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 INTRODUCTION BY JOHN THOMPSON, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, EMERITUS

Like most interesting works of history, Stephen Wertheim's book takes off from a question. The question is, when and why did the United States decide "to become the supreme political and military power holding itself responsible for enforcing world order?" (3). Wertheim contends that this question can be answered very precisely. The decision arose from the response of "American officials and intellectuals" to the fall of France in the early summer of 1940 and the consequent prospect that Adolf Hitler's Germany would hold sway over most of the developed world outside North America. This led "the U.S. foreign policy elite as a group" to conclude that "the superior coercive power of the United States is required to underwrite a decent world" (7). In his commentary on contemporary events in the press, Wertheim has made it clear that he views this commitment to global military dominance as a mistaken course that has had bad consequences both at home and abroad. But in this scholarly study he seeks to explain its origins, which he sees as lying in the response to an unanticipated event rather than being the natural outcome of an earlier history.

Wertheim begins by developing his argument that the commitment to geopolitical supremacy represented a profound break with Americans' past thinking about the nature of international affairs and the role that the United States should play in them. He rejects those alternative interpretations that see it either as the product of a continuous expansionist drive motivated by some mixture of ideology and economic interest, or as the outcome of a multi-generational contest between 'isolationism' and 'internationalism.' Before World War II, he argues, "the United States pursued capitalist growth and fancied itself exceptional while shunning political and military entanglements in Europe and Asia" (6). 'Isolationism' had never been the goal of U.S. policy and is a bogey term invented in the 1930s by advocates of greater involvement in overseas conflicts. (32-5). 'Internationalism' too was redefined then to mean participation in collective security whereas earlier the term had referred to attempts to supersede power politics with a system based on international law and public opinion.

The research heart of this book is an analytical narrative of the evolving thinking of the 'experts' involved in the War and Peace Studies project set up by the Council on Foreign Relations in collaboration with the State Department after the outbreak of the European war in 1939. Originally planning for peace after a conflict that was expected to replicate the stalemate of 1914-16, the various groups into which participants in the project were divided found themselves after the fall of France producing reports defining the extent of the world that the United States could hope to defend successfully. At first, this was conceived as a 'quarter-sphere' centered on North America, but as Britain's continued resistance led to an assumption of Anglo-American cooperation this expanded to include the whole of the British Commonwealth and Empire and also east Asia and the entire western hemisphere. A memorandum in October 1940 called for an "integrated policy to achieve military and economic supremacy for the United States within the non-German world" (69). By December, Wertheim concludes, not only had the conception of America's world role been transformed but "internationalism" had come to mean "less the realization of world harmony than the projection of world power by the United States" (78-9). In 1941, as U.S. collaboration with Britain's war effort increased, the planners came to envisage "an Americo-British" world order. It was the realization that this project lacked appeal to the American public, Wertheim argues, that led to the commitment to a more inclusive peacekeeping organization, despite the disenchantment of many (not least President Franklin D. Roosevelt) with the League of Nations. This 'instrumental internationalism,' however, was designed to legitimate the exercise of U.S. power rather than to subordinate it to international law and multilateral procedures,

All the reviewers are impressed by the originality of the book, although some are more persuaded by the argument than others. To Peter Slezkine, this "carefully researched examination" of the thinking of foreign policy elites will be "the definitive work on a decisive moment in American history." Michael Falcone describes it as "a powerful account that insists that scholars revisit their understandings of the US rise to global dominance", above all by showing that it was "a choice – or rather, a constellation of choices" rather than a policy dictated by the requirements of self-defense or an inadvertent happening. For Dexter Fergie, too, it is by showing that the will to establish primacy resulted from "a deliberate decision by U.S. elites" in 1940-42 that the book constitutes "a much needed addition to the library of U.S. hegemony." William Hitchcock, who is much more critical than the other reviewers, concedes that Wertheim's reinterpretation of America's earlier stance is "original and worth taking seriously." But Hitchcock sees the book as less a work of history than an intervention "in a contemporary debate about the future of U.S. foreign policy" as, more sympathetically, does Jennifer Lind,

who urges Wertheim to engage more fully with that debate by fleshing out the substance of an alternative “liberal American grand strategy.”

Wertheim’s account of the history is questioned or criticized by the reviewers on two main grounds. The first is whether 1940-41 did represent such a clear rupture in elite opinion about America’s role in the world. Slezkine quotes A.T. Mahan’s call for an end to “the policy of isolation” as early as 1894. In terms of behaviour rather than opinion, several reviewers point to earlier exercises of U.S. power outside the Western Hemisphere, particularly in 1898 and 1917. Observing that “Wertheim’s bar for what counts as the prewar pursuit of dominance is a rather high one,” Falcone argues that earlier twentieth-century leaders had sought to project U.S. influence, “sometimes backed by force, sometimes in both hemispheres.” What was new, he suggests, was the open pursuit of a “*singular* supremacy.” Falcone, like Hitchcock and Slezkine, points to the continuing limitations on the commitment to global dominance after 1945 – the speed and scale of postwar demobilization, the continued reliance on British power in the Middle East, the resistance to increasing the defense budget, the reluctance to re-commit troops to Europe – and stresses that it was only the emergence of the Cold War that caused these to be overcome.

The second issue on which many of the reviewers express some skepticism is that of agency. How significant and influential were the ‘experts’ whose thinking and deliberations Wertheim recounts? Falcone sees “a slight disjuncture between the book’s expansive claims” on the one hand and “its tight methodological focus” on “the worldviews of a very narrow, albeit influential, set of white men in a few coastal cities” on the other. Fergie, too, observes that both a wider public at home and opinion in other nations helped to shape the United Nations Organization, making the point that many abroad were anxious to encourage the United States to play the leading role it had shunned in 1919-20. Hitchcock is more forthright in pointing to the lack of attention given to the officials who conducted U.S. policy and managed the country’s war effort, above all President Roosevelt himself, asking “where is the evidence that the Council on Foreign Relations really mattered?”

In his substantial response, Stephen Wertheim briefly explains what led him to write the book before addressing the major objections and questions raised by the reviewers. In defending his claim that the commitment to global military dominance represented a fundamental departure from the thinking that had previously guided U.S. policymakers, he emphasizes that he recognizes that the nation had engaged in violent and aggressive actions throughout its history. But, Wertheim argues, none of these actions violated the principle of non-entanglement in the power politics of other continents, and the consensual support for this principle “still held sway” until 1940. Intervention in World War I had been the result of a direct attack upon the nation’s own rights and citizens rather than of a belief that the United States had a vital stake in the European balance of power, while those who favoured membership of the League of Nations did not envisage “the permanent deployment of U.S. forces in Eurasia.” Until the late 1930s ‘internationalism’ continued to signify belief in measures to promote the peaceful settlement of interstate disputes rather than the assumption of overseas diplomatic and military commitments. There was continuity, Wertheim concedes, in the goal of “ordering the world along liberal, American lines,” but he insists that the conviction “that peaceful forms of engagement required hegemonic force behind them” was both novel and transformative. Wertheim is more ready to give ground to those who object that it was not in 1945 but during the early Cold War that the United States actually established a long-term military presence across the globe. Yet he observes that demobilization after World War II was far from complete, and points out that “preponderant power” was already a declared objective in official planning documents in 1947.

On the issue of agency, Wertheim defends his decision to focus on the Council on Foreign Relations study groups rather than on President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other top officials principally on the grounds that his concern was not the nature of wartime strategy but the thinking that shaped post-war planning. He maintains that the people studied did have real influence in this respect, and were also representative of wider opinion. He explains that he chose to write the book more as intellectual history than political history because his interest was in the origins of an ideology that “conflates internationalism with U.S. military superiority and casts those who favour the diminution of armed force as favouring a passive and ‘diminished’ world role in general.” In responding positively to Jennifer Lind’s suggestion that he explicitly relate his historical perspective to contemporary debates about U.S. grand strategy, Wertheim makes it clear that he is not seeking to criticize the specific steps taken to counter the Axis powers during World War II, or later the Soviet Union. In

his view, it was after the Soviet Union imploded in 1989 that the ideology whose origins he has been investigating led the United States astray.

It is not surprising that since its publication *Tomorrow the World* has attracted a great deal of both attention and controversy. The detailed analysis of the work of the Council on Foreign Relations study groups, and of the impact upon it of the rapidly changing war situation in 1940-41, will be of interest to all students of that momentous period. But it is the challenging emphasis on the extent to which the basic assumptions governing U.S. foreign policy were transformed as a result that is likely to have the widest impact. Maybe it is the question Wertheim asks, rather than his specific answer, that will stay with readers.

Participants:

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John A. Thompson is an Emeritus Reader in American History and an Emeritus Fellow of St Catharine's College at the University of Cambridge. His publications include *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), *Woodrow Wilson* (London: Longman, 2002), *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role* (Cornell University Press, 2015) and numerous articles and book chapters.

Michael Falcone is Chauncey Postdoctoral Fellow in the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy and International Security Studies at Yale University. He was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow in U.S. Foreign Policy and International Security at the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College, and he received his PhD in history from Northwestern University. His book project, *The Rocket's Red Glare: Technology and the Rise of U.S. Global Power, 1940-1960* examines the role of British technological diplomacy in influencing both the United States' conception of hegemony and its transition to global power during and after the Second World War.

Dexter Fergie is a PhD student of history at Northwestern University, where he is writing a dissertation on international organizations, geography, and U.S. hegemony. His work has appeared in *Diplomatic History*, *The New Republic*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The Atlantic*. He is also an interviewer for the New Books Network.

William I. Hitchcock is the William W. Corcoran Professor of History at the University of Virginia. Among other works, he is the author of *The Bitter Road to Freedom: The Human Cost of Allied Victory in World War II* (New York, 2008), a Pulitzer Prize finalist; and *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* (New York, 2018), which was a New York Times bestseller. He is now writing a book on American reactions to the rise of fascism in the 1930s.

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REVIEW BY MICHAEL A. FALCONE, YALE UNIVERSITY

In 2012, the actor and director Clint Eastwood took to the stage of the Republican National Convention in Tampa and assailed an empty chair. The chair was President Barack Obama, he insisted, and although it was unable to defend itself, Eastwood proceeded to berate it for trying to close the prison at Guantánamo and flip-flopping on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Audible apparently only to Eastwood, the chair displayed an uncharacteristically aggressive temperament compared to the real Obama. Nevertheless, after ten minutes of spirited dueling, Eastwood asserted victory in the debate, if only by default. No matter what the perfidious chair might claim, he assured, Americans remained “the best in the world”—never mind that the chair had in no way suggested otherwise.¹ In *Tomorrow, the World*, Stephen Wertheim indicates that the geopolitical order we know today was constructed in a similarly one-sided manner. In his telling, U.S. armed global supremacy was made when internationalist elites invented a special category of imaginary traitor—the isolationist—and harangued its vacant chair until their own voices were the only ones left on the stage. It is a provocative argument, encased in erudite and thoughtful scholarship, and it is sure to generate historical debate for years to come.

The core narrative in the book is the creation of the pejorative term ‘isolationism.’ Wertheim takes up Brooke Blower’s call to complicate isolationism as a category of analysis, but he goes a step further.² Even the act of nuancing the isolationist-internationalist divide reproduces it as a binary, he charges. In fact, ‘isolationism’ was never anything more than an epithet developed by would-be global supremacists to use as a political cudgel. Those same supremacists, he argues, also overhauled the notion of ‘liberal internationalism,’ now making it signify—paradoxically—that the United States should order the world to its own specifications at gunpoint.

Deconstructing this binary leads Wertheim to take aim at another: that of traditionalism-versus-revisionism in U.S. foreign relations scholarship.³ The United States, he says, neither nobly eschewed nor greedily anticipated global power during its first 150 years. Rather, the text “calls U.S. global leadership what it was: a choice” (3). That choice came in 1940. Before then, he argues, the United States always fancied the *idea* of shaping the world in its own image, but never took much action to achieve it. What Nazi leader Adolf Hitler did, then, was to force the question of America’s self-conception. Would the United States stand for an order that denied its treasured, if vague, notion of leading the world someday? Primacy, Wertheim argues convincingly, was therefore “closer to the status of an identity than to that of a policy or strategy” (7).

It was thus not the ghost of Wilsonianism nor the fallout from Pearl Harbor that pushed the United States to pursue supremacy, but the overrunning of France by Nazi Germany in June 1940. As the Wehrmacht marched down the Champs-Élysées, globalists in New York played with maps. Wertheim, building on the work of Patrick Hearden, recounts how planners swapped spheres of domination and “Grand Areas” in and out, hypothesizing what places the U.S. would have to

¹ “Transcript: Clint Eastwood’s Convention Remarks,” NPR News, August 30, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/2012/08/30/160358091/transcript-clint-eastwoods-convention-remarks>

² Brooke Blower, “From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919-1941,” *Diplomatic History* 38:2 (April 2014). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/26376561>

³ The former is exemplified by Robert Divine, *The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II* (New York: Wiley, 1965); David Schmitz, *The Triumph of Internationalism: Franklin D. Roosevelt and a World in Crisis, 1933-1941* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2007) and Geir Lundstad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Peace Research* vol. 23, no. 3 (September 1986), pp. 263-277. The latter is exemplified most preeminently by William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1959), and has been built upon ever since, with one noteworthy recent example being Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

secure in order to lead the “free world.”⁴ The proposals sometimes seem fantastical (like formal U.S. reunion with Britain and the Dominions), but the painstaking nature of the process offers strong evidence for Wertheim’s argument. The planners’ exquisite combination of scholastic sobriety and naive obtuseness (the USSR and China were scarcely given a passing thought, for example) represents compelling proof that U.S. global power was as unanticipated as it was deliberate.

Wertheim’s other major intervention is his call for a corrective to existing accounts of the United Nations (UN) that stress the international, ideological, and inter-imperial circumstances of the organization’s creation.⁵ In Wertheim’s telling, the true purpose of the UN was to sanitize U.S. power for *domestic* audiences. Petrified that American taxpayers harbored an “innate longing” for isolation (38), elites devised the UN to give the United States infinite latitude for unilateral power, while sheathing it in a Wilsonian rhetoric of equality and partnership that the public and political class could accept. By this sleight of hand, internationalists instrumentalized world government to “[make] supremacy safe for democracy” (132).

If that seems like a cynical ploy, however, Wertheim repeatedly steps back from the brink of calling supremacy a conspiracy. The dissenters we hear from are usually the ones who illustrate that internationalists understood themselves to be making a tragic choice. Wertheim casts in his lot with these fallen prophets—their eulogies for liberal intercourse tend to bookend the chapters—and in their fading advocacy for restraint we can almost hear the funereal echoes of 1900 presidential hopeful William Jennings Bryan, as the tide of a different kind of overseas expansionism drowned out his own anti-imperial pleas.

Ultimately, Wertheim delivers a powerful account that insists that scholars revisit their understandings of the U.S. ascent to globalist dominance. Potentially fruitful topics that such a revisitation might touch are myriad. How, for example, did these elites’ new spotlight on globalism—and their promotion of it using their white, Northeastern, patriarchal pull on the levers of national power—interact with the contemporaneous disillusionment towards the global felt among anticolonial leaders and thinkers (think of Carol Anderson’s “bourgeois radicals,” or Adom Getachew’s “worldmakers”)?⁶ How, if the UN was a domestic-focused exercise in sanitizing U.S. power, did American globalists shepherd their ideas through the minefield of conflicting global voices engaged with the formulation of the organization and its ideologies—from South African leader Jan Smuts to imperial critics like W.E.B. Du Bois and Jawaharlal Nehru? What about the role of other nations in shaping international governance and institutions during this period, as documented by scholars like Christy Thornton and Amy Offner?⁷ Finally, given how innovative the globalists’ ideological framework was, how was it received, understood, reshaped, and repurposed by diverse publics possessed of wildly divergent stakes? These are just a few of the questions that scholars might be stimulated to take up using Wertheim’s book as a launching point.

