

## US Power and the Transatlantic Relationship

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This packet contains a series of essays written over the past decade on topics related to the transatlantic relationship. The guiding theme is the changing nature of power and leadership in global affairs. This theme will be familiar to anyone who has been exposed to arguments about the relative decline of the United States or the difference between the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, I hope to make some small contribution to the debate by focusing on how the redistribution of economic activity at the global level has influenced the ability of the United States and Europe to assert control over their environment.

The packet is organized in reverse chronological order because I imagine people are more interested in looking at the present than dwelling on the past. Hence the first two essays deal with the conflict in Libya. One provides a justification for the decision taken within Barack Obama's administration to 'lead from behind' and rely on the Europeans to carry a significant burden in the military operations. The other (written with Dana Allin) explains how the decision to intervene in Libya makes sense – at least if you believe in the 'right to protect'.

The next three essays were written before the security situation in Libya began to deteriorate. The first of these explains why the United States is likely to end up playing an important role in any global crisis and why it is important to focus on followers as well as leaders – particularly in a transatlantic context. The second uses the renewed debate about American decline to draw out the importance of foreign policy narratives. And the third looks at the relationship between power and leadership. This third essay sketches the theoretical core of my argument using the rich literature on power that developed in the disordered conditions of the 1970s.

The transatlantic component comes in the next set of contributions. I have included the prologue and epilogue to a book I edited with Salvatore Vassallo on the 2008 U.S. Presidential elections. This book was designed to explain the American political process to a predominantly European audience and so my contributions flesh out the continuity and change that Europeans should expect. Europeans sought an explanation because they had so much difficulty relating to the successive George W. Bush administrations. Part of that has to do with the ambiguous nature of the man himself – and so I have included a short review essay on the Bush legacy. A more serious source of confusion comes from the distorted debate that emerged about the transatlantic relationship during the early phase of the conflict with Iraq. A longer essay tries to separate rhetoric from reality in order to show how the two sides of the Atlantic are more similar than either would like to admit.

Sometimes rhetoric is distinct from reality and sometimes it reveals a lot about how the world works. The last essay uses the contrast between cowboys and lawyers to dig into more fundamental theoretical debates. It was originally a tongue-in-cheek exercise, which explains the cartoons that the journal editors added. But I think it shows an important cleavage in how we

think about U.S. global leadership. I am currently exploring that point in a book that I am writing with Dana Allin for IISS. With any luck, that book will soon find its way into print.

The bibliographic references for the material are as follows:

“Power, Leadership and US Foreign Policy,” *International Spectator* 46:3 (September 2011) pp. 13-23.

“Closing Argument: As Good As It Gets?” *Survival* 53:3 (June-July 2011) pp. 205-216. With Dana Allin.

“European Security, Transatlantic Relations, and the Challenge to US Global Leadership,” In Ricardo Alcaro and Erik Jones, eds. *European Security and the Future of Transatlantic Relations* (Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2011) pp. 149-167.

“A Great Fall,” *Survival* 52:4 (August-September 2010) pp. 177-182.

“Closing Argument: Elusive Power, Essential Leadership,” *Survival* 51:3 (June-July 2009) pp. 243-252.

“Prologue” and “Epilogue,” in Erik Jones and Salvatore Vassallo, eds. *The 2008 Presidential Elections: A Story in Four Acts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 1-11, 247-252.

“Writing Bush’s Legacy Today,” *International Spectator* 42:3 (September 2007) pp. 452-454.

“Debating the Transatlantic Relationship: Rhetoric and Reality,” *International Affairs* 80:4 (July 2004) pp. 595-612.

“Cowboys and Lawyers: An Institutional Critique of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *European Political Science* 3:1 (Autumn 2003) pp. 7-12.

# Power, Leadership and US Foreign Policy

Erik Jones

American leadership is not simply a matter of going it alone and bearing all of the burden ourselves. Real leadership creates the conditions and coalitions for others to step up as well; to work with allies and partners so that they bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all.<sup>1</sup>

When Barack Obama committed American military forces to the joint intervention in Libya, he had to satisfy three constituencies at once. To begin with, he had to convince realists in his own administration that this action was in the national interest. He also had to reassure pragmatists both inside and outside the administration that the operations would not prove too costly to sustain either in terms of blood or treasure. Finally, he had to make it clear to all Americans that the United States was playing a 'leading' role.

The realists were never going to be satisfied. Although there were many voices in the administration speaking in favour of humanitarian intervention and the right to protect, they could not convince the realists to come over to their idealist perspective. Hence the realists were overpowered by the followers of norms.<sup>2</sup> The result is a fudge. Obama's suggestion that it would not be in America's interest to allow the unchecked slaughter of Libyan civilians does not logically require that it is in America's interest to use military force to do the checking.

The pragmatists were easier to placate, at least at the outset. Both the US military and the federal budget were badly overstretched and yet there were still enough resources to support the bombing of anti-aircraft installations and aircraft on the

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<sup>1</sup> US President Barack Obama, "Address to the Nation on Libya", 28 March 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>

<sup>2</sup> See H. Cooper and S. L. Meyers, "Obama Takes Hard Line with Libya after Shift by Clinton", *New York Times*, 18 March 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/world/africa/19policy.html>

ground. The problems began to emerge later, once it became clear that Qaddafi would not surrender and that the rebels were too inexperienced and ineffective to topple his regime. The European allies faced challenges of their own in marshalling support and munitions.<sup>3</sup> So while Obama insisted that the American contribution would focus on the superpower's "unique capabilities", this left open the possibility for redefining 'unique' to encompass an ever widening array of commitments. Congressional support began to waiver soon after the sixty-day time limit for unilateral executive action under the 1973 War Powers Resolution expired, leading to calls for the president to justify continued American involvement.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of American leadership has been salient throughout. Those voices ranged against the realists argue that the United States has a special mission to protect human rights and promote human dignity across the globe. The principled opponents of the pragmatists insist that the United States should uphold its values abroad no matter what the costs. These constituencies are natural allies for the Obama administration, and their influence weighed heavily on his 2009 Nobel prize lecture. Their starting point is that the United States should play a leading role. Here Obama's supporters are joined by his opponents. Virtually everyone in the United States believes their country should lead the globe. To deny that would be to deny that America is 'exceptional'.

The Obama administration's efforts to explain their view on American leadership are an attempt to square the circle. Administration officials argue that American leadership lies in helping European allies rise up to the challenge, shoulder the burdens, and accept responsibility for the consequences. Following the logic of this argument, it is in America's national interest to help the British and the French act in their own national interest. Meanwhile, the United States can husband its resources by encouraging the British and the French to substitute their own. Outgoing Defense Secretary Robert Gates put the case succinctly in an interview with the *Financial Times*: "I'm the quintessential believer in American exceptionalism. I believe we are different than everybody else. I do believe we are the indispensable nation. But for all those reasons, we can walk a little lighter."<sup>5</sup>

This argument about American leadership has not been easy to sell, particularly on the right. Republicans like presidential hopeful Mit Romney have derided Obama for "leading from behind", Henry Kissinger has dismissed it as disingenuous, and

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<sup>3</sup> See K. De Young and G. Jaffe, "NATO Runs Short on Some Munitions in Libya", *Washington Post*, 15 April 2010, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/nato-runs-short-on-some-munitions-in-libya/2011/04/15/AF307EID\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/nato-runs-short-on-some-munitions-in-libya/2011/04/15/AF307EID_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> See C. Savage, "Libya Effort is Called Violation of War Act", *New York Times*, 25 May 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26powers.html>

<sup>5</sup> P. Spiegel, "Defence: NATO's Troubled Terrain", *Financial Times*, 27 June 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c9291eb8-a0ea-11e0-adae-00144feabdc0.html#>

Council on Foreign Relations President Richard Haass has described it as half-hearted – either the President should commit fully or he should not commit at all.<sup>6</sup> The left has also been critical for fear that the coalition will crumble and the European allies will not finish the job. The protection of fundamental rights and the promotion of universal values should not be left to the fickle or faint of heart.

The argument in this article is that such critiques are neither fair nor accurate and the model of leadership being promoted by the Obama administration is more than just a clever bit of rhetorical sleight-of-hand. Indeed, Obama's notion of leadership as creating the conditions within which others can shoulder the lion's share of responsibility is well-suited to the current international context. Power has bled out of the international system and only collective action can regenerate leverage or control. Yet such collective action depends as much on followers as it depends on leaders. It is not enough simply to announce an objective; it is also necessary to rally others to the common goal.

This argument is important for understanding the past as well as the present. International regime theorists have taught us much about the importance of hegemonic leadership in setting out the rules of the game. What has been less well elucidated is whether and why other countries choose to follow along. This question was uninteresting in the context of the Cold War. The choice between capitalism and communism was not really a choice at all. Outside that Manichean framework, however, it is more difficult to take the motivations of follower states for granted. The contrast between more state and more market is not stark enough to force countries to declare their alignments. Leaders are still inclined to lead and yet followers are less inclined to follow.

This argument has five stages. The first introduces the relationship between power, leadership and collective action. The second explains how this relationship is influenced by changes in the distribution of resources and other notions of power. The third looks at the implications when collective action breaks down. The fourth adds in the economic constraints that confront both the United States and its European allies. The fifth concludes with the challenge of using leadership to regenerate power.

### **Power, leadership and collective action**

Individuals can be weak or powerful; groups can be weak or powerful as well. The difference between strength and weakness is partly a function of the distribution of

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<sup>6</sup> See D. E. Sanger, "Letting Others Lead in Libya", *New York Times*, 23 April 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/24/weekinreview/24intervention.html>. In fairness, the phrase "leading from behind" was given to Romney by the Obama administration itself, and used in Romney's official announcement that he would run for the presidency: <http://mittromney.com/press/2011/06/mitt-romney-launches-presidential-campaign>. See also R. Haass, "What Next in Libya?", *Huffington Post*, 6 April 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-n-haass/what-next-in-libya\\_b\\_845792.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-n-haass/what-next-in-libya_b_845792.html)

resources. It is also a matter of coordination. The distribution side of the argument is well known. Governments with significant resources at their disposal usually run powerful countries. Alliances with significant resources are usually powerful as well. The logic connecting wealth and power is self-evident. What is more difficult to anticipate is why the link from wealth to power would break down. Hence the focus is on coordination rather than the distribution of resources, specifically as that coordination applies to groups.

All things being equal, better coordinated groups are more powerful – meaning they are better able to influence their environments, including the actions of both those within the group and those outside. This is the starting point for Mancur Olson’s *Logic of Collective Action*.<sup>7</sup> It is also the key to Olson’s most counter-intuitive conclusion: because they are better coordinated, smaller groups often overpower larger groups. The obvious question is how to improve coordination within a group. Institutions – rules, norms, conventions – offer one set of solutions, but their effectiveness depends on a mix of incentives and enforcement. This is where leadership comes into play. A leader can create incentives to encourage others to adopt and abide by the rules of the game; a leader can also step in to enforce the rules for those who are less compliant.

This notion of leadership leaves out a number of conventional meanings of the term. For example, it does not include innovation or creativity as a necessary component. The test of leadership is not getting there first; it is getting others to follow.

Such a restrictive notion of leadership changes the way we think about power as well. To begin with, it creates a distinction between the power that comes from collective action, and the power of leaders over followers. The power of collective action lies in the efficient pooling of energy and resources; the power of leadership focuses more narrowly on the ability to create incentives or to impose discipline.

Consider the notion of soft power. The United States creates incentives for collective action by setting itself up as a role model. Countries that seek to emulate the United States are more likely to accept the rules, norms and conventions that it promotes as well.<sup>8</sup> Agenda-setting creates another set of incentives; once countries accept to tackle those issues at the top of the list, they can realistically expect to turn to those issues further down.<sup>9</sup>

Hegemonic stability theory rests on the ability of the hegemon to offer public goods as incentives for compliance. The promise of access to an open market for distressed goods and to a lender of last resort makes it easier to accept norms of reciprocity and non-discrimination. The distribution of costs and benefits from

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<sup>7</sup> Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*.

<sup>8</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*.

<sup>9</sup> Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*.

participation in international trade or capital movements may not be equitable, but the advantages are nevertheless sufficient to win compliance with the regime.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, power can be exercised through coercion as well. As Soviet experience has shown, such coercion can cover a wide spectrum of activities. Here is where the power of the leader and the power generated through collective action intersect. The problem with coercion is that it is such an inefficient means of coordination. The quality of collective action is diminished as a consequence.

The goal here is not to re-litigate the Cold War. Rather it is to suggest only that leaders are better off using incentives than coercion if they want to rely on collective action to generate power. There is nothing new in this assertion. You can find it as easily in the writings of Max Weber as E.H. Carr.<sup>11</sup>

The role of incentives is important once we relax initial assumptions about the distribution of resources, up to now held constant. The focus here is not on how resources are distributed at the outset; rather, it is on how that distribution evolves over time. The reason is simple: any change in the distribution of resources across members of the group has the potential to change the structure of incentives even if the leader's coercive power remains undiminished. In turn this would alter the balance between incentives and coercion in the leader's efforts to foster coordination; the power generated through collective action would dissipate.

## **Distribution and power**

Relevant changes in the distribution of resources can either take place within the group or between insiders and outsiders. Going back to the post-World War II international economic regime as an illustration, it is clear that both forms of redistribution have been important. The rise of Germany within Europe and Europe within the Atlantic Alliance has altered the incentives for Europeans to accept American hegemony. The rise of China and India outside the Western system – and Turkey and Brazil as middle-ranking powers – has altered the incentives to accept the rules, norms and conventions of a Western-dominated world.

These trends are well established in the writings of commentators like Thomas Friedman and Fareed Zakaria.<sup>12</sup> However the conclusion they draw is different from what is suggested here. Power has not shifted from West to East (or, in Zakaria's wording, from the West to the Rest); rather power has diminished as coordination both within and between groups has faltered. The difficult negotiation of the Uruguay Round of the GATT was an early example; the moribund Doha Development Round of talks within the WTO shows progression along that

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<sup>10</sup> Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939*.

<sup>11</sup> Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*; Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939*.

<sup>12</sup> Friedman, *The World is Flat*; Zakaria, *The Post-American World*.

trend. Meanwhile, efforts to create parallel forms of coordination or go-it-alone strategies have fractured the original system. The evolution of the original Bretton Woods currency arrangement to the current monetary disorder is a good illustration. So too is the ‘spaghetti bowl’ of bilateral trade agreements that is inundating the old multilateral trading system.<sup>13</sup>

The change in the distribution of resources has not only reduced the quality of collective action but also made it possible for actors to express alternative types of power relationships – beyond those associated with the practice of leadership or deriving from the fruits of cooperation. The most obvious of these are blackmail within the regime or the creation of alternative arrangements outside the regime.

The notion of blackmail as power derives from the writings of Michel Crozier.<sup>14</sup> His argument is that power lies in control over uncertainty. Actors exploit the benefits of collective action by threatening to undermine or withhold them. Charles De Gaulle’s attack on the link between the dollar and gold is one illustration, the implicit threat that China will sell off its dollar-denominated reserve holdings is another. The list of cases could be expanded to include everything from nuclear proliferation to economic migration. The more complex the web of interdependence between countries, the more opportunities there are for individual countries to control uncertainty within the system.<sup>15</sup>

The creation of alternative arrangements is more complicated because it implies competing forms of collective action. The competition between rival capitalist and communist systems in the developing world was an obvious illustration of this dynamic, as was the attempt to create a ‘non-aligned’ new economic order between them. In the current context, the examples are found in OPEC, the BRICs, etc. But it can also be found in the transnational leasing of arable land, the purchase of minerals in the ground, or the pattern of Chinese investment in sub-Saharan Africa.

States are not the only actors to benefit from these new forms of power. Non-state actors have taken advantage of them as well. Transnational terrorist groups threaten to control uncertainty within the state system; transnational democracy movements strive to organise alternatives to existing state institutions. The global financial community illustrates both dimensions – first it creates a parallel financial universe seemingly disconnected from the real economy that drives the rest of the world; then, when that universe faces implosion, it demands assistance in order to prevent the real economy from devastation. Hence when policymakers call for regulation to prevent moral hazard, what they are hoping to prevent is giving blackmail power to institutions that are ‘too big to fail’.

