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The Lion and the Lamb Realism and Liberalism Reconsidered

David C. Hendrickson

The Ideas That Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy
and Free Markets in the Twenty-first Century

Michael Mandelbaum

New York: PublicAffairs, 2002

The Tragedy of Great Power Politics

John J. Mearsheimer

New York: W. W. Norton, 2001

These two books, each a capstone in the author's scholarly career, form a natural counterpoint to one another. Each claims fidelity to one of the two opposing visions—of realism and of liberalism—that dominate the contemporary study of international politics in American universities. They stand, therefore, in ripe philosophical antagonism. Both are preoccupied with the lessons to be learned from the past two centuries, with Mandelbaum insisting on the epochal significance associated with two great revolutions—the French and the Industrial—that have profoundly shaped the modern world, and Mearsheimer focusing on the history of warfare and great power competition since 1792. Though focused mainly on the past, both insist that their respective eschatologies tell us vital things about the world to come.

One would think, on first inspection, that these two scholars were easily gauged. Mearsheimer, of the University of Chicago, is the blood-and-iron man, approvingly quoting Bismarck on the need to keep Germany's boot on the Poles forever, indecorously pointing to various acts of aggression in the past 200 years that bear out his thesis

that states are committed to expansion and to the maximization of their power. Mandelbaum, of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, on the other hand, is of the peace, prosperity, and disarmament school, propounding a liberal theory of history that emphasizes the progressive marginalization of the role of force in human affairs. Mandelbaum thinks it is the ghost of Woodrow Wilson, not the defeated "offensive realists" of the past two centuries, whose ideas are now in the saddle and ride mankind.

Thus drawn, the contrast between liberalism and realism will seem familiar, redolent perhaps of the disputes between Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, Jefferson and Hamilton, Locke and Hobbes, or Grotius and Machiavelli. The oddity is this: in the Iraq debate, the blood-and-iron man, Mearsheimer, is of the Peace Party; and the peace, prosperity, and disarmament man, Mandelbaum, is of the War Party. Over the past months, Mearsheimer has spoken eloquently and persuasively against the war on Iraq, upholding the continuing validity of deterrence and condemning as unnecessary and dangerous the Bush administration's

new doctrine of preventive war (misnamed the “strategy of preemption”).¹ As if in sublime concordance with the “peace, love, and dope” school that he likes to make fun of in his lectures, he has also recommended the doing of good works in the Arab world so as to diminish the hatred of the masses against us. Mandelbaum, by contrast, applauds the new liberal order that neoconservative hawks seek to implant in the Middle East. In order, he says, to “defend, maintain, and expand peace, democracy and free markets,” the central purpose of American power in the new millennium, the United States must “strengthen peaceful foreign policies, democratic politics, and free markets where they are not securely rooted—above all, in Russia and China—and install them where they do not exist at all, notably in the Arab world.”²

It is an interesting question, indeed something of a riddle, whether our two authors are contradicting themselves—whether Mandelbaum ought not, on his own liberal premises, harshly condemn the exercise of imperialism, and whether Mearsheimer, if he were really true to “offensive realism,” should not welcome the exploitation and deepening of America’s hegemonic position that would ensue from a successful war with Iraq. Are they or aren’t they?

The Liberal Theory of History

At the center of Mandelbaum’s work is a “liberal theory of history” that is, he says, almost too good to be true, in which all three elements of the liberal triad work to reinforce one another. Democracies tend to conduct peaceful foreign policies. Free markets, over time, tend to promote democracy and peace. In tone and argument, the book is similar to other works of the past decade celebrating the liberal triumph. Mandelbaum aligns himself with Francis Fukuyama’s view that liberal democracy has no competitors; insofar as “the end of history” means “the triumph and hegemony of lib-

