THE **CRISIS** OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century

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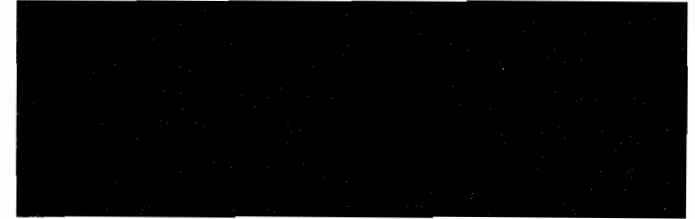
3. Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century

Anne-Marie Slaughter

Woodrow Wilson brought America the progressive doctrine of "the new freedom." That included tariff reform, a federal income tax, the Federal Reserve System, federal antitrust laws, child labor laws, federal aid to farmers, and an eight-hour day for railroad workers. Who today would not want to claim the mantle of being his heir? It is worth remembering his domestic accomplishments because they provide an important context for interpreting his international legacy. There too, Wilson was a president who sought to avoid war at all costs; who ran for reelection on a platform of keeping America out of war; and who when he finally concluded that America had to enter World War I went to Congress to ask both counsel and permission. He believed strongly that America should fight "for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured," but he did not seek war to spread those principles.

When Wilson's legacy is framed in these terms, it is easy to understand why so many schools of foreign policy today seek to wrap themselves in the Wilsonian mantle. Thomas Knock reviews these contenders in his contribution to this volume; they include Francis Fukuyama's "pragmatic Wilsonianism," Philip Zelikow's "pragmatic idealism," and John Ikenberry's and my articulation of "a world of liberty under law."[1] This debate might seem like an intellectual game of "Will the Real Woodrow Wilson Please Stand Up," if the foreign policy stakes were not so high.

At issue here is nothing less than the lessons to be drawn from the disastrous foreign policy of George W. Bush's first term, lessons that will shape America's foreign policy for the next decade. If the principal lesson is that the Wilsonian support for democracy is a fool's errand, succeeding only in snaring us in the "foreign entanglements" George Washington urged us to avoid,[2] then the policy of a new administration will point us back toward a realist calculation of how best to advance our national interest, regardless of the political systems of the nations we deal with. But if the lesson is that the United States can and should stand for democracy around the world, but through the tools of patient support for the building of the political, economic, and social institutions necessary to support liberal democracy on a country by country basis, then a new administration can be expected to work with other liberal democratic nations around the world to find ways to pursue that policy as effectively as possible.

That is why the debate between Tony Smith and myself on these pages is more than an academic sparring match. It is also why, sharply as I disagree with Smith's assertions, I value his contribution in sparking this debate.

Smith argues that the neoconservative architects of the war in Iraq are the intellectual doppelgängers of what he terms *neoliberals*, a hodgepodge of intellectuals on the liberal left who, in Smith's view, share the neocons' "Wilsonian" desire to remake the world in their image through American power if need be. This claim twists Wilson and his legacy beyond recognition. It fashions a whole intellectual movement—neoliberalism—largely from a semantic desire to create a parallel to neoconservatism. Worst of all, the substance of this neologism conflates the military adventurism of American conservatives with broad international efforts to build a law-based world that preserves peace, prosperity, and human rights.

Smith's claim, in a nutshell, is that neoliberalism, authored by people like John Ikenberry and me, differs from the Bush Doctrine of preemptive war, democratization, and U.S. primacy and unilateralism only by virtue of our preference for multilateralism over unilateralism. He goes on to argue that this preference is not a difference that makes a difference, because U.S. power is so dominant in multilateral forums that other countries cannot effectively constrain U.S. action.

In fact, liberal internationalism today, true to its Wilsonian origins, differs from the Bush Doctrine on multiple dimensions. Scholars like Ikenberry and myself indeed favor multilateralism over unilateralism, as stated. Our commitment, however, is not to cooperation and collective action but rather to an entire liberal international order—an integrated set of rules, institutions, and practices that allow nations to achieve positive-sum outcomes.[3] We support liberal democracy, but reject the possibility of *democratizing* peoples. The better path, the only successful path, is to liberalize democratic processes and institutions where they already exist. And we reject U.S. military primacy, preferring instead to maintain a balance of power in favor of liberal democracies worldwide.[4]

At the heart of this debate, however, is a deeper question, one that Smith does not propose in terms but one that liberal internationalists must answer satisfactorily. One way to read Smith's assertions is that Wilsonianism in the twenty-first century, no matter how well intentioned, will inevitably converge with neoconservatism. Open the door to humanitarian intervention and the theories of conditional sovereignty that support it as a matter of law, and it is impossible to close it again on those who advocate coercive regime change in the name of democracy and human rights. Unless a theoretical distinction can be drawn between those two positions that can then be translated into a workable legal and political distinction, liberal internationalists must take Smith's charges of collaboration and enabling more seriously. If liberal internationalists cannot avoid such a convergence, even if they do not seek it, they must accept at least partial responsibility for the results of neoconservative policies.

That is the task I set myself in this chapter: not only to rebut Smith but also to formulate a theoretical and practical distinction between Wilsonianism in the twenty-first century and neoconservatism. That task is particularly pressing because the president who follows Bush will face a genuinely Wilsonian moment. Much like after World War I, the world today needs an America committed to working with other nations to build an international order that preserves peace and prosperity through institutions and law. Pressing challenges such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, global climate change, and the rise of countries like India and China cannot be met any other way.

The world does not need an America that turns inward like during the 1920s. It does not need an America that seeks to unshackle itself as a global leviathan. Wilsonianism, properly adapted and updated, offers a far better guide to meeting these challenges in the twenty-first century.

Wilsonianism in the Twentieth Century

Smith portrays Wilson as seeking to promote democracy and sees the neocon embrace of external intervention to do so as a natural extension of Wilson's legacy. Yet the historical record puts Wilson in exactly the opposite light—supporting self-determination and insisting that nations actually determine their destinies without external intervention. It is true that he did not hold this view when he became president in 1913. But he learned his lesson quickly after his disastrous adventure in Mexico in 1914. His internationalist legacy was built on a later and wiser understanding of politics both within and among nations.