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<sup>13</sup> Bhagwati, *Termites in the Trading System*.

<sup>14</sup> Crozier, *The Stalled Society*.

<sup>15</sup> The argument made in this and subsequent paragraphs is developed further in Jones, “Elusive Power, Essential Leadership”, 243–51; and Jones, “A Great Fall”, 177–82.

The redistribution of resources makes for a more disorderly world because even if self-anointed leading countries have the resources and proclivity to lead, other countries have less interest to follow and more opportunities to go it alone. The types of power used in the system are multiplied, but the power generated by collective action is diminished.

## **Implications**

Three implications derive from this understanding of power and leadership: friction increases, leaders are overstretched and negative externalities accumulate. These implications are obvious (and well known). The increasing friction can be measured by the length of time required to agree on collective responses; the overstretch takes place as leaders try to maintain their positions by increasing both incentives (public goods provision) and coercion; and externalities accumulate as the pattern of collective action becomes more inflexible, as routine maintenance of the system is ignored and as the unintended consequences of cooperation remain unaddressed.

The evolution of the United States' responses to state failure from Yugoslavia through Somalia to Afghanistan and Iraq are illustrative of this dynamic. The increasing friction within the Western alliance led to delayed or ineffective intervention. The US response was to shift toward ever narrower 'coalitions of the willing'. And the result was not only the over-commitment of America resources but also a lingering resentment within the West and the destabilisation of a region extending from the Middle East to the Indian subcontinent.

The security policy illustration is clear but the pattern can also be seen in the context of global macroeconomic imbalances.<sup>16</sup> Many top officials in the Obama administration have identified these imbalances as a cause of the economic and financial crisis. In September 2009, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner insisted that macroeconomic imbalances should be the focus for cooperation within the Group of 20 (G20). Far from resulting in decisive action, however, this insistence on tackling macroeconomic imbalances has only fuelled further divisions and indecisiveness within the G20 itself.

A third example might be environmental protection. The negotiation of the Kyoto Protocols was difficult. Their implementation was only partial and efforts to negotiate a follow-up agreement in Copenhagen were largely unsuccessful. The conversations between countries continue, but it is hard to see much evidence of progress. Meanwhile, greenhouse gases continue to accumulate in the atmosphere and the estimated cost of adjusting to higher temperatures continues to mount.

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<sup>16</sup>For an extended analysis of the problem of macroeconomic imbalances, see Jones, "New Political Economy of Macroeconomic Imbalances", 61–73.

The controversial point would be whether the United States was actually a ‘leader’ on this issue. Even if we assign ‘leadership’ to Europe, however, we can see much the same pattern of development.

Finally, it is worth considering how these implications of power and leadership play out alongside the pro-democracy movement in the Arab world. To begin with, there is a clear argument to be made that the democratisation of the Middle East creates conditions that are impossible for any one country to manage alone. Even when the subject is limited to a single subject like ethnic conflict, human rights violations, economic migration, energy security or Israel–Palestine, it is hard to see how a single country could play a decisive role. Once these lines of argument interact, the logic of collective response becomes inescapable.<sup>17</sup>

The point is to consider what the outcome will be if the international community is divided, if individual countries – the United States, Britain, France, China, Saudi Arabia – try to manage the political transformation of the Arab world, and if unintended consequences – lost incomes and opportunities, migration, crime, etc. – continue to mount. It is not hard to imagine this situation leading to a non-democratic outcome that is worse in many ways than what the Arab countries started with. This is clearly a scenario worth preventing both across the region and at the individual country level.

## Second-order constraints

Throwing money at the Arab world is not an option. The Obama administration simply does not have the resources at its disposal. Military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq has resulted in an unprecedented degree of American war-weariness. When they met for their first major debate in New Hampshire, the contenders for the Republican Party’s presidential nomination were all competing to explain how they would put an end to foreign entanglements.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, President Obama has announced an accelerated draw-down of US foreign troop deployments.<sup>19</sup>

Budgetary debates in the United States underscore the limits to American resources as well. As Republicans and Democrats wrangle over how best to cure the government’s fiscal deficits, the market actors fear that political inattention to the need to raise the statutory debt ceiling will result in an unintended technical default. Meanwhile, every aspect of discretionary spending is under the

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<sup>17</sup> See Allin and Jones, “As Good as It Gets?”, 205–15.

<sup>18</sup> For a strong characterisation of the debate, see Republican Senator John McCain’s interview on ABC Television’s ‘This Week’ program, 19 June 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-sen-john-mccain/story?id=13869543>

<sup>19</sup> President Obama’s remarks “on the way forward in Afghanistan”, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>

microscope.<sup>20</sup> And even though foreign assistance amounts to less than one percent of the federal budget, the fact that it has so few domestic constituents means that the foreign assistance budget line will suffer significant cuts.

Such constraints are second-order because they derive at least in part from the accumulated weakness and ineffectiveness of American control over the international system. More efficient multilateral involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq would have relieved some of the strain on the US military; more solidarity in the world economy would have softened the impact of the financial crisis as well.

The United States is hardly alone in suffering from ever tighter financial constraints. Although most European countries do not approach US federal debt levels, they remain overcommitted. The reason lies in the ineffectiveness of European leadership, both nationally in those countries worst effected and in the European Union as a whole. The consequences are dramatic: the threat of a sovereign debt crisis on Europe's periphery threatens to stall the economic recovery and bring down the major European banks – and perhaps the single currency as well.

It is small wonder, then, that so few European countries committed forces to the Libyan engagement. As the trickle of migrants from North Africa to Europe threatens to transform into a flood, governments are eager to ring-fence their development assistance as well. Although there are clear arguments that such assistance can help stem the flow of migrants, the credibility of such arguments depends upon the belief that migration flows can be stemmed without the threat of force. International development assistance is only a long-term solution. In the short term, it is easier (and more expedient politically) simply to shut the border and shunt the burdens associated with international migration onto someone else.

### **Restarting collective action**

If countries cannot simply redeploy resources to aid the political transformation of the Arab world (or to end global warming, correct macroeconomic imbalances, rebuild failed states and restructure international trade and development), then there is little choice but to search for a cooperative solution.

The challenge is to restart collective action. This challenge is much greater than we might like to admit because it focuses attention on followers as well as leaders. Somehow, despite the redistribution of power resources in a changed global environment, followers must resist the temptation to defect from cooperation or to resort to blackmail.

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<sup>20</sup> See M. Tomasky, "The Budget Battles on which His Reelection Depends", *New York Review of Books*, 26 May 2011, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/may/26/budget-battles-which-his-reelection-depends/>

This is where Obama's point about 'real leadership' in the context of Libya becomes relevant. Any attempt by the United States to intervene independently would only intensify the strain on American resources. Should the United States insist on running the show, it would expose itself to blackmail or defection.

Hence the best choice is for the United States to create incentives for other countries to assume responsibility for the maintenance of collective action. An important part of such incentives is going to be allowing other countries to influence the precise definition of the goals. At best, the United States will serve its national interest by encouraging other countries to pursue their own. Ideally, it would make this specific intervention in Libya compatible with a broader collective response to the democratisation of the Arab world.

The success of this strategy depends heavily on the actions of the other countries involved. If the Obama administration wants to assume a 'real leadership' position, then it has to accept responsibility for the work of the 'real followers' as well. In other words, the Obama administration has to accept responsibility for political decisions made outside its direct control – and this is what makes most Americans uncomfortable. When John Kerry announced his commitment to a 'global test' of explaining the legitimacy of American actions to the rest of the world, he was immediately ridiculed for giving other countries an opportunity to question the US government's pursuit of its own national interest. Making US policy dependent on other countries' performance is even harder to swallow. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine a credible alternative. Even accepting that the Libyan intervention might not have been in America's national interest, it is clear that US foreign policy depends significantly on how much it can depend upon the cooperation of the rest of the world. Moreover, such interdependence has existed for decades; the current situation may be qualitatively different, but it is not categorically so.

This is why outgoing Defense Secretary Robert Gates' critique of NATO in his 10 June 2011 speech is so significant.<sup>21</sup> US Defense Secretaries have always complained about burden sharing within the alliance. As Gates himself admits, there is little new to say on that front. What is new is more implicit than explicit. The Obama administration has a lot staked on how well Europeans demonstrate the capacity to support America's leadership role. This is sure to sound strange to the Europeans themselves. Why should they be held responsible for the success or failure of the Obama administration's engagement with the outside world? Yet if Europeans prefer this new style of American global leadership to the more autonomous alternative, then the answer to that question is self-evident. The effectiveness of any leader is a function of the efforts of those who follow. And a leader without followers has little choice but to go it alone.

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<sup>21</sup> Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2011/06/10/transcript-of-defense-secretary-gatess-speech-on-natos-future/>

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## Closing Argument

# As Good as it Gets?

**Dana H. Allin and Erik Jones**

I

'I don't oppose all wars,' the Illinois state senator told those assembled in Chicago on 2 October 2002 for an anti-Iraq War rally. 'What I am opposed to is a dumb war.'<sup>1</sup> Elected president of the United States six years and one month later, Barack Obama was soon provided with ample opportunities to parse the distinction. The man who ordered the immediate ramping up of drone strikes in a fierce policy of targeted killing against the al-Qaeda and Taliban cadres seeking refuge in Pakistan was certainly no pacifist. And although the new president did make good on his commitment to withdraw the majority of American combat troops from Iraq, he also approved a substantial escalation of the war in Afghanistan, against the pointed advice of some in his administration and amidst growing unease among the general public. The next test was going to be Iran. Israel's panic regarding a nuclear-capable Iran and Washington's promise not to accept such an outcome strained against the administration's palpable reluctance to become involved in a third war in the Muslim world.

Then, the contingency of events took over. A Tunisian fruit vendor, humiliated one too many times – this time, by the slap of a policewoman – set himself on fire. The human tumult set off by that act of self-immolation convulsed the Arab world. Decades-old regimes fell in Tunisia itself and in Egypt, until the Libyan dictatorship in between, having mowed its own protestors like bloody grass, bore down on Benghazi and threatened to

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hunt down its rebels from house to house, 'like rats'.<sup>2</sup> Within days of that statement, mere weeks after the Libyan protests and repression started, the UN Security Council authorised member states to use 'all necessary means' to keep Muammar Gadhafi's forces from the hunt.<sup>3</sup> In the history of a putative international community organising itself to stop atrocities, this was the speed of light and, as Bruce Jones explains elsewhere in this issue, only the fourth time in its history that the Security Council 'fully' authorised 'force against a member state'.<sup>4</sup>

Did Obama, in league with France's Nicolas Sarkozy and Britain's David Cameron, thereby stumble into his own dumb war? The indictment of strategic incoherence includes a number of damning counts. The most important is that while the administration spoke of humanitarian intervention, the situation on the ground looked more like civil war. Much of the east of Libya clearly rejected the Gadhafi regime, but a large part of the west of the country offered active support. Moreover, as Saskia van Genugten points out elsewhere in this issue, no one knew much about the rebels, and what was eventually learned did not instil confidence in an effective fighting force.<sup>5</sup> The operating theory was that an air campaign, sanctions, and the certainty of permanent isolation would set loose a steady landslide of regime defections, until such time as the regime crumbled or, at least, Gadhafi and sons started looking for a way out. Yet almost no world leader has as much experience surviving sanctions as Gadhafi, and very few show such willingness to impose the ruthless discipline required to hold potential defectors in check. With vast stockpiles of cash at his disposal, an equally vast pool of mercenaries, and a near limitless capacity for self-delusion, it is not hard to imagine that Gadhafi can hold out for quite some time.<sup>6</sup>

Such counts are damning but not irrefutable. Few real-world scenarios combine the need for humanitarian intervention with the absence of civil war, or at least a potential for civil conflict. Even the most brutal dictator has domestic supporters. (Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania was the exception and not the rule.) The experience of Bosnia and Kosovo showed that humanitarian intervention cannot be neutral without creating contradictions; it only becomes coherent once it accepts to take sides.

From this perspective, it could be argued that the Obama administration did not have much of a choice. It could hardly side with Gadhafi and his forces as they fought to reassert their own view of 'political order', and it could not stand aside as Gadhafi's troops went house to house in Benghazi either. As Obama phrased it in his 28 March speech to the American people, 'It was not in our national interest to let that happen'.<sup>7</sup> This was not some post hoc rationalisation. The roots of this argument are clearly laid out in Obama's 2009 Nobel acceptance speech:

More and more, we all confront difficult questions about how to prevent the slaughter of civilians by their own government, or to stop a civil war whose violence and suffering can engulf an entire region.

I believe that force can be justified on humanitarian grounds, as it was in the Balkans, or in other places that have been scarred by war. Inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to more costly intervention later. That's why all responsible nations must embrace the role that militaries with a clear mandate can play to keep the peace.<sup>8</sup>

The situation unfolding in Libya fits clearly within the 'just war' scenario that Obama sketched for the Peace Prize audience. Any suggestion that Gadhafi would be less than brutal in his repression of dissent is inconsistent with the history of his rule, or with practice elsewhere in the region. Gadhafi is not uniquely oppressive; he is just extremely so.<sup>9</sup>

The fact that other countries also accepted the logic of intervention is significant as well. In the three sentences that follow the above citation from Obama's Nobel speech, the president goes on to point out that 'America's commitment to global security will never waver. But in a world in which threats are more diffuse, and missions more complex, America cannot act alone. America alone cannot secure the peace.'

The Libya crisis may not be the perfect occasion for humanitarian intervention, but there is unlikely to be a better one. The emergency was real and impending. The response was authorised by the UN Security Council, with five abstentions but no vetoes or negative votes. Through the Arab League, regional states supported it. European powers France and Britain

argued for it and were willing (how able they are is another question) to take on the main burden of conducting it. If one believes in the developing international norm of a 'responsibility to protect' – and according to its vote of 14 September 2009, the UN General Assembly does so believe – then this particular exercise of that responsibility is probably as good as it gets.

## II

One alleged problem that cannot be taken seriously as a real problem is inconsistency: the accusation that intervening in Libya is somehow illegitimate because the United States, France and Britain are not also intervening against repression in Bahrain, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (where there have in fact been EU-flagged troops), in Syria or even in Saudi Arabia. The fact is, that inconsistency is baked into the cake for as long as the American superpower lacks supernatural powers.

Firstly, the set of problems amenable to outside military solutions is a small one. The urgent problem in Libya was not to create a democracy, which is not practical at gunpoint, but to prevent a massacre. That task was accomplished – at least as of the moment when *Survival* went to press – and although it cannot be proven that, in the absence of intervention, a massacre would have taken place, the evidence, as suggested above, is strong.

Secondly, any intervention is an act of choice, and choice is an expression of priority. Even the United States has limited resources. Nowhere are those limits more evident than when the military is involved. American men and women are not only engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan and ongoing stabilisation efforts in Iraq, but they are also helping to stabilise relations between North and South Korea; are patrolling the waters of the North Atlantic and South Pacific; and are delivering aid and sustenance to disaster victims in Japan. (Indeed, they may already have completed that mission and moved on to provide assistance elsewhere by the time this issue appears.) Moreover, these examples constitute only a small fraction of what the US military is asked to accomplish on a regular basis. Any additional foreign intervention only adds to the list.

