

one of Rothbard's sources for his claim about money in the Middle Ages? The manuscript tells a different story. The corresponding note begins: "*Professor Timberlake misconstrues the historical researches of Luigi Einaudi on 'imaginary' money in the Middle Ages*" (ms., p. 88, n. 4, emphasis added). By omitting a crucial sentence, Professor Timberlake has been transformed from the note's target to one of its sources. One wonders whether it is altogether a coincidence that Professor Timberlake is an editor of the volume.

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Perhaps it may be claimed that the change avoids acrimony among the contributors and was for that reason acceptable. But this argument at most supports omission of the note entirely, rather than the distortion here perpetrated. And if controversy among contributors was to be concealed, why is Timberlake in his article allowed to criticize Rothbard (p. 189, n. 6)? Dr. Bowdler would have been very proud of this job. ▀

FOREIGN POLICY AS PSEUDO- SCIENCE

From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role

Fareed Zakaria

Princeton University Press, 1998, x
+ 199 pgs.

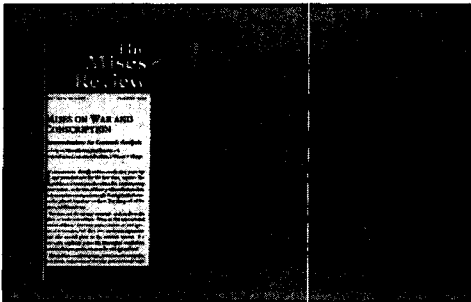
Mr. Zakaria finds a paradox at the heart of American foreign policy in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The United States at that period was rapidly becoming an economic giant. Yet its role in the international system did not exceed that of far weaker nations. Why did economic strength in this instance go together with diplomatic weakness?

In the decades after the Civil War, our author notes, "economic growth reach[ed] a truly stunning pace. By one calculation, the United States grew at an average rate of 5 percent per year between 1873 and 1913. This extraordinary rise manifested itself in almost every sector of the economy.... In fact, its meteoric rise was even more staggering in relative terms.... Great Britain was averaging

growth of only 1.6 percent. By 1885 the United States had surpassed Britain, gaining the single largest share of world manufacturing output” (pp. 45–46).

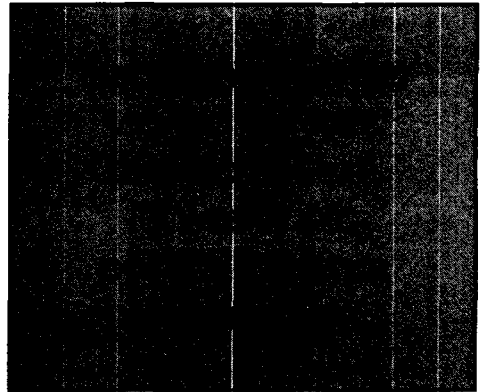
America’s military and diplomatic power by no means matched Britain’s. “Between 1865 and 1890, the United States acquired forsaken Alaska and the tiny Midway Islands and gained basing rights in Samoa. During the same period, Britain and France each acquired over three million square miles of new colonies” (p. 47). Around 1890, the American army ranked fourteenth in the world, behind Bulgaria; and the laughable United States Navy was inferior in strength to the Italian navy.

These facts are not in dispute; but why does Zakaria think he has found a paradox that demands resolution? In his view, America’s behavior violated a traditional rule of European statecraft: nations increase their power to the extent their resources permit. “So common was this pattern that European statesmen viewed the state that did not turn its wealth into political influence as an anomaly” (p. 4).



Because the Netherlands did not in the eighteenth century expand to the extent its vast economic capacity allowed, statesmen of the time referred to the “Dutch disease.” In sum, “[a]s European statesmen raised under the great-power system understood so clearly, capabilities shape intentions” (p. 5).

