

DeVane Lecture Discussion #13 – April 19, 2001

Good afternoon and welcome. I am here this afternoon with John Gaddis, the Robert A. Lovett Professor of History at Yale, to discuss some of the themes of Professor Gaddis's fascinating lecture on Tuesday, "Democracy and Foreign Policy." John, in your lecture, you left us with the sensation at the end, I think, that by the skin of our teeth, through the most extraordinary combination of circumstances -- which might very well have been otherwise -- we have washed up on this democratic shore to find ourselves in a world that is filled up with countries that subscribe—at least in the abstract, and many in the concrete—to the principles of democratic government. I was left wondering as I walked out of Battell after the lecture. Granted that it's a fortuitous path that's brought us here, filled with accidents of an unpredictable kind; but here, we've arrived. How confident should we be that the relatively happy situation we find ourselves in is a stable and durable one that we can count on lasting? What are the forces that we should worry about? Concretely, there's China, which is hardly a democratic country yet, and there's Russia, which is only tenuously so, and in danger of sliding back into a less than benign form of authoritarianism. Maybe we're just on the razor's edge and about to slip back into a period where democracy recedes and authoritarianism gains the upper hand again. How would you advise us?

JG Well, I don't think we're on the razor's edge. I think that we're in the fortunate position of democracy, now, being widely and deeply rooted and so, therefore, fairly robust. But, at the same time, I don't think we should be too confident about its future. It seems to me that the path of prudence is precisely to ask the kind of question that you are asking: what are the things that could go wrong? I guess the message that I was trying to end with on Tuesday is, take nothing for granted and don't assume that this was an inevitable process, and don't assume that it is a process that is automatically going to continue in the future. And what are the things that could go wrong? Some of the things that could go wrong are the kinds of things that did go wrong in the period of the early 20th century. We had democracies that died, or we had countries that were on the path of democracy that, instead, had the path of totalitarianism forced on them in the early part of this century. And it does seem to me that we can learn something from going back and looking at those experiences. One thing, obviously—perhaps, the single most dangerous thing—is the danger of a worldwide economic crash which would, it seems to me, make democratic institutions almost as tenuous as in fact they were in the period of the last great economic crash. So this could be a problem. A great ecological or epidemiological crisis that confronts us all with something unexpected, whether it be disease or whatever it might be -- the outbreak of something unexpected that could tax the powers of government would surely strain the processes of democracy. One can come up with disaster scenarios, of course, right and left. And a lot of it is science fiction. But I do think, having your antennae out for these kinds of things is certainly worth doing.

Just one other thought, Tony, that I was trying to suggest in the lecture on Tuesday. That is, in a couple of ways, the processes leading to democracy -- this Wilsonian vision that I was talking about -- could be its own worst enemy. I was trying to bring in Isaiah Berlin at the end of the talk. I think it is possible to argue that too much economic integration could wind up subverting democracy in the sense that it could generate a backlash against the processes of globalization. It could certainly weaken structures of government which are required, indeed, for

democratic institutions. And it seems to me that too much self determination could strain the processes of democracy. We've got about 200 independent states now. If we had 2000 independent states—say, 20 years from now or 30 years from now—would that be a more peaceful world and would that peace encourage democracy? I'm not convinced that it would. And the point that I was trying to make in invoking Berlin is simply that, to assume that democracy proceeds from any one of these things automatically is probably a mistake. It is a combination of circumstances. And there are circumstances in which too much of any one of the things that brought us to this point could actually push us over the edge that you're talking about.

AK The processes that you've just described point in different ways, or nearly in opposite ways, to the collapse of the system of nation states as we now know it. Is the fate of democracy as a form of political organization tied to the fate of the nation states?

JG That's a very provocative question. I don't know the answer to that. I'm not sure anybody knows the answer to that. One thing that I think the Cold War is going to be remembered for, when we project out, perhaps, three to four hundred years, is that it may well have represented the apogee—the high point—of the authority of the nation state itself, which is only about 500 years old. It may well have peaked at the period of, say, World War II and the early Cold War period. I think it's ironic that these very processes that are driving democratization—economic integration and political self determination—are, at the same time, eroding the authority of states—traditional state authority as we know it -- partly through the processes of globalization that we're all familiar with, but also through the pressure for secession that we see in so many multi-ethnic societies. So what happens if, indeed, the next century sees a significant decline of state authority? Are there other sustaining mechanisms for democracy? Does democracy depend on a certain maintenance of state authority? I don't think we know the answers to those questions. These are untested propositions. But I do think these are ways we're going. These are trends toward which we're tending, it seems to me.

