

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXI-9

**Richard Drake.** *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism.*

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 INTRODUCTION BY LLOYD GARDNER, EMERITUS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
 

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Richard Drake's biography of Charles Austin Beard resumes the debate over Beard's work that has been underway ever since he published *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson in 1913.<sup>1</sup> That in itself is somewhat odd because economic interpretations of American politics were at the forefront in the Progressive Era. Nonetheless, Beard touched a raw nerve with the book. Columbia University President Nicholas Murray Butler supposedly answered the question, 'Have you seen Beard's last book?' with the response, 'I hope so.' The controversy over Beard's iconoclastic view of the Founding Fathers did not end his academic career at Columbia, nor did opposition to America's participation in World War I, as was sometimes believed. Instead, he left the university in protest against the firing of two professors who did oppose the war and had spoken out against it. He never again held an academic appointment at a university.

Instead, Beard became an engaged commentator on public affairs as well as a committed historian whose massive books, *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927) and *America in Midpassage* (1939), both of which were written with his wife, Mary Ritter Beard, were bestsellers and selections of the *Book of the Month Club*.<sup>2</sup> One could argue that during these years Charles Austin Beard was the unchallenged leader of the profession—but not just the American Historical Association, for he was elected president of *both* the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association. The Beards set forth their credo in the very first introductory sentence of *The Rise of American Civilization*: "The history of a civilization, if intelligently conceived, may be an instrument of civilization."<sup>3</sup>

What they meant was that studying life as a whole, instead of individual parts under a microscope, as they wrote in the next sentence, "ought to come nearer than any partial history to the requirements of illumination." But there is an additional way to read this credo—as a call for the historian to come down out of the ivory tower and do battle across the castle moat. And that is what Beard did from the time he studied at Oxford University where he never sat for an exam, but along with two other Americans helped to found Ruskin Hall in 1899, later Ruskin College, which is affiliated with Oxford University. Ruskin Hall's mission, said its founders, was to give working class students without the usual qualifications the opportunity to receive an education like that which was reserved for the British elite in those days.

John Ruskin, the reformer and art historian, was a key influence on Beard's outlook on life and society. The anti-modernist Ruskin was hardly the only influence on Beard at the time. Somewhat surprisingly, then, as Richard Drake points out, Beard was attracted for a time to what Bernard Semmel wrote about memorably as the connections between British social reformers and imperialism in his path breaking book, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914*.<sup>4</sup> (1960). Then, however, he encountered John A. Hobson's, *Imperialism*, a famous critique of capitalism as the main force behind the imperial race that began around 1875, and that book became the principal intellectual influence on his writing thereafter.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Austin Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

<sup>2</sup> Beard and Mary Ritter Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1927, 1930). Beard and Beard, *America in Midpassage* (New York: The Macmillan Company: 1939).

<sup>3</sup> Beard and Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, vii

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin; 1960).

<sup>5</sup> John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1902).

Hobson was not a Marxist-Leninist in his interpretation, however, seeing imperialism as a choice, rather than a circumstance, of capitalism. As Drake relates, *Imperialism* became “a foundational book in Beard’s mental development as a historian” (49). But there was still some social-imperialist thought lingering in Beard’s mind. Unlike Hobson, who opposed World War I, Beard ardently supported Wilson’s decision to enter the war. “Despite the many disagreements that [Nicholas Murray] Butler and Beard had over American history and campus politics, they both imagined the Allied cause in the war to be a civilization-saving crusade against the unparalleled evil of German militarism” (35).

Disillusion came with the revelations in the secret treaties the Allies had signed that had nothing to do with making the world safe for democracy and everything to do with parceling out Germany’s colonies, and divvying up the Ottoman Empire. And while Beard despised the Bolsheviks, it was their revelations about the secret treaties that started the historian on the revisionist path. Drake quotes Beard’s statement that “If the Bolsheviks had not torn open the secret archives of Petrograd and flung documents in the face of mankind in December 1917, these plighted war aims of the Entente Allies would have remained unknown perhaps forever and their official hypothesis would have been questioned only by the cynical at home and abroad” (71).

Then came the articles in the *American Historical Review* starting in July 1920 by Sydney B. Fay, titled “New Light on the Origins of the World War” that argued, in assessing blame for the war, that Germany was no more guilty than the Entente powers.<sup>6</sup> The treaty system and imperial rivalries were at the heart of the issue of what caused the war, not individuals like the Kaiser and the Tsar—however foolish their actions in the final July crisis may have been.

From this time on, Beard was a confirmed opponent of an interventionist foreign policy. In the mid-1930s he published two Hobson-esque books, *The Open Door at Home* and *The Idea of National Interest*.<sup>7</sup> He had had hopes that the New Deal would pursue a continentalist foreign policy, but saw President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1937 ‘Quarantine Speech’ as an admission of failure and the signal that the United States was about to embark on a new crusade. In his last conversation with a fellow revisionist, Harry Elmer Barnes, “Beard had summed up the foreign policy of Roosevelt and President Harry Truman as an exercise of perpetual war for perpetual peace” (226). The New Deal, having failed to make capitalism work in a nationalist framework, meant that the nation would become ever more dependent upon interventionist policies abroad to provide a solution to economic questions at home. Beard wrote two books that filled out many details of his argument, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940*, and the book that quarantined Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*.<sup>8</sup> Published just before his death in 1948 by the Yale University Press, the book went through four printings quickly “and received some excellent notices” (267).

But *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, with its implicit and explicit accusations of presidential deception about the way war with Japan came, was not a book that matched the times in the early Cold War. Beard could see no good reason why the United States interfered with Japan’s ‘sphere of influence’ in Asia, which he believed was no worse than what the U.S. had done in Latin America. The path to war, then, looked to him like the same one that had trapped Wilson, but as Beard saw it, Roosevelt was no naïf, and was fully conscious of the consequences of his actions. This one quotation from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson clinched the point for revisionists. It was from an entry in Stimson’s diary about the

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney Bradshaw Fay, “New Light on the Origins of the World War, I. Berlin and Vienna, to July 29,” *The American Historical Review* 25:4 (July 1920): 616-639, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/25.4.616>.

<sup>7</sup> Beard, *The Open Door at Home: A Trial Philosophy of National Interest* (New York: Macmillan, 1935); Beard, *The Idea of National Interest: An Analytical Study in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1934).

<sup>8</sup> Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940: A Study in Responsibilities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946); Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study of Appearances and Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

discussions in the Cabinet a short time before Pearl Harbor: “the question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves” (225).

Beard’s growing association with a broad assortment of Roosevelt critics placed him outside the ‘consensus’ school of American history that dominated Cold War society and included academia. Not quite everywhere, of course. “The University of Wisconsin history department, most famously in the work of William Appleman Williams, kept faith with Beard’s economic interpretation of history, but did so as an exception to the rule of the research and the graduate work under way in most history departments by the 1950s and 1960s” (3).<sup>9</sup>

The reviewers pick up the story at this point. All three regard Drake’s biography as a timely contribution to Beard’s role as historian and critic of American imperialism; likewise all three find the book wanting in certain respects. Justin Doenecke begins his review, “To tackle a historian as prolific and complex as Charles A. Beard is a daunting task and it is to the credit of Richard Drake that he does it so well.” All three reviewers focus on his foreign policy writings, but Ryan Irwin opens his review with a question that Beard would like to have tackled, “How will future historians explain America today?” How much credit should go to Beard for predicting the failures of globalization and neoliberalism, and the rise of populist wings in both political parties? Ironically, Beard’s insistence that what drove history was the conflict “between the profiteers and the people” resembles political strategist Steve Bannon’s apocalyptic language in President Donald Trump’s inaugural address.

So Irwin asks, “Will the real Charles Beard please stand up?” Then he discusses Beard’s racism as the elephant in the room. Irwin notes Beard’s contention that sending teachers to the Philippines while thousands of “white children” in American cities were underfed and undereducated was the work not of “brute imperialists but self-destructive lunatics.” What is that but racism—a racism deeply embedded in Beard’s thinking; not only Beard’s, moreover, but in the critics of empire he drew upon for his critique of American policy. But is that racism separate from his interpretation of how decisions were made and policies advanced by American leaders? Irwin sees Beard appealing to Populist tendencies in both parties, and the Trump insistence on America First: “[I]f America First is going to settle into our collective consciousness—and change the way we think about U.S. and the World history—we would benefit from equally insightful histories about American autarky’s genealogy.”

