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DEFYING THE PUNDITS · D.G. Hart

PERILOUS FICTIONS, PERILOUS POLICIES · Adam Garfinkle

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Ronald J. Granieri

When warned that his willingness to strike compromises on difficult questions would hurt his political career, Henry Clay offered in response the immortal line: "I'd rather be right than President." That has become one of the most famous quotations in American political history, though one could also say it is honored more in the breach than the observance. Most political leaders, and those who support them, would prefer to believe that there is no need to choose between being in the right and being successful—if anything, the latter is sufficient proof of the former.

Such dour reflections are a product of a particularly polarizing and confusing election season. As Americans try to decide whom to elect President, they have debated what constitutes being right in a world where there is more frustration than hope, where past disappointment clouds the vision of followers and leaders, and where appealing to frustrated demands for total change is a more promising path to power than advocating compromise and restraint.

The American Review hopes to enrich our understanding of American political life by linking politics to larger trends in American culture society. This month's two essays serve that mission by examining the often-chaotic intersection between politics and moral principle.

FPRI Associate Scholar Darryl Hart offers an analysis of the attraction between American Evangelical Christians and Donald Trump. Their mutual connection has come as something of a shock to many, but Professor Hart traces the connection between Evangelical attacks on the American political establishment and Trump's blunt rhetoric. Even if one could not imagine Trump teaching Sunday school, it's clear that his message is attracting plenty of evangelical support the other six days of the week.

The (dis-) connection between policy and morality also attracts the analytical gaze of FPRI Fox Fellow Adam Garfinkle, who has penned a review of a recent work on "the benefits and pitfalls of America's alliances with authoritarian regimes" to reflect on how Americans think about the compromises inherent in making foreign policy. Garfinkle reminds us that Americans like to think of themselves as both principled and practical, while each observer reserves to herself the right to decide where to strike the balance between the two, and to point out where her fellow Americans fall short. Nobody ever quite gets it right, which only guarantees that the conversation will continue. Few things are more American than that.

If you want to be part of the conversation, please contact us here at the American Review. We look forward to hearing from you.

Onward!

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DEFYING THE PUNDITS

By D.G. Hart

D. G. Hart is an Associate Scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He teaches history at Hillsdale College and is the author of among other works, *Damning Words: The Life and Religious Times of H. L. Mencken* (forthcoming).

To fathom the support from Christian Americans (Evangelical and Roman Catholic) for Donald Trump, perhaps a comparison to Turkey will help. The republic of Turkey has a long history of religious and secular rivalry. To make Turkey a modern and western nation and to distinguish it from the Ottomans, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk embraced a French-styled secularism (laicity) that excluded Islam from politics entirely. Only with the 2003 election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan as prime minister as leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) did Islam make its way back into the Turkish government, thanks to AKP's roots among the Turkish Muslim electorate. Erdogan has hardly ended hostility between secularists and Muslims as the 2013 protests in Istanbul indicated – disputes that escalated from objections to police brutality to protests over Erdogan's efforts to reappropriate Turkey's Ottoman past. Still, his party remains the political voice for many devout Muslims.

Imagine, then, what might happen if the Turkish equivalent of Donald Trump, a phony believer at best, a secularist at worst, sought to become the leader of the AKP. To ask the question is to concede how implausible that would be. But that is essentially what is happening in the Republican presidential primaries. A party that for the last thirty-five years has achieved electoral success by courting Christian values voters, a party that identified itself on the divine side of the secularist-religious divide in American society, now has a candidate who's professions of faith cannot hide a life far removed from the religious circles and causes that animated the Religious Right. Even more astounding, Trump's appeal is not the result of the candidate's conversion, say like George W. Bush's later-in-life commitment to Christianity. Instead, the conversion is on the other side of the podium. The values voters, who used to select candidates on the basis of opposition to abortion, homosexuality, and sexual wantonness, now support a candidate who has, in the words of George Weigel and Robert P. George in their recent letter to Roman Catholics in *National Review*, "driven our politics down to new levels of vulgarity." Ironic does not capture the spectacle of pious Christians voting for an indecent Trump. This is a mystery, but hardly a holy one on the order of the virgin birth of Christ.

