

VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 4, FALL 2018

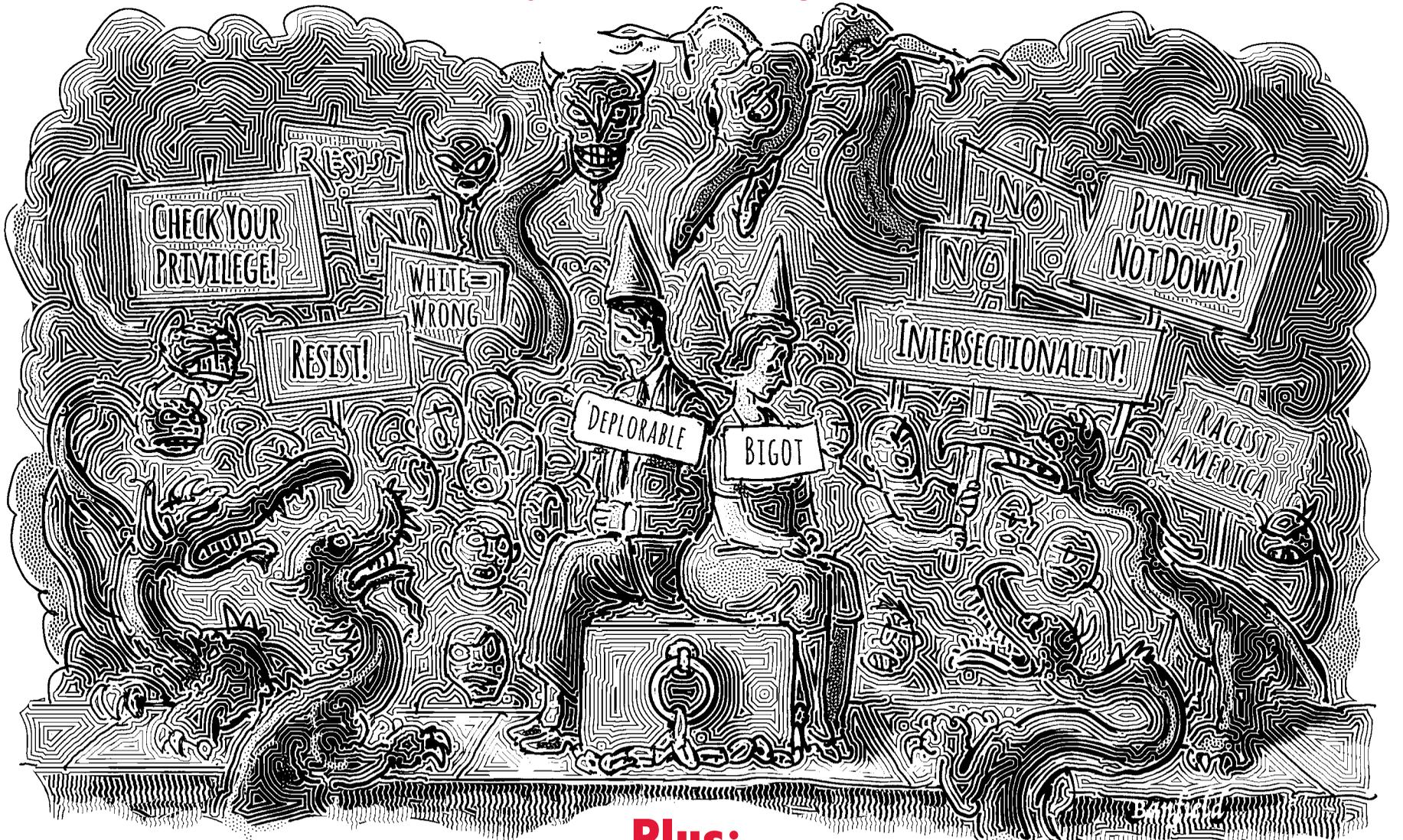
# CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

