

17. Liberal Internationalism and Intervention:

An Early Transatlantic Dialogue between Thomas Paine and Immanuel Kant

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Many commentators look to recent disagreements between the United States and Europe over intervention in Iraq as a new low in transatlantic relations. Robert Kagan's analysis may be the most polemical in this respect.¹ Drawing some of his rhetoric from pop psychology, Kagan charged that *Americans are from Mars* due to their willingness to engage in war while the *Europeans are from Venus* because of their reluctance to do so. For Kagan, the increasingly divergent views on the efficacy of military force have severely undermined transatlantic unity. This divergence may have culminated during the debates over intervening in Iraq in 2003. However novel the recent tensions appear, the spirited opposition by Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder to George W. Bush's ambitions in Iraq is nothing new in transatlantic relations. Since the founding of the American state, Americans have maintained a degree of enthusiasm for military intervention as a way of fostering good governance abroad. Europeans have frequently looked askance at American efforts to radically transform political institutions in other states. These distinct views on intervention have often strained transatlantic relations.

This particular type of American interventionism is commonly traced to Woodrow Wilson. Fareed Zakaria referred to Bush's zeal to spread democracy as "Wilsonianism with a vengeance."² Edward Rhodes also claimed that Bush's interventionist policies constitute "America's return to Wilsonian internationalism."³ Through his interventions and occupations in Latin America Wilson rightly earned this reputation. Just as important as his actions is the rhetoric the Wilson Administration used to justify intervention. For instance, after the American intervention in Mexico, a British emissary broached the topic of objectives to Wilson: "When I go back to England I shall be asked to explain your Mexican policy. Can you tell me what it is?" Wilson supposedly replied: "I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men!" In addition to Mexico, the Wilson efforts to bring good government led to interventions in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, among others. Perhaps bemused by how Americans intended to "teach the South Americans to elect good men," British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey pressed Wilson's Ambassador in London. What emerged is one of the most noted exchanges on American intervention to impose good governance:

Grey asked, "Suppose you have to intervene, what then?"

"Make them vote and live by their decisions," replied Walter

Hines Page, the American Ambassador to London.

"But suppose they will not so live?" asked Grey.

"We'll go in again and make them vote again."

"And keep this up for 200 years?"

"Yes. The United States will be here 200 years and it can continue to shoot men for that little space until they learn to vote and rule themselves."⁴

With exchanges like this, it is hardly surprising that so many have come to associate Bush's interventions with those of Wilson. But the American faith in military intervention as a means of spreading democracy originated more than a century before Wilson's presidency. Wilson's approach to interventionism was merely the most visible and stunning reflection of a long-held American attitude. The European skepticism toward these types of interventions has an equally long provenance.

This paper explores one of the earliest transatlantic disagreements over military intervention to spread democratic governance. By looking back to ideas circulating during the Age of Revolution, we see a transatlantic difference emerging over this very issue. Two leading liberal internationalists writing in the late 18th century, Thomas Paine and Immanuel Kant, propounded very different views on intervention to spread democratic rule. Paine, with his faith in reason, progress, and Enlightenment, was the quintessential American. In his dedication of "Rights of Man," the ebullient Paine promised to join the French general Lafayette in "the Spring Campaign" that will "terminate in the extinction of German despotism, and in establishing the freedom of all Germany."⁵ While the celebrated German philosopher shared many of Paine's liberal internationalist inclinations; Kant was adamantly opposed to the types of interventions advocated by the radical American. Kant explicitly made the principle of non-intervention one of his Preliminary Articles in his essay *Perpetual Peace*. "No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state." Kant defended this principal on the grounds that these interventions violated the rights of independent nations to determine their own forms of governance. Any efforts to impose constitutions from outside would likely fail.⁶

This disagreement between Paine and Kant reflects one of the earliest strains between the European and the American liberal-internationalist traditions in international relations. Liberal internationalism refers to the shared belief in a system of states which are democratic, free-trading, and peaceful with one another.⁷ On these issues Paine and Kant largely agreed, just as most contemporary Americans and Europeans tend to agree. On the issue of intervention, however, the political thought of Paine and Kant serves as the earliest installment of this ongoing transatlantic disagreement. A careful examination of this rift between Paine and Kant provides a better understanding of the underlying logic and assumptions that continue to

divide many Europeans and Americans on the issue of intervention. We can also understand that even in the midst of this disagreement on intervention, a vast area of agreement still binds. After discussing the different political contexts that helped inform the thought of Paine and Kant, we will turn to the commonalities in their thought. Taken collectively, the international thought of Paine and of Kant mirrors both the tensions and shared understandings characterizing transatlantic relations over the past two-hundred years.

