arab Leaders Abandon the Palestinians,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2 April 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/arab-leaders-abandon-the-palestinians-1522708189>.

⁴¹ See, for example, Jack L. Goldsmith and Eric A. Posner, *The Limits of International Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴² Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty, Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴³ For an excellent statement of this position, see Spencer Weart, *Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ For a superb recent book making a compelling case the United States has considered Regime change an important war aim for addressing the root cause of a conflict, see Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Combating Combat Success into Political Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

Soviet Union a totalitarian regime with unlimited Leninist ambitions, not a traditional great power as Nixon and Kissinger hoped, or a defensive one provoked to aggression by the arrogance of American power. Like the great Soviet dissidents such as Natan Sharansky, Reagan rightly believed that the root cause of the Soviet Union's implacable expansionism was in its internal structure, in the character of the regime and its ideology.⁴⁵ The Soviet Union would remain an existential danger to freedom, in Reagan's estimation, so long as it was a totalitarian state, so long as a handful of people made the decisions, and so long as there was no public opinion to limit the actions and ambitions of a small totalitarian leadership. Accordingly, Reagan's National Security Decision Directive 75 (NSDD-75) aimed, like President Truman's United States Program and Objectives for National Security (NSC-68), to transform the Soviet regime through intense and unremitting economic, political, and military pressure. Reagan and Truman were right.⁴⁶

As Geoffrey Blainey discovered, the most just and durable periods of peace arise when wars have decisive outcomes, eradicating the root cause of the conflict.⁴⁷ That does not mean that the United States should seek monsters to destroy. It should respect the sovereignty of other nations in most places, in most circumstances, most of the time, even when it does not like the values of the regime. That does not mean the United States should not encourage regime change for some of the most dangerous monsters—with the means depending on a prudential computation of the gravity of the threat, the costs, risks, and existence of plausible alternatives. Count Iran, Russia, North Korea, and China in the category of rogue revisionist regimes where the United States should not renounce regime change as an objective.⁴⁸

For someone so admirably informed about the early American republic and concerned about the health of civil liberties, Hendrickson oddly omits any mention of the Alien and Sedition Act, which was the most restrictive and menacing restriction of freedom of speech in American history, much more chilling anything the United States has done since World War II.⁴⁹ Also, America's role as the world default power also contributed to greater liberty at home, intensifying the long overdue gravitational pull for finally extending full civil rights to African Americans. How could the United States simultaneously win the hearts and minds of the developing world while tolerating a system of *de jure* segregation in the South? Weakness and retrenchment may undermine civil liberties. Muscular internationalism may assist broadening and deepening them.

Would American values and freedom thrive in a world in which an illiberal China, which is hostile to liberty, dominated the Indo-Pacific? That is unlikely, considering China's historic disdain for western notions of

⁴⁵ Kaufman Interview, Natan Sharansky, Kfar Blum, Israel, 6 January 1995.

⁴⁶ Robert G. Kaufman, "The First Principles of Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policy, *The First Principles Series*, No. 40 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2 November 2011).

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ Schmitt, ed., *Rise of the Revisionists*; Michael Rubin, *Dancing with the Devils: The Perils of Engaging Rogue Regimes* (New York: Encounter Books, 2014).

⁴⁹ See Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

juridical sovereignty that Communist tyranny has compounded. As Kore Schake demonstrates in her excellent new book, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony*, rising hegemons, even benign ones such as the United States in the twentieth century, do not become stakeholders of the old system, but revise the roles to fit their own values and interests, which in China's case, are opposite to the United States' own.⁵⁰ I agree with Schake that "We have been clumsy hegemons certainly, but we have also been largely beneficent ones," China's 'One Belt, One Road Initiative' and provocative maritime claims that have antagonized all its neighbors signal Chinese determination under change the rules; "There is no reason that "friends, partners, or allies, of the United States should accept these Chinese assertions.... We are not modern parallel of European states seeking to colonize Latin America."⁵¹

Hendrickson is a fine scholar of the early American Republic. In *Republic in Peril*, however, his romantic, unexamined realism seeking to restore a past tradition that is not quite how he depicts it would make an avoidable American decline more likely, freedom at home more precarious, and the world abroad a more dangerous place.

⁵⁰ Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

⁵¹ Quoted in Tunku Varadarajan, "Will China Impose a New World Order?," *Wall Street Journal*. 9 February 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/will-china-impose-a-new-world-order-1518219178>.

Review by James H. Lebovic, The George Washington University

In his provocative book, David C. Hendrickson makes a ‘liberal republican’ case for U.S. global retrenchment. He argues that U.S. leaders, who long championed the ‘liberal world order,’ have “lost touch with critical elements of the liberal tradition” (168). Worse still, they have perverted the principles undergirding both liberalism and realism to serve a militaristic national-security state. In defiling both terms, they have trampled fundamental principles of international law and decency, pursued aggressive global policies, intervened wantonly in the affairs of other countries, and left a trail in human casualties and contagious misery. ‘Deep-state’ reasoning resonates in Hendrickson’s references to “the permanent government and its supporting array of institutions—think tanks, news media, and corporate interests” that “remain crucial in understanding the American approach to the world” (4).

Hendrickson thus pushes for a pluralistic foreign-policy approach, based on the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and a recognition that other countries—Russia, China, and Iran, in particular—have a right to protect their vital interests. In his words, “such a policy would base relations with Russia and China on the recognition of their vital interests. It would surrender and condemn the idea that it was the U.S. intention to overthrow them or to interfere in their internal affairs. It would treat them as possessing the rights that all nations have to self-protection” (179). In general, Hendrickson seeks to put U.S. relations with other states on a cooperative footing.

Hendrickson offers an understandable plea for U.S. restraint, and a fundamental rethinking of the U.S. global role and purposes. He maintains that the Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan wars testify to the consequences of the profligate use of military instruments. U.S. leaders jumped into conflict to right some wrong or to address some “threat,” with little thought to what comes next. Indeed, Hendrickson observes that no administration—Republican or Democratic—is immune to these tendencies. President Barack Obama arrived in office with a promise of ending U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, in backing the decapitation of the Libyan government, he, too, succumbed to the interventionist temptation. Thus, Obama began his term where President George W. Bush left off; and President Donald Trump began his term where Bush had started (7). The Trump administration’s belligerence toward North Korea and Iran stand as cases in point. For Hendrickson, then, Trump is not an anomaly. Trump himself “may turn out to be the most profound legacy of the ‘liberal world order’” (9).

Hendrickson’s book proves nonetheless that an understandable plea does not always make for a logical, compelling, or well-supported argument. I offer four main criticisms.

First, Hendrickson seems to hold the United States responsible for much of the world’s contemporary problems. Where instability and conflict exist, he sees the impact of U.S. aggression, malevolence, and unbounded reliance on ‘revolutionary overthrow’ as an instrument of U.S. national-security policy. By his telling, the United States now confronts a nuclear-armed North Korea because Republicans sabotaged President Bill Clinton’s Agreed Framework on North Korea (7). Any suggestion of North Korean culpability—that North Korea actually violated the Agreed Framework by secretly developing a uranium-based nuclear-weapons program—plays no part in his story. Similarly, Hendrickson cuts the Bush administration no slack in Afghanistan. The September 11 attacks were engineered “to avenge U.S. attacks in the Muslim world” (201). The United States then added to its woes by choosing war over a “plausible” alternative. In Hendrickson’s charged words (92), “the U.S. war machine was uninterested in trying to communicate with the Taliban and explore possibilities of a political settlement with them; its purpose from

the outset was simply to extirpate them.” Missing from his indictment is: an acknowledgment of the religious and ideological zeal of the Taliban regime, which made it a global pariah (and less-than-forthcoming negotiating partner); a discussion of the close interconnection between Mullah Omar and Osama bin-Laden (and Taliban regime and al-Qaeda forces); and acknowledgement of failed efforts by the Pakistan government, via a traveling delegation, to negotiate (on the U.S. behalf) with the Taliban. Bush administration officials certainly doubted that negotiations would succeed but, to their credit, they *did* try. The Taliban, for its part, stalled. It claimed to have no evidence of bin Laden’s guilt, or knowledge of his whereabouts. In Iraq, the turmoil and violence that erupted in the aftermath of the U.S. occupation reduces to a soundbite: the United States’ “aggressive occupation gave strength to extremist forces who took up guns and bombs in response” (93). In Iraq and Afghanistan, Hendrickson holds the United States *directly* responsible, by implication, for the high civilian death toll. “The public was assured that the United States would conduct its military operations with unprecedented discrimination, avoiding civilian casualties; in the sequel, civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan numbered in the hundreds of thousands, outpaced in number only by a tidal wave of refugees” (94). To be sure, U.S. efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan were poorly planned, and painfully misguided. The efforts deserve careful analysis, nevertheless, though the facts complicate a viscerally compelling argument: U.S. aggression provoked understandable reactions, and inevitable human suffering.

Second, clear statements of causality are absent from the book. Instead, Hendrickson hits the reader with a conspiratorial chain that makes it hard to know who is influencing whom or to unmask the central characters.

The Iraq War serves as a centerpiece for such thinking in his analysis. In Hendrickson’s account, the war was about protecting Israel. We learn that George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, “though neither is Jewish, both were closely aligned with the Israel lobby” (118). But that notion is problematic. If they were aligned, by virtue of some principle, that suggests a story of agreement, not influence. If they were aligned because the lobby could deliver something—say, the Jewish vote to the Republican Party – we must assume that U.S. officials were too naïve to realize they were being scammed. Contrary to the implication of Hendrickson’s book – for example, his reference to “Jewish opinion in shaping views of the Middle East” (49)—American Jews were less likely than the U.S. public overall to support military action against Iraq¹—or, for that matter, to support the Republican Party.

The mystery remains with Hendrickson’s clearest casual statement on the topic. He concludes that “a heady mixture of American militarism and Israeli solicitation best explains the Iraq War, not the machinations of the oil companies” (119). Deconstructing that sentence, the reader must assume that “American militarism,” which is an untargeted predisposition, serves here as a necessary condition. As an undirected force, it explains why the United States acted, but not where it attacked: why strike Iraq, not the Sudan or Venezuela? The answer lies in the second part of the explanation—“Israeli solicitation.” The implication is that the Israel lobby capitalized on American militarism for its own devious purposes. Without evidence, Hendrickson takes what is at best a convergence of viewpoints and renders it a causal relationship. His conclusion: the Israel lobby took the United States to war.

¹ Laurie Goodstein, “Threats and Responses: American Jews; Divide Among Jews Leads to Silence on Iraq War,” *New York Times*, 15 March 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/15/world/threats-responses-american-jews-divide-among-jews-leads-silence-iraq-war.html>.

Beyond Iraq, why the United States does what it does is never quite clear from the analysis. In the Middle East, countries like Israel and Saudi Arabia appear to hold the strings. Even the U.S. war state cannot stand up to the sway of these countries over U.S. foreign policy. Everywhere, however, the United States remains curiously disinterested in policy substance. The U.S. war machine seeks only to perpetuate itself by offering a gun for hire, “the effective decision rule is to thwart Russia on behalf of European allies, to thwart China on behalf of Asian allies, to thwart Iran on behalf of Israel and Saudi Arabia” (35). Hendrickson observes, then, that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) “were intended as payoffs to corporate interests at home, a way of leveraging security dependence in order to distribute benefits to domestic supporters and giving those domestic supporters an incentive to support the security state” (42).

Third, Hendrickson does not play by his own rules when insisting the United States should not be in the business of telling countries how to run their affairs. Hendrickson avoids criticism of Russia, China, Iran, Syria, and many other countries for their treatment of their citizenry. Yet he repeatedly singles out Israel for its false status as a democracy, and its mistreatment of its Arab population. In calling for a more ‘evenhanded’ U.S. approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, he writes that Jews subject Arabs to “terrifying rituals of humiliation and second-class status” and that “Israel has been profuse in its use of extraordinary and violent methods.” Israelis, it seems, do not realize that the key to “improve their relationship with the Palestinians” is “by treating them with humanity, kindness, and rewards” (207-208). Given this characterization, it seems a bit disingenuous, then, for him to call upon the United States to adopt an ‘evenhanded’ approach to the conflict. What basis for compromise exists between perpetrators and victims?

One could respond that Israel deserves scrutiny by virtue of the country’s liberal pretense, which rationalizes funneling billions of U.S. aid dollars to that country. But that would not explain why, in calling for greater cooperation with Russia, China, and Iran, Hendrickson gives those countries a pass. Does Israel’s treatment of Palestinians count more than Russia’s actions in Chechnya, or China’s actions in Tibet? His professed outrage is hard to reconcile with defense of the Syrian government, which apparently seeks only to protect itself against armed rebellion (84). He asks, “With what justification can the United States throw its resources in “support for the overthrow of an established government?” (197). Hendrickson argues that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—aside from his claim, shared by many a brutal despot, to head an ‘established government’—enjoys widespread backing across denominations within his country. Hendrickson asks, “Does it mean nothing that Assad should have on his side many denominations, whereas the armed resistance has on its side only one denomination (197)?” He finds no national self-determination challenges, here—ignoring the fact that that one denomination, Sunni Arabs, constitute three-quarters of the Syrian population. Although half a million people have died in the Syrian civil war, Hendrickson does not blame the Syrian government. The argument seems to be that the Syrian civil war, exacerbated by U.S. interference, is an outgrowth of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and U.S. policies elsewhere in the Middle East (20). As for Syrian government attacks on civilians, he offers that Syrian barrel bombs are no more deadly than the smart bombs that were delivered or supplied by the United States: “the wasteland made in Kobani, Fallujah, Ramadi, or Mosul by smart bombs is not appreciably different from the wasteland made in Homs or Aleppo by barrel bombs” (94). Mention of Assad’s use of chemical weapons is missing entirely from the text.