⁴ Patrick Hearden, *Architects of Globalism: Building a New World Order during World War II* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002).

⁵ Examples that Wertheim gives include Dan Plesch, *America, Hitler, and the U.N.: How the Allies Won World War II and Forged a Peace* (London: Tauris, 2011) and Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶ Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁷ Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

For its part, *Tomorrow, the World* is primarily an intellectual history, or as Wertheim puts it, a book “in the province of ideas” but with “concrete implications for U.S. policy across the globe” (7). From the remove of their oak-paneled rooms, foreign policy elites had the latitude to dream big dreams. But what about outside of those rooms?

As an intellectual history-cum-political manifesto, there is a slight disjuncture between the book’s expansive claims about its intervention on the one hand (overturning narratives of deep-seated U.S. expansionism, and predetermining the Cold War and the liberal interventionism of the post-1991 era), and its tight methodological focus on the other hand (the worldviews of a very narrow, albeit influential, set of white men in a few coastal cities). Since 1945, Wertheim says, “U.S. foreign policy has never been the same,” with the global dominance installed in this moment set up to “shape the distant, perhaps perpetual future” (7). But were the planning committees *that* powerful? Was restraint *truly* dead and buried by VJ Day?

Perhaps this question is resolved by Wertheim’s convincing case regarding these elites’ access to power. The new supremacists were constantly shuttling in and out of the revolving doors between officialdom, policy institutes, mass media, and academia, and the same people (like James Shotwell) were often employed by several at once. Moreover, the absence of prior state capacity in knowledge production, area studies, and intelligence analysis meant that the Council on Foreign Relations’ postwar committee essentially *became* the State Department’s official planning body. Wertheim calls his assemblage of experts a “proto-national security state,” (8) and it is here that we find the main nexus between the realm of ideas and the realm of praxis.

And yet, there were inflection points during and after the Second World War which suggested that the new armed globalists would have more work to do to make their Dr. Strangelovian dreams the unshakeable identity of the country. For example, if President Harry Truman was won over by the policy establishment’s dominance doctrine, he nevertheless initially sought low-cost and circumscribed ways to implement it. U.S. policymakers expected to rely in part on the stabilizing weight of other powers, and were forced to scramble in 1947, for example, when a depleted Britain withdrew from its hegemonic role in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the grassroots level, U.S. occupation soldiers mutinied in 1946 to return to prewar peacetime conditions, and were egged on by both Communists and congressional conservatives back home, including the influential author-politician Clare Boothe Luce. Slashing defense budgets and maintaining opposition to the ‘garrison state’ were among the express platforms of GOP politicians in the initial postwar period, and they rode that plank to a full takeover of Congress, using it to block attempts by the White House to increase enlistment and military spending. More than half of U.S. military installations were shut down between 1946 and 1949, and we might argue that it was the Korean War, not WWII-era planning boards, that crystallized what we now recognize as the country’s pointillist “empire of bases.”⁸ Finally, several of Wertheim’s armed globalists themselves began to lament the reactionary and anti-diplomatic turn that U.S. policy was taking during the late 1940s; Atlanticist intellectual Walter Lippmann even went so far as to advocate unilateral withdrawal from Europe.

Raising these well-worn points is not meant to revive the ‘reluctant hegemon’ canard—quite the contrary. It is rather to stress that the longer chronology and contingencies of globalism show just how much supremacy *was* a choice—or rather, a constellation of choices. If we were to take Wertheim’s argument that supremacy was set in stone by 1945 and move it forward in time to, say, 1951, then his thesis would only get stronger, since his work helps us to see the intellectual basis for *why* primacy was chosen in the postwar years, when there was still little need for the United States to pursue it, and still some resistance to undertaking it.

That is, even if hegemony was not hegemonic immediately, what Wertheim’s scholarship sets us up to understand is that, as policymakers engaged with evolving international and domestic circumstances in the first postwar decade, they increasingly drew upon a vocabulary of power that was bequeathed to them by the wartime supremacists, a repertoire that had not existed before. By the time a generational turnover swept the likes of secretary of state Dean Acheson and NSC-68 author

⁸ For more on the “pointillist empire,” see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2019).

Paul Nitze to power, they and the growing security state around them had already been steeped in the primacist maneuverings of Wertheim's change generation, a fact that gave armed globalism a kind of Manichean momentum as time passed and as geopolitical flashpoints piled up.

What this suggests is that perhaps the rushed primacy formulation of wartime elites was not quite squared for the realities of true global commitment by 1945. Instead, it needed further theoretical appendages over time (containment, anti-Communism, modernization, antiterrorism) to make for an actionable ideology—add-ons that would arrive only through praxis and encounter. The making of U.S. global supremacy, in other words, was and is an ongoing act. Tracing the origins of its intellectual scaffolding is Wertheim's signal achievement, even if it did not necessarily crystallize into incontrovertible policy immediately.

We might locate a similar disjuncture in his suggestion that primacy *arose* from the ether, too. Without wishing to stumble into exhausted realist/revisionist debates, Wertheim's bar for what counts as the prewar pursuit of dominance is a rather high one. Despite providing an expansive definition (7), the book's working meaning for the pursuit of global power is essentially limited to 'embracing Europe's alliance system' and 'deploying military force to the Eurasian landmass.' Demurring from those two specific activities is far from the same thing as a circumscribed disposition toward 'peaceful intercourse,' and the United States demonstrated frequently in the early twentieth century that that was far from what motivated it. If we take a 'global imaginary' to mean, as John Fousek and Jenifer Van Vleck do, a policy of conceiving of the world as a rightful sphere for national political influence, then it is evident that early century U.S. leaders harbored proto-globalist notions about the propriety of U.S. influence over the world's institutions, commons, markets, imperial relations, raw materials, culture and religion, and economic systems—sometimes backed by force, sometimes in both hemispheres.⁹

But if globalism had something of an antecedent, then what role did that leave for Wertheim's foreign policy elites in 1940? We can answer that question by considering two points. First, global power did not always have to mean *singular* supremacy. It is perhaps simplistic to say it, but a world crowded with bellicose empires was simply not compatible with such a conception before World War II, and conceding to the existence—or even eminence—of other superpowers did not mean that the U.S. was unwilling to pursue a force-backed order amenable to its interests (even if not as a full-time vocation). Second, we should not assume that America's cadre of friendship-seeking Atlantic internationalists had always reflected the country's real foreign policy or the measure of its commitment to force. That is to say, we need to divorce what the U.S. *did* from the way it *framed* what it did. Could it not be that, for the first half of the century, a kind of armed proto-globalism—acceding to the entrenchment of other, better-mobilized superpowers by necessity—was pursued *de facto*, intermittently, and opportunistically by the executive, with only hazy medium- and long-term goals, and largely in the absence of intellectuals or planners to give it a pithy "ism?" The key change illustrated by Wertheim, then, is not that U.S. globalism was birthed in 1940, but rather that after 1940 U.S. intellectuals and officials actually *said* 'global supremacy' out loud—together. They recognized the prostration of their former competitors and built on the country's previous global activities to call for an *exclusive* U.S. domination, explicitly and for the first time. Approaching the book's material with this interpretation in mind changes the focus a bit, but remains faithful to the broad spirit of *Tomorrow, the World*—neither violating Wertheim's objections to the 'reluctant hegemon' school, nor suggesting that U.S. power was foreordained.

Would a revised framing along these lines weaken Wertheim's manifesto? Not at all. On the contrary, I believe the book is all the more valuable for pointing *to* these contradictions. The country's actions may have been in place earlier in some ways, but not their avowed pursuit. We might think of the U.S. global role before 1940 as being under-theorized, insufficiently deliberate, and incoherent. What Wertheim compellingly shows us, then, is the way that the crucially important intellectual dimension of the United States' multifaceted pursuit of globalism clicked into place. The central question of the book might thus not be how the U.S. chose armed supremacy, but rather how intellectuals—the theoreticians of supremacy—came to

⁹ John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism & the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Jenifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

dominate the strategy of the country, an activity that had previously been conducted by others, or not at all. Such an approach would ask us to consider how and why and in service to which particularities of globalist ideology the state came to elevate professional planners and technocrats into its policy apparatus—a dialectical process in which elites theorized a global role for decisionmakers, and decisionmakers found themselves more and more in need of elites to elaborate their worldviews and substantiate their actions. Looking through such a lens might lightly infringe upon a few of Wertheim’s particular framing choices, but not the profound value of his work.

And, as Wertheim shows us, dominate those elites did. Intellectuals’ cleansing of raw U.S. power became codified first in the State Department, then in the White House, and finally in the new Department of Defense, National Security Council, and Central Intelligence Agency. Expert-approved supremacy became the order of the day, with the outcome being a reflexivity to violence that was at once numbly technocratic and messianically ideological. From the ‘Best and Brightest’ to the Project for the New American Century, the United States think-tank-ed its way into a cycle of endless conflict that “lacks both a terminus and a purpose”—a symptom, rather than a cause, of unquestioned consensus (180).

Ultimately, perhaps the most important contribution of the book concerns accountability. Even the harshest critiques of U.S. foreign relations, revisionist or otherwise, often inadvertently let those who made and make supremacy off the hook. Imagining the pursuit of limitless dominance as something inherent to the nature of the United States only invites nihilism. *Tomorrow, the World*, on the other hand, places responsibility squarely back onto the shoulders of supremacy’s practitioners. While American expansionism, racial supremacism, and exploitation date back centuries, the deliberate extension of dominance at a global scale was neither eternal nor accidental. Rather, it was carefully theorized and ardently advocated. Wertheim hopes that if people in power can cease to equate internationalism with perpetual U.S. force and control, then some semblance of that elusive ‘peaceful intercourse’—in its original, cooperative meaning—might somehow be attained.

REVIEW BY DEXTER FERGIE, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

At first glance, the historical problematic that Stephen Wertheim sets out to investigate—"the birth of U.S. global supremacy," so goes the subtitle—might seem shopworn for historians of U.S. foreign relations. After all, the United States' route to global dominance is a well-studied area of research that could fill many shelves. But Wertheim is doing something different. The question he poses is, "how did the United States acquire the will to lead the world?" That is a question, as Wertheim correctly notes, that historians have not even asked.

The library in which Wertheim deposits his monograph—let's call it the library of U.S. hegemony—contains volumes on the origins, rise, and nature of U.S. power. It is filled with works that identify the material conditions that enabled primacy: factor endowments, industrialization, demographic explosion, the gargantuan internal market, the financial resources of Wall Street, the 'free security' provided by its weak neighbors and oceanic moats.¹⁰ These works sit alongside others that examine the ideologies that motivated Americans to go abroad throughout U.S. history: the capitalist quest for profits, the impulse to reform the world, even crises of masculinity.¹¹ And there are more that focus on the imperial shakedown of Eurasia during the Second World War as the factor that pivoted the United States from being just another great power to being the planet's superpower.¹² Wertheim does not deny the material and ideological basis nor the geopolitics that made supremacy possible. But he notices that something is missing in these previous works. None of the above necessitated a world dominated by a militarily superior United States. That came down to a deliberate decision by U.S. elites. Between the end of 1940 and 1942, elites—government officials; experts at think tanks, chiefly those of the Council on Foreign Relations; academics, such as those based in the Yale School of International Studies; and capitalists (think of Henry Luce's swashbuckling call for an "American Century" in the pages of *Life* in early 1941)—*chose* to harness their country's resources to armed supremacy. This was an exercise in agency.

Recuperating the agency of the powerful is surely out of step with recent historiographical trends, but there is much to appreciate in Wertheim's maneuver. It transfers the origins of U.S. supremacy from the realm of destiny to that of politics,

¹⁰ Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth Lee Sokoloff, "Factor Endowments, Inequality, and Paths of Development among New World Economies," *Economia Journal* vol. 3, no. 1 (2002): 41-110; A. Paul David and Gavin Wright, "Increasing Returns and the Genesis of American Resource Abundance," *Industrial and Corporate Change* 6, no. 2 (1997): 203-245; James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1780-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Megan Black, *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America, and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Penguin, 2014); C. Vann Woodward, "The Age of Reinterpretation," *American Historical Review* 66, no. 1 (1960), 1-19.

¹¹ William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament, Along With a Few Thoughts About an Alternative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982); Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹² John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008); Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1968). Others identify World War I and its aftermath as the pivotal moment. See Katherine C. Epstein, "The Conundrum of American Power in the Age of World War I," *Modern American History*, 2, no. 3 (2019): 345-65.

and it helps us pin down the responsibility of Americans in transforming the United States into the armed overseer of world order.¹³

Tomorrow, the World begins with the long stretch of U.S. history from 1776 to 1940. During this time—that is, the majority of the republic’s history—most Americans eschewed world domination. To them, that is what made their country exceptional. They associated global dominance with those empires across the Atlantic that were gobbling up far-flung territories and regularly getting into wars with one another (it says a lot about Americans’ conception of the international system that their steamrolling over sovereign claims of Indigenous polities across the continent and their military ventures into the Americas were not seen as comparable activities). Americans, meanwhile, advocated for trade, arbitration, and other peaceful exchanges with Eurasia—all practices that came to be identified with internationalism, a neologism of the nineteenth century. Nothing sums this up better than President George Washington’s farewell address, in which he called for the United States to avoid “permanent alliances” and, as Wertheim reminds us, to engage in “liberal intercourse with all nations” (19). This was not a contradiction: Washington wanted Americans to encounter foreigners as businessmen and travelers, while insulating the country from the perceived dangers of European diplomacy.

This general disdain for global dominance remained more or less the same throughout that period, even as the United States racked up its own colonies and occupied countries in the Caribbean and Central America. But in the early 1940s, for the first time ever, policymakers and intellectuals successfully turned primacy into a policy objective. What changed?

To start, the hard, charred realities of the so-called interwar era and the beginning of the Second World War were key. The rise of fascist states, with their contempt for civil liberties at home and their penchant for violence abroad, challenged the tenets of liberal internationalism, which held that a harmony of interests undergirded global politics. These new states simply could not be reconciled with a liberal world order. The attempt to cope with these new realities can be seen in the emergence of the interwar lexicon that Wertheim documents: *totalitarian* (which folded fascist and communist states into a single category), *collective security* (retroactively rejigged as the original purpose of the League of Nations, despite the phrase’s coinage in the 1930s), and, of course, *isolationism* (30, 32-37). It’s this last one that stands out in Wertheim’s book—and in his larger oeuvre—for it was “the ‘I’ word” that most redefined the terms of debate and provided advocates of armed supremacy a rhetorical cudgel with which they could bash critics (35). And bash they did.

Isolationism was not just an actor’s category. It was an epithet, or as the American international legal scholar Edwin Borchard called it in 1941, a recently invented “cussword” (Vice President Henry Wallace defined “isolation” as “short pants for a grown-up United States”) (33, 93). As isolationism took hold in U.S. discourse, internationalism changed its meaning too. No longer were internationalists peaceniks who believed that liberal intercourse would naturally win out over the villains of world order. Internationalism, Wertheim argues, was mutating into interventionism.

Borchard is actually an instructive example to reflect on. An avowed internationalist, Borchard is often remembered today for his 1911 proposal for a world court that would mandate global disarmament and thereby end war. Later, his internationalist street-cred persisted, even as he adopted a critical stance on the League of Nations; internationalism was roomy enough to include critics. But, only a few years later, Borchard’s opposition to U.S. intervention in the Second World War and his critique of the United Nations as a “thinly disguised military alliance of the three largest Powers” were not welcome (15). The new internationalists—that is, what used to be called interventionists—began to expel Borchard and other erstwhile internationalists for alleged isolationism.

