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The Case for an America First Foreign Policy

by Ralph Raico

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2007 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: Our next speaker, Ralph Raico, is a retired professor of history at University College of New York at Buffalo, a popular lecturer for the Ludwig von Mises Institute, the Cato Institute, the Institute for Humane Studies, and many other organizations. Ralph is also the author of many scholarly essays and articles. He attended Ludwig von Mises' famous seminar in New York, and he translated Mises' book *Liberalism*. He has contributed many fantastic articles to the Future of Freedom Foundation over the years, and his talk today is entitled, "The Case for an America First Foreign Policy." Ralph Raico.

Ralph Raico: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm very happy to be at this great conference, and I have to thank Bumper for his actually surprisingly skimpy introduction of me. And also I have to thank him for placing my talk between Jim Bovard's and Bobby Higgs'. It really makes me seem great. Okay. We're talking today about "The Case for an America First Foreign Policy," named, of course, after the last great conservative antiwar movement that attacked Franklin Roosevelt in 1940–41.

In Moscow, on Christmas Day 1991, Christmas according to the western churches, but not the eastern churches, the red flag was lowered for the last time from over the Kremlin. Thank God it was the end of the Soviet Union and the Cold War.

The Cold War lasted for nearly half a century. It included two big, hot wars, cost trillions of dollars, and radically changed American society forever. With the downfall of the Soviet Union

and the end of the Cold War, many of us thought that the time had come for a great debate, to rethink and revise the foundations of U.S. foreign policy. What should be the aims of a foreign policy, and what should be the mission of the U.S. Armed Forces? That debate never took place. Now, a decade and a half after the collapse of communism, the need for such a debate is more pressing than ever as the U.S. Government embarks on an even more extensive and burdensome war, a war against world terrorism and world evil.

My view is that our cause should be anchored in the traditional American policy that served us so well in the first 100 years of our life as a nation, a policy that I will be calling America First. The record is laid out in a schoolbook by the great historian Charles Beard, published in 1940, *A Foreign Policy for America*. Charles Beard was a professor at Columbia and president of the American Historical Association, considered the dean of American Historians until he concluded and documented that Franklin Roosevelt was not really all that sincere when he told the American people, before Pearl Harbor, that he was working night and day to keep us out of war, whereupon Beard was suddenly demonized by the profession and dismissed as a hopeless nutcase.

This was Beard's thesis in that small book: In our dealings abroad we should basically follow the guidelines laid out by George Washington in his farewell address to the American people. The great rule of conduct in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, we should have with them as little political connection as possible. This statement by Washington, which we may hear maybe once or twice during this seminar, involves three basic points. First, we should engage in mutually beneficial peaceful commerce with the rest of the world, but forcing nothing, as Washington was careful to add. Second, while trading with them, we should avoid entanglements in the political affairs of other countries and in their quarrels with other nations. Finally, we should always remain strong enough to defend ourselves from attack.

This system was endorsed by John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the other Founders. That was no accident. Nonintervention was the natural counterpart to the form of government, the Republic, which they had instituted. The monarchies of Europe were all massive war machines, systematically exploiting the people to finance the never-ending conflicts and to support the military and civilian bureaucracy that those conflicts necessitated. The old monarchies were dedicated to the pomp and glory and power of the state. America would be different: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, as you will find still on the back of dollar bills, the new order of the ages.

Here, the rights of the people, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, of all things the pursuit of happiness, that was our mainstay. Government power was to be strictly limited, mainly exercised by the localities and the states. Hence the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which still reads, for all the good it does us, "The powers not delegated to

the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” Taxes would be low, and the public debt would soon be liquidated, ensuring that the citizens, citizens not subjects, would not be routinely plundered as was the European and monarchial way.

In order to forestall high taxes, debt, and the centralization of power, there was a crucial precondition, however; we had to steer clear of war. Here is the considered opinion of James Madison: “Of all the enemies of true liberty, war is perhaps the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, debts, and taxes are the known instrument for bringing the many into the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the executive, that is the President and his minions, is extended. No nation can preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

So the advice of the Founders was this: If you want to preserve the system we had established, keep out of war, except when war is required to defend the United States; avoid political entanglements overseas, since these are likely to lead us into war. And, as Washington also warned in his farewell address, we should treat all foreign nations fairly and equitably, not showing favoritism to any, because, he said, “The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or habitual fondness is in some degree a slave.” You can call this the policy of America First. First it was reiterated by James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Grover Cleveland, and others throughout the 19th century.