The financial constraints on American power are telling as well. Apart from the potential human cost of any combat operations, cruise missiles and precision-guided munitions deployed from existing stockpiles all have to be replaced. The accuracy such weapons offer comes at a frightening cost at a time when Democrats and Republicans are threatening to shut down the government over a difference of a few billion dollars. By 30 March, the administration had set the price tag for the Libyan intervention to that point at \$550 million and estimated it would cost another \$40m per month from there.<sup>10</sup> Of course, these estimates depend on whether America's NATO allies can shoulder the burden for routine operations and so leave the United States to attend only to its unique capabilities. Given that the European allies were already running out of precision-guided munitions by mid-April, the 'uniqueness' of American military assets looks set to broaden and the cost of US involvement to consequently increase.<sup>11</sup> On 21 April, for example, the United States began deploying *Predator* drones to make targeted strikes in urban areas beyond the reach of European NATO assets.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of such fiscal considerations should not, however, be exaggerated. They may explain why the Obama administration does not intervene everywhere all the time, but they are no excuse for avoiding selective engagement. Although it is true that the United States is currently borrowing excessively, the reason does not trace back to one-off measures such as the Libyan intervention. Even the huge stimulus package passed at the start of the Obama administration is of relatively marginal concern. Instead, the real forces driving US indebtedness can be found in the rising cost of health care for the elderly, including the prescription-drug benefits created under the previous George W. Bush administration, and the Bush tax cuts.<sup>13</sup> Both Republican and Democratic proposals for fiscal consolidation admit that the combination of high costs and low revenues is a structural problem.<sup>14</sup> But just as the Libyan intervention was an act of choice, it also constitutes discretionary expenditure.

We now know, of course, that while the Obama administration was debating whether to join a Libya intervention, it was also in the late stages of planning for a mission to kill Osama bin Laden. The concurrence of

these operations serves to remind us that no single doctrine or tradition can really convey what America is up to or about. In Walter Russell Mead's categories, a 'Wilsonian' liberalism made it difficult for America to stand aloof from Libya's ordeal, while 'Jacksonian' nationalism made it unlikely that bin Laden, for all his success in evading capture, would end his days peacefully in bed.<sup>15</sup> The question that arises is whether the organised violence that is driven by either of these American impulses can be put to good strategic purpose.

Since the law of unintended consequences almost inevitably applies, we must be cautious about asserting that the answer is 'yes'. But in the case of bin Laden, it can't hurt to have underscored the lesson, expressed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Islamist militants in South Asia, that 'You cannot wait us out, you cannot defeat us, but you can make the choice to abandon al-Qaeda and participate in a peaceful political process'.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not her intended audience is now more amenable to that choice is debatable, but it is now at least an established historical fact that regimes, such as Afghanistan's pre-2001 Taliban, or individuals, such as Osama bin Laden, who are complicit in a major attack on the United States are very likely to be destroyed as a result.

In Libya, the understandable fear is that stalemate and Gadhafi's survival in power will make America look, in Richard Nixon's immortal phrase, like a 'pitiful, helpless giant'.<sup>17</sup> It is not clear, however, that the immediate fall of Benghazi would have made America look much better than that. In any event, the long-term fate of the Arab Awakening will be decided in Egypt and, to a lesser extent, in Tunisia. Obama's decision to intervene in Libya insulates both countries from the consequences and contagion that would result from Gadhafi's unchecked oppression. This will not guarantee the success of democracy in the region, but it does buy more time for Egypt and Tunisia to consolidate recent gains.

### III

Is this, finally, the hour of Europe? The Obama administration clearly wishes that were possible. If there is a clear doctrine coming out of the president's address to the nation about Libya, it has less to do with the

conditions for humanitarian intervention than with the exercise of global leadership. In an attempt to draw a contrast with the leadership style of the previous Bush administration, Obama insisted:

American leadership is not simply a matter of going it alone and bearing all of the burden ourselves. Real leadership creates the conditions and coalitions for others to step up as well; to work with allies and partners so that they bear their share of the burden and pay their share of the costs; and to see that the principles of justice and human dignity are upheld by all. That's the kind of leadership we've shown in Libya.<sup>18</sup>

The success of this doctrine hinges on whether the Europeans are up to the challenge. The outcome will be close at best.

The first point to note is that the European Union is largely absent from the equation. As Anand Menon points out elsewhere in this issue, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is virtually irrelevant.<sup>19</sup> Although Europe's foreign ministers managed to pass a supportive resolution, they did so only on 1 April 2011 – well after the fact. This should not be surprising. The precondition for a successful European foreign and security policy is that the member states agree to act in common; it does not work the other way around, with a pressing issue building unity for action. Hence the EU rarely emerges as a coherent actor in response to sudden changes in world events, particularly where the immediate concerns of the member states are likely to differ, as when those events are close to home.

The EU will be important to Libya over the longer term, but that importance will only develop much later, once the member states have had time to build consensus on priorities for action and as the European Commission and Parliament seize the opportunity to bring the Union's considerable resources for development assistance, political cooperation and market access to bear. Post-stabilisation, the EU will likely become Libya's most important partner. Hence the European challenge is to manage events in and around Libya through the perilous short and medium terms.

In this period of decisive action, 'Europe' is not the European Union. It is the member states – France and Great Britain in particular. Europe is also the NATO Alliance, drawing upon the support of America's unique capabilities but shouldering both the lion's share of the costs and risks associated with military operations. Finally, Europe is the idea of collective regional security. It is the difference between unilateral intervention and what Obama characterises as 'leadership'.

The problem for the Obama doctrine is that 'leadership' depends so much on the successful delegation of responsibility to other countries. This is particularly true within the NATO Alliance. The United States may create the conditions for France and Germany to assume a higher profile within NATO, but then France and Germany must be able to lead the smaller members of the Alliance as well. In turn, France and Germany must either create the conditions for the smaller Alliance members to assume a significant share of responsibility for the Libyan intervention, or they must accept to carry a disproportionate share of the burdens themselves. This is where things are most likely to break down. France and Great Britain have already expressed concern that the smaller Alliance partners are not doing enough; that concern will only increase once the true cost of intervening in Libya becomes apparent and as the transition from intervention to stabilisation and, one hopes, democratisation begins to take hold. The rising tide of migrants to Europe from Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa is just one illustration of the wider problem. For France to chide Italy for not being more active in Libya while at the same time closing the Franco-Italian frontier to stem the flow of Tunisian migrants was incoherent. Either France and Italy share security objectives in the region or they do not; if they have different interests, then they should be free to pursue different policies. This is precisely the sort of situation where the European concept of collective security is most likely to founder. Fortunately, this time it did not. Italy pledged to become more actively involved in Libya even as France and Italy agreed to work together to suggest new protocols for introducing border controls within the Schengen regime.

In any case, tensions arising between France and Italy were but the tip of the iceberg. Germany's abstention in the UN Security Council and more

general northern European reluctance to assume active combat roles pose an even greater problem. The danger is that the smaller NATO Allies will each find reasons to object to French and British requirements. The French and British will become frustrated with their disproportionate share of the load. And the Obama administration will find itself re-assuming responsibility for what the French and the British claim not to be able to manage. In other words, the greatest threat to the new Obama doctrine on leadership will rise from the bottom up. The end result could look less like leadership than over-commitment.

This worst-case scenario is not inevitable. In any event, the best-case scenario of a strong and united Europe capable of assuming responsibility for political turmoil on its borders was not on the cards. The unilateral involvement of American forces without European allies would be ineffective, while any attempt to ignore this unique opportunity to prevent a massacre by a brutal dictator would be unacceptable. The United States cannot expect to find a better situation and should not hope for better allies. Instead, the Obama administration has to play the hand it was dealt.

## Notes

- 1 Barack Obama, speech given in Chicago, IL, 2 October 2002, transcript available at <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/munro5/ObamaonIraqOct2002.pdf>.
- 2 See, for example, Richard Spencer, 'Libya: Col Gaddafi's Speech his Last Stand?', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8341374/Libya-Col-Gaddafis-speech-his-last-stand.html>.
- 3 United Nations Security Council, 'Security Council Approves "No-fly Zone" over Libya', press release and full text of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, 17 March 2011, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.
- 4 Bruce D. Jones, 'Libya and the Responsibilities of Power', *Survival*, vol. 53, no. 3, June–July 2011, p. 52.
- 5 Saskia van Genugten, 'Libya after Gadhafi', *Survival*, vol. 53, no. 3, June–July 2011, pp. 61–74. On the limitations of the rebels see, for example, Claudia Gazzini, 'Chi sono i ribelli di Bengasi?', *La Guerra di Libya – Quaderni Speciali di Limes (Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica)*, vol. 3, no. 2, April 2011, pp. 49–56.
- 6 Assessment offered by Karim Mezran, director of Rome's Centro Studi

- Americani and a long-time expert on Libya's relations with the West.
- 7 Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya', National Defense University, Washington DC, 28 March 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>.
- 8 Barack Obama, Nobel Lecture, Oslo, 10 December 2009, [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/obama-lecture\\_en.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/obama-lecture_en.html).
- 9 We do not deal explicitly with claims like those made by Alan Kuperman that the threat posed by Gadhafi to his own civilians has been exaggerated, except to say that not only are such claims inconsistent with Gadhafi's history of oppression, but they are also based on a reading of Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that is wildly inaccurate. Contrast, for example, Alan J. Kuperman, '5 Things the U.S. Should Consider in Libya', *USA Today*, 22 March 2011, and Alan J. Kuperman, 'False Pretense for War in Libya?', *Boston Globe*, 14 April 2011, with the actual text of the 10 April 2011 HRW report on Misurata: 'Libya: Government Attacks in Misrata Kill Civilians', <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/04/10/libya-government-attacks-misrata-kill-civilians>. Subsequent HRW reporting is even more revealing in its condemnation of Gadhafi's attacks on civilians, which includes use of cluster bombs.
- 10 This cost estimate went out over the Reuters wire on 30 March 2011 and reverberated widely across other media outlets. See 'Libyan War Cost \$550 million So Far, Lawmaker Says', <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/30/us-libya-usa-cost-idUSTRE72T6XZ20110330>.
- 11 See Karen De Young and Greg Jaffe, 'NATO Runs Short on Some Munitions in Libya', *Washington Post*, 15 April 2011.
- 12 Megan Scully, 'Obama Authorizes Predator Drones for Libya', *National Journal*, 21 April 2011, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/domesticpolicy/obama-authorizes-predator-drones-for-libya-20110421>.
- 13 See, for example, *The Long Term Budget Outlook* (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, August 2010), pp. 27–46.
- 14 The Republican proposal ('The Path to Prosperity: Restoring America's Promise') was made by Representative Paul Ryan, chairman of the House Budget Committee, on 5 April 2011, and is available at: <http://budget.house.gov/UploadedFiles/PathToProsperityFY2012.pdf>. Obama's budget proposal for fiscal year 2012 is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget>.
- 15 Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001). On the Obama administration's move, during the debate over a Libya intervention, to a more operational support of Wilsonian principles, see Ryan Lizza, 'The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy', *The New Yorker*, 2 May 2011, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa\\_fact\\_lizza](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza).
- 16 'Bin Laden Death: Clinton Says "You Cannot Wait us Out"', BBC News,

- 2 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13260603>.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard M. Nixon, 'Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia', 30 April 1970, available at <http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/nixon430.htm>.
- <sup>18</sup> Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya'.
- <sup>19</sup> Anand Menon, 'European Defence Policy from Lisbon to Libya', *Survival*, vol. 53, no. 3, June–July 2011, pp. 75–90.

# 11.

## European Security, Transatlantic Relations, and the Challenge to US Global Leadership

*Erik Jones*

The debate about European security and the transatlantic relationship gives a privileged position to the global role of the United States. Hence, when James Goldgeier writes about NATO's role 'beyond' European security, it is clear that his focus is on how NATO can help the United States pursue its interests across the globe. In part this is due to the reality that many security threats to Europe come from outside the continent; in part it is due to the fact that European security is weakened when US commitments draw down American military resources. Hence Goldgeier argues that the Europeans should solve problems within their own backyard and they should contribute to American efforts to address security concerns elsewhere. This is not a call to altruism on the European side; it is a matter of European self interest.<sup>1</sup>

In general terms, this notion of transatlantic partnership makes intuitive sense. Who offers better alliance opportunities for Europe than the United States? In more specific cases, however, it is easy to see how the security interests of Europe and the security interests of the United States might diverge, even if only in terms of perception and not reality. The missile defense debate is one example; the relationship with Russia is another. When the United States places missile defense installations in Europe it makes a visible commitment to transatlantic security partner-

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1. See James Goldgeier, "NATO's Role in European Security – and Beyond" in this volume; for a contrasting view, see Charles A. Kupchan, "The Atlantic Order in Transition: The Nature of Change in US-European Relations" in Jeffrey Anderson, G. John Ikenberry, and Thomas Risse, eds. *The End of the West?: Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008) pp. 111-126.

ship. When the United States decides to relocate those installations to focus on Iran, it inadvertently creates problems as well as resolving them. This is because it creates the impression that US commitment to Europe is changing and it gives rise to concern that its perception of the best way to respond to a nuclear Iran is different from what many Europeans would be willing to accept. As a result, Europeans begin to question the fundamental structure of the alliance and the nuclear guarantee offered by the United States. Given that the time is fast approaching for US nuclear force modernization, there are looming practical implications to this debate.<sup>2</sup>

Relations with Russia show the other side of the coin. Whatever the motivations of President Barack Obama's administration for removing missile defense installations from Central Europe, it is clear that security concerns define the US-Russia relationship. For Europeans, that security lens is not so clearly predominant. On the contrary, some European countries – notably Germany – perceive Russia primarily in economic and energy-supply terms. This only stands to reason given the difference in geographic proximity to Russia and natural resource endowments between Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, the contrast between security and economic perspectives has a powerful influence on the structure of any partnership. It is small wonder, then, that many Europeans would question whether the United States should lead in defining relations with Russia, or whether it should follow.<sup>3</sup>

The problem with this notion of European leadership is isolating what constitutes Europe in the first place. The European Union does not encompass the whole of the continent and in any event is not a monolithic entity. There are important common institutions but it remains a collection of different member states. The addition of other, more encompassing organizations like the Council of Europe or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) only complicates any effort to locate Europe's 'actorness'. This is particularly true in the realm

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2. See Oliver Thränert, "Nuclear Arms and Missile Defence in Transatlantic Security", in this volume.

3. See Arkady Moshes, "Russia in European Security Architecture: Contributor or Contender?" in this volume.

of security and defense. The different organizations play different roles and serve different sets of constituents. This helps to promote stability (and therefore also collective security) but it does not strengthen European power projection. The modest reforms introduced by the Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon Treaties do not seem to have answered the question of what Europe is either. They have facilitated the deployment of European missions into zones of past or potential conflict, but they have not substantially deepened European combat efficiency and neither have they muted the controlling influence of the member states. Hence, although the European Union now includes institutional arrangements that seem analogous to those of a nation state, it is in no way comparable to the United States. Europe is wealthy and it is well-armed, but it is neither unified nor coherent in defense and security terms.<sup>4</sup>

Europe is not a rival to the United States and yet it is not obviously a supportive influence either. Meanwhile, the United States has problems of its own. The Obama administration suffered a significant setback during the mid-term elections held in November 2010. The Republican Party won control over the House of Representatives and it was able to reduce the Democratic majority in Senate. As a consequence, the Obama administration has lost much of its room for maneuver in domestic policy and it faces an uphill battle getting Senate approval for key appointments and international treaties (it managed to have the US-Russia New START treaty on the reduction of nuclear warheads approved by the Senate in the final days of the lame-duck session, though). In turn, international perceptions of the strength of Obama as president have diminished, making it easier for some to ignore US entreaties or blandishments and for others to take advantage of perceived American weakness or preoccupation at home. Many question whether the prospects for American leadership have been fatally challenged and some even wonder whether they can ever be repaired.<sup>5</sup>

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4. See Anand Menon, "Much Ado About Nothing: EU Defence Policy after the Lisbon Treaty", in this volume. Note that Europe's failure to come together on defence issues confounds the recommendations made by Kupchan (see note 1 above) and so tilts the prospects for transatlantic stability more toward Goldgeier's analysis.

5. Newspaper commentary after the November 2010 was full of this sort of doom

This is not an idle debate. On the contrary it taps into a wider *Zeitgeist* of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, according to which power is drifting from the United States (and Europe) to China and elsewhere: it is the decline of the West and the rise of the rest.<sup>6</sup> The only difference is that it is happening in real time and at a pace that even the most enthusiastic (or pessimistic) of pundits would not have expected just a few years back.