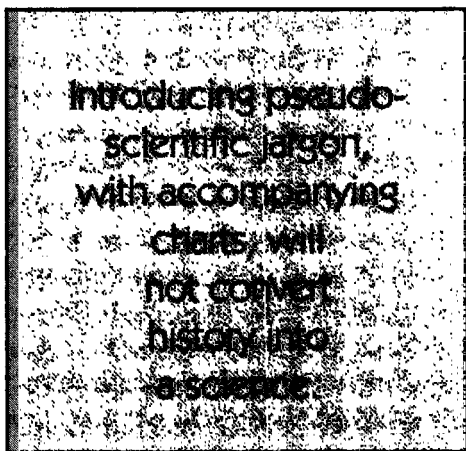
Here then is the paradox that confronts Zakaria. The United States suffered from the Dutch disease. If capabilities shape intentions, why did the United States during the relevant period shun expansion?



Zakaria’s question is a good one, but only by accident: he lacks an adequate rationale within which to consider the issue. As he sees it, the fact that many European states pursued an expansionist policy somehow establishes a “law” that this is standard behavior.

Given this law, the task of the political scientist is clear. Aping the procedure of “hard” scientists, he must formulate a hypothesis designed to

explain the supposed law. The hypothesis must then be tested: if verified, the law is confirmed.



Students of Mises will at once spot the flaw that undermines Zakaria's procedure. The fact that states during a certain period have expanded in proportion to wealth does not give us the material for a law, in the style of the physical sciences. In human affairs, we are not given precisely defined variables that can be measured: to talk of verifying a hypothesis, as if some law of science were at stake, leads nowhere. Introducing pseudo-scientific jargon, with accompanying charts, will not convert history into a science.

Zakaria of course would regard these Misesian strictures as nonsense. Given his "law" of state expansion, he considers two hypotheses to account for it. The first, classical realism, with which Zakaria sympathizes, holds that states expand to the extent of their capacity. As you will recall

(since I mentioned it only a few paragraphs ago), this is the traditional European view of state behavior.

Against this stands another theory, championed by Walter Lippmann and George Kennan, which our author terms "defensive realism." It holds that states expand in response to perceived threats: "nations expand their political interests when they become increasingly insecure" (p. 21, emphasis removed).

Zakaria does not like defensive realism at all. He directs two criticisms against it, one good and one bad. He rightly points out that many politicians justify expansion by self-serving statements. Thus, Stalin took over Eastern Poland not of course as an expression of Soviet imperialism, but in response to fears of "Western aggression." Or so he told us.

Zakaria's point is excellent, but once more pseudo-science rears its ugly head. Security, it seems, "is a malleable concept that is more difficult to operationalize than most terms in political science" (p. 26). From it we cannot generate testable predictions. Zakaria evidently imagines himself in a 1930s logical positivist's model of a physics laboratory.

But if Zakaria rejects defensive realism, it is not entirely to defend its classical realist rival. Rather, he modifies classical realism in a crucial respect; and his modification leads him, I fear unintentionally, to a most valuable line of inquiry. He suggests that classical

realists err in assuming that statesmen have automatic access to the full extent of their nation's wealth. This need not be so: and what determines a political actor's grasp for power is the resources that he can command. In Zakaria's state-centered realism, "[s]tatesmen, not nations, confront the international system, and they have access to only that fraction of national power that the state apparatus can extract for its purpose" (p. 35).

Here, at last, Zakaria strikes pay-dirt. The framers of the United States Constitution were not pseudo-scientists. But they were disturbed by the dangers of an expansionist state: they believed that a strictly limited government, devoted to peace, was essential to a good society.

Accordingly, they made it very difficult for the national government to expand territorially or to engage in war. Power-seeking presidents cannot acquire territory by themselves, nor can they commit our country to war without the consent of an often difficult to manage Congress. And, owing to limited taxation, the federal government usually could not fund expansionist schemes.

Centralizers have from its inception disliked our constitutional endeavor to contain overeager presidents. Thus, Alexander Hamilton "argued during the constitutional debates in Philadelphia for both a more powerful central government and a more powerful president. In Hamilton's

opinion, if America were to achieve the economic prosperity of Europe, greater responsibilities and power would have to be placed in the hands of the national government and, in particular the presidency" (p. 97).

