

***A Pact With The Devil:  
Washington's Bid for World Supremacy  
and the Betrayal of the American Promise***  
**Roundtable Review**



Reviewed Works:

**Tony Smith.** *A Pact With The Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise.* New York: Routledge, March 2007. ISBN: 978-0-415-95245-3 (hardback); 978-0-203-94114-0 (electronic).

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**Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge**

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**T**ony Smith has a strong interest in the role of ideology in political and foreign policy contexts. His five previous books explore different ways in which ideas influence everything from French decolonization and Algeria, the impact of the idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, the role of the American sense of mission to promote democracy, and the influence of ethnic groups in shaping U.S. foreign policy. Consequently, Smith is very well prepared to explore the latest manifestation of ideas in American foreign policy, the intellectual origins of George W. Bush’s strategy, most specifically the Bush Doctrine of 2002, and the influence of neoliberals in providing the intellectual structure for the doctrine.

Tony Smith is not the first to evaluate the origins and what the author considers the disastrous results of the Bush doctrine in Iraq and elsewhere. Neoconservatives and their beliefs have received increasingly critical attention as the Iraq war dragged on after President Bush announced “Mission Accomplished” on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003. Smith does give far more attention than previous studies to the contribution of liberal internationalists who in the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, shifted to what Smith defines as liberal imperialism with a minority moving on to liberal fundamentalist jihadism, a messianic division of the world into good and evil and rejection of any challenges to their beliefs.

Smith considers the Bush doctrine, as articulated in the National Security Strategy document of September 17, 2002 and subsequent Bush speeches and White House rationales for the war on terrorism and Iraq, as a serious, ideologically complex statement with disastrous consequences. John Lewis Gaddis in *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (2004)<sup>1</sup> evaluated the Bush doctrine as an example of grand strategy with a good deal of coherence, although Gaddis indicated several criticisms and reservations on the implementation of the strategy in Iraq as well as the prospects for democracy and U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Smith and Gaddis agree that the Bush doctrine was not a Karl Rove political *démarche* or a breezy think-piece from the domineering Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Instead, the authors emphasize the integrated nature of the strategy, the extent to which it represents the first comprehensive post-Cold War strategy, and the degree to which it drew on past American experience.

On almost every other aspect of the Bush doctrine, however, Smith and Gaddis are in disagreement, which may reflect their different training, philosophical perspectives, and, perhaps, personalities. The disciplinary perspective of political scientist versus historian contributes to the differences, although a number of Smith’s books have focused on the past, most significantly the liberal internationalism of Woodrow Wilson. Smith also in Chapter Three evaluates the different stages of liberal internationalism from the pre-

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<sup>1</sup> For assessments of Gaddis’ analysis, see “John Gaddis’s *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience: A Roundtable Critique*,” *Passport: The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations*, Vol. 36, Issue 2, August 2005: 4-16; and Thomas Maddux’s review for H-Diplo, May 24, 2004.

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classical stage starting with the American revolutionary leaders to the classic stage under Wilson, to liberal international hegemonism from 1944 to 2000, and, finally liberal imperialism. Smith devotes most of his analysis in chapters four through seven to post-Cold War liberal thinkers on international relations and related topics and their development of democratic peace theory versus established realist theories; on comparative political analysis of political leadership; and to neoliberal support for the Bush attack on Iraq as a manifestation of liberal imperialism, and, a subsequent shift by some neoliberals to liberal fundamentalist jihadism. As a historian, Gaddis looks more to the past for a pattern or tradition to relate to the Bush doctrine starting with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and moving on to Franklin D. Roosevelt for a different tradition, and, then, to Bush drawing on JQA as the “Father of Preemption, Unilateralism, and Hegemony”. Finally, Smith is a committed liberal internationalist who has reacted with passionate dismay at what he considers the disastrous betrayal of his beliefs by liberals who joined with neoconservatives to make a “Pact with the Devil,” and by Smith’s definition, two pacts including the Bush doctrine and neoliberal support for the Iraq war. (xvi-xvii). Gaddis has been accused of being many things— a revisionist, a post-revisionist, a traditionalist with archives, and now add a neoliberal by association—but he has never exhibited the passionate commitment of Smith in his writings. Gaddis has explored international relations theory in his writings, but he retains a historians’ skepticism on the reliability of any theory on international relations and expresses caution in assessing the likely results of the Bush doctrine and its application in Iraq.<sup>2</sup>

The reviewers recognize that Smith has made a valuable contribution in exploring the changing emphasis of liberal internationalist views on how the U.S. should advance its belief in the virtues of democracy to other nations. However, they express a range of disagreement with Smith’s thesis on the influence of neoliberals on the Bush doctrine and the U.S. attack on Iraq as well as reservations on Smith’s tone at times and the author’s conviction that the Iraq war is a disaster regardless of what happens going forward. Smith’s response to the reviews is spirited and affirmative of his central thesis and the seriousness of his concerns. Some of the issues include the following:

1.) Is the title of Smith’s book and his identification of two pacts with the devil, the Bush doctrine and neoliberal support for the doctrine’s manifestation in the Iraq war, an example of an excessively polemical tone in Smith’s study? Several of the reviews suggest that the Smith’s development and criticism of neoliberal ideas extends beyond an appropriate and dispassionate analysis to a style and tone of charging, convicting, and condemning neoliberals to the netherworld of the title’s main character. Smith, however, is writing as an engaged liberal internationalist. He considers himself a liberal internationalist who was abandoned by other liberals in the 1990s who ultimately made a pact with neoconservatives and the Bush administration. As Smith notes in his response to the criticism of begin too polemical, “in the case of contemporary liberal internationalism, we are confronted with an ideology that has been made afresh in the invasion of Iraq, with

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<sup>2</sup> See John Lewis Gaddis, “Grand Strategy in the Second Term,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (January/February 2005).

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threats now against Iran. The Bush Doctrine, that is, is an ideological pronouncement without parallel in American history. Nuance is off the table; ideas have been forged into an instrument of war. The result is that polemic against the ideas so assembled is appropriate indeed necessary, in my opinion.”<sup>3</sup>

2.) How new is the Bush doctrine with respect to its emphasis on the necessity for preemption to address security threats, the necessity for unilateralism to meet challenges, the importance of hegemony to maintain American security, and the related emphasis on democracy as the best long-range solution to the challenges faced by the U.S. in the post-Cold War environment and the promotion of American security? Gaddis, for example, looks to the past for precedence and finds it in the traditions established by John Quincy Adams. In the aftermath of the British burning the nation’s Capitol and White House on August 24, 1814, Gaddis depicts JQA as concluding that the U.S. should defend its security by expanding its spheres of responsibilities through expansion vis-à-vis Spain and Indians as well as the unilateral Monroe Doctrine asserting hegemony in the Western Hemisphere with respect to the European powers.<sup>4</sup> Other observers such as Walter Russell Mead advanced four major contributions linked to specific leaders—Hamilton, Jefferson, Jackson, and Wilson—that shaped a foreign policy tradition that influenced the U.S. response to September 11<sup>th</sup> and terrorism.<sup>5</sup> Smith recognizes the important precedent of Wilson and his expanding commitment to spreading democracy, has written extensively on this subject, and is quite critical of liberal interventionism by Wilson and his successors. However, Smith concludes that “many of the terms of the Bush doctrine have their antecedents in the American foreign policy tradition, just as much of its tone is in touch with religious and nationalist sentiments in this country. But what any accurate account of the doctrine should rather stress is change, not continuity, its boldness and singularity, its break with the past, its ideas that only were born in the 1990s, its relationship to a world situation that was radically new after 1991, and its authorship by a radical elite in this country....” (46-51).

3.) “Are you now or have you ever been a neoliberal?” A new twist on a Cold War accusation that points to the issue of whether or not Smith has reliably identified the beliefs of neoliberals as they emerged in the 1990s and the significant advocates of a neoliberal perspective. A second related question is whether or not the neoliberals that Smith evaluates supported the war against Iraq. Smith is most interested in the first question and willingly notes, when he has available information, that a neoliberal writer rejected the unilateralism of Bush’s quest for war in Iraq or accepted the attack as necessary to deal with the likelihood that Saddam Hussein held weapons of mass destruction. But Smith is unwilling to give much credit to neoliberals who turned critical

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<sup>3</sup> See Smith’s response, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> See Gaddis, *Surprise*, pp. 10-20.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (2001); See also Mead, “The American Foreign Policy Legacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (January/February 2002), 164; and “Politics of Power,” an Exchange between James Fallows and Walter Russell Mead, Dec. 6, 20, 27, 2001, *The Atlantic Online*, <http://www.theatlantic.com>.