## FROM LEADERSHIP TO 'FOLLOWER-SHIP'

No matter how much it may be tempting to buy into the argument about the transfer of power from West to East (or North to South), it would also be wrong. To understand why, it is necessary to argue across the conventional wisdom and not against it. Specifically, this essay makes three points:

- the mismatch between US commitments and resources,
- the prospects for US-sponsored cooperation with other great powers, and
- the inevitable character of US global leadership.

The first point is one that proponents of the conventional wisdom about the decline of the West should find easy to accept: the impact of the global economic and financial crisis, coming alongside or on the heels of two expensive conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, has left the United States in a vulnerable situation. Now, more than ever since the end of

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and despair. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to discount that analysis as a reflection of events of the moment. Serious commentators like David P. Calleo have long worried whether the US has finally overreached itself to the extent that it cannot pull back – particularly under the George W. Bush administration, but under the Obama administration as well. See David P. Calleo, *The Unipolar Folly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

6. For a sample of such writing, see Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050", *Global Economics Paper*, no. 99 (New York: Goldman Sachs, 2003).

the Second World War, the United States needs cooperation from its friends and allies if it is to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

The second point is that whatever the need for cooperation, the United States is likely to encounter great difficulty mobilizing other countries to help it with the intensity and consistency required to meet the challenges we face today. Here the force of the argument is ironic if not tragic. The more the United States needs cooperation, the less likely others are to follow American leadership. Again, proponents of the conventional wisdom will find little to contest. On the contrary, there are many who think that US leadership lacks global legitimacy and so should not be the focal point for global cooperation in any case.

The third point is that the United States is likely to soldier on trying to provide global leadership in different guises nonetheless. This is partly due to hubris and frustration on the American side and partly due to indifference or distraction on the part of others. The basic point here is that neither Europe nor Japan is able to fill a global leadership role. Meanwhile, neither China nor any emerging power is particularly eager to shoulder the burdens that global (or even regional) leadership would entail. Even if that were not the case, emerging powers are even less likely to mobilize followers than the United States itself. Whatever the reason, the result will be further American foreign policy over-commitment leading to worsening and lasting damage to the United States. Both European security and the transatlantic relationship will suffer as a consequence.

That third point is not inevitable. While I have few doubts that the rest of the world will resist the mantle of global leadership, I have some reason to believe that a more equitable and sustainable sharing of burdens between the United States and the rest of the world can be restored. This will involve more than just a strengthening of the transatlantic relationship, although better cooperation between Europe and the United States will help. The transatlantic partnership must be the nucleus around which other countries will pool their efforts as well. The challenge, however, will be to bolster 'follower-ship' as well as leadership at the global level. This is as much a domestic issue as anything else: finding a solution will depend upon commitment in many national parliaments and not just the two Houses of Congress.

## A LEADER WITHOUT RESOURCES

This analysis starts with the stark limits to the resources that the United States can bring to bear in confronting the many challenges it must face in the world – from terrorism to climate change and including all points in between. What matters in this context is not military hardware or personnel. Although there are clear signs of overstretch, the United States has both in abundance. Indeed, it has become almost a requirement at international security conferences for someone to point out that the United States spends more than the rest of the world put together.

What the United States lacks is the financial resources to balance defense expenditures – including procurement, operations, salaries, and veterans benefits – with everything else. This would have been true even without the global financial crisis. The US population is aging. In 2009, 18 percent of the US population was over the age of 60 – by 2050 that population share will be 27 percent.<sup>7</sup> Neither Medicare or Social Security – the largest welfare programs for the elderly run by the US government – was ever designed to handle such a load. Although we like to pretend that these are funded systems, the reality is that they are pay-as-you-go. By implication, future American workers will have to pay enormous taxes to fund the outstanding commitments. This will cut deeply into the money available for the rest of the budget.<sup>8</sup>

Consider the basic arithmetic.<sup>9</sup> Right now Social Security, the federal program providing retirement pensions to retirees, accounts for 20 percent of all federal outlays. With Medicare and Medicaid, the programs funding healthcare for the elderly and the poor, that share goes up to 41

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7. This demographic data comes from the United Nations and is available upon request from the author.

8. See, for example, *The Long-Term Budget Outlook*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, June 2010 (revised August 2010).

9. This section about budget shares draws heavily on: *Policy Basics: Where Do Our Federal Tax Dollars Go?*, Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 14 April 2010. The force of this argument is borrowed from Michael Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower: America's Global Leadership in a Cash-Strapped Era*, New York: Public Affairs, 2010.

percent. Even in a very low interest rate environment, the servicing of the federal debt adds another 6 percent on top of that. Then there is another 14 percent that goes to finance rather modest US social safety net – alleviating some of the worst effects of poverty. This means that just over 60 percent of the budget is tied up in interest payments and entitlements. And both categories – interest and entitlements – will only become more important as the US population gets older.

The economic crisis pushes matters to a whole new level of urgency. The fiscal constraints on the United States were bad before the start of the crisis. The Obama administration inherited a large deficit and a burgeoning public debt. Hence it was always going to have to face the need for a consolidation of the federal government's fiscal accounts. The stimulus package passed in the first months of the administration only delayed and did not deny this reality. And while the stimulus succeeded in stabilizing economic performance, the crisis has created long-term unemployed – exacerbating poverty. It has increased levels of stress, and worsened health overall. And it has run up both the deficits and the public debt, which will increase the burden of interest and amortization in the future. The fiscal situation was bad before, but now it is worse. In turn, this means that the prospects for further delay are more limited: the Obama administration has used up much of its room for maneuver.<sup>10</sup>

Then there are the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The human cost of these conflicts is enormous but the fiscal implications are more directly relevant to the argument. Taken together, Afghanistan and Iraq have a significant transitory effect on the defense budget – amounting to approximately USD 160-170 billion per annum. They also have a lasting impact on benefits to government employees, which include veterans. Together, defense expenditures and benefits payments account for another 27 percent of total outlays. Even as American involvement in both places begins to scale down, the absolute cost of having participated in both conflicts is likely to continue to grow.

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10. See *The Budget and Economic Outlook: An Update*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, August 2010.

Once the numbers for entitlements and defense outlays are put together, they command an impressive share of the total: 41 percent for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security; 6 percent for debt service; 14 percent for the social safety net; and 27 percent for defense and for benefits owed to government employees, including veterans. That adds up to 87 percent of the federal budget. These are the things that the Obama administration cannot cut except with great difficulty.

The remaining 12 to 13 percent of the federal budget encompasses everything else – meaning education, research, infrastructure, and those non-security components of our international affairs (which amount to about 1 percent of the total). This is where the Obama administration will find it easier to cut outlays. It will be painful but it is inevitable.

Under its most optimistic assumptions, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) believes that the Obama administration will have to make a substantial adjustment at some point soon to ensure that the debt does not grow out of control.<sup>11</sup> Recent analysis from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) concurs and argues that the United States is running out of its fiscal room for maneuver.<sup>12</sup> The Obama administration has not reached the limit yet – and there are still good arguments to be made that further stimulus is necessary to ensure that the economy does not go down yet again – but the administration knows that it will run out of space sooner rather than later.

More troubling, the IMF analysts assert, the Obama administration will have no way of recognizing that it has run out of room until it is already too late; financial actors will suddenly lose confidence in dollar denominated assets sending both bond and currency markets into a sharp correction.<sup>13</sup> This point went largely unnoticed when the IMF analysis was published. Instead commentators focused their attention on the fact that the Obama administration's room for fiscal maneuver has not yet disappeared. In doing so, they missed the principal thrust of

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11. Ibid.

12. See Jonathan D. Ostry, et al. *Fiscal Space*, IMF Position Note (SPN/10/11), Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

13. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

the analysis – which is that fiscal crisis strikes without forewarning. To borrow from New York Times editorialist and Nobel Prize laureate in economics Paul Krugman, the Obama administration will find itself in a Wyle E. Coyote moment, having run off the cliff long before it had the chance to look down.<sup>14</sup> The fact that Krugman foresaw that possibility already three years ago does not change the nature of problem.

Under more pessimistic assumptions – called the ‘alternative fiscal scenario’ because it is characterized by a combination of legislative changes including an extension of the tax cuts enacted by the Bush administration – the CBO believes the Obama administration will have to cut net expenditures as soon as possible because the costs of delay in terms of future consolidation efforts will only continue to mount.<sup>15</sup> Despite the difficulties involved, both military and entitlement spending will no doubt feel the pinch.

It is hardly a surprise in this context that the Obama administration underscored the importance of economic issues in its 2010 National Security Strategy – ‘at the center of our efforts is a commitment to renew our economy, which serves as the wellspring of American power.’<sup>16</sup> The Obama administration is also looking for friends and allies to help shoulder the burden. That is why it refers to the importance of maintaining strong alliances and it even goes so far as to insist that: ‘Our relationship with our European allies remains the cornerstone for US engagement with the world, and a catalyst for international action.’<sup>17</sup> The implication is that other countries will have to continue to embrace American leadership, not just in Europe but elsewhere as well. US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg made the point about as elegantly as you can when he argued at the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ Global Strategic Review last September that: ‘The decision to reinvigorate global cooperation is not ours alone, but we can play a po-

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14. Paul Krugman, “Will There Be a Dollar Crisis?”, *Economic Policy*, July 2007, pp. 435-467.

15. *The Long Term Budget Outlook*, pp. 15-17.

16. *National Security Strategy: May 2010*, Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2010, p. 2.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

werful and important role in shaping that decision for other countries.’ The possibility left open is that other countries may decide not to follow where the United States tries to lead.

## A WORLD WITHOUT FOLLOWERS

Scholars of international relations tend to give much more attention to leaders than to followers. The reason is that leaders have prior causal significance. Greater powers have to threaten before lesser powers can react by balancing or band-wagoning. It is almost impossible to imagine a world where the influence of great powers does not come first. Speaking at the same IISS conference where Deputy Secretary Steinberg underscored the importance of global cooperation, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made an allusion to the fact that international politics regards a situation without leaders in the same way that nature abhors a vacuum. His point was that a leaderless world is unimaginable because a leader will always emerge in world affairs. If it is not the United States, then it may be China, India, Germany, or Japan. It is an intriguing prospect, and in some ways seems intuitive. But that does not resolve the problem of American leadership in decline. If push comes to shove, the world will find a leader. The more important question is whether that leader will be able to motivate any followers because without collective action there is very little that any country can accomplish acting alone.

Here it is useful to reflect on the European situation using a slightly different perspective from that deployed at the start of this analysis. The European Union does not claim to rely principally or heavily on its ability for power projection. Instead, the EU prides itself for being a model for prosperous and peaceful reconciliation. Europe ‘leads’ as an example for the rest of the world. There is a powerful logic behind this notion. The problem is that the influence of European leadership on other countries diminishes rapidly with any increase in geographic distance. Those countries that join the European Union feel the influence most strongly; those on its borders feel it considerably less; and those in other parts of the world hardly realize that such a thing as European leadership exists.

They may admire European prosperity but they feel little urge to follow its example (and no urge to do what Europe says).

The challenge of European leadership becomes even greater once we consider its unique constitutional features. Although the European Union has a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), these ‘policies’ – if that is indeed the correct noun – operate only with the agreement of the member states. Where such agreement is not forthcoming – which is true in areas like relations with China, Russia, the United States, or the Middle East – it is hard to speak about Europe in any coherent sense.<sup>18</sup>

Outside of Europe, the prospect for successful leadership is even worse. Who would follow China or India? Certainly these two countries are unlikely to follow each other, and neither is willing to follow Japan. That does not rule out the prospect that these countries can lead by example just as the European Union does and perhaps without the same diminishing influence across geographical distance. China, for example, is often held up as a model for developing countries because of the strong role of the state in guiding economic processes. But imitation of state capitalism as a model is not the same as coordination across state-capitalist systems and it is unclear that state capitalists have any interest in coordinating their actions (rather than simply being left alone).<sup>19</sup> For all the talk about soft power, it was the character of American values and not just the projection of American influence that fostered the development of a cohesive West at the end of the Second World War.<sup>20</sup> The Soviet Union managed to transmit its values as well, often to a willing population that was unimpressed with the advantages of democracy or market capitalism. Nevertheless, the character of those values fostered

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18. Again, see Menon, “Much Ado About Nothing”; see also Erik Jones and Saskia van Genugten, “Introduction: The Future of European Foreign Policy”, in Erik Jones and Saskia van Genugten, (eds). *The Future of European Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 1-6.

19. Ian Bremmer, “State Capitalism Comes of Age: The End of the Free Market?”. *Foreign Affairs* 88:3, May/June 2009; Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, London: Atlantic Books, 2008.

20. See, e.g. Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong, *The End of Influence: What Happens When Other Countries Have the Money*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, pp. 35-64.

conflict rather than cooperation and the fractures this created in the Eastern block were felt almost immediately. Hence, the *Return to Diversity* in Central and Eastern Europe was not a sudden explosion in 1989; rather, as Joseph Rothschild makes clear in his book by that title, it was a process that was four decades in the making.<sup>21</sup>

Imitation of state capitalism inspired by China or Russia more closely resembles competition than collective action. Moreover, it is a mercantilist competition that does not benefit from a market based 'hidden hand'. Hence the weakening of US global leadership and the decline of the West is not a straightforward transfer of power from one group of countries to another; it is a dissipation (or bleeding out) of power as we move from an organized to a disorganized international system. The allusion here is to the second law of thermodynamics: complex systems tend to entropy or disorder.<sup>22</sup>

Consider the institutions of the Bretton Woods system, meaning not just the IMF and the World Bank group, but also the World Trade Organization (WTO). Neither China nor Russia (or another other emerging power) wants to assert western-style leadership over these institutions. In terms of Charles Kindleberger's theory of hegemonic stability, they do not want to act as lenders of last resort or as open markets for distressed goods.<sup>23</sup> We can make a similar point in terms of collective security. Both Russia and China are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and yet neither country appears eager to use that forum to take initiative. If anything, their ambitions are to limit membership in the group of five permanent members (P-5, which also includes Britain, France, and the US) and to make effective bargaining use of their own right of veto.

The institutions created to consolidate American global leadership are ill-equipped to serve any country but the United States. Yet if no

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21. Joseph Rothschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*, third edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

22. Erik Jones, "Closing Argument: Elusive Power, Essential Leadership", *Survival* 51:3, June/July 2009 pp. 243-251.

23. Charles Poor Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939: Revised and Enlarged Edition*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 288-305.

other country aspires to control these institutions, there are at least four reasons why the United States will have difficulty rallying others to support its continuing dominance. The first and most obvious is the ungenerous nature of the kind of leadership that the United States has to offer. It cannot make significant financial concessions to encourage cooperation through either foreign aid or market access. And it does not control who has privileged positions within this design of the global economic system as a whole. The first point follows directly from the arithmetic constraints on the US fiscal situation and from the periodic groundswell of US market protectionism. The second point is more complicated because it calls attention to the incentives that used to encourage countries to play a follower role.

The best way to explore this notion of structural privilege is to start with what we know about the US situation. There are a number of critiques of the Bretton Woods system, the United Nations, and NATO, that center on the problem of American exploitation of privilege. In the classic formulation, the US government uses its predominant position in the global economy to shunt some of the costs of its hegemony onto others.<sup>24</sup> This argument continues to have merit – not least because it acknowledges the high cost of accepting a global leadership role. Such costs are not borne out of altruism but self interest. As Brazil's foreign minister Celso Amorim has argued, a generous power is one that sees its interests in the long-term stability of the system. His example was the United States. That is what the US wanted at the end of the Second World War – and it did what was necessary to achieve that goal.

The point that is often overlooked in this analysis about the self-interested nature of America's commitment to the post-WWII world order is that other countries wanted the structure that the US had to offer as well – even if looked at only in straight economic terms. As export-led growth countries, Germany and Japan were eager to buy and hold dollar denominated assets and did not want their currencies to replace the dollar at the global level. They learned how to thrive in the shadow of

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24. David P. Calleo and Benjamin M. Rowland, *America and the World Political Economy: Atlantic Dreams and National Realities*, Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1973.