Historicizing this shift matters because, as Wertheim shows, the library of U.S. hegemony overflows with volumes that misunderstand and misapply the term ‘isolationism.’ Too many scholars have taken that term, which had originally been

¹³ A provocative essay that makes a case for this approach is Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, “Recentring the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations,” *Texas National Security Review*, vol. 3, iss. 2 (2020): 38-55. See the H-Diplo Roundtable on the article at <https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XXI-42.pdf>.

used to rhetorically arm U.S. supremacy, and have used it as an analytical category through which to understand the origins of U.S. supremacy. And the problems with the adoption of this category are obvious. Critiques of the particular form that internationalism takes can be deemed isolationist, rather than as criticism emanating from an alternative internationalism—a lesson Borchard learned the hard way.

It was in this context of slipping signifiers that policymakers and intellectuals began toying with the idea of a world dominated by the United States. One week into the Second World War, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the founder of the Council on Foreign Relations and the editor of its journal *Foreign Affairs*, began to think seriously about the United States' future place in the world. The war might provide a "grand opportunity" for the United States to become "the premier power in the world," Armstrong and a colleague suggested to the State Department (37). The rest of Wertheim's book follows the question of the United States' future as it bounced between think tanks, academic seminars, op-ed pages, and government bureaucracies. And, if Or Rosenboim's *The Emergence of Globalism* presents a slideshow of the many internationalisms that were circulating in the United States and Great Britain in the 1940s, Wertheim explains how armed dominance was the one that won.¹⁴

The shift from dominating a region to dominating the world was a geographic one. And Wertheim shows how, as elites "worked to recalculate the perimeters of U.S. security," the map of where the United States was to project power got bigger and bigger during the war (63). Reckoning with the prospect of a Nazi-dominated Eurasia, postwar planning committees in the Council on Foreign Relations developed in the summer of 1940 the idea of the "quarter sphere," stretching from Canada to Brazil (54-56). But others feared this would not offer a sufficient trading basis for the "American standard of life" (56). The quarter sphere then expanded to the Western Hemisphere, though critics lobbed similar critiques, calling it "hemispherical isolation" (56). By the end of autumn of 1940, planners had added the Pacific basin, and then the British Empire's possessions, too, in what came to be known as the "Grand Area." The map was beginning to smother the entire world. "Tyrannies may require a large amount of living space," Henry Luce wrote the following year. "But Freedom requires and will require far greater living space than Tyranny" (81).

Throughout the book, Wertheim keeps most members of the public off-stage, though there are moments when they do peek around the curtain: An East Coast sea captain, for instance, who rose through the ranks of the anti-war movement in the 1820s to eventually head the American Peace Society (20). This is a reasonable choice. Wertheim's aim is to explain the decision-making of the powerful, and so he pulls his *dramatis personae* from the upper reaches of U.S. society: journalism, universities, think tanks, and corporations. But, still, it is worth reflecting on the role of the larger public in his story—all the more so given that the champions of U.S. armed dominance have historically deployed the language of democracy.

Despite being off-stage, the public occupied a central position in the minds of U.S. planners in the 1930s and 1940s. Wertheim shows how concern for public opinion—*American* public opinion, to be sure—motivated a lot of elite thinking about what the postwar should look like, as a stable world order would require the legitimacy that came with public support. The federal government folded public opinion into the State Department bureaucracy, establishing the Office of Public Opinion Studies in 1943 (153). And elite perceptions of Americans' views shaped policy: it was for this reason that plans for an explicit Anglo-American dominion covering the whole world were scrapped. Instead, after having mocked the idea of a universal international organization for the previous couple of years, U.S. planners began to conceive of one as a way to legitimate the U.S.-led world order that they wanted. Here is one of Wertheim's most salient interventions: previous historians, in having located the origins of the United Nations in an international context, overlooked "the domestic concern, to which the U.N. was primarily addressed" (119). U.S. planners saw in the United Nations a way to rope Americans into the project of primacy.

¹⁴ Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

Wertheim's decision to not interrogate public opinion itself, however, poses some problems. In the final chapter, Wertheim claims that no debate about the United Nations took place in the United States, for a "broad anti-isolationist consensus" had already amassed by at least 1942. Though only 33% of Americans polled by Gallup in 1937 supported U.S. participation in international organization, that number reached 73% five years later (151). While it is clear that U.S. elites demolished "isolationism" throughout the 1930s, this does not explain the public's support for something like the United Nations. International organization as a mode of engagement with the world, after all, continued to be denigrated even into the early 1940s. At the beginning of that decade, a *Time* magazine editor pitching a story on the League of Nations and the World Court felt the need to add "Don't laugh" to the proposal (91). When the Council on Foreign Relations and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace began to ponder hegemony in 1940 and 1941, their members had little interest in international organization. And, according to Wertheim, Roosevelt himself resisted his aides' pleading for a postwar international organization until the beginning of 1943 (he had even scratched out an endorsement of an "effective international organization" in a draft of the Atlantic Charter a couple of years earlier, 114, 142). If it took so long for elites to sidle up to international organization, what was the source of everyday Americans growing interest in international organization?

The question about the public is important, and not just for historiographical reasons. The Quincy Institute, which Wertheim helped found before migrating to his new position at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, is devoted to making U.S. foreign policy more sensible—read: less trigger-happy—and more democratic. The DC blob's insularity is one of the key targets pierced by the Quincy Institute: the foreign-policy community, the Institute's website states, "suppresses or avoids serious debate" and, by doing so, "has forfeited the confidence of the American public."¹⁵ But to bring the public aboard will require a sophisticated theory of the public, a theory that accounts for the fact that everyday Americans can reject foreign-policy elites and how ideas can bubble up from everyday Americans.

In addition to the public, another set of actors largely left off-stage is the international community, outside of Britain and the United States. Wertheim's laser-like focus on U.S. elites is not without merit, as mentioned above. But this approach does risk inflating the influence of Americans or, at the very least, depicting U.S. elites as having made these decisions from within a vacuum. And however colossal the United States may have been during the latter years of the Second World War, the planet was far from being a vacuum.

A deeper consideration of actors abroad could help explain how the United States was able to achieve, paradoxically, primacy through international organization. For example, it was not uncommon to find arguments around the world that claimed that the Second World War happened because the League of Nations had failed, and that the League had failed because the United States did not join.¹⁶ This argument guided several foreign statesmen to insist on U.S. participation in the United Nations, at any cost. It was even one of the chief reasons why, against the initial wishes of some European diplomats, the UN headquarters ended up in the United States. In his memoirs, the first Secretary-General Trygve Lie claimed that "a repetition of the tragedy of the League of Nations, stemming not least from the United States' refusal to join, could not be permitted," and, so, the key objective was "to secure the fullest possible United States participation."¹⁷ Foreign officials, like Lie, sought to lock in U.S. participation in the postwar world, even if that meant ceding advantages to the

¹⁵ See the about page at <https://quincyinst.org/about/>.

¹⁶ A BBC journalist who had covered both the League and the United Nations noted how widespread this argument was in the mid-1940s. See Bernard Moore, *The Second Lesson: Seven Years at the United Nations* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 78. Parts of this argument were beginning to take shape even in the 1920s. The League's first Secretary-General indicated in 1929 that, with the absence of the United States, there was "a real danger of dwindling and becoming a minor factor in world affairs." Quoted in James Barros, *Office without Power: Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 36-37.

¹⁷ Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 57.

United States. The international community provided a “permissive context,” to borrow Fredrik Logevall’s phrase, through which U.S. elites were able to advance primacy.¹⁸

Future historians will hopefully connect some of these dots. Borrowing from Wertheim’s intellectual-history methodology, scholars might track how the discourse of U.S. ‘isolationism’ played out internationally—something we know surprisingly little about. We encounter traces in books and archives: A U.S. diplomat in Beirut in 1943 telegraphed the fears of Arab leaders back to Washington, which included “American isolationism” (along with “French imperialism, British insincerity... and Zionist expansionism”).¹⁹ But more work needs to be done to delineate the foreign and U.S. discourses of U.S. ‘isolationism,’ and, as well, to evaluate how the two discourses interacted with one another from the interwar era into the present. It might be revealed that this foreign fear of an internationally aloof United States—which itself was a mythologized artifact from the 1930s and ‘40s—has actually been a critical pillar of international support for U.S. primacy.

Tomorrow, the World is a much-needed addition to the library of U.S. hegemony. It calls attention to the ideological quicksand that historians stand on when they uncritically use words that were coined at the time of the birth of U.S. supremacy. It radically rethinks the meaning of U.S. postwar multilateralism as a project motivated by domestic concerns. And, by framing primacy as a result of choices, it implies rather optimistically that things can be otherwise.

¹⁸ Logevall’s approach allows for widening the number of actors, while also hierarchizing agency: U.S. elites were the ones who made decisions, but less powerful international actors enabled those decisions. Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xiv-xvi, 402-403.

¹⁹ The Diplomatic Agent and Consul General at Beirut (Wadsworth) to the Secretary of State, telegram, Beirut, March 23, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943, The Near East and Africa, Volume IV*, available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943v04/d1022>.

REVIEW BY WILLIAM I. HITCHCOCK, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Stephen Wertheim's *Tomorrow, The World* is not a history of America's rise to global power. It is instead a moralizing polemic, an example of that distinguished genre that reaches back to the American antiwar idealist Randolph Bourne and has been carried on by figures as diverse as William Appleman Williams in the late 1950s and Andrew Bacevich today. Like these critics, Wertheim takes aim at the American Leviathan and in particular the policy of "armed primacy" (6) in world affairs that, he believes, was designed by U.S. officials in 1940 and has held sway over national security ever since, long outliving the emergency of the Second World War. The U.S. policy of world domination, he asserts, was articulated by a fairly small group of "nonofficial experts" (8), lawyers, journalists, corporate leaders, and think-tank intellectuals loosely grouped around the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Abandoning a long tradition of pacific intercourse with the world that gave priority to economic expansion, peaceful arbitration of disputes, and membership in legalistic international organizations, these primacists, whom Wertheim labels the "U.S. foreign policy elite" (48, 49, and throughout), came to believe that only global military expansion could adequately protect the interests of the United States from its foes, present and future. The onslaught of Nazism across Europe in 1940 provided a pretext to reorient U.S. foreign policy away from a traditional and suddenly discredited policy of restraint, collaboration, and diplomacy towards permanent global military hegemony. During the following 80 years, Wertheim believes, the United States never freed itself from the illusion that its own security relies upon unceasing domination of the world.

Tomorrow, The World positions itself as an intellectual history of the idea of U.S. primacy, but since its publication, the author has done much to connect the book to an on-going policy argument. It lends support to one side in a contemporary debate about the future of U.S. foreign policy, and its most likely audience will be think-tank intellectuals (like Wertheim himself) who are daily engaged in hammering out the underpinnings of grand strategy. For this reason alone, the book is essential reading for those of us who have an interest in the outcome of that debate, which pits 'restrainers' – those calling for a diminished and demilitarized world role – against liberal internationalists, who believe that global threats and crises are best managed by an active U.S. presence in the world. Critics of U.S. overstretch will find much comfort here; while interventionists who have long championed a robust U.S. global role will gnash their teeth as they read.²⁰

However, the book is also something of a cautionary tale about the limits and pitfalls of writing what some call 'applied history.' At their best, books that use history to frame contemporary policy debates give us a valuable roadmap of our strategic landscape and how it came into being; the way ahead is illuminated by knowing where we have been. But when policy advocates give the appearance of rummaging around in history's attic in search of useful tidbits with which to make an argument, leaving behind the odds and ends that do not quite fit, readers should beware.²¹

²⁰ Wertheim has been quite vocal about the policy implications of his historical argument. See "When America Decided to Rule the World," *Washington Post*, November 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/11/02/united-states-tomorrow-the-world-stephen-wertheim/>. According to that article, "Wertheim... helped found the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a new Washington think tank backed by both liberal financier George Soros and right-wing billionaire Charles Koch that advocates for U.S. restraint in geopolitics and a shift away from decades of militarized foreign policy." See also "The Only Way to End 'Endless War,'" *New York Times*, September 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/14/opinion/sunday/endless-war-america.html>; "America Has No Reason to be So Powerful," *New York Times*, October 15, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/opinion/america-global-power.html> and "The Price of Primacy: Why America Shouldn't Dominate the World," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2020-02-10/price-primacy>

²¹ One of the best examples of using history to think about contemporary problems is Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, eds., *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015). There's also the awkward question of the book's title: the author does not acknowledge that the phrase "tomorrow, the world," (*morgen die ganze Welt*) was common in Nazi propaganda, most prominently in the Hitler Youth marching song "*Es zittern die morschen Knochen*". The lyric runs thus:

Wertheim opens with a 30-page summary of 150 years of U.S. foreign policy, a bold move that inevitably compresses and obscures complexity in the service of argument. Yet that argument is original and worth taking seriously. Wertheim draws on previous scholarship to show that for much of its history, the United States had engaged with the world—the nation was in fact “born internationalist” (18). The terminology is important to Wertheim’s argument, for he uses the word to imply a specific type of benevolent global exchange: U.S. leaders imagined a world governed by rules and laws, lubricated by trade and commerce. The power politics and secret alliances of the Old World were hateful to them; even as nineteenth-century statesmen expanded control of territory in North America, they imagined themselves as being engaged in constructing an “empire of liberty” (19). While conquering indigenous lands, they nonetheless advocated international peace, freedom of the seas and diplomacy, and eschewed entangling alliances.²²

This tradition of pacific “intercourse” (23) with the world, Wertheim contends, could not be dislodged even during the brief spasm of colonial conquest in the late nineteenth century, when the U.S. snapped up Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Hawaii. “Colonial empire proved unpopular with Americans” (21), he writes. Instead of wars of conquest, the United States at the start of the twentieth century preferred a policy of “internationalism”—diplomacy, arbitration, and “transatlantic efforts to codify legal code” (22).²³ Wertheim has nothing to say about the decision to enter World War I (one of those awkward tidbits left behind in the attic), rushing past that war to stress instead that the advocates of U.S. membership in the League of Nations sought to promote internationalism – with its emphasis on diplomacy, peaceful arbitration and open commerce—as an antidote to alliances, military hegemony and war. Even when Congress chose to keep the United States out of the League of Nations (a troublesome detail for Wertheim’s argument), policy remained steadfastly internationalist. Wertheim asserts that loans to Germany in the 1920s, membership in the International Court of Justice, disarmament treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, all show that the United States remained wedded to diplomacy, conciliation and commerce rather than armed primacy.²⁴

Even the rise of militant Fascism and the start of hostilities in Europe in 1939 did not immediately trigger a change in U.S. policy. To be sure, some elites felt that the United States could not afford to remain aloof from the darkening European

*Wir werden weiter marschieren
Wenn alles in Scherben fällt,
Denn heute da hört uns Deutschland
Und morgen die ganze Welt.*

[We will continue to march,
Even if everything shatters;
Because today Germany hears us,
And tomorrow, the whole World.]

²² On U.S. globalism in the nineteenth century, see, for example, Frank Ninkovitch, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundations of American Internationalism, 1865-1890* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011).