Fourth, by not defining terms like ‘vital interests,’ Hendrickson fails to establish the parameters of his ‘liberal pluralism.’ He provides no advice on how to recognize vital interests, to reconcile rival interest claims, or to know when so-called vital interests are merely a ploy for a land grab. His push for ‘liberal pluralism’ thereby amounts to an argument for dividing the world among global (and regional) powers and allowing them to act

within these areas of control. Accordingly, he describes the United States' "aggressive push into an area of vital Russian interest" (29); points to Iran's legitimate interests in the Middle East but not the interests of Israel or Saudi Arabia; and gives China's rights in the South China Sea more recognition than the rights of various contenders. Although he concedes that other countries have legitimate claims to the South China Sea, he essentially concludes this is not a U.S. problem (108-109). By my reading, that approximates a 'sphere of influence' argument, a conclusion he seems to both accept (109) and reject (21). Indeed, the vital interests that concern him most are those claimed by Russia, China, and Iran.

Still, Hendrickson predicts good things once the United States acts with due deference, restraint, and cooperativeness toward other countries. To him Chinese, Russian, and Iranian claims are either understandable, legitimate, or none of the United States' business.

Hendrickson thereby downplays China's threat to Taiwan. The main danger here lies in U.S. support of an aggressive campaign of Taiwan independence (113, 114)—though, in the "unlikely event" of a Chinese invasion, the United States should, according to Hendrickson, leave Taiwan to defend itself (187).

Hendrickson argues that Russia's actions in Ukraine are justifiable given U.S. support for demonstrations that brought down a legitimately elected (pro-Russian government) and Russia's support for the national determination of Russian speakers within Ukraine. As he puts it, "Russia encouraged the revolts, but then was totally surprised by the determination and ability of the Ukrainian nationalists to stage a ruthless counterattack," putting the civilian populations "at risk" (184). Russia in this reading seems to have been forced into military action, and Russian President Vladimir Putin would act differently were Russia freed from U.S. interference in the region.

Hendrickson argues that Iran's support for the Syrian government is legitimate under international law and that, regardless, Iran—acting in Syria, and beyond—is simply trying to "maintain protective relations with Shia communities" (202). Hendrickson concludes that Iran has no intention of seeking nuclear weapons since they serve no conceivable purpose. To suggest otherwise is to "dehumanize" Iranians, that is, to "throw them out of the human race" (121). One has to wonder about the implications of this argument for the populations in countries that do possess nuclear weapons.

In the end, Hendrickson's book is bereft of questions that challenge academic analyses. Can international cooperation thrive in the absence of U.S. leadership? Does any such leadership ultimately depend on U.S. security guarantees and an active U.S. role in global affairs? Can the United States exert influence in a conflict short of becoming a party to that conflict? How would a U.S. retreat from the world affect countries that now depend on U.S. support? Should the United States provide a nuclear umbrella or safety net (as a second line of defense)—if that leaves conflict management, by default, to combatants who might count on the United States for a rescue? Might that not create the worst of both worlds? That is, might it not leave the United States to intervene belatedly—lacking the resources, benefits of time, and capability to turn back the clock—to place the conflict on a more manageable footing?

Rather than addressing these important questions, Hendrickson argues, first and foremost, for containing a U.S. national-security state that is dangerously out of control. The U.S. war machine invents enemies, spreads destruction, makes deals at home and abroad, and coopts and absorbs even those, like Barack Obama, who rise to oppose it. If that really is the way the U.S. system works, are we not engaged in a fool's errand when, as scholars, we study foreign-policy decision-making, mine historical cases to explore (familiar and peculiar)

processes at work, or, frankly, predict meaningful change in the U.S. political system? Worse, are we not, then, part of the problem, doing our part to perpetuate a fraud?

Review by Henry R. Nau, The George Washington University

David Hendrickson is one of the foremost revisionist critics of American foreign policy. Informed by a deep knowledge of and commitment to the Constitution, he explores the trade-offs involved in simultaneously pursuing domestic liberty and national security. Along with Walter McDougall, Eric Nordlinger, and Andrew Bacevich, he makes the case that America does better in the world by doing less, by returning to a neutrality that served it well in the nineteenth century and kept the new republic from falling into the clutches of the military or garrison state.¹

His central argument is both simple and jarring: “America’s zeal for anti-imperialist projects abroad has created a new imperialism of its own that is expansive and provocative of conflict” (13). Under the banner of liberty, America acquired characteristics that it found noxious in its illiberal enemies—“powerful standing military establishments, a pervasive apparatus for spying and surveillance, a propensity to rely on force as a preferred instrument of policy, and a disdain for popular opinion or legislative control in matters of war” (14). It built a liberal world order based on rules of sovereignty and non-intervention but then consistently violated those rules, chasing an empire of liberty abroad while debasing its own liberty at home.

Hendrickson’s analysis is timely. Both Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump tried to rein in America’s ambition. They failed, Hendrickson argues, thwarted by powerful domestic elites and interests. The deep state, ‘the swamp,’ beat back the agents of change; America slipped ever further into the morass of foreign quagmires, domestic scandals and paralytic politics. Today America’s allies freeride, adversaries intervene brazenly in domestic elections; and global conduits spew out goods, money, refugees and terrorists that destabilize countries, both rich and poor.

I have followed Hendrickson’s writings for many years.² Our differences have been considerable. He is a libertarian nationalist convinced that the use of force in foreign policy is the enemy of domestic liberty and that a world of nations whatever their domestic ideologies is a stable world. He wants American troops out of Europe and Asia and is persuaded that “a plural and independent world does not need a centralized enforcer” (157). I am a conservative internationalist committed to the view that national sovereignty and the use of force are the ultimate guarantors of freedom in the world and that a democratic world is a safer place for America as well as for others. Neither of us is comfortable with a realist or liberal internationalist world which calls for a ‘centralized enforcer’ like a hegemon, great power concert, or universal international institution.

¹ Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997); Eric Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*, updated ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² His earlier books include *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate Over International Relations* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); and, with Robert W. Tucker, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Despite these differences, however, after reading this book, I believe that Hendrickson and I are closer together than either of us might have ever imagined. Let me measure that closeness by identifying where we agree and where we still disagree.

There is no doubt that war militates against the exercise of civil liberties. In every war that America has waged, the government has severely curtailed civil liberties. The one exception may be the War of 1812, perhaps because the father of the Bill of Rights, James Madison, occupied the President's House and refrained from illegal incarcerations. Today the problem is more pervasive. A sprawling military and intelligence community controls the 'Washington playbook' that recommends the use of force for every foreign policy crisis. Even worse, that community now mixes openly in domestic politics. Military officers hold high positions in government and intelligence officials secure secret warrants to track foreign contacts in political campaigns, unmask hundreds of American citizens caught up in the resulting surveillance, and publicly question the fitness of the duly-elected president to hold the highest office of the land. A respected U.S. Senator, Charles Schumer of New York, shuddered before this specter of intimidation: "Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you."³ As Hendrickson writes, "call it the 'Emergency State' or the 'Surveillance State,' the 'National Security State,' or the 'Deep State'; it has dominated foreign policy and grand strategy over the last generation" (138).

I further agree with Hendrickson that the allies are free riders and support Trump wholeheartedly in the need to break some eggs to rebalance trade and defense spending among the allies. As Hendrickson writes, "public goods for them [the United States' allies] have meant public bads for the U.S. labor force," (112) and "costs do need to be imposed on countries that run chronic trade surpluses" (113). That is not to say that American labor did not also gain from collective security and open trade. But what other labor force in the world would have moved as flexibly as the American worker did from old jobs to new jobs to allow workers in other countries to export and become more wealthy? It is time to ask other countries, especially China, to open their markets more and to demand a similar flexibility from their own workers.

Nevertheless, while Hendrickson and I agree that the U.S. needs to be tougher on trade, we also agree, perhaps paradoxically, that open markets after World War II represented a seminal shift in American foreign policy—for the good. "This general shift of opinion," Hendrickson writes, "does not constitute a slam-dunk argument for raw, savage capitalism, but the parameters of the argument have clearly shifted over the last half-century: just about all foreign leaders understand that they can develop their economies only if they reject autarchy, just as they accept that the means of production cannot rest mainly in the hands of the state but must include a private sector based on private property and market incentives" (129). His libertarian instincts match my conservative economic preferences for market competition wherever possible. I made the case three

³ Mallory Shelbourne, "Schumer: Trump's 'really dumb' for attacking intelligence agencies," *The Hill*, 3 January 2017, <http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/312605-schumer-trump-being-really-dumb-by-going-after-intelligence-community>.

decades ago that the postwar Bretton Woods installed market rather than interventionist rules, and that President Ronald Reagan revived Bretton Woods policies to launch the “great expansion” from 1980-2010.⁴

Finally, and most importantly, I agree with Hendrickson that today’s world may offer a unique opportunity to move American foreign policy back toward neutrality and nationalism, which marked foreign policy in the first century of the republic. “Neutrality,” Hendrickson argues, “sought the isolation of conflict, whereas collective defense, which has prevailed since 1947, insists that aggression anywhere is a threat to the peace everywhere; it universalizes conflict” (19). For Hendrickson this means not abandoning alliances in Europe and Asia but withdrawing American forces from those regions and insisting that the allies bear the full cost of their own defense. He is not an isolationist. He is for a rebalancing of alliances and a strategy of defense through sea and air power that relies on “attrition” to thwart attacks after they occur rather than on “annihilation” to deter such threats before they occur (169).

But here is where Hendrickson and I still have some differences. His strategy overlooks the principal reason why a strategy of greater neutrality may be possible in today’s world: all of the major industrialized powers in the world, who also happen to be America’s allies, are democracies. It makes sense to pull back in this kind of world. It makes no sense to do so, as Hendrickson concedes, in a world in which authoritarian powers are on the upswing. “The last thing the law of neutrality was made for,” Hendrickson writes, “was the threat that Hitler’s Germany posed; here, indeed, no moral equivalence was possible in viewing the contest of the European powers; here, indeed, collective effort in opposition was mandatory” (154). Hendrickson wants to believe that another Adolf Hitler cannot happen again because of nuclear weapons. But weapons do not cause war; illiberal states and irrational leaders do. Hitler and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin perpetrated savage onslaughts against the civilized world. However misguided Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq may have been, they pale by comparison. A strategy back toward neutrality requires self-restraint. And that self-restraint exists only in liberal societies. Indeed, it stems from the very tension between domestic liberty and war that Hendrickson highlights and despotic systems lack.

So, I want to temper Hendrickson’s approach with a greater sense of the difference democracy makes in the world today. He believes the postwar system was built on trade and investment, not the promotion of democracy, writing, “Only then [after the mid-1980s] and in subsequent years did the promotion of democracy, as opposed to the promotion of trade and investment, become the distinguishing feature in America’s idea of the Open Door” (130). I disagree. The defense and spread of freedom were front and center from day one in U.S. strategy toward postwar Europe and Asia. President Harry Truman at the beginning of the Cold War and Reagan at the end defined the conflict explicitly in ideological terms (regime types), not in terms of spheres of influence or open trade.⁵ Democracy was planted in Germany and Japan and flowered gradually in other postwar European and Asian countries that were not initially democratic – Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey South Korea, Taiwan and so on. Was this flourishing of democracy an accident or simply a consequence of open trade? I doubt it. Hendrickson believes that “the market functions perfectly well without

⁴ Henry R. Nau, *The Myth of America’s Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Real world GDP grew at 3 plus % per year during this period, taking into account periodic recessions. See Henry R. Nau, “Lessons from the Great Expansion,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 January 2012.

⁵ For my interpretations of Truman and Reagan, see *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman and Reagan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), chs. 6-7.

a hidden fist” (131). But would open markets have flourished in postwar Europe or Asia if Soviet power had dominated the continent? Free trade is not natural; it is part of the ideology of the West which western forces defend.

Further, Hendrickson exaggerates the trade-offs between freedom and force. He acknowledges that America’s imperialism was pretty generous (51, 132-133); yet he wants to blame American imperialism today for crises in Ukraine and North Korea. In Ukraine, according to Hendrickson, the United States and the European Union conspired to overthrow the pro-Moscow Kiev government, apparently by supporting Ukraine’s interest in association with the European Union and NATO. But is that a threat equivalent to Russian-backed forces seizing Crimea and invading eastern Ukraine? The EU has no common military force, and NATO posted no troops in any country on the border of Russia *until the invasion of Crimea*. If Ukraine threatened Russia simply because Kiev wanted to adopt western standards for its economy and military, all member states of the EU and NATO threaten Russia—definitive proof, by the way, that domestic regime type matters in security affairs and provokes conflict, a fact which Hendrickson in his desire for neutrality is reluctant to acknowledge. In Korea too, Hendrickson blames the United States for the conflict, especially the brutal bombing of North Korea in the 1950s. “That memory above all,” Hendrickson concludes, “explains North Korea’s desire to accumulate a fearsome nuclear arsenal” (188). I am skeptical. Why does that same argument not also apply *a fortiori* to Germany and Japan? The United States bombed the hell out of them too. In Iraq, he blames the U.S. strategy to overthrow the government for “having released the hounds of the Sunni-Shia conflict” (202). There’s some truth to that. But was it not America’s leaving, not its intervention in Iraq, that also unleashed the hounds of ISIS?

I am much more forgiving than Hendrickson of America’s mistakes, because I always compare them with the mistakes of despotic powers. And I am, therefore, much less complaisant than he is about a world in which America retreats too far. Yes, the U.S. would not like it if Russia intervened on its borders as Russia has and does in Cuba and Central America, or indeed in the U.S. elections as in 2016. But there is a difference: The U.S. supports freedom, Russia supports authoritarianism. Unless the spread of freedom is an accident, U.S. leadership, despite contradictions, gets credit for this outcome. That is self-serving, you bet. But it is also a fact. I am not willing to grant a moral equivalence to despots, even if the U.S. is imperfect, which it is. If you think a world of democracies led by the U.S. is provocative, think back to the world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led by Germany and Japan.