America's exorbitant privilege. China is doing the same thing today. The problem is that the United States can no longer afford to offer these incentives. This is what the debate about global macroeconomic imbalances is all about – America's inability to underwrite the global economic system as consumer of last resort.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the Obama administration is asking countries like Germany, Japan, and China to change the export-led growth formulas that made it possible for them to thrive under American hegemony. That is a hard sell. It is made all the harder by the prospect that divided government in the US will prevent the Obama administration from making other concessions that could ease the pain.

The second reason that the Obama administration will have difficulty finding followers is that countries are less willing to identify with the system. This is a subtly different point because it has less to do with incentives, or how countries benefit from the system; instead the focus is on where the system does them harm. Germany is not part of the P-5; China has only as many votes in the IMF as Belgium and the Netherlands; and so on. Every country can see problems with the system of global institutions and each has its own view as to how the system should be reformed. The wrangle about IMF directorships and voting weights is a good illustration of the problem; but reform of the UN Security Council could fit as well. In that context, the Obama bounce in global public opinion polling does not offer much hope for improvement. Countries may like the United States and admire its leadership but that says very little about how they want to interact with one-another even if they believe that the US should continue to run the show.

The third reason that the Obama administration will have difficulty finding followers is that the problems it must face are so complicated and the consequences are so uncertain that it is hard to find consensus on what should be done. Here again it is useful to focus on the problem of macroeconomic imbalances. The Obama administration is trying to tell the Germans, the Japanese and (particularly) the Chinese, that the United States can no longer act as the consumer of last resort and that

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25. Erik Jones, "Shifting the Focus: The New Political Economy of Global Macroeconomic Imbalances", *S&S Review* 29:2, Summer/Fall 2009, pp. 61-73.

they will have to start investing in themselves and relying on domestic demand to stimulate output. And while it has made considerable headway in terms of changing the emphasis in the debate, none of the current account surplus countries is willing to concede the argument. On the contrary, they are telling the United States that it is America's obligation to reform. For all that the Obama administration has spoken optimistically about the G-20, that forum has clearly reached an impasse on this issue – both globally and within Europe itself. It is impossible to see how to avoid a repeat of the recent crisis if this problem of macroeconomic imbalances is not resolved.<sup>26</sup> If anything, the near collapse of Irish or Greek public finances threatens to make matters worse.

The fourth reason that the Obama administration will find it difficult to reassert control over multilateral institutions is that the other countries of the world are no less constrained than the United States itself. If anything, their situation may be even more problematic. This point is more complicated than can be expressed in this paper. Suffice it to offer a simple illustration. One of the most pressing constraints on US government finances lies in the fact that the American population over sixty will increase, as said, from 18 to 27 percent of the total during the next four decades. In China, the elderly share of the population will go from 12 to 31 percent, and China is not even the worst case. That distinction is reserved for South Korea, which will see its share of over 60s go from 15 to 41 percent of the total population. This peak is only slightly higher than we expect to see in Western Europe, although the starting point is much lower and so the change is correspondingly greater.<sup>27</sup> These emerging market and middle income countries have only a short window to exercise anything like global leadership before they have to face dramatic challenges at home. This means they are not only unlikely to lead; they are also unable as well as unwilling to follow. The conclusion to draw at this point is straightforward: the US needs cooperation now more than ever but it is unlikely to find a willing group of followers to help.

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26. This is a recurrent theme in the writings of *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf. See, Martin Wolf, *Fixing Global Finance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

27. Again, this data is taken from the United Nations and is available upon request.

## FRUSTRATION AND HUBRIS

There is no ready alternative to American leadership and there is no obvious support for American leadership either. Nevertheless, Kissinger is right to believe that the international system demands a leader. Some country must set the agenda and forge cooperation if all are to benefit from the power of collective action. 'Leadership' in this sense is roughly the same as the provision of public goods, including governance.<sup>28</sup> The most likely candidate is still the United States. The reason is that no-one else wants the job. Regional powers are working hard to stabilize their neighborhoods. This is what the recent history of the European Union has so amply demonstrated. EU member states are interested in other parts of the world but they are not 'present' in that sense of deep and inescapable entanglement. The former high representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, has been very explicit in stating that Europe's strength is to play a supportive – and not a guiding – role. Again, if there is European leadership, it operates more by example than by action. This is not to diminish the significance of the European Union. European integration has brought peace and prosperity to the Old Continent and that is a tremendous achievement. Most Europeans would be happy for others to follow that example.

The United States has much greater ambitions. This has a lot to do with the American political temperament and the underlying consensus in the United States on the indispensability of American power.<sup>29</sup> This was articulated most clearly during the 2004 US presidential elections. In the first of three presidential debates, the Democratic candidate, John Kerry, led off with the following conviction: 'I believe President Bush and I both love our country equally. But we just have a different set of convictions about how you make America safe. I believe America is safest and strongest when we are leading the world and we are leading strong alliances.' This conviction was uncontroversial in the debate. In-

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28. This notion of leadership is developed in Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower*.

29. Recent scholarship suggests this has always been the case, even during the period between the two World Wars. See Bear F. Braumoeller, 'The Myth of American Isolationism,' *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6:4, October 2010, pp. 349-371.

stead, the candidates sparred over who had the best formula for exercising such leadership. Kerry insisted that much hinged on American credibility and the president's ability to pass 'the global test where your countrymen, your people understand fully why you're doing what you're doing and you can prove to the world that you did it for legitimate reasons.' The Republican incumbent, George W. Bush, insisted that leadership emanates from the strength of American values and the constancy of American commitments because 'if America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy.'<sup>30</sup>

This debate over the nature of American leadership became one of the defining moments of the 2004 campaign. Again, however, the assumption of American leadership was not at issue; what the candidates fought over was the style. The Bush campaign ridiculed Kerry for his suggestion of a 'global test' and cemented the importance of projecting American values and promoting American interests through a firm commitment to leadership abroad. Four years later, Democratic candidate and then President Barack Obama pulled the style of American leadership back in a more cooperative direction. Nevertheless, whether the administration is led by a Republican or a Democrat, the assumption that the United States should play a leading role in the world goes unchallenged.

Few if any other countries can field such a consensus. Certainly Europe would be difficult to cast in that role. It would not fit China too well either. The government in China wants to be treated as a great power in a world of great powers. It wants to be respected. But most of all, it wants to be left alone to wrestle with its many domestic economic and political challenges. What it clearly does not want, is to run the show. There are few if any indications that India, Russia, Brazil or Turkey want to assume that role either.

The implications of this lack of enthusiasm within other countries to strive to replace American global leadership are significant. When something truly terrible happens, the United States will consistently be among

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30. The transcript of these debates is available online at [http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a\\_p.html](http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a_p.html).

the first countries to respond. It may do so reluctantly and it will work very hard to bring others along with it. It will work with other regional actors who are more directly implicated in the matter. But it will always be there and it will become increasingly overstretched as a result.

This recurrent assumption that the United States should play a leading role in the world will continue despite the outcome of the 2010 mid-term Congressional elections. The Republican victory in the House of Representatives, taken together with the gains it has made in the Senate, will lock up the machinery of government and make the Obama administration even more slower to react either to its own need for reform or to any problems arising abroad. But that is a matter of process and not principle, which remains largely unaffected by the alternation of legislative control. Although they rarely make clear foreign policy prescriptions, even members of the Tea Party movement believe in the essential indispensability of American global leadership. They may express frustration with the unwillingness of other countries to share the burdens of responding to global crises; they may deny the importance of common problems such as those related to climate change or trade and development; and they will certainly resist efforts to offer financial support for multilateral institutions. However, none of that contradicts the firm commitment that the United States has a special destiny to lead the world.

## CONCLUSION

Should the United States continue to pursue its ambition to global leadership without the benefit of European support, there will be clear and negative implications both for European security and for the transatlantic relationship. An overstretched and under-resourced US administration is likely to withdraw prematurely from its overseas commitments – as it did in Lebanon in the early 1980s, in Somalia in the early 1990s, and as it may do both in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2010s. Given its close geographic proximity to these areas, Europe will undoubtedly experience the consequences. A frustrated American leadership will most likely pursue a piecemeal solution to the problem of global climate

change and it will continue to rely more heavily on bilateral trade deals in lieu of multilateral omnibus talks. Again, the consequences will be felt in Europe as well – with matching frustration on the European side of the Atlantic.

There is no easy solution to this conundrum. The Europeans are understandably reluctant to follow an American leadership with which they are in disagreement, and the United States is unwilling to underwrite public goods that are not to American benefit. Meanwhile, neither Europe nor the United States has any other partner who is willing or able to play a complementary role. The two sides of the Atlantic are co-dependent as well as inter-dependent. They must learn to work together if either is to achieve its goals.

# European Security and the Future of Transatlantic Relations

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## Review Essay

# A Great Fall

Erik Jones

### **The End of Influence: What Happens When Other Countries Have the Money**

Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong. London: Basic Books, 2010. £12.99/\$22.00. 208 pp.

Arguments, like films, tend to be repeated in regular cycles. The argument about the decline of American power is no exception. By my count we are in at least the third iteration. The first came in the 1970s with writers like David Calleo and Robert Gilpin.<sup>1</sup> The second came in the 1980s when Mancur Olson and Paul Kennedy reignited the debate.<sup>2</sup> We got to skip the 1990s and much of the 2000s. Now, however, American decline is back with a vengeance.

In its current iteration, the declinist argument runs along the lines of the 1983 movie *Scarface*. In that movie, protagonist Tony Montana was attracted to the United States because of its seductive culture: 'I watch the guys like Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney. They, they teach me to talk. I like those guys. I always know one day I'm comin' here, United States.' Once inside the borders, it did not take Montana long to figure out the rules of the game. 'In this country, you gotta make the money first. Then when you get the money, you get the power.'<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Montana failed to appreciate the true well-springs of American prosperity. Instead, his image of the country was an exaggerated no-holds-barred sort of capitalism. Suffice it to say that the world of *Scarface* was unsustainable and so inevitably came crashing down around him. The film is a cautionary tale about what happens in a

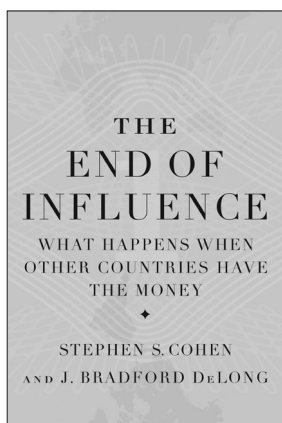
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market without rules. It also suggests a question that most viewers in the early 1980s would not have considered: what happens when other countries have the money?

This is the question Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong pose in *The End of Influence*. Their answer begins by reiterating the lessons of *Scarface*. American power at the end of the Second World War was rooted to a large extent in the attractiveness of its culture and the wealth of its society. Other countries were willing to follow the United States because they wanted

to be like the United States. Unfortunately, however, Americans themselves began to drift towards ever more extreme forms of free-market competition. This extreme neo-liberal view was at odds with the planning and industry that made America wealthy in the first place. As they embraced an increasingly unregulated market, the neo-liberals in America put their country on an unsustainable trajectory and became increasingly addicted to the combination of cheap manufactured goods and easy credit that other countries were willing to offer. The other countries got the money, and with it, the power.



But this does not mean that the United States will go down in a hail of gunfire: 'The United States will continue to be a world leader – perhaps even *the* leader. But it will no longer be the boss' (p. 14, emphasis in original).

The Cohen and DeLong argument is declinism for a new century, grounded in now-popular notions of soft power. Although they emphasise money, their concern is norms and values, not guns and butter. When countries have money they have earned in a sustainable manner over a long period of time – not by pulling resources out of the ground, but through innovation and industry – they can influence others to adopt their own preferred way of organising things without making a conscious effort. The United States did not just export democracy, it also exported social mobility, efficiency and a host of other social norms that now seem self-evident, but were not always so. Now, however, what used to be distinctly American culture has gone global and the United States is no longer in control. Because

they are the principal creditors of US profligacy, the Chinese and others are able to assert a countervailing influence; they can bind American power and perhaps also project values of their own. The problem with this arrangement is not that the United States is poorer and less attractive as a result. The loss of US money and its implications for global influence has already happened. Rather, the problem is that the transition from one position to another is making the world economy as a whole unstable. The United States cannot live beyond its means forever and so must inevitably lose the confidence of its creditors. As we have just experienced, bad things happen when that confidence breaks down. Even though the crisis appears to be over, there is no guarantee it will not flare up again.

Cohen and DeLong end on a low note. The Humpty Dumpty of American global dominance cannot be put back together again. Even if it could, it would not last: 'After all, Humpty was an egg' (p. 148). It is tempting to dismiss this as an exercise in exaggerated pessimism. As Joseph Nye wrote in response to Paul Kennedy, the United States is *Bound to Lead* once we understand the nature of American power.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Cohen and DeLong's argument makes for a compelling narrative, not least because it draws on the same notion of power that Nye uses and because it contains, like *Scarfarce*, so many memorable lines.

### **The power of belief**

Cohen and DeLong's compelling version of the declinist argument has potentially important implications for the stability of the global economic system. When they talk about America's creditors having confidence in the US government's ability to live up to its financial commitments, they touch on an aspect of global hegemony that has gained increasing currency in modern economics. The elements of the story can be read off the contents page of George Akerlof and Robert Shiller's recent *Animal Spirits* (reviewed in the June–July 2009 issue of *Survival*<sup>5</sup>). When we try to assess the stability of the global economic system, we need to think in terms of psychological variables like confidence, fairness, bad faith and the money illusion. Other countries will only buy into an American-centred global order if they believe the US government is willing and able to underwrite the system, if they can

have an equitable chance to pursue their own self-interest, if they believe that other powerful actors will not violate the rules of the game and so take advantage of them, and if there is some currency that can be used to connect trade and capital flows.

This is not a new argument in the field of international political economy. Charles Kindleberger sketched the requirements for hegemonic stability in his 1975 study of the Great Depression.<sup>6</sup> The difference is that Kindleberger focused on the structural characteristics of the hegemon – meaning the ability to underwrite the system by acting as an open market for distressed goods, to enforce the rules impartially, to provide moral leadership, and to act as a lender of last resort. By contrast, Akerlof and Shiller underscore the importance of perceptions held by other actors. Whatever the objective merits of the United States, if other major actors lack confidence in America's ability to maintain open markets, if they believe that the global economic system is rigged against them, if they perceive other actors like China or Germany to be taking advantage of the system, or if they lose confidence in the dollar as the ultimate vehicle for international payments, they may begin to behave irrationally, with sudden and systemic implications. They may panic and trigger a global crisis. Combining Cohen and DeLong's analysis with the logic of Akerlof and Shiller, it is possible to see the recent economic turmoil as only the first stage in a wider self-fulfilling (and self-reinforcing) prophecy.

Narrative is the causal mechanism at the heart of Akerlof and Shiller's analysis: 'Stories are like viruses'.<sup>7</sup> Once they begin, they spread like an epidemic. Sometimes the results are inconvenient but innocuous. Sometimes they are fatal. We have all heard the declinist argument in the past; that does not mean we can afford to be complacent about it this time around. Cohen and DeLong have a compelling narrative. That may be the problem.

US President Barack Obama's National Security Strategy was written as a counter-narrative (or anti-virus). It does not reinvent the wheel and carries many elements from the 2002 and 2006 versions produced by the George W. Bush administration. Even the people responsible for drafting the document are quick to admit this.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the 2010 National Security Strategy is unlike its predecessors in placing strong emphasis on rebuilding the eco-

conomic foundations of American power. This is hardly surprising. Although the 2002 National Security Strategy was written in the midst of an economic downturn, economic concerns were overshadowed by the terrible events of 11 September 2001. The 2006 strategy emerged in a period of relatively robust US economic growth; the greater economic concern lay in promoting structural reform in Europe and Japan.<sup>9</sup>

The 2010 National Security Strategy emerged at the end of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. It is only to be expected, therefore, that it places America's economic weakness up front:

Our approach begins with a commitment to build a stronger foundation for American leadership, because what takes place within our borders will determine our strength and influence beyond them ... At the center of our efforts is a commitment to renew our economy, which serves as the wellspring of American power.<sup>10</sup>

Similar to Cohen and DeLong's analysis, the emphasis is on norms and values at least as much as on guns and butter. The United States' economy must be secure, resilient, disciplined and competitive 'in order to sustain America's ability to lead in a world where economic power and individual opportunity are more diffuse'. To be successful, however, America's performance must also be convincing:

the work to build a stronger foundation for our leadership within our borders recognizes that the most effective way for the United States of America to promote our values is to live them ... America has always been a beacon to the peoples of the world when we ensure that the light of America's example burns bright.