AK To shift back for a moment, from the grand to the more particular: in your lecture on Tuesday, you emphasized the importance of the American decision to economically restore and then democratize our vanquished enemies at the end of the Second World War—Japan and Germany—and you describe that as a decisive decision which had consequences that really proved immense -- maybe, in the end, fundamental -- for the eventual resolution of the Cold War. And to underscore the point, you played a scenario for a world with one counterfactual adjustment in it. And I'd like to come back to that counterfactual for a moment and pose a skeptical question to the thesis you were advancing. Let's suppose, as you suggested, that we had followed the Morgenthau Plan and let Japan and Germany really have it after the war, and as a result, they had, through a series of predictable political steps, come into the communist camp so that, by 1947 or 1948, they're to be included, along with the Soviet Union, among the communist countries, and then, a year later, comes China. Well, that's a pretty bleak picture, but if one is confident in two propositions, as a theoretical matter, there's still room for hope. Proposition #1, that in the long run free markets do better than managed economies and we would have, at the end of the day—it might be a very long day—a degree of material prosperity to show for ourselves that the Soviets and their communist allies couldn't match, and they would be bound to imitate us, perhaps in small ways at first and then in larger ways, and their economies would gradually move to a mixed regime and then something really closely

approximating ours. Proposition #2: as their economies move in that direction, their politics would move in our direction, too. A free economy brings free politics in its train. Again, perhaps it's a long train, but the process is, if not quite inevitable and resistless and perfectly determined, it's about as sure a thing as one can find of large tectonic processes in the history of the world. So, yes, we might have lost Japan and Germany for the time being. It would have been, perhaps, another 50-100 years, but we'd have arrived eventually at the point we're at now, happily, after only 50.

JG I think I have two answers to your two questions on this. And I would just preface it by saying that the long run could have been very difficult. We are all dead in the long run, and of course, many of us would have been under that scenario. So it is not a particularly optimistic scenario. But let me just pick up your premise and suggest a couple of possibilities. First of all, the proposition that command economies can't work is based on a fairly limited historical case study. It's actually based on putting Russians in charge of a command economy. If you were designing a command economy from scratch and you decided you really wanted to make it work, would you put Russians in charge of it? I think the kind of people that I might put in charge of it would be Germans and Japanese. And so we don't know what a German and Japanese command economy would have looked like. It might have looked very different from the one that the Russians actually ran. So that's one answer, I think, to the question. The other answer has to do with the assumption that we all tend to make, that market economies do lead to democracy, and yet, right in front of us is a glaring exception to this, which is called China. China has had a thriving market economy now for about 15 years. There's no particular indication that they are on the verge of becoming democratic and there are people who think that they are going in the other direction. So the proposition that marketization automatically leads to democratization does require overlooking China, which is a rather big thing to overlook. So these would be my two concerns about this proposition.

AK Let me open the discussion at this point and invite those in the audience who would like to join us in the conversational circle to please do so.

Q I was wondering . . . At the end of your lecture, you talked about the Kyoto Protocol and Bush's rejection of that. . . I was wondering if you would like to expound upon that issue and how that's going to play out in the international . . .

JG Well, I just referred to this briefly, and I was referring to it in the context of the need for a certain humility in the conduct of American foreign policy. And I was trying to make the point that, during the Cold War, looking back on that experience now, it seems to me that we, indeed, did show a remarkable amount of, if not humility, certainly sensitivity to the views of others. And I was trying to make the suggestion that, both in the Clinton and in the first days of the Bush administration, we seem to have lost some of that. I was citing two examples, really, from the first days of the Bush administration. One was the rather brutal rejection of the South Korean efforts to negotiate with the North Koreans, and the rather equally brutal public rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, as indicating a kind of contempt for the opinions of others. What this actually amounts to and whether what we see here is considered policy on the part of the new administration, or not, I think remains to be seen. Most of the experts that I have read on this do suggest that the Kyoto Protocol has all kinds of difficulties with it. This probably is not the best

way to go, which does raise interesting questions about why the previous administration negotiated this but then did not make any effort to secure its approval or to secure its modification. So it may well be that it was certainly in the cards that the new administration was going to go in another direction. I think that's probably true and I think it's probably wise. What I think was unwise was to do it in the way that it was done, so that you wind up with the kinds of headlines that we were seeing in England a couple of weeks ago. It was a rather unflattering picture of George W. Bush leaning leeringly over the podium and a headline in the *Independent*, which is one of the most sober and responsible newspapers in England: "The World's Number One Polluter." So I think that my objection here is to the way it was done, not necessarily to the policy considerations that lie behind this. And I wonder if we would have handled it the same way if we still had the Russians out there as competitors. It seems to me that one thing that was good about the Cold War, one thing that was good about having a competitor is that it did force us to be a little more sensitive about how we were going to come across to others. And I think we might have thought twice before making a pronouncement like that if the Russians had been out there, and it would be quite obvious to what extent the Russians would exploit this gaffe, if in fact it were made. And I fear that, in the absence of that competition, sometimes we find ourselves making statements that are ill-considered or not particularly calculated to win us friends abroad. And the effect of that is to generate, it seems to me, unnecessary resistance to things that may still make sense to try to do.

Q Professor Gaddis, in answering the implicit Wilsonian question of how we would make the world safe for democracy, your lecture focused primarily on foreign policy, suggesting that our ability to foment democracy abroad depended on our ability to engage with other countries through military and political and economic means. There's another suggestion that I think was prevalent in our country for at least its first hundred or so years—that our ability to foment democracy abroad depended on our domestic policy. Abraham Lincoln, for example, defined the American democratic experience as an experiment that would prove to other countries that democracy could work and that, if slavery imperiled that experiment, it would give the enemies of democracy fodder to think that it wouldn't. And although you dismiss a kind of exemplar theory of democratic spread at the beginning of your lecture, it seems like there's concern about the relationship between domestic and foreign democratic policy that has at least persisted into the 20th century: the speech by Martin Luther King that we read this week that worried that sending black soldiers abroad to guarantee democratic liberties for Vietnamese was hypocritical, given the fact they were denied those liberties at home. So I was wondering if you could reflect a little bit on whether or not our ability to insure democracy abroad depended at all or was affected by the way in which we granted democracy to our citizens at home.

JG Sure, Daniel, of course it did. And there are all kinds of examples that you could cite in support of that proposition. The whole Civil Rights movement is a very good example and one of the reasons that the Civil Rights movement got going when it did and met the response that it did from federal authorities was the fact that there was a Cold War going on and the fact that the inequities which we had considered quite normal and had not done much about in the pre-Cold War years were going to harm us abroad sufficiently badly that something had to be done. So doing the right thing at home, in part—not totally—but in part, I think, reflected the existence of the Cold War abroad and that's one of the interconnections between domestic and foreign policy. I think there's another one that's out there right now which is interesting and which kind of plays

in another direction and that is that the nature of our society, and particularly the culture that has developed and particularly the attractiveness of our higher educational institutions, is such that this is an extraordinarily powerful magnet out there in the world—not because the State Department or the U.S. Information Agency necessarily set out to make it so, but simply because of the way the society has evolved. And so you wind up with this kind of paradox that we see all the time. We saw it with the Iranian Hostage Crisis, where the hostage takers had taken the hostages, but then were talking about trying to get into Harvard or Yale the next year. We saw it with the people who were arriving out in front of the embassy in Beijing, still talking about wanting to come to the United States to study. That is an extraordinary asset for us and whereas our treatment of minorities is a liability for us in the world, there are a lot of other ways in which our domestic institutions are assets for us, it seems to me, in the world. So it works in both ways. But we are, in the old sense, a city on the hill in the sense that our domestic institutions are so visible and so transparent to the rest of the world that the good and the bad gets transmitted out there and it immediately becomes a foreign policy issue. So for these reasons I've always been fairly impatient with the distinction that we academics tend to make rather arbitrarily between domestic and foreign policy and between domestic and diplomatic history.

AK And sometimes the causal relationship runs in the other direction—positions that we take in our foreign policy become the touchstone by which we measure our achievement. I'm thinking, in particular, of the way in which the vocabulary of human rights, which became part of the currency and idiom of our foreign policy in the years following the Second World War, was picked up and made very effective use of by the Civil Rights leadership in the United States.

JG Let me just reflect on one other way in which it seems to me that this works, and it does get back to the examples of Germany and Japan that Tony Smith talks about in his book that was on the reading assignment. What is very interesting about those experiences, as I was trying to suggest in the lecture, is that Washington did not order the democratization of Germany and Japan. This was an initiative which came from the two generals who were running those occupations—Clay and MacArthur. Anybody who knew those two men would not have necessarily thought of them as raving democrats. They actually were rather conservative within the context of American domestic politics, or in the case of MacArthur, perhaps, even worse. And so the question is, how can one resolve the paradox of the fact that you actually have American autocrats in charge of these two countries who chose to turn them into democracies. It's a fascinating question that Tony Smith probably has come closer to answering than anybody else. I think the answer really hinges on going back to domestic institutions and domestic cultures. And it really revolves around this: what do you do if you suddenly and unexpectedly find yourself in charge of a country and you're not expected to be—you kind of fall back on your own domestic institutions. And without really even thinking about it, almost as a matter of instinct, it seems to me, Clay and MacArthur decided that this was the right thing to do. Its domestic culture and domestic institutions projected upon those countries through the authoritarian means of military occupation. What's fascinating is to contrast this with what the Russians did in their part of Germany—in the Eastern part of Germany which they occupied. They did the same thing. They imprinted their own society, their own domestic institutions onto East Germany. But because those institutions, of course, were very different from ours, you wound up with two very different Germanys. And it seems to me that much of the history of the Cold War is reflected in just that fact—the division of Germany, the fact that those two very

different cultures are imposed on the same country. And I think the ultimate outcome—what happened in Germany—very much reflects that history.

AK Would it be fair to say that the American program of democratization in Germany, which was, as you say, the transplantation of American institutions to a foreign setting, worked because certain fundamental building blocks of democracy were already there and could be taken advantage of? For example, the rule of law, system of courts and a tradition of law-abidingness and so on and so forth, in contrast to Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union where we attempted, perhaps half-heartedly and certainly with fewer dollars, to transplant some pieces of our American . . . but with little or no success because the elemental foundation stones were missing.

JG But I think there's a problem with that—a couple of problems with that. Presumably, these German institutions, the rule of law—they would have applied in both halves of Germany. That heritage was there, and yet the two halves went very differently. And secondly, it seems to me that this is rather to glide over the experience of Germany between 1933 and 1945 when those rules of law atrophied or were perverted. One of the really most depressing things, I think, about the history of the 20th century is the extent to which recent research is indicating how popular Hitler continued to be with the German people. We've always known that he came to power by constitutional means. We've always known that he was popular in the period before the war started. But the recent research indicates that that popularity continued for really quite a long time. Hitler might very well have been able to win democratic elections in Germany up to about 1943 or so. So whatever rule of law and whatever democratic institutions had been there in Germany in the pre-Hitler period had been pretty badly wiped out, it seems to me, by that point. So it really is almost a matter of starting over again in that country.

Q I have a question about what I call the “steamroller policy,” the self-proclaimed aim of America to instill democracy in every country in the world and the reluctance to accept any other regimes. Basically, nothing is safe from democracy. And what's your vision of the future? Do you see America cooperating or getting along with countries that have political systems other than democracy, or do you see us forcing everyone to adopt it?

JG First of all, I would challenge, I guess, the premise of your question because I don't think it is American policy to impose democracy everywhere. Our rhetoric, sometimes, may suggest that that's our policy, but if you look at what we actually do, the record is much more spotty. I tried to suggest some of the spottiness of the record in what I said in the lecture. I talked about our utter failure to promote democracy in places like Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World at a time when we were making a major effort to do it in Europe during the Cold War. Surely, it is not our goal now to commit resources in a major way to the promotion of democracy throughout the world. The rhetorical goal is there but you do not see vast economic resources being mobilized in support of this proposition. You do not see large military establishments being recruited in pursuit of this cause. You do not see the United States willing to take casualties in defense of this cause. You do not see the United States willing to take casualties in defense of any cause, really, these days. So I would, first of all and fundamentally, question the premise of your question in that regard. I think as a matter of practicality, yes indeed, we have got along with non-democratic countries and we do get along with non-democratic countries.

We do not make democratization really the standard of whether we are able to deal or not deal with a particular country and, once again, China is obviously the best example, but you could name any number of other countries out there as well, for whom that is the case. But, having said that, I would still come back to the proposition that I was trying to suggest in the lecture. Even with these reservations and qualifications, the net effect of the American role in the world over the entire 20th century has been one of giving a very substantial and significant boost to democracy in the world through the mechanisms that I was talking about.

Q It seems like one of the prerequisites for maintaining an authoritarian regime or a communist regime has been control over information, especially the media. It's obvious in China and also it seemed to be in the Soviet Union. In your lecture, you talked a little bit about the development of the Internet and other information technologies as a means to combat some of the potential threats from living in a world where democracy wasn't universal or democracy wasn't in the majority, and dealing with command and control systems for the military. As that technology has become commercialized and more widely available, some of those same technologies seem to be fighting the battle against authoritarian regimes by spreading information. Could you comment on that a little bit and to what an extent an authoritarian or a communist regime depends on control over information?

JG I think this is another one that we have to be careful about. I think the process that you describe is, indeed, certainly happening and is tending to work in this way—that the information revolution does, these days, for the most part, benefit democracy. But I did try to make a point in the lecture of talking about another information revolution—the one at the end of the 19th century, the development of mass communication technology, which played both ways; which actually encouraged democratization, but under certain circumstances encouraged authoritarianism as well, or provided a mechanism by which authoritarian leaders like Stalin and Hitler were able to consolidate their authority. So for us to say, today, that the Internet always is going to be a force for democratization, I think underestimates the potential imaginativeness of those who might want to find ways to use it for other purposes. It's not too hard to conceive of how this could happen. We already see terrorist groups, criminal groups, using the Internet in ways that we find it very difficult to keep track of or to stay ahead of. China, of course, is admitting the internet into Chinese society but it's not clear yet to me just what the effect of this is going to be. I think to say that democracy depends on the Internet is another one of these single cause explanations that I was trying to warn against. And it seems to me one has to factor in politics, one has to factor in history, one has to factor in culture. It may well work that way in our culture, but our culture is not the culture of everybody else out there and I can see how other cultures could use the technology in ways that might produce very different results. So, again, I would just be careful about that. So far, I think it's worked the way that you suggested. I hope it continues to work that way. But again, as I was saying, don't bet your top hat on it.