Paine, Kant, and Liberal Internationalism

At first glance, the political thought of Kant and Paine may appear to be one and the same. Mark Zacher and Richard Mathew fail to see any differences between Paine and Kant: "Another late-eighteenth-century writer whose views are very close to those of Kant is the American Thomas Paine."⁸ Given their vast areas of agreement, this is understandable. Both, for instance, saw democratic rule – or what they termed republicanism – as a positive force for peace.⁹ Both also envisioned how free trade would also nurture peace between states. These twin features help compose the foundation of modern liberal internationalism in the study of international relations. Both Paine and Kant made unique contributions to modern liberal-internationalist ideas of democracy, trade, and peace. These ideas remain unifying features of transatlantic relations.

Thomas Paine, although born in England, became the most prominent representative of American optimism toward political transformation during the Revolutionary War. With little formal education, Paine began work as a corset-maker. He then became a tax collector before serving as a crewmember on a privateer during the Seven Years' War. After a chance meeting in London in 1774, Benjamin Franklin encouraged Paine to emigrate to the American colonies. Paine arrived on the eve of the American Revolution. His first major work, *Common Sense*, helped inspire the Declaration of Independence. Here he made the lofty claim that "we have it in our power to begin the world over again."¹⁰ Paine came to play a prominent role in the American Revolution and gained the confidences of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. During the French Revolution, Paine traveled to France, was granted French citizenship and served as a member of the National Assembly. He wrote *Rights of Man* during the French Revolution, where he advocated universal human rights and rapid expansion of democratic revolutions across Europe, by military force if necessary. *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* were the most widely read political tracts during the American and French Revolutions, with hundreds of thousands of copies circulating within their first years of publication.¹¹ Paine's rapid rise from humble beginnings and his positive experience with the political transformation in America informed an unbridled, if not utopian, optimism and activism that runs throughout his revolutionary liberal thought.

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Compared to Paine, Kant demonstrated considerably more caution in both his life and in his political works. Kant lived his entire life in Königsberg, East Prussia, under a militaristic regime that showed glimpses of progressive governance. Turning down better paying positions at other German universities, Kant waited more than 15 years to become Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Königsberg.¹² He lived a scholarly life, strictly regimented, cautious and patient. Kant is best known for his contributions to philosophy, ethics, and epistemology. While Kant's work on international politics stands apart from his major contributions to philosophy, his essay *Perpetual Peace* remains one of the most widely read works of liberal internationalism.

Both of these luminaries remain central to the contemporary study of liberal internationalism. Michael Doyle placed Kant as "one of the greatest liberal philosophers" for students of international relations.¹³ For Bruce Russett and John Oneal, Kant provided the foundation for a contemporary liberal research program in international relations by emphasizing regime type, free trade, and membership in international organizations.¹⁴ Paine has found equal standing in contemporary research, recently being cast as the most "faithful representative of the Enlightenment for students of International Relations."¹⁵ Scott Gates, Torbjørn Knutsen and Jonathon Moses noted how Paine "delivered one of the clearest (and most consequential) formulations of the claim that a state founded on democratic principles...must also be, fundamentally, against war."¹⁶ In his Trevelyan Lectures at Cambridge, Sir Michael Howard referred to Paine's *Rights of Man* as the single most forceful and original text on liberal internationalism. Every liberal, Howard concluded, "who has written about foreign policy since has been able to provide little more than an echo of Paine's original philippic."¹⁷ Finally, Sheikh Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar, the Sunni Arab leader who would assume the interim Presidency of Iraq in 2004 following the American invasion, claimed that Paine was his "favorite philosopher."¹⁸ Both Kant and Paine grew to be prominent spokesmen for the notion that democratic, free-trading states would lead to a more peaceful world. We will now turn to their respective elaborations of these ideas.