The programme outlined by the 2010 National Security Strategy contains a mixture of initiatives to promote domestic education, innovation and investment – particularly in the energy domain. In turn, these efforts are embedded in a systematic reform of the global economic order to make it more representative, stable and equitable. For those who are familiar with

the declinist argument, this is a coherent strategy. The Obama administration has the ‘right’ agenda for restoring American power. What remains to be seen is whether it has the strength to drive that agenda. Much of the outside world is sceptical. America’s influence depends upon whether those sceptics can be convinced.

## Notes

- 1 David P. Calleo and Benjamin M. Rowland, *America and the World Political Economy: Atlantic Dreams and National Realities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973); Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
- 2 Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).
- 3 These citations from the screenplay are taken from the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086250/quotes>.
- 4 Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
- 5 See Bill Emmott, ‘Environment, Resources, and Economy’, *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 3, June–July 2009, pp. 208–209.
- 6 Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975).
- 7 George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Schiller, *Animal Spirits: How Human Psychology Drives the Economy, and Why It Matters for Global Capitalism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 56.
- 8 Spencer Ackerman, ‘America’s Global Outlook, at an Inflection Point’, *The Washington Independent*, 28 May 2010, <http://washingtonindependent.com/85916/americas-global-outlook-at-an-inflection-point>. Many thanks to John Gans for bringing this to my attention.
- 9 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: The White House, March 2006), p. 29.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

# Elusive Power, Essential Leadership

**Erik Jones**

I

The global economic crisis has everyone focused on the Great Depression. Not since the 1930s – or so we repeatedly read in the newspapers – has global finance seized up so quickly, growth slowed so sharply and unemployment risen so dramatically.<sup>1</sup> Such analogies are at best imprecise and a range of voices do dispute them.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the parallels are close enough to brand a whole range of economic policies as lessons from the past.

The same is not true for foreign affairs. No matter how closely the economic situation mirrors conditions in the inter-war period, the political situation does not. Radical Islam is not fascism and neither Russian- nor Chinese-style authoritarianism bears any similarity to the communist threat. Robert Kagan may pause to celebrate the *Return of History and the End of Dreams*, but it is to herald a new ‘age of divergence’ and not to signal precise parallels with the past.<sup>3</sup>

To find an appropriate political analogy we should look to the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period when international turmoil coincided with a crisis of governability. Then, as now, America’s moral authority suffered the stigma of an unpopular war even as contradictions in the American economy contributed to the breakdown of global finance. This dual challenge to American hegemony coincided with a crisis in political legitimacy:

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across the globe, student protest, labour unrest and even political violence captured government attention at home even as political leaders sought to adapt to the changing structure of relations abroad. The old certainties of the Cold War crumbled and writers began to speculate about the future of the West.

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed an important flourishing of the study of power beyond the traditional notions of the classical realist period. Where classical realists like E.H. Carr or Hans J. Morgenthau focused on the exercise of power as a function of wealth and capabilities,<sup>4</sup> the writers of the late 1960s and early 1970s were more concerned with the possibility that groups without obvious endowments could nevertheless force changes to the status quo. Traditional concepts of power were set aside in favour of new relational notions that underscored the importance of managing interdependence, manipulating uncertainty and redefining the possible in a changed world.

These relational concepts of power are increasingly important today. With all the talk of hard power and soft power, smart power and network power, we risk losing sight of the dynamics that emerge when politics collapses into disorder.<sup>5</sup> A reconsideration of the 1970s not only helps us better understand events as they unfold in the current crisis, but also forces us to reconsider the appropriate balance between American leadership and the international rule of law.

## II

The usual presumption is that if one country gets another to do something it otherwise would not do, or prevents it from doing something it otherwise would, the explanation can be traced to some attribute of the country in charge: the strength of its army, the wealth of its economy, or the hold it has over public opinion or the popular imagination. This is the spectrum of power that runs from the coercive hard to the attractive soft, covering all points in between. Moreover, the attributes are not exclusive and the list is never exhaustive. Countries can have many attributes in combination and they can develop new ones, such as extensive social networks, dynamic markets, effective schools and creative universities. Finally, politicians can

use national resources poorly or they can use them well; they can squander their power assets or they can be smart.

The key feature in this presumption is that power is something that countries possess or can develop. Power belongs to countries by dint of their resources and, so long as we can take the structure of relations between countries for granted, the distribution of resources should offer a good guide as to how conflicts between countries will work out.

The presumption that power lies in attributes is less useful when some countries play by one set of rules while others do not, or when a broadly binding set of rules either stops functioning or breaks down. The distribution of power resources does not provide a good guide to the behaviour of rogue states, reckless states or states that tolerate or even support the terrorists, warlords, insurrectionists, pirates, drug cartels and other criminals who challenge the security of many parts of the world. We can guess what they might be doing, but it is harder to characterise it as 'rational' and easier to scoff that it is not.

In a context where the structure of relationships between countries cannot be taken for granted, a new set of presumptions about the nature of power comes into play. Resources still matter, but relationships matter more. Consider the problem of interdependence. When Richard Cooper set out his analysis of *The Economics of Interdependence* in the late 1960s, he explained how even the government responsible for managing the world's largest economy could only achieve its policy objectives by taking the actions of its major partners into account. Hence national policymakers faced a choice: either they could learn to work together with their counterparts in other countries, or they would have to scale back on their country's relations with the world economy as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Cooperation is never easy, but it is more effective than trying to go it alone and more durable than trying to compel others. This is the central insight in Hannah Arendt's work *On Violence*. Arendt uses the notion of violence to distinguish between power and coercion. Her basic point is that power lies in collective action: 'The extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All'. What she reveals with this distinction is the importance of legitimacy and acceptance – not

for any given actor or groups of actors, but for the underlying rules of the game. Actors do not possess power by dint of their resources, rather they are 'empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name'. Once this group withdraws its support, the power itself withers away.<sup>7</sup>

The disappearance of power is not the only problem the loss of legitimacy or acceptance represents; relations can be manipulated as well. This was emphasised by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye in their study of *Power and Interdependence*. What they add to the discussion is a distinction between the sensitivity and vulnerability of actors to any change in their relationships with others. They argue that countries are sensitive insofar as they can be affected by a change in the relationship and vulnerable insofar as they lack the means to escape any adverse effects.<sup>8</sup> Both sensitivity and vulnerability are characteristic features of states, but these characteristics are different from the power resources sketched in the classical realist sense. They create new opportunities for the 'strong' to come under the influence of the 'weak'.

The weak are often quick to exploit the potential to manipulate relations in order to influence the strong: this is the central claim made by Michel Crozier in his study of *The Stalled Society*. Crozier agrees with Arendt that power emanates from acceptance of the rules of the game, but he points out that actors can also influence events by breaking the rules to take advantage of the resulting uncertainty. What is more, Crozier notes that rule-breakers can garner a certain toleration or acceptance of their own, effectively rewriting the rules to suit their own purposes. What starts as blackmail gradually becomes a normal part of the game.<sup>9</sup>

Acceptance is not the only currency of power; imagination also plays a role. If we agree that power is a function of both resources and relationships, then we greatly expand the possibilities for interaction beyond any easily observable distribution of resources. The exercise of power becomes as much a question of recognising what is possible as having the wherewithal to match ends to means. Steven Lukes emphasises the importance of such agenda-setting in his short pamphlet *Power: A Radical View*.<sup>10</sup> He underscores the potential for a revolution in the structure of relationships well beyond the incremental changes that manipulation or blackmail may

bring at the margin. By controlling the agenda, the weak can push the strong in a whole new direction.

### III

Much of the current speculation about the future, like that pursued by writers such as Robert Kagan and Fareed Zakaria (or business analysts at Goldman Sachs), is that power will follow the growth in relative wealth and population.<sup>11</sup> The gist of the argument is that current trends will not lead to a total eclipse of the United States, but will result in its relative decline. And the preliminary evidence in terms of trade, investment and short-term capital flows suggests that the argument has merit, at least in broad terms.

What such speculation does not reveal is how a new global order will emerge from the present crisis. This is where the insights from the 1970s become important. Consider again the logic of interdependence. George W. Bush could come into office at the turn of the century with a strong commitment to American unilateralism. He could turn his back on the Kyoto Protocol for the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions, the Anti-Ballistic Missile accord, and the International Criminal Court, without much concern for how foreign reactions to his positions would impact on the effectiveness of US policy. Barack Obama cannot afford the same luxury. He has to worry about how other countries react to American efforts to shore up the big US banks, just as he has to recognise that international cooperation will enhance the effectiveness of US economic policy.

This problem of interdependence has become pressing in other areas as well, from energy security to environmental protection, and from international terrorism (in the Middle East and Central Asia) to organised crime (in Mexico and Latin America) to piracy (in the Indian Ocean). No matter how many resources the United States is willing to throw at any of these problems, no solution will be forthcoming unless other state actors come along. Moreover, their essential cooperation cannot be compelled if it is to be meaningful, or at least any more meaningful than Pakistan's efforts to contain nuclear proliferation or stop the Taliban.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration has to be on the lookout for countries or other actors who seek to exploit any vulnerabilities that

present themselves. The pirates in the Indian Ocean are a good example. Their business model is built on the recognition that it is easier to pay the occasional ransom than to re-route freight traffic around the Horn of Africa. As a result, they not only pursue their trade with impunity but may have even come to regard it as accepted practice, which partly explains why the pirates responded so angrily to the forceful liberation of Captain Richard Phillips.

Where the pirates exploit state vulnerability, the North Koreans and Iranians engage in varying degrees of blackmail, breaking the rules to take advantage of the resulting uncertainty. The North Korean case is the most acute: by timing their missile test to coincide with the G20 summit they forced the Obama administration to focus its attention on their concerns. The Iranian case is more subtle; they do not need to demonstrate such an obvious threat in order to raise doubts and attract attention. Whether their goal is domestic legitimation, regional intimidation or international independence, they are unwilling to abide by America's interpretation of the rules of the game.

What we lack is a clear vision of how to reconcile such competing ambitions in a way that promotes a stable and effective pattern of international cooperation. There is a lot of talk of promoting the G20 in lieu of the G8, reforming the United Nations Security Council, and redesigning the voting rules for the International Monetary Fund, but there is little sense of how this somehow constitutes a coherent global framework. Indeed, apart from the G20 perhaps replacing the G8, it is hard to see how these other changes could come about. Most of the existing global institutions (and the Security Council in particular) are hostage to the vested interests of the key actors who benefit from existing arrangements. They are thus even harder to reform than they are to do without. Of course international institutions are hardly unique in this regard; domestic institutions are difficult to reform as well. The fact that the problem is a general one, however, only deepens the challenge of finding a way out.<sup>12</sup>

The mistake is to presume that international law by itself is somehow the answer. Law is useful as a means of structuring relations between countries just as between individuals. But the usefulness of the law is itself

a function of its acceptance. More importantly, the law by itself cannot tell us how to reform existing structures once that acceptance breaks down. When the law ceases to function, it is leadership that matters.

This is the dilemma that Theodore J. Lowi confronted in his analysis of *The Politics of Disorder*. Lowi wrote this book as a sequel to his more famous *End of Liberalism* to emphasise the importance he attaches to the equality that is only possible under the rule of law. The 'disorder' of the title describes the special case when people become disillusioned with politics because of the consequences when institutions fail. The only recourse is to leadership, which Lowi viewed as the opposite of law. Lowi feared the inequity and unpredictability inherent in political leadership, yet he acknowledged that 'institutionalized change sounds like a contradiction in terms' and recognised 'the iron law of decadence' that encourages self-interested actors to block any effort at institutional reform. Leadership is the corrective even if law should be the norm. The challenge, therefore, is to find some balance in the relationship between leadership and the law.<sup>13</sup>

The current debate about the use of extreme interrogation techniques underscores the difficulty of the task at hand. The photographs of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib discredited the George W. Bush administration in the eyes of much of the world and has provided a powerful tool in the recruitment of terrorists to attack the interests of the United States. The slow drip of information and images coming out of Guantanamo Bay only made matters worse. Hence it is no surprise that the Obama administration made the closure of Guantanamo a priority upon entering office. Despite the impressiveness of the symbolism involved, however, the reassurance of the rest of the world was not so easily won. Pundits and commentators have parsed the new president's comments to see how committed he is to the abolition of torture as an international norm. The release of memoranda used to justify the Bush administration's policies has not relieved the ambiguity, even if critics of Obama's decision to release the memoranda worry that he has tied his administration's hands by doing so. Voices on the left argue that only a prosecution of Bush administration officials can show the Obama administration's commitment to the rule of law.

The challenge of balancing leadership and the rule of law is not limited to domestic politics or security matters; it plays out at the international level and in other policy domains.<sup>14</sup> Finding a response to the current economic crisis is a good example. The Obama administration must not only set the agenda for reform, but also win acceptance both for its policy programme and its self-appointed leadership role. Coming up with a coherent agenda is hard enough. Although there are a number of excellent ideas circulating, it is difficult to see how they come together to form a coherent new economic world order. Finding acceptance will be even harder. Certainly it would be a mistake to assume that the overwhelming military and economic resources of the United States will be enough to underwrite any new agenda or that American leadership can be taken for granted. The tests that Obama has confronted during his first 100 days in office reveal not just the extent of the challenge but also the many dimensions of power in an increasingly disordered world.

## Notes

- 1 Such reporting gained particular prominence when it could be traced back to the International Monetary Fund's *World Economic Outlook*. See, for example, Jeannine Aversa, 'Global Recession Worst Since Depression, IMF Says', *The Huffington Post*, 22 April 2009, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/22/global-economy-may-shrink\\_n\\_190165.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/22/global-economy-may-shrink_n_190165.html).
- 2 Bartle Bull, 'No, He Can't', *Prospect*, April 2009, p. 60.
- 3 Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008) p. 4.
- 4 E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919–1939* (London: PaperMac, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995 [1946]), pp. 97–134; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1958 [1954]), pp. 93–152.
- 5 The notion of 'soft power' is most closely associated with Joseph Nye, who develops it in part at least in order to overcome the paradox that arises when 'people define power as synonymous with the resources that produce it' (p. 3). Nevertheless, when he discusses the sources of soft power, it is clear that his is a resource-based understanding of power as well. See Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 11–15. For 'smart power' see Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington DC: CSIS, 2007); and for 'network

- power' see 'America's Edge: Power in a Networked Century', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 1, January–February 2009, pp. 94–113.
- <sup>6</sup> Richard N. Cooper, *The Economics of Interdependence: Economic Policy in the Atlantic Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1968), pp. 260–64.
- <sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), pp. 42–4.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York: Longman, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2001 [1977]), pp. 9–17, 196.
- <sup>9</sup> Michel Crozier, *The Stalled Society* (New York: Viking, 1974 [1970]), pp. 19–36.
- <sup>10</sup> Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- <sup>11</sup> Kagan, *Return of History*; Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, *Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050*, Global Economics Paper No. 99 (New York: Goldman Sachs, 2003); Goldman Sachs Economics Group, *BRICs and Beyond* (New York: Goldman Sachs, 2007).
- <sup>12</sup> See, for example, Lester Thurow, *The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change* (New York: Penguin, 1981 [1980]); Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).
- <sup>13</sup> Theodore J. Lowi, *The Politics of Disorder* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971).
- <sup>14</sup> See, for example, G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Project on National Security, 2006).