eral forms” Mandelbaum too believes that we’ve reached it. Mandelbaum’s stress on Wilson as the prophet of the post–Cold War era recalls Tony Smith’s *America’s Mission*, and his focus on the wonders of the market and the promise of globalization is closely in tune with Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* or Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s *Future Perfect*.³ In holding that democracies have made peace their passion, he goes beyond the theory of the liberal democratic peace advanced by Michael Doyle, for whom “warlessness” is confined to relations within the democratic camp. Unlike Joseph Nye, John Ruggie, or Robert Keohane, for whom international regimes and institutions matter greatly, Mandelbaum devotes no sustained attention to that theme.⁴ After democracy and the market, the third leg of Mandelbaum’s liberal tripod is not institutionalism but disarmament—practices of “common security” that he associates with the transparency of military forces and operations, their configuration for defense but not attack, and “the pervasive and principled aversion to the use of force for all but defensive purposes.” Those are the ideas that have conquered the world.

Mandelbaum is not quite an evangelist of the “liberal theory of history,” or at least affects an air of detachment from it. He logically unfolds what he takes to be its central propositions and insists that the theory is mostly right, but qualifies the argument in a few particulars. Newly formed democracies are sometimes bellicose, he acknowledges.⁵ Autocracies like Pinochet’s Chile, he speculates, might be better able than faction-ridden democracies to carry out painful economic reforms and fit snugly into the golden straitjacket. Most importantly, the liberal order could be overturned: “The political decisions that created the conditions in which international economic integration flourished could be reversed.” Mandelbaum’s deepest fear is that the United States will abandon its responsibilities to lead in the maintenance of the system. Prospects for

global free trade, as for nuclear nonproliferation, access to Persian Gulf oil, and peace in Europe and East Asia, rest on the same basic uncertainty: “whether the United States will continue to make large contributions to the provision of international public goods.”⁶ Torn between his desire to declare liberal hegemony to be inevitable and his belief that American power is indispensable in the functioning of this order, Mandelbaum in the end rejects determinism and concludes that we need, like Lenin, to seize history by the horns.

The book is oriented to history and social science; other than general advice to defend, preserve, and expand the community of liberal democracies, Mandelbaum offers little concrete policy advice. There are more similes in this book than you can shake a stick at, surely a record for IR scholarship, and they add clarity and vivacity to the presentation. Especially good is his analysis comparing the course and outcome of the Cold War to the process of evolution in nature, competition among rival firms in a market, and religious conversion. As much a critic of illiberalism as a defender of liberalism, Mandelbaum develops the contrast in fortunes between nations divided by the Cold War—Germany, Korea, and China. He emphasizes the terrible corruption and abuse of power that manifested itself in all forms of communist rule and argues persuasively that victory in the Cold War owed more to peaceful example than to arms. He lays great stress on the maintenance of close and intimate relations with Germany and Japan, subtly analyzes the prospects for integrating Russia and China into the free world colossus, and explains clearly (though in textbookish fashion) the origins and subsequent development of the post–World War II international economic order. Mandelbaum is above all concerned with the relations among the twentieth century’s great powers; the Southern Hemisphere, with the exception of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, is well off his radar screen. He treats

skeptically the prospects for humanitarian intervention, stressing that for public opinion the maximum allowable number of casualties in such enterprises is zero, and his advice for developing countries irked by onerous IMF conditionality is to deal with it. Critiques of globalization, he says, are “incoherent and stupid.”

I have three principal objections to his argument.

First, his treatment of the origins of the liberal outlook, which he identifies most often with the French Revolution but occasionally with vaguely specified Anglo-American precedents, is unsatisfactory. In fact, the French Revolution retained only briefly the liberal character given to it by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and rapidly came to embody a host of illiberal tendencies. Successive French governments ruled in accordance with no constitution and had a fondness for plunder and force totally antithetical to liberalism—a point well appreciated by the two figures that represented the liberal impulse in France during those years, Benjamin Constant and Germaine Necker. In its expropriations, revolutionary violence, and contempt for the law of nations, the French Revolution was the predecessor of the Bolshevik Revolution rather than of the post–World War II order created under American auspices.⁷