America First in no way meant isolation from the rest of the world. This term “isolationism” has turned into a one-word slam dunk in the hands of the proponents of global meddling. It’s the only thing that most college students, for instance, remember about American diplomatic history, if they remember anything—that in the bad old days we used to be isolationists. But no one was more of a cosmopolitan than Thomas Jefferson. America following Washington, Jefferson, and the others welcomed trade and cultural exchanges with all nations while rejecting political connections. As we abstained from overseas meddling, American civilization flourished, and America became the world’s economic powerhouse.

This noninterventionist America devoted to solving our own problems, and nurturing our own distinctive civilization, soon became *Stupor mundi*, the Latin phrase “wonder of the world.” Everywhere people struggling for their freedom looked for inspiration and hope to the Great Republic of the West. America served the cause of freedom in the lands across the seas not by sending troops or bombers or foreign aid, but by being, in the words of Henry Clay, “a light to all nations,” a shining example of a happy and prosperous people enjoying their God-given rights and peace. When the French decided to send us a birthday present for our country’s 100th birthday, the statue was named “Liberty Enlightening the World.” That’s the reason that statue in

New York Harbor is carrying a torch. Traditional American policy thought it was none of our business to make any distinction between foreign nations as to their morality, ideology, or provenance. If a regime had the attributes of a state, we could recognize it and deal with it. There were no outlaw states or rogue states; we carried on business with governments ranging from the Ottoman Empire and czarist Russia to England and France.

By the end of the 19th century, however, a great transformation took place in the official American policy towards the rest of the world. The country's elite went over to a policy of global responsibility, which meant more and more our intrusion into other nations' affairs, backed up a growing U.S. military might. The landmarks along the road are the Spanish-American War, the conquest of the Philippines under William McKinley, then Theodore Roosevelt's noisy promotion of the United States as a great power—and I don't understand why that man is on Mt. Rushmore, or I could mention another American President who maybe shouldn't be there, but if you look carefully, I think you'll find Jefferson sort of leering at him—but Theodore Roosevelt promoted a great American naval power, and most fateful of all, Woodrow Wilson, who embroiled us in the First World War.

Establishment historians like to give the impression that all of these steps were inevitable. This is their claim that the massive expansion of government power at home has been preordained and inevitable by the modern world of technology or whatever. But in fact every move away from America First and towards globalism was a result of political choice and political struggle. The best example is at the turn of the century, where the imperialism of McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt was fought tooth and nail by the classical liberals of the time, men like Edward Atkinson of Boston, Carl Schultz, E.L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation* magazine—which in those days was a premier laissez-faire journal in this country, believe it or not—by Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, and William Graham Sumner, about whom I will have something to say further at the end of this talk.

But the libertarians of the day proved to be no match for the forces arrayed against them: the civilian and military bureaucrats in Washington, the capitalist interests anxious for government backing for their export trade and investments abroad, and more than anything else, the elite political class enthralled by their vision of America as a mighty world power.

The decisive turn came with Woodrow Wilson and World War I. Wilson presented the nation with the starkest possible contrast to our traditional policy. For over a century the American attitude was the one expressed by John Quincy Adams—Quincy Adams was Secretary of State under James Monroe, and the author of the Monroe Doctrine. John Quincy Adams declared, “Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will be America's heart, her benediction, and her prayers. But America does not go abroad in search of

monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all, she is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”

Instead of acting as a light to all nations, America, in Woodrow Wilson’s conception, would scour the earth in search of antidemocratic monsters to destroy. The all-knowing leaders in Washington would discover them and then tap the immense resources of our free enterprise wealth machine. That’s the advantage that it had and that’s why they have made America into a world hegemonic power; it’s because capitalists produce in America, and the politicians take what they need for it. This would be an endless crusade to rid the world of evil and impose democracy on everyone else.

Wilson was rejecting the authentic American tradition; in its place he was adopting the program of the Jacobins in the French Revolution. They were the men who tried to impose their ideals, allegedly of liberty, equality, and fraternity, on the rest of Europe at the point of a bayonet. The results were 25 years of war that only ended at Waterloo, millions of dead, and devastation across the continent.