At home, too, Hendrickson overstates the costs of America leadership in the world. While America bore the mantle of Cold War leadership, almost alone, it became one of the most diverse free societies in history. The civil rights movement, women’s liberation, unprecedented immigration (59 million immigrants since 1965),⁶ and epochal economic prosperity—all produced virtuous developments in American society. America’s civil society is much healthier than it was 75 years ago; and that accounts too for the pushback today against an

⁶ Pew Research Center, “Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065: Views of Immigration’s Impact on U.S. Society Mixed,” 28 September 2015, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>.

overweening government or deep state. Even if its external imperialism was a bad (which, on balance, I do not believe is the case), it did not produce a more imperialist civil society at home—just the opposite.

Hendrickson argues that the old nineteenth-century international law was neutral and therefore good: “a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other’s domestic affairs and checking each other’s ambitions through a general equilibrium of power” (16). But the old international law protected the domestic affairs of monarchs not republics, and the balance of power depended upon the mutual respect of sovereigns who were all Christian and exercised their power by ‘divine right.’ Neither law nor power was neutral.⁷ Monarchs feared republicanism. Here is what Prince Metternich of Austria said in the 1850s about American democracy: “If this flood of evil doctrines and pernicious examples should extend over the whole of America, what would become . . . of the moral force of our governments, and of that conservative system which has saved Europe from complete dissolution?”⁸ He was right. Republicanism destroyed monarchy and later fascism and communism.

International law, then and now, is never neutral. It reflects and reinforces the status quo. Differences among states, Hendrickson argues, “would be there even if these states became what America is not: perfect democracies” (59). But this assertion denies the empirical evidence of the democratic peace. Of course, differences remain but democracies do not settle them by force. Hendrickson says, “Washington has wanted to style its enmities as conflicts between democrats and despots, but these are conflicts among nations” (59). What is the difference between nations and democracies or despots? Nations are not just geographic *lands* to be defended; they are also *heartlands*, political ideologies that express a nation’s values, culture, institutions, and history. Geographic interests change little; heartland interests change more readily. The difference between Europe in 1918 or 1818 and Europe in 2018 is not nations but democracy. Domestic and international regimes are inseparable. Hendrickson cites the American Founders to this effect: “The type of international system that a state inhabited bore mightily on the type of regime that could be established” (146). But then he fails to apply the implications of this point to his own argument. It is only because the United States inhabits a world of mostly democracies that it can afford to take a step back and do less in the world.

So how do we close the remaining differences between us?

First, Hendrickson might agree with me that democracy or regime type is a crucial factor in U.S. foreign policy. Democracy is not perfect; it is just better for world peace and the containment of war, which destroys republics. Looking back over the past hundred years, it is hard to gainsay that conclusion. So, the United States should work in the first instance with other democracies through the alliances and the larger community of democracies. Use the United Nations as possible, which Hendrickson prefers, but recognize

⁷ On the role of ideas in this history, see John M. Owen IV, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁸ Quoted in Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America’s Place in the World from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 4.

that this is where democracies and despots contend as well as cooperate and stalemate may be a more frequent outcome.

Second, I might agree with Hendrickson: discipline the use of force in the defense and potential spread of democracy. The Wilsonian urge to make the world safe for democracy everywhere, affirmed most recently by President George W. Bush, is unnecessary. Make it safe only where it counts the most, namely on the major borders of existing freedom in Europe and Asia. Today that means Ukraine and Korea. If the West loses the prospects for freedom in these places, it significantly undermines the democratic peace in Europe and Asia. If it loses freedom in Iraq, Afghanistan (or earlier, in Vietnam), it loses much less. And the cost of defending freedom in Ukraine and Korea is less than in more remote regions because powerful democratic alliances and free markets exist close by.

Further, Hendrickson might agree with me that the EU and NATO are not the cause of Russian aggression in Ukraine; Russian President Vladimir Putin's desire to reconstruct the Soviet empire and roll back the western liberal order is. But I might also agree with Hendrickson that Russia is relatively weak, and the threat is manageable at low cost. Do not therefore seek to spread EU markets and NATO membership to Ukraine (or Georgia) *now or in the immediate future* but also do not rule out these possibilities *in years ahead*. The United States has no need to export freedom but it does need to keep the option of freedom open and to prevent any further Russian aggression in Ukraine and elsewhere by deploying modest NATO forces in the Baltics and Poland (initiated by NATO in 2016) and arming Kiev forces to resist Russian tanks and heavy weapons (as was done by Trump in 2018). Hendrickson wants to withdraw these forces but then he wants to retain U.S. nuclear guarantees. That is illogical. The United States gives up leverage over how a war might break out while it remains committed to using nuclear weapons if war does break out. Nevertheless, as he suggests, European forces should eventually provide the vast majority of command positions and ground forces in Europe, while some very modest U.S. troops remain as a guarantee that any outbreak of conflict involves the United States.

Korea is similarly pivotal. Chinese leader Xi Jinping, like Putin, seeks to roll back the western liberal order. However, the Chinese threat, too, is not the equivalent of the former Soviet Union, at least not yet. China is stronger than Russia and is without doubt *the* rising power of the twenty-first century. But it is economically more open and dependent on global markets. Incentives to compromise are greater. A willingness to negotiate some joint management of the sea lanes around the first island chain, as Hendrickson recommends, is probably warranted. The key is to ensure that long-term developments in contested areas move North Korea and China incrementally toward the western democratic order, not let South Korea and potentially thereafter Taiwan and Japan slip into the despotic domain of China and North Korea.

In the rest of the world, the United States should attend to threats such as terrorism but not seek to promote democracy and expand the democratic peace. Here Hendrickson's strategy of strong offshore sea and air capabilities makes sense. The U.S. should intervene vigorously to destroy specific threats (Afghanistan after 9/11) but not tarry to promote democracy (Iraq). It should stay over the horizon to intervene again if necessary. Other than a few advisers and trainers, it should keep U.S. ground forces to a minimum and rely on local forces to hold territory seized from terrorists (Sunni Arabs and Kurds in Syria and Iraq). If that fails, use lethal air and sea power to deny the terrorists control of territory but not to nation-build.

The world of the democratic peace invites a coming together of libertarian nationalist and conservative internationalist perspectives. We may never have another opportunity like the present to accept a better world while sharing more responsibility with other democracies to defend it.

Review by Kori Schake, International Institute for Strategic Studies

I guess I qualify as one of those people David Hendrickson accuses of loudly praising the liberal world order while losing touch with the critical elements of the liberal tradition. I hardly recognize his description of “the phenomenon whereby the United States not only defeated and dismantled adversary empires but also acquired, in the act of defeating them, many of the characteristics once deemed obnoxious in these enemies” (14). I do think the world is, on balance, better for America having an active, engaged foreign policy that sets and enforces rules of order. I do not consider the national security establishment a grave threat to America’s domestic liberties. And I think there is at least some evidence the exalted founders Hendrickson relies on to buttress his arguments for a different American foreign policy than has been practiced since 1945 are a winnable constituency for shaping the world in America’s image.

I have not experienced vested interests and ideology regnant as he ominously asserts; my government jobs would have been vastly easier and the ‘Never Trump’ campaign successful were Hendrickson correct. Alas, the American public is agitating for a different kind of engagement than liberal ideology prescribes, more reliant on military power and less invested in building institutions and alliance networks and other states’ capacity to govern their territory. All of which makes Hendrickson’s urgent questions about America’s role in the world all the more important.

Hendrickson summarizes his argument as America accumulating an empire the maintenance of which threatens its domestic liberty. He argues that the expansion of liberty internationally necessitated the concentration of power in the executive, that a national security apparatus burgeoned around it that prevents reconsideration, and that the tools developed for use abroad are being put to domestic uses that are insidious to a free people. It is an extension of Paul Kennedy’s imperial overstretch argument, except that rather than bankrupting the great power, empire corrodes the very institutions and practices that created it.¹

His argument fits with Russian expert George Kennan’s critique of containment and in the contemporary offshore balancing school of thought, advocating reducing the role of military power in American foreign policy, renouncing forward deployments, shifting military strategy from winning wars to attrition of enemies, relying more heavily on maritime strategies, adopting a ‘no first use’ policy for nuclear weapons, and becoming ‘pluralist’ (that is, no longer favoring like-minded states in the United States’ policies).² He embraces the fact that the logical conclusion of his approach is neutrality, which is to his credit given its unsavory associations.

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

² See, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Kennan and Containment, 1947” (“Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” retired publication), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan>, Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 47, 49-51. Some of the sharpest offshore balancing works are by John Mearsheimer, “The Case for Offshore Balancing” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2016), Barry Posen, “Stability and Change in U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Orbis* 51:4 (2007): 561-567, and Patrick Porter, “Sharing Power? Prospects for a U.S. Concert-Balance Strategy” (Carlisle: U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013).

Hendrickson and others who argue for a foreign policy that respects state sovereignty rather than individual rights, that removes the United States from policing the international commons, are in the ascendancy. President Donald Trump seems also to veer toward that view. Much of Hendrickson's argument is policy preference enrobed in academic ermine. For example, he argues that enforcement destroys rather than upholds an open trading system, because the U.S. government has employed economic sanctions and other tools that close off or coerce participation. He is rather too silent, though, on the purposes those specific policy choices were in service of: sustainment of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, levering against tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, penalizing aggression. That is, tactical foreclosing to achieve greater strategic compliance with a liberal order.

He also considers it "imperative" to retreat from supporting the right of oppressed people to revolution and from intervening to prevent humanitarian depredations, because some of those have produced worse outcomes. (68) In this argument he has good company, including political scientist Micah Zenko.³ But they at least struggle with the balance; Hendrickson does not engage the success stories, and would rescind the practice because of its failures.

I share Hendrickson's disgust with the triumphalism in post-Cold War American policy; claims to be indispensable and characterizing the U.S. as the most powerful in the history of the world are not only rude, they convey rot at the institutional core. And they unquestionably led to ill-considered policies, most spectacularly the 2003 Iraq war, which did much more to destabilize the liberal international order than its adversaries ever have. While there may never have been an Elysian past in which American statesmen strode the earth making philosophical decisions without regard to practical policy alternatives, like Hendrickson, I yearn for a more modest American foreign policy, one respectful of the United States' philosophical heritage and other countries' unique histories.

But is American neutrality in a Westphalian balance of power really the answer? The founding fathers held it to be self-evident that American values were universal; they may have argued over whether the United States would advance them best by engaging with the world or remaining a pure embodiment of its values, but they believed that the U.S. ought to propagate its values. Hendrickson's support for a Westphalian order of unchallengeable state sovereignty comes down strongly in one camp...but there are two camps, even among the founders. It is no refutation of the founders' wisdom to take another side of this long-running dispute.

And is it really true that militarism has overtaken civic society in America? The imperial presidency he describes has power ceded to it by legislative inaction and public apathy; those are indeed threats to the republic, but they are not the result of U.S. foreign policy. And the policies Hendrickson proposes are in fact more likely to require an expansive presidency because threats will burgeon in the absence of American protection.

Hendrickson castigates the U.S. for its hypocrisy in failing to practice the rules it established. That is certainly true. But the more interesting question is why so many states plead for the U.S.-led order to be sustained and contribute so much to its maintenance. Or, to use the international relations theory terminology, why is there so little balancing against American power? If Hendrickson's description were shared by national leaders, we

³ Micah Zenko, "The Mythology of Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, 28 March 2011.

ought to observe many more challenges. Perhaps the answer is that for all its failings, the U.S. is a preferred hegemon to the alternatives.

It is both pleasant and important to have so much of the wisdom of America's founders brought to bear on problems of foreign and security policy. But it is not true that "the great questions of foreign policy are philosophical in character," or at least they are not solely philosophical in character. (5) They are also stubbornly practical, requiring decisions with monumental consequences. No political leader has the luxury of making philosophically satisfying decisions to the exclusion of their practical consequences. Hendrickson presents Abraham Lincoln's view as president abjuring to intervene in the 1848 Hungarian revolution absent the context that he had a vested interest in not legitimating other states' support for the confederate rebellion. (73) Hendrickson ignores the context in which decisions are made.

The other risk that Hendrickson succumbs to is setting the Founders' ideas in stone—to carve them out of marble and place them atop pedestals, their wisdom to command America's every move. That is, I think, not the republic the Founders would have wanted. They confronted a world vastly different than our own, one in which preservation was paramount and America poorly equipped to hold its own against the Great Powers. The Founders scrambled to keep the Republic out of jeopardy and strengthen its administrative capacity to meet the challenges of their day. They would not begrudge current leaders departing from the practices of their time to find solutions to the challenges of the present.

Because there were no other republics, President George Washington's wariness about permanent friends and President Thomas Jefferson's caution to avoid entangling alliances rang down across more than two hundred years. Would either of those great men have argued against free people banding together to defend themselves? Faced with industrial-age warfare, when the protection of the oceans was less of a buffer, would they have remained so complacent that the U.S. could wait out wars that produce economies of scale and that those stronger and emboldened powers would not also turn their ravenousness toward America? Would they be so confident that the U.S. would always have time to react, that its resources would be adequate to preserve its independence, and that the American people would feel no kinship to other free societies?

It is at least a debatable proposition that Hendrickson does not explore. I think Washington and Jefferson would have reveled at the cost effectiveness of sharing the burden of common defense among like-minded states. Jefferson and President James Madison were by no means dead-set against alliances: when President James Monroe approached Jefferson and Madison in 1823 about the possibility of allying with Great Britain to prevent continental European powers from colonizing the western hemisphere, they both supported it. Jefferson even said of the British proposal that would subsequently, unilaterally, become the Monroe Doctrine, "the war in which the present proposition might engage us, should that be its consequence, is not her war but ours. Its object is to introduce and establish the American system, of keeping out of our land all foreign powers, of never permitting those of Europe to intermeddle with the affairs of our nations. It is to maintain our principle, not to depart from it."⁴ It is but a small step from Jefferson allying with Britain to

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed Paul Leicester Ford, vol. 10 (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 277-278. Cited in Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 50.

protect the American system throughout the entire Western hemisphere to protecting like-minded states elsewhere.