It was the United States, ignored in Mandelbaum’s account until Woodrow Wilson’s appearance on the scene, where liberal nostrums took root in 1776 and beyond. All three of the great precepts that Mandelbaum identifies as central to liberalism—“peace as the preferred basis for relations among countries; democracy as the optimal way to organize political life within them; and the free market as the indispensable vehicle for producing wealth”—were closely identifiable with the American Revolution, far more so than with the French Revolution. “America will grow with astonishing Rapidity,” wrote John Adams early in the war

for independence, “and England, France and every other Nation in Europe will be the better for her prosperity. Peace which is her dear Delight will be her Wealth and Glory.”⁸ The Founders knew well the “military system” of Europe, with its fatal effects on liberty, and came to understand how difficult it was for democracies to cooperate even for a cause they all regarded as vital. The institutions they contrived addressed both problems and had purposes recognizably akin to what Mandelbaum calls “common security.”⁹ Throwing open the doors of commerce was also a deep impulse of the American Revolution. Even when the United States turned toward protectionism (briefly in the 1820s and 1830s, then decisively after the Civil War) the free trade zone established among the United States continued to be seen as a key source of prosperity and security. In short, the great themes so characteristic of twentieth century American internationalism, proclaimed by Woodrow Wilson during the fight over the League of Nations, were homegrown. It is wayward history that traces them to a continental line featuring the French Revolution, Kant, and Napoleon.

A second objection resides in the manner in which Mandelbaum treats the role of force in the contemporary world system. To hear him tell it, the societies of the West have been “debellicized” and now combine a profound aversion to war with an anxious solicitude to make the compromises necessary for peace. Undoubtedly the most unfortunate passage in the book compares the effects of the September 11 attacks to those of a badly stubbed toe. They have been far more consequential than that comparison implies, illuminating power realities and attitudes toward force of far-reaching moment. It is weird to say that the September 11 attacks “illustrated another defining feature of the world of the twenty-first century: the transformation, or at least the dramatic devaluation, of war.” It is pretty evident that belief in the utility of force runs

high not only along Islam’s bloody borders but also in the United States, and equally evident that neither the author himself nor the larger American demos is immune from the fever.

Even in Europe, where Mandelbaum’s argument is strongest, we can see that the progressive demilitarization of the continent has diminished Europe’s political voice and magnified that of America. NATO expansion has meant and continues to mean the expansion of American political influence, tilting the balance from “old Europe” to “new Europe” and making descriptions of Western security as being founded on “common security”—as opposed to American hegemony—increasingly unreal. Whereas Mandelbaum usually writes of the “core powers,” seldom pausing to distinguish between America and Europe, the reality, as commentator Robert Kagan has emphasized, is that Americans and Europeans come from different planets in their attitude toward force.¹⁰ Ironically, Venus, having been smitten for a decade with the enchanting vision of common security, has discovered that her partner from Mars has different ideas about the exercise of military power, *and she can’t do a thing*. Like the proverbial battered wife, she can neither fight him nor throw him out, so she puts up with him while muttering imprecations under her breath. It is very likely that dictatorial methods and disproportionate power will ultimately fuel a powerful countervailing movement in international society; for now, however, it is unipolarity and unilateralism, not “common security,” that defines the character of the world security order.¹¹

A third flaw stems from Mandelbaum’s view that the commitment to liberalism may require a revolutionary policy of extending democracy by force of arms. Of all the heresies prompted by the idea that democracies are naturally pacific, surely the strangest is the proposition that war is justified to bring the democracy that will bring everlasting peace. Mandelbaum himself acknowledges that implanting free institu-

tions in Russia and China was like installing software on a computer that didn't have an operating system; it is a mystery why a more violent procedure should work in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.¹² The key point is not that the Arabs or the Persians are incapable of democracy but rather that whether they are or not is something that they and not outsiders must determine; such is the command of the existing international legal order. The arrogation of a right to overturn existing governments and to initiate revolution is dangerous enough even if authorized by the United Nations; its unilateral assertion by the United States is a threat to the foundations of international order.