Wilson’s experiment in exporting democracy turned out badly, as well. By pushing our way into Europe’s bloody quarrel, we ensured that there would be no compromised peace, instead the total triumph of one side. The consequence was the vindictive Treaty of Versailles, virtually guaranteeing another world war. The Germans were forced to give up the Kaiser, which made it possible, 14 years later, for a demagogue like Hitler to seize total power, through the terrible consequences that ensued, that was democracy in action. You know, the Italians, after the First World War, kept their king, of course, they were the victorious power; and then, finally, when the time came when Italy was totally humbled by Mussolini’s stupid policy, the king dismissed Mussolini. He was in a position to do it. No one was in a position to dismiss Hitler.

Mr. Wilson’s War, as it was called, demonstrated the high costs at home of exporting democracy abroad. In every area of American life, Americans lost liberties to Washington as taxes and public debt reached unprecedented levels. As government controls pervaded the economy, the authority of federal agents and federal censors reached into every city and town. In 1920 the people voted in a landslide for a return to normalcy under Warren Harding, whom historians, of course, count as one of our worst presidents. But the transformation of law, institutions, and most of all, the attitudes and mentality of the people, could not be undone.

The Second World War is the next great landmark on our road to permanent war. This whole complicated issue had been reduced to simply one word: “Hitler.” Of course Hitler was an extremely evil man, one of history’s worst. But in all this talk about the war to rid the world of Hitler, what is rarely mentioned is that the United States was the faithful ally of Joseph Stalin, who killed more people, and killed them earlier, than Hitler did.

Also not usually mentioned is the fact that Franklin Roosevelt lied and maneuvered the country into war. This is hardly the mark of a great democratic statesman, one might think. But Roosevelt's defenders have an answer. This is very typical of them nowadays. This is the way a pro-Roosevelt historian, Robert Dallek of UCLA, put it in a major work on Roosevelt's foreign policy. This is what Dallek says: "In the light of the national unwillingness to face up fully to the international dangers facing the country, it is difficult to fault Roosevelt for building a consensus by devious means. Yet for all the need to mislead the country in its own interests, Roosevelt's deviousness also injured the national well-being in the long run. It created a precedent for manipulation of public opinion, which would be repeated by later Presidents, and, thus, justifiable circumstances." He means Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam, because the professor was against that particular war. But whatever your view of our involvement in World War II, what does it say that an American President lied the country into war for our own good? Is this Washington and Jefferson or Niccolo Machiavelli?

Sometimes Roosevelt's lies were laughably transparent. Thus, to quote Professor Dallek, "Roosevelt told a press conference on September 30th, 1941, that Article 124 of the new Russian Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience. This is what Roosevelt said, 'Freedom equally to use propaganda against religion.'" Can you imagine the communists allowed propaganda against religion? Roosevelt said, which is essentially what is a rule in this country, although we don't put it quite that way. As Dallek comments, Roosevelt knew full well that there was no freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. No, there wasn't, not after the communists had murdered tens of thousands of priests, bishops, and millions of Christian laity.

Now, and this is the way the history is concocted, imagine for a moment that Robert Taft or Herbert Hoover, or some other conservative leader, had said, in 1941, that the Jews enjoyed freedom of religion in Nazi Germany. Do you think that we might have heard about such a ridiculous and shameful statement? In fact, isn't it likely that it would have been drummed into our heads from the time we entered grade school? Yet here's Roosevelt making a similar defense of Stalin's Russia, and yet his outrageous lie has disappeared down a memory hole.

This is the Franklin Roosevelt who amiably referred to Stalin as "Uncle Joe," and who is praised to the skies by today's conservative leaders, by the *Wall Street Journal*, by Newt Gingrich, who calls Roosevelt the greatest President of the 20th century, and many of the others. With World War II the rule was set: it is the job of the President of the United States to identify foreign monsters that people are too short-sighted to recognize. And it is his right and duty to deceive and manipulate the people into waging war against them.