²³ The works of Kristin Hoganson, Daniel Immerwahr, or Paul Kramer offer a bracing counterpoise to the idea that the projection of colonial control into the Pacific and the Caribbean in the 1890s was some sort of an absent-minded and unpopular accident. See Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: FSG, 2019); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

²⁴ A good example of the scholarship on American engagement in postwar European affairs is Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America's Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

scene. Wertheim points to figures such as columnist Walter Lippmann and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's speechwriter Robert Sherwood as exemplars of a new rhetorical strategy that tagged those who clung to the traditional policies of disarmament, peaceful arbitration, and collective security with the label 'isolationist,' a term meant to denote weakness and retreat. Wertheim is much too brief in discussing the advent of isolationism as a political epithet, especially since it has to bear so much weight in supporting his later argument. But he is right to point out that in 1939 and early 1940, the foreign policy elites, whether gathered in mahogany paneled seminar rooms at Yale, Princeton, or the Council on Foreign Relations, or indeed in the Roosevelt White House, did not call for a decisive shift in America's basic position. German leader Adolf Hitler, these elites concluded, was a menace to Europe but not an existential threat to the United States; offers to mediate the continental quarrel were prudent, but preparation for a war no one desired was considered ill-advised.²⁵

What changed? For Wertheim, the answer lies in the surrender of France in late June 1940, following a devastating defeat by the German invasion that had been launched just six weeks earlier. That event, far more than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor eighteen months later, triggered a complete reorientation of U.S. global policy, he believes. The decision to place great emphasis on the fall of France as the turning point in U.S. policy leads the reader to expect significant revelations in the chapter that deals with these portentous months. But Wertheim's account here falls strangely flat. The author tells us that the calamity of June 1940 led American planners to conclude "that the United States should underwrite international order by securing its own political and military supremacy" (49), yet the bulk of the chapter is taken up with meetings of the nonofficial Council on Foreign Relations and the issuance of advisory memoranda by the same. These make for illuminating reading; yet they seem to show, contrary to the author's intention, that American elites shared the same anxieties about a German take-over of continental Europe that had so worried the Wilson administration two and a half decades earlier. Autarky would be bad for business, and if it should happen that Europe became closed to American goods and trade, a rewiring of U.S. patterns of global commerce would have to be instituted. This is interesting; not surprising. Do such position papers about future trading arrangements, penned by self-appointed wise men, amount to a decisive rupture in U.S. policy?

To answer that question, we would need to know more about the impact of the Council's work. But little evidence is given here that these documents were widely read or that they left their mark on the one man who, above all, was in a position to redesign U.S. world policy: Roosevelt. It is a curious thing that in the pages of the book that treat the decisive rupture of June 1940, Roosevelt is not very visible. That is odd, for there is plenty of evidence that the fall of France deeply impacted him. The story behind his June 10, 1940 speech in Charlottesville – the 'stab in the back' speech, which called for swift aid to the nations fighting Hitler – might have been retold here. Doing so might have helped illuminate the degree to which popular opinion was prepared for a confrontation with Hitler. The Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park holds a massive file of letters sent to the president following his speech, and they show near-unanimous support for a tough response to the German war machine.²⁶ But Wertheim overlooks both Roosevelt and the American public, choosing instead to examine a cabal of volunteer experts who were drafting blueprints for global domination. In fact, the U.S. public, even without tutoring from the Council on Foreign Relations, had decided that Hitler was a menace, not just to trade, but to democracy itself. Americans wanted action.

²⁵ There is a large literature on U.S. foreign policy toward Europe and especially toward Germany in the late 1930s, but a sample would include Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (New York: Oxford, 1988); Arnold Offner, *American Appeasement: U.S. Foreign Policy and Germany, 1933-38* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); and David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2001). Wayne Cole has written widely on these years, especially *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

²⁶ Stephen Early, FDR's press officer, wrote that "Perhaps more than any other address the President has made in recent years, the reaction to the Charlottesville speech revealed a virtual unanimity of opinion." Early to J. Edgar Hoover, June 12, 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, President's Personal File, 200B, box 62.

Sensing the shift in public sentiment in favor of preparedness, Roosevelt began to take significant steps to rearm the country and support Britain. Although Wertheim chooses not to examine what he calls “presidential-level milestones” (63), they do seem important. Roosevelt called for, and received, a massive defense appropriation from Congress; in September 1940, he signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history; and he shaped an agreement for the transfer of 50 old destroyers to Britain in exchange for century-long leases on valuable British seaboard territories, thus circumventing Congressional neutrality legislation. All these actions did indeed mark a significant evolution in U.S. policy. Do they signal, though, aspirations for global hegemony? That is a hard case to make. His 1940 presidential campaign promises aside (‘your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars’), Roosevelt did not desire to take the country into war, nor did he desire to create a globe-straddling empire.²⁷ Yet these initial steps responding to Germany’s continental military rampage garner little attention from Wertheim, who instead gives pride of place in his analysis to frothy Walter Lippmann columns and the earnest futurology of the gentlemen at the Council on Foreign Relations.

In the first half of 1941, Wertheim argues, the ambitions of these planning elites grew dramatically. Once Britain had fended off the threat of a German invasion by the end of 1940, American think-tankers began to ponder the future world order. They considered what the world might look like if Nazi Germany was defeated—a prospect that became plausible after June 1941 when Hitler turned his attention from the English Channel and launched his invasion of the Soviet Union. The Nazi Empire was growing but it was becoming over-extended; planners could imagine Germany losing the war and leaving a power vacuum in its wake. What should fill it? Certainly not the forms of international cooperation such had been tried after World War I. The League of Nations had failed to keep the peace; it may even have helped bring about another war. Roosevelt, who had served in the Wilson administration and knew all too well what the ‘treaty fight’ had done to President Woodrow Wilson, had no interest in picking up that snuffed-out torch. Whatever world order awaited in the wake of the war, there could be no return to the League.

Wertheim presents this dismissal of prewar internationalism as a cynical embrace of pure power politics. But was it so evil-minded, or so ill-conceived? Surely the League *had* failed to sustain the peace after World War I; surely part of the explanation for its failure was the absence of real enforcement power in that body. Looking backward, the lessons of the past weighed heavily on Roosevelt. To the extent that Roosevelt could envision a future world order, he wanted one with rules that could actually be enforced. Was that wrong? To Wertheim, this quest for a world order that benefitted Anglo-American interests and would be held in place by Anglo-American power and values smacks of conspiracy, imperialism, and hubris. Yet was it not wise to consider rebuilding a postwar order that was different from the one that had so completely collapsed in 1939?

Wertheim does not delve much into Roosevelt’s thinking; he is drawn to more boisterous figures like Henry Luce, who in early 1941 called for the construction of an “American Century” to replace the multipolar world order that lay in flames.²⁸ Wertheim implies that Luce’s *Life* magazine essay helped fuel U.S. global overreach. And the evidence given for the rapidly accelerating plot to govern the world is, oddly, the Atlantic Charter, an assertion of Anglo-American “trusteeship over the world” (114). But this earnest testimonial of Anglo-American friendship, signed by Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August 1941, looked nothing like the ardent primacy that Luce desired. The non-binding statement of affinity surely contained no call for armed primacy or world policemen. The text was in fact rather Wilsonian, expressing opposition to territorial conquest, and approval of self-determination, sovereignty, open trade, an improved standard of living, and disarmament. If that was hegemony, who would oppose it?

This book, though, does not take utterances like Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech of January 1941 or documents such as the Atlantic Charter at face value; it presents them as part of a deliberate plot to dress the *Griffnach der Weltmacht* of the

²⁷ He spoke this line on the campaign trail on October 30, 1940: there is even a film clip of the famous line: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfSU-VGixjM>

²⁸ Henry Luce, “The American Century.” *Life*, February 7, 1941.

United States in the soft raiment of peace and brotherhood. But when these garments failed adequately to cloak American ambitions, and threatened to reveal the mailed fist within, according to Wertheim, postwar planners in the State Department called for a new suit of clothes. To lure a wary public toward armed primacy, they proposed a new world organization that looked a bit like the old League of Nations but was in fact “a vehicle for U.S. hegemony” (12)—the United Nations. The UN was “fashioned ... as an instrument to implement power politics by the United States” (12). (How disappointed they would be today!) A gigantic project of advocacy in favor of the UN soon followed, designed once again by ambitious globalists who wished to make the reality of U.S. armed primacy palatable. “The wartime interventionists” sought to make “global supremacy” seem “natural” (148). The Second World War was now reconfigured, Wertheim argues, as a fight for internationalism and peace, rather than what it really was: a brutal quest for global domination. The publicists and primacists tried to make any limits on U.S. global power seem small-minded and dangerous. “The *restraint* [italics in original] of American power became [in the hands of these clever salesmen] the height of introversion and selfishness” (148).

Wertheim argues that the rebranding effort of U.S. primacy was successful, and by the time the San Francisco conference on the UN opened in the spring of 1945, the United States had positioned itself as a guileless advocate of international conciliation and arbitration. The true ambition of the U.S. – the imposition of global hegemony and liberal democratic capitalism around the world – was not so much disguised as made to appear natural and normal. By 1945, Wertheim tells us, U.S. leaders found they had developed an irrefutable argument for a permanent warfare state: world peace and order could only be sustained by U.S. armed supremacy, and any suggestion that an absence of power might actually cultivate peace and stability could be tarnished with the brush of that antiquated, failed ideology called ‘isolationism.’ The value of this sleight of hand has been demonstrated repeatedly ever since, for it proved an easy matter to swap out Nazi Germany and substitute the Soviet Union, or Communist China, the Viet Cong, Saddam Hussein or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as an enemy whose existence required permanent primacy. The basic blueprint was designed to take on any challenger. The book’s conclusion inevitably features George W. Bush launching the “global war on terror” (173) by drawing on the readily available and uncontested concept of U.S. global military supremacy.

Tomorrow, The World ambitiously recasts the narrative of America’s role in the Second World War, dispensing with all talk of noble purpose and replacing it with a duplicitous plot to attain world power. Policy elites, Wertheim concludes about this era, “manipulated openly” (169). This argument is certainly bold; it may not persuade, however, and it could strike readers as at the very least unsympathetic to the massive challenges that faced U.S. policymakers on the eve of a calamitous global crisis. By way of encouraging a fruitful exchange and rebuttal, I offer a few questions the author might wish to address to extend the discussion.

Where does the U.S. entry into World War I fit in this story? The author argues that before 1940, Americans were committed to a tradition of pacific liberal intercourse with the world. What about 1917?

Why is Franklin Roosevelt something of a bit player here? What is the methodological argument to be made for downgrading the role of Roosevelt, or any president, in a story of America’s struggle for world domination?

Where is the evidence that the Council on Foreign Relations really mattered? The papers and policy drafts examined here tell us much about the men who wrote them and their ambitions. But did they necessarily serve as a blueprint for global supremacy that was adopted by the U.S. government? Don’t we need more of clear through-line before we can credit the think-tank essays with the choices Roosevelt made from 1940 on?

Why are the Second World War and its architects largely missing? The book takes for granted that the gigantic warfare state the U.S. constructed from 1941 to 1945 simply sprang into being once the Council on Foreign Relations had summoned it. But the actual builders of that power—from government leaders and cabinet officers, to industrial and corporate titans, to military chieftains, logisticians and planners—barely rate a mention. The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army at this time, General George Marshall, is mentioned twice; the Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson never appears. Two individuals who worked closely with FDR in shaping his world policy, Admiral William Leahy (chief of staff to the president from 1942 on), and personal adviser Harry Hopkins, go unmentioned. Absent too are figures like industrialist Bernard Baruch; the head of

the Office of War Mobilization James F. Byrnes; Robert A. Lovett, who as assistant secretary for war oversaw the swift expansion of the Army Air Force; Charles “Engine Charlie” Wilson, the head of General Motors; and so on. Do these figures matter in the story of America’s global expansion? If not, why not?

If the bid for world domination was in train by 1940, why did the U.S. demobilize its military infrastructure in 1945-46? Why did the government have to wait until 1947 to get a National Security Act in place to organize its intelligence and defense structures? Why did the armed services successfully preserve their inefficient disunity in the late 1940s and defeat proposals to unite them under one powerful Defense Secretary until the passage of the Defense Reorganization Act in 1958? Why did NSC-68 have to be written in 1950, and why would then-president Harry Truman have thought it too extreme, if the argument for global supremacy had already been won a decade earlier?

Finally, what were the alternatives, and who argued for them? There are a few pages in the book when figures like Senator Robert Taft (a conservative Ohio Republican), Norman Thomas (a Presbyterian Socialist and pacifist) and Charles Beard (a Progressive interventionist-turned-anti-interventionist-turned-conspiracy theorist) are brought in to make the case for disengagement from world affairs. Wertheim does not quite embrace them as heroes, because to do so would raise awkward questions. Should the United States *not* have fought Germany in World War II? Or, if the U.S. had done so, should it have withdrawn swiftly from postwar Europe and foregone the reconstruction of Germany? Should the United States have opposed the creation of the UN? Would a weaker organization—a League 2.0—have been better? Or nothing at all? Should the U.S. have ignored the Soviet Union and the configurations of world power in the late 1940s? Was NATO an error? Was the Marshall Plan, and the contemporaneous financial arrangements of the era, ill-conceived? Must all such initiatives be condemned as part of an unceasing bid for global military supremacy?

The answers to these questions are not automatically obvious, and we can all learn much from reconsidering them. But in setting the terms of the debate, Wertheim runs the risk of vilifying liberal internationalism as nothing more than a fig leaf for injurious militarism and forever wars—just the rhetorical maneuver he says has been committed against the concept of non-interventionism by declaring it synonymous with the maligned term ‘isolationism.’ It is well past time that grand strategists, think-tankers and the public undertake the hard work of rethinking U.S. global security policy. But if the conversation starts with accusations of bad faith and deceit, it is unlikely to lead to the kind of significant recalibration the author desires.

 REVIEW BY JENNIFER LIND, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

There's this thing we do at Dartmouth's lunchtime international relations seminars. Around the table, amidst the sounds of crunching potato chips, rustling papers, and scooching chairs, sit historians and political scientists who study international security and U.S. foreign policy. As we give comments to the author of a paper, we often say, "I'm not a historian, but—" or the reverse. We offer feedback, hoping to be of some vague use, while wondering whether our increasingly siloed fields can speak to one another.

Tomorrow, the World shows that they can and do. Stephen Wertheim puts a historian's training and talents in service of addressing key questions in American foreign policy. I'm not a historian, but will comment here on the book's connections to grand strategy debates. Wertheim challenges the longstanding U.S. foreign policy by dismantling a narrative about American 'isolationism'; in doing so, he provides the intellectual foundations for the reemergence of a truly liberal American grand strategy.

Unpacking the "Armed Supremacy" Narrative

Tomorrow, the World explores the history of the U.S. decision to "become the supreme political and military power holding itself responsible for enforcing world order" (3). The book exposes and critiques a conventional wisdom or 'narrative' that underpins America's longtime grand strategy, known variously as 'deep engagement,' 'global leadership,' 'liberal internationalism,' or (by its critics) 'liberal hegemony.'²⁹ Wertheim calls it "armed supremacy." A central theme in *Tomorrow, the World* is that narratives matter, language matters, names matter.³⁰ The term 'deep engagement' evokes a sunrise with an American flag waving gently in the breeze, fading to the image of a crowd of smiling people on a dusty street waving at departing American soldiers. "Armed supremacy," by contrast, suggests troop formations stretching to the horizon, and the demented cackles of a Marvel villain. In this essay, in the interest of fairness, I will just awkwardly use both terms to refer to the longtime U.S. strategy.

The deep engagement/armed supremacy strategy, argues Wertheim, rests on a narrative that goes something like this. The young United States—focused on nation-building and wanting to wash its hands of European squabbles—espoused isolationist ideas. The United States ejected European countries from its hemisphere and avoided their peccadilloes. America came late to World War I and then, spurning the League of Nations, withdrew inward. The world convulsed in economic depression and war. America was jolted to arms by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. After the war, American leaders finally saw the light, and the reluctant sheriff stepped up to lead.