Paine frequently looked to the emergence of a democratic, rights-based America as an exemplar for his liberal world order. America in the 18th century, with all its differences in language and religion, was a least-likely case for peace and harmony. But if the different groups could prosper with democratic institutions in America, Paine reasoned that these virtues could be spread around the world, by force if necessary. Paine celebrated the American situation in the following manner:

If there is a country in the world, where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up, as it is, of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different

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languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable... Their taxes are few, because their government is just... There is nothing to engender riots and tumults.¹⁹

This depiction of the American polity, however idealistic and romantic, served as Paine's model for a new international order founded on universal democratic governance. If democratic sensibilities could be effectively exported, the world would become more prosperous and peaceful.

To achieve this end, Paine sought an immediate franchise for all people. In his *First Principles of Government*, Paine stressed how "The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected. To take away this right is to reduce a man to slavery."²⁰ Paine's ardent support of universal voting rights rested upon his lofty assumptions about human nature and goodness. For Paine, the individual is essentially moral and good: "The moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation toward all his citizens."²¹ Corrupt forms of government, however, have obscured individual goodness and harmony. Paine noted that "man, were he not corrupted by [non-democratic] governments, is naturally the friend of man, and that human nature is not itself vicious."²² Given the assumption that reason and a sense of justice naturally guide individual behavior, the best answer to the ills of the world is democratization. This optimism culminated in Paine's prediction that the transition to democracy would be swift and he doubted whether "monarchy and aristocracy will continue seven years longer in any of the enlightened countries in Europe."²³

Once states became democratic they would live in peace with one another. In *Common Sense*, Paine pointed out that the republics of the world tended to be peaceful: "Holland and Swisserland are without wars, foreign or domestic." According to Paine, this peace results from the democratic tendency to "negotiate the mistake" rather than letting regal pride swell "into a rupture with foreign powers."²⁴ Paine's most famous proclamation comes in *Rights of Man*. Citing the French Constitution, which he helped craft, Paine acknowledged "The right of war and peace is in the nation. Where else should it reside, but in those who are to pay the expense."²⁵ If this right were granted to the people, they would avoid wars with fellow democracies. Paine, however, was quick to point out that democracies would not necessarily be peaceful when dealing with their authoritarian neighbors.

The second element of liberal internationalism prominent in Paine's work is how peace might be achieved through free trade. Paine was arguably the first popular proponent of free trade as a means of promoting peace. In the widely circulated

Rights of Man, Paine asserted:

In all my writings, where the matter would permit, I have been a friend of commerce, because I have been a friend to its effects. It is a pacific system, operating to cordialize mankind, by rendering nations, as well as individuals, useful to each other...If commerce were permitted to act to the universal extent it is capable, it would extirpate the system of war.²⁶

Paine frequently pointed to how trade promotes international understandings, thereby working to 'cordialize' mankind. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, Paine saw how interaction and experience would foster learning and understanding between different nations. Economic interaction would work to acquaint nations with one another and reduce misunderstandings that might lead to conflict. More importantly, trade created a degree of economic interdependence that would increase the costs of military action. Finally, trade would not only produce wealth but it would also reduce conflict by promoting understanding and by creating shared economic interests between free trading nations. Combining democratic rule with free-trading states would be the surest path to peace.

As a good Enlightenment liberal with an internationalist bent, Kant agreed that rule by the people and international trade would increase the probability of international peace. Few textbooks in international relations go to press without the ritualistic reference to Kant's prediction that when "the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise. For this would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war."²⁷ Kant's reasoning, however, varied in significant ways from Paine's. In Kant, we see a more gradual road to democratic governance, not the rapid revolutionary road that Paine projected.