Jerald Combs reviews Beard’s critique of Wilson’s policy in World War I and Roosevelt’s policy before World War II and his claim that neither conflict could be considered a war to save democracy, in the first instance because of the secret treaties, and in the case of World War II because it was fought with the Soviet Union as a member of the Grand Alliance—a country led by Joseph Stalin who had at the time it began been responsible for more deaths than Adolf Hitler. Combs is very troubled, however, by Drake’s reliance on one or two sources to vindicate some of his most important claims about the origins of the Cold War and the assumption that America’s “economic and military cliques” dragged the nation along that path. He notes that “Drake leaves any critical analysis of Beard to extensive quotations from other opponents of Beard, which he then quickly dismisses.” Like Irwin, Combs wonders how Beard would have regarded Trump’s foreign policies. Drake might have performed a real service by wrestling “a bit more with Beard on the topic of American imperialism amidst this ongoing debate, but given Drake’s full-throated agreement with Beard on the topic, that was probably too much to ask.”

Doenecke discusses the influence of other European thinkers on Beard’s interpretation of historical causation, as well as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in the *Federalist Papers*. Despite the sophistication of these thinkers, and Beard’s own thinking, the shock of discovering the secret treaties and other dealings among the allies led Beard to accept the

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<sup>9</sup> Full disclosure. I was a graduate student at Wisconsin from 1956-1959, and the line-up before Williams joined the faculty in 1957 was like the famous ‘Murderers’ Row’ of hitters on the New York Yankees, starting with Merrill Jensen on the Revolution, William Best Hesseltine on the Civil War Era, Howard K. Beale on the twentieth century, Merle Curti (a long-time friend of Charles and Mary Beard) on intellectual history, and Fred Harvey Harrington in the clean-up spot on diplomatic history. Williams had studied with these people after he left the Navy, and was a Wisconsin Ph.D. Further full disclosure. I was a reader for Cornell University Press on Drake’s book.

simplicities of many revisionist thinkers about the war—and to downplay Woodrow Wilson’s real efforts to mitigate the reparations demands on Germany. Drake also too easily accepts, as Combs relates in his review, the views of certain historians, such as Thomas Mahl’s arguments in *Desperate Deception*,<sup>10</sup> to substantiate Beard’s view of Roosevelt’s policies. Yet Doenecke points out that several of the arguments made in *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* have been vindicated over time. In a very real sense, the isolationists have been redeemed from stereotypes of being “fools, lunatics, potential traitors, and Nazi dupes.” And, as in the instance of the sinking of the U.S. destroyer *Greer* in September 1941, “Beard’s distinction between ‘appearances’ and ‘realities’ remains particularly telling in this regard.”

Irwin’s fear, on the other hand, is that Drake’s book leads to a re-litigation of all the debates of the 1930s. An open question, then, is what does Beard tell us—despite his racism and prosecutorial stance—about a useful past, not to avoid mistakes in building the empire, but in understanding the real challenges ahead? Beard’s AHA presidential address, “Written History as an Act of Faith,” asserted that humankind was headed towards one of three ends: chaos, totalitarianism, or some form of social democracy.<sup>11</sup> It was an act of faith to believe that it would be social democracy. What then is America’s role to be? Did Beard really believe that if the United States had opted out of World War II the path to social democracy would have been preserved? Did Beard’s disillusionment with Woodrow Wilson deaden his historical sensitivities at a critical moment in his career? Was the path Roosevelt chose the only way? As Justus Doenecke points out, in William Appleman Williams’s opinion, Beard maintained that liberal internationalism could be maintained if the United States abandoned its “frontier-expansionist” theory of history.<sup>12</sup> These are hard questions. All of the reviewers agree that Drake’s biography is a beginning point for such a discussion.

#### Participants:

**Lloyd C. Gardner** is Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers University. A Wisconsin Ph.D., he is the author or editor of more than fifteen books on American foreign policy, including *Safe For Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1984), *Approaching Vietnam* (W.W. Norton, 1988), *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Ivan R. Dee, 1995), and *The War on Leakers* (The New Press, 2016). He has been president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Affairs.

**Jerald A. Combs** (PhD, UCLA, 1964) is Professor of History Emeritus at San Francisco State University and continuing to consult there as Officer of International Articulation. He is the author of *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (University of California Press, 1970, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize by the Pulitzer Advisory Committee); *American Diplomatic History: Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations* (University of California Press, 1983), and *The History of American Foreign Policy*, 4<sup>th</sup>. ed. (M.E. Sharpe, 2012). He served as History Department Chair at San Francisco State from 1992-2000 and Dean of Undergraduate Studies from 2000-2002.

**Justus D. Doenecke** is emeritus professor of history at New College of Florida. His latest book is *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of American Entry into World War I, 1914-1917* (University Press of Kentucky, 2011). He is currently writing a sequel dealing with the United States’ role as a belligerent. His books most relevant to this review include *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Bucknell University Press, 1979); *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist*

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-44* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Beard, “Written History as an Act of Faith,” *The American Historical Review* 39:2 (January 1934): 219-231, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/39.2.219>.

<sup>12</sup> The argument is advanced in Greg Grandin’s, new book *The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019).

*Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (Hoover Archival Documentaries and Hoover Institution Press, 1990); *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); *Debating Franklin D. Roosevelt's Foreign Policies, 1933-1945* with Mark A. Stoler (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); and *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941* with John E. Wilz; 4th ed. (Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

**Ryan Irwin** is an associate professor at the University at Albany-SUNY. He is the author of *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (2012). Currently, he is writing a book called *Vast External Realm*, which explores what the Free World meant to its intellectual architects.

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REVIEW BY JERALD A. COMBS, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY, EMERITUS

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As one might surmise from the title of this book, Richard Drake has written an enthusiastically admiring biography of Charles Beard. And there is much of Beard to be admiring about. Beard had an admirable sense of social justice. As a student in Oxford, he was appalled at the contrast between wealth and poverty around him and responded by helping to establish a working man's college to be associated with the university. He was a believer in women's rights and exemplified that attitude in his work and in his relationship with his wife and collaborator, Mary Beard. He took a stand on behalf of the freedom of speech of two Columbia professors who were fired for expressing beliefs contrary to his own and he resigned from the university when his protest was ignored. In his public life he was a model of courage and rectitude.

It is more difficult to know about Beard's private life and character. He and Mary burned their papers and correspondence, so Drake has been compelled to work from Beard's publications and the correspondence received by others to write this biography. The result is more an intellectual history than an intimate portrait of his personality. Mary obviously loved Charles dearly and denied that the fierce combatant that people saw in his writings and public debates defined his private persona. When Matthew Josephson, a fellow leftist historian, neighbor, and friend, published a reminiscence of Sunday dinner parties with "Uncle Charlie," Josephson humorously recalled Beard debating his guests with sarcasm and finger pointing "as if accusing and transfixing his adversary," Mary raged that these were falsifications and "terrible misrepresentations for the most part of Beard as host" (221). Beard was a very popular teacher at Columbia and made many good friends, but it is hard to believe that the austere man pictured on the dust jacket of this biography and the combative writer who emerges from his books was an easy person in his private life.

Drake has done an enormous amount of research on Beard and offers a very full summary of his works and ideas. He traces the development of Beard from a supporter of President Woodrow Wilson and of America's entry into World War I to his disillusionment with The New Freedom's mild reforms of the capitalist economy and especially with what he considered the imperialistic aims and outcomes of the United States and its World War I allies. Already convinced of what he called the 'economic interpretation of history,' as exemplified by his 1913 and 1915 works, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* and *An Economic Interpretation of Jeffersonian Democracy*, Beard now applied it to American foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> He thus became, in Drake's words, "The Master Historian of American Imperialism."

