

The Path Not Taken

In *The Nation* (May 8, 2000), Kai Bird, the author of *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy & William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (1998), contends that those on the left who oppose humanitarian interventionism have forgotten the New Deal's vision of the American role in the world.

Sadly, in our determination to oppose nuclear brinkmanship and other idiocies that marked Washington's foreign policy for 44 years (1945-89), we have forgotten our basic radical principles and the common-sensical path not taken at the end of World War II. Most Americans have no memory of the designs Franklin Roosevelt's New Dealers had for postwar American foreign policy. Human rights, self-determination and an end to European colonization in the developing world, nuclear disarmament, international law, the World Court, the United Nations—these were all ideas of the progressive left. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were initially conceived as vehicles for internationalizing the New Deal.

the mandatory inoculations or left the military to avoid them. Many of the “refuseniks” are experienced pilots, field-grade officers, and combat veterans.

Though it pooh-poohs their complaints, says Bacevich, the Pentagon “has entrusted the manufacture of anthrax vaccine to a single firm of dubious reputation” (BioPort Corporation, of Lansing, Michigan), and Pentagon officials, including qualified medical professionals, privately acknowledge that the efficacy of the vaccine is open to question. It was developed in the 1950s not to protect against inhalation of anthrax spores but rather to safeguard tannery workers who risked contamination through the skin from handling the hides of anthrax-infected animals. “Some of the same Pentagon officials who today insist upon the safety of the anthrax vaccine,” Bacevich observes, “have themselves [in the recent past] suggested a link between the vaccine and Gulf War illness.”

Even if the vaccine does work against anthrax, Bacevich says, terrorists could select from a large array of other potent pathogens, including smallpox, botulism, bubonic plague, and the

Ebola virus. “Indeed, U.S. intelligence agencies believe that Iraq and North Korea are already developing the capability” to use smallpox as a weapon. And why, he asks, would terrorists target U.S. military bases rather than any of the much “softer” and readily available alternatives, such as the New York subway system?

In any event, the “biological Maginot Line” defense is bad strategy, Bacevich avers. The Clinton administration should instead issue a clear threat “to retaliate massively” in response to any biological (or chemical or nuclear) attack by terrorists, not only against the terrorist organizations themselves but against any regime that gives them direct or indirect support.

A “sense of proportion” is needed, Bacevich contends. “Fixating on the problem of fending off a biological calamity—a danger that has existed virtually unnoticed for decades—enables policymakers to avert their eyes” from larger questions, he says, such as the feasibility and costs of fulfilling the administration’s ambitious goal of making the world “peaceful, democratic, and respectful of human rights and free enterprise.”

How Ideas Rule the World

“The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations” by Daniel Philpott, in *World Politics* (Jan. 2000), Bendheim Hall, Princeton Univ., Princeton, N.J. 08544.

The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the era of religious wars in Europe and brought into being the modern system of sov-

ereign territorial states. More than 350 years later, argues Philpott, a political scientist at the University of California, Santa



The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, said one scholar 300 years later, was “the majestic portal which leads from the old world into the new world.”

Barbara, the treaty remains relevant in a way that is not widely appreciated: It shows the momentous influence that ideas—in this case, religious ideas—can have in international affairs.

Though most political scientists maintain that the Westphalian system emerged as a result of the states’ gradual accumulation of armed might, wealth, and other forms of power, Philpott contends that the Protestant Reformation was “a central cause.”

Without the Reformation, he says, medieval impediments to a system of sovereign states would have remained: “the substantive powers of the Holy Roman Empire and its emperor, the formidable temporal powers of the church, religious uniformity, truncations of the sovereign powers of secular rulers, [and] Spain’s control of the Netherlands.” Protestantism, Philpott writes, “challenged all temporal powers of the church and the empire,” the latter of which was born by papal decree under Charlemagne in the ninth century and reached its fullest extent over much of Christian Europe during the 13th century.

Only where a strong clash between Protestants and Catholics over the political order took place, Philpott says, did an interest in the Westphalian notion of sovereign statehood develop. The German Protestant states and the northern provinces of the Netherlands, which were partly independent “protostates,” wanted full indepen-

dence. Already-independent France (which kept its Catholic monarchy but, after a civil war, opted for religious toleration) and independent Sweden wanted sovereign statehood for the rest of Europe. England and Denmark lent diplomatic support to the anti-imperial powers. But “none of the Catholic polities, the Catholic German principalities, Spain, Italy, or

Poland, developed any interest at all in a system of sovereign states,” notes Philpott. “They remained allies” of the Holy Roman Empire.

The case of Spain, early modern Europe’s strongest state, presents, Philpott believes, an especially damning argument against the conventional view that the impetus for modern statehood grew solely from polities’ rising material power. “Like other European states, Spain gained strength in the 15th century, unifying its territory and experiencing, by some measures, the earliest and most rapid growth of any contemporary European state. It expanded its military . . . to 150,000 [troops] in the 1550s (three times that of France), established an overseas empire that fed it hordes of silver and gold, and enlarged its treasury and royal bureaucracy. Yet the Spanish colossus never sought or fought for a Westphalian system of states and was indeed its arch-opponent, regarding it as heresy.”

If ideas—not just material forces—played a crucial role in the emergence of sovereign territorial states nearly four centuries ago, Philpott concludes, then other ideas may have a similar importance today. Ironically, he points out, ideas about human rights and democracy, and about federalism, now are encouraging movement *away* from sovereignty, in such “contemporary trends . . . as internationally sanctioned intervention and the expansion of the European Union.”