Hendrickson's explanation for how succeeding presidents like George Bush and Barack Obama could converge on similar "dispiriting" policies is "the power of the (foreign policy) machine over the man" (3). He ought as a matter of inquiry to have explored the possibility that reasonable people responsible for the country's well-being saw no better alternative than the policies they adopted. They campaigned on personal belief and adapted their approaches for governance.

America's founding fathers are the unscalable redoubt of intellectual defense; but they are not a substitute for practical solutions to the foreign policy problems of today. This finely wrought book failed to persuade me that the world is worse off for American activism; that the national security state poses a threat to American domestic liberties; or that the alternative he proposes would result in an international order more conducive to America's domestic and international interests. This is a beautifully written book, with crystalline arguments, that I wish I could like much more than I did.

Author's Response by David C. Hendrickson, Colorado College

Toward the end of my book, I wrote that its argument and conclusions were totally at variance with the conventional wisdom of the Washington establishment; these four critical reviews bear out the depth of that variance. While there are a few bouquets thrown in my direction, the overall thrust is overwhelmingly negative. The reviews generally reflect the perspectives of the old guard of the Republican foreign policy establishment, represented in Washington by such figures as Ambassador Nikki Haley and Senators Marco Rubio, Lindsey Graham, Tom Cotton, and John McCain. I had been under the impression that Bush-style Republicanism was an endangered species within the American academy; I stand corrected. Judging by the assembled reviews, 'muscular internationalism' appears as dominant in the republic of letters as in Washington.

Looking on the bright side, I have plenty to argue with. 15,000 words of criticism requires a lot in reply, though even at my length (14,000 words) I do not deal with every detail in the multiple counts against me. In large measure, the critical viewpoints reflect profound differences in worldview and will be met as best I can, but I caution the reader that I do not accept many of the characterizations of my views, which seem to me twisted in their telling. There are many key positions in the book (my endorsement, for example of a "new internationalism") that are simply ignored. I will begin with some general themes and then proceed to cases.

International Law

In my work I present a brief for "traditional international law," one which is reflected in the UN Charter, but which has deep roots in western theorizing regarding the bases of a peaceful international order (57-60 and chapter two, *passim*). This older understanding counseled acceptance that the international system would inevitably be composed of a variety of regime types, and it sought to remove differences in regime type from the panoply of causes that might justify a war. It stood foursquare against the attempt by any one state to dominate the international system, the principal (but not the only) meaning of "the balance of power" as an objective of international society. It was rooted in the law of nature; one branch of international law was simply the law of nature applied to nations, giving to each a right of self-preservation but enjoining them, in asserting their rights and interests, to not infringe the rights of others. I defend this traditional conception against the humanitarian interventionists of the left and the "new sovereigntists" of the right, both of whom offer conceptions of the international legal order different from my own.

The authors do not engage these distinctions, but instead just fire away at international law. Robert G. Kaufman writes that my "enthusiasm for the efficacy of international law exceeds a sober appreciation of its limits as a substitute for international politics. Much of what passes for international law is not law at all, but aspiration. Even at its most effective, international law is much weaker, much less significant, and much less enforceable than Hendrickson claims it to be." But I do not consider international law to be a substitute for international politics; it is instead its essential companion. It is not self-enforceable; instead, it provides the basic ethical framework within which to assess whether any given action, including force, is legitimate and prudent. I make the argument that one version of international law, which I identify with a pluralist legal order, is superior to the others in offering a surer path to international peace, and that the wisdom it contains has been virtually obliterated in the practice of U.S. foreign policy, and often ignored even by legal scholars,

many of whom are entranced by the vision of humanitarian intervention and the universalization of the human rights regime.¹

Henry R. Nau also criticizes my conception of international law, but in doing so confuses some important issues. He argues that “the old international law protected the domestic affairs of monarchs not republics.” But it was considered as protecting all states, including monarchs and republics, by U.S. statesman Daniel Webster, who criticized the Holy Alliance and Austrian minister Klemens von Metternich for violating this precept against intervention in the 1820s. Webster’s opinion, joined by Abraham Lincoln in 1852 (not, as Kori Schake strangely comments, when he was president), was entirely representative of the American policy bequeathed by the Founders. Nau leaves the impression that I am defending Metternich and the Holy Alliance; no, I am defending Vattel and a pluralist conception of international order, which Metternich saw fit to repudiate.² America’s early containment policies in the Cold War also respected this principle in theory (though often not in practice, as in the CIA’s multiple covert interventions of the 1950s). That is, they were about defending the free world against aggression, not overthrowing hostile regimes. At the level of publicly articulated policy, that only changed with the Reagan Doctrine of 1985, which successive administrations enlarged. The 2005 Bush Doctrine calling for the end of tyranny everywhere is the *ne plus ultra* of this viewpoint, but the Democratic administrations of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama also waded pretty far into these waters.

The question of whether one has a warrant to engage in regime change is different from the question of the respective merits of collective security and neutrality. Nau’s review conflates the two. Yes, international law is generally supportive of existing rights of possession; it reflects and reinforces the territorial status quo. It condemns regime change as a legitimate motive for war. But this is a different question from whether states should join in alliance for the purposes of self-protection (which is perfectly allowable under international law, including the law of the UN Charter) or should stand aside in a posture of neutrality toward conflicts raging elsewhere. I do not say that neutrality is the policy that is always and everywhere to be recommended, as Schake writes; that is obviously incompatible with my observation that the United States should maintain (while changing in certain particulars) existing alliances with Europe, South Korea, and Japan (and incompatible, too, with my criticism of neutrality in the 1930s). My point is that the older system of neutrality, especially as contrasted with doctrines mandating U.S. military enforcement at all points of the globe, does offer substantial advantages. It isolates international conflict rather than universalizing it. It does not place upon another people a burden they are often ill-equipped to bear (pronouncing in God-like fashion on the rights and wrongs of quarrels among and within nations). It allows distinctions between the greater and the lesser, the vital and the peripheral. In the view of neoconservatives, the experience of Adolf Hitler refutes these arguments, for all time and for all circumstances, and any attempt to find common ground with

¹ On pluralism, see especially Robert H. Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Brad R. Roth, *Sovereign Equality and Moral Disagreement: Premises of a Pluralist International Legal Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (New York: Oxford, 2007).

² Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations, Or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*, Richard Whatmore and Bela Kaposy, eds. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008 [1797]).

“enemies” is derided as appeasement. I argue that such a view, in today’s world, is very dangerous and risks misperception and war across the board.

The critics impute to me a position that elevates state sovereignty into an “absolute” and “unchallengeable” principle. I do not use those words. I said it was part of the bedrock of international law, the protection of which is fundamental and respect for which was once a key commitment of U.S. statecraft, even under the reign of liberal internationalists. That is, it was one of the things that commitment to a rule-based order signified (76-82). But its weight does differ in different contexts; few values hold with absolute sway in every circumstance. The principles that forbid externally-supported and violently-imposed regime change are of much greater weight than claims to sovereign immunity by off-shore tax havens. Kaufman also observes, following Stephen Krasner, that sovereignty was often violated in the course of the old European system (roughly, from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the outbreak of war in 1914). That is true enough (I discuss the phenomenon at 239n), but it confuses things to identify an empirical violation with the status of the norm, as both Kaufman and Krasner do. The fact that these unending wars (in their day and our day) were so often accompanied by the violation of sovereignty suggests that there might be something to be said for the norm’s observance.³

It is a central part of my critique of the “liberal world order” that it became, in its operation, distinctly illiberal, the defense of it overwhelmingly centered on what Kaufman calls “muscular internationalism.”⁴ In these interventions, and in many other ways, the United States does not play by the rules it sets for others. My critics concede this in certain respects but say it does not matter because the United States is morally superior. Schake says this softly, with due recognition of the dangers of hubris, but still says it, as the others do more stridently. I think it matters greatly. Doing unto others what you would never allow them to do unto you violates the rule of reciprocity, the foundational rule of liberalism. The concept of reciprocity and the Golden Rule (unmentioned by the reviewers, so central to my argument) eludes the establishment, but it is the basis for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the conduct of a successful diplomacy. Its rejection is the fount of war (98-103). With great facility the U.S. establishment touts adherence to a rule-based order as the be-all and end-all, and then says that the United States’ exceptional character in these and other respects gives it the right to violate the rules. Those conjoined propositions would be difficult to defend in theory, but in practice they rule the roost.

Ideals and Interests

I wrote, in a passage Schake partially cites, that “the great questions of foreign policy are philosophical in character, concerning the right ordering of the commanding values of American civilization in confrontation with the problem of insecurity” (5). Schake writes: “But it is not true that ‘the great questions of foreign policy are philosophical in character,’ or at least not solely philosophical in character. They are also stubbornly practical, requiring decisions with monumental consequences.” Do not these formulations say essentially the same thing, that both ideals and interests are relevant in considering foreign policy? The whole thrust of my

³ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴ To similar effect, see Patrick Porter, *A World Imagined: Nostalgia and the Liberal Order* (Cato Institute Policy Analysis No 843), 5 June 2018, <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/world-imagined-nostalgia-liberal-order>.

argument is that the United States has defined its world role in a way that is contrary to its true interest and its deepest ideals. One may question, as all the critics do, my understanding of those interests and ideals, but both are relevant to the case at hand. Who among the defenders of the “liberal world order” would deny it?

The practical questions with the most momentous consequences are those concerning war and peace, and I argue that the United States’ worldwide military posture, threatening war at nearly all points of the compass, is deleterious to American security. This is especially so if regime change against Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea is attached to these military commitments and dispositions, but it would be the case even in the absence of such extravagant ambitions. The United States imperils its security on behalf of interests that, if lost, would not threaten that security. It has come to define its security in relation to the achievement of “milieu goals” that, in principle, justify intervention everywhere.⁵

Kaufman urges us to accept Henry Kissinger’s definition of America’s vital interests as preventing a hostile hegemon from dominating any of the world’s major power centers. As I argued in the book, that criterion gains in authority by its long historical lineage and makes a certain sense as a focus of strategic planning; concretely, however, it stipulates a totally implausible threat (155-156). The utility of conquest was transformed most obviously by the nuclear revolution, which conferred a surfeit of destructive power on those so armed, but the last 100 years, witnessing the sequential fall of empires, also shows the incapacity of empire to bend foreign nationalisms to its purpose. Nationalist resistance everywhere proved a foil to imperial ambition, with “third-rate powers” proving to be quite formidable when fighting on their own turf. This experience, together with the intrinsic costs of war, makes plainly illusory the idea of harnessing the latent economic power of defeated nations in some such plan of continental-sized conquest. Ambitions of a much less grandiose character have a proven record of shaking the authority of governments. The real danger, I argued, is not schemes of Hitlerian conquest but the breakdown of authority in more and more regions, of disintegration amidst zones of anarchy. Kaufman imputes such ambitions to Russia and China as if they were oblivious to these moral and material realities, but then goes on to say that both nations are actually very weak. And from this geriatric condition Russia is to conquer Europe and China is to conquer Asia?

The real basis of America’s role is the conviction that it is contending with evil regimes. Its foundation is laid in the conviction that America’s adversaries are malevolence personified. All four of my critics seem to believe that U.S. adversaries are champing at the bit, to be held back only by the threat of escalating sanctions and war, but above all they see a battle between good and evil. Contrary to many of the reviewers’ imputations, I would be the last person to question the sincerity with which these convictions are held; the real danger seems to me to lie in a fanatical commitment to them. They are sustained, politically, by a well-oiled machine, but I am sure that those who profit most from the security complex are convinced that they do so, in their own estimation, from the highest motives.

The greatest fear expressed by the critics is that an American abdication of its role as the “default” or “rule-enforcing” power will lead to the predominance of “the revisionist powers”; my greatest fear is that the crusade against them will end in a costly and destructive war. Such a war, or wars, would deeply imperil U.S. security, prosperity, and liberty, but would also feature abundant collateral damage for all. Neither side in this argument can really prove these contentions; they are inherently hypothetical and speculative. I contend that

⁵ For an incisive examination of the theme, see John A. Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America’s Global Role* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

the zealotry of the U.S. side, in comprehending the motives and characters of these powers, leads it to misapprehend where they are coming from, and that U.S. countermeasures threatening their security can succeed in doing that only at the price of threatening America's own.

America's perceived ideals have thus compromised its security. I say perceived, because the mission of freeing the earth from tyranny through coercive methods was never part of the traditional American doctrine. The world was to be changed through successful example, not military crusades. The traditional view forecast an international order, as Richard Nixon put it, "in which those who would influence others will do so by the strength of their ideas, and not by the force of their arms" (176). Admittedly, America as exemplar, in the actual living flesh, seems haggard and drawn, its polity, economy, and culture beset by too many liabilities to afford an exemplary model for others. Its status in this respect has undergone a serious decline since the halcyon days of the immediate post-Cold War period. But America as idea, of the civic creed as a way of delivering the best society and a peaceful world order, still has great power to inspire. At least, I am an inspired by it; most of my ideas for the reform of domestic and foreign policy are rooted in the American lexicon.

One of the maxims of the Founders that should indeed be carved in granite, between majestic columns, is that the experience of war is hostile to free government. That is true for the United States, but also true for adversaries, as a heightened state of international tension, of wars of words and sanctions, inevitably diminishes the oxygen for civil society. Enforcing a state of isolation on Russia does nothing to help civil society there, and actually hinders it. Free societies can advance the cause of human rights by respecting such rights themselves, by giving asylum to prisoners of conscience, and by making aid conditional on domestic reform; but when support for human rights passes on to the policy of coercion, of war and sanctions, the tendency is to gravely undermine human rights rather than sustain them. Much of my argument is dedicated to showing the *incapacity* of force to achieve the lofty objectives invariably attached to it—the intrinsic difficulty of successfully deploying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the leading edge of a 500-pound bomb. The critics do not meet that argument: their reply ("mistakes were made") is just their way of eluding it.