Drake points out astutely that although Beard's critique of American imperialism resembled that of America's Marxist opponents, Beard was no Communist. His mentor on imperialism was J. A. Hobson, who was something of a democratic socialist, not the more radical Vladimir Lenin. His goal was not a Communist society but, in Drake's words a "worker's republic," a "collectivist democracy," a "genuine democracy," or a "social commonwealth" (265, 236, 254, 120). Beard's hero of domestic polity was President John Quincy Adams, who sought to use the federal government to develop resources for the common good and who would use tariffs to protect American farmers and workers against free traders who imported goods from countries with cheaper labor costs. Beard wanted neither a dictatorship of the proletariat nor the free-for-all buccaneering capitalism set off by Andrew Jackson's defeat of Adams. Instead, Beard wanted an America where ordinary people were sufficiently secure economically that they could adopt the moral and aesthetic virtues of the world's best writers, artists, and philosophers. His guide to proper democratic and republican virtue was the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin, not Karl Marx.

That Beard was no Leninist did not make him any less vehement in his condemnation of American imperialism. As Drake quotes and summarizes at excruciating length, Beard regarded America's entry into World War I as a product of America's rapacious economic elites. Those elites used the war to expand the American economy by providing supplies and loaning money to the Allies in a patent violation of America's neutral duties. They then used German submarine warfare as an

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1913). Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

excuse to prevent the Allies from losing the war and defaulting on their debts, thus saving the United States from a major economic collapse. Meanwhile, Wilson hornswoggled the American people by claiming that the war was one to save the world for democracy, when in fact the Allies were in the war for trade, territory, and resources, just as America's own imperialists plundered Latin America. Beard said he had "some difficulty discovering profound spiritual differences between...the use of Annamese troops to preserve French loot in China and the use of American Marines in the interest of law and order in Haiti. . ." (72).

Beard also opposed American entry into World War II. He argued that the war could not possibly be a struggle for democracy because the Soviet ally had killed even more people than Adolf Hitler. Although Beard supported the war tepidly once the United States joined it, he initially conceived of the war in Europe as no more than an economic rivalry between the German and the British/French empires. Likewise, he regarded the conflict in Asia as nothing more than a contest between Japan and the United States for empire in China. He roundly condemned President Franklin Roosevelt for lying America into the war, claiming that Roosevelt purposely invited the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, Americans could be deluded by Roosevelt into thinking that World War II was a war for democracy rather than imperialism because they had forgotten their own imperialist history. This included their "genocidal wars against native inhabitants. . . . [along with] their own wars of expansion and imperialism against Mexico, Spain, and the Philippines. Yes, the Germans were acting atrociously in 1939 and 1941, but in some of the same ways done earlier by Americans" (111).<sup>2</sup> Although Beard died in 1948, the "prescient" historian already saw America's economic and military cliques dragging the United States into a Cold War "in pursuit of a global economic system conducive to corporate expansion" (189).

Although this is a deeply researched book, it is almost totally uncritical. Drake attempts to prove Beard's points by providing not only voluminous quotes and summaries from Beard himself, but equally voluminous quotes and summaries from those who agreed with him. Or Drake cites a single revisionist historian as demonstration of Beard's correctness. How do we know that the "prescient" Beard was right to maintain that America's economic and military cliques dragged the United States into an unnecessary Cold War? Because of the "brilliant analysis" of Carolyn Woods Eisenberg in her book on the division of Germany after World War II.<sup>3</sup> How do we know that Beard was correct in his condemnation of Roosevelt's policies during World War II even though Beard could "barely hint at the full enormity" of that policy in his book that covered only the year 1941? (200). Because Gabriel Kolko spelled it out in his revisionist study, *The Politics of War*.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Drake leaves any critical analysis of Beard to extensive quotations from other opponents of Beard, which he then quickly dismisses.

The only mild criticism Drake makes of Beard's anti-imperialist views has to do with Beard's treatment of the Axis in general and the Nazis in particular. First, Drake points out that Beard did recognize Nazism as "a low diabolical philosophy" which governed "by brute force, by unquestioned and unchallenged berserker rage." Drake then concedes that Beard's "censure of the Nazi regime later would seem grievously understated." (110) But Drake immediately mitigates this by arguing that "In 1940, ...with the Holocaust still in the future and general knowledge of it even more so, critics concerned about mass murder would have been much more justified in censuring Stalin..." (110). For Beard, he says, the war that had broken out in 1939 was just another fight between imperialist thieves. At this point, "well before the Holocaust and the other horrors for which the Nazis would become branded as moral lepers in the pages of history, the fundamental difference that he saw between the two sides had to do with territory: Britain already had lebensraum to spare and Germany wanted some." (108

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<sup>2</sup> This is Drake's summary of Charles A. Beard, *A Foreign Policy for America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940).

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide German, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (New York: Random House, 1968).

The vitriolic debates set off by the election of Donald Trump over whether America's overseas presence represents an evil empire, a benign empire, or a liberal order makes Drake's revival of Beard very timely. It would have been interesting if Drake had wrestled a bit more with Beard on the topic of American imperialism amidst this ongoing debate, but given Drake's full-throated agreement with Beard on the topic, that was probably too much to ask.

## REVIEW BY JUSTUS D. DOENECKE, NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA, EMERITUS

To tackle a historian as prolific and complex as Charles A. Beard is a daunting task and it is to the credit of Richard Drake that he does it so well. Beard was America's leading professional historian from the 1910s to the 1940s, known alike for provocative monographs (*An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, 1913), eloquent surveys (*The Rise of American Civilization*, 1927; with Mary R. Beard), and widely used textbooks (*American Government and Politics*, 1910). During the 1910s, both parents of this reviewer were assigned *The Development of Modern Europe* (1907-1908; with James Harvey Robinson).<sup>1</sup> Beard was versatile enough to have served as president of both the American Historical Association (AHA) and the American Political Science Association (APSA).

Even his critics expressed strong admiration. Historian Samuel Eliot Morison, for example, deplored Beard's economic focus and opposition to President Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy, writing a scathing article in 1948 for the *Atlantic Monthly*: "Did Roosevelt Start the war? History through a Beard."<sup>2</sup> Yet Morison also found the Beards' *Rise of American Civilization* the most profound explanation of the national experience yet offered. Similarly, few critics of World War II anti-interventionism were as strident as publisher Henry Luce, who wrote in his famous 1941 editorial for *Life* magazine, "The American Century": "We can make isolationism as dead as slavery" (123). In 1944, however, while Beard was still harboring strong skepticism concerning the possibility of a just post-war order, the very same *Life* ran his book *The Republic: A Conversation on Fundamentals* in ten installments.<sup>3</sup>

Beard's biographers have long debated the perceptiveness of his foreign policy. Most contributors to Howard K. Beale's anthology *Charles A. Beard: Appraisal* (1954) differed with their subject on this matter, though one contributor, former *Harper's* editor George R. Leighton, offered a sympathetic account. In 1958 Cushing Strout saw Beard as being "blinded by the radiance of his own ideals to the issue of American security in a world menaced by totalitarian government." Yet, wrote Strout, if Beard ignored the global balance of power, he wisely warned against utopian goals and correctly indicted the Roosevelt administration's lack of candor. Four years later Bernard C. Borning praised the historian for raising crucial issues concerning the nation's future. In 1968 Richard Hofstadter concurred with Beard's criticism of Roosevelt's interventionism, but chastised him for not presenting alternatives. In 1975 the more critical Thomas C. Kennedy nonetheless found Beard's work valuable in exposing differences between Roosevelt's words and deeds. Early in the eighties Ellen Nore expressed strong appreciation of the Beardian worldview.<sup>4</sup>

Be they sympathetic or critical of Beard's anti-interventionism, none of these historians gave him the visibility—and respect—offered in William Appleman Williams's highly influential *Contours of American History* (1961). Without

<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913); *The Rise of American Civilization*, 2 vols., with Mary R. Beard (New York: Macmillan, 1927, 1930); *American Government and Politics*, 1st. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1910); *The Development of Modern Europe*, 1<sup>st</sup>. ed, with James Harvey Robinson, 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1907, 1908).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, "Did Roosevelt Start the War? History through a Beard." *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1948): 91-97.

<sup>3</sup> Charles A. Beard, *The Republic: A Conversation on Fundamentals* (New York: Viking, 1943).

