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Foreign Policy for America in the Twenty-first Century: Alternative Perspectives

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Israel or the hijackers of “9/11.” However, he argues further that if Freud is correct, the balance to Thanatos is Eros, or the love of life. While Thanatos drives humans to self-annihilation, Eros drives them to embrace each other with affection and support. The Freudian view is that both concepts are real and in eternal struggle; there can never be a lasting peace between them.

Hedges closes with a plea: “To survive as a human being is possible only through love. And when Thanatos is ascendant, the instinct must be to reach out to those we love, to see them all in their divinity, pity and pathos of the human.” Love alone, for the author, has the ability to overcome human destructiveness. One feels almost compelled to regurgitate the Beatles line, “All you need is love.” Therein lies the serious weakness of this book. Hedges is convincing in his analysis and reflection on war but superficial to the point of triviality about its necessary counterbalance, love. It is as if he remains addicted to the very thing that he recognizes will destroy him.

Nevertheless, every civilian defense executive, soldier, sailor, Marine, and airman should read *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. Those of us who have known the intimate jag of war also know its nightmares. Hedges’s work is a cautionary tale implying that nations and peoples should enter war most reluctantly. It warns that war should be a last resort, and that tragic consequences may result even so.

My father made four opposed landings with MacArthur’s army in the Southwest Pacific theater, each one with the first assault wave. He was never wounded. After the war, he worked for

an aerospace company for over forty years and never missed a day to sickness. Every night, after work, he drank himself insensate. That is my most salient memory of him. Now, after *my* war, I know that his drinking was a learned coping behavior that served him well after each landing. It also got him through the rest of his life. Such is war’s effect.

With this book Hedges has rammed the issue of morality and ethics of war in our faces. Will we take heed, or simply strike?

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Henriksen, Thomas H., ed. *Foreign Policy for America in the Twenty-first Century: Alternative Perspectives*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 2001. 152pp. \$15

A brief, clean-cutting compendium with six well known scholarly contributors, Henriksen’s volume illuminates the current cardinal directions in the debate over American foreign policy—unilateral versus multilateral interventionism along one axis, and aggressive promotion of democracy (or global markets) versus conservative harboring of national strength on the other. Behind this compass hides the more theoretical discussion of whether the United States needs or could possibly maintain a grand strategy in the absence of an immediate national security threat. Henriksen’s own contribution (introduction and chapter 5) is to lay out the dynamics of the post–Cold War world, emphasizing the rise of China, threats from rogue states, a stumbling Russia, and a series of regional crises that

mandate “measured global activism” in order to protect U.S. national interests.

John Lewis Gaddis stresses the need to develop a coherent U.S. grand strategy in the post–Cold War world—primarily as a tool for managing foreign policy in a disciplined, proactive fashion rather than simply responding to crises on a case-by-case basis. Gaddis argues, “A country without a strategy is like a missile without a guidance system. It’s likely to dissipate resources ineffectually and spread potential damage far. It can pose as many risks to those who build and maintain it as it does to those at whom it’s supposed to be aimed.” Gaddis is known as a key historian of the Cold War. Under current circumstances, he sees grand strategy as an “endangered discipline,” suffering from a shortage of generalists who understand the “ecology” of the international environment rather than narrow regional or functional specialties.

Starting the directional debate, Richard A. Falk argues that American grand strategy should emphasize strengthening global economic governance via international financial institutions, support for European Union–type regionalism as a means of international security, and the transformation of the United Nations toward a global parliament. In Falk’s view, all these developments are in sync with the natural instinct of America, although thus far “the United States’ position has exemplified the democratic paradox of favoring democracy at the domestic level but resisting its application at the global level.” Those familiar with Falk’s writings over the past four decades, advocating world federalism, might find these familiar arguments repetitive; what is unique here is Falk’s lack of

stridency and the absence of the near-utopian rhetoric that marks his earlier, longer works.

Larry Diamond, Hoover Institution scholar and founding coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy*, stakes out the activist end of the other axis. He insists that building a world of liberal democracies, whether by unilateral or multilateral means, should be the primary objective of U.S. grand strategy. Not only does Diamond subscribe to the “democratic peace” theory (that real democracies do not fight each other), but he also argues that democratic institutions function as “elixirs” to all socioeconomic ills. Unlike Falk, Diamond finds the solution for abusive power and brutality through domestic democratization rather than in democratizing international institutions—the latter a process that (by implication) is at best moderately helpful and potentially distracting. At worst, “one nation, one vote” (or votes cast in international fora by rulers of people who are not free) thwarts the process of true (internal) democratization by allowing authoritarian states to subvert the evolving global trend toward greater individual freedom. Diamond identifies the Muslim world, rogue states, and China as having cultural “dilemmas” that resist much direct U.S. support for democratic change, but he maintains that they should remain the particular focus of U.S. efforts.

Sebastian Edwards, UCLA business professor, presents a scholarly defense of the beneficial aspects of economic globalization and concludes that the United States must be the driver of free trade and economic openness throughout the global system. Pointing to the evidence between openness and income

distribution, Edwards sees an international economic policy supportive of globalization as a core aspect of U.S. grand strategy. For Edwards, free capital is as important as free institutions.

Walter McDougall, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, simultaneously anchors both the unilateral and noninterventionist ends of the twin axes by arguing for “contra globalization and U.S. hegemony.” His is not a unilateralism of action but a conservation of American strength for vital interests, of which strenuous efforts to establish international institutions is not one. McDougall also argues against the need for an articulate and public American grand strategy, since “strategy is by its nature secretive, deceptive, and counterintuitive . . . and partly reactive” and “democracies are ill-equipped to formulate or execute *any* long-term strategy except in time of war or obvious peril.” In his view, the quest for a detailed grand strategy leads nowhere, because quite simply “the American people don’t want one.” He equally refutes both the “Clintonian vision of globalization” and “the neo-conservative crusade.” America must carefully husband its international political resources (particularly military deployments), since “the world today is in a highly *unnatural* state” that will inevitably lead to balance of power politics and spheres of influence. Continually strong U.S. economic development is the soundest policy; since “the most predictable and direct challenges to U.S. security are the invasion of illegal immigrants and drugs, and the prospect of civil collapse in Colombia, Mexico,

and lands in between,” strengthening pan-American relations should be the main focus. As for the rest of the world, “helping to prevent wars among the big powers is the most moral task the U.S. can perform,” a task that does not include humanitarian crusades, promotion of free trade, or global democracy. “I am for them, by and large,” states McDougall, “but I know America can live without their triumph abroad” and should not squander vital, limited resources in their pursuit. As in his book *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997), McDougall compares the potential outcome of America’s moral crusades overseas with that of the ephemeral and counterproductive results of the medieval Crusades. He concludes that Americans should “cease calling for the conversion of all nations in this generation . . . and husband the *assets* they will need when and if strategic genius becomes necessary.”

As the most recent outline of America’s ongoing foreign policy/grand strategy debate, *Foreign Policy for America in the Twenty-first Century* successfully bridges the gap between one-sided media op-eds and cautious scholarly tomes. Appealing to both the interested citizen and policy specialist alike, this book indeed delivers on its promise to bring together major opposing “alternative views” in a succinct, highly readable way.

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