Democratic Peace

The reviewers criticize me for insufficient appreciation of the democratic peace hypothesis (Kaufman), for incomprehension of the democratic revolution (Nau), and for "no longer favoring like-minded states in the United States' policies" (Schake). These are related objections, all pointing to a dreaded state of "moral equivalence."

It was not my intention in this work to re-litigate the rights and wrongs of the Cold War; the main focus was on the post-Cold War period. But I do credit the great achievement of the United States in helping to rebuild Western Europe and Japan, and I praise the avidity with which Germany, especially, made America's civic creed its own. The free world in those places was a living, breathing thing, in real and decidedly superior confrontation with totalitarianism. But the commitment to reconstruction and the fostering of liberal democracy in Germany and Japan were duties imposed by the responsibilities of victory, not in either case a justification for the war. The results, too, cannot be seen apart from the historical context (real German acceptance of and contrition for their responsibility) and the overwhelming character of the defeat. No sane person could wish to duplicate that context today (total war resulting in armed occupation of the enemy

nation, facilitated by the incineration of whole cities). Yet that context of total war and unconditional surrender was surely relevant to the outcome.

The watchword for the ensuing U.S. policy was containment, not “rollback,” the preservation of the free world, not the extinction of tyranny. Nau elides the two, writing that “the defense and spread of freedom were front and center in U.S. strategy toward postwar Europe and Asia.” As between “defense and spread,” there is a gap. Nau sees a fundamental continuity between Truman and Reagan; I see a break. American administrations after Truman, it is true, went for rollback on various occasions, usually under cover of secret CIA missions, but not until Reagan did the United States adopt an overt policy justifying aid to insurgents seeking the overthrow of Communist regimes. In the older understanding, the United States was to hold the line, not revolutionize the world. In 1960, when Khrushchev announced Communist support for wars of national liberation, American officialdom received that as a grievous threat to world order. Over time, the revolutionary policy U.S. leaders once condemned became their own brilliant innovation.

Among the things that most irritates me about Trump (there are a lot of such things) is his conduct toward America’s traditional allies and friends. The treatment of Canada, Mexico, Germany, among others, strikes me as nothing short of scandalous, entailing breaches of decorum previously unimaginable. I must thus disassociate myself from the following observation of Nau: “I further agree with Hendrickson that the allies are free riders and support Trump wholeheartedly in the need to break some eggs to rebalance trade and defense spending among the allies.” I attribute the burden-sharing problem to America’s excess, not Europe’s defect; it wasn’t Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroder who poured \$5 trillion down the drain in Iraq and other Middle Eastern venues. The United States, too, was the leading force behind NATO expansion; it could have easily pursued a different policy (as it pledged Mikhail Gorbachev it would do) without injury to NATO. Widespread evocations of NATO’s “seventy-year record” of peacekeeping in Europe neglect the doubling in size and expansion in scope it underwent in the last two decades. The NATO of the Cold War neither marched boldly into Russia’s geopolitical space nor facilitated the projection of U.S. military power into the Greater Middle East; today, that’s what it’s all about.

Trump’s approach to “breaking eggs” seems to me to be utterly incoherent. His call for prodigious increases in military spending can only be justified as a way of shoring up America’s global military position, hence the protection of the very allies he excoriates as deadbeats. He conceives of the alliance as an empire of tribute, in which dependents are to pay up for protection, a view of the alliance entirely different from my own. Trumpian political economy shows a similar incoherence, with Trump and Republican-inspired gargantuan fiscal deficits working strongly against attempts to mitigate imbalances in trade. We need negotiations with the surplus wielding nations (China, Germany, Japan, etc.) to reduce trade imbalances, not Trump’s blunderbuss approach to tariffs. That requires a sane fiscal policy, not the trillion-dollar budget deficits in prospect. Trump’s hyperbolic antagonism of all and sundry (the Saudis and the Israelis excepted) is deeply contrary to my favored approach, which is more on the order of “friends to all, enemies to none.”

There is, to be sure, “empirical support” for the democratic peace hypothesis, especially in the post-World War II period. Over every historical period, the evidence is mixed. One has to make some awfully fine distinctions, allowing for the exclusion of contrary cases, to be a complete enthusiast for that view. The American Civil War, for instance, was regarded at the time as a scandal to democratic institutions, and the South did have vigorous and competitive elections. Germany had a representative Reichstag in 1914, which duly voted war credits to the Kaiser. Heck, even Hamas won the vote. There is also merit in the older judgment that pure democracies (however those might be defined) have often been subject to bellicose

passions. There have been “almost as many popular as royal wars,” as Alexander Hamilton put it in 1788. “Democracies are prone to war, and war consumes them,” wrote William Seward in 1848.⁶ Surely it is evident today that democracies are often subject to the lure of an exclusivist nationalism (witness Turkey, India, Poland, Hungary, Israel, even little ‘ole England and the U.S. of A). Advocates of the democratic peace concede that it does not apply to the intercourse with non-democratic states, and in that sense is seriously deficient as a theory of world order. But I do not object to so much to the democratic peace hypothesis as to the conclusions that people draw from it. The successful establishment of peace among democracies does not provide a warrant for war and quasi-war against non-democracies. It is indeed a marvelous achievement; why throw its advantages away? Those who counsel this course use the blessings of peace as a false flag for war.⁷

The rhetoric contrasting democrats and despots has been most consequential in the Middle East, justifying the overthrow or attempted overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi, and Bashar al-Assad. The European Union, as it were, supplies the evidence for the democratic peace hypothesis; the Middle East gets the bombs. These policies of regime change and despotic overthrow, I argue, have been a first-class disaster, especially for the peoples of Iraq, Syria, and Libya, but also for the United States. They have not mitigated the threat of terrorism, but rather have enlarged its field of operation. The zones of anarchy arising from the smashing or attempted smashing of adversary states has generated tremendous human misery and tides of refugees (badly testing the European Union); most incredibly, the United States came even to directly consort with al-Qaeda in Syria, reflecting a weird transmogrification of the “war on terror” as the United States helped arm the resistance to Assad.⁸ Schake concedes that the Iraq War “did much more to destabilize the liberal international order than its adversaries ever have,” whereas both Kaufman and Nau say it was a success upended by Obama’s precipitous withdrawal in 2011. I can hardly agree with the latter view; the failure was achieved in the Bush years, well before Obama took office; most of the evil consequences (especially another round of the civil war) were embedded in the initial decision to smash the state and establish by force a new order.

Ukraine is also enlisted by my critics in the cause of establishing a democratic peace, though none take up my criticism of the manner in which the U.S. violated central democratic principles in supporting the overthrow of Ukraine’s elected government. Since independence in 1991, Ukraine has been a fragile state, beset by huge differences between East and West, with geographic and cultural divisions manifest in closely contested presidential elections. To overthrow the regime through massive street demonstrations, in total violation of constitutional procedures, inevitably meant civil conflict. It put Ukraine in a state of nature, in which the right to take up arms by the Russophiles in the east was established by the prior resort to force by the Russophobes of the west. The U.S policy favoring revolution, though wanted by the mobocracy of the

⁶ Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* No. 6 in George W. Carey and James McClellan, eds., *The Federalist* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001 [1787-1788]), 24; Seward quoted in David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 421-422, n10.

⁷ On the misuse of the doctrine, see Bruce Russett, “Bushwacking the Democratic Peace,” *International Studies Perspectives* (2005).

⁸ William Van Wagenen, “The Myth of US ‘Inaction’ in Syria,” The Libertarian Institute, 8 July 2018.

Maidan, did no favors for Ukraine, whose GDP has halved since the war began. There is no prospect for its economic revival unless it reaches some sort of accommodation with Russia. U.S. support for Ukrainian ultra-nationalism deepens Ukraine's predicament and prohibits recovery. The accommodation I propose—recognition of a Russian Crimea, a plebiscite in the Donbass, sharing undersea rights in the Black Sea—hardly gives Russia the springboard for a vast Eurasian empire. Russia spends a tenth of what the U.S. does on defense. Denying Russia access to the Black Sea, a wild objective apparently embraced by Zbigniew Brzezinski in *The Grand Chessboard*, is a policy neither sensible nor fair; it flies squarely in the face of vital Russian interests and would be considered an insult by vast swathes of Russian opinion.⁹ In the subsequent 20 years, extreme strategic ambitions of the sort that Brzezinski embraced got badly mixed up with the West's vaunted ideals, confirming George Kennan's worries in the 1990s about where it would all end.

Hovering above these arguments is the question of moral equivalence, which each of my critics raises against me, and which is closely bound up with the assessment of the United States' putative enemies. My position is that these adversary nations do have an equality of rights. My critics reason from the manifest fact that the Americans represent the good, they the bad, and from this moral high ground ask: what are you going to do about it? I start from the recognition that Russia, China, North Korea and Iran are entitled to the rights that all nations have, of self-preservation and survival. I am disappointed that no one found that chain of reasoning, beginning with Hobbes's explication of the laws of nature, interesting enough to recapitulate, or weak enough to repudiate, but it does go to a basic difference. The point of U.S. strategy, heartily seconded by most of the critics, is to put these adversaries in the worst condition possible, always working toward their weakening and ultimate breakup. I think that the preservation of peace with them requires recognition of their legitimate rights and interests, and that the 'muscular internationalists' badly understate the danger of war if their rival course is followed.

The recognition of mutual right does not preclude judgments about the moralities of various actors. Yes, there are repugnant features in each of these regimes, but it violates a rule of morality to hold them out in the worst possible light, against an ideal vision of America, cast in the best possible light. This essentialist reasoning has taken hold of Washington and animates my critics, but I think it badly misleads as a basis for policy. I point, for example, to the effect of the U.S. bombing of North Korea from 1950 to 1953 as relevant in understanding the North Korean attitude. Kaufman thinks the very attempt to see their point of view is misbegotten (the worst regime in the world needs our understanding). Nau argues that mentioning the bombing establishes in my estimation U.S. responsibility for the conflict. No, the point is to show that they have a security problem, and that negotiating with them for peace and denuclearization means recognition of that. Nau argues that we should want to preserve the freedom and independence of South Korea; I agree. The measures I advocated in the book—backing off threatening military deployments, insisting on South Korea's primary responsibility for its conventional defense, retaining the nuclear guarantee against "first use" by the North—are perfectly compatible with that support, and far closer to the South Korean position than those who urge preventive war and profess indifference to the resulting catastrophe for the locals (as Lindsey Graham has done). As between American bellicosity and South Korean conciliation, there seems more wisdom in the latter. We may be sure that President Moon does not address Kim Jong-un in the violent

⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

language so often employed (and employed here) against North Korea. He understands that to get security for South Korea he needs to provide it to the North.

Rise and Fall

Kaufman holds, with Charles Krauthammer, that the maintenance of America's world military position (dominance in air, sea, land, space, and cyber) is perfectly affordable. Military dominance, they have said, costs a steadily diminishing portion of the national budget, is without culpability in driving U.S. deficits, and remains the essential hallmark of its status as the indispensable nation. I think these depictions exaggerate American strengths, minimize the costs, and fail to address the difficulty of maintaining this posture over time. 3.5% or 4% of GDP doesn't sound like much, almost a rounding error, but the \$1.2 annual trillion cost of the security complex (as calculated by the Straus reform project) is actually much more like 5.5 to 6 percent of GDP, if one also counts expenditures on veterans, security-related spending like Homeland Security, and a proportional share of interest payments.¹⁰ Complain if you will of the escalating demands for social welfare (among the elderly, especially), but stopping it, from a demographic standpoint, is akin to halting the tides. The Republicans, in my view, deserve the lion's share of blame in blowing up the prospect of any reasonable solution to U.S. fiscal problems, with Bush II and Trump the chief culprits. Cutting taxes on the wealthy, combined with escalating 'defense' expenditures, has been the Republican plan for over 35 years. But the Democrats are not blameless; they, too, seem to be sidling up to the proposition that 'deficits don't matter,' willing accomplices to what looks more and more like an act of generational theft.

The epochal economic prosperity that Nau celebrates has increasingly been confined to the upper strata of the population, with the remaining 80 percent treading water or worse.¹¹ The accomplishments that Nau highlights—the civil rights movement, women's liberation, making immigrants citizens—are real, but fading, as both race and gender drive political antagonism. This has made for an ugly political culture, with identity politics (on both sides) eclipsing the appeal to common interest and common ideals. Americans have lost faith in the existing parties and have practically given up on Congress; most believe that "the system" does not work for them. Whatever the state of the United States' civil society, its political culture is a mess; I see precious little to celebrate there.¹²

Each of the critics seems to take as axiomatic the primacy of foreign policy; they see great benefits following from it. It is true that, historically, the strength of the civil rights movement in the 1960s was related to this impulse, as America could hardly make a bid for the sympathies of the Third World if it maintained its odious system of segregation (147-148); otherwise, I do not see how an interventionist foreign policy produces any

¹⁰ Mandy Smithberger, "America's National Security Budget Nearing \$1.2 Trillion," Straus Military Reform Project, 13 February 2018. See my discussion in *Republic in Peril*, 223n29.

¹¹ Edward Alden, "Changing Economic Fortunes for Americans: Implications for Foreign Policy" in Daniel S. Hamilton and Teija Tiilikainen, eds. *Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations and Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2008), 99-118. See also Rajan Menon, "The United States Has a National Security Problem—and It's Not What You Think," *The Nation*, 16 July 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/united-states-national-security-problem-not-think/>.

¹² See further David C. Hendrickson, "Behind America's New Nationalism," Hamilton and Tiilikainen, *Domestic Determinants*, 55-77.

great domestic benefits at all. It crowds out expenditures on other social goods and makes accomplishments achievable by allies (free university education for qualified applicants, trade schools for the rest, as in Germany) unreachable for the United States. I think that the quality of American domestic life matters more than the extension of military preeminence among the nations, and the United States has a lot of expensive domestic problems to address. The “surplus” of a society, which it may draw on for investments in its future, is inherently limited, and especially limited for a “dissaving” society like that of the United States. The decision to be the world’s preeminent military power, seeking dominance in the near-abroads of its rivals, inescapably brings a very hefty bill. To minimize the opportunity costs is contrary to common sense.