Religious support for Trump is all the more dumbfounding since Christian leaders such as Weigel and George and the signers of their open letter, have overwhelmingly repudiated Trump. From Al Mohler and Russell Moore, the two most prominent figures within the Southern Baptist Convention (which has roughly 15 million members), to Max Lucado, a best-selling Texas pastor, evangelical authorities have overwhelmingly repudiated Trump. Trump's only prominent religious endorsement came from Jerry Falwell, Jr. of Liberty University. What the Trump phenomenon may be revealing is that religious leaders may no longer speak for people in the pews, or at least that the latter do not seem to be paying attention to their pastors. Perhaps this proves that religious leaders have for too long spoken more for themselves and have undermined their own leadership status.

The most common explanation for religious support for Trump is that the Donald is giving voice to discontent, or even venting political incorrectness for people who now know in a post-*Obergefell* that they have no hope of making their views acceptable to the political and media elite. On specific policy matters, immigration, nationalism, and the economy come all wrapped up in one. According to Scott McConnell, writing at *The American Conservative*, Trump's appeal is this: "much of the bipartisan establishment believes that borders are an outdated concept . . . and that human progress requires higher levels of immigration and no real barriers to international trade. If Americans are hurt by these policies, so what? Their residual nationalism is outdated, if not actually bigoted." Support for Trump thus is a gesture of defiance from a segment of the

population that feels resentful and ignored, economically and politically as well as culturally

This makes sense of Trump's appeal in some ways, but I can't help but wonder where this discontent was in 2012, when the scars of the 2008 financial meltdown were far fresher and when immigration as an issue was even more pressing. Mitt Romney was hardly the person to tap such dissatisfaction. Ron Paul or Rick Santorum or Newt Gingrich could have raised these issues, however, yet they did not. Furthermore, the primary motivation of evangelicals as a voting bloc in national politics over the past thirty years has not been economic (aside from broad endorsements of free markets and American greatness as the most affluent nation in the world.) Now we are to believe that religious voters, who once were devoted to pro-life positions and an ethic of sexual restraint in selecting a candidate have given up on all that and are turning to Trump? What could have brought about this conversion? Is it his ability to say whatever is on his mind and not worry about offending American sensitivities? If so, evangelicals have not identified a man who is going to voice their objections to abortion or homosexuality. He is as PC on these matters as the mainstream media and the Democrats.

Another way to try to explain affinities between Trump and evangelicals is to notice the resonance of evangelical religiosity with conservative talk radio and Trump's status as a television celebrity (which one pundit likened more to a game-show host than a movie star). Rod Dreher at *The American Conservative* has emphasized the connection between Trump and talk radio by invoking a piece from 2009 by John Derbyshire about the dangers of drive-by chatter driving political debate. Derbyshire wrote: "right-wing talk radio captures a big and useful market segment. However, if there is no thoughtful, rigorous presentation of conservative ideas, then conservatism by default becomes the raucous parochialism of Limbaugh, Savage, Hannity, and company." Nor does connecting the dots between Trump's performances on *The Apprentice* and the verdicts rendered on talk radio tax the imagination. If Trump carved out an audience simply by saying what comes easy for most people *only* in their imaginations – "you're fired" – people who follow American politics through the lens of such talk-show host denunciations of Jimmy Carter as a "war criminal" or the nation's leading dailies as the *New York Slimes* and *Washington Compost* may well think Trump is their candidate. Whether these same people want Tourette-Syndrome like outbursts when a president is conducting the affairs of state is another matter. Imagine the strain in EU/US relations if Trump were to say about Angela Merkel what he did about Carly Fiorina's face.

The aspect of evangelical faith that connects with celebrity (evangelicals do have more celebrity pastors than Major League Baseball has teams) and outrageous radio commentary is a distrust of institutions and authority. For born-again Protestants, a personal encounter with God is essential to faith. Having "Jesus in my heart" is one way to put this. And such an emphasis on experience has meant that for evangelicals the structures or hierarchies that have typically defined and regulated Christianity – clergy, creeds, liturgy – are impositions that come between a believer and God. Taken to extremes, of course, this impulse leaves evangelicals without any institutions or organizations (or even a Bible). So it has rarely been taken to its logical conclusion, which is an average evangelical at home, alone which Jesus in her heart. But such an understanding of authentic faith has left evangelicals with a deep distrust of authorities who come between them and what they believe is genuine.

George Whitefield, the evangelist who put "great" in the First Great Awakening (circa 1740), was one of the first to tap the significance of personal experience. In his 1740 sermon, "The Kingdom of God," he warned against identifying Christianity with the institutional church. "True and undefiled religion, doth not consist in being of this or that particular sect or communion." If someone said to Whitefield he belonged to a church where they worshiped "in the same way" his parents did, the evangelist concluded that such a nominal Christian had placed the kingdom of God in "that in which does not consist." Charles Finney, the celebrity evangelist of the Second Great Awakening (1820s) took the personal nature of Christianity and applied it in a way that undercut the authority of denominational structures. Of the highest body among American Presbyterians, Finney wrote, "No doubt there is a jubilee in hell every year about the time of meeting of the General Assembly." Billy Sunday, another celebrity evangelist in the early twentieth century showed what evangelical attitudes to religious experience could mean for theology or formal study of religious truth. He boasted that he did "not know any more about theology than a jack rabbit does about ping pong." But as long as he had a conversion experience he was qualified to

preach.

H. L Mencken, who covered some of Sunday's exploits, put his finger on the appeal of evangelicalism and traced it directly to the anti-institutional, informal character of its devotion:

> Even setting aside his painstaking avoidance of anything suggesting clerical garb and his indulgence in obviously unclerical gyration on his sacred stump, he comes down so palpably to the level of his audience, both in the matter and the manner of his discourse, that he quickly disarms the old suspicion of the holy clerk and gets the discussion going on the familiar and easy terms of a debate in a barroom. The raciness of his slang is not the whole story by any means; his attitude of mind lies behind it, and is more important. . . . It is marked, above all, by a contemptuous disregard of the theoretical and mystifying; an angry casting aside of what may be called the ecclesiastical mask, an eagerness to reduce all the abstrusities of Christian theology to a few and simple and (to the ingenuous) self-evident propositions, a violent determination to make of religion a practical, an imminent, an everyday concern.

Donald Trump is the Billy Sunday of Republican politics. For fifty years the conservative movement – from Barry Goldwater to Rick Santorum – has pushed for ideological consistency and encouraged its candidates to rattle the establishment's cage. But Trump is the first to jettison the decorum and relative dignity that still govern candidates in their dress, use of titles, and policy proposals. None of these conventions hamper Trump. As Mencken said of Sunday, Trump "comes down palpably to the level of his audience." And for the evangelical part of that audience, Trump finally represents a politician willing to get the discussion of national security and the economy "going on the familiar and easy terms of debate in a barroom."

PERILOUS FICTIONS, PERILOUS POLICIES

By Adam Garfinkle

Ted Galen Carpenter and Malou Innocent, *Perilous Partners: The Benefits and Pitfalls of America's Alliances with Authoritarian Regimes.* Washington: Cato Institute Press, 2015. Hardback, 622 pp., $24.95.

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Over the years I have come to appreciate the reality that a book is about as good as it may be useful to its particular reader. And since the experience, intelligence, and purposes of readers naturally differ so much, it is usually difficult to pronounce any book, especially a non-fiction offering, to be categorically good or categorically bad. *Perilous Partners* by Ted Galen Carpenter and Malou Innocent, published in-house by the Cato Institute, strikes me as tedious, frustrating, and, perhaps worst of all, banal. But that's just me. To an intellectually hungry college student or a 26-year old U.S. Foreign Service novice, on the other hand, it may be the best thing since that proverbial loaf of sliced bread. So I would never deign to follow in the footsteps of Dorothy Parker, who once wrote in a *New Yorker* review essay that: "This is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force." At most I would lightly release *Perilous Partners* to settle into a cardboard box with other books bound for donation to the local Wheaton public library.

Now why would I do that? I would do it for reasons of temperament, reasons related to the understanding of how time works in history, and reasons related to scholarship.

As to temperament, my conservative realism clashes with the barely attenuated moralism on display in *Perilous Partners*. It is easy to drill down to the essence here. On page 2 Carpenter and Innocent quote George F. Kennan saying, "No people can be the judge of another's domestic institutions and requirements." On this point as well as many others I think Kennan was right. But Carpenter and Innocent tell the reader that "U.S. political leaders and most of the American public, though, tend to regard such realism as unappealing"—and they make clear that they side with the public, not with Kennan. The gist and judgment of the entire book follow ineluctably from that foundational premise.

Carpenter and Innocent are not shy to use phrases like "pollute American values" in reference to prospective ways in which the U.S. government might try to protect the nation from the scourge of mass-casualty terrorism. As their parade of case studies gets started, with "Friendly Latin American Strongmen" first, we are peppered with statements that this or that American misdeed was "shameful," or "compounded the shame," or that "Washington was, at best, indifferent and at worst, supportive to the rise of tyrants—as long as they were friendly to U.S. domestic and strategic interests," or, more generally, that the U.S. government misrepresented the character of some of its thuggish Cold War allies to the American people as members of the "Free World." That same judgment applies to the next chapter, which focuses on Chiang Kai-shek.

And so on we go during Cold War times to South Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, South Vietnam, Zaire, the Philippines, Yugoslavia and Romania, and, last, China. The second part of the book picks up the same themes in the post-Cold War epoch with case studies of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan again, and Central Asia. The language and tone do not change; Carpenter and Innocent seat themselves on high and, as self-appointed priests of moral rectitude in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, issue writ after writ of judgment as to which behaviors fall inside their definition of "ethical pragmatism" and which fall outside. Most fall outside. The book concludes with a kind of "how to" chapter called "Closing the Values Gap," to

which we will return anon.

Now, *Perilous Partners* is not stuffed with wild and wooly, irredeemably idealist cant. The authors understand the concept of a lesser evil and they grant that sometimes the U.S. government can be morally right, considering the alternatives, to deal with unsavory associates. They are arguing against gratuitous activism on behalf of non-democratic associates, the sort of unwarranted expressions of "friendship" that either are or become unhinged from need. Put that way, no one can really argue against the proposition in principle, and put that way novices can learn that the hoary division of the policy world into idealists and realists is of very limited use. In the real world inside governments, as opposed to the vastly more experientially sterile world of academia, there are no ideal types—there are only dispositions at the margin between realistic idealists and idealistic realists who tend to align or diverge more or less on a case-by-case basis.

The core problem is that it is rarely clear down in the policy trenches what kinds of precautions taken against greater evils are gratuitous or not. It was never easy to define "need" in the midst of a Cold War struggle believed to be both multidimensional and protracted. At any given time, anxious U.S. administrations inclined to err on the side of safety, in part because their capacity to see around the inevitable curves of history was (and remains) very limited. To pass judgment on such behavior from the heights of hindsight gets churlish in a hurry.

To the best of my knowledge, neither Carpenter nor Innocent has ever spent time in those policy trenches inside government, and it shows. Hence their "Closing the Values Gap" finale may be of much use to a new FSO; I can find little fault with it. At the same time it is banal in the sense that *no one* really can find fault with it because it's sufficiently anodyne to be useless. Consider a sentence from the book's final paragraph: "Ethical pragmatism . . . accepts the need for some dilution of moral standards in the conduct of foreign policy—but only if the American interests at stake are sufficiently important, the threat to those interests is serious, and the compromise of values is not excessive, given the circumstances." Here is the rub: Go try to define "some dilution," "sufficiently important," "serious," and "not excessive" in such a way that an obvious consensus springs forth in any "given circumstances." Guess what: You can't. No one can. These are the things that policymakers agonize over and argue with each other about from dusk until dawn. This advice is a little like counseling a recovering cardiac patient to "take it easy" but at the same time to engage in regenerative exercise. Absent specific knowledge of the patient, this advice is puerile—and not all medical professionals will agree about the right balance in any case.