A logical place to start to understand Wilsonian internationalism is his proclamation of the famous Fourteen Points. He listed these points in a speech to the Senate in January 1918 as a program for peace and a reiteration of the purposes for which the United States was fighting the war in light of the Russian Revolution. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Fourteen Points, given the way that Smith paints Wilsonianism, is that *democracy* is never mentioned. Not once. What Wilson refers to over and over again is the right of peoples to autonomous development and the sovereign right of nations to political and economic independence and territorial integrity. Indeed, in his original call for what would become the League of Nations, in his fourteenth point, Wilson sought "a general association of nations" bound by covenants concluded "for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."[5]

Wilson sought not democracy but self-determination, a very different proposition in what was still an age of empire. Self-determination meant the rights of minorities within multiethnic conglomerates to determine their own fate and form of government. It also meant guarantees *against* external intervention, a far cry from Smith's caricature of Wilson as seeking intervention to impose any particular form of government.

Wilson's insistence on self-determination is ultimately a commitment to national, as opposed to imperial, sovereignty—the right of a people, not of individuals, to govern itself in its own way. That view stands in stark contrast to the positions of people Smith would label neoliberals today. Following the horror of World War II, when nation-states proved utterly incapable of protecting their own people, liberals promulgated the idea that states had duties to uphold their citizens' rights, an idea incorporated into the nascent human rights regime, to which I return below. To the extent that neocons use the language of human rights to advocate forceful regime change—and it is unclear they share many of the same tenets as the liberal human rights regime when they do so—they are making a case that postdates Wilson by a quarter century.

According to John Milton Cooper, perhaps the world's leading authority on Wilson, Wilson's early experience with intervention to help the democrats in the Mexican Revolution turned him into a staunch *anti*-interventionist. A week after the outbreak of World War I in Europe, with the guns of August roaring around the world, Wilson explained his altered views on Mexico to his secretary of war:

> There are in my judgment no conceivable circumstances which would make it right for us to direct by force or by threat of force the internal processes of what is a profound revolution, a revolution as profound as that which occurred in France. All the world has been shocked ever since the time of that revolution in France that Europe should have undertaken to nullify what was done there, no matter what the excesses then committed.[6]

"No conceivable circumstances" that would justify directing "by force or threat of force" a country's internal processes. This sentiment is difficult to square with the neoconservative theology that Smith claims neoliberals have enabled.[7]

Unaccountably, Smith's description of Wilsonianism mentions "self-determination" only in passing, as the goal that Wilson sought at Versailles.[8] That goal, on Smith's account, "was to be ultimately validated by the creation of regimes that were constitutional democracies," although he offers no citation in support of his claim.[9] Smith writes, "A world at

peace and safe for democracy would be a world dominated by democracies."[10] But those are Smith's words, not Wilson's.

The interpretation of this famous rallying cry is crucial to understanding Wilson's legacy. Wilson did indeed hope and expect that democracy would result from self-determination, but he never sought to spread democracy directly. Cooper is again very helpful on the point. He reminds us that Wilson actually said: "The world must be made safe for democracy." Cooper argues that Wilson was a strict grammarian who would never have used the passive voice unintentionally. Instead, in Cooper's view, Wilson "meant that democracy must be defended where it existed, and if America could aid others in advancing democracy, so much the better."[11] Defending democracy means fighting the enemies of democracy, which is a very different proposition from being a champion of democracy and seeking to spread it to other nations. Defending democracy is a creed that is quite consistent with noninterventionism, but not with Smith's desired depiction of Wilson.

Equally important is Wilson's understanding of *how* the world would be made safe for democracy, and by whom. After America entered the war, Wilson sought above all a "non-punitive settlement and new world order."[12] Punishing Germany, in Wilson's view, was simply going to lead to more trouble. Wilson instead sought an end to war, and invited Germany to "associate herself with [the United States] and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing."[13] He imagined that with the establishment of the League the causes of war would be removed. At that point, individual nations would be free to find their own way toward democracy, monarchy, or whatever other form of government they chose.

Wilson was not naive about the difficulties of that journey. After all, he came into office as president with an academic background in American and British domestic politics. He also became president at a time when American society faced huge challenges, prompting calls for wholesale reform. Wilson's diagnosis of what America needed and how best to accomplish the sweeping reforms that would meet those needs can help us understand his views on the foundation of effective liberal democracy and the virtues of multilateralism.

Trygve Throntveit describes Wilson as a pragmatist progressive who believed in "political and social reconstruction through broadly inclusive, deliberative discourse," a process that Wilson called "common counsel."[14] Common counsel was the heart of pragmatism: a flexible process that allowed great abstract ideals to be filled and refilled with the meaning that an ever-evolving society gave them in practice. It rested, in turn, on William James's notion of "corrigible truth," a truth that could be continually challenged and refined and adapted to circumstance in ways that changed its form but preserved its soul.[15]

The purpose of common counsel, in Wilson's view, was to promote social change—social change fostered by the state itself. And not minor social change, but wholesale political and economic reconstruction. That description applies to the first six years of his presidency, when he took on vested economic interests to lower tariffs, regulate banking, increase the federal government's role in monetary policy through the creation of the Federal Reserve, and strengthen antitrust laws. Wilson took on these Progressive Movement causes with a personal zeal and determination reminiscent of Theodore Roosevelt, and he was not afraid to thrust himself personally into policy debates. Indeed, in 1913, he became the first president since John Adams to address both houses of Congress in person.

The most important lesson to draw from Wilson's domestic political agenda is his deep understanding of what it actually takes to make a liberal democracy work. The roots of a successful liberal democracy must run deep indeed, deep enough to change economic and social conditions at the most micro level. Putting the two halves of Wilson together—the domestic politician and the international statesman—demonstrates that he could never have thought democracy could be externally imposed, or that it could be established by the simple expedient of holding elections. He understood, just as he did at home, that the first prerequisite was peace—absence of violence—to be established not by one nation but by a league of nations. The second was a material degree of economic prosperity and social equality, to be built from the ground up. And the third was time: not months or years, but decades.