According to this narrative, America's blunder was its embrace of isolationism: the mistaken view that the country was most secure remaining outside of power politics. When the United States corrected this mistake – by joining in the World War II war effort, and pursuing an activist, militarized grand strategy after the war—America grew more prosperous and more

²⁹ Notable articulations of this strategy include Stephen G. Brooks, G John Ikenberry, and William Curti Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (December 2012): 7–51; Robert Kagan, *The World America Made* (New York: Vintage, 2013); Robert J. Lieber, *The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2005); Joseph S. Nye Jr, "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* (1995): 90-102.

³⁰ On narratives in international politics see Jennifer Lind, "Narratives and International Reconciliation," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 229-247; Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Stacie E. Goddard and Ronald R. Krebs, "Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy," *Security Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 5-36.

secure. The prescription? To maintain and where possible expand U.S. military dominance, political leadership, and the 'liberal community' of nations.

Wertheim's Critique

Tomorrow, the World challenges several aspects of this narrative. First, Wertheim contends that America was not in fact isolationist prior to World War II. He argues that the United States was deeply engaged with the world politically and economically—it just didn't seek military dominance. "Americanism and internationalism," writes Wertheim, were positioned "in opposition to the system of power politics centered in Europe. Abstaining from the system politically, the United States could transcend it peaceably. Without seeking global supremacy Americans could imagine themselves leading the world to better things" (18-19). Thus Wertheim rescues traditional American liberal internationalism from the post-World War II, highly militarized policy that coopted its name. By lifting the isolationist tarp that foreign policy elites draped over American diplomatic history, *Tomorrow, the World* thus opens up space to debate whether the United States should return to a grand strategy that is highly internationalist, yet not characterized by military dominance.

Second, Wertheim demonstrates that the United States was drawn into World War II not by Japanese dive bombers careening over Pearl Harbor, but rather by France's stunning collapse in May 1940. The fall of France created the prospect of Britain's defeat and German hegemony in Europe. Wertheim describes how American foreign policy elites pondered the prospect of a world order divided between German and American spheres, and concluded it would be harmful to American interests. "The United States, they determined, should not tolerate a world in which totalitarians possessed preeminent power" (51). Wertheim shows that American thinkers believed German leadership would threaten both American economic interests and its sense of 'destiny.' "The United States would not necessarily be attacked, but it would perpetually be on the defensive. America would be on the receiving end of world history" (57). Allowing 'totalitarians' to play a major role in international leadership would thus challenge America's identity: Americans saw their country, after all, as the city on the hill leading the world toward greater liberalism. Concluding that Europe could not be allowed to fall to Germany, American foreign policy elites decided to join the war effort, and to embrace a global politico-military role.

This, argues Wertheim, was a fateful and enduring decision. In order to convince a skeptical American public to support the war, he shows, U.S. leaders had to mount a massive propaganda campaign. The State Department partnered with think tanks, such as the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the Council on Foreign Relations, in what Wertheim calls "perhaps the most determined effort in its history to engage the American public" (151). Wertheim suggests that this narrative took on a life of its own: that elites "believed and absorbed their own myth" (154). As such, in "the debate that wasn't" (the title of Chapter 5), the decision to join the fight against Germany flowed seamlessly into the decision to prevent Soviet regional hegemony.

Wertheim also challenges the deep engagement/armed supremacy narrative by disputing its claim that the strategy has made the United States more secure. "Seeking to order the world by force has caused the United States to mete out continual violence, akin to policing the frontier by empires past" (180). *Tomorrow, the World* chronicles (rather than critiques) the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. But in his other work, Wertheim argues that 'armed supremacy' has made America less safe. "The pursuit of military dominance," he argues, "has created a lot of enemies of the US that didn't need to be enemies of the US. We've engaged in bad behavior ourselves and stimulated it in others" (referencing al-Qaeda). Noting pandemics and climate change, Wertheim warns that U.S. military dominance may cause America to "continue to define its biggest threats in military terms, even if they aren't."³¹ Thus Wertheim argues that to become more secure, the United States should step away from deep engagement/armed supremacy and re-embrace the earlier American liberal internationalism: a highly engaged yet less militarized foreign policy.

³¹ Quoted in Alex Ward, "How Military Superiority Made America Less Safe," Vox.com, December 29, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/22176111/usa-military-power-tomorrow-the-world-stephen-wertheim>.

A Liberal Grand Strategy

Tomorrow, the World creates an intellectual foundation for a liberal American grand strategy. First, the book draws upon, and reinvigorates, liberal critiques of U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War. Liberal thinkers of that era had argued that U.S. antagonism unnecessarily inflamed relations with the Soviet Union.³² Liberals protested the flourishing of the ‘military industrial complex,’ opposed American wars and interventions in the Third World, and denounced Washington’s support for human-rights abusing, anti-communist dictators. Liberal critics lamented how vast military spending and overseas adventures put America in debt and contributed to crumbling infrastructure, inadequate human services, and spiraling inequality at home. “We All Lost the Cold War,” argued Richard Ned Lebow and Janet Gross Stein, highlighting its “heavy costs in lives, treasure and legitimacy.”³³

After the Cold War, this liberal perspective was relegated to the fringe as the Democratic Party moved toward the center. While liberal activists picketed World Trade Organization meetings, shivered in tents, and chanted ‘Occupy,’ the Democratic Party embraced globalization—and Wall Street. Liberals protested sanctions against Iraq for causing the death of half a million Iraqi children in eight years; Democrats supported sanctions and later voted to invade Iraq. Liberals foregrounded images of Abu Ghraib, protested torture and drone strikes, and argued against America’s ‘war on terror.’ But as the United States faced a world without great-power rivals, Democrats partnered with neoconservatives toward the goal of order-building. The critical Left, with a truly liberal foreign policy, was pushed to the fringe.

The Left is back. The success of Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and others reflects the increasing appeal of liberal ideals. Yet progressives have largely confined their interest in foreign policy to issues such as climate change and human rights.³⁴ As historian Daniel Bessner wondered in the *New York Times*, “What Does Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Think about the South China Sea?”³⁵ As progressives start to grapple with a vision for grand strategy, *Tomorrow, the World* provides them with an important intellectual foundation.

Not Two but Three Perspectives

Although Wertheim contrasts his liberal perspective against deep engagement/armed supremacy, there is actually a third perspective in grand strategy debates: a centrist-realist one. The realists view the existence of a regional hegemon as a threat

³² Important voices include William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, and Walter LaFeber. For discussion see John Lewis Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 7, no. 3 (July 1983): 171–90; Robert W. Tucker, *The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore, 1971); Charles S. Maier, “Revisionism and the Interpretation of Cold War Origins,” *Perspectives in American History* 4 (1970): 313–347; J. L. Richardson, “Cold War Revisionism: A Critique,” *World Politics* 24 (1972): 579–612.

³³ Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4.

³⁴ On progressive foreign policy see Van Jackson, et. al, “Policy Roundtable: the Future of Progressive Foreign Policy,” *Texas National Security Review*, December 4, 2018 at <https://tnsr.org/roundtable/policy-roundtable-the-future-of-progressive-foreign-policy/>; Michael Walzer, *A Foreign Policy For the Left* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Daniel Bessner interview with Matt Duss, “The Bernie Sanders Doctrine on Foreign Policy,” *Jacobin*, August 20, 2020, <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/08/bernie-sanders-foreign-policy-matt-duss>; Ganesh Sitaraman, “The Emergence of Progressive Foreign Policy,” *War on the Rocks*, April 15, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/the-emergence-of-progressive-foreign-policy/>; Elizabeth Warren, “A Foreign Policy for All: Strengthening Democracy—at Home and Abroad,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2019); Thomas Wright, “The Real Progressive-Centrist Divide on Foreign Policy,” Brookings Institution, February 19, 2020.

³⁵ Daniel Bessner, “What Does Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Think About the South China Sea?” *New York Times*, September 17, 2018.

to American national security, and so would agree with the deep engagement/armed supremacy school that Washington indeed should have mobilized against Germany in 1940, and (contra Wertheim) against the Soviet Union after 1945. The tragedy, according to the realists, was not America's 1940-45 militarization (as Wertheim argues), nor was it an imagined isolationism prior to 1940 (as asserted by the deep engagement/armed supremacy narrative). Rather, the realists argue that the blunder was 1989. That's when the Soviet Union collapsed and the United States—though it did not face a rival regional hegemon—decided to sustain its military dominance and pursue a revisionist strategy to spread liberalism and American leadership.³⁶ In a debate after the collapse of the Soviet Union, realists prescribed returning to a grand strategy ('offshore balancing' or 'restraint') in which they argued that Washington should draw down American Cold War alliances, and should stay out of the democracy-spreading and order-making business.³⁷

Importantly, the three schools (liberal, realist, and deep engagement/armed supremacy) all offer different diagnoses and prescriptions for contemporary American national security debates. *Tomorrow, the World* details the World War II-era conversation in which U.S. elites pondered whether the United States could co-exist with an illiberal, mercantilist regional hegemon. Wertheim does not discuss contemporary U.S.-China relations in the book, but his commentary (and opposition to "armed supremacy" and "endless war") suggests he opposes U.S. engagement in a great-power competition with China.³⁸

By contrast, the deep engagement/armed supremacy school emphasizes the 'liberal international order' and the threat to it posed by an illiberal, nationalist, mercantilist Beijing.³⁹ This school thus prescribes that the United States maintain political-military dominance and 'police the frontier' where necessary: Taiwan, the East China Sea, the Korean peninsula, and so on. In Europe, too, the United States must stand vigilant against Russian efforts to weaken NATO, the European Union, and America's political-military dominance.

And the realists? Contra Wertheim, they would not feel safe with a Chinese regional hegemon. They dismiss the idea of 'liberal order,' but they would be troubled with a regional hegemon that enjoyed what John Mearsheimer calls the "freedom to roam." This refers to the loosening of constraints, and growth of ambitions, that occurs when a regional hegemon is secure in its own neighborhood. (Realists point to the United States itself as Exhibit A.) "The great danger," writes Mearsheimer, "is that a distant hegemon would eventually start to meddle in the Western Hemisphere, which could present

³⁶ Jennifer Lind, "Asia's Other Revisionist Power: Why US Grand Strategy Unnerves China," *Foreign Affairs* 96 (2017); Jennifer Lind and William C. Wohlforth, "The Future of the Liberal Order Is Conservative: A Strategy to Save the System," *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 2 (March/April 2019),

³⁷ Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): 5–48. Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22, no. 1 (1997): 86–124. Notable recent works from this school include Emma Ashford, "Power and Pragmatism: Reforming American Foreign Policy for the 21st Century," in *New Voices in Grand Strategy*, Center for a New American Security, April 11, 2019, at <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/new-voices-in-grand-strategy>; Barry Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Cornell University Press, 2014); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018); Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

³⁸ See Rachel Esplin Odell and Stephen Wertheim, "Can the Democrats Avoid Trump's China Trap?" *New York Times*, May 10, 2020; Stephen Wertheim, "Is it too Late to Stop a New Cold War With China?" *New York Times*, June 8, 2019.

³⁹ On international order see Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1999): 179–96; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). On Beijing's threat to liberal order see Nadège Rolland, ed., "An Emerging China-Centric Order: China's Vision for a New World Order in Practice," (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2020).

a serious threat to the United States.”⁴⁰ The liberal perspective thus confronts not one but two perspectives that—for different reasons—share the view that the United States should seek to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon.

Game On

As liberals return to the grand strategic intellectual fray, it is time for them to become more clear about the grand strategy they advocate, and engage with its weaknesses. In other words—Welcome! You’ve made it to the grand-strategic big time. The debate will be greatly enhanced by your ideas. But accordingly, it is time to lift your gloves and prepare to take some punches from other grand strategic heavyweights. That is, if progressives want their foreign-policy ideas to be taken seriously, they have to do more than lament ‘endless wars’; they have to articulate a vision of U.S. interests and the foreign policy instruments and tools (including military ones) that advance them.

In the foreign policy debate between the center-realists and the deep engagement/armed supremacy folks, for example, each school has taken it on the chin—and landed several punches too. Critics of ‘restraint’ have argued that the strategy would invite countries that formerly sheltered under the U.S. nuclear umbrella to acquire nuclear weapons; that the need to build up military capabilities after the U.S. departure would trigger regional spirals of insecurity; and that the ensuing instability and even wars would damage the U.S. economy.⁴¹ But the center-realists have wrestled with these arguments, and have landed important blows of their own.⁴² Thus they’re still standing, and indeed, the crowd cheering them on grows larger as the costs of deep engagement/armed supremacy mount.

The deep engagement/armed supremacy school has also gone several rounds. Scholars countered warnings of ‘overstretch’ with arguments about the ‘exorbitant privilege’ that America gains from economic and financial dominance.⁴³ Scholars

⁴⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, “We Asked John Mearsheimer: What Should Be the Purpose of American Power?” *National Interest*, August 21, 2015.

⁴¹ On U.S. alliances and nuclear nonproliferation see Nicholas L. Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018). For critiques of restraint and offshore balancing see Stephen G. Brooks, G John Ikenberry, and William Curti Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America,” *International Security* 37, no. 3 (December 2012): 7–51; Hal Brands, “The Limits of Offshore Balancing,” Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, September 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11785>; James Holmes, “Why Offshore Balancing Won’t Work,” *National Interest*, July 18, 2016; <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-offshore-balancing-wont-work-17025>

⁴² See for example Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, “The Effects of Wars on Neutral Countries: Why it Doesn’t Pay to Preserve the Peace,” *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (2001): 1-57; Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, “Protecting “the Prize”: Oil and the US national interest,” *Security Studies* 19, no. 3 (2010): 453-485; also see Daniel W. Drezner, “Military Primacy Doesn’t Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think),” *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013): 52-79.

⁴³ On overstretch see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987); for a critique see Sebastian Rosato and Michael O’Brien, “Relax America: Why Overstretch is a Myth,” Nobel Institute, Oslo, June 2012. On exorbitant privilege see Carla Norrlof, *America’s Global Advantage: US Hegemony and International Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Carla Norrlof and William C. Wohlforth, “Raison de l’Hégémonie (The Hegemon’s Interest): Theory of the Costs and Benefits of Hegemony,” *Security Studies* 28, no. 3 (2019): 422-450; Michael Mastanduno, “System Maker and Privilege Taker: U.S. Power and the International Political Economy,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009): 121–54.

favoring deep engagement/armed supremacy countered arguments about U.S. alliances and entrapment risks,⁴⁴ and KO'd claims that American dominance would encourage counterbalancing.⁴⁵

It's now time for progressives to step into the ring, to address numerous questions raised by their arguments. First, for example, revisionist historians during the Cold War, and progressives discussing China today, often blame the United States for rising tensions and competition, saying its power antagonizes other countries. But war does not always occur through spirals; sometimes there are predatory countries in the world. What would progressives recommend in such cases? Second, if the United States had adopted the progressives' preferred strategy after 1945, they need to describe the counterfactual of what a world without 'armed supremacy' would have looked like—and whether that world would have been preferable to this one. If the Western Europeans had faced the Soviets alone, for example, presumably Europe would have militarized to a far greater extent, with many more nuclear-armed countries.⁴⁶ Relatedly, Wertheim suggests that the United States could have co-existed with the Soviet Union without seeking to contain it. But he needs to make the case. What would that world have been like; what would it have meant for American interests? Furthermore, relevant to today's foreign policy choices, progressives need to make the case that the United States can advance its interests in a world with a Chinese regional hegemon. Readers are already indebted to Wertheim and other progressive thinkers for enhancing the debate; it is a compliment to them that now, we want to hear more.