This is the policy that was carried out by Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman. Starting with the Truman Doctrine, the public was misled again and again about the mortal dangers facing America. At the time, Senator Vandenberg, who was in favor of it, advised Truman that if he

wanted to get Congress to endorse his Truman Doctrine, the recipe for endless foreign involvement, he would have to scare hell out of the American people. That is what Truman did, and that is what successive administrations have kept on doing. Robert Higgs of the *Independent Review* has written, and his works are indispensable for an understanding of this whole problem, that for over a half century we have had a state of continuous national emergency and sustained military readiness without precedent in American history. What is politely called information management, the lies and half-truths spread by thousands of hired propagandists, professional propagandists, at the Pentagon and other agencies in Washington, this has served to keep up the anxiety level. The lie by Condoleezza Rice, brilliant woman, about the imminence of a mushroom cloud arising above American cities, the pretext for the invasion of Iraq, is just one of thousands over the years.

Another result of the Second World War is perhaps more dismal. The American people themselves have become inured to the wholesale massacre of enemy civilians by the U.S. military. The killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians through the terror bombing of German and Japanese cities was accepted and even applauded. Then it was followed in the Korean War, when General Curtis Lemay admitted, or really boasted, of the killing of around a million Korean civilians, North and South, by the U.S. Air Force. How many Vietnamese civilians were killed by the American bombing or otherwise massacred will never be known. It is probably on the order of one-and-a-half million. If you've never seen it before, you might go to Washington just to look at the Vietnam Memorial. Don't bother with that World War II Memorial; it is unbelievably garish. Mussolini would have liked it a lot. But if you look at the Vietnam Memorial, it contains the names only of Americans who were killed, about 58,000. It's very moving, and may bring tears to your eyes, but if it had included Vietnamese killed, it would have had to have been 75 times bigger.

And so it goes. And Serbia under Clinton, today in Iraq, civilians are killed, families wiped out; Afghanistan too, families wiped out, and as always the only concern of most Americans is for the American casualties. The few who are concerned about the death inflicted on foreign innocents are derided as traitors, wimps, or some other mindless epithet, I don't know, girly-boys. There is a book by Chris Hedges, reporter, who has witnessed many recent battles in different parts of the world; it's called *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. It's about the emotional and psychological benefits that people experience during war. They experience a sense of community and solidarity with their fellow citizens. They're imbued with the feeling of being part of something immeasurably great and grand, part of human nature, I suppose.

Another major result of our wars is that large parts of the U.S. Constitution have become dead letters. The most obvious is the war-making power. It is pretty well known, the Constitution explicitly vests the power to declare war in the Congress. Article I, Section 8, enumerates the various powers of Congress, and Clause 11 reads, "The Congress shall have power to declare war." There's a reason for this. Madison warned that the executive branch of government is

inclined to war. This is what he said: “War is, in fact”—Madison is often called the father of the Constitution—“War is, in fact, the two nerves of executive aggrandizement. The strongest passions and the most dangerous weaknesses of the human breast, ambition, avarice, vanity, the honorable or venial love of same, are all in a conspiracy against the desire and duty of peace.”

Nothing is clearer than that the Framers intended that Congress, and not the President, should possess the war-making power. One of the major Framers, John Wilson of Pennsylvania, argued for adoption of the ratifying convention of the state on that basis: the system will not hurry us into war. Madison himself said the Constitution presupposes what the history of world government demonstrates, that the executive is the branch of power most interested in war, and most prone to it.

How far we have come from that understanding to what is accepted today. It was, accordingly, in the Constitution, with steady care, that this power was vested in the legislature. Nowadays the issue is confused by reference to the President’s authority as Commander in Chief, but all that that means is that once Congress declares war, then the President has the authority to deploy the armed forces. And even Alexander Hamilton, the great promoter of executive power, argued for ratification of the U.S. Constitution when that argument was going on, and the Federalists, and wrote, “The President is to be Commander In Chief of the Army and Navy.”

This would mean nothing more than that the supreme command and direction of the military and naval forces was in his hands. The power of the British King extends to the declaring of war and raising and regulating the fleets and armies, all of which, by our Constitution, by the Constitution under consideration, would pertain to the legislature. This was such an established principle that even the most power-hungry Presidents felt constrained to follow it. So in 1917 Woodrow Wilson went to Congress to request a declaration of war, as in 1941 Franklin Roosevelt did the same thing.