Wilson's commitment to multilateralism must be understood in this context. First, the League of Nations was not a democracy-promoting

institution per se. It was a dike, a bulwark of peace against the violence and aggression that allowed big nations to take over small nations and deprive them of the ability to determine their own fate. Indeed, the seminal difference between the League and the later United Nations was the nature of the security commitment. The League embodied a genuine collective security pact, akin to NATO's Article 5.[16] Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, by contrast, embodies a negative pledge in which all members agree to *refrain* from the use of force in their international relations except in self-defense or as authorized by the Security Council. The League was intended to be a high wall behind which nations could exercise their right of self-determination, an exercise Wilson did indeed hope would produce liberal democracies, but which he did not propose to direct or even shape.[17]

Second, "multilateralism" was not merely a blind for American leadership. Quite the contrary; Wilson genuinely believed that processes of collective deliberation produced better results for all concerned. Wilson's concept of common counsel also demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of political legitimacy. He would not have been in the least surprised to discover that absence of UN approval seriously impeded the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the process of reconstruction afterward. He defined power in terms of getting results, which at least in the international sphere means that multilateralism has to be more than window dressing.

Against this backdrop, Smith's assertion that the Bush Doctrine can be described as Wilsonian because "American leadership is a plausible alternative to collaboration in multilateral institutions on an equal basis" is genuinely perplexing and textually unsupported. As Thomas Knock notes in this volume, "whatever [Wilson's] claim to transcendent historical significance, in the end it rests . . . upon his having set in motion what Senator J. William Fulbright once characterized as 'the one great new idea of the [twentieth] century in the field of international relations, the idea of an international organization with permanent processes for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.'" Wilson ultimately staked his presidency on this idea, in combat with a Senate that would have been quite happy with a unilateral alternative.

In sum, Smith's argument that the Bush Doctrine is Wilsonian depends on his claim that American leadership can substitute for multilateralism.

Woodrow Wilson certainly would not have seen it that way. It is equally important, however, to refute Smith's framing of the debate between us as turning on the importance of multilateralism to the Wilsonian vision.[18] Knock and I both agree that multilateralism was and is an essential element of Wilsonianism in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. But I actually agree with Smith that the "keystone of Wilsonianism is democratic government built on strong foundations of national self-determination."[19] That is why it is so critical to grasp the difference between "democratization," or "spreading democracy," and supporting liberal democratic parties and institutions in countries determining their own political future.

My differences with Smith also rest on a deeply different view of the potential for American power to be used for good in the world. Wilson believed, and his heirs continue to believe in that potential, even as we acknowledge the many times that we have failed to live up to it. Smith is far more dubious, which is why he portrays "neoliberals" and "neoconservatives" as two branches of the same tree.

Neoliberalism: The Triumph of Semantics over Substance

Smith constructs the term *neoliberalism* to parallel neoconservatism, since he wants to argue that neoliberals and neoconservatives not only share the same ideology, but that neoliberals actually preceded and thereby enabled the triumph of neoconservatism. This neologism affords him semantic satisfaction and frames the debate about the Wilsonian legacy in terms of a set of artificially imposed parallels. While Smith succeeds in reconstructing interesting connections between a quite diverse set of ideas, he does so with the false wisdom of hindsight rather than a genuine exploration of the intellectual trajectory of liberal internationalism.

The three supposed elements of neoliberalism—democratic peace theory, a great man approach to democratic transitions, and the responsibility to protect—are stitched together in a crazy and threadbare quilt. To begin with, Smith cannot find a single scholar or public intellectual who actually advocates these ideas together, in contrast to the neoconservatives, who offered the world a manifesto in the Project for the New American Century.[20] No self-consciously constituted group of "neoliberals"

exists to advance a program.[21] On the contrary, Democratic foreign policy experts routinely lament the absence of an equivalent set of coherent ideas among their cohort. It is an interesting if not sad commentary on Democratic politics that the only person who sees such coherence is a critic.

Each of these three elements has a different pedigree and different groups of supporters. First is democratic peace theory. The empirical father of democratic peace theory is political scientist and former special advisor to Kofi Annan, Michael Doyle, who published two important articles in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* in the mid-1980s showing that no two mature democracies had ever gone to war with each other.[22] Doyle advances this empirical data as a vindication of Kant's original claim in *Perpetual Peace*.[23] Doyle's work triggered over a decade of debate among international relations scholars, with various participants challenging, refining, and trying to identify the specific attributes of mature liberal democracies that would account for the phenomenon Doyle identified.[24] Along the way, Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield showed convincingly that while mature liberal democracies might not attack one another, *democratizing* countries were more likely to go to war against just about anyone, making a strategy of democratization an unlikely recipe for peace of any kind unless conducted with care, sophistication, and a long time horizon.[25]

By 1994 the Clinton administration had borrowed democratic peace theory as the underpinning of their grand strategy of "enlargement": expanding the community of liberal democracies. Later, in 2000, the State Department under Madeleine Albright midwifed the birth of the Community of Democracies, a global talking shop of democratic states. It is exactly this strategy that neoconservatives seem to find too namby-pamby; far from enabling them, it offered them a target. The neocons in the Bush administration, for instance, have largely ignored the Community of Democracies. Although a democracy-based international institution would seem to appeal to neoconservatives in theory, it appears, perhaps tellingly, that their commitment to democracy promotion is not sufficient to overcome their low opinion of international institutions in general.

The second supposed element of neoliberalism is a rejection of sequenced theories of democratic transitions in favor of the view that "great

men plus great ideas at certain historical junctures can make history."[26] It is hard to know what to make of this claim. Smith offers an accurate and succinct account of the academic literature on developing democracy from the 1960s through the 1980s.[27] But in describing the purported shift to the view that the patient process of building liberal democratic institutions was no longer necessary, Smith shifts to the passive: "And so the mood grew that 'sequences' and 'preconditions' for democracy were of bygone importance."[28]

Where's the evidence? Many of the former Soviet countries were able to make a peaceful and stable transition to democracy, but only within the context of NATO and promised EU membership. Others, most notably the countries of the former Yugoslavia, fell apart in violent and often horrific ethnic conflict. Boris Yeltsin made a mess of the Russian economy and rapidly lost support for democracy among ordinary Russians. In short, almost nothing in the 1990s supported a view that democracy could be conjured up by a wave of the hand of a great man with great ideas. Indeed, Larry Diamond, whom Smith cites repeatedly in support of a rejection of sequenced views of democracy building, excoriated the Bush administration for failing to appreciate the complexity and multiple dimensions of democratic transitions in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq.[29]

A third neoliberal argument, according to Smith, "came from international lawyers who began to redefine the meaning of 'sovereignty.' A 'right to intervene' became a 'duty to intervene' if a state's 'responsibility to protect' were not honored."[30] The pedigree of this claim is worth parsing closely, because it illuminates the artificiality of Smith's construct and because it demonstrates the true origins of the "responsibility to protect," which are neither liberal nor conservative but humanitarian and supported by a broad cross-section of the developed and developing world.