<sup>4</sup> George R. Leighton, "Beard and Foreign Policy," in Howard K. Beale, ed., *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 161-84; Cushing Strout, *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl Becker and Charles A. Beard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 153; Bernard C. Borning, *The Political and Social Thought of Charles A. Beard* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Knopf, 1968); Thomas C. Kennedy, *Charles A. Beard and American Foreign Policy* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1975); Ellen Nore, *Charles A. Beard: An Intellectual Biography* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

engaging Beard's thought systematically, Williams depicted Beard as the victim of "bigoted and career-building attacks, attacks of purification in the form of misrepresentation, and even smart-alec criticism by supposed aristocrats." To Williams, Beard wisely maintained that liberal internationalism could be sustained without subverting private property, that is, provided that the United States abandoned its "frontier-expansionist" theory of history and allocated its human and material resources in a more rational and equitable fashion.<sup>5</sup>

Drake is now introducing Beard to an entire new generation, doing so in both a comprehensive and stimulating way. Much of Drake's study involves summaries and commentary on Beard's seminal foreign policy works, beginning with *Cross Currents in Europe Today* (1922) and ending with *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War* (1948).<sup>6</sup> Yet the book does not limit itself to narrative-cum-analysis but delves at length into such topics as Senator Robert La Follette, Sr., the Nye Committee, the *Progressive* magazine, fellow revisionist Harry Elmer Barnes, and Herbert Hoover's long unpublished "magnum opus."

Though Charles and Mary Beard destroyed all their papers, Drake has painstakingly combed the relevant manuscript collections, including those of Herbert Hoover (Hoover Institution, Stanford; Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa), Oswald Garrison Villard (Harvard), Harry Elmer Barnes (University of Wyoming), Merle Curti (State Historical Society of Wisconsin), Harry Elmer Barnes (University of Wyoming), Edward M. Borchard (Yale), Richard Hofstadter (Columbia), and William Appleman Williams (Oregon State University).

Particularly valuable is Drake's treatment of the intellectuals who were influential in molding Beard's thought. Though most Beard scholars focus on the influence of James Madison, and in particular on *Federalist No. 10*, Drake stresses certain Italian intellectuals. Originally a historian of Italy, Drake first became intrigued by Beard when he delved into the thought of three political theorists with strong Italian ties: Gaetano Mosca, who claimed that elites play the controlling role in every society; Vilfredo Pareto, who saw history as involving the conflict between reigning and contesting establishments; and German-born Roberto Michels, who discovered that leaders of political parties almost invariably arose from the elite classes. Michels, who migrated to Italy, in particular put his stamp on Beard, who claimed that the sociologist "told me more truth than most of us can endure..." (xii) As Beard was developing his historical relativism, manifested in his 1935 AHA presidential address "Written History as an Act of Faith," he received his greatest inspiration from Benedetto Croce's *History: Its Theory and Practice* (1917).<sup>7</sup> Denying the sheer possibility of objectivity, Croce argued that historians were of necessity bound by their own era, experience, and values.

Such theorists led Drake to search for a historian who would apply similar analysis to the American past, one who would probe deeply into the roots of an American imperialism that still manifests itself decades after the Cold War ended. Beard, Drake writes, "left no doubt regarding the existence of a complexly functioning economic and political power over the underlying masses." Indeed, the "core insight of Beardianism" lay in "the persistent success of economic elites in gaining the political ends that mattered most to them" (2, 4).

Though Beard stressed economic factors in much of his writing, Drake asserts that Beard's insights did not stem from Karl Marx, but originally from British intellectuals. The scholar spent several years of his early adult life in Britain, once considered living there permanently, and wrote his Columbia doctoral thesis on the topic "The Office of the Justice of the Peace in England." Beard was particularly influenced by social critic John Ruskin, who attacked a society ruled by financial oligarchs and sought a Christian social order. Economist John A. Hobson also affected Beard strongly. Hobson found war rooted in the rivalries of capitalist oligarchs who sought colonies in order to fill their own personal pockets, doing so at the

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<sup>5</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), 490, 454.

<sup>6</sup> Charles A. Beard, *Cross Currents in Europe Today* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1922); *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (Eng. trans.; New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1923).

expense of their own nation's greater prosperity. Governments, he preached, must be wrestled from the elites that controlled them.

Certain seminal works, notes Drake, also played a major role in Beard's later thinking. German sociologist Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1936) argued that governments always deceive their publics, using ideological mystification to manipulate the disorganized masses.<sup>8</sup> Two works by American historian Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895) and *Theory of Social Revolutions* (1913), taught Beard that from the time of the ancient Romans, greedy financial elites have destroyed every civilization in history.<sup>9</sup>

Drake brings out certain facts about Beard anti-interventionism that might not be widely known. In 1901, writing in the wake of the Spanish-American War, Beard asserted, "the imperialism which produced the United States is good," far better than having the frontier remain under the rule of Comanche Indians (13). In 1917 he endorsed United States participation in World War I, writing the *New Republic* that Americans should seek "a smashing victory which will carry the soldiers of the Allies to the streets of Berlin."<sup>10</sup> It was the firing of two antiwar professors, not his opposition to American intervention, that caused him to resign from the Columbia faculty later that year. Drake goes far to compare Beard's own prowar attitudes to the trenchant opposition expressed by Senator Robert La Follette, Sr., himself the subject of another one of Drake's books.<sup>11</sup> The biographer stresses the role of the Nye Committee in forming Beard's World War I revisionism, though the historian went much further than simply indicting munitions-makers and bankers. Beard claimed that ultimate responsibility lay with the American public, anxious to export its surplus products. One chapter in his *Devil Theory of War* (1936) is titled "War Is Our Own Work."<sup>12</sup>

Such World War I revisionists as Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes, however, could be as simplistic as their critics. Drake notes that Barnes wrote that Article 231 of the Versailles Treaty, the 'war guilt' clause, should have been reserved for Russia and France. Yet Germany was by no means an innocent bystander. It rigidly adhered to the Schlieffen Plan, thus making a two-front conflict inevitable. On 5 July 1914, Wilhelm II issued a 'blank check' to the Hapsburg Empire, giving it *carte blanche* to invade Serbia. On 17 July, Berlin declined Sir Edward Grey's call for mediation by four powers that still were remaining neutral: Germany, France, Italy, and Britain. If the Wilhelmstrasse was not bent on precipitating a general conflict, it certainly did not exercise any restraining influence.

Beard's 1922 endorsement of John Maynard Keynes's *Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1922), a position noted by Drake, reveals his one-sidedness. Whereas the British economist portrayed Woodrow Wilson at Paris as "this blind and deaf don

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936).

<sup>9</sup> Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History* (rev.; New York: Macmillan, 1896); *The Theory of Social Revolutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

<sup>10</sup> Charles A. Beard, "Letter to the Editor," *New Republic* 11 (14 July 1917): 309-310.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Drake, *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Charles A. Beard, *The Devil Theory of War: An Inquiry into the Nature of History and the Possibility of Keeping Out of War* (New York: Vanguard, 1936).

Quixote” who had “no plan, no scheme, no constructive ideas whatever,” Wilson biographer Arthur S. Link shows that the president gained major concessions on such matters as reparations and the Rhineland.<sup>13</sup>

Drake correctly redeems the ‘isolationists’ of World War II, whose most thoughtful proponents included such figures as Beard, from the still remaining stereotype of being fools, lunatics, potential traitors, and Nazi dupes. Though Drake does not probe this topic deeply, one should note that among anti-interventionist ranks were a novelist and an editor who won Pulitzer prizes (Sinclair Lewis and Felix Morley), one of the world’s leading physiologists (Anton J. Carlson), the presidents of Vassar College and the universities of Rochester and Chicago (Henry Noble McCracken, Alan Valentine, Robert Maynard Hutchins), America’s foremost architect (Frank Lloyd Wright), the founder of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (John L. Lewis), two distinguished scholars of international law (Philip Jessup, Edwin M. Borchard), and two liberal advertising executives (Chester Bowles, William Benton). Such people possessed a healthy suspicion of executive power, as exhibited in such matters as the destroyer-bases deal and the American occupation of Iceland. They correctly saw an American Expeditionary Force as a most risky venture, particularly had Adolf Hitler not attacked Russia. They were alert to presidential duplicity, as exhibited in Franklin Roosevelt’s false account of the sinking of the U.S. destroyer *Greer* in September 1941. Beard’s distinction between “appearances” and “realities” remains particularly telling in this regard.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to establish Beard’s perceptiveness, Drake sometimes uses certain sources uncritically. Thomas Mahl’s *Deliberate Deception* (1998) fortifies Beard’s suspicion of Britain by stressing the wide extent of its propaganda from 1939 to 1941. Yet Mahl hurts his own case by making unsubstantiated claims. He incorrectly maintains that the British played the crucial role in energizing American interventionists, that major Roosevelt backers were no more than British puppets, and that the president’s policies lacked the support of his countrymen.<sup>15</sup> Nicholas John Cull’s *Selling War* (1995) would have given Drake more accurate ammunition as it offers a more judicious treatment, describing propaganda efforts without such sensationalist conclusions.<sup>16</sup> The same holds true for Drake’s use of *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (2000), written by Oakland journalist Richard Stinnett. Drake claims that the work confirms the suspicions of Beard and fellow revisionist Harry Elmer Barnes. (301 fn. 48). Yet it remains highly doubtful that a book that blames the attack on a prearranged plan designed by an American junior naval office challenges the massive research exhibited in Gordon Prange’s 850-page tome *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (1981).<sup>17</sup>