## *Prologue*

ERIK JONES AND SALVATORE VASSALLO

The election of Barack Obama as forty-fourth president of the United States gave cause for widespread celebration. People everywhere grabbed onto his message of hope and change to look forward to a brighter future. Nowhere was this more true than in Europe, where the history-making nature of Obama's victory carries a meaning all its own. No one would deny the significance of having an African American in the White House, nor would anyone understate the importance of seeing a new generation in power. Nevertheless, the promise that Obama represents in Europe goes beyond historic reconciliation between races and beyond his particular incarnation of the new. Obama promises to transform the transatlantic relationship into one within which Europe can aspire to a more meaningful role. In this sense, he offers a reconciliation of a different sort—helping the old world to come to grips with the resurgent and at times even volatile power of the new. What is more, Europeans have long anticipated Obama's victory, even if they did not know it would come with Obama per se. They have looked for him, like a child of prophecy, in just about every U.S. president since John F. Kennedy. They sought him in Bill Clinton and, after Clinton, in Al Gore. Each time they were disappointed—never more so than in 2004.

Seen from Europe, the 2004 U.S. presidential elections were a foregone conclusion. It was almost unimaginable that George W. Bush could retain control of the White House. The war in Iraq was not going well, and it showed every sign of deteriorating further. The U.S. economy was growing, but only just. The stock market was up, with the Dow Jones trading above 10,000, but any increase in employment

was slow, and income inequality was on the rise. Then, of course, there was the disastrous state of the American health care system. Despite paying more per capita in public funds than most European countries paid in public and private monies combined, the United States continued to trail in the international league tables for life expectancy, infant mortality, and, most of all, the number of people without insurance and therefore lacking adequate health care. You did not have to be a political scientist, an economist, or a policy analyst to know these things. They were all clearly explained in blockbuster film documentaries and on the editorial pages of the *New York Times*. Again, seen from abroad, the administration's rebuttal was hardly convincing, coming from a bumbling president, a snarling vice president, and a mixed assortment of neoconservatives, right-wing Republicans, and fundamentalist evangelicals. Either such a coalition would never gain traction with the electorate or the United States really was a different place from what most Europeans imagined after all.

The reelection of George W. Bush by an outright majority of U.S. voters came as a shock. Although many pundits in Europe suggested that the Bush administration would retain control of the White House, few if any predicted such a resounding victory. Instant explanations ranged from an increase in American religious fervor to an incompetent Democratic challenger. Whatever the real reason, Europeans developed a sense—bordering on insecurity—that they really did not understand American politics. They began to question America's democratic credentials, recalling the very close contest in 2000 between then Governor Bush and Vice President Al Gore. Some Europeans even began to joke cynically that the choice of a U.S. president is so important that they too should be given a say.

The change in the Republican Party's electoral fortunes during the midterm congressional elections in 2006 did little to restore a sense of comfort or reassurance about American political institutions among Europeans. The United States is a democracy, but the nature of that democracy is unfamiliar to people brought up in a parliamentary tradition, for whom the two-year-long process involved in presidential elections remains a mystery. The fact that the presidential contest started almost as soon as the midterm congressional elections ended, triggered a fresh wave of speculation as to who would inherit the White House after Bush. This speculation was largely ignorant of the possible alternatives, but it was acutely aware of the stakes. If nothing else, the Bush administration taught Europeans that the personality of the U.S. president can make a difference. Fantasies aside, no one seriously expected

a revolution in U.S. politics, and yet that still left them wide latitude to wonder how the new president would strike the balance between continuity and change.

### Continuity and Expectations

The continuity in American foreign policy centers on the country's sense of its own exceptionalism. Whether U.S. policymakers view Washington as the new Rome or the new Jerusalem, what is clear is that they regard it as a world apart. Europeans have come to expect nothing less. Nevertheless, they continue to hope for more. That explains why the transatlantic relationship is much more a popular fixture in Europe than it is in the United States. Few American newspapers lead with front-page stories about the tone or content of relations across the Atlantic. Most European newspapers do, at least from time to time. What is more, they always have, at least during the post-Second World War era, including after the cold war. The controversy that surrounded the buildup to war in Iraq in 2002 and 2003 was hardly exceptional. There have been any number of periods when press speculation about the possibility of a rupture in the relationship has been equally intense. Examples include Kissinger's "year of Europe" in 1973, the SS-20 crisis later that decade, the installation of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Italy and Germany during the early 1980s, the removal of those weapons and the modernization of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) short-range nuclear arsenal in the late 1980s, and the Yugoslav wars of the early to mid-1990s—to name just a few. Even the joint campaigns to liberate Kuwait and to stop the genocide in Kosovo sparked markedly different interpretations. Sure the alliance had come together, but that did not mean it would always do so in the future.

Controversies in the transatlantic relationship center on two themes: one is how much the United States is willing to listen to Europe; the other is how much Europe is prepared to contribute. The concerns implicit in these discussions are that the United States will end up doing most of the heavy lifting and Europe will never lead. Seen this way, the imbalance in attention given to relations on either side of the Atlantic is a function of expectations. The debate about burden sharing within the NATO alliance, led by the United States, is too complex to capture the popular imagination, particularly when the administration is focused on maintaining the preponderance of American power. Too easily, the

transatlantic relationship collapses into caricature: Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus, or something like that.

The European perspective is less pessimistic and yet, if possible, more frustrating—particularly in popular debate, where consistent and overwhelming majorities in most European countries favor the development of a European common foreign and security policy. European governments are willing to contribute more to collective security and in the foreign policy domain, but they cannot do so without more discretionary freedom from the leadership of the United States. This means that Europeans have either to create a new set of instruments for policy coordination and force projection outside of NATO or to find some way to use NATO assets without necessarily following America's lead.

The U.S. position on intra-European security cooperation further complicates this situation. As the presumption is that the Europeans are not carrying their share of the burden for collective security in the first place, there is no reason for any U.S. administration to support investment in a duplication of NATO assets. Instead, successive U.S. administrations have insisted that Europeans should focus their efforts on shoring up their national contributions to NATO. Of course, this makes sense from a burden-sharing perspective, but it is less useful as a demonstration of independence from the United States. No matter what the technical arrangements for using national forces when they are not already obligated under the terms of the alliance, the appearance is that Europe's choice is whether to follow where America leads.

This is where the controversy over Iraq becomes important—not as a conflict within NATO but as a conflict over the monolithic nature of American leadership. At the same time that the United States was preparing the ground for invasion, the Europeans were debating whether to participate. It was an exceptionally heated debate. It was also an exceptionally complex one. Despite the “old Europe, new Europe” rhetoric favored by the American media, the divisions within Europe were many and they were deep. Countries of all sorts came down on either side of the issue—rich and poor, large and small, East and West, North and South. More important, the debate often pitted the government against public opinion (as in Italy and Spain) or even divided the governing coalition (as in the Netherlands).

What all Europeans shared was a sense of wonder that this major subject of political controversy counted for so little on the other side of the Atlantic. Within the Bush administration, the preparations were what mattered; the intra-European debate did not. The Bush administration gave no indication that it cared about the level of European

support and every indication that it would proceed with or without its closest European allies. At one point, defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld went so far as to suggest that even British participation was optional. Turkey's refusal to open its borders to allow the United States to create a northern front for the conflict was also shrugged off by the Bush administration. Access to Turkey would have been useful, but lack of access did not ultimately make a difference. In terms of burden sharing, the Bush administration had already planned for the worst. Indeed, it had done so precisely to avoid the need for transatlantic consultation—just as the Bush administration had declined European offers to invoke Article V of the NATO treaty during its preparations for the attack on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001.

The transatlantic crisis of 2002–3 was essentially an intra-European affair—and all the more toxic as a result. For example, the fact that the United States ignored Europe during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq overshadowed the progress that European governments had made in negotiating greater discretion to act collectively in the absence of American leadership. Everyone could tell you where their government stood in relation to the war in Iraq; almost no one ever heard about the Berlin+ arrangement for giving Europeans access to use NATO military assets.

The Bush administration's disregard for European political sentiments was hardly a new feature in the transatlantic relationship. Few U.S. administrations have had much patience with intra-European politics. Kissinger's famous remark about Europe not having a phone number is a blanket indictment that has served most presidents well. Almost from the outset, however, the Bush administration elevated this sense of detachment to high art. It began with President Bush's insistence on rejecting the Kyoto Accords, his removal of America's signature from the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, and his determination to allow the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to lapse so that he could push forward with the construction of ballistic missile defenses. Valid arguments can be made on both sides of these issues, and it is reasonable for allies to disagree over policy. The problem was that the Bush administration gave no opportunity to air any such disagreements. These were all subjects of intense controversy well before 9/11, and the Bush administration's stance, from a European perspective, seemed to be that no controversy was too intense to be ignored.

The 2001 European Union–United States summit held in Gothenburg, Sweden, poignantly illustrates the European political implications of

the isolationist diplomacy of the Bush administration. Such summits are primarily symbolic, and President Bush's first was no exception. This time, however, the symbolism was not only inside the summit but outside as well. Bush arrived in Gothenburg to be greeted by popular protests—which he largely ignored. His snub did not go unnoticed. When Bush left, those protesters were still locked outside the security perimeter. As their frustration mounted, the protestors changed their focus from President Bush to the European Council, intensifying rather than dissipating their demonstrations. This pivot caught the Swedish police wholly unprepared, leading to violent clashes that left three protestors wounded. It was not the first such encounter in Europe that Bush would trigger. The situation later that summer only got worse. President Bush returned to Europe for the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy, of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations plus Russia. Again the protestors assembled, and again the police responded. The difference was that Genoa left one protestor dead. In Italian domestic political terms, the repercussions resonated for years thereafter.

Of course, the Bush administration cannot be blamed for the “no-global” movement, which is the loose collection of groups responsible for the Gothenburg and Genoa protests. If anything, that movement started under the Clinton administration during the 1999 World Trade Organization summit held in Seattle. The point is that the Bush administration did almost nothing to mollify public opinion or to prevent the easy equation of opposition to globalization with opposition to the United States. Moreover, European leaders were well aware that by aligning with the Bush administration they risked courting the opposition of the no-global groups, and that by aligning against the Bush administration they could court their favor.

The European response to the Bush administration was nothing if not opportunistic. Some governments sought to distance themselves from the United States to underscore their independence. Others sought to align themselves to highlight the strength of their special relationships. Examples of this behavior are not hard to find. German chancellor Gerhard Schröder's decision to play on anti-American sentiments to strengthen support for his German Social Democratic Party (the SPD) during the 2002 parliamentary elections is one; Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's speech to the joint houses of Congress during the 2006 Italian parliamentary elections is another. The problem is that these positions hardened into stereotypes over time, and the clash of these stereotypes strengthened the perception of transatlantic crisis.

The Italian situation is a good illustration of this dynamic at work. When President Bush invited Prime Minister Berlusconi to speak to the joint houses of Congress in February 2006, he blatantly interfered in Italian domestic politics, showing preference for one candidate over another by giving Berlusconi such a prominent place on the world stage. This action not only harked back to the old cold war policy of keeping the Italian Communists out of power but also made it difficult for Berlusconi's opponent, Romano Prodi, to work closely with the Bush administration after Prodi's coalition achieved victory at the polls. The facts that Italy had been a loyal ally of the United States under the center-left during Kosovo as well as under the center-right in Iraq and that Romano Prodi as prime minister would see his coalition break down over his support for U.S. policy in Afghanistan seemed hardly to matter.

No European expects to be able to set the policy of the U.S. government. Few expect to be ignored so consistently or comprehensively either. The Bush administration not only elevated this practice to an art form; it also set it out as ideology. During the first of the 2004 U.S. presidential debates, Democratic nominee Senator John Kerry argued that his administration would differ from President Bush's because of its willingness to explain to its allies the legitimacy of its policy actions. The Bush administration responded by describing such a practice as giving foreign countries an effective veto over the American pursuit of the national interest: a "global test." Leadership, President Bush explained, is not convincing others that you are right; it is maintaining your conviction in the face of opposition. This position won the debate, and Kerry recanted the global test. From a European perspective, the outcome was anything but a break from U.S. policy or from America's foreign policy traditions. Nevertheless, it was more continuity than they were wont to expect.

### Flexibility and Change

The point about continuity can be overemphasized. The first Bush administration continued and exaggerated many of the tendencies inherited from the Clinton years—such as then secretary of state Madeleine Albright's inclination to regard the United States as the world's "indispensable nation"—but it offered a few new twists as well. The dismissive tone coming out of Secretary Rumsfeld's Defense Department is one example; the promotion of faith-based initiatives is another. By

the same token, the second Bush administration was different from the first. President Bush won the 2004 election by emphasizing his decisive response to the threat of global terrorism, but he started his second administration by emphasizing his openness to work with his European allies. President Bush sent Condoleezza Rice to Europe for her first foreign tour as secretary of state and quickly followed with a trip to Europe of his own. During those trips the Bush administration made a point of including stopovers in Brussels to meet with representatives of the European Union. The implication of these visits was that Europe is not just a collection of great powers; Europe also has a personality—or, in EU-speak, an “actress”—of its own.

The challenge for Europeans has been to interpret the lasting significance of any change in policy or leadership style. It is here that the personality of the president became so important. Although many Europeans retained positive impressions of U.S. society and popular culture, in successive public opinion surveys they expressed deep dissatisfaction with U.S. government policy, and with the Bush administration most of all. Moreover, no change in the rhetoric coming out of the White House could dispel this popular disapproval, and no change in U.S. policy could be expected either, at least not so long as the United States remained embroiled in Iraq and Afghanistan, and not so long as it continued to wage a global war on terror through extraordinary renditions, secret CIA prisons, and the infamous Guantánamo detention center. Much of President Bush’s unpopularity in Europe derived from the strength of his personal commitment to (and identification with) each of these ventures. Given President Bush’s resounding victory over Senator Kerry, however, it was not obvious that any Democrat could win the White House while rejecting any of these commitments—let alone while rejecting them all.

Virtually the whole of the American political class was implicated in the Iraq venture and the global war on terror, sitting members of Congress most of all. The nuanced position that the war in Iraq was justified even if the conduct was flawed found little support among European public opinion, particularly after it became clear that no weapons of mass destruction would be found. Meanwhile the complicity of European governments in the practice of extraordinary rendition cast a pall over the conduct of the war against terror as a whole. Even governments ostensibly opposed to the Iraq campaign were implicated in this manner, and the transatlantic relationship was tarnished as a result.

The 2006 midterm congressional elections could never have changed these popular impressions. The Congress is too complex and the

president too visible for even a massive defeat of the Bush administration to have that effect. The only way to reverse the downward spiral in perceptions of the United States in Europe was to change the face of Americans abroad—and that meant changing the president of the United States. What the Europeans looked for was a great sense of flexibility and a greater willingness to listen. Such characteristics would not eliminate the role of the United States as the world's indispensable nation, but they would make it easier for Europeans to contribute to collective policies, and they would raise the profile of European independence as well.

Before they could anticipate this new flexibility, however, Europeans had to penetrate the American electoral process. The goal was not to generate a precise prediction of the outcome of the U.S. presidential elections, although precise and accurate predictions are always welcome. Rather, Europeans hoped to get a sense of the American political system's capacity for change. For example, it would be unrealistic to expect a U.S. presidential candidate to campaign on a platform of surrendering American leadership in world affairs, but would it be possible for American "leadership" to take on a different character? More important, even assuming that a candidate could win on the promise of hope in a new future, what is to prevent the logic of American power from reasserting the importance of continuity over change?

### A Story in Four Acts

This book was conceived at the start of the primary season for the 2008 presidential elections with such questions in mind. It is published too late to shape opinions before the elections take place, but it is still a timely aid to interpreting the significance of events after the fact. In this way, the goal is not just to explain how Barack Obama came to win the election but also to assess how durable his message of change will be in the European context. Along the way, the book should help Europeans understand what role they have to play in President Obama's success. If the massive turnout for Barack Obama in Berlin during his campaign trip to Europe in July 2008—and the overwhelming support Obama receives in European public opinion polling—are any indication, a change in U.S. foreign policy toward a more open multilateral framework is precisely the outcome that Europeans have longed for over the past two administrations (and more). It is not, however, a gift from the United States to Europe, and there is much the Europeans will have to contribute to the process as well.