The responsibility to protect is a doctrine developed essentially at the behest of that noted unilateralist, Kofi Annan. At the opening of the General Assembly in September 1999, Annan challenged all UN members to "reach consensus—not only on the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights must be checked, wherever they take place, but also on ways of deciding what action is necessary, and when, and by whom."

Annan had in mind two crises that occurred under his watch, first as director of the UN's peacekeeping operations and later as secretary-general. In 1994 Rwandans killed eight hundred thousand of their countrymen in a matter of months while the world did nothing. Then, in 1999, NATO flouted the United Nations and, in the eyes of many, international law, and bombed Serbia in order to stop Serb aggression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. As Annan wrote later, "The genocide in Rwanda showed us how terrible the consequences of inaction can be in the face of mass murder. But this year's conflict in Kosovo raised equally important questions about the consequences of action without international consensus and clear legal authority."[31] Finding a way to prevent the former without sliding down the slippery path lurking in the latter is a major task for policymakers in the twenty-first century, as the crisis in Darfur illuminates.

In response to this challenge, the Canadian government, together with a group of major foundations, established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), headed by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General Mohamed Sahnoun and composed of a distinguished global group of diplomats, politicians, scholars, and nongovernmental activists. In December 2001 the commission issued an important and influential report, titled "The Responsibility to Protect," that essentially called for updating the UN Charter to incorporate a new understanding of sovereignty.[32]

The ICISS seeks to change the core meaning of UN membership from "the final symbol of independent sovereign statehood and thus the seal of acceptance into the community of nations," to recognition of a state "as a responsible member of the community of nations."[33] Nations are free to choose whether or not to sign the Charter; if they do, however, they must accept the "responsibilities of membership" flowing from their signature. According to the commission, "There is no transfer or dilution of state sovereignty. But there is a necessary re-characterization involved: from *sovereignty as control* to *sovereignty as responsibility* in both internal functions and external duties" (emphasis in the original). Internally, a government has a responsibility to respect the dignity and basic rights of its citizens; externally, it has a responsibility to respect the sovereignty of other states.

Further, the commission places the responsibility to protect on both the state and the international community as a whole. The commission insists that an individual state has the primary responsibility to protect the individuals within it. However, where the state fails in that responsibility, a secondary responsibility falls on the international community acting through the United Nations. Thus, "Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect."

In my view, the ICISS report outlines the most important shift in the nature of sovereignty since the Treaty of Westphalia. But the origins of this shift aren't exactly *neoliberal*, at least in the sense that Smith uses the term. In the first place, far from being an American conspiracy, the ICISS was a genuinely international group, headed by former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans and the Algerian diplomat Mohamed Sahnoun. It included experts from Canada, the United States, Russia, Germany, South Africa, the Philippines, Switzerland, Guatemala, and India. It conducted hearings in Ottawa, Geneva, London, Maputo, Washington, Santiago, Cairo, Paris, New Delhi, St. Petersburg, and Beijing. Subsequently, efforts to promote the responsibility to protect in the United Nations have even garnered the support of a number of African countries. These countries know full well that they could be targets of intervention on the basis of the responsibility to protect, but nevertheless recognize the critical importance of holding themselves and their neighbors to account for not turning on their own people. Their agreement was codified in the Ezulwini Consensus, the African Union's official response to Kofi Annan's High Level Panel Report outlining the responsibility to protect. Indeed, the African Union went one step further than the High Level Panel and suggested that regional intervention under the responsibility to protect even *without* Security Council authorization may at times be appropriate.[34]

The responsibility to protect does indeed have classical liberal roots, in the sense that it supports individual citizens against the state. It is in many ways a natural extension of the human rights movement as a whole, which is deeply compatible with liberal democracy, although it is worth noting

that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified in 1948 by forty-eight of the then fifty-eight members of the United Nations, earning abstentions only from Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Bloc, and apartheid South Africa.[35] The entire human rights regime favors states that have relatively good human rights records over states that do not, as a matter of universally agreed international law.

Above all, even the most expansive interpretation of the responsibility to protect would not have authorized the invasion of Iraq in 2003. If the responsibility to protect doctrine had been an established UN doctrine in 1988 when Saddam Hussein deliberately gassed Kurds in Halabja, or in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War when he killed thousands of Shi'ites in the South and destroyed the marshes, the Security Council could have relied on it to take action against the Iraqi government. But by 2003 the Iraqi human rights record, while dismal, was no worse than that of many other governments. Armed invasion on humanitarian grounds was not justifiable under any current version of the responsibility to protect doctrine; nor was it ever advanced as a rationale for the invasion by the Bush administration. The stated grounds were the violation of previous Security Council resolutions requiring the elimination of all of its weapons of mass destruction and free access to weapons sites for inspectors. The whispered grounds in Washington were to create a stable democracy that would provide a springboard for the democratic transformation of the Middle East.

Supporters of the responsibility to protect are more comfortable with the use of force than are many traditional international lawyers. But these supporters are acutely aware of the potential for abuse of any exception to the basic rule of nonintervention. And indeed, in the United Nations itself the responsibility to protect was ultimately adopted only in a significantly hedged form. International intervention would require Security Council approval and only be permitted on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their "populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity."[36]

The more fundamental link between the responsibility to protect and the authorization of the use of force in situations other than the grave humanitarian crises encompassed by the doctrine lies in the extent to which

serious, deliberate, and systematic human rights violations indicate a flaw in a particular government that should alert the international community to potential danger in other situations. Was it reasonable, for instance, to be more suspicious of Saddam Hussein's denials of nuclear, biological, or chemical capacity given his previous record not only of seeking such weapons but actually being willing to use them? In a more contemporary example, suppose the intelligence services of multiple countries had credible evidence that the Sudanese government was developing biological weapons and that the issue was brought to the Security Council. In trying to assess the validity of the evidence and the gravity of the threat, is the Security Council justified in weighting the evidence against the regime more heavily in light of the regime's conduct in Darfur?