While both Paine and Kant agreed that democratic government would result in a more peaceful world, they disagreed over who would have the right to vote. Kant's voting public was far more limited than Paine's. To vote, according to Kant, one must be an "active citizen" and "must possess civil independence." By 'active citizen,' Kant meant that one "must by his own free will actively participate in a community of other people." But participation alone does not guarantee voting rights. Kant argued that "To be fit to vote, a person must have an independent position among the people." His ideas on what constituted 'civil independence,' however, would result in widespread restrictions on suffrage. Kant explicitly denied the vote to anyone who has "to receive orders or protection from other individuals, so that they do not possess civil independence." These restrictions included woodcutters, blacksmiths, domestic tutors, apprentices, women, and "all those who are obliged to depend for their living...on the offices of others." Kant, curiously, claimed that such a restriction

on voting does not "in any way conflict with the freedom and equality as all men as human beings who together constitute a people."²⁸ While Paine was quick to endorse voting rights as the cure to an ailing polity, Kant was more hesitant to see voting rights as the penultimate measure of freedoms within a society.

Kant's hesitation to quickly establish democracy by rendering the vote to all may be explained by his evolutionary view of human development. In Kant, we see a far more cautious, if not dark, initial view of human nature. In one passage Kant asked what could be "constructed from such a warped wood as that which man is made?" In one of his last essays, Kant noted, with characteristic ambiguity, that "man's natural endowments consist of a mixture of evil and goodness in unknown proportions."²⁹ Whereas Paine cast the individual as one who is essentially good but corrupted by monarchic governance, Kant recognized limitations in man's ability to bring reason and justice to the political arena.

Turning to international trade as a force for peace, we again see some slight differences. On the question of trade and peace, Kant had a different point of emphasis from Paine. Kant posited that trade may lead to peace because of the vested interests of international financiers and businessmen. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant claimed that "the *spirit of commerce* sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war." Moreover, he argued that "of all the powers (or means) at the disposal of the power of the state, *financial power* can probably be relied on most" [emphasis is Kant's]. Kant envisioned "financial power" and business interests as forces working to mediate all wars throughout the world. According to Kant, business concerns would grow into effective transnational agents for international peace due to interests, not morality. To preserve wealth generated through trade, Kant argued, "states find themselves compelled to promote the noble cause of peace, though not exactly from motives of morality. And wherever in the world there is a threat of war breaking out, they [trading states] will try to prevent it by mediation."³⁰ Faith in trade as a means to both prosperity and peace continues to inform modern liberal policies on both sides of the Atlantic. From the foundation of the European Union to the Washington Consensus, the promotion of free trade remains an area of general agreement between the United States and Europe, regardless of what other issues come to challenge the relationship.

The transatlantic consensus over the importance of democracy and free trade to peace may have been solidified by recent research. A number of studies in international relations have carefully and repeatedly scrutinized the impact that free trade and democracy might have on peace and war. While Katherine Barbieri suggested some conditions under which trade may increase conflict, Russett and Oneal demonstrated how increased levels of trade reduces the probability of militarized conflicts between

states.³¹ A far greater amount of research has been devoted to questions surrounding the democratic peace. After reviewing the evidence, Jack Levy concluded that the "absence of war between democratic states comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."³² Similarly, Russett proclaimed that the peace between democratic states "is one of the strongest non-trivial or non-tautological generalizations that can be made in international relations."³³ While the finding that democracies are unexpectedly peaceful with one another stands as the foundation of liberal thought, the ways in which democracies come to be established is far more uncertain and problematic. The prospects of spreading democratic rule through military intervention, however, remains contentious in liberal international thought.

Kant's Non-Intervention and Paine's *Descent Upon England*

Not unlike the current transatlantic schism, Paine and Kant had a striking disagreement over the question of military intervention to promote democratic rule. Paine, perhaps drawing from his experiences during the American Revolution, saw military force as an efficacious tool to enact political change. He became a zealous advocate for military intervention to spread democracy. After traveling from the American Revolution to the French Revolution, Paine grew even more confident that democratic revolutions would quickly spread across Europe. Paine also considered the role that military force might play in spreading democratic revolutions. In *Part II of Rights of Man*, written in the midst of the French Revolution, Paine saw the French military as a pivotal force in spreading democratic revolution across Europe. At one point, Paine even pledged to take part in a military campaign to rid Germany of despotism.³⁴

Paine justified military interventions to spread democracy on two grounds. First, he believed in the universal and God-given nature of individual rights. Chief among these are the "universal right of conscience, and the universal right of citizenship." Through these general rights all other rights can be guaranteed. By spreading democratic governance, Paine was helping spread these various rights. The "mass of the people," Paine reasoned, "are the friends of liberty: tyranny and taxation oppress but they deserve to be free."³⁵ Paine argued that in many cases, such oppression can be broken only through military intervention.