Q I would like to challenge and question what I took to be the premise of your lecture, that the Cold War represents a struggle between authoritarian and democratic regimes. I sort of got curious about these funny names of all these communist, undemocratic regimes—the People's Republic of China, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. And then other rhetoric of democracy which was in the speeches and in the names that they gave their armies and their institutions. That seemed curious to me, so I went back and started researching this in the

Marxist tradition and found that the commitment, the public commitment to democracy, took two forms. Some were for a communist democracy but not a parliamentary democracy preceding communism. Others were for a parliamentary democracy. But two forms or not, the commitment to democracy ran from Marx all the way through Mao—at least, the public commitment. And so that made me think this: their commitment to democracy was of the Rousseauian type, the sort of general will. Their analysis of their countries vs. our countries—I don't know this for a fact; I suspect—would have been that they were democratic and we weren't insofar as they were freeing people from the material conditions which made them unfree, and thus were being democratic, and we were still tied to the material conditions which bound us. So I can see two conclusions flowing from this. One is, you can say that democracy had already won the day long before the Cold War. It won the day when the world became a struggle between Rousseau and Locke, and on that level, perhaps, it only won intellectually and rhetorically. But if you give any credence to the analysis of the material situation and its effect on our minds that the communists erected, then you might also say that this was really not a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, but between two forms of democracy—one founded on private property and the other not so founded on private property, so that the struggle shouldn't be read as Wilson vs. Stalin, but Locke vs. Rousseau.

JG Well, it's a provocative argument, as I'm used to from you, Josh. I was trying to deal with it, at least briefly, in what I said in the lecture. Because I did make the point that both Marx and Lenin had, as you suggested, claimed that their objective was democracy, that the very idea of a classless society is, indeed, a democratic ideal—or was in their formulation. But what I was trying to suggest is that, for them, it was a distant promise and authoritarian, undemocratic means were to be used to get there. The whole idea of a dictatorship of a proletariat is the use of undemocratic means to try to reach a democratic end. And, of course, then that creates the classical philosophical problem of the means corrupting the end. And I was trying to suggest that the genius of Wilson was to understand or to demonstrate that you need not proceed in this fashion, that democratic means could be employed to achieve democratic ends. But I was also trying to suggest that, in his own way, Wilson was the greater materialist because he understood that economic progress, that progress toward prosperity has got to proceed in tandem with the progress toward democracy. And it seems to me this is the great failing of the Marxist/Leninist systems because they did not provide for prosperity. They said prosperity will come in the distant future, but for the moment, we've got to have an authoritarian state and for the moment, we've got to sacrifice and everything has got to be committed to that state. And, in the end, that is, I think, largely what undermined those states: the failure to provide precisely the material comforts and the material benefits that had been promised over so many years. Their massive credibility gap opened up as a result of this. So I would flip it around and say that it was Wilson who was the greater realist, it was Wilson who was the greater materialist in seeing the need to link these two processes, and that it was Marx and Lenin who were the utopians, the idealists, the impracticals in this situation. Does that help?

Q Yeah, it does, but could I follow up a bit? And yet, intellectually at least, democracy, in the names and in the rhetoric, in the public performance of ideology, democracy had already won the day when the Cold War started. It was a question of the analysis of situations or what democracy meant and what it took to lead to it. But I guess I would want to challenge your

thesis on the idea that this was intellectually authoritarianism vs. democracy. Intellectually, it was democracy vs. democracy.

JG Well, it was democracy vs. another concept of democracy. But what strikes me is that, when you refer, for example, to the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea, the government that Kim Il Sung created, or to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or all of the people's democracies out there, this really is a corruption of what we would normally understand democracy to mean. And that is precisely the basis for George Orwell's writing about the corruption of language. Because it was precisely these examples that he had in mind. So it does not overly impress me that these countries called themselves democracies. I think our role, as serious analysts, is to look at what that actually meant in practice in those countries. And, of course, what it meant in practice was just the opposite. So one can see it purely in terms of language detached from significance. Yes, one can see democracy as having prevailed everywhere in the period of the early Cold War. But if one attaches significance to language, if one attaches meaning to words, then it seems to me one cannot sustain the argument.