Two possible reasons justify answering *yes* to this question. The first is President Bush's view that governments (or their leaders) can be categorized along the binary dimension of "good" or "evil." Governments that are evil, in this view, warrant having all presumptions and inferences drawn against them; they are inherently suspect. Many of the atrocities committed by governments against their citizens and more generally by human beings against their fellow human beings are so horrifying that they reveal the very face of evil—think of the mutilation strategies by Charles Taylor's troops in Sierra Leone or the abduction and brutalization of children forced to kill family members to make them soldiers in the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. But "evil" is far too subjective and emotive a determination to serve as a foundation for decisions that can themselves loose the death and destruction that will accompany any use of force.

The second reason that a horrific and systematic human rights record might justify giving greater credence to charges of dangerous behavior on the part of a particular government is not personal or moral but institutional. This view sees grave and systematic human rights violations as a symptom not necessarily of the character of a particular government but of its structure. They are a symptom of the near complete absence of any checks on the use of governmental power by other branches of government or by the people. The logic here is Madisonian; it underlies the basic principles of American government. "If men were angels," Madison wrote, "no government would be necessary." Far from assuming that some

leaders are good and some are evil, Madison and his fellow framers assumed that *all* governors are open to temptation, and so must be checked and balanced. The corollary is that *all* governments commit some abuses of power, even grave abuses of power, but that healthy governments have a self-correcting mechanism.[37]

The necessity of checks on government power is at the core of political liberalism. To the extent that international law is evolving, however haltingly, toward an understanding of sovereignty and a system of collective security that is premised on the responsibility of governments to protect their own citizens and that gradually recognizes the value of institutional checks on individual power in helping ensure that governments live up to this responsibility, it is moving in a liberal direction. Note, however, that this evolution does not describe a teleology of virtue. Liberal democracies are not inherently good. They do not get some kind of free pass or presumption that they are complying with their international legal obligations. Rather, they have put the institutions in place to counter the dark side of human nature—the nature of *all* humans, wherever they may live. That is a premise not of neoliberalism or neoconservatism, but of the Enlightenment.

In sum, Smith's version of *neoliberalism* is an artificial and often polemical construct. However, he raises one point that all champions of human rights, liberal democracy, self-determination, and the international rule of law must confront.[38] Is it in fact possible to legitimize the offensive use of force in any situation, however carefully hedged and limited and however well intentioned, without opening Pandora's box? Is it inevitable, even if not intended, that endorsement of the use of force in the service of the responsibility to protect will inevitably be twisted into a justification of the use of force to democratize a country? Must the best always be the enemy of the good? More concretely, is it possible to construct a system of safeguards that would allow intervention to save eight hundred thousand Rwandans without enabling the use of force for multiple other less savory purposes, or even for benign but unacceptable purposes?

David Rieff has addressed these questions in a version of Smith's argument that is directly informed by his experience in the field in Bosnia and Africa, as well as by a lively critical sensibility.[39] Rieff worries that liberals

interested in preventing genocide in Rwanda and neoconservatives wanting to spread democracy in the Middle East share a misguided faith in the ability of strong states or the international community to help rather than harm. Although they may differ on means—multilateral versus unilateral, military force as first resort or last—both camps share, in Rieff's view, a faith in their own ability to better the world that is as dangerous as it is naive.

This argument must be answered directly and unflinchingly by all liberal internationalists who believe, as I do, that the origins of international conflict and cooperation lie in the political and economic microfoundations of individual societies. That is a deeply Wilsonian claim. An updated Wilsonianism must thus confront the question whether and under what circumstances the collective or even, in extreme circumstances, the unilateral use of "coercive measures," in Kofi Annan's phrase, is permissible to free a society from the iron grip of a government bent on the destruction or virtual suffocation of a significant portion of its own population—whether an ethnic group, as in Rwanda, or all women, as with the Taliban in Afghanistan.[40]

Such measures may do more harm than good either directly, in terms of the killing and destruction that results from the intervention itself, or indirectly, in terms of licensing other aggressive interventions and destroying the shaky edifice of self-restraint in the use of force that we have built up over the course of a century. In such cases, Rieff and others are right to condemn intervention no matter how altruistic or whatever the circumstances. But then the debate extends far beyond "neolibs" and "neocons." It raises far deeper questions of how both domestic policy and international law should respond to a world in which the principal threats to individuals worldwide are emerging from within states rather than between them.

Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century

Woodrow Wilson lived in a world of states' rights, not individual rights. At home, his racism and indifference to the plight of African Americans—indifference reflecting not only his Southern heritage but also political expediency—reveals his focus much more on the nature and quality of

government than on individual civil and political rights. He thought much more in terms of the rights of an entire people, as in national self-determination, or the rights of groups of people, as in his beloved parliamentary party system. His emphasis on government through common counsel, for instance, envisioned a collective decision-making process among representatives of different interests in society. He was a political scientist rather than a lawyer, a reformer who turned to the larger forces of politics rather than the individual rights of the litigant.