*A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship*

## The Way We Hate Now

by William Voegeli



**Plus:**

Andrew C. McCarthy:  
**Impeachment**

James W. Ceaser:  
**Jonah Goldberg**

Joseph Epstein:  
**The American  
Language**

Michael Anton:  
**Trump &  
the Philosophers**

John M. Ellis:  
**The Diversity Delusion**

Amy L. Wax:  
**Gender Police**

Christopher Caldwell:  
**What is Populism?**

David P. Goldman:  
**Woodrow Wilson**

Allen C. Guelzo  
Charles R. Kesler:  
**Harry V. Jaffa at 100**



A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$6.95

IN CANADA: \$8.95

Book Review by Patrick J. Garrity

## FOXES AND HEDGEHOGS

*On Grand Strategy*, by John Lewis Gaddis.  
Penguin Press, 384 pages, \$26



**R**ELECTING ON WORLD WAR I, WINSTON Churchill wrote:

The distinction between politics and strategy diminishes as the point of view is raised. At the summit, true politics and strategy are one. The maneuver which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle. The maneuver which gains an important strategic point may be less valuable than that which placates or overawes a dangerous neutral.

Our subsequent experience with an even greater war led to describing such statecraft as “grand strategy”: the integration, during both war and peace, of all aspects of national power (military capability, diplomacy, economic capacity, science, technology, engineering, strategic intelligence, covert action, ideological and cultural attractiveness, and so on) to ensure the regime’s survival and prosperity in a complicated, dangerous world. Grand

strategy in turn is supposed to be guided by an “overall strategic concept” that represents the highest level of long-term thinking about what the nation wants to do in the world, and how to go about it.

**J**OHAN LEWIS GADDIS, THE ROBERT A. LOVETT Professor of Military and Naval History at Yale University, is generally regarded as the most eminent historian of the Cold War. (See “The Long Twilight Struggle,” *CRB*, Summer 2006.) The Cold War and containment are not, however, the focus of his most recent book, *On Grand Strategy*, which offers his reflections on the topic gained from over 40 years of study. (He does not address the academic debate over the viability of grand strategy directly, but he touches on all the critical issues.) He dates his interest in the subject from a course he taught at the Naval War College in the mid-1970s, when he encouraged his students to consider the U.S. experience in Vietnam in a wider political and historical context. In 2002, Gaddis began co-

teaching Yale University’s “Studies in Grand Strategy” seminar together with Paul Kennedy (author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* [1987]) and retired diplomat Charles Hill. The Yale seminar is a selective, intensive year-long course that relies on classical texts and historical case studies, rather than international relations theory. During the summer, the students are required to involve themselves in some “real world” activity—for instance, one scholar retraced the campaign routes of Alexander the Great. Gaddis has been accused by the Left of offering a preparatory course for future American imperial proconsuls. More politely, it seems he is trying to cultivate in students with an interest in public affairs a mature, reflective approach to politics that is rarely encouraged by today’s educational system.

Rather than a precise template or recipe for the exercise of grand strategy, Gaddis instead provides a *tour de horizon* of what one might glean about humanity’s nature and condition from the greatest philosophers, writers, histo-

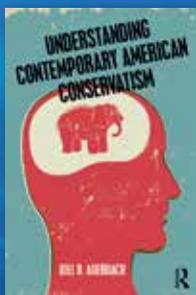
## New Books FROM ROUTLEDGE

Routledge publishes cutting-edge research, authoritative handbooks, and textbooks for the varied needs and interests of researchers, professors, and students.

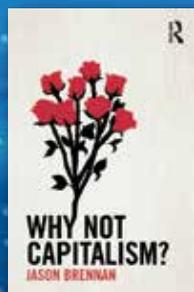
HISTORY



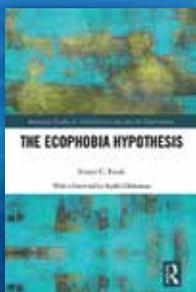
POLITICS



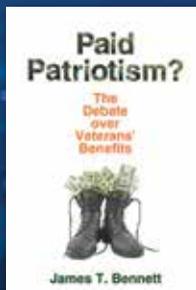
PHILOSOPHY



LITERATURE



ECONOMICS



And More...

5%  
DISCOUNT

Browse our full collection at  
Routledge.com and use CLR18  
for a 5% discount.

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group

rians, and statesmen. Grand strategy, it seems, has less to do with cleverly moving pieces on a geopolitical chessboard than with understanding men's motives, aims, abilities, and limitations. It is, Gaddis writes, "the calculated relationship of means to large ends. It's about how one uses whatever one has to get to wherever it is one wants to go."