The man who broke with this principle was Harry Truman, now, along with Roosevelt, a great hero to those who call themselves conservatives in America today. He brought the United States into the Korean War without a declaration of war by Congress, which the great Robert Taft, known in his time as Mr. Republican, denounced as a usurpation of power. (Incidentally, when I was a kid, I shook hands with Robert Taft—Robert, not William Howard, as some people are saying—and in fact I was the head of Students for Taft in New York City. It was never a large group. Incidentally, you may wish to take it as evidence against the Darwinian theory of evolution, that is, the evolution of a Republican Party from Robert Taft to George W. Bush.)

Truman held views on the power of the chief executive very similar to the views of the Stuart kings of England, for which one king was beheaded, another one chased out of the country. Truman seized the American steel industry, because, he said, “a steel strike would endanger

American national security,” so he had the right to do it. He also held that, on these same grounds, the President had the authority to seize any industry, including the newspapers and radio networks. Truman’s takeover of the steel industry was annulled by the Supreme Court by a six to three vote; two more votes and he would have gotten away with it.

Our foreign wars are always accompanied by a barrage of official lies. The wars in the Middle East are obvious examples. Now the people who bring us into those wars hardly manage to keep a straight face in their deception. They lie to us in our faces, lies that can be nailed to the few clicks on your computer, checked on the Internet. We now tend to forget about Bill Clinton’s war on Serbia back in 1999. It’s really disheartening how every President makes you nostalgic for the last one. I mean, now, with Ashcroft and Gonzalez, can you imagine we’re nostalgic for Janet Reno? The pretext for killing thousands of Serbians and destroying the country’s infrastructure was that the Serbian Government was committing massive massacres, even genocide, in Kosovo, a province of Serbia. What was actually happening was that the Serbian Government was dealing harshly, as the Union did with the South, for instance, in our Civil War, with an insurrection by the KLA, the Kosovo Liberation Army. The aim of the KLA was to drive the Serbians from Kosovo Province of Serbia, ancient province, make it totally Albanian.

How did we get involved in these people’s problems? The KLA had not succeeded in taking over Kosovo until the U.S. Air Force came to their aid. The Serbian genocide against the Kosovo Albanians turned out to be another lie, another lie. After the war, forensic teams scoured Kosovo; they were able to find only about 2,000 bodies in multiple graves, they could not tell whether the bodies were of Serbs or Albanians, whether they were fighters or civilians, and under what circumstances they had been killed. So much for genocide, which everybody throws around nowadays.

In modern times there has been really just one demonstrated genocide, as far as I’m concerned. Genocide doesn’t mean mass killings; a lot of governments do mass killings. There was one attempt to annihilate and exterminate a whole people. Since the KLA victory in Kosovo, virtually all the remaining non-Albanians, the Serbs, the Gypsies, a few Jews, even the Turks, who were Muslims, have been ethnically cleansed under the indifferent eyes of the NATO peacekeepers. We have peacekeepers there, too. Hundreds of Christian churches, monasteries, and shrines have been demolished by the Muslim Albanians, and Kosovo is effectively independent of Serbia, but that was forgotten when the United States Government proceeded to its next crusades.

Today the conservative jurists and politicians, who are all for original intent and strict construction of the Constitution, agreed the President may simply, on his own say-so, attack any country in the world, engage the United States anywhere in the world, as he sees fit. The history of our departure from an America First foreign policy has been anything but auspicious, I would

say. In addition, there are a number of theoretical considerations that weigh heavily against permitting any of our politicians to go poking around in the world, miring us in foreign problems that are none of our concern. This is sort of a prima facie case, depending on a number of points, against global meddling.

First, there is no reason to assume that our leaders are any more competent in international affairs than they are in domestic affairs. The process by which they are selected is now mainly reduced to mindless 30-second TV commercials and meaningless debates, with never a whiff of a reality intruding into the mix, except one recent debate, when a physician from Texas spoke. This process is guaranteed to produce political leaders who are either liars or fools or both.

Second, foreign intervention will often be dictated by purely partisan political motives. It is well known that the President receives a shot in the arm in the polls when he gets tough with some foreign devil. Thus it often pays to invent foreign devils, new Hitlers at every turn. The only thing people remember in the 20th century is Hitler: Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, if you remember when he was a devil, Adid in Somalia, General Cedras in Haiti, Milosevic in Serbia, Saddam Hussein, of course, and now Ahmadinejad in Iran, another Hitler, and who knows who tomorrow.