AK Could I add this thought? Certainly, viewed from a sufficient distance, the disagreement between Soviet style communism on the one hand and western style democracy on the other is a family quarrel within the Enlightenment tradition. There is a shared subscription to certain very basic values which were not shared by the fascist and truly anti-Enlightenment authoritarian enemies of the allies in the Second World War. Germany was a reactionary power in the sense that, at the most fundamental level, it turned its back against the ideals of the Enlightenment, however you construe them, and similarly in the case of Japan. What is the difference? What is the family quarrel? Well, one way—I'm not sure this is the best way, but one way -- of characterizing it would be this: there is a shared commitment to the principle of self determination. That itself is a modern value, an Enlightenment value. But the Soviets and their communist allies located the crucial, relevant processes of self determination at the societal and historical level. They said: the world spirit and its various incarnations in modes of production sequenced over the course of human history is working itself through a process of free self determination to the end of whatever. The western democrats, as John has been characterizing them and as I think I would, locate the decisive moment and expression and power of self determination at the level of the individual and not of the aggregate formation to which the individual belongs. Of course, if you locate it at the level of the aggregate, then you'll be prepared to sacrifice lots and lots of individuals for the sake of the principle of self determination, which is to be realized at the collective level. But I think it's also worth realizing that, even though he didn't use the term, almost surely Hitler thought of his own state as a people's democracy, and he had some reason for that—I mean, the level of popular support that he was able to generate over a long period of time was such that one could, again, from his point of view, probably make that argument. So it seems to me that this, then, revolves back around this question of, what is the precise meaning that you attach to words? And that's my concern, is that we not lose touch with that connection.

Q If I can just toss out a thought as I retreat to my seat: it's this mystery that is so provocative and worrisome for me, that you have three 20th century readings of democracy, and two of them were bad, and one was good—at least in my opinion. And that's a mysterious thing about political philosophy. You sort of generate these houses of values, but whether they're

good houses or not depends on how people live in them. And I've become skeptical of political philosophy. I've started to question whether specifying your values brings you any closer to good states of affairs.

JG I think it is a pretty simple question of linking your values to what you actually do, and that's where the rubber meets the road.

Q This question is on the subject of American political rhetoric that we were discussing before. One thing I've been thinking a lot about since your lecture on Tuesday is, I guess, what I would call a bifurcated attitude toward U.S. foreign policy. On the one hand, we have American political leaders like Clinton and Bush who, regardless of what they actually do, have this very . . . You know that they're not at all humble in their political dealings with foreign leaders and in their attitude toward what he mentioned as promoting democratization around the world. But then, on the other hand, we have the majority of the American public which, I would say, is either apathetic or vehemently opposed to U.S. foreign policy and its high level of rigor, whether it's military intervention or even economic policies. So, I guess, my two questions are, can you make sense of this division? And do you think it undermines the way our own democratic values in America are perceived around the world?

JG I think I can make sense of it in at least one way in just citing classic public opinion studies going all the way back to, probably, Gabriel Almond, if not further back than that, that the proportion of the public that actually pays attention to significant public issues, particularly to foreign policy issues, has always been small. And this was true even at the height of the Cold War, even in the deepest crises of the Cold War—the so-called attentive public for foreign policy issues was running, maybe, 20-30% or something like that in the opinion polls. That might shoot up in something like the week of the Cuban Missile Crisis. But in terms of sustained levels of attention, this has never been particularly high in this country. How that would compare with other democracies, I don't know, but there's nothing particularly new, I think, about this phenomenon. At the same time, I would surely accept the premise that since the Cold War ended, probably the level, almost certainly the level of the attentive public for foreign policy has contracted even more, simply because it is not so much out there on the radar screen as a matter of national security as

it has been in the past. But to say that this poses profound problems for our democracy is just another way of raising the larger issue, which I'm sure you've been discussing in this series, which is the number of people who don't vote. Yeah, in a very large way, that does pose a problem for democracy. But the counter-argument is that if more people did vote and they remained as ill-informed as they now are, it would not necessarily make wiser decisions or better democracy. So I'm not sure just how this plays out. The only thing I would say is that it's not a new problem. It is a problem which has somewhat intensified as the tensions themselves of the Cold War have diminished. But does it create problems for us overseas? Only marginally, I think. It is embarrassing when you're overseas and you see what the voter participation level is. But in terms of really significant day-to-day problems for American foreign policy, I don't think it's a major problem.

Q I think my question -- being the subject of this entire course -- couldn't be much more global. I'm wondering what, exactly, you mean, Professor Gaddis, by democracy? In light of

the fact that if we mean universal suffrage or holding elections, well, that seems a rather narrow definition and we could just send Jimmy Carter to developing countries to watch the polling place. But if we mean liberal democracy in the sense that grows out of the English idea of limited government and the rule of law and private property rights, that's certainly much harder to instill and would take much longer, much more effort. Perhaps it would even require a military occupation. So I'm just wondering what you think about it.