Now, there are two sorts of moralism at play when it comes to U.S. foreign policy, and these forms compose two sides of the same coin of American exceptionalism. As Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff put it way back in 1966 in *Power and Impotence*, exceptionalism gives rise to both isolationism and interventionism. Sometimes Americans have thought themselves different from and better than everyone else and so believed that the musty, fusty, dusty Old World did not *deserve* American attention. And sometimes Americans have thought that less fortunate others were *owed* more American attention than they had ever asked for or dreamed of—all for their own good, of course. William McKinley famously decided to annex the Philippines to "educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died"—as if the Filipinos were not already Catholics.

In any event, the shift from the former attitude to the latter has tended to track with the burgeoning of American wealth and might, and so confirms Dean Acheson's observation that "interests tend to expand with power." That trend has given rise increasingly to interventionist behavior that fits the definition the late Michael Kelly gave to American policy writ large: "Secular evangelism, armed."

At the same time, the adversary culture in America—so named by Lionel Trilling—has essentially believed that America is exceptional in the sense of exceptionally bad—not holier than thou but particularly sinful and corrupt. The far leftwing critique of the U.S. Cold War embrace of non-democratic allies relied on the stock set-up of revisionist thinking, to wit: When the bad United States does bad things, it's because it's in its nature to do bad things; and when it does good things it's because the not-bad Soviets/Chinese/North Vietnamese or whomever force it to do so. Similarly, when the good

Soviets/Chinese/North Vietnamese do good things they do it because it's in their nature, but when they do bad things it's because the bad Americans force them to. Anyone who believes this is in possession of a foolproof method of indicting U.S. foreign policy *no matter what it does*. Just read back issues of *The Nation* and you'll see this schema hard at work.

Now, what the combination of Janus-faced exceptionalism and anti-American revisionism gave rise to in Cold War times, among other things, was a cross-ideological overlap on the general issue of intervention, including the form that covers the friendly tyrants portfolio. Anti-Communist left-of-center liberals and social democrats joined with some conservative but idealistic exceptionalists to become internationalists. By and large, these conservatives tended to be from the big business, military-industrial, and moral majority wings of the Republican Party. Adversary culture critics, meanwhile, became objective allies with other conservative idealist exceptionalists, mainly from the libertarian wing of the Republican Party, to become neo-isolationists. The Cato Institute, since its founding in 1977, has always been aligned with the conservative part of that latter combination, and *Perilous Partners* represents the most recent expression of it.

This position is vividly illustrated in the fight that Carpenter and Innocent pick with Bob Kagan. Kagan, a founding member of what has come to be known, somewhat oddly, as neo-conservatism, is quoted as claiming that the problem with U.S. policy was not that it was too interventionist in many cases but that it was not interventionist enough. Kagan has argued that U.S. policy did not create, for example, Latin American dictatorships, but once engaged with friendly tyrants for whatever original reason, the U.S. government should have intervened to turn these tyrannies into democracies. Carpenter and Innocent argue, in essence, that U.S. policy did indeed create more than a few Latin American dictatorships, and so shove themselves into a position that, in essence if implicitly, claims that were it not for bad U.S. policies these dictatorships would not have arisen. The countries at issue would have by default become market economies and democracies, because that is how most libertarians think about human social and political nature.

In my view, both sides of this argument are basically incorrect, and some of Carpenter and Innocent's own analysis demonstrates it. After excoriating U.S. policy in the Dominican Republic, Carpenter and Innocent admit that Joaquin Balaguer—whom the U.S. government had put in place in Santo Domingo after the 1965 intervention—became a genuine democratic reformer who came to respect human rights. And after excoriating U.S. policy in Guatemala and Nicaragua for several pages, they conclude that, "the blowback from decades of supporting friendly, corrupt, and often brutal tyrants proved to be less severe than it might have been." They even describe the democratic transition in Guatemala (such as it is) starting in 1996. Carpenter and Innocent seem not to get it, but they undermine their own argument in this way, because they fail to understand how time works in the affairs of state.

A more patient analysis could readily conclude that U.S. policy in all three of these cases was successful both in the short term, by keeping these countries out of Soviet and later Cuban hands, and in the longer term by helping move them toward a more liberal political and social order. The same may be said for U.S. policy in South Korea and Taiwan, and arguably even in Chile. In the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan cases, Carpenter and Innocent chirp: "sometimes it's better to be lucky than good." In this regard, they attack the late Jeanne Kirkpatrick for her famous distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian rule, but Kirkpatrick was right to argue that U.S. support for authoritarians, by protecting them from totalitarian influence domestic and foreign, could at least preserve a chance that they will evolve in a more liberal direction. Carpenter and Innocent's intimation that the absence of U.S. influence, up to and occasionally including the abjuring of intervention, will necessarily make the situation in any given case better, on the other hand, is faith-based and wholly unwarranted.

