

Steven Menashi :: [11/21/2003](#) ::

Cato and the World: [Next week](#), something called the "Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy" will be announcing its birth at the National Press Club in Washington. [Signatories](#) to the Coalition's statement of principles, "The Perils of Empire," include folks from *The Free Liberal*, *The American Conservative*, and the Cato Institute as well as academic liberals and academic realists. Note that Doug Bandow is identified not as a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, which [he is](#), but as a "Former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan" in order to make the Coalition appear to include a group it does not: Reaganite conservatives and Republicans. (Leon Hadar's [biography](#) at *The Globalist* explains that Mr. Hadar helped launch the Coalition with the aim of "countering the neoconservative imperial agenda.")

Hadar is also a Cato Institute fellow. [Christopher Preble](#), who maintains the Coalition website and appears to be the group's director, is another Cato fellow. And the list of signatories includes four additional Cato folks (Eland and Layne, like Bandow, are listed as having other affiliations). So it seems that the Coalition is either officially or unofficially a Cato project. A new foreign policy initiative from the Cato crowd is an interesting development. [Francis Fukuyama](#), among others, has argued that libertarianism, especially in the arena of foreign policy, has been rendered ideologically obsolete in the post-September 11 world. The terrorist attacks, he argued, discredited Cato-style isolationism: At the time of the Gulf War, Cato produced an analysis that argued it would be cheaper to let Saddam keep Kuwait than to pay for a military intervention to expel him -- a fine cost-benefit analysis, if you only abstracted from the problem of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a megalomaniac. Contrary to Mr. Reagan's vision of the U.S. as a "shining city on a hill," libertarians saw no larger meaning in America's global role, no reason to promote democracy and freedom abroad. Sept. 11 ended this line of argument.

But the truth is that there are other, larger political constituencies that don't believe in promoting democracy and freedom abroad. If Cato succeeds in uniting them in a coherent political movement -- similar, I suppose, to the cold war-era coalition of libertarians, neoconservatives, and the "religious right" -- then that would be a significant ideological development.

Last March *The American Conservative* called for a "[left-right anti-war coalition](#)" (though Pat Buchanan's previous efforts to that effect haven't [turned out so well](#)) and now someone's trying to build one. But it's unclear what the purpose of this new alliance might be. The Coalition is certainly very angry about the Bush administration's post-September 11 agenda. But what should we have done instead? "Following 9/11," reads the Coalition's statement of principles, "we should have refocused our attention on the very real threats facing us in the 21st century." Well, that's super. But I would guess that the statement's signatories all have very different ideas about what that means.

"We are united," they explain, "by our desire to turn American national security policy toward realistic and sustainable measures for protecting U.S. vital interests in a manner that is consistent with American values." Then again, so is everyone else.

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Carter's World: In [The Washington Post](#) today, Jimmy Carter has this to say: