



Center for
International
Studies



The Liberal Foreign Policy Tradition: Pluses, Problems, and Prospects

January 10, 2008

*Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
Washington, D.C.*

Convened by the MIT Center for International Studies,
History and Democracy Project, University of Massachusetts – Amherst,
and the Division of United States Studies, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

This conference aims to assess the liberal internationalist tradition in American foreign policy in the light of both past experience and present needs. To this end, the conveners have brought together distinguished historians and international relations experts to discuss whether and how the policy traditions stirred by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt have advanced two specific, but broad, policy objectives: greater global economic equity and enhanced democratic rights. Panelists and discussion will also take up how relevant these traditions are for the next president's foreign policy.

The format of the conference is intended to promote an unusually dynamic exchange of ideas. There will be three panels, each consisting of two presenters who will speak for 20-30 minutes, and an interlocutor who will respond by posing questions designed to promote discussion and debate. All who attend the conference are strongly encouraged to read the pre-circulated papers and to join in these discussions as active participants themselves.

9:30 Convene for coffee and continental breakfast

9:50 Introductions

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Panel One: Historical Assessments of Wilson and Roosevelt

What is the liberal internationalist tradition, how does it derive from the ideas and practices of Wilson and Roosevelt, how have the key elements of these ideas been translated into practice, and with what lessons for policymakers today?

Presenters: Ted Widmer and Elizabeth Borgwardt
Interlocutor: Robert Westbrook

12:00-12:45 p.m. Lunch

1:00 – 2:45 p.m.

Panel Two: “Freedom from Want”—Roosevelt’s Global Institutions

How has the goal of greater global economic equity been implicitly accepted – but unevenly pursued – through the global financial institutions created by Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Has this most robust form of multilateralism performed as expected? What does it tell us about the prospects of multilateral engagement in other realms?

Presenters: Charles Maier and Amy Sayward Staples

Interlocutor: Rachel Glennerster

3:00-4:45 p.m.

Panel Three: Wilsonian Idealism from the 20th to the 21st Century

Wilson is most strongly identified with support for self-determination and democratization globally. Was this Wilson’s intention? What was his legacy in global politics? To what extent have group rights, such as those undergirding self-determination, informed the human rights revolution of the last 60 years? How has democratization been conceptualized as a goal of U.S. foreign policy?

Presenters: Tony Smith and Erez Manela

Interlocutor: Julie Mertus

5:00-5:30 Reception

7:00-8:30 p.m. Dinner