As much as "Wilsonianism in boots" has become part of what people understand liberalism to require, such that it often poses as a moral duty, it is antithetical to the deepest current in the liberal approach to international relations, with its principled opposition to the first use of force and its regard for international law and the society of states. Even for Wilson himself, the ostensible paragon and progenitor of liberal intervention, the actual historical figure cannot be claimed as good authority for the new imperialism. Everyone remembers that he wanted to teach the Mexicans "to elect good men" and helped drive the dictator Huerta out of power in 1914; forgotten is that Wilson after 1915 stoutly resisted calls to intervene more deeply in Mexican affairs, believing in the right of the Mexicans to determine their future for themselves. Self-determination and nonintervention—by which he meant resolution of the conflict by domestic and not foreign forces—were then his watchwords. He took the same view of the Russian Revolution, and his limited interventions in Russia were not undertaken for the objective of intervening in Russia's civil war. He was in principle opposed to doing that. Mandelbaum's contrasting attitude appears in his comment that "it was the historical misfortune of both [Russia

and China] not to have been conquered, occupied, and governed as was India."

Machtpolitik Man

"There is a certain satisfaction in coming down to the lowest ground of politics," Ralph Waldo Emerson once observed, "for we get rid of cant and hypocrisy." Mearsheimer certainly sits on the "lowest ground." For him, states do not pursue ends for altruistic purposes, as they sometimes do in Mandelbaum's world. States are instead power-maximizing units that must survive in a threatening world and that are always looking out for number one. "Offensive realism," the theory that Mearsheimer advocates, holds that "the overriding goal of each state is to maximize its share of world power, which means gaining power at the expense of other states." The lulls and *détentes* that dot international history are illusory, always harboring predators simply awaiting a better opportunity.

What accounts for the relentless accumulation of power after more power by the great powers? The answer, says Mearsheimer, is three-fold, lying in the structure of the international system, which lacks a common sovereign; the offensive capabilities that states inevitably maintain; and uncertainty over enemy intentions. For Mearsheimer, structural factors such as anarchy and the distribution of power "are what matter most for explaining international politics." Little attention is paid "to individuals or domestic political considerations such as ideology." He also rejects "human nature realism," according to which the love of power arises from motives deep within the human breast; for Mearsheimer it is international political structure, not human nature, that matters (though he doesn't explain why states should respond predictably to structure if human beings don't have a nature).

The theory is both descriptive and prescriptive. "States *should* behave according to the dictates of offensive realism, because it

outlines the best way to survive in a dangerous world.” They should, that is to say, take advantage of opportunities for offensive war, and Mearsheimer instances Germany’s failure to do so in 1905 when Russia was suddenly enfeebled by defeat and revolution. Great powers that do not act as offensive realism says they should act are courting doom: “Such foolish behavior inevitably has negative consequences.” Despite recommending power maximization at every opportunity, Mearsheimer nevertheless finds international politics to be “genuinely tragic” in character. “Great powers that have no reason to fight each other—that are merely concerned with their own survival—nevertheless have little choice but to pursue power and to seek to dominate the other states in the system.”

In methodology, the book has the positivist imprimatur characteristic of most work in the American science of international politics, an approach shared by many of the liberals with whom Mearsheimer does battle. That is to say, Mearsheimer aims at the identification of a simple law or law-like statement (states are power-maximizers), offers a parsimonious theory (they are this way because of the structure of the system), and then tries to show that 200 years of history bear out his thesis. In this world, states never learn lessons from their past misdeeds and catastrophes, or rather the lesson they learn (unless they decide to give up the great power game) is that they must super-size their power.

Such positivist methods, deeply rooted in academia though they are, unfortunately have severe limitations. Greatly lauded in theory, parsimony in practice invariably yields a simplified view of the past, and passing all these materials through a single meat grinder makes, organizationally and stylistically, for much repetition. To show that the economic base matters (chapter 3), that land power is more important than seapower or airpower (chapter 4), that conquest pays (chapter 5), or that the interna-

tional system is populated by revisionist powers (chapter 6), Mearsheimer trudges through the same material (the great power competition of the last two centuries), but with the unpleasing result that no single event is ever given a thorough or satisfying explanation.¹³

Mearsheimer’s proclivity to make timeless assertions about the relative value of competing strategic arms (land, naval, air) is also dubious, for the resolution of that question depends on the political objectives they are meant to serve in any particular instance (which Mearsheimer typically leaves unspecified). Because Mearsheimer confines his focus to interactions among the “great powers,” of whom there remain precious few, his treatment is curiously circumscribed. In considering naval power, for instance, he doesn’t examine its political utility in circumstances short of war or its military significance in wars against states of inferior rank. Even committed continentalists and perceptive critics of “the British way of warfare” such as Sir Michael Howard and Paul Kennedy should certainly wince at Mearsheimer’s systemic denigration of naval power and his cavalier dismissal of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian Corbett. Enthusiasts of airpower and of the “revolution in military affairs” will write him off as an old tank man feverishly re-gaming distant and now irrelevant wars.¹⁴

The most serious lacuna in this book is the absence of reflection on the nature and character of the legal, ethical, and institutional restraints that the leaders of states are obliged to observe. For Mearsheimer, there is no international society, or at least none that is relevant to the scientific study of international politics. He mentions such restraints only for the purpose of dismissing their significance, and he displays little knowledge of the role they have played in shaping international history. Exchange, reciprocity, good faith—as instruments both of securing interest and of soothing the asperities of interstate conflict—are given no

recognition in Mearsheimer's conceptual world. International institutions, he affirms, are just "arenas for acting out power relationships"; that they have anything to do with legitimacy—or indeed that legitimacy itself is of any conceivable importance—is not a thought that occurs to the author.

Though ostensibly "realistic," such an approach stands in direct opposition to our daily experience of political life, in which political actors are continually in competition for the moral high ground and battle fiercely for the mantle of legitimacy.¹⁵ A realism that shunts those factors aside is psychologically naïve as well as morally obtuse, for such factors are significant even if they are only observed hypocritically (as, admittedly, they often are). The failure to grapple with normative issues is also quite contrary to the richest vein in classical realism. The greatest of the realists, Thucydides, placed in continual dialectical antagonism the claims of power and justice, and his *History* is "above all an investigation and a testing of the Athenian thesis on justice and on the place of justice in the world of international politics."¹⁶ Indeed, Mearsheimer's dismissal of the normative dimension of international politics makes it difficult to understand why he describes international politics as tragic in character, for tragedy requires elevation of character and the choice between irreconcilable but otherwise commanding values. If a state dedicated to power maximization, and that alone, meets adversity in its inexorable advance toward domination, it is difficult to limn the tragic dimension of its misfortune. Is it tragic when the bad go bad?

Related to Mearsheimer's ethical void is another shortcoming: in emphasizing power-maximization as *the* rational objective of the state, Mearsheimer is seemingly oblivious to the consideration that the people in constitutional democracies might fear not only threats from abroad but also overly centralized power at home. In the long history of reflection on the security predica-

ments of free states, as Daniel Deudney has shown, domestic hierarchy or tyranny is as significant a problem as international anarchy or conquest. That crucial theme, though missing from Mearsheimer, has long been at the core of the republican security theory to which Montesquieu and America's Founding Fathers made such distinguished contributions. That theory is far more sophisticated and relevant than Mearsheimer's offensive realism because it places the preservation of free institutions and the *control* of power at the core of its concern.¹⁷ Mearsheimer's apparent unawareness of this heritage is in keeping with his lack of interest in the history of international thought prior to the twentieth century, which lends to his work a parochial air. This unconsciousness of his predecessors is probably just as well, for if Mearsheimer belongs anywhere in the history of international and strategic thought, it is with the schools of Wilhelmine *Machtpolitik* and *Geopolitik*.