Beard’s analysis of wartime diplomacy, thoroughly described by Drake, is also questionable. Beard claimed that during the war the U.S. colluded with the British Empire to secure global markets. Yet, as Warren F. Kimball has shown, the U.S. drove a hard bargain on lend-lease. British historian Christopher Thorne traces bitter inter-Allied rivalry in regards to China,

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<sup>13</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 41, 43; Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 1979), 88-103.

<sup>14</sup> Beard, *Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 138-140, 146-50.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-44* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas John Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American “Neutrality” in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Robert Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).

Southeast Asia, and India.<sup>18</sup> If, as Beard aptly pointed out, there existed little moral difference between Hitler and Joseph Stalin, surely in 1941 the German leader posed the greater threat to the United States, dominating Europe from the coast of Normandy to the outskirts of Moscow. To envision American security simply in terms of continental defense remains dubious. Beard strongly attacked the ‘appeasement’ of Teheran and Yalta but one must ask just what military leverage Roosevelt possessed at the time.

Certainly at times Beard overreached himself, as when he denied that slavery caused the Civil War. In 2015 John A. Thompson’s *Sense of Power* summarized much research questioning “Open Door” diplomacy as the keystone of American’s foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Yet Beard did the historical profession an indispensable service by recovering the role of elites in policymaking and of underlying economic motives in statecraft. In 1929, returning from an AHA convention on a Pullman train, “Uncle Charlie” conversed with some colleagues. He specifically denied that economics “explain everything” and conceded that ideas and ethical concepts were important. He continued, though, that he had always maintained that “among the various motives impelling men to action, the struggle for food, clothing, and shelter has been more important throughout history than any other. And that is true, isn’t it?—ISN’T IT?”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Drake has made a major contribution by recovering the contribution of one of the greatest figures ever to write American history.

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<sup>18</sup> Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969); Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>19</sup> John A. Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America’s Global Role* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Beard in Howard K. Beale, “Charles Beard: Historian,” in Beale, ed., *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal*, 123.

REVIEW BY RYAN IRWIN, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY-SUNY

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*America First*

“**T**his American carnage stops right here and stops right now.” They were practically the first words out of President Donald Trump’s mouth after his 2017 inauguration, and a message that encapsulated his unorthodox road to the White House. “From this moment on, it’s going to be America First,” he continued. “Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.”<sup>1</sup> If you took the latter part of this sentence at face value, Senator Bernie Sanders’ response would be perplexing. “Today is going to be a tough day,” he tweeted to supporters before the inauguration, “but we can’t throw up our hands in despair.” Sanders had spent 2016 fighting for workers and their families, but he now promised he would “fight back as vigorously” as possible against Trump’s agenda. Evidently, one man’s populism could be the other man’s demagoguery.<sup>2</sup>

How will future historians explain America today? In a fairly short period of time, Trump and Sanders have changed what it means to be a Republican and a Democrat. Ten years ago, if you told your typical GOPer that he or she would be championing protectionism in 2019, you’d have been mocked. Back then, George W. Bush celebrated free markets as the panacea for all things and flirted with comprehensive immigration reform. Similarly, five years ago, not many Democrats thirsted for single-payer healthcare, tuition-free college, and a Green New Deal. Now, party operatives are promising to “knock down the house.” Although it is hard to imagine two people more different than Trump and Sanders, their movements have eviscerated neoliberalism’s right and left flanks, popularizing an argument that few Hillary Clinton-supporters saw coming in 2016: Globalization, the *raison d’être* of U.S. foreign policy since 1942, betrays America. The people need something new.

Or perhaps they need something old. The central premise of Richard Drake’s *Charles Austin Beard* is that its subject illuminates our current impasse. Subtitled “The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism,” the book offers an intellectual history of a scholar who once dominated America’s scholarly landscape. Beard earned notoriety in 1913 for *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, which argued that the Constitution was designed to insulate the wealth of America’s founding fathers. Fourteen years later, he co-authored *The Rise of American Civilization* with his wife, a bestseller that reframed American history as a struggle between the rich and the poor. Beard walked away from academia in 1917—indignant at the lack of intellectual freedom at Columbia University—but his colleagues elected him President of the American Political Science Association in 1926 and President of the American Historical Association in 1932. Then everything fell apart. Beard endorsed the American First Committee in the late 1930s and authored books in 1946 and 1948 that suggested President Franklin Roosevelt had lied to the public before the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack. Reviewers questioned Beard’s research and blasted his politics, and by 1968 almost everyone seemed to agree with historian Richard Hofstadter’s assessment that Beard had become an “imposing ruin”—better memorialized rather than read.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Trump, Inaugural Address, 20 January 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address>.

<sup>2</sup> For quote, see Eliana Dockterman, “Bernie Sanders Has a Message on Donald Trump’s Inauguration Day,” *Time*, 20 January 2017, <http://time.com/4640805/donald-trump-inauguration-bernie-sanders>.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Random House, 1995), 344.

Yet this ruin has refused to crumble. Historian Andrew Bacevich, whose work has stirred many Sanders supporters, cites Beard as a muse, and so too have the paleoconservatives credited with inspiring Trump's immigration and trade policies.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Beard would have 'felt the Bern.' "If [the historian] did not tell the truth about the always-corrupting exercise of power," Drake writes in a passage about Beard's politics, "there could be no way to prevent the country from drifting into senility that foreshadows the decline and fall of peoples, nations, and civilizations (4)." Beard's main gripe about the New Deal was that it didn't do enough to help America's workers. However, he also distrusted socialism and had a flare for tragedy that was decidedly conservative. Corporate capitalism had "failed every test of history," he believed, but "tradition and morality" simply "could not withstand" the "amoral profit takers" who foisted "social and cultural dysfunction" upon their countrymen "to achieve [their] nefarious end (264)." For Beard, this conflict—between the profiteers and the people—drove history, and he sometimes pined for strong men who supported the working poor. In this regard, he resembled Steve Bannon, the controversial strategist who authored Trump's apocalyptic inaugural address.

Will the real Charles Beard please stand up? Drake's story unfolds in three acts. The first section of the book focuses on Beard's early scholarship and his journey from rural Indiana to New York City, lingering on the relationship between Beard and progressives like Robert La Follette. Although people were drawn to Beard for different reasons, his work inspired adulation because it demystified the workings of power, offering a blueprint for anyone who wanted to end the monopoly on truth of the rich. The book's middle section turns to the interwar years, when Beard built his reputation as a popular historian by elaborating the insights of John Ruskin, John Hobson, and Brooks Adams, among others. Ruskin, an English art critic, gave Beard his moral compass; Hobson, a renowned British scholar, confirmed that industrial capitalism was uncivilized; and Adams, the great grandson of John Adams and a prominent American historian, inspired Beard's renunciation of all things provincial. Beard wove these insights into an autarkic worldview that was all his own, and Drake's final chapters explore the fallout of his campaign against President Roosevelt. There are asides about the Nye Committee, which investigated America's munitions industry in the mid-1930s, and an interesting chapter about Herbert Hoover, but the basic point is that Beard finally picked a fight he couldn't win. His reputation languished after his death in 1948, despite his wife's efforts to canonize his work, and it was not until historian William Appleman Williams published *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* in 1959, introducing Beard to the baby boomers, that he began to garner a new following among America's youth.<sup>5</sup>

