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Tony Smith. *America's Mission: The United States And The Worldwide Struggle For Democracy In The Twentieth Century.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994. xviii + 455 pp. $33.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-691-04466-8; $52.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-03784-4.

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Professor Tony Smith, who is affiliated with Tufts and Harvard, believes that the legacy of Woodrow Wilson has profoundly affected American foreign policy. Since Wilson, he argues, most American leaders have shared (or at least voiced) a common assumption: The growth of democracy abroad makes America more secure at home. Fostering democracy has not been easy, however, for American liberal internationalism has confronted, molded, or fought the sometimes intractable forces engendered by modern nationalism.

Mr. Smith takes evident pride in what he calls Wilsonianism, "the most important and distinctive contribution of the United States to the international history of the twentieth century" (p. 12). He defines liberal democracy as the ideology of a state within which organized social forces and free political parties express the will of the people, prevent the emergence of arbitrary or dictatorial power, and secure the lives, property, and liberty of the individual citizen.

Mr. Smith rejects the Marxist thesis, which asserts the primacy of economic forces in both foreign policy and international affairs. Nor does he have much use for the realist school, either. According to the author, leading realists like George Kennan and Walter Lippmann failed to understand how foreign policy is shaped by an ideology created by prevailing domestic values and structures. In the author's view, international relations reflect more than the struggle for geopolitical and strategic hegemony or balance. The author is certain that the promotion of liberal internationalism augments the security of the American nation. In his view, Wilson's genius lay in realizing that a democratic world order, organized by Americans through a League of Nations, could ensure to the progress and safety of the United States. Indeed, Wilsonianism is the centerpiece of America's Mission. Though Americans could blunder (refusal to enter the League) and even play the role of exploiters and incompetent imperialists (Cuba and the Philippines), they often rose to the Wilsonian occasion.

According to Smith, President Wilson realized that the rise of nationalism represented a challenge to liberty and order. If properly channeled, nationalist passions could be tamed by healthy constitutional orders and free societies. Self-determination, therefore, was more than a slogan; indeed, it was merely a beginning. Peoples emerging from oppression or tutelage should be encouraged to adopt liberal constitutions, much as Wilson did in the case of the Czechs. Then, liberated peoples and their patrons would create a global, liberal international economic system. Free peoples, some today and some tomorrow, but always with American support and encouragement, would band together in a League of Nations. Wars would become infrequent, and men and women would enjoy the blessings of freedom and material progress. Presumably, America would play midwife to this new world order. Clearly, Wilson is the hero of this book, he is Smith's inspiration. As the author writes (p. 65), Wilson's presidency "meant the triumph of a policy of principle over one of material or strategic consideration to a degree unparalleled in American history."

Mr. Smith quickly spots a dilemma, however. At times and with most painful consequences, Americans may not be capable of promoting democracy. This is especially true in agrarian societies, where oppressive elites have kept the masses in bondage and poverty. Promoting democracy while working in tandem with the elites who exploit those people just does not work. Political reform without a program dedicated to economic and social justice is, Smith observes, futile. Even restoring order as a way of ensuring the triumph of legitimate authority may backfire. The legacy of American intervention in the Dominican Republic was the rapacious dictator Rafael Tru-

jillo; in Nicaragua the United States left as its interventionist legacy the Somoza dynasty. The reality between "ought" and "can" creates a gap between rhetoric and reality. And in this space there have flourished hypocrisy and crass self-interest. Smith acknowledges this truth, and some of his examples are powerful ones: Latin America, Vietnam, and the Philippines appear on his list of American failures. To his credit, Smith does not hesitate to show how such examples undermine the rhetorical power of Wilsonianism. Yet the Wilsonian ideal remains his mantra. Neo-isolationism has been fashionable among many academics since the 1960s. It is refreshing to read a book which celebrates the ideology of liberal internationalism, and the virtues of select interventions. Mr. Smith has made an important point. No global order and no enduring peace can emerge unless the leading players in world politics come to terms with nationalism. In a time disfigured by fascism, extreme nationalist phobias, and communism–all of which appeal to the bitterness and hatreds rife among troubled peoples living in a turbulent era–the strongest power must stand for a better alternative. In this sense, Wilson's liberal internationalism offered a way out, and still does. Yet the road to that shining city on a hill is twisting, and beset with discouraging obstacles.