Where, then, does the adjective "grand" come in? Gaddis believes it has to do with the stakes. In Walter Lippmann's famous account, "[F]oreign policy consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power." After his idealistic early years, Lippmann spent much of his career offering realistic objections when, in his opinion, American foreign policy failed to meet this test. The dangerous tendency is that of strategic overextension or imperial overstretch, to borrow Paul Kennedy's terms. Gaddis clearly identifies overstretch as a—perhaps the—perennial problem that must be addressed by sensible grand strategy.

History provides us with some notorious failures to balance means and ends, such as the disaster of Xerxes in Greece, Napoleon in Russia, and Woodrow Wilson's campaign to make the world safe for democracy. But nations and empires may also weaken themselves over time through the cumulative effects of many small blunders. Gaddis, for example, previously expressed skepticism about the wisdom of NATO's adding new countries from eastern Europe, which may have inflamed Russia unnecessarily while leaving the alliance hostage to the erratic behavior of its new members.

PROVIDING THE FRAMEWORK FOR MUCH of Gaddis's reflections is Isaiah Berlin's famous riff on the fox and the hedgehog: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Hedgehogs, Berlin explained, "relate everything to a single central vision" through which "all that they are and say has significance." Foxes, in contrast, "pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way." In the context of grand strategy, the hedgehog aims to reshape his environment, to accomplish things that will resound through history. He is not interested in hearing objections and will double down rather than change his goals when confronted with resistance. The fox, by contrast, is preoccupied with the complexities of the strategic situation, with what might go wrong, with unknown unknowns. He is suspicious of great schemes. He relies on intuition to adapt to unexpected circumstances. He worries about strategic overextension.

Gaddis clearly leans to the perspective of the fox, whose general approach to strategic affairs seems, in his view, historically and conceptually sounder. It leads back to the awareness of the need to reconcile means and ends, which the hedgehog resists or ignores. And yet Gaddis is no reflexive strategic minimalist—he was not unsympathetic to Ronald Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union or George W. Bush's doctrine of preemption. The hedgehog has a point: if a leader tries to take account of everything, he will never do anything. Truly positive change will be impossible or accidental—we might still be living in a slaveholding regime, or in a world menaced by fascism or Communism. Unforeseen circumstances can work in our favor as well as against us.

Gaddis's answer is to reconcile, somehow, the two apparently contradictory strategic perspectives. He cites F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous test of a first-rate intelligence: "the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." The choices facing us are less often between such stark alternatives as good versus evil than between good things we cannot have simultaneously. Grand strategy requires the ability to combine the hedgehog's sense of direction—a strategic compass, if you will—with the fox's sensitivity to surroundings, while at the same time resisting paralysis by analysis. This would reconcile Berlin's foxes and hedgehogs with Gaddis's insistence on the inevitability, and unpredictability, of choice.

BUT IT IS MORE THAN PURELY FIRST-rate intelligence. "Any complex activity," Carl von Clausewitz wrote, "if it is to be carried on with any degree of virtuosity, calls for appropriate gifts of intellect and temperament." Gaddis takes this to mean that just as no politics can be pure, every "grand strategy" will be affected by the unforeseen. Tightrope walkers use long poles as stabilizers, as critical to the reaching of destinations as the steps taken toward them. The poles work by feel, not thought: focusing on them increases the risk of falling. Temperament functions similarly. If intellect is a compass, temperament is a gyroscope. Like poles on tightropes, temperament makes the difference between slips and safe arrivals.

Gaddis cites two American statesmen who possessed this capacity for reconciliation or exploitation of opposites, albeit perhaps in different proportions: Abraham Lincoln, who was a natural genius, and Franklin Roosevelt, who (in the view attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes) had a first-class temperament. Lincoln showed the practicality, in politics, of a



moral standard. His was a compass aligned with what he regarded as the timeless principles of the Declaration of Independence, which led him to reject “the monstrous injustice of slavery.” This was Lincoln’s One Big Thing. But just as he opposed Stephen A. Douglas’s “don’t care” approach to slavery and its expansion, he rejected the radical, impractical courses advocated by some opponents of slavery, such as immediate abolition or “no Union with slaveholders.” His point in the 1850s was to deny slavery as a moral good or as a morally neutral consideration, to stop its expansion, and to return it to the circumscribed legal status reluctantly granted it by the founders, thereby—like them—preserving the Union. When this proved impossible and war came, Lincoln’s unvarying objective was to restore the Union, thereby saving his country for what he foresaw as a future of global greatness. But that would *not* be possible, he also believed, without expunging the originally necessary sin of slavery.