Let me just make another point. The decision to intervene, like all political decisions, is the influence of pressure groups. This is where the domestic legislation foreign policy will be shaped by the pressures exerted by various minority constituencies with their own axes to grind. Meanwhile, the interest of the public at large is lost in this shuffle. This is the basic teaching of the school of public choice, you know, which, in my mind, they've gotten too much credit for, because it is a basic teaching of classical liberalism going back to the 18th century. Consider a particular domestic subsidy, particular tariff or farm subsidy; most often fewer than one percent of the American people have an interest in high prices. Everyone else has an interest in low prices. How is it, then, that the tariff or subsidy is adopted to keep a price high? The reason is that the benefits of the high price policy are concentrated while the costs are diffused, so the special interest group spends time and money and votes to make sure it gets what it wants.

Similarly, in foreign policy, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough, by and large, the American people have virtually no interest in foreign affairs; they know nothing about foreign countries, the histories and problems; they care nothing about them. With most of the countries the U.S. Government has attacked and invaded in recent years, the majority of Americans could not even locate them on a map. In truth, no people was ever less suited to be an imperial nation than the Americans. Inevitably, therefore, the policy of global meddling will be determined not by the American people themselves, but by small groups in cliques who do care, and care a lot. Do such groups and cliques exist? Yes, of course they do.

First of all, there are powerful individuals and corporations with foreign financial interests who use the agencies of the government, the State Department, the CIA, the U.S. military, and so on, to protect their interests and thus socialize the costs of doing business abroad. Sometimes I used to point out to my classes that for years the Rockefeller family kept a foreign policy consultant on retainer, a professor at Harvard, named Henry Kissinger. I used to ask the students whether their families had a foreign policy consultant. It will be interesting to see what happens when the time comes to privatize the Iraqi oil industry, whether the American and British and other oil companies would pay for the costs of this privatization, the aircraft carriers, the helicopter gunships, the F-16s, depleted uranium munitions and cluster bombs and all the rest of it.

Second, another classic example is the American Zionists, really right-wing Zionists, allied to the Likud Party in Israel. Nowadays these ultra-Zionists are by no means limited to people of the Jewish faith, and by no means they're all members of the Jewish faith in this camp. Probably the so-called Christian Zionists are more numerous, people like James Dobson, he's the head of the group Focus on the Family, a greatly influential organization. You see it on TV stations all the time, and has intimate access to the White House. I'm to confess that over the last few years I've become more and more curmudgeonly, maybe it befits my age, so it's come time to consider a number of people who disagree with me in politics to be crazy. But these Christian Zionists are really crazy. Later in our conference, my friend Dr. Lawrence Vance will explain what a true Christian policy is, based on, as someone said over there, that terrorists do is, who was tortured by the Romans. The power of the Zionist lobby in America is detailed in this scholarly paper by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, which you can access on the Internet. In fact, there is more freedom to criticize Israeli policy in Israel than there is in the United States, as you can see, for instance, from the columns by Uri Avneri and Ron HaCohen on Justin Raimondo's indispensable Web site, Antiwar.com.

Third, there are other cases of pressure groups exercising influence on U.S. policy as well. The Cuban-American community is very important in determining the electoral votes of Florida and pivotal to keeping the embargo on trade with Cuba going for decades despite its being obviously counterproductive and stupid. When Clinton decided to send troops to Haiti, that's been forgotten, too, to return Father Aristide to power; his decision was influenced by the clout of the Black Caucus in Congress. This is in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans had not the slightest interest in restoring democracy in Haiti. That's what it was called, Operation Restore Democracy In Haiti. They really have no shame.

Fourth, but let us, aside from all this, suppose that a meddling farm policy would be formulated by competent leaders who never exploited for personal political advantage, who were somehow immune to pressures from special interests. Still the world is an exceedingly complicated place; really very complicated. Inevitably there will be unintended negative consequences of U.S. interventions. This is what is known as blowback. The only person that never heard of it seems to be Rudy Giuliani. We went to war in 1917 to make the world safe for democracy. The result

was the Versailles Treaty, the rise of Hitler, and World War II. We helped drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan; the result was the coming to power of the Taliban. The outcome of American support of Israel and other interventions in the Middle East has been to turn millions and millions in the Islamic world into enemies of the United States. And the effect of that is that some fanatics, murderous fanatics, came over here to attack us on our own soil. And now there are men in Washington and elsewhere speaking of the inescapable coming of war with Islam.