World War I was a war of nation-states and nations striving to be states. It was reasonable in its wake to imagine that if the geopolitical map could be better aligned with national aspirations and if the aggression of powers could be checked, peace and prosperity would flourish. After all, the dominant legal culture of Wilson's era, exemplified by men like Elihu Root and William Howard Taft, firmly believed that states could be persuaded to settle most differences in The Hague rather than the battlefield.[41] Even in this nation-state centered era, however, the League Covenant included guarantees of individual rights. Article 20 of the original Covenant that Wilson presented to a plenary session of the peace conference on 14 February 1919 provides:

> The High Contracting Parties will endeavor to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labor for men, women, and children both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend; and to that end agree to establish as part of the organization of the League a permanent Bureau of Labor.[42]

After World War II, this early focus on relations between governments and their citizens expanded well beyond labor. Hitler's aggression and the horrors of Nazism in general brought three lessons home. First, that war could spring not simply from the ambitions of one state against another, but from the depravity and megalomania of a single leader. Second, that a government could wreak such horrors on its own people that "self-determination," unchecked, could become a travesty. And third, that such horrors were often the symptom of either an ideology or an individual agenda that could readily spill across borders, transforming intrastate brutality into interstate war.[43]

Reflecting these lessons, post–World War II Wilsonianism amended and amplified the basic notion of an international collective security system that would allow individual nations to determine their destinies in peace. The United Nations Security Council tempered aspirations for the League of Nations by acknowledging the necessity of giving great powers a special seat at the table and the reality that collective action would not be forthcoming absent their agreement. Each great power thus got a veto.[44] But the Security Council came to coexist with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the "embedded liberalism" of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).[45] The human rights movement was built on a Wilsonian platform, insisting that governments make specific pledges regarding their treatment of their citizens. Embedded liberalism similarly recognized that national governments would want and need to provide for the economic well-being of their citizens and thus that they needed some relief from pure economic liberalism. In effect, the social compromise championed domestically by Wilson and then, more fully, by FDR was recast at a global scale.

The Great Depression and the New Deal demonstrated that freeing up the forces of economic competition and creating a supportive infrastructure for a healthy economy and sound government, as Wilson had done by creating the Federal Trade Commission, a progressive income tax, and a federal reserve, was not enough to ensure the well-being of individual citizens. World War II demonstrated that letting nations determine their destinies without regard to some specific relationships between governments and their citizens was not enough to secure either international peace or domestic well-being.

After the end of the Cold War, the international system turned back in many ways to Wilson's world: nationalism, ethnic conflict, violence of all kinds swirling around seemingly arbitrary state boundaries. Self-determination in the Balkans had never actually been achieved, but only deferred. But unlike World War I, it was violence taking place above all within states rather than between them. International institutions designed, however imperfectly, to stem interstate violence did not even have the legal technology to allow them to decide to act, much less the physical technology actually to enable them to implement the resulting decisions.

Amid the escalating violence in multiple countries, the limits of a voluntary system of international human rights protection became all too evident. To the inevitable inertia and agonizing slowness of an expressly political decision-making process in the UN Security Council was added the inability of nations seeking to provide food to starving millions in Somalia, to stop Slobodan Milosevic's determination to destroy a functioning multiethnic society in the former Yugoslavia, or, had anyone tried, to stop a hideous genocide in Rwanda, to find a language and a legal framework to argue against an absolute norm of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of any nation. Here, as described above, is the origin of the responsibility to protect.

At the same time, the value of liberal democracy in the 1990s was understood in social and economic as much as political terms. When Francis Fukuyama wrote *The End of History*, he was referring as much to the seemingly universally acknowledged benefits of free (or relatively free) market capitalism as to the virtues of voting. And what impressed Western observers most about the fall of the Soviet Union and especially its proxy governments in Eastern Europe was the strength and centrality of civil society in effecting democratic change. Such a civil society is essential to individual self-determination as much as national self-determination.

In this context, the responsibility to protect and the democratic peace came together in a vision of social and economic transformation rolling across poor and oppressed countries that was indeed Wilsonian. Not a vision of the forcible spread of liberal democracy, nor yet of a universal embrace of the United States, but rather of removing the obstacles to social development and economic growth internationally in much the same way that Wilson's New Freedom or Franklin Roosevelt's four freedoms had done domestically.[46] After all, the 1990s was also the age of astonishingly rapid European integration after decades of stagnation. After the completion of the Single Market in 1992, Europe both deepened and widened, bringing an undeniable measure of prosperity and freedom to a growing region from the coast of Portugal to the forests of Poland. Tony Lake's vision of "democratic enlargement" owed as much to the concrete example of an expanding European Union as to any political theory of a democratic peace.

This vision was fueled by the optimism of a new age—a sunny stretch in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. That optimism has been sadly and brutally tempered by Iraq, but the optimists refuse to give up entirely. That is why the current debate over the lessons of Iraq, even while the war continues, is so important.

Smith is right to say that many strong supporters of the responsibility to protect, including me, saw Saddam Hussein through the lens of his horrific human rights violations, a view that in turn may have led us to be more willing to believe that he had nuclear or biological weapons without carefully scrutinizing the available evidence. We were wrong. In my view, that is exactly the situation in which multilateral processes should have been most valuable; in which it should have been incumbent on our government and the British government to convince not only Americans and Britons but also the citizens of other liberal democracies with an equal dislike for Saddam Hussein's abuses that evidence of an imminent threat to international security justified the direct use of force against him.

Wilson would have looked to Security Council deliberations as an international version of common counsel. But common counsel failed. The United States and Great Britain and a handful of other nations did not wait for authorization by the Security Council, or ever seriously contemplated not going to war if such authorization was not forthcoming. Hence the debate in this volume: given the weakness of *any* constraints on the use of force by the powerful against the less powerful, isn't a doctrine like Wilsonianism that licenses the use of force for any purpose other than strict self-defense deeply dangerous? Isn't it *inevitably* enabling, whether its proponents want it to be or not?

My answer remains no. The twenty-first century, like the twentieth century, must be made safe for democracy. For Wilson, that meant a collective commitment to stop imperialist aggression and allow states to decide their destinies for themselves—a vision that he fought for but failed to achieve. For an American president in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it means a collective commitment to create the economic and social conditions in which liberal democracy can flourish, including, in extreme circumstances, enforcement of a government's responsibility to protect its own citizens.

From Principles to Policy

Translating the principles of Wilsonianism into a twenty-first-century context is the critical task facing scholars and foreign policy thinkers who continue to subscribe to and be inspired by the liberal internationalist tradition. The Princeton Project on National Security final report, which Tony Smith uses at the end of his essay to clinch his case that twenty-first-century liberal internationalism is closely aligned with the Bush Doctrine,[47] does indeed contain many liberal internationalist elements. But it is not a creed or even a statement of principle, but rather a pragmatic document laying out a national security strategy that is based on over two years of bipartisan deliberations among foreign policy experts of every stripe. Further, Smith's characterization of the report, titled "Forging a World of Liberty under Law," equates U.S. leadership within a genuinely collective framework with U.S. hegemony and understands the report's call for "military predominance of the world's liberal democracies" as a quest for U.S. "primacy."[48] These distinctions actually make an enormous difference, but rather than rebutting Smith's argument point by point, I will instead lay out my own view of the central principles and convictions of twenty-first-century Wilsonianism.