⁴⁴ Alexander Lanoszka, "Tangled Up in Rose? Theories of Alliance Entrapment and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 2 (2018): 234-257; Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of US Defense Pacts," *International Security* 39, no. 4 (2015): 7-48; Hal Brands and Peter D. Feaver, "What Are America's Alliances Good For?" *Parameters* 47, no. 2 (2017). Also see Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (2011): 350-377.

⁴⁵ Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Hard Times for Soft Balancing," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 72-108; Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World is not Pushing back," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 109-139; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

REVIEW BY PETER SLEZKINE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The timeliest books are typically conceived well before the moment is ripe. Such is the case with Stephen Wertheim's *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy*. Although the book bears a publication date of 2020, Wertheim filed a dissertation with the same title in 2015. In the interim, an 'America First' presidency generated an extraordinary amount of interest in the apparently endangered 'U.S.-led liberal international order.' Over the past four years, scholars and pundits have produced a great deal of commentary on the subject, but a number of key historical questions remain. Although experts on international relations generally take the World War II origins of American global leadership for granted, there is little consensus regarding the precise timing and logic of this major development. And while academics have debated the liberal internationalist credentials of American leadership, they have paid little attention to the process by which policymakers and the public originally came to identify these ideals with the pursuit of global supremacy. *Tomorrow the World*, a carefully researched examination of the perspectives and priorities of American foreign policy elites from the late 1930s through 1945, seeks to dispel these mysteries. In doing so, it becomes the definitive work on a decisive moment in American history.⁴⁷

In order to determine the exact moment when global supremacy first became a conceivable national objective, Wertheim looks outside of the U.S. government to a network of 'nonofficial experts,' focusing especially on the postwar planning committees assembled by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in the weeks after the outbreak of World War II (8). As Wertheim shows, the State Department (whose personnel in 1939 totaled only nine hundred) had a full docket simply dealing with day-to-day issues. Moreover, government officials "feared that postwar planning, if carried out internally, might become public knowledge and raise suspicion that the Roosevelt administration was preparing for war" (37). As a result, State Department leaders were happy to delegate long-term planning to the private citizens of the CFR. The groundwork laid by these 'nonofficial' committees, Wertheim shows, set the course for official government efforts in subsequent years. When postwar planning moved in-house after Pearl Harbor, the installation of CFR planners atop several State Department subcommittees further cemented this continuity.

By examining the CFR committees' records, Wertheim discovers that the postwar planners abandoned a traditional commitment to hemispheric defense and non-entanglement after the fall of France rather than after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Presented with the prospect of a Nazi-dominated Europe, the CFR planners swiftly expanded the American sphere of interest, ultimately calling for an "integrated policy to achieve military and economic supremacy for the United States within the non-German world" (102). Only at this scale, they argued, could liberal intercourse and free economic exchange continue to prosper in the face of a competing totalitarian bloc. The parallels with the later 'Free World,' which American officials would identify with the entire 'non-communist world,' are readily apparent. Wertheim is thus able to make a compelling case that it was "against Nazi Germany, prior to Pearl Harbor, that Americans developed the cold war concepts they would apply to the Soviet Union in the late 1940s" (97).

Another striking finding is the extent to which American policymakers during this period explicitly envisioned the United States as the heir to Britain's global role. In early 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt had dismissed British calls for the United States to take up global leadership: "that the scepter of the sword or something like that had dropped from their palsied fingers—that the U.S.A. must snatch it up—that F.D.R. alone could save the world—etc., etc" (36). But by the spring of 1941, once it appeared that Britain might survive and Nazi Germany might not, a postwar partnership between the U.S. and the UK struck policymakers as essential. Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of the CFR's magazine, *Foreign Affairs*,

⁴⁷ See among others, Patrick Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order: Nostalgia, Delusion and the Rise of Trump* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020); Robert Jervis, Francis J. Gavin, Joshua Rovner, and Diane Labrosse, eds., *Chaos in the Liberal Order, The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

declared that “the maintenance of international order would rest upon the United States and the British Empire for an indeterminate period following a Nazi defeat” (101). Meanwhile, the CFR planners emphasized the United States’ primacy in this partnership by systematically replacing the adjective “Anglo-American” with the far clunkier “American-British” (99). For Wertheim, the Atlantic Charter, produced by Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in late summer of 1941, epitomized this vision of an ‘American-British’ postwar order.

Wertheim thus shows that a core contingent of the United States’ foreign policy establishment embraced an objective of ‘military and economic supremacy’ before Pearl Harbor, first as a counterbalance to a potentially Nazi-dominated Europe and then as the foundation of an ‘American-British’ world order to be established after Germany’s defeat. But this only serves as a partial explanation of the country’s postwar transformation. In order to commit the United States to a role of global leadership, policymakers had to reconcile this objective with established American ideals. According to Wertheim, they did so in two ways. First, advocates of an extra-hemispheric military presence developed the pejorative concept of ‘isolationism’ and redefined ‘internationalism’ as its opposite. Second, they decided to pursue global supremacy through participation in an international organization.

Isolationism, Wertheim shows, only entered the American political vocabulary in the late 1930s. Although it purported to identify an entrenched ideology, it had no real constituency. No group described itself as isolationist. The purpose of the epithet was to discredit opposition to potential armed intervention outside of the Western Hemisphere by characterizing it as a selfish refusal to recognize the United States’ growing responsibilities. As a result, previously dominant forms of internationalism, which presumed that increased global ties would reduce rather than require military engagement, suddenly lost the ‘internationalist’ designation. Meanwhile, the new internationalism, defined as anti-isolationism, potentially justified a practically limitless expansion of the United States’ role in the world.

Still, Wertheim’s postwar planners were not immediately interested in establishing an international organization. Neither was Roosevelt. According to Wertheim, American policymakers only resurrected the idea of an international organization after the announcement of the Atlantic Charter “‘fell like a dead duck’ upon Congress and the public” (128). Anxious that the “projected American-British policing of the seas” might have “an imperialistic connotation,” the postwar planners turned to the idea of an international organization (which had previously carried the stigma of the failed League of Nations) as a means of reassuring a skeptical American public (128). Yet Wertheim argues that postwar primacy still came first. The planners ensured that an international organization would exercise few meaningful constraints on the great powers and managed to convince Roosevelt to accept the idea only after reassuring him of this fact.

Interestingly, Wertheim suggests that the efforts to legitimize a greatly expanded postwar posture might have had more to do with the anxieties of the policymakers than those of the public. Constant warnings against a resurgent ‘isolationism’ after 1942, in the absence of any notable opposition to the new ‘internationalist’ program, might have indicated American officials’ own uncertainty about the entanglements they advocated. Similarly, their fear that the public would never accept global leadership without international organization might have reflected internalized concerns about the ‘imperialistic connotation’ of a postwar order in the British style.

Whatever the motivations for this legitimization campaign, it undoubtedly worked. By the end of the war, the United States government, with the support of the vast majority of the American public, had committed to the continued exercise of global leadership through the United Nations. The new interpretation of an interventionist internationalism had also established that the cause of world peace, and the demands of national security, required the indefinite maintenance of military primacy. As President Harry Truman declared on 23 October 1945, the day before the United Nations Charter

would come into force: “Until we are sure that our peace machinery is functioning adequately, we must relentlessly preserve our superiority on land and sea and in the air.”⁴⁸

Tomorrow the World substantially revises our understanding of a critical period in U.S. history by showing how campaigns against isolationism and for international organization served to legitimize a long-term role of armed American leadership – a posture first envisioned by a segment of the foreign policy elite in the aftermath of the fall of France. But do these developments constitute a ‘qualitative break’ in American history (2)?

Wertheim contends that, prior to the ‘rupture’ of World War II, American policymakers subscribed to a set of ideals that precluded “playing, let alone dominating, power politics in the Old World” (2). Until they abandoned these commitments, he argues, “global supremacy would sound like the kind of great-power imperialism that Americans always condemned in others” (2). In Wertheim’s estimation, neither the Spanish-American War nor World War I constituted a real rupture. It is not entirely clear why they do not make the cut, even when measured against the standards Wertheim sets himself. The acquisition of former Spanish colonies after 1898 certainly struck many Americans as “the kind of great-power imperialism” they had “always condemned in others,” and President Woodrow Wilson’s efforts to dictate the terms of the postwar peace would seem to involve playing “power politics in the Old World.” Of course, Wilson represented the League of Nations as a means of transcending power politics, but so did the promoters of the United Nations. And while the United States never joined the League of Nations, support for American participation in some kind of international organization was overwhelming, as Wertheim describes. It was only Wilson’s intransigence and the squabbles among different factions of supporters that led to the Senate’s refusal to ratify the League of Nations treaty – a lesson learned by later advocates of the United Nations.

Wertheim ultimately makes a convincing argument that a decisive shift did in fact take place during the period between 1941 and 1945. But the novelty of the developments Wertheim describes would be more evident if he presented them as something less than total. In his effort to dispel the myth of an isolationist past, Wertheim comes dangerously close to repeating the sins of his subjects, going so far as to declare “internationalism” to be one of the country’s “foundational” concepts, despite the fact that the term did not refer to a self-conscious movement until the end of the nineteenth century (in Wertheim’s own telling) (18). On the flipside, Wertheim occasionally oversells the conceptual shift represented by the invention of ‘isolationism’ in the mid 1930s. Although he explains that it was “the –ism, connoting a worldview” that was new and not the “long-standing discourse of isolation,” it is not always clear what separates the two (32). At one point, Wertheim quotes Henry Wallace to demonstrate how the rhetoric of anti-isolationism could make a hemispheric policy seem anachronistic:

Likening isolationism to childhood, Vice President Wallace implied that the passage into world leadership was natural, necessary, and irreversible. “We of the United States can no more evade shouldering our responsibility than a boy of eighteen can avoid becoming a man by wearing short pants,” he said. “The word ‘isolation’ means short pants for a grown-up United States” (93).

Henry Wallace might as well have been quoting Alfred Thayer Mahan, the U.S. Naval officer, historian, and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1894 called for the United States “to cast aside the policy of isolation which befitted her infancy, and to recognize that, whereas once to avoid European entanglement was essential to the development of her individuality, now to take her share of the travail of Europe is but to assume an inevitable task.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Harry Truman, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Universal Military Training,” 10/23/1945, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-universal-military-training>.

⁴⁹ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1897).

Wertheim makes a significant discovery in noting the emergence of the epithet of 'isolationism' in the mid-1930s and demonstrates its considerable power in disqualifying a whole range of previously acceptable policy positions. But he is somewhat less clear about the nature of the alternative. "In 1941," he writes, "anti-isolationism acquired a positive program" (110). The goal was to make the United States "the ultimate arbiter of global politics" (111). But in the mid-to-late 1930s, those who invented the bogeyman of 'isolationism' appear to have been "advocates of collective security" – a rather different program (32). In fact, it is difficult to discern a single 'positive program' associated with 'anti-isolationism' in Wertheim's narrative. Collective security gave way to U.S. supremacy in the 'non-German world,' followed by plans for an 'American-British' postwar partnership, Roosevelt's 'Four Policemen,' and, finally, the United Nations.

The upshot, it seems, is that 'anti-isolationism' did not imply any positive project beyond American world leadership, loosely defined. Wertheim appears to make this point when he draws a contrast between American attitudes toward postwar peace in 1919 and 1943-45. In the first instance: "*Whether* the United States should shape world affairs was a given; what politicians and intellectuals asked was *how* to do so" (27). In the second case: "Americans fixated on *whether* their country would accept internationalism. They pushed to the background what kind of internationalism it should be" (146). By staging a debate between a "least-common-denominator" internationalism and a non-existent (but supposedly energetic) isolationism, American officials in the mid-1940s managed to ensure that any difficulty in deciding *how* the United States would exercise power in the world would not determine *whether* it would do so at all (153).

Wertheim concludes that this "sterile nondebate" rendered the idea of U.S. global supremacy "indisputable" (13). By 1945 Americans had accepted entanglement with the rest of the world to a degree they never had before and any future opposition to this stance could simply be dismissed as a return to isolationism. But the fact that American officials before 1945 mostly elided the question of *how* the United States would participate in world affairs does not mean that those debates did not occur thereafter. Arguments (including a 'Great Debate') about the distribution of aid, the establishment of military alliances, the relative strategic importance of Asia and Europe, and the commitment of troops abroad (among other subjects), consumed policymakers and the American public over the second half of the 1940s. These were not small matters. They determined the very substance of American world leadership. The fact that postwar planners in 1941 had already envisioned the potential necessity of U.S. global supremacy made the eventual expansion of American commitments more likely. But it did not make this outcome inevitable. And while the concept of 'isolationism' contributed significantly to this expansion, it did not make it indisputable. Nor did 'isolationism' operate alone. Other concepts coined around the same time – including collective security, national security, totalitarianism, appeasement, globalism, the Free World, and the Cold War – constituted a powerful and interconnected matrix that substantially shaped the mindset of American policymakers.⁵⁰

Wertheim concludes his account in 1945 because he believes that U.S. global supremacy had by then become indisputable. He also chooses this endpoint because the "original United Nations embodied the ideal template for how foreign policy elites wanted U.S. leadership to work" whereas the Cold War that followed "was always imagined as an aberration" and was merely "one epoch of American global leadership, which would outlast the Soviet challenge as well as the Soviet collapse" (14). Setting aside the question of what kind of template the rather inchoate United Nations of 1945 provided in practice, it is worth considering whether the Cold War was as aberrant as American policymakers assumed. With the Cold War long gone and U.S. global leadership still chugging (fitfully) along, it is perhaps natural to consider the former as a mere phase of

⁵⁰ See among others, Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Anders Stephanson, "Fourteen Notes on the Very Concept of the Cold War," H-Diplo (May 1996), 1–21, Anders Stephanson, "Cold War Degree Zero" in Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, eds., *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945–1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), Benjamin Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture Envisioning the Totalitarian enemy, 1920s–1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

the latter. But Wertheim's discovery that the birth of U.S. global supremacy coincided with a proto-cold-war against Nazi-dominated Europe suggests another interpretation. Perhaps such configurations (including the more recent confrontation with an 'Axis of Evil' and potential 'new' cold wars with Russia and China) represent a constitutive element, rather than a limiting factor, of U.S. world leadership.

RESPONSE BY STEPHEN WERTHEIM, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

It probably took me as long to formulate the guiding problem of *Tomorrow, the World* as it did to devise the book's argument. Could it really be, I asked myself, that on all the shelves of what reviewer Dexter Fergie calls "the library of U.S. hegemony," scholars had not frontally posed a question: how and why did the people who shape U.S. foreign policy decide to pursue global military dominance as a fundamental objective of America's role in the world?

I kept looking for the book that would give me the answer, until I concluded that it remained to be written. *Tomorrow, the World* is my attempt to do so. I am grateful to the reviewers, Michael Falcone, Fergie, William Hitchcock, Jennifer Lind, and Peter Slezkine, for taking seriously not only the historical account it offers but also the force of its insistence that armed primacy, whatever its deep sources, was also a choice — a conscious, collective decision that required conceptual innovation and political transformation. In 1940 and 1941, between the fall of France and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, I argue, officials and intellectuals who once rejected extra-hemispheric 'entanglements' came to believe that the United States should become the world's political-military hegemon. They worked assiduously to plan a U.S.-led future and build a new consensus around it in American politics. Their achievement, in place by 1945, surprised them more than it has scholars since, who, looking back from the Cold War or the unipolar moment, have preferred to ask, in effect, 'what took so long' for Americans to muster the will to lead the world, rather than why they ambitiously sought to do so at all.