Drake does not gawk at Beard's racism, but it is the elephant in the room throughout *Charles Austin Beard*. "Americans, sending at an enormous expense 600 teachers equipped to the Philippines to instruct naked natives while thousands of white children in American cities are underfed and undereducated, are not brute imperialists but self-destructive lunatics," he suggested before World War I. "[V]ictory will not be planting a flag over a collection of negro huts, or the organization of cannibals for commercial exploitation, but the planting of a new colony of rationally organized white men (13)." Beard's textbooks equated progress with the elimination of Native America while propagating the myth that the Civil War wasn't about slavery, and his criticism of "the idle rich" and "luxury consumers" went hand-in-hand with a belief that "race mixture" was insane and "some life" should "be repressed" for the greater good (13). Moreover, the men who inspired his work—Hobson and Adams, among others—were anti-Semites, and Beard's disavowal of imperialism was clearly entwined with a deep affection for settler colonialism. Beard's understanding of imperialism and colonialism go unexamined here, but thanks to the work of Amanda Behm and Duncan Bell, we know that most late Victorian scholars fetishized human

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Corey Rubin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Joseph Scotchie, ed., *The Paleoconservatives: New Voices of the Old Right* (New York: Transaction Publisher, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> William Appleman Williams, *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1958). See also *ibid*, "A Note on Charles Austin Beard's Search for a General Theory of Causation," *American Historical Review* 41:1 (October 1956): 59-80.

difference and saw white supremacy as the connective tissue between labor and empire.<sup>6</sup> Corporate capitalism created the wrong kind of segregation—a society where class mattered as much as race—and anti-imperialism doubled as a lamentation against a dystopian future where racially distinct people were interdependent.

Beard is relevant today. Is that a *good* thing? Drake's downplaying of Beard's racism leads him into some interpretive dead ends. In a chapter about isolationism, for example, he begins with a lengthy summary of Philip Roth's 2004 novel *The Plot Against America*, which evidently equated isolationists with fascists, and suggested that American Firsters, had they prevailed in the 1930s, would have refashioned the United States as Nazi Germany 2.0.<sup>7</sup> It is an odd way to start a chapter, and Drake's point, I think, is that authors like Roth—who apparently channel the academic consensus on this question—have mischaracterized Roosevelt's critics. Charles Lindbergh, the public face of the America First movement, did not “criticize Jews for anti-Semitic reasons,” Drake writes, “but for the political choices some particular Jewish individuals and groups made (98).”<sup>8</sup> Beard, Drake continues, merely spoke truth to power, and his claims are now supported by good research and clear thinking. Britain, we're told, used a “massive secret political campaign” to “undermine the isolationist movement and bring the country into war” (115). Anyone who has read Robert Mueller's 2019 report on “Russiagate” will appreciate the irony to this claim, but Drake does not go there, which is for the best. Ultimately, it would have been wiser if the book's second and third acts simply explained the relationship between Beard's anti-imperialism and his anti-internationalism.<sup>9</sup> *Charles Austin Beard's* subtitle, after all, promises an intellectual history of empire—not a defense of autarky.

By downplaying Beard's racism, Drake walks headlong into a debate that is roiling the field of U.S. foreign relations history. Historian Paul Kramer laid down the gauntlet a year ago in “How Not to Write the History of U.S. Empire,” impugning the abilities of scholars who define empire narrowly, recycle categories from the past, homogenize sovereignty, or write the history of U.S. power from the inside-out. “[T]he best histories of the United States in the world,” he proclaimed, must be written by “scholars positioned either ‘outside’ of U.S. history or in the rich interstices between the United States and the rest of the world.”<sup>10</sup> Drake, however, defines empire on Beard's terms, refrains from analyzing his subject's assumptions, and relitigates arguments from the 1930s. The book's oversights are doubly unfortunate because Drake's main argument is correct. Beard *is* important. Anyone who can inspire populists in today's Republican and Democratic parties merits a closer

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<sup>6</sup> Amanda Behm, *Imperial History and the Global Politics of Exclusion: Britain, 1880-1940* (London: Palgrave, 2018) and Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Part of the problem here is historiographical. Drake's analysis of Lindbergh relies on Wayne Cole's *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953) and *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt, 1974). Drake ignores A. Scott Berg's Pulitzer-prize winning *Lindbergh* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1998), a book that arguably offers a more textured interpretation of Lindbergh's anti-Semitism. Drake also avoids the scholarship on race formation. The chapter appears to equate racism with violence, implying that Lindbergh was not an anti-Semite because he did not champion the Holocaust. Similarly, Drake suggests that Beard “could not condone racism” in a paragraph about Beard's support for eugenics (13), which suggests a comparable connection between racism and physical violence, and disregards the relevant scholarship on this topic. A useful primer is Stephen Middleton, David Roediger, and Donald Shafer, eds., *The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the Meaning of a White Identity* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Relevant primers include Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Kramer, “How Not to Write the History of U.S. Empire,” *Diplomatic History* 42:5 (November 2018), 12.

look, and intellectual history—or transnational national history or whatever jargon we are supposed to use—should not go the way of the dodo because it affronts Kramer’s prescriptions on the proper approach to writing history.<sup>11</sup> The field is swimming in smart works about liberal internationalism, most of which confirm that international institutions served empire by delimiting postcolonial sovereignty, and if America First is going to settle into our collective consciousness—and change the way we think about U.S. and the World history—we would benefit from equally insightful histories about American autarky’s genealogy.

Beard is the logical place to start and Drake’s book gets us part of the way there. However, the author’s sympathies have undercut important aspects of his interpretation. Hopefully, *Charles Austin Beard* will raise questions that will generate further research, so scholars get down to the business of historicizing the sentiments on the march today.

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<sup>11</sup> Kramer, 11-13.

RESPONSE BY RICHARD DRAKE, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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I wish to thank the reviewers for their work. In varying degrees, all three of them had some positive comments to make about the book. With deep appreciation, I will let those comments stand and focus my remarks on the shortcomings they addressed and the questions they raised.

Jerald A. Combs correctly observes that the book is more an intellectual history than an intimate portrait of Beard's personality. In general, he appears to accept my overall approach as a useful one. After nearly two pages of approving summary of the book's claims, he comes to his main complaint: "Although this is a deeply researched book, it is almost totally uncritical." This criticism disregards the book's concern about Beard's support for American intervention in the First World War, a partisan involvement he later regretted as the most dismaying error of his life. I also point out the crude and oversimplified way that in his early work he used the economic interpretation of history. The book focuses on his growth as a historian, especially regarding the sequence of developments through which he acquired an understanding of other complex variables in the historical process. In coming to his mature realizations, Beard got a lot wrong, as he freely admitted in letters to his intimates. I draw attention to the sources in which he made these confessions.

It is fair to say, though, that Beard also got a lot right in his main claims on the issues that Combs raises in his final paragraph: the Second World War did have an economic subtext, as all wars do; the United States government did work assiduously to promote and augment the corporate capitalist system in the postwar period; the national interest did continue to be defined at the beginning of the Cold War by the economic elites who controlled the country; the Marshall Plan and then NATO did have as their main consequence the absorption of Europe into the orbit of American economic and military power. Beard also predicted, accurately I think, that the United States would fail to Americanize the world and deserve to fail. It did not know enough about how other civilizations worked and lacked the patience to learn. His legacy is worth reconsidering today not in a spirit of uncritical praise, but with appreciation for the prophetic insights that he offers. Writing in *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* (2017) about the eruption of a hydra-headed radicalism in the global civil war of our time, Pankaj Mishra in effect confirms Beard's warnings about the likely consequences of a Pax Americana based on the oligarchical principles of a business civilization.<sup>1</sup>

To follow the recommendation by Combs that I should have systematically cited the historians who disagreed with Beard as a means of achieving balance in the analysis, I would have had to turn the book into a bibliographical essay instead of basing it on archival research and my own analysis of his voluminous writings. For my methodological approach, I took instruction from Benedetto Croce, a historian much admired by Beard and featured in the book's final chapter, "Beard's Philosophy of History and American Imperialism." A key sentence in Croce's profound book, *History: Its Theory and Practice*, concerns his critique of the famous objective style of the nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke: "a form of exposition conducted in the tone of a presidential summing up, where careful attention is paid to the opinions of opposed parties and courtesy is observed toward all."<sup>2</sup> Such an otherworldly neutral philosophy of history only could be practiced by historians convinced that they were examining the past in a state of mind wholly free of their own values, convictions, and prejudices. In their judgments about the past, Croce encouraged historians to take a resolute moral stand informed by the knowledge that they had gained from research and study. I tried to follow Beard's example of heeding Croce's advice. Interestingly, in his deconstruction of the history profession's belief system about the sanctity of objectivity, Peter Novick honors Beard as the foremost example of an American historian who came to terms with the inherently subjective character

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<sup>1</sup> Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2017). See the recent H-Diplo roundtable review of the book at <https://hdiplo.org/to/RT20-44>.