Paine's second justification for intervention related directly to national security concerns. A democratic France would be threatened constantly by its authoritarian neighbors. Paine argued that only when "France shall be surrounded with revolutions, she will be in peace and safety." In Paine's view, the national security of France depended heavily on extending democracy to neighboring states, even if it required military "campaigns" to achieve a democratic outcome in these neighboring states.³⁶

Paine also applied this national security logic to his proposed intervention in England. Paine justified the descent on England in such a manner: "There will be no lasting peace for France, nor for the world, until the tyranny and corruption of the English government be abolished, and England, like Italy, become a sister Republic."³⁷ Again, Paine presented a vision of an interdependent world where all democracies would be faced with constant threats from non-democratic states. What ensued was a messianic zeal bent on transforming the world into democracies along the American lines – or "to begin the world over again," as Paine promised in his first major work, *Common Sense*.³⁸

Paine openly discussed his efforts to lead an intervention against monarchical England. While still an active member of the French Assembly, Paine offered a "small patriotic donation" of "five-hundred livres" to help finance a French-led "descent" on England.³⁹ According to Paine's account, Bonaparte was to command the descent. "By agreement between him and me," Paine wrote, "I was to accompany him...to give the people of England an opportunity of forming a government for themselves, and thereby bring about peace."⁴⁰ Paine never considered this an *invasion* but rather an effort to help lead the English people away from tyranny. Paine was optimistic that liberated Englishmen would be quickly convinced of the superiority of democratic rule based on individual rights. They would in turn set out to form new institutions along the American and French lines, ultimately bringing about an open, liberal, democratic society.

Paine's use of the term "descent" for his invasion of England provides the fitting image of coming down from above to help establish an enlightened and just form of government for those people incapable of doing so on their own. Married to this idea of intervention is the assumption of inferiority of the target nation. Paine assumed that "the inhabitants of a monarchical country are often intellectually degenerate and are distinguished for their servile disposition."⁴¹ Such people need a lending hand on the road to freedom. Similar pretensions have characterized attitudes toward democratic military intervention since Paine's initial movement.

The military interventions that Paine championed, however, would be relatively small, even by 18th century military standards. The descent on England, for instance, could be funded by "small patriotic donations." No large naval vessels would be needed. Instead, Paine advocated the use of his small gunboats to be rowed across the English Channel. For Paine, intervention would not be a blunt instrument used to completely transform societies. Rather, as was the case in England, the intervening force would link up with progressive factions from within to bring about rapid political transformations. E.P. Thompson chronicled Paine's collaborations with various English reformers seeking to democratize the regime.⁴² Once in England, military

force would target the powers wielded by the corrupt state, not the people. When dealing with the people, persuasion and reason would prove more valuable than cannon and military might.

Paine's enthusiasm toward these types of interventions relate directly to his optimism regarding human nature and to his experiences in America. Tyrannical forms of government rob individuals of their natural goodness. Once the yokes of tyranny have been removed – or even challenged, individual reason and goodness will rapidly prevail. For Paine, once “governmental persecutions” are removed mankind will come together “not as enemies, but as brothers.”⁴³ Paine's optimism is perhaps most evident in his predictions that republican governments would establish themselves across Europe within seven years. In Paine's worldview, if individuals were given the opportunity to reason freely, they would promptly embrace democracy, peace, and justice. Anchored by lofty views of human reason and goodness, Paine envisioned rapid and relatively easy democratic transformations, though sometimes hastened by military intervention.