These outcomes, again, such as they are, had little to do with luck and much more to do with the serial uses of time, and the opportunities it sometimes provide. One can easily get lost in counterfactual what-ifs; maybe good outcomes would have eventuated without the costs and moral misdeeds of American actions. We'll never know. What we can know is that in these cases U.S. foreign policy *ended up* on balance doing both well and good. Yet all Carpenter and Innocent can see are selected Polaroids of the "horrible costs" incurred along the way.

So while Carpenter and Innocent allow in principle that the existence of a greater evil might forgive unseemly behavior from time to time, one is hard-pressed to find many examples of it in *Perilous Partners*. Similarly, they are willing to admit that figures like Allende and Mossadegh were neither saints nor political geniuses, and that American concerns about their intentions were not pure inventions. They do not celebrate the two-dimensional conspiracy theories of the adversary culture when it comes to telling the tales of their downfall, and they certainly do not embrace the devil theory according to which American corporate capitalists dictate U.S. policy solely on the basis of greed. Nor in the case of Iran do they parrot the absurdist bookend that Ben Affleck wrapped around his 2013 film *Argo*. They are not, in short, unreasonable people.

But on balance they credit the blowback thesis and find fault with U.S. policy in these and all the other cases within the pantheon of American evildoing that the adversary culture dragged out during the Cold War. They believe, as do so many others, that U.S. aid to the Afghan *mujahedeen* that began in the Carter Administration and continued into the Reagan Administration was *a* cause, if not inclusively the cause, of the 9/11 attacks: "The anti-Soviet jihad facilitated a resurging Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan and around the world. Some of the conflict's Arab fighters who helped America defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan later committed the horrendous atrocities of 9/11."

Carpenter and Innocent take care, here and elsewhere, not to assert a strong cause-and-effect argument of the sort that has become a staple of "gotcha" cheap-shot journalism over recent decades, as if key U.S. officials "should have known" in 1979 or 1981 that in 1996 Osama bin-Laden (whom no one had ever heard of at the time) would go from Sudan to Afghanistan to set up shop, as if the *mujahedeen* as of 1981 were the same people who populated al-Qaeda twenty years later, and as if a load of other nonsensical premises were true to boot. Here we have on view the "immaculate conception" version of U.S. foreign policy, and it too relies on an unwarranted compression of time into a kind of retrospective omniscience that is then projected back decades onto decision-makers of an earlier day.[1] Carpenter and Innocent don't assert it but they do imply it, and they try to make their retrospective case against the decision to aid the *mujahedeen* by discounting the role it played in the downfall of the USSR.

When it comes to scholarship, *Perilous Partners* is disappointing, but not unusually so. These stories have all been told many times before from many points of view. Some 25 years ago I myself was involved with such an effort. I was co-editor of and an author in FPRI's seminal study of *Friendly Tyrants*. That volume (actually there were two, including a compendium to the case study volume called *The Devil and Uncle Sam*) raised the same issues one finds in *Perilous Partners* and engaged with many of the same cases.[2] Carpenter and Innocent cite *Friendly Tyrants* several times. But the case studies in *Friendly Tyrants*, each one written by a different expert in their zones of specialization, more resembled the late Clifford Geertz's notion of a "thick description" in anthropology in that the chronologies were reasonably detailed and inclusive. The parallel discussion in *Perilous Partners* is generally more loosely drawn, but not in all cases: The material about Pakistan, for example, is especially finely drawn. This style comes in part because *Perilous Partners* is co-authored by only two individuals who cannot possibly be deeply expert in so many cases.

The result is that it often becomes difficult for a reader to imagine how decision makers at the time perceived the problems and understood their options. Carpenter and Innocent also rely mainly on secondary sources and an occasional dip into the FRUS, having uncovered or used no new archival material. That is certainly no sin in a book that both covers so much historical ground yet aims to make a general argument. But a contribution to scholarship, then, it really is not.