For me, it took discipline to examine critically those who early on favored U.S. involvement in the righteous struggle of World War II, but who also, as I reveal, planned to keep the United States globally deployed in something like perpetuity — an approach that many of them frankly acknowledged to be offensive in character. So I thank the five participants in this roundtable for finding the material to be as provocative as I did, and Tom Maddux for organizing our exchange.

I cannot hope to do justice here to every valuable point raised by the reviewers, but I will try to address the criticisms and concerns they voice in common. I will begin with matters of argument and chronology — of what decision, exactly, was made, and when. Then I will address the issue of actors and agency — who made the decision and made the difference. Finally, I will reply to William Hitchcock's particular criticisms of the book, before taking up Jennifer Lind's generous invitation to expand on the book's implications for U.S. foreign policy today.

Argument and Chronology, Part One: The Prewar Inheritance

By the eve of the Second World War, the United States had violently expanded its power since the beginning of the republic. Its wars to that point had been at least as brutal, and more straightforwardly imperial, than U.S. interventions would prove to be in the epoch of 'global leadership' to come. A pacifistic country this was not. Yet until the summer of 1940, the United States had not committed itself to a project of global dominance through political and military commitments. During the 1930s, the traditional non-entanglement consensus, seeking to avoid power politics on the continents of Europe and Asia, was as strong as ever. President Franklin D. Roosevelt scoffed when Lord Lothian, the UK ambassador, asked him to take the torch of world leadership from Britain's hands in January 1939: such a prospect was both undesirable and impractical. America's leading policymakers and intellectuals felt similarly in the opening months of World War II, despite staunchly favoring the Allied side. Against this backdrop, *Tomorrow, the World* traces the turn toward not just intervention in the war but, more importantly, dominance of the "peace" to follow.

Several reviewers ask why I think earlier moments did not inaugurate America's ambition for global military dominance. The most minimal version of my claim is this: whatever certain Americans had in mind prior to 1940, they did not establish a domestic consensus that the configuration of political power beyond the Western Hemisphere was of vital importance to the United States, much less that it merited the open-ended pursuit of U.S. global primacy. Despite coming under challenge in the early decades of the twentieth century, the non-entanglement consensus still held sway — as when Congress deepened U.S. neutrality toward European and Asian conflicts in the 1930s, when President Warren G. Harding proclaimed 'return

to normalcy' after World War I, and even when President Woodrow Wilson pitched his League of Nations as a 'disentangling alliance' that might never again require the United States to send armies overseas. At the very least, a major domestic political coalition, ultimately manifested in the America First movement, stood in the way of achieving long-term U.S. power projection beyond the Western Hemisphere and America's insular colonies and territories. This rather uncontroversial claim suffices to give significance to what *Tomorrow, the World* provides: an account of the conception of U.S. global dominance in 1940 and 1941 and its domestic legitimation by 1945.

But I also advance a stronger claim about U.S. foreign policy prior to 1940. Not only was there no domestic consensus around political-military globalism, but few prominent officials and intellectuals clearly favored such a thing. The main proponents of an assertive 'internationalism' — who pushed the United States to seize colonies in 1898, or police the greater Caribbean circa 1905, or enter World War I in 1917, or join the League of Nations after 1919 — still did not advocate the permanent deployment of U.S. forces in Eurasia in order to secure a preponderance of power there. Chapter 1 contains more argumentation and evidence, particularly on the McKinley-Roosevelt era and the fight over the League of Nations. The bottom line is that even expansionist and imperialist American elites aimed to make the United States into a great power with a regional sphere of influence, but not a global hegemon.

Symptomatic of this vast and yet significantly limited ambition was how the concept of internationalism in American discourse remained associated with its nineteenth-century roots in the peace movement. As *Tomorrow, the World* documents, only just before the Second World War were advocates of peace turned into the embodiment of the new coinage 'isolationism' and thus expelled from the ranks of internationalism. Until then, leaders as militaristic as President Theodore Roosevelt were nonetheless content to put their faith in the 'peaceful settlement of international disputes' — a major and consistent priority of American statecraft from the first Hague Peace Conference in 1899 until the lead-up to World War II — to address conflicts in Europe, Asia, and beyond. One could of course engage in a search for individuals who displayed significant aspects of the post-1941 consensus; Theodore Roosevelt, for example, cast the United States as a policeman of universal civilization, breaking down a sense of essential difference between the New World and the Old. Peter Slezkine rightly points to naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who urged his countrymen to get over their qualms about 'European entanglements' in the 1890s, as a figure who would have readily signed up to U.S. global primacy in the 1940s. But we should not miss the proverbial forest for the trees.

William Hitchcock proposes one potential turning point that is worth addressing here, since *Tomorrow, the World* could only touch on it (2, 23). Did the United States determine that its vital interests depended upon the European balance of power as early as 1917, when it entered World War I? Hitchcock thinks so, claiming that after the fall of France in 1940, "American elites shared the same anxieties about a German take-over of continental Europe that had so worried the Wilson administration two and a half decades earlier." But as John A. Thompson, who wrote the introduction to this roundtable, has carefully demonstrated, the Wilson administration was not driven by a fear that Germany would conquer Europe. In the spring of 1917, when the United States declared war, a German victory appeared *less* likely than in previous years. At the time, Americans expected the war to end in either an Allied victory or a stalemate. What prompted the United States to enter the war was Germany's resort to unrestricted submarine warfare, which violated America's rights as a neutral state and thus its 'national honor.'⁵¹

The contrast with the Second World War is stark. Only the prospect of an Axis victory, occasioned by France's fall, caused the Roosevelt administration to abandon neutrality, aid the allies, and ultimately enter the war. Simultaneously, as officials and intellectuals contemplated America's world role after the war, they decided that the United States had to seek a

⁵¹ John A. Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), ch. 2; Thompson, "The Geopolitical Vision: The Myth of an Outmatched USA," in Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, eds., *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 91–114. Also see Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), chs. 6–12.

preponderance of power globally in order to prevent any future totalitarian power or alliance of powers from dominating Europe and Asia as the Axis had threatened to do. *Tomorrow, the World* uncovers a series of documents devised by postwar planners, working in and around the Roosevelt administration, that show America's international responsibilities leaping from hemispheric to global proportions. Hitchcock wonders: "Do such position papers about future trading arrangements, penned by self-appointed wise men, amount to a decisive rupture in U.S. policy?" Yes, they do (when viewed in tandem with evidence of similar ideas in the Roosevelt administration, Congress, leading foreign-affairs institutions, and public commentary), because for the first time they envisaged an effectively permanent policy of U.S. political-military preeminence the world over.

I think it is genuinely challenging to appreciate, in light of America's postwar conduct and its continued pursuit of unrivalled power, just how much of a rupture took place in a matter of months less than a century ago. Falcone, for example, suggests that the United States could have been aiming almost unintentionally at global supremacy well before World War II. He writes:

Could it not be that, for the first half of the century, a kind of armed proto-globalism—acceding to the entrenchment of other, better-mobilized superpowers by necessity—was pursued *de facto*, intermittently, and opportunistically by the executive, with only hazy medium- and long-term goals, and largely in the absence of intellectuals or planners to give it a pithy "ism?" The key change illustrated by Wertheim, then, is not that U.S. globalism was birthed in 1940, but rather that after 1940 U.S. intellectuals and officials actually *said* 'global supremacy' out loud—together.

I suppose it might be possible, in some sense, for a nation to pursue an objective without anyone really saying so. But this would be extremely hard, perhaps impossible, to prove, especially when the thing to be explained is first and foremost an idea. *Tomorrow, the World* seeks to account for the emergence of the collective claim that the United States should project preeminent military power on a global scale and assume responsibility for ordering the world. Could such an idea exist if no one articulated it? Even if it could, how would historians adduce evidence for something left unspoken? Why would they want to try? Falcone's many qualifications ("a kind of armed proto-globalism," "pursued *de facto*, intermittently, and opportunistically," etc.) may bolster my point: it is so difficult to show that the United States pursued global political-military dominance in the decades before the 1940s that one must pile provisos upon speculations in order to make the case.

At the same time that *Tomorrow, the World* emphasizes the moment of change after the fall of France, however, it does not claim that primacy arose "from the ether," as Falcone suggests. It argues instead that primacy resulted from a mutation of prewar internationalism, in which U.S. leaders decided that peaceful forms of engagement required hegemonic force behind them. Since the late nineteenth century, the United States sought to participate in the project of ordering the world along liberal, American lines, while avoiding entanglements in the corrupting, un-American system of power politics. For decades, these twin imperatives coexisted, striking many as two sides of the same 'internationalist' coin. In the 1930s, their compatibility diminished, as Americans began to polarize into advocates of 'collective security,' who searched for some feasible (and non-forcible) way to support allies abroad, and advocates of impartial neutrality, who renounced some forms of commerce in order to keep out of war (see 29–37). Still, it was only once a totalitarian alliance proved capable of conquering Eurasia that Americans perceived a stark and unpalatable choice between the two previously complementary imperatives: they could secure a liberal and American-style world order at the price of accepting global entanglements, or steer clear of such entanglements at the risk of accepting totalitarian preeminence (see especially 52, 58, 62, 74–75, 77, and 175–178).

The former position won out, and *Tomorrow, the World* highlights the novelty of this commitment to open-ended U.S. military superiority free of hemispheric limitations. To claim that global dominance was a new objective, however, hardly implies that it emerged *de novo*. In short, *Tomorrow, the World* features a quite common structure of historical explanation: it shows how existing traditions encountered changed conditions, resulting in something so qualitatively different as to qualify as new, while still having roots in the past.

Argument and Chronology, Part Two: The Postwar Legacy

I am more persuaded by criticisms pertaining to the other side of *Tomorrow, the World's* chronology. Falcone, Hitchcock, and Peter Slezkine all suggest that if primacy was conceived in the early 1940s, it was not fully implemented until 1951. By then, the United States had joined the NATO military alliance in Europe, sent troops to fight in the Korean war, and adopted NSC-68, a strategic document that laid out a militarized and indisputably global approach to wage the Cold War. By contrast, more peaceful futures appeared possible as of 1945, when *Tomorrow, the World* ends: perhaps the great powers could cooperate through the United Nations, or any U.S.-Soviet rivalry might remain a largely economic and transatlantic affair. A rich historical literature on the second half of the 1940s shows how the United States determined that the Soviet Union posed a grave threat to U.S. dominance and mobilized to contain it.⁵²

But why did the United States value dominance in the first place? Why did State Department planners posit, in 1947, that “preponderant power must be the object of U.S. policy”?⁵³ That is what *Tomorrow, the World* seeks to establish. Although the pursuit of primacy did not suffice to bring about the Cold War, it was, at a minimum, a condition of the Cold War’s possibility. The non-entanglement position, which was regnant after 1919, was entombed by 1945; *isolationism* now replaced *entanglement* as the main specter to avoid. I would be satisfied if *Tomorrow, the World* does no more than prove, as Slezkine proposes, that by 1945 U.S. supremacy was adopted “as a general theory, if not as an actual practice.” Still, significant elements of practice were surely manifest before the Cold War began. In the immediate postwar years, United States was the only country to project military power on a truly global scale. It stationed troops continuously in Central Europe and East Asia, and, when the demobilization drive reached its end in June 1947, still maintained more than 1.5 million men under arms.⁵⁴

Ending the narrative proper on V-J Day serves another purpose as well. For many scholars and practitioners, 1945 possesses almost totemic virtue. It marks the moment when all was right: America won the war, broke free of ‘isolationism,’ and enjoyed unequivocal leadership of a world whole and free. When the Soviet Union collapsed half a century later, 1945 supplied the model for U.S. officials who decided to preserve American supremacy even in the absence of a Cold War threat.⁵⁵ More recently, 1945 was the touchstone for President Donald Trump and his primacist detractors alike — the former touting the ruthlessness of generals Douglas MacArthur and George Patton, the latter rising in defense of the post-1945 ‘liberal international order.’⁵⁶ It is easy enough to criticize the excesses of the Cold War, and easier still to lament U.S. military overreach in recent decades. But it is perhaps more pertinent to ask whether the pursuit of effectively perpetual

⁵² A handful of works among a great many are Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945–1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Melvyn J. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 19.

⁵³ Quoted in Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 19.

⁵⁴ Richard F. Haynes, *The Awesome Power: Harry S. Truman as Commander in Chief* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 119.

⁵⁵ See George H.W. Bush, “Remarks to World War II Veterans and Families in Honolulu, Hawaii,” December 7, 1991, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, vol. II (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 1573–1576.

⁵⁶ Patrick Porter, *The False Promise of Liberal Order* (Newark: Polity Press, 2020); Stephen Wertheim, “Quit Calling Donald Trump an Isolationist. He’s Worse than That,” *Washington Post*, February 17, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/02/17/quit-calling-donald-trump-an-isolationist-its-an-insult-to-isolationism>.

global primacy, in place by 1945, implied a good portion of the strategic indiscipline and moral imperiousness that have afflicted U.S. foreign policy since then.

Actors and Agency: The Foreign Policy Elite

If the decision for dominance was made before the Cold War, just who made it? Several reviewers raise questions about the agents in *Tomorrow, the World*, although they pull in opposite directions. Hitchcock argues that top-level government officials deserved center stage, whereas Fergie suggests including the public at large.

Tomorrow, the World focuses on “the U.S. foreign policy elite as a group” (defined on 7–9) and invites the scrutiny that the reviewers have given it. My cast of protagonists could not be perfectly satisfying, both because the boundary of the elite is inherently fuzzy and because mid-tier intellectuals neither controlled government policy nor necessarily defined popular opinion. How tempting it would have been to write a traditional diplomatic centered on President Roosevelt and his close associates, as Hitchcock appears to favor given that he accuses the book of “downgrading the role of Roosevelt.” Such an approach would have made for an elegant narrative and probably more book sales. But it would not have fit the problem at hand.

During the pivotal years of 1940 and 1941, the uppermost U.S. officials, who were occupied with the war crisis, lacked the time and resources to devote sustained attention to the shape of the postwar world. Below them, America’s national-security state was only the kernel of what it would soon become. That is why, once the war in Europe broke out, the State Department enlisted a think-tank, the Council on Foreign Relations, to convene a hundred-person group to plan the postwar world (37–38). That group supplies the backbone of *Tomorrow, the World*’s narrative, because it was the highest-level and most rigorous and comprehensive effort at the time to consider America’s world role after the war. It also supplied the backbone of the government’s official postwar planning committee established after Pearl Harbor (135–136), and sent personnel elsewhere to the Treasury and Federal Reserve (122).

Hitchcock nonetheless asks: “Don’t we need more of clear through-line before we can credit the think-tank essays with the choices Roosevelt made from 1940 on?” For three reasons, I think not. First, my claim is less that any singular actor caused policy change than that foreign policy elite, as a class, reconceived America’s role in the world in response to international events. If the Council on Foreign Relations had not undertaken postwar planning, the same basic outcome might well have obtained, given how many officials and intellectuals elsewhere were thinking and speaking along similar lines. The Council’s efforts matter chiefly as cogent, intensive, and traceable articulation of the transformation taking place more broadly. I do, however, think these planners had influence, and argue in chapter 4 that the Council-turned-State Department planners convinced Roosevelt to create a permanent international organization with every state a member, rather than confine a postwar body to the great powers alone.

Second, *Tomorrow, the World* does provide evidence from the highest levels of government, including in the pre–Pearl Harbor years when attention spans were limited. It shows, for example, that naval war plans enlarged the definition of U.S. vital interests (75–78), that Vice President Henry Wallace met with the Council planners and endorsed their scheme for postwar American-British air and naval policing (88, 112), and that Roosevelt redefined America’s global interests and responsibilities in public speeches and through the Atlantic Charter (51, 54, 57–58, 63, 72–75, 87, 99, 112–114). (Hitchcock claims that “Wertheim does not delve much into Roosevelt’s thinking; he is drawn to more boisterous figures like Henry Luce,” yet a check of the index shows that Roosevelt appears in about four times as many pages as Luce.)