History has a way of playing tricks upon those who proclaim the triumph of liberal democracy throughout the world, or the imminent coming of the New World Order. In 1941 Henry Robinson Luce, the son of missionaries, proclaimed the coming of the American Century. Much of his vision was prophetic–global intervention, international good works, an American prosperity without precedent–but the world disappointed him. Luce foresaw American victory in the greatest of wars; he did not anticipate a bipolar, communist-infested world armed with nuclear weapons; nor did Luce dare to imagine a near time when beloved China, the land of his birth, would be in Communist hands. Only a few years ago Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the coming triumph of liberal democracy. "… mankind," he wrote in *The End of History and the Last Man* (p. 338), "will come to seem like a long wagon train strung out along a road." Ultimately, most of the wagons will reach the promised land, for "liberal democracy in reality constitutes the best possible solution to the human problem."

So a bit of humility is in order. His reverence for Wilson blinds Mr.Smith to some of his hero's faults. He sometimes acknowledges this or that defect, but then quickly moves on to his next subject. In fact, the book does not clearly investigate the line separating the promotion of democratic ideology from military, economic or political intervention in the domestic affairs of its putative beneficiaries. The expression of the global validity of democracy is at the heart of Wilsonianism, but so was armed intervention, from Mexico to Germany. Was Mexican democracy better off as a result of Wilson's fumbling policy there? More important by far was the President's intervention on the side of the Allies. A German victory might have been a bad thing for the United States, but Wilson's propaganda portrayed it as the virtual end of the world. Yet if America had stayed reasonably neutral, and Germany, the anti-democratic demon, had won the war, would things have turned out worse than they did? One can argue that by rejecting Wilson's League, Americans themselves forfeited any right to complain about his policies. But without Wilson's pious meddling on the "democratic" side (Russia!), there would have been no Hitler. A German hegemony might have lasted a generation or two, but it too would have foundered on the rocks of the very nationalism which Wilson inadequately understood.

I bring up these points because Mr.Smith portrays Wilson as a kind of disembodied idealist, whose abstractions made sense in a world troubled by nationalism and pregnant with communism and fascism. Yet Wilson was more than a preacher advocating Smith's liberal international order. This President was given to weepy moods of messianic fervor. He knew how to whip up emotions (against Germany, for the League). Wilson oversold his vision to a fickle public; he was tactically inept, and too vain to acknowledge the limits of his theory and the fragility of his health.

Wilson's moralistic strictures against German naval depredations could only inflame the American public and cloud its (and his) judgment. Walter Lippmann, though dismissed by Mr.Smith as an errant realist, saw the danger inherent in Wilsonian appeals. When he wrote his powerful interventionist essays for Henry R. Luce's Life in 1939-1941, Lippmann did not inflame emotions by dwelling upon the evil nature of the Germans and their Nazi masters. Instead, he methodically showed what Hitler's control of the North Atlantic sea lanes would mean to the American economy and the American way of life. And as FDR drew closer to war, he was careful to avoid Wilson's promises, while defining the national interest in terms of the defeat of militarist Germany, not the new world order. True, he sometimes spoke of Four Freedoms and the like, but Roosevelt always fell back, not upon a League of Nations, but upon the defense of an imperiled Western Hemisphere. The author does warn

(p. 12) that "Pride cometh before the fall." He admits that Confucian or Islamic cultures may yet engender "political orders more effective than those proposed by the West." Still, Smith is convinced that the prospects for Anglo-Saxon liberalism are good. Its values are sound, though its advocates have sometimes used too little force (against fascism) or too much (against Vietnamese Communists). In Latin America, the author notes, American leaders have on the whole done more for dictatorship than they have for democracy.