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[1] "Foreign Policy Immaculately Conceived," *Policy Review*, #120 (August & September 2003).

[2] Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle, editors, *Friendly Tyrants: An American Dilemma* (London & New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's, 1991), and Adam Garfinkle *et al.*, *The Devil and Uncle Sam: A User's Guide to the Friendly Tyrants Dilemma* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1992). For some reason, Carpenter and Innocent fail to mention the fine edited volume by the late Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *Dealing with Dictators: Dilemmas of U.S. Diplomacy and* Intelligence *Analysis, 1945-1990* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

I say all this despite my sympathy for much of what Carpenter and Innocent are arguing, and I am glad that people who take their point of view are part of the American policy–analysis mix. Did the U.S. government, especially in the early days of the Cold War, exhibit a distended form of callous paranoia in dealing with a number of countries, particularly in Latin America? Of course it did; the Arbenz caper in Guatemala is a noteworthy case in point. But as Navy SEALs are wont to point out, in America "anything worth doing is worth overdoing." (Carpenter and Innocent would probably prefer David Brooks's twist on the same thought: "It is an essential element of the American creed that anything worth doing stupidly is worth doing at great expense.")[3] The Dulles brothers—John Foster at State and Allen at the CIA—were Manichean maniacs, and when Tom Robbins comically savages them in *Fierce Invalids Home from Hot Climates* (2000) I have no trouble at all chuckling along.

Did U.S. leaders allow the personalization of relations with friendly tyrants to cloud their judgment of strategic necessity? Yes, unfortunately.

Did the U.S. government sleepwalk out of the Cold War into a new era without adjusting its relationships with several authoritarian clients? Yes, even more unfortunately—but it's not true, *contra* Carpenter and Innocent, that the "betrayal" of Hosni Mubarak was a bright exception to the rule. Mubarak fell because his fellow generals had surmised that he had passed his sell-by date; nothing U.S. policy did could have had more than a second-tier influence after that. The U.S. government could perhaps have acted sooner in order to head off or ameliorate the chaos that struck Egypt in 2011; I argued exactly that when I was in government half a dozen years before. But then as later there were no good and reliable ways to ensure that what might follow Mubarak would be better for the Egyptian people or for U.S. interests.

I certainly agree with them and just about everyone else who thinks about the subject that a U.S. Cold War-era policy of unvarnished *realpolitik* would have been disastrous even had it been possible. If the U.S. government had treated every foreign country the way it had treated Nicaragua and Haiti over the years, it would never have been able to create the "empire by invitation" that was the *sine qua non* of victory in that struggle. Carpenter and Innocent disparage the hypocrisy of double standards that erupts from the gap between the virtues we espouse and the way we sometimes act. I celebrate it as la Rochefocauld's famous "homage that vice pays to virtue" because it is necessary to an effective balance between aspiration and exasperation that just comes with the territory of great-power foreign policy practice.

I even agree with Carpenter and Innocent that, since the end of the Cold War and even in a few cases before, U.S. administrations have used force too often and in the wrong ways. I opposed the 1983 Grenada operation, the 1989 operation in Panama, and the 2004 intervention in Haiti. I opposed the U.S. use of force in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, as they ought properly to be called, in the mid-1990s. I opposed starting a war in Libya in 2011. And I opposed bombing ISIS starting in September 2014 in the absence of a genuine strategy. In practical case-by-case situations, Carpenter, Innocent, and I would probably get along reasonably well. But try to have a more abstract conversation and we would end up wanting to throttle each other.

Let me close with a personal story that circles back to the arguments surrounding Carpenter and Innocent's quarrel with Bob Kagan.