Turning to Kant, we see a very different vision of democratic transition. Kant agreed with Paine that a republican constitution “is the only one which does complete justice to the rights of man.”⁴⁴ However, Kant did not endorse military interventions as a means of procuring republican constitutions and democratic rule. From East Prussia, Kant took a very different view of intervention to “rid Germany of despotism.” In direct opposition to Paine, Kant issued a firm warning against interventions to re-shape domestic political institutions. Perhaps as a result of living his entire life in Königsberg – where the shadow cast by the rampant interventionism during the Thirty Years' War had not yet entirely lifted – or perhaps in response to Paine's popular advocacy of intervention in his widely distributed *Rights of Man*, Kant made the principle of non-intervention one of his *Preliminary Articles of a Perpetual Peace*. Kant was explicit that “No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state.” For Kant, any “interference of external powers would be a violation of the rights of an independent people which is merely struggling with its internal ills. Such interference would be an active offence and would make the autonomy of all other states insecure.”⁴⁵ In Kant's view, sovereignty was to be respected and such deference was in the interest of all states. Without an appreciation for the principle of state sovereignty, states risked rampant intervention and warfare that characterized Europe during the Thirty Years War.

Kant reiterated that even the most despotic states should be protected from outside interference. He argued that “no state can be required to relinquish its constitution, even if the latter is despotic.” Any governing constitution, Kant continued, is “better than none at all, and the fate of premature reform would be anarchy.”⁴⁶ In keeping

with his gradual and evolutionary approach to political development, Kant saw any rush toward rapid transformation as counter-productive and potentially dangerous.

While republican states are discouraged from actively intervening, Kant still envisioned one republic leading the way to perpetual peace. But this would be done by example, not by force: "For if by good fortune one powerful and enlightened nation can form a republic (which is by its nature inclined to seek perpetual peace), this will provide a focal point for a federal association among other states."⁴⁷ Through a process of gradual approximation, Kant's federation of republican states and perpetual peace would gradually expand.

Kant did offer some specific conditions under which intervention may be justified. Intervention, Kant cautioned, could only take place if a state is "split into two parts, each of which set itself up as a separate state and claimed authority over the whole. For it could not be reckoned as interference in another state's constitution if an external state were to lend support to one of them, because their condition is one of anarchy."⁴⁸ Kant allowed a neighboring state to intervene militarily and assist one faction in a civil war. However, in the absence of state failure or civil war, state sovereignty must be respected. Intervention on humanitarian grounds would therefore be justified according to Kant. Interventions to alter a state's existing institutions and form of government would not be justified.

Kant's general prohibition against intervention is related to his cautious view of human nature and to his evolutionary approach to history, as spelled out in his early essay, *Universal History*. Here Kant argued that political institutions must evolve slowly and indigenously because "reason does not itself work instinctively, for it requires trial, practice, and instruction." But Kant was confident that in the end, "we shall discover a process of improvement in the political constitutions of our continent." And as reason emerges in its unsteady stages, Kant predicted that "men gradually move towards greater agreement over their principles, they lead to mutual understanding and peace."⁴⁹ For Kant, this path to peace would take much longer than the seven years prophesied by Paine. This process also could not be accelerated through military interventions from outside the state.

On the issue of intervention, European liberals in the tradition of Kant are far more restrained. American liberals in the tradition of Paine may advocate military intervention to bring freedom to all people who suffer the injustices brought about by non-democratic governance. Kant realized that freedom and justice would not come about easily or immediately. As an extension of his cautious faith in democratic processes, Kant reasoned that a just society could not be imposed by forces outside the actual polity. Instead, democracy was like reason and Enlightenment: it would

grow slowly and sporadically in accordance with particular national traditions and institutions. The ebullient Paine, on the other hand, saw no virtue in patience when rights were being trod upon. Like many of the divergences between Paine and Kant, their opposing views of intervention to spread democratic institutions continue to raise questions for contemporary international relations in general and transatlantic relations more specifically.

Conclusion

Reflections of the liberal internationalist vision of Thomas Paine can still be discerned in the American polity. When this vision is compared to Immanuel Kant's liberal internationalist vision, still prevalent among many in Europe, we can better appreciate the enduring transatlantic rift over military intervention as a means of shaping domestic institutions in distant lands. We can also appreciate the degree of consensus over democracy, human rights, and free trade. These elements of conflict and consensus will likely continue to inform transatlantic relations in the future.