JG First of all, in the lecture, I tried to be pretty clear. I was specific because I was relying on the Freedom House statistics. They've got a very precise definition of democracy that means, basically, competitive multi-party elections. It's a fairly narrow standard. My own individual preference, I think, would be more toward the direction of the second definition of democracy that you provided, centering around all of the things that are necessary for people to take responsibility for their own well being, which it seems to me is pretty much at the center of the democratic idea. But, obviously, that is sufficiently vague that it doesn't give you a lot of purchase as a policy objective. It was entirely possible, for example, for the Americans and the West Europeans, in the early days of the Cold War, to have profoundly different ideas on what the relationship between the state and the national economy should be. And I was trying to make the point the other day that one of the things the Marshall Plan actually did was to solidify a social welfare state in Europe—the states that were nationalizing the means of production and all of this—in ways that would never have been acceptable within the context of the United States. And yet democracy was a sufficiently broad tent as to be able to encompass these very different forms of economic organization. I think, historically, we have had a pretty broad definition of it and perhaps that is the best way to go, if one gets down to the point of trying to split hairs about these definitions. It seems to me that is likely to lead in the direction of the kind of perfectionism that Berlin was advising against. Maybe a certain vagueness is actually helpful—in the policy sense—on this issue.

Q I have a follow up to the Golden Arches theory that you effectively demolished on Tuesday. I guess that was that no nation with a McDonald's franchise would ever bomb or go to war against another with a McDonald's franchise, which theory has now been demolished. I've often heard—and I can't attribute this to the source—an analog to this that I guess you could call the ballot box theory, that either no democracy would go to war against another democracy, or if it did happen, that would be a peculiarly unlikely thing to happen. In the course of history, when we look at wars that have actually occurred, they are either between two authoritarian regimes or between, perhaps, an authoritarian regime on the one hand and a democracy on the other. I guess anything can happen in the future, but is there anything structurally about democracies that would give you either some assurance that there would be something to the theory that democracies are unlikely to go to war with other democracies, or on the other hand, would enable you to demolish that theory?

JG Actually, Tom Friedman's Golden Arches theory is a spin-off of the larger democratic peace theory that you're talking about and it's associated with two individuals who are much better qualified to talk about it than I am. One is Michael Doyle at Princeton, the other is Bruce Russett here at Yale. But the basic premise is one based on solid historical evidence missed by historians but picked up by political scientists in this regard. And that is that there has been no point in the past where two democracies have fought each other. This does require a little bit of

fudging of the definition of democracy. It requires, with the War of 1812, portraying Britain as not being a democracy. It requires with 1914 that Germany not be one. There is a striking historical pattern here of democracies not fighting each other even as they often are quite ready to fight with authoritarian states and even as they are often quite ready to indulge in imperial or colonial adventures in Third World areas.

Q You pointed out at the very commencement of your lecture that democracies are really a new thing historically because a hundred years ago we didn't have any democracies. So the fact is that most wars in the past have occurred in the past and until very recently, at a time when there were few or no democracies to go around. So in a future where most nation states, if we can think optimistically, are likely to be democracies, I wonder if that time tested theory would hold and if there's something structurally about democracies that makes that unlikely?

JG Well, again, I would say don't bet your top hat on it. Part of the reason is that the political scientists themselves disagree as to what the reasons are for why democracies have not fought each other and that is at the center of the debate on this issue right now. What exactly are the reasons? One very good place to go for an introduction to the basic arguments on this is Bob Dahl's recent little book on democracy and he's got a good chapter on this that surveys very nicely the reasons, or the hypotheses, for why this does not take place. But I think the concern that I would have with regard to the proposition that you put forward is, as we have more democracies, will we not have more peace or will not peace be even more guaranteed? That is another one of these single cause explanations. In this case, it's a single cause explanation of peace, not of democracy. But I distrust it for a couple of reasons. Because, first of all, as democracy spreads more and more, it means that it is spreading into parts of the world where there are longstanding, chronic, endemic rivalries of one kind or another—ethnic rivalries, whatever these may be. And it seems to me that, the more this happens, the more the chances do exist of some democracy fighting some other democracy. Secondly, it seems to be that, in the Balkans in the 1990s, we came very close to seeing the theory torpedoed because, if you look at what happened with the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of the successor states, one could argue these various successor states—Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia—were created in response to, if not democratic procedure, at least were created in response to popular support. And yet, our bloodiest series of wars in quite a long time happened in that part of the world as a result of that particular break-up that occurred. And if you simply hypothesize the projection of that process that we saw in the Balkans into any number of other places in the world, I could certainly see how there could be wars between democracies. So the most I would be willing to say is simply that it's a very interesting historical pattern that has held up, up to this point. But my friend, Mike Doyle, once admitted to me that he gets up in the morning, every morning, with great fear because he worries about seeing that headline in the *New York Times*, "Two democracies have today gone to war with one another," and down goes the theory, down the tubes. So I would treat this with some skepticism as a prediction for the future, even as there's no question that it's a very interesting historical phenomenon.

Q Professor Gaddis, you talked earlier about how competition sharpens democracy, domestically and foreignly, and I was wondering if you think the converse—the lack of a clear competitor these days is weakening the democratic mission and also if you could touch briefly on if China is our competitor and if you see sort of a rising Cold War dynamic developing there?