In the post-1945 world Mr. Smith finds Wilsonianism vindicated. While admitting that the cold war inspired a "new realism" (p. 118) in American leaders, Smith lauds the remaking of the West German and Japanese polities as deeds worthy of the idealistic Wilsonian legacy. In other cases, the cold war and dread of communism inspired less noble efforts. Right-wing dictators whose ardor for democracy was non-existent received backing from the same presidents who promoted democracy in Germany and in Douglas MacArthur's Japan. The United States, whose national experience was anti-colonialist, supported the imperialist cause in Indochina, since the French were fighting communism. These inconsistencies trouble Mr. Smith, but he never lets them undermine his faith in the Wilsonian legacy. After all, if rightist dictators were no Wilsonians, they, unlike Hitler or the Soviets, did not threaten the potential liberal world order's very existence. In 1941 Lippmann and other interventionist argued that a fascist victory would turn an isolationist America into a fortress, whose economy would decline and whose way of life would decay. Other realists and interventionist believed the same thing in 1947 (William Bullitt is a good example). That is, if the communists expanded any further, the international economic order would shrink, markets would disappear, vital raw materials would become scarce, and America itself would find herself under siege. Mr. Smith accepts this line of reasoning, and he may be right to do so. He is convinced that the realist-crafted policy of containment and liberal democratic internationalism could and did work together–much of the time. By integrating Germany and Japan into the capitalist international order, neo-Wilsonian America strengthened democracy and preserved itself in the struggle against world communism.

Greece, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Iran, and Guatemala were unfortunate lapses. Mr. Smith calls the cold war period a time of "selective liberal democratic internationalism." (p. 181). While acknowledging President Dwight D. Eisenhower's hypocrisy in the instances of Iran and Guatemala, Mr. Smith is nonetheless overly kind in this chapter. He accepts the administration's estimates of the communist danger in Guatemala, and does nothing to inform readers of the grotesque injustices which Dulles intended to preserve in that unhappy land. Smith even claims that Eisenhower faced down McCarthy, when in fact the administration struck back only when the Wisconsin demagogue was assaulting its owned armed forces. In regard to those forlorn countries, Mr. Smith, the Wilsonian idealist reborn as a cold warrior, decides that "communist strength was so real, that Washington had a right, based on a compelling sense of national security, to work to deny the Soviet Union greater influence in either place" (p. 194).

In the case of Iran, the issues at stake were communism, oil, and geopolitical advantage. While the author admits that Khomeini was the price we paid for the overthrow of Mohammed Mossadegh, he seems to feel that this wart on the face of Wilsonian neo-realism, though ugly, could not have been avoided. But if the Shah's feeble, corrupt dictatorship was more useful to the neo-realist brand of liberal internationalism than was the promising albeit imperfect Mossadegh brand of nationalism, does that fact imply something disturbing? If foreign policy promotes, not liberal democratic internationalism, but forces pledged to its suppression, then in what sense is that foreign policy "Wilsonian? "

Mr. Smith feels that John F.Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was in the Wilsonian tradition. Intended to promote democracy, progress, and social reform, the Alliance quickly fell afoul of other considerations. Land reform might help the communists; and military dictators could sometimes be handy tools in the fight against Cuban leader Fidel Castro and his admirers. Turning to more recent presidents, Mr. Smith respects Jimmy Carter's commitment to human rights, but cites his blunders in Nicaragua and Iran as proof of this truth: "When liberalism becomes moralism, substituting its wishes for realistic analysis of conditions abroad, it serves more as Fourth of July play to the grandstand than as an effective guide to policy" (p. 265). In Woodrow Wilson's worldview human rights were part of the whole, to be furthered along with constitutionalism, democracy, open markets, national self-determination, and respect for the territorial integrity of one's neighbors. Yet what was Wilson's messianic vision of a new world order if not a "Fourth of July play" of which Americans soon tired.