<sup>2</sup> Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1923), 290.

of historical analysis while, insofar as possible, trying to harmonize this obvious truth with the scientific method.<sup>3</sup> As the history profession for the most part has gone in an anti-Beardian direction for the past seventy years, I thought it fitting to present Beard's views as they developed and to show how some of his most important insights have been confirmed and kept in circulation by historians and other scholars outside the mainstream, most notably William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, C. Wright Mills, Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, Walter LaFeber, Thomas McCormick, and Lloyd Gardner.<sup>4</sup> I brought in his critics where it seemed appropriate to do so, but their views, particularly regarding the great questions surrounding America's entry into the Second World War, constitute the readily accessible conventional wisdom on the subject.

Justus D. Doenecke's principal criticism of the book appears at the end of page four of his review: "In an effort to establish Beard's perceptiveness, Drake sometimes uses certain sources uncritically." Up to that point, he generally endorses the approach that I took in writing the book and expresses agreement with my conclusions. The first of these uncritically examined sources is Thomas Mahl's *Deliberate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-1944*.<sup>5</sup> Mahl's book is certainly very controversial in many of its claims about the extent of the British effort to drag the United States into the Second World War. Yet Doenecke cites as a better authority for this section of my book Nicholas J. Cull, who makes the same general point that Mahl does about the massive propaganda campaign engineered by the British to rally American public opinion and foreign policy behind the war. Cull writes in *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American "Neutrality" in World War II*, "The full effort stands as one of the most diverse, extensive, and yet subtle propaganda campaigns ever directed by one sovereign state at another."<sup>6</sup> Doenecke's downplaying of the British role in energizing American intervention is contradicted by Cull, who, in writing with approval about the British covert operations that took place in the United States from 1939 to 1941, differs with Mahl. He concludes enthusiastically, "Although British propaganda may not have changed the course of history, it certainly accelerated the process."<sup>7</sup> Of course, as Cull also shows, the British could not have done it without the help of their allies in the press, Hollywood, and Washington. Doenecke is right. I should have added Cull to my list of sources. He reinforces my argument for this section of the book.

The second source mentioned by Doenecke is Robert Stinnett's *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor*.<sup>8</sup> Very much aware of the controversial reception of Stinnett's book, I consulted with several historians in the field about how best to judge his findings. They all advised me to exercise a high degree of caution in using *Day of Deceit*. I sought to follow their advice by pointing out in a footnote the skeptical response to the book. Beard himself, though strongly suspicious of

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). This book should have had a much greater impact than it did on the restoration of Beard's reputation.

<sup>4</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959); Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (New York: Random House, 1968); C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York-London: Oxford University Press, 1956); Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963); Thomas McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967); Lloyd Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941-1949* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Mahl, *Deliberate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-1944* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American "Neutrality" in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Cull, *Selling War*, 201-202.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

the motives behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies in the Pacific, never in print or in his letters embraced conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbor. He looked hard but in vain for evidence of such conspiracies. As I write in the book, revisionist historians would have been cheered by Stinnett's findings. They would have read this book as a confirmation of their conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbor, but this is not the same thing as saying that as a general proposition the work confirms their suspicions.

About Beard's analysis of wartime diplomacy, the particular issues noted by Doenecke about the tensions within the U.S.-British Empire relationship do not detract significantly from the argument that these two countries worked together, if not in perfect harmony, to create the global capitalist order emerging from the Second World War. Beard got the main point right about the economic objectives of the war on the Allied side. As for the statement by Doenecke about the dictators Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, Beard argued that in moral terms Nazism and Stalinism essentially came to the same thing. The point of this argument did not concern which totalitarian leader posed the greater threat to American national security. The threat that Stalin posed was ideological, not immediately strategic. Beard, however, did not think that Nazi Germany could threaten American security either. Unable in seven months to invade England across the twenty-one-mile-wide English Channel, the Nazis would not be crossing three thousand miles of ocean for an attack on the United States, least of all once they had unleashed Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union in June of 1941. National security understood in the manner of the Constitution and George Washington's Farewell Address, as the safety of the territorial United States, could not plausibly be shown to be endangered. Only by changing the definition of national security to include global responsibilities—about which the Constitution said not a word—could American intervention in the war be justified. Beard rejected this new definition of national security and not only on constitutional grounds. Global responsibilities as conceived by the Roosevelt administration would entail the militarism and empire that Beard regarded as the paramount threats to American national security, as they would remain following the war.

Stalin mattered to Beard for reasons having nothing to do with questions of national security. During the 1930s, Beard incurred the wrath of Marxists for his criticism of the terror and tyranny practiced by the Soviet dictatorship. The American alliance with the egregious Stalin seemed to him a stark contradiction of the President's claims to be fighting a war for the four freedoms. The irony of a war fought against totalitarianism with the assistance of the greatest totalitarian dictatorship in the world was not lost on Beard. Moreover, the peoples of Ireland, Egypt, and India would have had a difficult time trying to reconcile their condition as subject peoples with the image of the British Empire as a force for freedom in the world. Rhetoric about the four freedoms served the same propaganda purpose in the Second World War that the call to make the world safe for democracy did in the First World War. To Beard, these wars had nothing fundamentally to do with freedom or democracy. He thought that all wars, including the Second World War, at bottom concerned empire. Nazism he regarded as a totalitarian abomination, but its elimination was incidental to the conflict's larger aims as viewed from Washington. The outcome of the Second World War in the Bretton Woods financial conference, the Marshall Plan, NATO, the national security warfare state, and the permanent war economy abundantly confirm Beard's view of that conflict's fundamentally economic character. To protect and augment the economic status quo that emerged from the Second World War, the United States now has an empire of military bases ringing the globe, with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducting operations in more than 130 countries. Beard would not have been surprised by these latter-day developments. Indeed, he predicted them, as well as the perpetual wars that would be necessary to keep a lid on the cauldron of discontents that the American-led globalized economy would be powerless to assuage.

Doenecke rightly asserts that at times Beard overreached himself. Any historian with a curriculum vitae including more than forty books would make mistakes and be guilty of misjudgments. Doenecke cites John Thompson's *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role* as an example of recent research showing the limitations of a Beardian emphasis on 'Open Door' diplomacy in understanding American foreign policy. Here I think it worthwhile to remember the defense and further elaboration of Beard's position by William Appleman Williams in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), *The*

*Contours of American History* (1961), and *Empire as a Way of Life* (1980).<sup>9</sup> Using the ‘Open Door’ as a code phrase for the material factors of markets, territories, and resources conditioning modern American diplomacy, Williams and the Wisconsin School of historians he inspired have kept Beard’s ideas alive. The question remains, if not the ‘Open Door,’ then which thesis possesses greater explanatory power for understanding the rise and current dilemmas of the American empire? Alternatives to Beardian realism on this question seem to entail intellectually unpromising variants of American exceptionalism according to which the United States operates on an exalted plane of morality, goodness, and intellectual high mindedness unreached by any other power elite in history.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking Doenecke for alerting readers to the book’s emphasis on the all-important European dimension in Beard’s thinking and, even more, for his work in elucidating the complexities of the World War II era, particularly *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (1990) and *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (2000).<sup>10</sup> These books were invaluable to me for understanding the historical context in which Beard waged his struggles on the eve of American intervention in the Second World War.

Although Ryan Irwin grants that the main argument of the book is correct, he lists some shortcomings that prevent me from providing a satisfying portrait of Beard. The chief defect of my interpretation, he argues, is the way I downplay Beard’s racism. This is a peculiar criticism, in view of the instances of racism that he cites in the paragraph beginning, “Drake does not gawk at Beard’s racism, but it is the elephant in the room throughout *Charles Austin Beard*.” His examples come from my analysis of essays that Beard wrote around 1900 while a graduate student at Oxford University. It does not seem reasonable to charge me with a dereliction that Irwin himself shows to be contradicted by the contents of the book. I would like to address here the complex character of race as a factor in Beard’s interpretation of American history.