JG I was trying to suggest, in the lecture, that the competition that we faced in the Cold War forced us to do the right thing in any number of situations, or at least forced us to do what now, in retrospect, looks to have been the right thing. And I was raising the question, are we going to continue to do that in the absence of competition? That, of course, implies that I have certain preconceptions about what the right thing is and I guess I do. Some sense of international responsibility—well, I don't know that we are giving up on that by any means. International involvement—I don't think we're giving up on that. But something else that I was trying to suggest in the lecture was awfully important during the Cold War and that was, precisely, this willingness to listen to others and to accommodate the interests of others. I am worried that, in the absence of competition, we are giving up on that. And that is the concern that I have—that we have lost the art of listening, which, as I go back and try to figure out what were the things that were most critical to us in winning the Cold War—that ability to listen, that art of listening, I think, was absolutely critical. So there I would say, yes, the loss of competition has had an unfortunate influence in that regard.

AK Towards the end of your lecture on Tuesday, you made several cautionary remarks about pridefulness, obtuseness, inability to recognize or acknowledge one's past mistakes. And you urged a humility, a self-consciousness of failing and shortcoming, and an Isaiah Berlin-esque attention to the multiplicity of values and to their non-congruence in important cases. And all of that seemed to me to be a wonderfully appropriate cautionary note to strike. But it has to be a caution that one feels and acts on in the service of a program of some sort. If you were summoned to the Oval Office and the President said, "Professor Gaddis, tell me the three things that -- I understand that I'm to do them humbly and to listen closely and I will, I promise -- but what are the three things you think it most important for the United States to do in the next four years?"

JG Specifically in the interest of trying to foster or solidify democracy.

AK Yes.

JG I would say a couple of things. First of all, Russia is the one that I would put first on the list because it seems to me that this has been the great failing of our policy in the 1990s. It does seem to me that the possibility of Russia moving toward democracy was, indeed, a very serious possibility at the time the Cold War ended and at the beginning of the 1990s. I don't think the possibility is down the tubes. The possibility is now much more problematic. It is striking to me that we made such a vast effort to instill democracy in our former adversaries after World War II and we have made so little to try and do that or to encourage it with our former adversary in the Cold War. It seems to me that, had we done so, then it seems to me many of the problems that we are likely to face in the first decade of the 21st century—I mean, one thing is the prospect of still a divided Europe—one part of Europe which is democratic and prosperous and the other part of Europe which is not. The possibility of a Russian/Chinese rapprochement, which is already developing as the Russians are selling arms to the Chinese and so on, getting back to something that very much alarmed us during the Cold War but does not seem to alarm us very much today. A series of things, not least of which is the sheer tragedy of what has happened to the Russian people over the last ten years. This is a country in which life expectancy has declined

dramatically. There is no other country in the world—or very few other countries in the world—maybe just Africa, as a result of AIDS—where this is happening to such a vast extent. It may well be that several million—in fact, it surely is certain that several million Russians have died prematurely as a result of the declining health care standards and what’s happened to the economy of that country. How is that going to be assessed 100 years from now? Who is going to be held responsible for that 100 years from now? Are historians going to go back and say that there was—I wouldn’t want to use the word “Holocaust” but let’s say that there was a kind of mass death in Russia in this particular decade and nobody tried to do anything about it, nobody made an effort to do anything about it. It seems to me these are all things that may come back to haunt us as a result of having paid so little attention to Russia during this period. So that really is one big thing that I sense was lacking in the Clinton administration and is still, so far, lacking in the Bush administration. And if it could be demonstrated that democracy could take hold in a country like Russia, then it seems to me that would be just as powerful a demonstration as the similar demonstrations of Germany and Japan were. And it’s so much else, so many other issues that seem big to us today but may seem small in the long sweep of history, like what happens in Kosovo or Chechnya or whatever—many of these issues would fix themselves if, at that center, there was a kind of democratic core that was developing. So this is where I would put, really, a lot of emphasis. I think it’s a pretty fundamental principle of strategy—that your resources are limited. You’ve got to target them in the place where you can be most effective. You can’t spread them all over the place. I would really target, and I think my biggest target would be Russia. China, I think, is a lot more difficult. There’s a lot more inertia, there’s a lot more gravity, there’s a lot more history. The permeability of that society to outside influences, it seems to me, is much less than is the case with Russia. And is China a competitor or a potential partner? Neither. China is going to be China. It’s never going to be like us. It’s never going to follow our model. And I would not invest vast efforts or energies in trying to democratize China. China will go its own way. There may be things that we can do that influence that. But it seems to me that there’s not a great deal we can do from the outside. Russia, I think, is really a fundamentally different proposition, and that sure is where I would put a lot of emphasis.

AK We’re out of time. Professor Gaddis, as many of you, perhaps, know, is on leave from Yale this year, visiting at Oxford as the Eastman Professor, and having you back with us for a few days has just made us all that more anxious to have you back with us for good, come summer and fall. Thank you very much, John.