The oddest feature of Mearsheimer's book is his treatment of the contemporary international system. Instead of viewing it as an instance of unipolarity—that is, of American hegemony—he says it is bipolar in Europe and multipolar in Northeast Asia, with a certain Potemkin Village in the East and a still poor Middle Kingdom doing their best to match up with the American hyperpower. The United States, he allows, "is the most powerful state on the planet today," but it "has no intention of trying to conquer" Europe and Northeast Asia. "There has never been a global hegemony, and there is not likely to be one anytime soon.... Except for the unlikely event wherein one state achieves clear-cut nuclear superiority, it is virtually impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony." He also writes reassuringly that the pursuit of power stops when regional hegemony is achieved and insists that "states do not become status quo powers until they completely dominate the system," meaning, presumably, that they will become status quo powers once they do.

The Tragedy of Great Power Politics came out just after 9/11, and it is unclear if Mearsheimer would revise these views in light of the last 18 months. What has happened—the Bush administration’s embrace of preventive war doctrine, the abrogation of the ABM Treaty, the determination to achieve military superiority in perpetuity, large increases in defense spending—underlines just how unipolar the structure of world military power has become. The Bush Doctrine certainly puts an exclamation point on that fact, and the new combination of strategic defenses and revolutionary accuracies now in prospect will enhance still further American nuclear superiority; but the lineaments of the new world order, and the temptations to which they would subject the United States, were clearly adumbrated in 1990 and 1991.¹⁸

It cannot be said, moreover, that the United States became a status quo power once the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed it to dominate the international system; the reverse is true. From a status quo power in the years of containment and bipolarity, the United States became a revolutionary power once it achieved unipolarity. As previous restraints on the exercise of U.S. power fell away, America embarked on a number of enterprises (undertaking humanitarian interventions, freeing oppressed minorities, waging preventive war) whose common theme was the erosion—if not revolutionary displacement—of the previous ground norm of international society based on the independence of states. Such restraints as did exist in the 1990s on the exercise of American power were largely internal and have (momentarily, at least) been swept away by 9/11 and its aftermath.

That expansion of ambition, the reverse of what Mearsheimer expected, shows that his emphasis on structure is not particularly illuminating today, or is so only because it underlines the significance of the structural transformation brought by the end of the Cold War. None of the categories that he

uses, awkwardly, to interpret past structural configurations—bipolarity, balanced multipolarity, and unbalanced multipolarity—captures the power realities now ascendant. That is not a knock against realism, but rather a reminder that our old friend “*libido dominando*”—the long-forgotten impulse recognized in “human nature realism”—can still get it up after all these years.

The Riddle Solved

What, then, is the answer to the question posed earlier? Are they or aren’t they contradicting themselves? For Mandelbaum, I believe, the answer is “yes”: he has taken the gentle doctrine of liberalism, one of the noblest inventions of the human race, and transmogrified it into an instrument of war. This commitment to permanent revolution has no doubt impressive precedents in history to fall back on, but they are not liberal precedents. At best, the new imperialism is a bastard offspring of the old liberalism, at worst a repudiation and betrayal of its core teaching.

The emergence of Machtpolitik Man as a spear carrier for the Peace Party is a bit trickier. Mearsheimer’s compelling explanation, with Stephen Walt, of why containment and deterrence are more prudent than preventive war demonstrates the continuing relevance of realist analysis; here Mearsheimer’s amorality is not a vice but a virtue because he is not tempted to confuse moral indignation with the cool assessment of enemy motives. As a result, he sees Saddam’s motives and calculations much more clearly.¹⁹

“Offensive realism,” nevertheless, holds forth only the flimsiest of barriers to the abuse of power. Taken in the abstract, it supports the general principle that we should expand our power into every nook and cranny of the world. Noting that “the historical record shows that offense sometimes succeeds and sometimes does not,” Mearsheimer insists that “the trick for a sophisticated power maximizer is to figure out

when to raise and when to fold.” Mearsheimer, certainly, is not obligated by his theory to counsel conquest and occupation, especially given his acute appreciation of the logic of deterrence, but it is easy to see why a powerful state that lives by his maxim would acquire a fondness for military methods and be tempted by the kind of deed he now detests. The appropriate verdict for Mearsheimer recalls an old *New Yorker* cartoon, in which a stern judge lectures a hapless defendant: “You’re not guilty, but you’re very, very close.”