- States derive their authority and legitimacy as the primary actors in the international system from their status as the protectors of and providers for their citizens. Any sovereign state must be presumed to have determined its own form of government. That presumption, however, can be overcome by a government's behavior against its own citizens that so egregiously violates fundamental human rights as to amount to genocide or crimes against humanity. Such behavior cannot be chosen or self-determined in any meaningful way.

- Human progress in any society requires economic, social, and political transformation from the bottom up. Liberal democratic institutions cannot be imposed or even established from without, but must instead be built from within. Other nations and international institutions can support and even advance this process through the creation of a stable and just international order, but cannot substitute for it.

- Decisions about the use of force in the international system to repel aggression, to enforce international law, or to intervene to protect a population where its government has abdicated its responsibility to protect must be made collectively rather than individually. Multilateral processes are messy, frustrating, and political—just like pluralist government at home. But they are also indispensable, not only to deter and constrain governments that are either threatening international peace or their own people, but also to legitimize and improve the judgments of the governments seeking to uphold international order, including the United States.

Team Leadership

Translating these principles into U.S. policies requires a new understanding of leadership, a new conception of supporting democracy, and a new approach toward current multilateral institutions. Regarding leadership, one of the core assumptions that Smith makes about the group of thinkers he calls neoliberals is their purported attachment to U.S. "hegemony." "These Democrats," he writes, "would try to multilateralize American supremacy in world affairs."[49] Liberal internationalists do believe in American leadership, but not in supremacy or hegemony. And in the twenty-first century both the substance and style of American leadership in world affairs will have to change.

The United States will not lead as of right, as the unchallenged economic and military superpower. On the contrary, changes in the world economic and political system are bringing many new powers to the fore; not only the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), but also the European Union as an important civilian and economic power. Equally relevant, the global and deeply interdependent nature of many twenty-first-century problems require teams of nations to take the lead in tackling them—not one single voice. In the twenty-first-century world of global corporate networks, many business leaders are turning to "team leadership," a mode of motivating others and working together toward a common purpose that assumes teamwork rather than hierarchy.[50] In many areas, successful national leaders will have to follow suit.

Building Liberal Democratic Institutions

A new conception of supporting democracy is already burgeoning in many political quarters in the United States. The majority of the electorate heading into the 2008 presidential election was wondering why the United States is paying more attention to democracy building abroad rather than democracy strengthening at home. And even the most committed supporters of democratic transitions around the world question the wisdom of holding elections that brought Hamas to power in Palestine and that have fanned ethnic divisions in places like Iraq and Kenya.

Liberal internationalists may not return to the sequenced developmental approach of academic theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, but many are focusing on the critical importance of building liberal democratic institutions to guarantee the rule of law, minority rights, and an economy that works for the broader society rather than only a pampered few.[51] The Princeton Project on National Security deliberately emphasizes liberty under law rather than democracy; it portrays democracy as a means to the end of ordered liberty, much as the American founders saw it.[52] A PAR index ranking governments worldwide, including developed countries, on their degree of Popular, Accountable, and Rights-Regarding government is hardly a far-fetched idea. Indexes like the Freedom House index offer a ready model.[53]

A New View of International Institutions

A new approach toward multilateral institutions would begin by reaffirming that treaty obligations are genuine restrictions on U.S. sovereignty — voluntarily accepted as the price of a greater benefit. The United States has accepted those obligations in the World Trade Organization, accepting that an international panel may strike down U.S. legislation for violating international trade rules, as the cost of imposing those same rules on all other WTO members. Indeed, the United States has long accepted that its obligations under NATO require it to come to the defense of any NATO member that is attacked, whether or not the United States would have chosen to go to war in the absence of such an obligation. Accepting treaty obligations only as long as they give us the results we seek at any one moment destroys U.S. credibility and undermines U.S. power over the long term.

Woodrow Wilson understood this point all too well. As Thomas Knock demonstrates persuasively, Wilson did not flinch from presenting the American people with some hard truths and basic trade-offs. Knock opens his chapter with an excerpt from one of Wilson's speeches on his western tour in which he told his audiences: "only those who are ignorant of the world can believe that any nation, even so great a nation as the United States, can stand alone and play a single part in the history of mankind." Even more directly, he was prepared to tell members of Congress that some of our sovereignty would be surrendered. He pointed out that other nations would be prepared to make a similar sacrifice, and only thus could concerted action be achieved.[54] Hard truths, but necessary ones.

The real test of this commitment to live up to our international obligations comes in the Security Council. We are pledged under the UN Charter not to use force except in self-defense, an often-broad exception, without the authorization of the Security Council. Although that commitment was plainly understood when it was made,[55] U.S. presidents since the end of the Cold War have been unwilling to give the United Nations a veto over the pursuit of its vital interests; during the 2004 presidential campaign President Bush accused his Democratic opponent John Kerry of requiring a "global test" before defending the United States (not that the UN Charter actually required him to do so), a charge the senator strenuously denied.[56]

From my perspective, a U.S. president should make absolutely clear what our actual obligations are under the Charter and then should pledge either to adhere to them or to work with other nations to adapt the interpretation of the Charter. That is exactly, in fact, what Secretary General Annan asked nations to do with respect to finding a legal basis in the Charter to authorize intervention in a situation like the Rwanda genocide. That is the genesis of the responsibility to protect.

If Security Council authorization is still going to be essential to the use of force for purposes other than self-defense, however, then the Security Council must become more effective and more legitimate. Today's Council—which is to say, the Council of 1945—does not score particularly well in either category, as can be seen perhaps most dramatically in its inability to end the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. A body that omits India's billion people, that excludes major economic powers like Germany

and Japan, that does not include even a single country from Africa, Latin America, or the Middle East in its permanent membership, and that allows the five victors of World War II to unilaterally block any action is not a good enough repository of collective action for the twenty-first century.