Bearing on America’s “rise and fall” is its position in relation to the RICs (Russia, Iran, China). Kaufman criticizes me for defying the imperatives of geopolitics, which apparently require a full court press on every front. I find it is a peculiar kind of geopolitics that prescribes the unity of enemies as the means of keeping them tractable. A posture of hostility against all three inevitably results in their closer alliance. This outcome is not contrary to the interest of the security establishment, as it gives it more reasons for agitation and more resources for itself, but, thinking geopolitically, the logical policy is to seek the avoidance of this outcome. (Brzezinski recognized that in *The Grand Chessboard*, incidentally, as he paired hardball toward Russia with softball toward China.) I disdain the Washington calculation under which the only allowable reason for reconciling with one enemy is to redouble American efforts against another, but in principle there is something to be said for a policy that would seek the dispersion, rather than the unification, of the power of hostile states. Would not Sun Tzu think so? I’ll concede to Kaufman that, faced with a Hitler, delay and appeasement should be rejected, but I deny that Russia, China, or Iran pose threats at all comparable to those that Hitler posed in the 1930s. Kaufman says in his introduction that he agrees that the United States has devoted disproportionate time, energy, and resources to the Middle East, but then goes on to recommend tearing up the JCPOA and undertaking regime change against Iran. This retrenchment through expansion must surely be seen to be believed.

Kaufman invokes the writings of Samuel Huntington to show the error of my reasoning, reflecting Huntington’s views of the late Cold War. But another Huntington emerged in the mid-to-late 1990s, far more cautious about U.S. power, warning in 1999 of the risks of hubris, unilateralism, and overextension. America fancied itself as the beloved leader of a unipolar system; Huntington emphasized in contrast how often it was alone in the world. “Benign hegemony,” he observed (in a jab at William Kristol and Robert Kagan), “is in the eye of the hegemon. ‘One reads about the world’s desire for American leadership only in the United States,’” he quoted one British diplomat as saying: “‘Everywhere else one reads about American arrogance and unilateralism.’”¹³ American officials, he thought, “seem peculiarly blind to the fact that often the more the United States attacks a foreign leader, the more his popularity soars among his countrymen who applaud him for standing tall against the greatest power on earth.” Huntington went on to criticize the use of unilateral sanctions and interventions as recipes for disaster, urged abandonment of the “benign hegemon illusion” holding there to be a natural congruity between America’s interests and values and those of the rest of the world, advised cooperation with other countries, including Russia and China, as only way, realistically, of dealing effectively with global issues, agreed that most of the world does not want the United States to be its policeman, and proposed that “the major regional powers” assume “primary responsibility for order in their own regions.” This dose of Hendrickson-style appeasement had also been promulgated in Huntington’s

¹³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1999).

Clash of Civilizations, where he recommended a policy toward other civilizations of nonintervention and mutual abstention and respect, holding that “the Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers three problems: it is false, it is immoral, and it is dangerous.”¹⁴ If the ghost of Huntington is to guide us, I claim the authority of the more mature Huntington, who had time to reconsider his flirtation with the Reagan triumphalists. Kaufman’s injunctions violate all of Huntington’s later strictures.

Israel and the Lobby

The aspect of my book that most upsets Kaufman and James H. Lebovic is what I have to say about Israel—what it is, its record in the use of force and treatment of the Palestinians, its influence in the United States. Kaufman objects strongly to questioning Israel’s status as a liberal democracy, pointing to the existence of three Arab members on Israel’s Supreme Court and 18 Arabs in the Knesset. He should include what they say about the question, if he is going to parade them as exemplars of Israel’s liberalism.¹⁵ Kaufman says that I place “exclusive responsibility” on Israel for the failure of the two-state solution, but I neither said that nor believe it. What I would say is that Israel’s settlement program, placing 600,000 Jews in the West Bank, indicated Israel’s effective renunciation of a settlement on equitable terms. Would the promise of the Oslo accords have been realized in the absence of that Israeli policy? I always had my doubts about that, on the reasoning that any peace between Arabs and Jews would also excite grave discord, perhaps even civil war, within their own communities. This grim predicament, however, does not relieve Israel of responsibility for foreclosing a reasonable settlement (one that at least squinted at justice). There are many ardent defenders of Israel who would acknowledge that point; according to my recollection, Jeffrey Goldberg and Leon Weiseltier were long quite critical of the settlements project and saw how it would foreclose the possibility of peace. Is that really such an extreme view?

I concluded that the prospects of an Israeli-Palestinian peace are today practically nil—not “humanly possible” (209). Israel is determined to pursue the occupation, and the United States is unwilling to exert serious pressure on Israel to change its policies. Running up the white flag on the viability of that enterprise, I yet advised Israel in its conduct of the occupation to be more discriminate in the use of force and to employ carrots rather than just sticks, invoking Niccolò Machiavelli’s advice to avoid uses of force that incur hatred, and Francesco Guicciardini’s to employ rewards as well as punishments (209). Lebovic mocks the latter prescription, but Kaufman in effect says that Israel does not need reminding on the former point, as it has “done a good job striving to minimize civilian casualties” and its actions are within the laws of war. I think Israel’s wars against Lebanon and Gaza show the contrary, with the pummeling of the latter leaving it on the verge of inhabitability. I cannot square the Dahiya Doctrine with the laws of discrimination and proportionality; it stands in open defiance of them.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 310.

¹⁵ Jonathan Lis and Noa Landau, “Israel Passes Controversial Jewish Nation-state Bill After Stormy Debate,” *Haaretz*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-passes-controversial-nation-state-bill-1.6291048>, noting that Arab lawmakers tore up the bill in protest and called it an “apartheid law.” See also “Israeli Arab Ex-justice: Nation-state Law Will Only ‘Add to Discrimination’ Against Arabs,” *Haaretz*, 1 August 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-ex-justice-joubran-nation-state-law-should-be-quashed-1.6336498>.

Both Lebovic and Kaufman accuse me of employing a double standard in my criticisms of Israel. “Does Israel’s treatment of Palestinians,” asks Lebovic, “count more than Russia’s actions in Chechnya, or China’s actions in Tibet?” I answer that it does count more insofar as the United States is directly responsible for it. The U.S. does subsidize Israel’s actions. In the eyes of much of the world, this makes it a party to the conflict, sharing fully in the responsibility. No such support was given to Russia in Chechnya or China in Tibet. As Israel’s universally recognized patron, the United States has a right to protect its reputation and to disassociate itself from acts that incur moral condemnation and that inculcate sentiments of revenge.

On the subsidies question, I think there is a strong case for getting something from the subsidies America showers on Israel or, that failing, withdrawing them. At some \$23,000 per year for each Jewish family in Israel, the subsidy *is* extravagant, and also improper given Israel’s relatively high standard of living.¹⁶ Sanctions against Israel (something I did not take up in the book) are a different matter. I agree that Israel has a right to its security and self-preservation, though that is not a license to do anything it likes. I would not sanction it in the ways now so familiar from U.S. diplomacy, in which the U.S. seeks the financial suffocation of its adversaries (at this writing, well under way in the cases of Russia and Iran). I oppose boycotts of Israeli academics, as of Russian, Iranian, and Palestinian academics. But a reasonable approach to the conflict must recognize that Israel holds its right to security and self-preservation on no better ground than that enjoyed by the people it subjects. “What basis for compromise exists,” asks Lebovic, “between perpetrators and victims?” I say, for each to recognize the natural rights of the other, and for each to offer the other as much security and prosperity as they can, without injury to their core interests. Is there some other way to break the syndrome, so pronounced in the tragic history of both peoples, in which victims become perpetrators?¹⁷

As noted, I take the prospects for such a reconciliation as practically nil; the consequential issue in U.S.-Israeli relations is not the prospect of a settlement of the Palestinian problem, and certainly not serious U.S. pressure on Israel to change its approach, but rather the prospect of a U.S. war against Iran. That, as it were, is where ugly gets uglier. I hold that Israeli and Saudi solicitation for a U.S. war against the Shia Crescent should be rejected, that a war against Iran, a nation three times bigger than Iraq, would be the height of folly for the United States. But today’s agitation for a showdown with Iran is just the latest installment of America’s war on Israel’s mortal enemies. For twenty years, the Israeli and neoconservative argument for dealing with Iraq, Syria, and Iran has been that they are terrorist states, that every means fair or foul should be used to undermine them or to overthrow them. Then, when the United States does undertake these things, on their advice, they say, ‘we had little or nothing to do with it.’ They also say that the United States and Israel should be inseparable, with no daylight between them; does it not follow from this that Israel’s role should be absolutely central to U.S. policy? It is difficult to understand how a commitment to Israel so far reaching in the abstract should play no role in explaining anything concretely.

Kaufman and Lebovic were especially critical of my attribution of responsibility for the Iraq War. I was in course of arguing that the security of Israel was more important than thirst for oil as a motive for the war, but that this question, however resolved, did not impair the obvious and commanding responsibility for the war

¹⁶ Whitney Webb, “US Military Aid to Israel Set to Exceed \$3.8B, or \$23,000 Per Year for Every Jewish Family Living in Israel,” *MintPress News*, 3 August 2018.

¹⁷ A lucid explication of the phenomenon of “victims turned predators,” relying on the work of Erich Fromm, is George Soros, *The Bubble of American Supremacy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

of George Bush and Dick Cheney. For them, I wrote, neither explanation satisfies: “They were American militarists bred in the heartland. They are fairly considered as the pawns of nothing but their own illusions” (109). Lebovic inverts the plain meaning of this attribution; Kaufman regards it as a grave transgression. But to say of someone that he is sincere but deluded, that he is animated by righteous convictions that are in fact mistaken, is no insult. The two delusions I charged against Bush and Cheney were “unlimited faith in the transformative promise of military power to bestow freedom and democracy,” and “exaggerated fears of an enemy they demonized.” That does not attack their character; it critiques their reasoning and their appreciation of the world, hardly an act of *lèse-majesté*. If this be deemed a seditious libel, it seems legitimate to claim truth as a defense. Does not the record show that their faith in military power was misplaced? Does it not show that they exaggerated the peril from Saddam’s non-existent nuclear weapons program?

The Israel Lobby was, historically, mostly Jewish. Support for Israel’s policies depended, in the words of an Israeli academic cited by Thomas Friedman, “on the tireless work by hundreds of thousands of Jews—Democrats and Republicans, most of them non-Orthodox—who are passionately mobilized to enhance Israeli’s security and prosperity with their money, time and talent.”¹⁸ Recognition of this fact is hardly inconsistent with noting Israel’s broader support within America. I did cite opinion polls showing that Americans sympathize with Israel over the Palestinians by a whopping 54 to 19 margin, arguing that “what really matters for U.S. policy is not the Jews but the vast millions of Protestants, Catholics, and non-believers who sympathize with the Israeli position against the Palestinians”—an affinity I put down mainly to “the memory of the disastrous Palestinian adoption of terrorism—a course that, as intended, drew attention to their plight, but also brought their cause profound moral discredit” (49). (These statements are inconsistent with the tendentious portrait that Kaufman and Lebovic draw of my position; they are ignored in both reviews.)

Undoubtedly, Christian evangelicals are a hugely important redoubt for Israel in U.S. public opinion, especially in the southern states. Netanyahu’s recent declaration that Israel could dispense entirely with the favor of American Jewry, relying instead on Israel’s support among the evangelicals, is not entirely to be believed, but does attest to the political importance of the Christian Zionists. Unfortunately, the theological commitments of the *Left Behind* folks (“Let’s hasten the time when the earth opens up”) are of obvious hair-raising danger if taken as the basis of policy; some eighteenth-century skepticism about religious superstition is surely necessary as an antidote. I do not agree with the neoconservative view of Israel’s security requirements, but it is a far more respectable position than one based on the Book of Revelation. My critics will doubtless be glad to hear that I do not exclude the Christian evangelicals for responsibility for the Iraq catastrophe. I am even happy to spread the blame to leading Democrats and to foreign leaders, like Tony Blair. But to focus on these characters alone, to the neglect of the attending chorus, would not give credit where credit is due. Opinion polls showing that American Jews supported the Iraq War by a lesser percentage than all Americans attest to the overall good sense of American Jewry, but it cannot be seriously maintained that this position was typical of the organized pro-Israel lobbies in Washington or of the major media outlets,

¹⁸ Thomas L. Friedman, “Israel to American Jews: You Just Don’t Matter,” *New York Times*, 12 July 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/12/opinion/israel-american-jews-benjamin-netanyahu.html>.

then in the grip of the neoconservatives. Nor does the position of those who opposed the war eliminate the responsibility of those who supported it.¹⁹

Kaufman cites Brzezinski as a sober voice on American strategy; perhaps his testimony on Israel and the Lobby also deserves attention. Brzezinski found the accusations against Mearsheimer and Walt's *Israel Lobby* to be without foundation, objected to the equation between criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism, saw "the massive aid to Israel" as "a huge entitlement that enriches the relatively prosperous Israelis at the cost of the American taxpayer," and bemoaned the shift in U.S. Middle Eastern policy "from relative impartiality (which produced the Camp David agreement), to increasing partiality in favor of Israel, to essentially the adoption of the Israeli perspective on the Israeli-Arab conflict." Stifling the needed debate, he concluded, "is in the interest of those who have done well in the absence of it," and to that interest he attributed the "outraged reaction" to Mearsheimer and Walt.²⁰

Kaufman alleges that I impugn the motives and loyalty of people who see things differently, and that I allege a big conspiracy darker than anything Oliver Stone ever imagined. I deny both allegations (as Mearsheimer and Walt denied the similar allegations against them). Those who state, across the U.S. political system, that the U.S. and Israeli interests are fundamentally harmonious and that the United States should work closely with Israeli in securing joint aims, are open in their pleadings. They have been open in denouncing Iraq, Syria, and Iran as terrorist states. They say the course they recommend—yesterday, overthrowing the Iraqi regime, today, overthrowing Assad and suffocating Iran—is the course dictated by American interests and ideals. I disagree with these views, seeing peril to American interests and ideals in the course they recommend, but I contest their argument, not their motives and loyalty. Unfortunately, it is impossible to contest that argument without receiving in reply a tremendous amount of abuse, and every prominent figure who has done so has gotten that treatment.