Now, fifth, there is damage done to our Constitutional system by foreign meddling. This was outlined in classic form by William Graham Sumner in 1899, in his essay titled, "The Conquest of the United States by Spain." You can read some excerpts from the essay in the archives of *Freedom Daily*. Sumner wrote, "We have beaten Spain in a military conflict, but we are submitting to be conquered by her on the field of ideas and policies. Expansionism and Imperialism are nothing but the old philosophies of national prosperity which have brought Spain to where she is now." Sumner went on to outline the original vision of America cherished by the Founding Fathers, radically different from the one that prevailed in the European nations of the time. It would have no court, no pomp, no orders or ribbons or decorations. Thomas Jefferson rode to Washington, to the city of Washington, for his inauguration all by himself, on his own horse. We have had no titles, they would have no public debt, there is to be no grand diplomacy because they intended to mind their own business and not be involved in any of the intrigues to which the European statesmen were accustomed.

This had been an American idea. It was our signature as a nation. And Sumner said, "It is by virtue of this conception that the United States has stood for something unique and grand in the history of mankind, and that its people have been happy." The system the founders bequeathed to us, as Sumner held, was a delicate one, providing for the division and balance of powers and aimed to keeping government small and local. It's no accident that Jefferson, Washington, and others who created the Republic issued their clear warnings against foreign entanglements. A policy of foreign adventurism would, in the nature of things, bend and twist and ultimately shatter our original system. As foreign affairs became more important, power would shift from communities and states to the federal government, and within that, from Congress to the President. An ever-busy foreign policy could only be carried out by the President, often without the knowledge of the people, often without the knowledge of Congress. Thus, the American system, based on local government, states rights, Congress, and the voice of the people, would more and more give way to a bloated bureaucracy, headed by an imperialist President.

But now, as Sumner said, with the war against Spain and the philosophy behind it, we are letting ourselves in for the old European system, war, debt, taxation, as he said, diplomacy a grand governmental system, pomp, glory, a big army, navy, lavish expenditures, and political jobbery; in a word, Imperialism. In giving up our own system, there would be, Sumner admitted, our compensations. Immortal glory is not nothing, as the Spaniards well knew. To be a pawn, even a pawn in a mighty enterprise of armies and navies, identified with great imperial power projected

around the world, the first empire which had said that the sun never set was the Spanish empire. To see the flag raised on victorious battlefields, many peoples in history thought that gain was well worth the candle, only if it was not the American way. That had been more modest, more prosaic, parochial, more middle class. It was based on the idea that we are here to live out our lives minding our own business and pursuing our happiness in our work, our families, churches, communities; it had been the small policy.

Finally, the final point I want to make, focusing on foreign problems—another point in the prima facie case against foreign entanglements—focusing on foreign problems diverts our attention from the need for very farreaching reforms at home. Those imperative reforms go far beyond anything suggested sincerely or not by a political leader, or anybody, virtually anybody who writes. We will never be able to undertake them if at any moment the politicians can choose to distract our attention by concocting some foreign crisis or other.

Do we have problems at home that call for our attention? I think so. We have to abolish the Federal Reserve System. How is that for starters? Leave aside the Feds' past depredations, the government, according to studies, now has an unfunded commitment of \$50 trillion. How is this huge sum going to be met? How is the government going to meet its obligations? The Fed would have to manage a massive inflation in the years to come, the total destruction of the dollar. It's the only way they can do it. There are continuing budget deficits and national debt, and then the phony-baloney tax cuts that will have to be paid by more taxes in the future by your children and grandchildren. We're rapidly approaching crisis in Social Security and Medicaid, which a conservative administration added a huge new entitlement to, the prescription drugs, the course of which it deliberately lied about to Congress.

There's a rotten American educational system, year after year producing millions of functional illiterates and near illiterates, an amazingly uninformed young people. There are hundreds of examples, but this is one I came across recently, that I like. Half of American high school seniors think that Sodom and Gomorrah were a married couple in the Bible. These are the future Democratic voters in our American empire. There's our ongoing struggle to stop the steady erosion of our Second Amendment rights by ignorant media types and the national and international bureaucrats who have this strange vendetta against guns that private people use for recreation, to protect themselves, their families, and their stores. I favor keeping guns in the hands of private people rather than in the hands of those who use them to kill foreigners.