Achieving these big aims required constantly operating in the ordinary political realm to hold the pro-Union coalition together—not all of whose elements initially agreed with the idea that slavery should be expunged—without abandoning his long-standing, publicly stated wish that “all men everywhere could be free.” It might mean temporarily reversing local military orders to free captured slaves or limiting the Emancipation Proclamation to the states in rebellion, or cutting backstairs deals over postmasterships to help guarantee congressional passage of the 13th Amendment. Lincoln kept long-term aspirations and immediate necessities in mind at the same time. He could not know what deals he would have to cut until he had seen what the previ-

ous ones had accomplished. Lincoln wrote a letter to a friend in 1864: “I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me.” Well, yes and no. Operating in that gray area between necessity and choice is the essence of grand strategy.

**F**RANKLIN ROOSEVELT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY the foxiest of all the great American grand strategists. He constantly frustrated his advisors with his loose management style and apparent unwillingness to make or adhere to policy decisions. As global war loomed in the 1930s, isolationists were convinced that FDR was secretly planning to drag the country again into the militaristic morass of the Old World. Those who supported the Allies feared he was doing too little, too late, to oppose the dictators. Roosevelt himself believed in the teachings of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan and recognized the threat to American security that would result from a domination of the Eurasian continent by hostile powers resolved to destroy democracy. His determination to resist this was his compass, his One Big Thing. Yet Roosevelt knew that the country had essentially disarmed after World War I and had become deeply cynical about other nations’ perils and good faith. He had no intention of repeating Woodrow Wilson’s mistakes. His foxy instincts gave him a sense, perhaps exaggerated, of the constraints he faced with public opinion.

FDR waited on events to clarify things, some of which he could not control or even influence. First, an American rearmament that would restore prosperity, allow selective support to selected allies, and still hold out the hope of not going to war. Thus, his foxy promise during

the 1940 presidential campaign never to send American boys to fight foreign wars: U.S. intervention might prove to be unnecessary but if it did prove necessary, those boys would be fighting an *American* war, not a foreign one. Second, assurance that the Soviet Union—the least threatening of the dictatorships—would survive, and hence serve as a continental ally between the larger threats posed by smaller powers on the peripheries, Germany and Japan. Finally, Roosevelt wanted his own Fort Sumter, the moral high ground of having been attacked. (This is not to say he conspired to bring about Pearl Harbor.) All of these things eventually came together, uniting the country and providing the strategic basis for victory. Their convergence, however dependent on circumstance, was hardly coincidental.

Gaddis’s new work is unlikely to have the influence of Clausewitz’s famous writings. He doesn’t offer a grand strategic solution to the current muddled geopolitical scene, but does erect signposts that we might profitably note and follow. He encourages a modern sensibility corresponding to the ancient political virtue of prudence, of statecraft, much neglected in our contemporary politics. It will be interesting to see, some years down the road, if a Yale graduate or two manages to follow the challenging path John Lewis Gaddis has set out.

*Patrick J. Garrity is Senior Fellow in Grand Strategy Studies at Villanova University’s Ryan Center for the Study of Free Institutions and the Public Good, a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute, and the author of In Search of Monsters to Destroy? American Foreign Policy, Revolution, and Regime Change, 1776–1900 (National Institute Press).*

The CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS is a publication of the CLAREMONT INSTITUTE  
FOR THE STUDY OF STATESMANSHIP AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Subscribe to  
the *Claremont Review of Books*

*“The Claremont Review of Books is an outstanding literary publication written by leading scholars and critics. It covers a wide range of topics in trenchant and decisive language, combining learning with wit, elegance, and judgment.”*

—Paul Johnson

Subscribe to the *CRB* today and save 25% off the newsstand price. A one-year subscription is only \$19.95.

To begin receiving America's premier conservative book review, visit [www.claremont.org/crb](http://www.claremont.org/crb) or call (909) 981-2200.

CLAREMONT  
REVIEW OF BOOKS  
1317 W. FOOTHILL  
BLVD, SUITE 120,  
UPLAND, CA  
91786

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 504  
UPLAND, CA