Mearsheimer’s “realism” needs (as, indeed, does Mandelbaum’s “liberalism”) the steadiness and the ruling-out of wild ventures that are provided by traditional standards of international law, such as the norm against preventive war, just as it needs recognition that international institutions and the consensual methods they encourage are a potentially salutary check upon large and threatening concentrations of power. Above all, Mearsheimer’s realism needs an Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, an understanding that power, like other valued things in life, is also subject to the laws of excess and defect, and that always wanting more is a vice no less fatal than not having enough. On such terms, come to think of it, might realism and liberalism—the lion and the lamb—lie down together in peace. ●

Notes

1. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “An Unnecessary War,” *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2003, pp. 50–59.

2. Michael Mandelbaum, “The Inadequacy of American Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, (September/October 2002), p. 62.

3. See Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000); John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Promise of Globalization* (New York: Random House, 2003).

4. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Robert O. Keohane, “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?” *Foreign Policy*, no. 110 (spring 1998), pp. 82–96.

5. Mandelbaum here follows the argument of Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

6. Mandelbaum, “Inadequacy of American Power,” p. 70.

7. Mandelbaum acknowledges that Napoleon represented liberal precepts “in a way that was, by the standards of the late twentieth century, at best imperfect,” but he does seem to place Napoleon in the classic liberal line. A clearer understanding of Bonaparte’s place in history was entertained by “the great mass” of nineteenth-century Americans, who, as Alexander Hill Everett remarked in 1830, considered Napoleon as a “tyrant, usurper, and enemy of liberty.” If forced to bear oppression, Everett went on to say, Americans “should much prefer a good, easy, hereditary, gouty despot, who would ask for nothing but a skilful cook, and a well-stocked deer park, to a fiery usurper of first-rate talent, who would always be on horseback, wasting the blood and treasure of his people in vain attempts to gratify his wild and wanton ambition. Tyrant for tyrant, we should certainly prefer King Log to King Stork, Louis to Napoleon; and we consider this preference as not only not inconsistent with, but as the natural and necessary result of a love of liberty” (Alexander Hill Everett, “The Tone of British Criticism,” in *Prose Pieces and Correspondence*, ed. Elizabeth Evans [St. Paul, Minn.: John Colet Press, 1975], p. 26).

8. John Adams to James Warren, *The Papers of John Adams*, ed. Robert J. Taylor et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), vol. 6, p. 346.

9. See David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2003) on this theme.

10. Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

11. See Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81 (July/August 2002), pp. 20–33; and Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited," *The National Interest*, vol. 70 (winter 2002/03), pp. 5–17.

12. How far Mandelbaum would go in this project beyond Iraq is unclear from the book, where he writes tersely that the majority of the countries that pose the greatest threat to Western security—Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya—are located in the Middle East, and the "obvious solution to this general problem is to replace the governments of the countries in question with regimes opposed to launching or assisting attacks on others." Mandelbaum goes on to say, enigmatically, that "the countries of the world's core had ready answers" to the question of how governments pledged to common security were to be fostered, but then abruptly ends his discussion and does not return to the question in subsequent pages.

13. Mandelbaum's work is immune from this objection. Though he too propounds and tests a few simple propositions, he does not do so in the neopositivist vein. His work contains many historical and analytical sections that are models of lucid exposition, making *The Ideas That Conquered the World*, unlike *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, quite suitable for an upper-level undergraduate course in international relations. An esteemed colleague has used it to evident satisfaction in a course on contemporary political philosophy.

14. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1972). The contemporary American equivalent of the old British strategy of "gunboats and gurkhas"—relying on American airpower and local ground forces—is well probed in Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). Mearsheimer minimizes the obvious potency of this formula.

15. See on this point the excellent study of Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

16. Thomas L. Pangle and Peter J. Ahrens Dorf, *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1999), p.15.

17. See Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (forthcoming).

18. Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992).

19. Mearsheimer and Walt, "An Unnecessary War."