As noted, the first American leader to pursue military intervention to foster democracy was Woodrow Wilson. Wilson, however, could not have succeeded without widespread popular support. This support is visible especially in the media of the period. Walter Hines Page, Wilson's Ambassador to London and steadfast champion of intervention, also ran a popular periodical, *World's Work*. In a tone similar to Paine's, this publication consistently stressed how Wilson's interventions were motivated by duty to mankind. In one editorial, it proclaimed, "We are simply going in there [Haiti]...to help our black brother put his disorderly house in order."⁵⁰ Even *The New York Times* envisioned Wilson's policy of intervention as essential to keep the Latin Americans "harmless against the ultimate consequences of their own misbehavior."⁵¹ Paine's enthusiasm for military "campaigns" to topple tyrannical governments rose to unprecedented prominence during the Wilson Administration.

Since the time of Paine and Wilson, many Americans maintain a strong faith in force as a means to achieve positive political ends. Europeans have been less enthusiastic. Kaplan, citing a large survey commissioned by the German Marshall Fund of the United States in 2003, noted that "more than 80 percent of Americans believe that war may achieve justice; less than half of Europeans believe that a war – any war – can ever be just."⁵² With such attitudes, American leaders find less domestic opposition to military intervention as a means of ridding the world of dangerous authoritarian leaders.

The latest demonstration of this faith in force and the special role of America reside in George W. Bush's campaigns to bring democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan. In his West Point Graduation Speech, Bush defended his policies with rhetoric similar to

Paine's. Just as Paine argued that America "made a stand, not for herself only, but for the world and looked beyond the advantages herself could receive," Bush argued that "Our nation's cause has always been larger than our nation's defense."⁵³ Just as Paine argued that peace will follow democracy, Bush argued that "We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent." Finally, both maintained a tone of millennialism. Bush argued that "we also have an historic opportunity to preserve the peace. We have our best chance since the rise of the nation state in the 17th century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace instead of prepare for war."⁵⁴ Paine, with a tad more eloquence and brevity, proclaimed "we have it in our power to begin the world over again."⁵⁵

A great deal suggests that certain elements of Paine's romantic, idealistic, and naïve vision of political transformation is alive and well among the American people. Paine's vision reflects two characteristics that have long informed American attitudes toward intervention: a faith in the utility of force and optimism that people are good, reasonable and capable of rapid transitions to free and fair democratic governance. When combined, these characteristics help garner domestic support for American military interventions to spread democratic governance. While the assumptions driving these attitudes can be troubling, these are the same attitudes that helped justify programs like the Marshall Plan and NATO. For better or for worse, these American characteristics, traced back here to the international thought of Thomas Paine, will continue to impress upon transatlantic relations in the years to come. Similarly, caution and circumspection on matters of military force, here traced back to Kant, will continue to inform European attitudes toward the transatlantic relationship. As we look forward to new challenges in transatlantic relations, we might pause to consider the historical evolution of these crosscurrents.

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Notes

- 1 Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).
- 2 Fareed Zakaria, "Our Way" *The New Yorker*, (October, 14-21), 2004, 15.
- 3 Edward Rhodes, "The Imperial Logic of Bush's Liberal Agenda," *Survival* 45/1, 2003, 131-154, 132.
- 4 Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 60.
- 5 Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, (Henry Collins Ed.). (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1791-2/1969). 173.
- 6 Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace" in (Hans Reiss Ed.) *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1795/1991, 96.
- 7 For discussions of this see Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978). Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); James Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics*, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).
- 8 Mark Zacher and Richard Matthew, "Liberal International Theory: Common Threads, Divergent Strands" in C. Kegley (Ed.) *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 113.
- 9 Both Kant and Paine reserved "democracy" for the form of government practiced in Ancient Greece where citizens were few and ruled without constitutional protection of rights. I will take on the convention, widely observed in international relations, of referring to Paine and Kant's republics as democracies. These are distinguished by regular elections, preservation of individual rights, and representative government.
- 10 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, (Isaac Kramnick Ed.) (London: Penguin Books, 1776/1986) 120.
- 11 John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995). 331.
- 12 Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 189.
- 13 Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs" (Part I), *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12/3, 1983, 205-235. 208.
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