Third and most important, however, my object of explanation is not so much “the choices Roosevelt made” as how an entire policymaking elite conceived of America’s role in the world beyond the present war. Suppose Roosevelt had personally written a ‘blueprint for perpetual postwar U.S. dominance’ as France fell in June 1940: this still would not mean a consensus had formed that would survive Roosevelt and the war. In other words, I am more interested in the ‘through-line’ to postwar policymaking and discourse than to Roosevelt the individual. So much the better that such Cold Warriors as Dean Acheson and Allen Dulles directly participated in the postwar planning efforts I document.

I appreciate Fergie's call to examine the views of the wider public in the United States, as well as actors internationally. As Fergie hints, the United Nations captivated the public to a degree that is difficult to appreciate today, and one should not assume that ordinary Americans valued that organization as instrumentally as Roosevelt's planners did. Nor did the public's support for the postwar settlement of 1945 imply a ready acquiescence in specific policies and deployments thereafter. Thousands of soldiers in the Asia-Pacific rioted and even mutinied in the winter of 1945–1946, demanding to serve a worthy purpose or come home. "What I want," said a Marine stationed in China, was "an explanation of what I'm doing here."⁵⁷ *Tomorrow, the World* concerns itself with less with the actual views of ordinary Americans than with how U.S. elites perceived or invoked 'public opinion.' I was struck by the gap between the two: anxieties about what the supposedly isolationist-minded public would bear often contradicted evidence showing most Americans to be broadly in line with the policy preferences of skittish elites (12, 29–31, 130–133, 137–138). Bearing in mind, then, the complex and often elusive relationship between mass opinion and elite decisions, I hope scholars will further investigate the formulation of foreign-policy ideas at the grassroots level and the history of elite efforts either to foster or to suppress mass participation in foreign policy.⁵⁸

A Reply to a Critic

Alone among the reviewers, Hitchcock objects to the historical question that *Tomorrow, the World* poses, before rejecting its answer. His criticisms warrant a special reply, for they ultimately illustrate why I thought I needed to write my book.

In his review, Hitchcock repeatedly objects that Roosevelt's policy moves in 1940 and 1941, which were often backed by popular support, did not amount to a desire for U.S. military dominance in general. For example, he writes:

Roosevelt called for, and received, a massive defense appropriation from Congress; in September 1940, he signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history; and he shaped an agreement for the transfer of 50 old destroyers to Britain in exchange for century-long leases on valuable British seaboard territories, thus circumventing Congressional neutrality legislation. All these actions did indeed mark a significant evolution in U.S. policy. Do they signal, though, aspirations for global hegemony? That is a hard case to make.

That would indeed be a hard case to make, and I do not make it. Roosevelt's policy measures to address the war crisis do not tell us terribly much about U.S. foreign policy after the war.⁵⁹ That is why *Tomorrow, the World* focuses on the officials and intellectuals who most prominently and intensively addressed the *postwar* world. But because those actors do not meet Hitchcock's stated standards for who and what matters — namely, Roosevelt and high-level officials implementing immediate policy measures — Hitchcock discounts precisely what to me matters most. His review implies that short-term policies should be the acid test of general axioms and long-term strategy. Hitchcock thus creates a circular test of my argument that excludes in advance the evidence that supports it. In short, he seems not to accept the aim of the book: to

⁵⁷ Quoted in James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 239.

⁵⁸ See David Allen, "Every Citizen a Statesman: Building a Democracy for Foreign Policy in the American Century," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2019); Andrew Buchanan, "Domesticating Hegemony: Creating a Globalist Public, 1941–1943," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2021): 301–29; Andrew Johnstone, "Creating a 'Democratic Foreign Policy': The State Department's Division of Public Liaison and Public Opinion, 1944–1953," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2011): 486–491.

⁵⁹ Incidentally, *Tomorrow, the World* questions whether the destroyers-for-bases deal with Britain marked a significant evolution in U.S. strategy. Even non-interventionists supported the destroyers deal because it strengthened hemisphere defense, establishing U.S. control over naval and air bases in the greater Caribbean and Newfoundland (62–63).

understand how the U.S. policymaking and intellectual class, including but hardly limited to the president, reconceived of America's enduring responsibilities in global affairs.

It is true that I could have written the book less as an intellectual history and more as a pure political history, which would have brought benefits as well as costs. More curious, however, is Hitchcock's claim that *Tomorrow, the World* depicts "a duplicitous plot to attain world power." Hitchcock repeats this interpretation several times, writing that the book "smacks of conspiracy" and levels "accusations of bad faith and deceit." No such accusations can be found in the book. What can be found, in fact, is an explicit refutation of those who "interpret this history along almost conspiratorial lines" (38). As I emphasize throughout the narrative, American elites struggled to figure out how to respond to unfolding events, changed their minds repeatedly, and made efforts to persuade a public that did not necessarily need persuading. The point, as Fergie observes in his review, is not that leaders duped the public, but rather that the architects of global dominance "understood themselves to be making a tragic choice" from the standpoint of their own commitments as Americans and internationalists (178).

Indeed, Hitchcock misses that although the book provides a critical account of the logic behind the quest for postwar military dominance, it takes no sides among the principal actors it addresses, much less on the question of whether and how the United States should have intervened in the war. I tried to extend sympathy to the book's protagonists and admire the creativity they exhibited in the face of unprecedented circumstances.⁶⁰ Elsewhere I have praised mid-twentieth-century foreign-policy experts for seeking to engage the public and presenting multiple points of view, even as they steered public opinion in debatable directions.⁶¹ We should be so lucky if today's crop of elites were to prove as willing as their predecessors to adjust U.S. policy to evolving international conditions and respect the public as a rightful and sometimes powerful arbiter of their country's role in the world.

A critical history can be misread as a "moralizing polemic" if one takes an uncritical stance toward the subject matter. Addressing the Atlantic Charter of 1941, Hitchcock dubs the document an "earnest testimonial of Anglo-American friendship," as though matters of power and interest belong in the genre of letters between pen pals. Why, he charges, don't I take "documents such as the Atlantic Charter at face value"? To me, the role of the historian is to read such official documents closely and interpret them in light of private discussions, ensuing actions, and the wider political and intellectual context, all of which *Tomorrow, the World* does in chapters three and four. Hitchcock does not discuss the evidence I provide, going on to assert that the Atlantic Charter's "text was in fact rather Wilsonian, expressing opposition to territorial conquest, and approval of self-determination, sovereignty, open trade, an improved standard of living, and disarmament," before asking, "if that was hegemony, who would oppose it?"

In *Tomorrow, the World*, readers will find that many prominent Americans who were opposed the Atlantic Charter at the time (127–129). Among them was future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who rebuked the Charter for constituting "Anglo-Saxon military and economic hegemony" (127)! The exact thing Hitchcock finds self-evidently non-existent was in fact thought and proclaimed, with the evidence right in the pages of the book. (Also overlooked are the book's passages showing that both supporters and detractors of the Atlantic Charter dwelled on its qualities that they perceived to be un-Wilsonian, especially its implicit embrace of open-ended Anglo-American dominance without wider international organization (128–129).) In sum, Hitchcock's review ignores the evidence that situates the Atlantic Charter in the context of American plans to join the United States with the British settler empire to police the postwar world, and then concludes

⁶⁰ I expand on this point in Alex Ward, "How Military Superiority Made America Less Safe," *Vox*, December 29, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/22176111/usa-military-power-tomorrow-the-world-stephen-wertheim>.

⁶¹ Daniel Bessner and Stephen Wertheim, "Democratizing U.S. Foreign Policy: Bringing Experts and the Public Back Together," *Foreign Affairs*, April 5, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-04-05/democratizing-us-foreign-policy>.

that what matters is presidential rhetoric taken at “face value.” Readers may decide for themselves which approach better resembles evidence-disregarding polemicism.

Historians have plenty of options that lie in between taking things at face value and alleging deceit. Among them is analysis of ideology, in which *Tomorrow, the World* engages. Specifically, the book traces the construction of an ideology that redefined internationalism around the global projection of military power and cast any alternative as tantamount to inaction and absence. Hitchcock’s review deploys that ideology, whereas my book seeks to show how it was historically produced. Hitchcock writes that the current debate over U.S. grand strategy “pits ‘restrainers’ — those calling for a diminished and demilitarized world role — against liberal internationalists, who believe that global threats and crises are best managed by an active U.S. presence in the world.” By “active U.S. presence in the world,” Hitchcock appears to mean a globally dominant U.S. *military* role, that being the issue that divides the two groups. Hitchcock’s review thereby performs the very move that, I argue, legitimated U.S. dominance at its creation: he conflates internationalism with U.S. military superiority and casts those who favor the diminution of armed force as favoring a passive and ‘diminished’ world role in general. As *Tomorrow, the World* concludes, the original primacists claimed that “the only way to practice internationalism, to constrain and transcend power politics, was to dominate power politics. The United States forged global supremacy by erasing this fundamental contradiction from view” (179). So it continues. I hope *Tomorrow, the World* invites readers to understand America’s foreign-policy choices, past and present, in ways that clarify rather than mystify them.

Facing the Future

Which brings us to the book’s relevance for U.S. grand strategy today. I thank Jennifer Lind for homing in on this question and proposing a place for my historical perspective within the grand-strategy debate in political science. *Tomorrow, the World*, she suggests, “creates an intellectual foundation for a liberal American grand strategy,” as distinct from primacist or realist alternatives. Lind’s three-part schematization is a useful point of departure, although I see things somewhat differently.

On my reading, Lind interprets *Tomorrow, the World* as taking the position that America’s basic grand-strategic mistake came in embracing a global military role in the 1940s. By contrast, she writes, “the realists argue that the blunder was 1989,” when the Soviet Union imploded and the United States nonetheless persisted in pursuing military dominance. But I identify more with this latter position than with the one she imputes to me. To my mind, the major mistake was the U.S. failure to pull back militarily after the Soviet collapse. My assessment of the 1940s is more complicated. Rather than take sides in the debate it chronicles, *Tomorrow, the World* seeks to appreciate the price of America’s turn to primacy, precisely because primacy has become more destructive in our own time than it was in the mid-twentieth century. The book’s implicit stance (for whatever authorial intent may be worth) is not that dominance was initially wrong but that its adoption was tragic and fateful.

As I try to show in *Tomorrow, the World*, the United States did not merely mobilize to counter specific threats from the Axis powers and later the Soviet Union. Officials and intellectuals also extrapolated grandly from the events of 1940 and 1941: they figured that a world without U.S. dominance would be prone to mass conquests by totalitarian great powers, effectively forevermore. “The fall of France,” I argue, “seemed to lay bare the nature of international politics; interventionists were implicitly arguing not so much that all of Eurasia *would* fall under totalitarian rule than that it *could*, now or in the future” (54). Here was a recipe for global military dominance as a forever project, to be pursued even in favorable international circumstances. Moreover, the United States decided on dominance for reasons that go beyond the strategic tenet Lind endorses, that of preventing totalitarian hegemony across Europe and Asia. U.S. elites frequently argued that American preeminence was necessary to preserve ‘world order,’ or fulfill America’s exceptional ‘destiny,’ or ward off ‘isolationism,’ to use categories common at the time. All of these rationales suggested that the United States should deploy globally not only to counterbalance great-power expansionism but also to prevent the emergence of new rivals — or simply keep dominance going, as a self-justifying endeavor.

Just how far was U.S. foreign policy, as of 1941 or 1945, from the designs of the Pentagon planners who wrote in 1992 that America must deter “potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role”?⁶² It was not all the way there, I would argue, but closer than Lind suggests. After all, if the United States erred by maintaining global dominance after 1989, we need to explain why U.S. policymakers at the time not only embraced primacy but found it nearly self-evident.⁶³ *Tomorrow, the World* offers one explanation: America’s post–Cold War ambitions had genuine roots in the excesses of the past, excesses that were and still are remembered exclusively as successes. Dominance was originally conceived as a near-perpetual venture. Small wonder it outlasted the Cold War.

At the same time, the distance from 1941 to 1989 was not nothing. Although the original case for primacy was open-ended, it also depended upon a historically specific specter — that of totalitarian powers mounting armed conquests to lead an international order of their own, which would close off vital portions of the world to liberal, American-style interaction and influence. It was to prevent this eventuality that the United States mobilized for dominance: better its power than theirs. But once the Soviet Union fell, so did the prospects for totalitarian conquest. If some primacists of 1941, teleported the 1990s, might have wanted to keep U.S. hegemony going, others might have believed that primacy had lost its purpose. In a world without conquering totalitarians, the United States could enjoy international exchange without wielding overwhelming force. Primacy, in this sense, outlived its reason for being. After the Cold War, U.S. leaders persistently fretted that they lacked an articulable purpose for American power.⁶⁴ In the absence of totalitarian rivals, I have argued, U.S. military dominance has grown difficult to justify to Americans themselves.⁶⁵ We will see whether a rising China will inherit the Soviet mantle.

While complicating Lind’s position, then, *Tomorrow, the World* gives succor to it, sharpening the critique of America’s post–Cold War grand strategy from the perspective of 1941. Likewise, Lind’s review might over-read our differences on grand strategy today. I would not take up the banner of a ‘liberal grand strategy’ as opposed to a ‘realist’ one. To my mind, realist and liberal logics can underpin any of the grand strategies Lind lays out, and indeed coexist in most individuals, albeit to varying degrees. (*Tomorrow, the World* blended those logics together, as I think was true to the historical actors.) I find it more clarifying to classify grand strategies by the strategies themselves. Joshua Shiffrin has done so by distinguishing four prominent options at present: neo-primacy, deep engagement, offshore balancing (which Lind calls ‘realist’), and restraint.⁶⁶ The latter two do not differ because one is realist and the other relies on values. Rather, offshore balancers want the United States to create a rough parity of latent military power within each major world region, whereas restrainers believe that the dominance of defense over offense, and perhaps the interests of the actors involved, reduce the need for U.S. military commitments. The two sides may also diverge over how to demarcate the geographical expanse over which a rival hegemon would become a threat to the United States.

⁶² Patrick E. Tyler, “U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html>.

⁶³ See Patrick Porter, “Why America’s Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment,” *International Security*, vol. 42, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 9–46.

⁶⁴ Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: BBS PublicAffairs, 2008).

⁶⁵ Wertheim, “America Has No Reason to be So Powerful,” *New York Times*, October 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/opinion/america-global-power.html>.

⁶⁶ Joshua Shiffrin, “Europe and Asia (and China) in US grand strategy,” *US–China Foreign Relations: Power Transition and its Implications for Europe and Asia*, ed. Robert S. Ross, Øystein Tunsjø, and Wang Dong (London: Routledge, 2020), 99–114.

Let us continue that discussion in the months and years to come. In *Tomorrow, the World*, I aimed, first and foremost, to restore a sense of agency to U.S. foreign policy and lay bare the stakes of America's strategic choices. If the book implores its readers to take a position, it is to think outside the boundaries established in World War II. In his famous essay announcing the arrival of "the American Century" in 1941, publishing mogul Henry Luce asked Americans to decide between "those old, old labels — internationalism and isolationism." He wrote, "We can make a truly *American* internationalism something as natural to us in our time as the airplane or the radio."⁶⁷ That is exactly what has happened: Americans ever since have come to find their global supremacy to be natural. They accepted that 'internationalism and isolationism' were the horizons of possibility of America's world role. I hope new generations will be more creative.

⁶⁷ Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, February 17, 1941, 63–64.