It amazed and dismayed me to find within the upper echelons of the George W. Bush Administration the same guilt-strewn moralist argument leftists used to make about U.S. associations with friendly tyrants. But there it was. The "forward strategy for freedom," what Tom Wolfe wryly described as the globalization of the Monroe Doctrine, was based in part on self-induced guilt. The President said at one point, "For sixty years we have sacrificed freedom for stability in the Middle East and gotten neither." Now, Carpenter and Innocent would interpret that statement to suggest that we should stop propping up tyrants and that whatever would follow them if they fell could not be worse, at least for us in avoiding "blowback." They speak the very same language; for example: "The U.S.-Saudi Cold War alliance sacrificed America's commitment to liberalism

[3] Brooks, "Inspired Immaturity," *The Atlantic*, March 2002, p. 22.

for the sake of security and undermined both." But that's not at all how President Bush understood the implications of his own statement. He believed that we should intervene more, not less, but on the side of democracy promotion.

When Colin Powell was Bush's Secretary of State, no such statement was going to appear in any major speech. He did not share a view that implied that, somehow, had we not done what we did in the region after the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947; everything would have been democratic and just fine. It was never in U.S. power then any more than it is now to conjure up democracy where there is no precedent or any historical premises for it. And we *did* achieve stability through U.S. policy in the Middle East during the Cold War. We made mistakes along the way, yes, but the main goals of the policy—keep the Soviets out, Israel safe, and the oil flowing—were in fact achieved.

When Condoleezza Rice became Secretary of State in early 2005, and inherited me as her principal speechwriter, she was channeling the President. In advance of her third major speech as Secretary, to be delivered in Cairo, she made it clear that she wanted that speech to repeat the statement: "For sixty years we have sacrificed freedom for stability in the Middle East and gotten neither." And when she delivered the speech in June it did contain that statement, but not by my hand. I did not stay to help write it; I just couldn't, because it wasn't true.

U.S. support for non-democratic allies in the Middle East was the right thing to do as a lesser evil during the Cold War, and it succeeded in protecting U.S. and Western interests. Most imaginable alternatives to those regimes at the time would have been worse for the people of those countries and worse for U.S. and Western interests—so in this case and in most others, too, the core Carpenter-Innocent thesis, in my view, fails. But so does the view that more and earlier interventions of a different kind would have made a major positive difference in this part of the world. Again, it was never in the power of successive U.S. administrations to pull a magical democratic rabbit out of a Muslim-Arab Middle Eastern hat, and trying too hard could only have come to grief, just as it did in the Iraq nation-building fiasco after March 2003.

It really does come down to a matter of temperament. I take to heart Isaiah Berlin's understanding of the originality of Machiavelli.[4] Americans tend to be monadic moral creatures, seeing no difference between the imperatives of right and wrong in relations among citizens within civil society and relations among states; we Americans really are, as Chesterton said, "a nation with the soul of a church." Carpenter and Innocent are by that measure more American than I am. I nevertheless stand with Walter Lippmann—not the youth who drafted Wilson's Fourteen Points but the seasoned and wiser man who wrote: "It is a disease of the soul to fall in love with impossible things."

Allow me to reference a work of fiction to make a concluding point. Moralists of both Left and Right at least implicitly assume, *contra* Kennan, that there is only one universal standard for judging rectitude in governance, and that American policymakers thus can, and should, reckon universally by that single standard. We think we know the difference between right and wrong in these matters without having to ponder much about them; we take our natural law by intuition, so to speak. But surprises lurk, and they come to our attention most readily in our reading of history. Consider in this regard a description embedded in a letter written in Canton by a fictional Bengali about some fictional Chinese and British policymakers around the time of the First Opium War:

> … [The] Yum-chai's chief failing is that he places too much faith in reason. He thinks that if only ordinary Englishmen could grasp the reasoning behind his policy there would be no dispute. In his heart he doesn't believe that any sensible group of men would go to war for something like opium … [H]e now thinks that his best hopes lie in reaching out to ordinary Englishmen. He has lost faith in Captain Elliot and other British officials, he thinks they are corrupt, self-seeking officials who are deceiving the people they are meant to serve.

[4] See Berlin's majestic essay, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York: Viking, 1979).

> I suspect he believes that ordinary Englishmen . . . can petition their government, as people do in China. He doesn't understand that it isn't the same in England; these men cannot petition their government or do anything to affect official policy.
>
> I suppose everyone finds the despotisms of other peoples hard to comprehend.[5]

Now there, perhaps, is something to ponder.

[5] Amitav Ghosh, *Flood of Fire* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015), p. 220.

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