When I began my research on Beard, I did not expect to find in the historical documents evidence of him as an unflawed human being. Indeed, I did not find such a figure there, nor do I present him as one. In showing the racist views that Beard held early in life, I thought that the mere statement of them would be adequate commentary about their disreputableness for a contemporary audience. Evidently, I was mistaken. To satisfy critics like Irwin, I would have had to make sure through my own commentary that the reader grasped the point about how outrageous these views were. The mature Beard’s private views on race I do not know. No one does. His published record, however, does not reveal anything remotely like the insensitiveness and crudity on matters of race found in the graduate student essays that he wrote. Irwin’s approach shackles Beard to these youthful indiscretions and makes them the core of his entire existence, but I found that he grew as a man.

Beard lived in a time of intense racism. For example, to read the Senate debates about the Treaty of Paris that would end the Spanish-American War is to become acquainted with the institutional racism that penetrated the highest levels of the American government and culture. Anti-imperialist senators opposing the treaty spoke with unbridled passion about the danger of what they routinely referred to as a threatened inundation of the country by the flotsam and jetsam of the non-white world. Beard was twenty-four years old when these debates took place. He and the whole country were marinated in this kind of racist thinking. It took a stupendous effort of the will and of conscience to break free from it, as did Moorfield Storey, the future president of the Anti-Imperialist League, and Mark Twain in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894), one of the supreme satires in our literature of American racism. Beard did not have a comparably heroic record, but, as I understand his work, he tried to take a professionally serious attitude toward questions of race, immigration, and culture, admittedly

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<sup>9</sup> John Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America’s Global Role* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*; Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961); Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Justus Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990); Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

without having in mind the standards of today. Few writers of Beard's generation could meet Irwin's ideals of rectitude on such matters. I do not think that Beard should be judged by such ideals, but by the real moral choices that he faced in his own time. As early as 1934 when many in Europe and the United States admiringly identified Hitler as a bulwark against Soviet communism, Beard publicly took an intransigent stand against Nazism as a monstrous ideological perversion. For our debates today about race and ethnicity he does not have impeccable credentials. In the great debate of his own time, however, he fought bravely and on the side of the persecuted. He deserves far more understanding than Irwin grants him in his review.

On what Irwin calls Beard's promulgation of the myth that the Civil War was not about slavery, Eugene Genovese had much to say. Genovese, one of our greatest historians of slavery, thought that Beard was mistaken on this subject. In "Charles A. Beard and the Economic Interpretation of History," a lecture that he gave in 1974, Genovese faulted Beard for slighting the slavery question. Yet he put this shortcoming by "one of America's giant historians" in the context of how much praise Beard deserved for his interpretation of the Civil War as a clash of economic issues in a veritable Second American Revolution.<sup>11</sup> Despite Beard's errors, omissions, and exaggerations, Genovese thought that no one could seriously doubt the vital importance of the economic conflicts underscored in the Beardian interpretation of the Civil War.

In a guilt-by-association argument, Irwin criticizes Beard for finding inspiration in the work of John Hobson and Brooks Adams, both well-known for their anti-Semitic beliefs. By this reasoning about anti-Semitism, many standard authors would have to be ruled out or marked down for having been influenced by Karl Marx, the author of the anti-Semitic "On the Jewish Question."<sup>12</sup> Marx, moreover, peppered his correspondence with slurs against Jews and Jewish culture. There was a little more to Marxism than these rants. The same case can be made for the work of Hobson and Adams, both historians of extraordinary capabilities who deserve to be remembered as well for the original ways in which they thought about the historical process. Beard in any case consistently defended Jews, and I document instances of his positive attitudes toward them. Irwin's raising of anti-Semitism as yet another shadowy example of Beard's dark side is without merit, insofar as the extant record shows. I did not conduct an exhaustive investigation of Charles A. Lindbergh's attitudes toward Jews because Wayne Cole's research in the books cited by Irwin contained irrefutable evidence for the case that I wanted to make about him.<sup>13</sup> History has not been well served by the popular image of him as the iconic American Nazi, lately enshrined in the caricature found in Philip Roth's prize-winning best-seller, *The Plot Against America* (2004).<sup>14</sup> A. Scott Berg, the historian cited by Irwin as a champion of nuanced thinking about Lindbergh, shields him from the kind of vituperative charges that Roth would make: "In truth, Charles Lindbergh was never associated with any pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic organization...."<sup>15</sup> Lindbergh can pass muster today even less than Beard on questions of race and ethnicity, but Berg, like Cole, provides abundant examples of his support for Jews against their persecution by Nazis.

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<sup>11</sup> In Marvin C. Swanson, ed., *Charles A. Beard: An Observance of the Centennial of His Birth* (Greencastle, Indiana: DePauw University, 1974), 25. The Second American Revolution thesis, "...had he carried it further, [might] have demolished almost single-handedly so much of the consensus interpretation of American history," 39.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in David McLellan, ed., *Early Texts* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> Wayne Cole, *America First: The Battle Against American Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953) and *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt, 1974).

<sup>14</sup> Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1998), 420. Berg also emphasizes the importance of Jewish support for America First, the anti-interventionist organization for which Lindbergh was the headline speaker. According to a FBI report cited by Berg, "there was 'a tremendous Jewish group' subsidizing the movement, using the Guggenheim Foundation as its front," 413.

Another serious misrepresentation in Irwin's review concerns his claim that Beard espoused a settler colonialist mentality in his portrayal of America's westward expansion. To buttress this criticism, once again he relies mainly on Beard's graduate student essays. In fact, Beard in his mature work portrayed America's continental advance as a classic instance of the imperialism he perennially criticized. In the lead-up to America's intervention in the Second World War, he likened the American conquest of the West to Hitler's drive for *lebensraum* in Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> He really could not see a moral difference in these two episodes. Racism, greed, and genocide were involved in both. Beard thought that with their record of unceasing acquisitiveness for land, and of the systematic violence to obtain it, Americans should have a much more understanding attitude toward addictions of other peoples to the same behavior. This is not the stuff of settler colonialism. It is something like its opposite. Those who look beyond Beard's graduate essays will be pleasantly surprised by the caustically ironic thinker that Beard became as the historian *par excellence* of American imperialism both in the territorial United States and beyond.

Irwin objects to my relitigating of the controversial issues that defined Beard's career in the interwar years. It seems to me the normal practice for historians is to relitigate the past, unless all that they have in mind is a celebration of orthodox views happily agreed upon as the only possible way to think about history. Beard thought that the orthodoxies about the Second World War came directly and in a nearly unalloyed manner from Allied propaganda about the conflict. For people convinced that Hitler's manias alone had caused the war, there would be no need to raise probing questions about other factors. Beard tried to counteract the Allied pieties about their motives and actions, including and above all those of the United States. He paid an appalling price for his temerity. Called in reviews and articles a sadist and an objective pawn of Nazis and Fascists, he swiftly lost his professional reputation and became an object lesson for young scholars about how not to write history. I was one of those young scholars once, and I remember the implacable hostility that his ideas provoked. Even today the case of Beard involves not so much a relitigating of his arguments, but their litigation for the first time, or at least a presentation of them to a generation of Americans prepared to ask those probing questions about the allegedly good war. He resolutely stood his ground, convinced that Americans would never understand their ever-worsening plight in the world until the truth came out about the Second World War's economic motives and the postwar crusade to organize the world according to the dictates of a corporate capitalist order. I began my book about Beard with an account of the enormous and permanent influence that the culturally conservative art historian and social critic John Ruskin had on his thinking. Ruskin taught that the business civilization produced by industrial capitalism was the greatest enemy of mankind that had appeared on earth thus far. All other world issues Ruskin subsumed in this civilization's epic lust for profit and power. Beard honored and quoted Ruskin until the end of his life, a point I remarked on throughout the book. It came as a disagreeable surprise for me to see Irwin's review reduce Beard to a Steve Bannon-like figure. I would have the reader peruse any book by Beard and then watch Bannon's fulsome tribute to American Enterprise Institute philosophy in his 2010 film *Generation Zero* for graphic illustrations of why these two men should never be coupled in any way.

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Austin Beard, *A Foreign Policy for America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 148-149.