But the answer is not, as the neocons believe and as Smith fears, to write off the Council. Rather, the response is to push very hard for meaningful Security Council reform. Only a Security Council that can act, and act with legitimacy, in the face of the world's problems will earn the trust and compliance of member states, including ours. The American people are far more likely to accept constraints on American sovereignty if they are convinced that the multilateral processes we voluntarily subject ourselves to do not subject the collective judgment of liberal democracies to the specific interests of autocracies and dictatorships.

But what if, after truly trying to reform the Security Council, we do not succeed? The answer is still not to abandon multilateralism. Rather, if the need for international action is great, the international community must turn to broadly representative regional institutions to authorize and implement interventions, a role NATO fulfilled in Kosovo in 1999 and a role the African Union is performing today in Darfur. Note that even these exceptional cases would not lower the threshold enough to sanction the neocon war in Iraq. No multilateral institution would have sanctioned that war in March 2003, thus the Bush administration's reliance on an ad hoc coalition.

Seeking the approval of a representative multilateral institution other than the United Nations, after first trying in the United Nations, would probably not be legal under the Charter, although many arguments would be advanced concerning the scope for action by regional organizations under Charter Article 53.[57] And perhaps new interpretations of the Charter similar to the responsibility to protect might emerge. But the Wilsonian point here is a sustained and genuine commitment to the processes of common counsel; a refusal to engage in the use of force as of choice, rather than of necessity, without the benefit of multiple perspectives and the need to make a case to multiple judges.

A final Wilsonian gloss on twenty-first-century multilateralism concerns the application of the responsibility to protect doctrine itself, interpreting it to take account of the full dimensions of that responsibility. Any

use of force against a society, no matter how well intentioned, requires a calculation in terms of the impact on the social and economic microfoundations of a society. This calculation must extend well beyond establishing the political forms of a liberal democracy. For Wilson, a healthy democracy required a healthy society and a healthy economy. That means that a removal of even a hateful tyranny will be ineffectual at best and counterproductive at worse if it destroys rather than transforms economic and social life in a society.

As far as I know, this proposed addition to the responsibility to protect has not been articulated in these terms. It is an example of precisely how an understanding of the deep foundations of Wilsonianism can help shed light on contemporary dilemmas. The necessity of calculating the impact of forcible intervention on the ability of a society to reconstruct itself adds another bulwark against the reckless use of the responsibility to protect to license such intervention. It means, for instance, that many of the most ardent supporters of international intervention to stop the killing in Darfur are recognizing the need for a longer-term plan not only to keep whatever fragile peace may possibly be established, but also to allow Darfuris to return to their villages and their livelihoods unmolested. That is a far more difficult proposition, but without such a plan a temporary cessation of Janjaweed atrocities might only hold the Darfuris hostage to even more violent retribution after a pullout of international and regional forces.

Iraq has given armed intervention in a country's internal affairs a very bad name. The impact on the Iraqi economy and society has been disastrous. However, the right lesson to draw is not to return to the middle of the twentieth century, to Franklin Roosevelt's improvement on Wilson's initial effort. It is to turn back to Wilson's original ideas and recognize the extent to which updated versions of them have become woven through the warp and woof of the international system.

Wilson would look today at the expanded European Union and see his own vision of self-determination and democracy for so many countries finally realized. He would look at the United Nations and perhaps see an improvement on the League. He would look at the responsibility to protect and see an effort to update his principles to changing circumstances. As horrible as Iraq is, and as many mistakes as we have made, that is the way forward.

Conclusion

Tony Smith's anger at the death and destruction that the United States has helped to wreak on Iraq and on our own soldiers is genuine and justified. He captures the frustration of a substantial swath of the Democratic Party, and indeed of many Americans regardless of party who see thousands of American lives, tens of thousands of Iraqi lives, and billions of American dollars being spent in a bungled war that should never have been started. Iraq is my generation's Vietnam—a horrific lesson in the costs of trying to use force to create a particular kind of government, whether that was our original goal or not. But the moral of the story, in my view, is not to return to a post-Vietnam era in which Americans reject the use of force in all circumstances except clear self-defense and skirmishes involving very small countries. The lessons of the 1990s also still hold. For all its troubles, Kosovo is in far better shape than it would have been if it had suffered the full brunt of Slobodan Milosevic's depredations. East Timor is in far better shape than it would have been if the United Nations had not authorized an intervention against Indonesian rampaging. The genocide in Rwanda should lie heavily on the world's conscience, as today should the horrors of Darfur.

The task today is not to apportion blame and return to a set of rules and institutions created for another world. It is to try to work out the dialectic of the thesis and antithesis of the conflicts of the 1990s and the war in Iraq. Perhaps the clearest conclusion is the value of prevention over cure— even if a reliable cure were available. Early intervention in a crisis—with diplomacy, funding, pressure, and carefully targeted sanctions—has proven results. Macedonia is the dog that didn't bark—the clue to a strategy that worked *without* the use of force. The deployment of NATO troops and civilian observers from the EU and elsewhere in 2001 is widely credited with checking what would have been a fourth major ethnic war in the Balkans in a decade.

Longer-term prevention strategies merge with the promotion of liberal democracy through induction and integration rather than imposition. Ironically for Smith's argument, this vision—the most successful and cost-effective version of neo-Wilsonianism—is not American at all, but European. Consider the following.

When [historians] look at a map of the world, they will describe a zone of peace spreading like a blue oil slick . . . sucking in new members in its wake. And around this blue map of the European Union (covering 450 million citizens) they will describe another zone of 385 million people who share land and sea borders with the EU. Surrounding them another 900 million people are umbilically linked to a European Union that is their biggest trade partner and their biggest source of credit, foreign investment, and aid. These 2 billion people (one-third of the world's population) live in the "Eurosphere."[58]

Kant would endorse this vision immediately, as would Wilson. But its author is no neolib, at least in Tony Smith's parlance. It is Mark Leonard, a former advisor to the British government, writing about "why Europe will run the twenty-first century." Instead of engaging in sterile debates about whether "neolibs" enabled "neocons," all Americans concerned with the future of our country and of the world would do well to find ways to forge a renewed partnership with Europe and like-minded countries across the globe. We must find ways to work together to achieve Wilson's vision: a world made safe for democracy, prosperity, knowledge, beauty, and human flourishing.