Neoconservatives maintain that Israel should be central to U.S. foreign policy but is not; surely it does not violate everything decent to maintain the contrary view: that Israel is central but should not be.

Historical Reconstructions

Lebovic is pretty tough on my various omissions and logical foibles. When I do not include something he regards as important, he seems to suggest that I am suppressing it. Apparently, too, my efforts render nugatory

¹⁹ A lot of evidence suggests that the major pro-Likudnik groups (especially AIPAC and the big political donors, like Sheldon Adelson) are *not* representative of American Jewry today; arguably, there was a big gap even in 2003. Intensity of belief and commitment, however, matters greatly in determining political influence. While the identity between AIPAC and the political allegiances of American Jews is indeed open to question, political calculation in Washington obviously imputes a far greater power to the pro-Likudnik view than to the anti-Likudnik view. There are brave Jewish dissenters to the Likudniks, to whom I look for enlightenment on these questions, but their political weight in America and Israel has unfortunately been pretty marginal.

²⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Dangerous Exemption: Why Should the Israel Lobby Be Immune From Criticism?" *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2006), 63-64. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

any attempt to make sense of U.S. foreign policy. My book places the scholarly enterprise itself in peril. Even the laws of cause and effect are threatened.

The questions Lebovic asks in his penultimate paragraph—“Can international cooperation thrive in the absence of U.S. leadership,” etc., are good ones, but to say that the book is bereft of discussion on these points is passing strange. He may not like the answers I give to these questions, but to say that I do not address any of them is just not so.

On Afghanistan, he writes that I ignore the attempted negotiations of the Bush administration with the Taliban. But those negotiations were never about the ways of exploring a separation between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the alternative course I recommend. My view is that the Bush administration did not think the Taliban would accept the demands, and did not want them to, as the administration was convinced at the outset that both groups had to be wiped out. The force of Lebovic’s criticism rests on the assumption that Bush, Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were seriously looking for a diplomatic way out—one focused on hitting al-Qaeda but not the overthrow of the Taliban. I think this is belied by their known opinions at the time and their subsequent actions. We are to understand that this sincere search for a diplomatic approach sprang up when administration officials were counting by fives and sevens, not by ones or twos, the number of wars in contemplation.

North Korean cheating on uranium enrichment, a different path to the bomb that the Agreed Framework had seemed to foreclose, was definitely an issue to be raised with them in 2001. But it was also a manageable issue—their covert work was at an early stage—and might well have been solved by diplomatic means. By the time the U.S. brought its charges against North Korea, ending in a screaming match, both sides had failed in their obligations under the agreement. From the beginning, the dominant approach of the Bush administration (with Secretary of State Colin Powell a mild though ineffectual dissenter) was to call the whole thing off, instead of seeking to revive it. The 25-year record of U.S.-North Korean negotiations has innumerable twists and turns, which continue, but there was always a choice between unremitting pressure (draconian economic sanctions, threats of preventive war, all looking toward regime change) and the path of diplomacy. The former course was followed by Bush II, with the well-known positive consequences (North Korean acquisition of the bomb, a looming intercontinental ballistic missile threat). The course the U.S. followed, helped along by special interests, accomplished at the end the precise opposite of the outcome proclaimed at the beginning.²¹ It seems appropriate to remind people of that.

Lebovic says that I hold the U.S. “*directly* responsible, by implication” for the high civilian death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan. One wonders how any formulation can be both “implied” and “*direct*,” but no matter. The larger point (ignored by Lebovic) is the contrast between the American way of war, ostensibly super friendly to civilians, and the actual results. I argue that this sanitized view of war did not survive contact with the enemy, and that a “stricter view of *jus in bello*, perfumed by technological advance, allowed a more expansive

²¹ On the role of special interests, see Gareth Porter, “How Cheney and His Allies Created the North Korea Nuclear Missile Crisis,” *Truthout*, 28 December 2017. The best short review of Bush’s record is Leon V. Sigal, “What Have Twenty-Five Years of Nuclear Diplomacy Achieved?” in Kyong-ok Do (Kyōng-ok To), Jeong-Ho Roh (Chōng-ho No), and Henri Féron, eds. *Pathways to a Peaceful Korean Peninsula: Denuclearization, Reconciliation, and Cooperation* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2016).

view of *jus ad bellum*, with tragic results” (94). The enemy was especially wicked in its profuse use of car bombs against civilian markets in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the United States is not exempt from criticisms about the effect of smart bombs. During the recent air campaigns against Ramadi, Mosul, and Raqqa, the U.S. military seriously maintained the pretense that civilian casualties were practically nil, when it was obvious that the contrary was true, and had to be true, as inhering in the nature of high-tech urban warfare against entrenched defenders. Kurdish intelligence, according to former Iraqi Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, estimated that more than 40,000 civilians were killed in Mosul.²² Appreciation of the true costs usually emerges after the fact, buried in historical reconstructions, but the Pentagon fiction normally passes with little questioning by the media in the course of these operations.

I want the U.S. military to operate within the laws of war, and I am proud that so many military officers take that injunction seriously. But in practice, as Chase Madar observes, the U.S. attachment to *jus in bello* became “less a restraint on force than a license and a lubricant” (238n98).²³ There is, too, an obvious gap, a veritable chasm, between what was promised at the outset of these wars and what in fact occurred. A great many writers have explored this disjunction—often superbly, as in the work of Andrew Bacevich, Tom Engelhardt, and, most recently, C.J. Chivers.²⁴ “According to the bullhorns and depending on the war,” as Chivers puts it, “America’s military campaigns abroad would satisfy justice, displace tyrants, keep violence away from Western soil, spread democracy, foster development, prevent sectarian war, protect populations, reduce corruption, bolster women’s rights, decrease the international heroin trade, check the influence of extreme religious ideology, create Iraqi and Afghan security forces that would be law-abiding and competent and finally build nations that might peacefully stand on their own in a global world, all while discouraging other would-be despots and terrorists.”²⁵ Apart from a few dead tyrants, none of it worked out as advertised; burnt-out cities and abandoned projects mark the burial ground of these fatuous promises.

Lebovic alleges that I ignore Assad’s chemical attacks. That is a subject of much obfuscation and propaganda, and the short answer to Lebovic is that I do not accept the attributions of responsibility universally alleged by western governments and media against Assad. I think that portrait it is inconsistent with the attitudes of the people who emerged from the rubble of jihadi occupied zones, who by wide margins hated their fanatical occupiers and welcomed their liberation by the Syrian government and its allies. I do not credit the impartiality of the White Helmets, who worked hand in glove with al-Qaeda affiliated or kindred groups

²² Patrick Cockburn, “The Massacre of Mosul,” *The Independent*, 19 July 2017. Omar Mohammed, an Iraqi historian best known as “Mosul Eye,” maintains that “many tens of thousands were killed during the fight for Mosul”—a figure, as Samuel Oakford notes, that well exceeds other independent tallies. Samuel Oakford, “Counting the Dead in Mosul,” *The Atlantic*, 5 April 2018. See also Azmat Khan and Amand Gopal, “The Uncounted,” *New York Times Magazine*, 16 November 2017, for the unreality of official estimates.

²³ Chase Madar, “Short Cuts,” *London Review of Books*, 2 July 2015.

²⁴ See especially Andrew J. Bacevich, *America’s War for the Greater Middle East* (New York: Random House, 2016), and Tom Engelhardt, *Shadow Government: Surveillance, Secret Wars, and a Global Security State in a Single-Superpower World* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014). To similar effect, see also Daniel A. Sjursen, *Ghost Riders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge* (Lebanon: ForeEdge, 2015).

²⁵ C.J. Chivers, “War Without End,” *New York Times*, 8 August 2018.

during the war. The supposed sarin attack on Douma was shown to be a fabrication, in interviews with the presiding physician where the attack supposedly took place (a fact deemed unfit to print in America's leading newspapers).²⁶ Another near-unmentionable in accounts of the Syrian war is Assad's popularity as the victor in the struggle, including among Sunnis. Lebovic's portrait of the Sunnis (customarily rated at 65 percent of the population, not the 75 percent he states) seems to assume that the Sunnis were overwhelmingly with the jihadists, and that the cause of self-determination was best served by arming them against the regime. That depiction ignores Assad's alliances with Sunni groups and the substantial support the regime now enjoys from all sectors of the population. As between the jihadists, who occupied innumerable suburbs and rained their mortars and bullets against civilians in government-held territory, and the regime, which resisted the insurrectionaries, the majority of Syrian opinion is with the government.²⁷ No, this cannot be, say the interventionists; Assad is evil and must be overthrown; that failing, Syria must be denied access to funds for rebuilding. Probably the U.S. will persist in these cruel and unnecessary punishments; grave difficulties attend even its cooperation with Russia in the return of refugees, an obvious humanitarian responsibility, but one that is of marginal importance to those intent on yet another collective punishment.²⁸

Lebovic writes that I concede Chinese naval superiority in "the Western Pacific." I wrote "within the first island chain," a different claim (109). None of the reviewers appears troubled by American war plans against China, though as I show they press very hard on China's vital interests. Whether free government survives in Asia is seen by Kaufman to rest on the U.S. military's determination to be dominant in the commons that impinge on China. I contest this proposition, think that it can only produce extravagant expense and heightened insecurity, and propose an alternative naval strategy of "sea denial" rather than "sea control." The ease with which the muscular internationalists contemplate war with China—it could happen, Eliot Cohen concedes in *The Big Stick*—is surely cause for grave concern.²⁹ They blithely dismiss the United States' vulnerabilities if it goes to the wall with China, making for a war that both sides would inevitably lose. Such a war, with its 1914-like potential, would do no favors for free government in Asia, the survival of which, at the end of the day, does rest on the Asians themselves. If they remain proud and resilient, China cannot deprive them of it.

Schake also criticizes my use of history. She gracefully concedes the existence of crystalline arguments and an agreeable style. She shares some of my misgivings with regard to American hubris. She understands that it is no derogation of the United States to "yearn for a more modest American foreign policy, one respectful of the United States' philosophical heritage and other countries' unique histories." She especially likes the zone of peace in Europe and Asia. (I like it, too. My objective is not to dismantle it but to put it on a firmer

²⁶ See, among others, Robert Fisk, "The Search for Truth in the Rubble of Douma," *The Independent*, 17 April 2018.

²⁷ On Syrian opinion, see Turkish journalist Fehim Tastekin, "What Will Be the Cost of Aleppo Victory for Damascus?," *Al-Monitor*, 16 January 2017, and Robert Worth, "Aleppo After the Fall," *New York Times Magazine*, 24 May 2017.

²⁸ Maxim A. Suchkov, "Russia Eyes Refugee Return as Centerpiece of Next Policy Move in Syria," *Al-Monitor*, 8 August 2018.

²⁹ Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power and the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

foundation.) Despite these concessions, she appears to share the assumption of the others that the RICs can only be held down by the threat of force, and that this threat of force produces the peace. I argue, to the contrary, that the continual threat of war, over interests dear to the RICs, will over time lead to war.

Schake emphasizes that there is very little balancing against American power, pointing to the world's overall acceptance of American hegemony. I did devote much attention to the motives that led allies to attach themselves to the United States. For the fifty odd states within the American system, I concluded, it has indeed been a pretty good deal. Though not without elements of U.S. coercion, it has mostly been voluntarily accepted and often welcomed (35-39, 44-46, 51-52). The Europeans—freaked out now by Trump, as they had previously been freaked out by Bush—may yet prove passive in their resistance, but I think there are more sources of resistance toward U.S. hegemony within this near union than Schake seems to credit. U.S. enforcement of sanctions on Iran (telling the Europeans that if they trade with Iran they will be embargoed by the United States) is just another way of saying that Europe cannot have an independent foreign policy, that protection under the U.S. umbrella means obedience to its dictates. That posture violates the classic bromides about free and equal nations in a democratic union. And yet it is becoming emblematic, making the U.S. alliance system more nearly resemble “one military empire ruled from one capital” than the “concert of free nations held together by a realization of their common interests and acting together by consent,” as Walter Lippmann posed the choice for America in the 1940s (45). It may be that the Europeans will put up with U.S. browbeating, but it is also true that they are furious about it, and rightly so. In vain do they look for support for their position among America's self-styled Atlanticists. The cords that bind states in a union seldom get snapped all at once, but the phenomenon should not be submerged under the pleasing illusion that the United States' old democratic allies think that America remains exemplary. Europe, like the rest of the world, does not yearn for America to be its schoolmarm, and it resents U.S. efforts to coerce it and to spy on it.

The biggest confusion of the liberal internationalist position (of which Schake gives a reasonable representation here) is its conflation of the U.S. alliance system with the world order, as if the West were the whole of the world's civilizations. As Huntington emphasized, it is far from being that (33-34). Only by this conflation would it be possible to say that there is so little balancing. Back in the 1990s, when Russia was too disorganized to balance, and China too poor, that theme—the relative absence of balancing behavior—made sense as a depiction of America's world position. Now that we are supposedly under assault by these “revisionist” states, the acknowledgment is due that balancing has in fact taken place. The emerging system—the U.S. and its allies arrayed against the RICs—is not the pacified international system of allies gratified and enemies reconciled that was projected in the 1990s. Over the last few years, it has come to resemble the worst phases of the Cold War. The U.S. system has changed in other respects. Through most of the Cold War, the Middle East was subordinated to Europe in U.S. priorities; today, as the Iran sanctions show, Europe is very much subordinated to the Middle East. Theorists of the American system who think only in terms of the near union (that is, the western alliance represented by the G-7), and consign the Middle East and the Global South to a footnote, badly misread the dynamic.³⁰ Truth be told, what Africans, Latin Americans, Arabs, Persians, Hindus, and most Asian peoples think about U.S. foreign policy is summarily ignored in the organs of U.S. mass communication. If you pay attention, you will see that these folks often have some big issues

³⁰ Cf. G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

with it. The establishment's idea of 'world opinion' is a solipsistic construction that usually manages to leave out four-fifths of the world.