Fortunately for Americans' well-being, the American system during the latter part of the nineteenth century worked much as the framers had intended. Thus, after the Civil War, Secretary of State William Seward was anxious to add Cuba to America's possessions. He was unable to do so: "when, late in his term, Seward espied an opening, he decided that congressional obstinacy made pursuing such a path futile" (p. 97). Not even the

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much more energetic efforts of President Grant to secure the island were sufficient to turn the trick. However much statists might balk, the national government had been designed to be inefficient in imperialism.

Of course, such is not the case today, much to our loss and Zakaria's satisfaction. Our author ably traces

the undermining of the American system of restraint. The Civil War dealt a severe blow to limited government, and Lincoln's usurpations of power in that conflict set a precedent for his successors. But, once more, nothing could be done until the central government commanded more resources. Increased federal revenues, the development of a professional civil service system, and the expansion of government regulation of business strengthened the state's hand.

But of course trends do not act by themselves: they require actors to set them in motion. Zakaria ascribes much of the credit, as he sees it, for the overthrow of restraint, to two presidents. One of these I am sure readers will be able to guess—Theodore Roosevelt.

The other culprit is a president often portrayed as weak and vacillating: William McKinley. Our author, by contrast, views him as bold and aggressive. "Under William McKinley's leadership, America undertook the most dramatic extension of its interests abroad since the annexation of Texas. McKinley also so brazenly expanded presidential power that some have called him the first modern president.... McKinley took advantage of his executive power to enlarge the presidency still further: he dispatched troops to China to help put down the Boxers without consulting Congress. Never before had a president used

force against a recognized government without obtaining a declaration of war" (pp. 163–64).

Zakaria's able historical narrative breaks the bounds of his allegiance to pseudo-science and offers a much-needed lesson to those who lack his devotion to the expansionist state. Unfortunately, he never quite shakes loose from what P.A. Sorokin termed "quantophrenia."

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One illustration must here suffice. A table purports to demonstrate the superiority of state-centered realism to defensive realism. In it, twenty-two opportunities for American expansion in the period 1865–1889 are considered. The number of validations for state-centered realism far exceeds that for its rival, and Zakaria waxes triumphant. But since he counts both a decision to expand and a decision not to expand as confirmations of his favored theory, his table is worthless. His theory will always come out right, just by the way he has set up the test. Such are the ways of pseudo-science. ▀

THE POLITICS OF CUSTOM

Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium: Hume's Pathology of Philosophy

Donald W. Livingston

University of Chicago Press, 1998,
xix + 433 pgs.

Donald Livingston's brilliant *Philosophical Melancholy* ranks as the most unusual philosophy book I have ever read. What starts as an analysis of David Hume's conception of philosophy ends in a discussion of the Civil War and secession. Has Livingston simply put together essays on disparate themes and called the result a book? Quite the contrary, he proves to the hilt that seemingly recondite philosophical questions have the utmost practical relevance.

Readers who remember Hume only as a name from a Western Civ course taken long ago probably have a picture of him something like this. Hume denied that we perceive ordinary physical objects. Instead, we have access only to impressions and ideas that copy them. The law of cause and effect has no rational basis: all that we have given to us are constant conjunctions of ideas. Inductive inference yields us no knowledge. Similarly,

morality rests on irrational sentiments—"ought" cannot be derived from "is"—and religion is nothing but superstition. Although Hume's own politics were rather moderate, surely his skepticism inevitably leads to utter nihilism.

According to Professor Livingston, who is probably the world's leading authority on Hume, the picture just given misrepresents the facts in every regard. (Those in the grip of the Western Civ picture should not feel too bad, though; at least they have heard of Hume. In more "progressive" colleges, they would no doubt have learned instead about the African origins of civilization or the millennia-long conspiracy of men against women.) Following, and to some extent correcting, the work of the great philosophical scholar Norman Kemp Smith, our author portrays Hume as a sturdy champion of common sense.

Livingston maintains that to view Hume as a radical empiricist is to

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