But if Wilson remains the dominant figure in Mr. Smith's tome, then Ronald Wilson Reagan becomes the

surprising hero of its final segment. The author praises the Reagan administration's policy of constructive engagement in South Africa, and lauds President Reagan for promoting democracy in Central America. Smith does not intend to be unkind when, speaking of Reagan's thinking, he observes that "while he held strongly to his convictions, some of them were contradictory and all of them were simple" (p. 272). Reagan, following his instincts, and alternating caution with daring, could promote democracy in both South Africa and the Soviet Union. He did so by inspiring confidence among potentially progressive leaders (especially Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union).

Reagan thus promoted democracy some of the time, but in the case of the Philippines, the picture is not so pretty. There, Reagan stuck by dictator Marcos for far too long. He seems to have labored under the burden of the "Who Lost China? " debate. The right had long claimed that America had undermined Chiang Kai-shek, to the benefit of the communists. Reagan would not do the same to President Ferdinand E. Marcos, at least not until the last minute. Mr. Smith is defensive about the Reagan policies in El Salvador (he turned a blind eye for too long to the Death Squads) and in Nicaragua, but on balance he thinks things turned out well there. In one sense the cold war called forth neo-Wilsonianism's most fervent advocacy of liberal democratic internationalism. "Pay any price, bear any burden" etc. On the other hand, cold war skull-duggery often seems to ridicule the high rhetoric. Mr. Smith has little to say about Iran-Contra. This is surprising. After all, in the name of promoting democracy in Nicaragua a small group of men illegally hijacked American foreign policy and ran a secretive operation out of a White House basement office. If subversion of the Constitution (the ultimate liberal foundation, one would think) at home is justified by the promotion of anti-communist democracy abroad, something has gone awry. Mr. Smith should have examined such unpleasantries in greater depth.

Mr.Smith begins this ambitious work by voicing an undiluted admiration for the Wilsonian message. By the time one finishes this challenging book, its author has become a bit more modest, except when he turns his attention to methodology. Then, we learn about the defects of the realists and the Marxists, and the superiority of Mr. Smith's method. To him, ideology, as molded by the values and social groups dominant in democratic society, must be studied as a causal factor in evaluating our foreign policy. Mr. Smith is right, but the promotion of the liberal international order (even allowing for violations of the credo thanks to communism or crass self-interest) has been but one factor in shaping our foreign policy. Still, the advocacy of democracy proved to be a powerful weapon in the anti-communist arsenal. Mr. Smith recalls with nostalgia the "glory days" of liberal internationalism, which he places in the decade following the Second World War. The creation, virtually ex nihilo, of democracies in West Germany and Japan represents, Smith argues, triumphs for the American mission in the world. Americans did not tire so easily, for fear of communism was a powerful stimulant. As soon as President Bush took national support for the Gulf War as an acceptance of a new, open-ended support for a new world order, he was doomed. Saddam Hussein was no Stalin, and people were tiring of exhortations that exceeded the size of the challenge or the danger.

We muddled through the cold war, propelled by fear of communism and devotion to liberal internationalism. But what about the coming challenges–and probable disasters–in Mexico, Iran, Africa, and Russia, not to speak of the Balkans? If Mr. Smith were an historian, I would not pose the question. But since political scientists, like seers, can tell the future, I pose the question. So, this provocative book makes us think about enduring dilemmas. Sadly, Mr. Smith's prose is dense and poorly written; it is repetitive, and at times almost unreadable. This is unfortunate, for the book is a mirror held before twentieth-century Americans. As such, the volume is highly useful. We feel, Smith concludes, compelled to promote democracy because of our national traditions. We feel that vaguely similar regimes will not endanger our safety. Yet we may sometimes support anti-democratic forces for fear of yet worse anti-democratic forces. We want to advocate a liberal world order, but our power to do so is often limited. This constraint may lead to disillusionment and isolation. But if we retreat we may sense that we are harming ourselves, or being untrue to our best traditions. Mr.Smith's book is worth struggling through, for it will make us ponder this and related problems.

Mr. Smith takes a broad and deep view of his subject. He has written a highly original work, one that will provoke much discussion in the troubled times to come.

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