Any position that invokes the past against the present, seeing merit in an older tradition that has been abandoned, runs the risk in clinging to the carcasses of dead policies. I agree with Schake's admonition that the Founders' policies cannot be set in granite and that the earth belongs to the living. But she also argues 1) that the Founders were in fact divided on the very points at issue in our argument, and 2) that they believed that American values were universal and ought to be propagated. What her argument fails to register is that one of the central values they propagated was the right to national independence. None said: free government is grand; therefore, we have a right to impose it everywhere. Considering the prospects of free government in South America, Jefferson wrote that "they have the right, and we none, to choose for themselves." Hamilton argued, apropos the French Revolution's call to overthrow the aristocracies and monarchies of Europe, that it was "repugnant to the rights of nations, to the true principles of liberty, [and] to the freedom of opinion of mankind" (75). The conception of international order disclosed in these remarks was part of the universal creed they championed, and it is in flat contradiction to neoconservative nostrums that tout regime change as the U.S. mission.

One key idea not in contradiction to their outlook is the notion that free states should join in union. Would either Washington or Jefferson, Schake asks, "have argued against free people banding together to defend themselves?" Not in principle, I argue, as "union and independence" was the keystone of America's early policies. In my previous book, *Union, Nation, or Empire*, I argued that the great but unrecognized source of internationalist ideas in the twentieth century was to be found in the heritage of the federal union, and I remain friendly to that conception "The idea that a union was required to arrest the malign forces of anarchy and despotism," I wrote, apropos America's choice in 1940, "was no late arrival to American history but rather the oldest idea in the American approach to international relations; on it the republic had been built."³¹ I return to that theme at various points of *Republic in Peril*, writing that "union and independence" remains a serviceable motto today. "Unlike other nationalists, I think that union must be a fundamental symbol of American purposes in the world; unlike conventional internationalists, I believe that the idea of union instantiated in America's system of 'liberal hegemony' is not the only one available" (160, 44-45). To reject the establishment's version of the union, with its emphasis on U.S. military superiority and the accumulation of protectorates, is not a rejection of the principle of union as such. I go on to elaborate what that union might entail in my description of a new internationalism (chapter five, *passim*, but esp. 168-172.)

Contra Schake, I do not say that the United States should remove itself "from policing the international commons." A key part of the new internationalism I propose is to address those commons (21, 170). I dispute, however, that a commons is to be governed autocratically. To reject that conception, especially marked in regnant ideas of U.S. naval power, is not to disavow responsibility for the commons but to assert that the policing of it must be shared. The U.S. view seeks military dominance in all the commons—space, cyberspace, narrow seas, and the rest. At the same time, it ignores the challenges of climate change and is oblivious to the health of the oceans. In these and other respects, its approach to "commonality" is to exempt itself from a decent respect for rights and interests of others.

³¹ Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire*, 366. See also, pp. 6-12. The theme is also broached in my *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), xiv, 271, 287.

Schake fairly associates my views with Kennan and the “off-shore balancers,” but goes on to call the book “an extension of Paul Kennedy’s imperial overstretch argument, except that rather than bankrupting the great power, empire corrodes the very institutions and practices that created it.” The arguments here, of course, are not alternatives; both can be true, and I think are true. Imperial overstretch is indeed a path that leads to a condition of insolvency akin to bankruptcy. And liberty acquires an empire by which it is itself threatened. (Two paths converge in a wood; we take the one most traveled by.) Schake’s rendition of my argument on this point is also quite peculiar. I do not say that militarism has overtaken “civil society” in America. I say that it has overtaken the government and would include in that not only the vested interests of the national security state in exaggerating foreign threats but the broader belief in the efficacy of force as a solution to foreign and domestic ills—the great proposition to which the American state is now dedicated. The surveillance state, erected on the specter of external threats, does not extinguish liberty in America, but it surely threatens it over time.

I understand that those who support and enact these policies are often animated by a lofty sense of duty, but I have also come to understand that policymakers who by their lights seek the best alternative are capable of making some pretty bad choices. Broad cultural understandings pitting good against evil, and belief in the utility of force, are I think at the root of America’s problem, but it matters when they also get expressed in entrenched institutions, supported by powerful interests and enforced by well-paid cadres of true believers. Dwight Eisenhower saw that danger, as have many other writers in a republican and liberal vein, but one cannot raise it today without it being translated into an attack on everybody’s good faith.

Odds and Ends

Kaufman criticizes me for ignoring the scholarly output of the muscular internationalists. “There are no references to Arthur Waldon, Michael Pillsbury, Gordon Chang, Aaron Friedberg, or Robert Kaplan on China; Ephraim Karsh, Reuel Marc Gerect, or Bernard Lewis on the Middle East; Ilan Berman, Gary Kasparov, David Satter, or Richard Pipes on Russia and the Soviet Union; Mark Moyar, Walter Russell Mead, Victor Davis Hanson, Robert Kagan, Robert Lieber, or Henry Nau on American Foreign policy.” I’m glad he mentioned these fellows, as I have read a ton of their stuff over the years. Two comments: I do cite Friedberg and Mead, contrary to this statement, and Robert Kagan is all over my book as an object of criticism. It is difficult to understand how his presence could have been overlooked.³² I focus on Kagan because I think that he gives the best statement of the “neoconservative” or “muscular internationalist” viewpoint, but a lot of the writers Kaufman cites could stand in for Kagan’s perspective.

As for my overall citation practices, the main constraint was on page length. As it is, the notes comprise nearly 20,000 words, and I did provide a select bibliography. The veritable tsunami of scholarly and journalistic output on the questions I take up, however, forbade a minutely-detailed bibliographical apparatus. Doubtless, if I had had more space, I would have been more inclined to cite authors supportive of my theses, rather than those who ridicule them. On that point of etiquette, I suppose I am guilty as charged, to be convicted *in absentia* (though with innumerable hordes of other authors, including Kaufman, joining me in the slammer). I also plead in partial mitigation that the field does not just consist of Kaufman’s Russia hawks, China hawks,

³² The index to *Republic in Peril* shows entries to Kagan at 111, 148, 224n7, 248-249n55, 249n60, 253n33, 258n36, and 260n43, several of them extended commentaries.

and Iran hawks. Those looking for a breath of fresh air, and a representative sampling of diverse perspectives in the field, in contrast to these tired old voices, should take a look at the author's list (some forty strong) in *Chaos in the Liberal Order*, a new compendium on Trump's foreign policy.³³

Lebovic writes: "For Hendrickson, then, Trump is not an anomaly. Trump himself 'may turn out to be the most profound legacy of the 'liberal world order'" (9). In the quoted passage, I said that "the imperial presidency, now entrusted to Trump, may turn out to be the most profound legacy of the 'liberal world order.'" There's a difference. The point is that Americans have created an office of tremendous powers, especially with respect to the use of force abroad, whose occupancy by Trump poses dangers unforeseen by those who supported expanded presidential powers in the first place. Is that not a problematic legacy? Schake's objection on this score is too clever by half: support enlarged presidential powers in the use of force, she says, lest crisis come, and their expansion is pressed yet further. But Trump can see that logic as well as his critics; that would seem to make an argument for checks and balances.

Nau calls me a libertarian nationalist: "He is a libertarian nationalist convinced that the use of force in foreign policy is the enemy of domestic liberty and that a world of nations whatever their domestic ideologies is a stable world." While I would not reject that term out of hand, I describe my position as one of republican liberalism (145-150, 251n19). As I emphasize (following Michael Lind), a republican political economy means attempts to rectify the extreme inequality (and declining middle class) that our system of globalization has fostered.³⁴ Such inequalities are a threat to republican values and imperil the integrity of democratic institutions (114). Though friendly to libertarian critiques of the prison industrial complex and to America's manic resort to coercive solutions, and hostile, like libertarians and other centrists, to Right and Left versions of identity politics, I am not a libertarian in other respects. I reject the Reagan formula of ever lower taxes and regulation. I think climate change is a serious peril that needs to be swiftly addressed (both points being registered in the book). Among views not registered there, as not germane to the subject matter, but freely offered here: I think the U.S. needs a tax on financial transactions, repelling the rentier profits of the robo-traders. I favor some forms of gun control, as of universal health care. I deplore the absurd license given to oligarchy by *Citizens United*. As a result of these eclectic views, I am admittedly difficult to place on the political spectrum, a man without a party. My master passion, as it were, has become concordance with noninterventionist critiques on both left and right, among self-styled progressives, conservatives, realists, and

³³ Robert Jervis, Francis J. Gavin, Joshua Rovner, and Diane Labrosse, eds., *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), which includes contributions from political scientists, historians, and IR scholars. I am at a loss to describe "the field," but I grew up with voices in diplomatic history far more critical of the U.S. record than is reflected in this roundtable. See, for example, the distinguished contributors to Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, eds., *The New American Empire: A 21st Century Teach-In on U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: New Press, 2005), or the diverse array of often critical voices in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). John Lewis Gaddis, one of the elder deans in the historiography of U.S. foreign policy, has held views broadly conformable to those of my four critics—see, for example, his *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)—but Gaddis long considered his outlook to be a minority one within the professoriate, as illustrated by the raucous entries in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *America in the World: The Historiography of US Foreign Relations since 1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁴ Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy and the American Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

libertarian nationalists. I devoutly wish that these people could get together and overcome their domestic squabbles, making for a real Peace Party.

While a nationalist in certain respects—every nation has important responsibilities to its own citizens, who ought to be the first care of its affections—I do also argue for a new internationalism, and I put limits at several points in the book on reach of nationalism. “It is one thing to defend one’s fatherland,” as Benjamin Constant observed, “another to attack people who themselves have a fatherland to defend.” (142). Contra Nau, I don’t think that “a world of nations whatever their domestic ideologies is a stable world.” It could be, I would say, but it probably will not be. The world we inhabit, which has regimes of different ideologies and inextinguishable nationalisms, may yet turn very violent, and is almost sure to do so if the advice of the muscular internationalists is followed. The contrary path I recommend, recalling the ethos of an older internationalism, entails acceptance of the rules of reciprocity with America’s putative enemies. Do I think this sudden onset of common sense is probable? Of course not. Far more likely that America will follow the well-trod road to ruin.

Nau also writes: “Neither of us is comfortable with a realist or liberal internationalist world which calls for a ‘centralized enforcer’ like a hegemon, great power concert, or universal international institution.” I have trouble comprehending this. While I do reject the proposition that the world needs a centralized enforcer, I also identify with the “liberal realist” tradition in IR (101-102). I call for renewed respect for the United Nation Charter (169). I endorse great power concert as against U.S. military supremacy as the proper antidote for the diseases of the Westphalian system (191-193). In general, I am friendly to international institutions, but criticize certain innovations (like the International Criminal Court) and think that all of them need reform (96-97). I also favor U.S. participation in the international economic institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO), but think they are badly in need of a rule that discourages massive trade imbalances.

Schake writes that responsible critics of U.S. intervention, like Micah Zenko, acknowledge the success stories, whereas I deal only with the failures. What success stories would those be, I ask. I examine at some length the 1991 Gulf War, Bosnia (crediting partial success there), Afghanistan, Iraq (again), Libya, Syria, Yemen, among other theaters of the war on terror, with brief discussion of other interventions in the 1990s and before. Zenko is a very trenchant critic of recent interventions, and the article from him that Schake cites doesn’t exhibit any successful ones. If he or Schake could point me in the direction of some, I would love to hear about it.

I had to laugh when reading Schake’s comment that the outlook of “Hendrickson and others” is in the ascendancy. Washington is in an absolute frenzy of sanctions, against practically everybody, in total opposition to my viewpoint. From the vantage point of ‘the swamp,’ at least, ‘a despised and neglected minority’ would be a more accurate estimate. While I do have a few points in common with Trump (let’s get along with Russia, OK?), I sharply criticize Trump’s posture of belligerent nationalism and, for reasons indicated earlier, find his overall posture incoherent and dangerous. Kaufman objects to my calling Trump a demagogue—I wrote that Trump “outdoes even Cleon in unscrupulousness, though not in eloquence.” I fail to see how adepts in the history of politics could regard him in any other light, whatever his literary and other merits as a demonic commander of the discourse. Yes, I am mortified by many of his tweets, but consider that my right as an American citizen to so feel. Such mortification, after all, has become something like the national pastime (and is catching on big-time elsewhere, as baseball once did).

Oddly, I have come to think that the Democrats' line of opposition to Trump—that he is a traitor who colluded with the Russians to win the 2016 election, that Russia mounted a Pearl Harbor-like attack on American democracy—tops out even Trump on the scale of demagoguery, which is no mean feat. Each party makes external enemies the villain for domestic discontent. Each competes to throw ever tougher sanctions on the world, differing only in who shall receive the worst. The United States has a president who, in personal belief, has the convictions of a militarist, and the chief complaint of “the resistance” is that he is insufficiently hawkish. The United States hurtles toward collision with a host of enemies, infused with a sense of outraged honor, but with very little appreciation of the dangers posed by force.

I do reckon that, on a straight up vote posing my new internationalism against muscular internationalism, the American people would greatly incline to my view, but they do not feel very strongly about the question, and they are easily led into ill-conceived adventures. In matters of war and peace, they seem always to come late to their repentance.