Is there any question that the war on drugs is a national disaster? And this is not a passing into the, like, prohibition laws. Now there are hundreds of thousands of federal and state and local bureaucrats with a personal interest in perpetuating the so-called war, and the United Nations and foreign bureaucrats with the same interest. Getting rid of this war in itself would be a full-time job. Other enforcement agencies are out of control, as well as the Drug Enforcement

Agency; Jim Bovard detailed some of that. Take the FBI: where's the anthrax killer? After all these years, we've forgotten about the anthrax killer. Instead, the FBI harasses innocent people like Brandon Mayfield, he's an attorney in Portland, Oregon. There was a terror attack in Madrid; the Spanish police faxed some fingerprints that they found there to the FBI. The FBI concluded that the fingerprints belonged to this Mayfield guy; they jailed him for weeks. In fact, they said that the prints matched 100 percent, although the Madrid police said no, there's no match. Finally, the FBI had to admit that they were mistaken, apologize to Mayfield and his family; now they can't even do fingerprints. And let's not forget the heroes of Waco and Ruby Ridge, huh?

Okay, well, there's a logic in human affairs, and one could go on with the other things that have to be done. There's a logic in human affairs, Sumner said, to go back to him for a moment: "Once you make certain decisions, some paths that were open to you before, are closed, and you are led step by step in a certain direction." America was choosing the path of world power, and Sumner had very little hope that his words would change that, so why was he speaking out? Simply because, as he said, "The scheme of a republic, which our fathers formed, was a glorious dream, which demands more than a word of respect and affection before it passes by," a very pessimistic conclusion. A bit more optimistic, "But to recover the republic, to foreswear the empire, will require a colossal effort." This conference is a small step in the right direction. Thank you.

Q: Ralph, speaking for, I'm sure, all of us here, we very much appreciate your historian's view of what we're considering at this conference. We would not have been very far along without it. In view, and in the following, of Reagan's success as far as Communism is concerned in this country, we have come to understand that Communism is dead. Is Communism dead in your view, and would you consider the engineered war on drugs or the engineering on the part of China and Russia bringing drugs into this county? Would you consider the culture war lost that we're undergoing right now as a part of Antonio, the Marxist Antonio -- his last name escapes me -- Is Communism dead in your view?

Ralph Raico: I get the idea. If there is some analogy to the Cold War, I mean, to Communism, it wouldn't be the war on drugs. It would be the ever-expanding welfare state and the policies of redistribution that Europe is ahead of us in this way, that is followed by so-called democratic governments. As Hidaka said years ago, the welfare state is now replacing socialism; Castro is dying, there's going to be a change there; North Korea, well, if we hadn't kept them scared to death by the threat of a war, of course, which, it wouldn't be carried out because they do have nuclear weapons. We only attack countries who say they have nuclear weapons. And China, China is hardly a socialist country anymore. So, the idea of socialism, of central economic planning and government ownership of the major production, is dead. But the welfare state is certainly a big danger.

Q: We have one more. Henry Howard [ph?] from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Ralph Raico: What's that?

M1: I say my name is Henry Howard, I'm from Pittsburgh. Conventional wisdom is that if the United States had not been successful in taking out Hitler, that we'd all be speaking German today. I'm somewhat skeptical about that, but it is hard to argue that Hitler would not have prevailed if we were not in the war, so my question is: In your estimation, how would world history have played out had the United States been successful in avoiding being getting into the war?

Ralph Raico: If we would all be speaking German, that certainly would have saved me a lot of trouble. We'd also be speaking Japanese, don't forget that. Well, a lot could be said about it. The fact is, I don't know whether you find this pleasing or not: Hitler was defeated by the Red Army, defeated-- the only countries he had overrun, the only important country was France. And once he attacked Russia, his fate was sealed. He was stopped outside of Moscow in December of 1941, and 80 million Germans were not in a position to take over the world, and step by step, year by year, was terrible, terrible, losses, the Germans were forced back. So whatever Hollywood wants to say, it wasn't Private Ryan who won the war, it was rather Private Ivan. Not that the Russians didn't behave barbarically once they flooded into Eastern and Central Europe; but I think you have to hand it to the Red Army, they defeated Hitler. I guess that's about it, then. Thank you very much.