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on Iraq over the flawed assumptions on what would follow the military defeat of the Hussein regime and the mismanagement of the occupation. A significant challenge that Smith faces is that at the same time he develops the shifts in liberal internationalism and assessing the nature and impact of neoliberal ideas on Bush policies, he also introduces leading neoconservative perspectives and individual advocates in order to clarify the different emphases in their ideas and how the two perspectives, according to his thesis, merged on some significant points or how neoconservatives recognized the expedient value of neoliberal theories on the spread of democracy and added them to their existing perspective.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately Smith suggests that neoconservatives and neoliberals differ more on means—unilateral U.S. force vs. multilateralism with major allies and the UN—than on the ends of attacking Iraq and spreading democracy and market capitalism. So there are occasions when Smith uses the ideas of a historian, international relations theorist, or public writer to illustrate the neoliberal perspective when the individual may not be a neoliberal. For example, Smith begins his discussion of liberal democratic internationalism with “The Case of John Lewis Gaddis,” although Gaddis might not recognize himself as a 21<sup>st</sup> century fellow-traveler of the antecedents of neoliberalism. (56-59) A less ambiguous example is Larry Diamond, Senior Fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, and Senior Adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Bagdad, January-April 2004. Smith develops Diamond’s ideas in depth and continues an exchange with Diamond in other publications.<sup>7</sup> The problem is also evident in Smith’s concluding statement of neoliberal perspectives, “liberal fundamentalist jihadism.” Smith notes that few neoliberals moved to this perspective which he considers mainly a neoconservative perspective, and many of Smith’s examples in this chapter are identified by him as leading neoconservatives—Max Boot, Richard Perle, William Kristol, Robert Kagan, and Paul Wolfowitz. Perhaps Smith should have either introduced more neoliberal examples to support this assertion or considered the possibility that neoliberals never went as far as the cited neoconservatives. (195-237)

4.) How does Smith demonstrate that the ideas advanced by neoliberals in their articles, books, op-ed pieces, and in broadsides from the Democratic Leadership Council and its think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute, influenced Washington policy-makers and the Bush Doctrine? The transmission of ideas and demonstration of their influence is a demanding challenge that other writers and historians have faced without a great amount of historical evidence. Walter Russell Mead, for example, suggests that 19<sup>th</sup> century traditions are somehow carried forward in the environment, a Frederick Jackson Turner-like creation of an American foreign policy culture, and through national political and intellectual institutions. Gaddis suggests that the response of the Bush administration to September 11<sup>th</sup>, “whether intentionally or not, has been drawing upon a set of traditions

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<sup>6</sup> For Smith’s evaluation of neoconservatives, see Chapter II on the “Intellectual Origins of the Bush Doctrine,” pp. 25-52.

<sup>7</sup> See Smith, *Pact with the Devil*, 114-116, *et passim*; “Was Iraq a Fool’s Errand? Tony Smith and Larry Diamond,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2004; Larry Diamond, “What Went Wrong in Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2004; and Tony Smith, “It’s Uphill for the Democrats: They Need a Global Strategy, Not Just Tactics for Iraq,” *Washington Post*, March 2007, B01.

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that go back to the aftermath of the first attack on Washington 187 years earlier” and the “grand strategy of John Quincy Adams—should be embedded within our national consciousness.” At least Smith surrounds the Bush administration with the writings of both neoliberals and neoconservatives and notes the similarity of their rhetoric with President Bush’s public statements as early as 1999. (14-23) As Bruce Kuklick notes in his review, Smith proposes a “transition belt” or a “transmission belt” that moves ideas from academic thinking to policy positions. (94, 114) As author of *Blind Oracles: Intellectuals and War from Kennan to Kissinger*, the subject of an earlier H-Diplo roundtable,<sup>8</sup> Kuklick evaluated the influence of intellectuals on policymakers from the end of WW II through the end of the Vietnam War and concluded that Cold War scholars and intellectuals ended up groping in the dark and having little impact on policy besides providing a theory or rationalization that policymakers used to explain their policies to the public. Smith seems to reach a somewhat similar conclusion with neoliberals in his suggestion that they provided the intellectual rationale for the pillar of purpose, democratic peace theory that increased optimism about spreading democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere (48-52), whereas neoconservatives provided the pillar of power, the importance of U.S. military preeminence, market economy, and unilateralism. (4-10) Yet Smith also suggests that, similar to Kuklick’s Cold War intellectuals, the neoconservatives did little more than provide rationales for what policymakers such as Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and President Bush already believed, and that neoliberals filled their other ear with additional rhetoric about spreading democracy. (42-44). Historians may have to wait decades for access to the records of the Bush administration to explore the preparation of the Bush Doctrine, the role of different individuals and agencies, and the nature of their ideas and contributions to answer some of these questions.

5.) Since the spread of democracy is central for neoliberals and Smith’s study, how do Smith and the reviewers view the promise and drawbacks of this quest? A range of perspectives are advanced, starting with Smith’s self-identification as a liberal internationalist committed to the encouragement of democracy but an advocate of supporting the growth of democracy without the imperialism and use of force by Wilson, Cold War leaders in Vietnam, and, especially the militant efforts of the Bush administration. “What has changed, however, is not so much me as Wilsonianism itself,” Smith asserts in his response, as neoliberals made Wilsonianism “more ideological and imperialist than ever before in its history.” Smith agrees with the examples that Doug Macdonald cites on the appeal of democracy around the world and nonviolent support for indigenous leaders and movements seeking democracy. “The question of my book,” Smith stresses, “is whether this creed can be formulated into a doctrine of state power, then used imperialistically, as the Bush Doctrine most clearly illustrates it can. And when this happens, what then of its proponents?” Kuklick, Jeffrey Taliaferro, and Robert Jervis have more serious reservations about idealistic internationalism from different viewpoints. Kuklick considers the Bush doctrine a familiar example of “claims for American exceptionalism every bit as outrageous as the many ex cathedra statements of George Bush” with many Cold War precedents such as the Truman Doctrine and NSC-68.

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<sup>8</sup> For the roundtable published on September 7, 2006, see <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/>.

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Taliaferro and Jervis apply a realism perspective to Wilsonian internationalism, reaching back to Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and others who have warned against the dangers of idealistic crusades from the Cold War to Iraq, noting the inevitable contradictions that occur including the push for democracy in the Middle East versus continued aid to autocratic rulers. *Realpolitik* triumphs over *Idealpolitik* in Taliaferro's and Jervis' realism perspectives. Jervis suggests that ideas serve as rationalizations for other considerations of security, economic concerns with respect to oil, political success at home, and the corruption of power.

6.) The question of results takes us back to the beginning and some of the inherent differences in the perspective of historians versus political scientists. As Bruce Kuklick notes, historians by discipline look to the past, wait for the results to be clear, and for the documents to be available. Now historians don't always wait, and the Iraq war is certainly an example where many, as Kuklick admits in his own views, share the intensity of Smith's conclusion that the Bush doctrine and the war that flows from it is a disaster. At this stage, Kuklick suggests that "we cannot clearly see what the outcome of this conflict will be, or how historians will parse it." We can document some results such as the demise of Hussein and his regime, the holding of elections and an increased role for the Shiites, the human costs to Americans and Iraqis, the financial costs projected to reach close to 1 trillion before Bush packs up for Texas, and other results. Yet we don't know the final results, what Iraq will be like with respect to the internal relations of Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds, as well as the external relationship of Iraq with Syria, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the impact of the war and Bush doctrine on the larger Middle East and endemic conflicts such as the Israelis versus the Palestinians.

### **Participants:**

**Tony Smith** earned a B.A. at the University of Texas, an M.A. from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1965, received his doctorate in political science from Harvard University in 1971 and he has been a Senior Fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard since 1979. He is the Cornelia M. Jackson Professor of Political Science at Tufts University where these days he gives courses on U.S. Foreign Policy. He is the author of five books, including *The French Stake in Algeria* (1978), *The Pattern of Imperialism* (1981), *Thinking Like a Communist* (1987), *America's Mission: The U.S. and the Global Struggle for Democracy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (1994), *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (2000). Smith has also published a dozen articles on the history of Wilsonianism, understood as a perspective making the promotion of democratic government abroad a central focus of American foreign policy.

**Robert Jervis** is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University. His most recent book is *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (Routledge, 2005), and he is completing a book of essays on the politics and psychology of intelligence. He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01 and in 2006

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received the National Academy of Sciences' tri-annual award for contributions of behavioral science toward avoiding nuclear war. He is a co-editor of the Cornell Studies in Security Affairs and currently is chair of the Historical Review Panel for the CIA.

**Douglas J. Macdonald** is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Colgate University. He has been at Colgate for 20 years in the Department of Political Science, and is a former director of the university's International Relations Program. He recently spent two years as a Visiting Research Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the U.S. Army War College where he carried out research on terrorism in Southeast Asia. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1967 to 1971, attaining the rank of Sergeant, and was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal in 1970. His research interests include transnational terrorist networks in Southeast Asia, Islamist ideology, and the region's institutional response to the New Terror. In 2007, he published "The New Totalitarians: Social Identities and Radical Islamist Grand Political Strategy" for SSI, and is in the finishing stages of a second monograph entitled, "The New Democracies and the New Terror in Southeast Asia." Macdonald's doctoral dissertation won the American Political Science Association's Helen Dwight Reid Award for best dissertation in the field.

**Jeffrey W. Taliaferro** is an associate professor of political science at Tufts University, where he has taught since 1997. He received his A.B. from Duke University in 1991 and his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1997. He is the author of *Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), which won the American Political Science Association's Robert L. Jervis and Paul W. Schroeder Award for the Best Book in International History and Politics. His articles have appeared in the journals *International Security*, *Security Studies*, and *Political Psychology* and two edited volumes. He is co-editor (and a contributor), along with Steven E. Lobell and Norrin P. Ripsman, of a volume entitled, *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, which is currently under review at a university press. He is writing a book entitled *The Primacy of Power: Realism and U.S. Grand Strategies, 1940-present*, which is under contract at Routledge. He has recently begun work on another book project that examines the periodic recurrence of preemption and preventive war calculations in the grand strategies of the United States and other great powers. He has held grants and fellowships from the Smith Richardson Foundation, the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the National Science Foundation, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University.

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