The 2008 U.S. presidential elections are analyzed in four parts, or “acts”—starting with the primary contests to determine the nominees, moving to the national campaigns, looking at the outcomes, and anticipating the implications. The analysis of the primaries explains how the choice for U.S. votes crystallized as it did. It reveals both the depth of divisions within the Democratic Party and the residual strength of the Republican right. It also dispels a number of popular myths about American democracy—that there are only two parties, that the major parties are either bunched up in the center or dominated by the extremes, that name recognition is all that matters, or that money is the key to power.

Once the primaries were decided, the candidates moved into the national campaign, where they had to compete with different opponents for control over a broader electorate. These campaigns relied on money and organization on a scale unprecedented even by American standards. Yet money and organization alone were not enough. The candidates had to participate in the traditional rituals of conventions and debates, while at the same time wrestling to control the media and the agenda. All of these factors contributed to the outcome, with the result that Obama’s victory was more comprehensive than anyone could have anticipated.

The explanation of the outcome provides a vital insight into the coalition of forces that will govern the country over the next four years. At the popular level, this coalition is revealed through an analysis of voting patterns in the election of the president. Nevertheless, popular control over the U.S. president is limited; the influence of Congress is much stronger. Therefore it is necessary to look beyond the popular vote and to examine the results in the House and the Senate. It is also necessary to examine the constitution of the cabinet. The president is not just the face of the United States; he is also the chief executive of the administration. The personalities that he calls to office reveal both the structure of his support and the depth of his self-confidence.

The implications of the elections are identified on three levels. The first concern is the conduct of foreign policy. Here the analysis necessarily explores how Obama succeeded with attitudes so different from those of both the Bush administration and the Clinton administration. The answer lies in the primacy of economics. Given the perilous state of the U.S. economy, foreign policy distinctions soon retreated into the background. By implication, the second concern lies there. The Obama administration came to power with a daunting economic agenda. Failure to address the nation’s concerns will almost inevitably

lead to a collapse in support at the polls. A final concern is the durability of the social fabric. This goes beyond the question of who voted in support to consider who is likely to vote that way in the future, where they are located, and how their voices will be heard.

The epilogue offers our reading of the role that Europe will have to play. The change in the United States has powerful implications for how transatlantic relations may develop in the future. Such potential can only be realized, though, if the countries of Europe make a positive contribution. This is not going to be easy. The demands on Europe will be difficult to meet. Given the popularity of the Obama administration, they will be difficult to resist as well. Europeans looked for change in the U.S. presidency. Now they must be ready to accept the consequences of getting their wish.

## *Epilogue*

ERIK JONES AND SALVATORE VASSALLO

The Obama administration came to power with the most complex policy agenda that any president has inherited since Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in 1932. Stock markets were collapsing, trade was shrinking, output was declining, and banks were failing across the globe. As if this economic situation was not bad enough, the security environment was pressing as well. Although Iraq appeared stable, Afghanistan did not, and Taliban insurgents were challenging the government of Pakistan. Relations between Israel and Palestine had taken a turn for the worse, Iran had begun to accelerate its nuclear enrichment program, and North Korea was threatening another ballistic missile test. Ethnic genocide continued to haunt the Darfur region and threatened to return to the African Great Lakes.

Then there was the host of domestic institutions in pressing need of reform. The health care system in the United States leaves appalling numbers of people without adequate coverage, the social security system cannot guarantee benefits far into the future, education is struggling, environmental protection is inadequate, and energy consumption is excessive. Moreover, the United States is hardly alone in suffering any of these domestic problems. Other countries may be better in some areas, but in other areas they are likely to be worse, and no country is sound across the board. Meanwhile, popular protests were spreading across Europe and threatening to ignite in the developing world. Even those countries that continued to grow, such as China, could not keep up with the pace of popular expectations and so feared the prospect of descending into turmoil. Economic crisis, international tension, and domestic stability were tightly intermingled.

In this fraught context, it was hardly surprising that Obama gave a somber inaugural address. Gone were the lofty phrases of his primary campaign, to be replaced by more austere calls to citizenship and solidarity. Obama insisted that "the time has come to set aside childish things," he noted that "everywhere we look, there is work to be done," and he encouraged the American people to embrace "a new era of responsibility." His message was not just for domestic consumption. To the outside world, Obama made it clear that America is "ready to lead once more" and that he would exercise leadership with "humility and restraint" on the basis of "greater cooperation and understanding between nations." Most important, perhaps, he made a firm commitment to joint action:

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and to feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering beyond our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.<sup>1</sup>

The America that Europeans had longed for without really expecting had finally come into being. The Obama administration restructured the balance in its relations with the outside world, deemphasizing the continuity in American foreign policy and instead stressing the need for change. It called for a new era of multilateral diplomacy, and it promised to listen to friend and foe alike. The buzzwords of the Obama administration were unfamiliar as well. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke openly about "smart power" in her confirmation hearings before the Senate, and the woman tapped to run the State Department's policy and planning division, Anne-Marie Slaughter, added "network power" to the list.

### Awkward Beginnings

The change in the tenor of transatlantic relations from the Bush administration to the Obama administration was like night and day. Where Bush tried and failed to stress the importance of strengthening the bonds across the Atlantic during his second term in office, Obama succeeded without even trying. Apart from a few holdouts, including Italy's Silvio

Berlusconi, who paid an odd compliment to Obama's suntan, most European leaders were eager to congratulate the new American president and to offer sincere commitments to close cooperation in the future. French president Nicolas Sarkozy and British prime minister Gordon Brown were among the most enthusiastic in displaying their affection for Obama, but the others were not far behind, and even the Russian president Dimitry Medvedev and prime minister Vladimir Putin were willing to admit an improvement in relations with the United States.

Despite all this enthusiasm, the new transatlantic relationship had its awkward moments as well. The most important of these centered on Afghanistan, where Obama has made clear his desire for closer coordination. According to the Obama administration, the Afghan theater is the real front line in the fight against international terrorism. Moreover, it is a front that extends deep inside Pakistan. Obama named Richard Holbrooke as his special envoy to the region, and he took every available opportunity to bring it to the top of the administration's foreign policy agenda.

The war against the insurgents in Afghanistan and Pakistan is a conflict of truly international dimensions, which means it is more than just an American concern. Obama liked to point out that the troops in Afghanistan come under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and not the United States. Although most of those troops are American, there is plenty of scope for other allied contributions. In the run-up to the April 2009 NATO summit, Obama made it clear that he would be seeking additional international support and that he was not just willing to strengthen the American presence as a *quid pro quo* but committed to doing so.

This strong commitment to resolving the Afghanistan situation came before a clear statement of what such a "resolution" would entail. Other than promoting a vague idea of Afghans no longer living in fear, even President Obama admitted that precise objectives remained to be determined. Indeed, the Obama administration announced its increased troop commitment to Afghanistan and its intention to hold a strategic review of the Afghan mission at roughly the same time.

For Europeans, this posed an obvious dilemma. Sending troops to Afghanistan is good alliance politics, but it is bad politics domestically, where the military interpretation of the fight against international terrorism has never been popular and where patience with overseas commitments was already wearing thin. Sending those troops without a clear understanding of the mission objective risked the prospect

of an indefinite deployment. No European country was eager to take that risk, and many were already looking for ways to ensure that what troops they had in country would not come under fire and might more easily move toward an exit.

Yet to turn down a request from the Obama administration was no easier than to accept one. After the expression of such enthusiasm for a change in the U.S. administration, any appearance of returning to politics as usual runs the risk of looking hypocritical. What is more, it creates the prospect of a prisoner's dilemma, where only some NATO allies cooperate and others defect. The only obvious solution is to coordinate a European response. But coordination in the face of crisis is not exactly a European forte. The uncooperative solution to the prisoner's dilemma—joint defection—is a much more likely result.

### Europe, What Europe?

The weakness of intra-European coordination has always been a vulnerable spot in the transatlantic alliance. It is apparent when the United States tries to ignore Europe, as it did during the run-up to the 2003 Iraq war, but it is evident too when the United States tries to engage with Europe. The weakness of intra-European coordination could be seen in the tension that arose during the negotiations of the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks pursued under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO), just as it could be seen in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that brought the WTO into being. Moreover, international trade is the area where Europe has the strongest institutions for constructing and presenting a coordinated position. In other areas where the United States has tried to engage with its European allies—say, on the Middle East, Russia, or protection of the environment—the prospects have been even worse: either the Europeans have come up with a common position that has left little room for compromise with the United States or the United States has struck deals with specific European countries at the expense of a common European position.

The Obama administration came into office facing a twofold challenge. Not only was intra-European coordination historically weak, but it was also a subject of near-obsession for the Europeans themselves. The impact of the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004 and the failure of the European Constitutional Treaty in popular

referenda held in France and the Netherlands just over twelve months later still have not been absorbed. Meanwhile, efforts to paper over disagreements by dropping any pretension to write a constitution for Europe have made matters worse not better. Although national politicians may pretend that the European Reform Treaty, or Lisbon Treaty, offers a workable blueprint for more effective coordination, the public is unconvinced, and renegade political elites are making a mockery of joint efforts. The Irish people rejected the Lisbon Treaty in a popular referendum, and Czech president Vaclav Klaus threatened not to sign the document in protest.

The theater that surrounds the process of European institutional reform obscures a deeper problem of intra-European coordination that was brought into sharp relief during the handover from the French presidency of the European Council and Council of Ministers at the end of 2008 to the Czech presidency at the start of 2009. Large European countries have significant diplomatic, economic, and military resources; small European countries do not. What is more, no simple turn of office in European institutions can make up the difference. Hence effective coordination between the United States and Europe depends first upon a general acceptance of the intra-European balance of power.

Where European institutions can make a difference is in shielding European countries from the volatility of the outside world. The European currency union, with its attendant multinational currency, the euro, is a case in point. Countries inside the Eurozone are not so vulnerable, for example, to fluctuations in the euro-dollar relationship, they are less susceptible to currency speculation or international capital flows, and they have greater liquidity in the face of banking failures or a more general global downturn. All of these factors became important during the economic crisis at the start of the Obama administration. However, the insulation provided by the euro did not cover Europe as a whole. Hence the European Union was forced to find ways to stabilize its weaker members and so had to divert its political attention away from the outside world. When President Obama came looking for European partners, Europe was turned in on itself.

### Europe's Turn

Even before the end of President Obama's first one hundred days in office, the transatlantic relationship had deteriorated sufficiently to give

cause for concern. The Europeans looked unready to make a commitment to support American leadership. They looked even less prepared to present a European leadership of their own.

This inability or reluctance to engage with the United States in finding joint solutions to common problems presents a great challenge in looking to the future. The multilateral moment in American foreign policy cannot survive without European support. On the contrary, the new effort by the Obama administration to embrace multilateral diplomacy must be nurtured through cooperation for the change in U.S. foreign policy to be made permanent. Otherwise there is a risk that the Obama administration will fail and that the change he offers will give way to a more traditional American approach to the world. The transatlantic relationship may not suffer as much as it did during the previous eight years, but an important opportunity for rebuilding the West will have been lost.

The obligation here is not to support American leadership. Rather, it is for Europe to come to grips with itself. This challenge is domestic as well as international. It speaks to the reconciliation between European societies and their immigrant communities as well as to East and West or North and South. President Obama started his electoral campaign by arguing that the voters would have to see their hopes and aspirations in his candidacy. This worked as a formula to convince a majority of voters to support a charismatic and yet improbable candidate who called them to responsible citizenship. Europeans do not need to use Obama as such an instrument. They need only draw from his experience to know that such a mobilization is possible. Far be it from any American to tell Europe how it should change. Suffice it to show that change can come about.

### **Note**

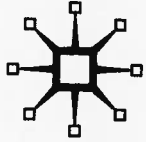
1. "Obama's Inaugural Speech," January 20, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/20/obama.politics>.

# **The 2008 Presidential Elections**

## **A Story in Four Acts**

*Edited by*  
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and  
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# Writing Bush's Legacy Today

Erik Jones

*The one percent doctrine : deep inside America's pursuit of its enemies since 9/11* / Ron Suskind. - New York : Simon & Schuster, c2006. - xi, 367 p. - ISBN 978-0-7432-7109-7

*State of denial* / Bob Woodward. - New York : Simon & Schuster, c2006. - xiv, 560 p. - ISBN 978-0-7432-7223-0; 978-0-7432-9566-6

Future historians of America's post-9/11 security strategy and particularly the conflict in Iraq will have to troll through a dense forest of contemporary commentary and insider accounts. In doing so, they will encounter three dominant themes: a broken policy process, distorted intelligence, and a tangled chain of command. All three of these themes are well established in the books by journalists Ron Suskind and Bob Woodward. Future historians will also find a puzzling gap in contemporary accounts. This gap concerns to what extent President George W. Bush is directly responsible for the failures of his administration. That he is accountable goes without saying: Bush is the commander-in-chief. What is at issue is whether he is the unwitting victim of his administration or the cause of its incompetence. Neither Suskind nor Woodward appears willing to make a clear indictment of a sitting president.

Both authors highlight the broken policy process, but Suskind's account is the more damaging of the two. His book's title, *The One Percent Doctrine*, alludes to an edict from Vice President Dick Cheney that policy planners treat any contingency as a certainty where the probability of an extreme event – the most dangerous weapons used by the most dangerous people – is greater than one percent. Beyond that one percent threshold, further discussion of likelihood is irrelevant. All that matters is the response. Yet with such a low threshold, there are no objective benchmarks for filtering contingencies out of the policy process. Instead, all measures of priority are political. Policymakers do not have to believe that Saddam Hussein will give weapons of mass destruction to Al Qaeda terrorists to accept that he might. Accepting that he might, they have no reason not to regard that possibility as a certain fact and to elevate that "fact" to the centre of US foreign policy.

Summarised like this, the one-percent proposition sounds unbelievable if not absurd. As it played out in real time, however, it was more subtle. Here the books by Suskind and Woodward come together to narrate a tale of deepening isolation and group-think. Those who are willing to follow each step in the chain of logical

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progression are allowed to remain in the policy process. Those who resist are pushed out. From the outside, the chain of reasoning as a whole becomes progressively absurd; from the inside, each successive link makes sense.

Excessive reliance on such tales of mistaken assumptions offers too generous an account of the tragedy that follows. US administrations are not ignorant of group-think or of its potential importance. Indeed, Irving Janis explained how group-think could lead to disasters like the Bay of Pigs and Graham Allison developed a related concept to explain how the Kennedy administration almost brought the world to an end over the Cuban missile crisis. As a result of analyses by Irving, Allison and others, the design of the US policy process is supposed to prevent such problems from coming about. Nowhere is this truer than in the provision of 'intelligence'. The intelligence community is the administration's link to the real world. Hence if the policy process is as broken as Suskind suggests, then this intelligence must have been corrupted along the way.

Suskind and Woodward agree that the intelligence used to support the war in Iraq was distorted by members of the Bush administration. Speech writers drafted language for the President with no evidentiary basis and against repeated advice. Pollsters and ideologues carried more influence than eye-witness accounts. Facts were tested against hypotheses rather than the other way around – and inconvenient anomalies or contradictory findings were quashed. The story of Ambassador Joe Wilson and his CIA spouse, Valerie Plame, features prominently in both narratives.

Where the two versions differ is over the role played by CIA Director George Tenet. Suskind is the more sympathetic voice.

For him, Tenet was a man caught in an impossible situation. The challenge for Tenet was to fix the policy process while remaining loyal to the president – who kept him in office after an alternation in power – and maintaining his effectiveness in dealing with those world leaders most important for America's security. This challenge was made all the harder by an assertive Vice President, an aggressive Secretary of Defense, an inconspicuous Secretary of State, and an incompetent National Security Advisor. Tenet had no clear allies in his efforts to tie US policy to the real world and he had both enemies and opportunists waiting to pounce should he misstep: Slam Dunk.

Woodward is less forgiving of Tenet, and not without reason. The Director of Central Intelligence cannot afford to yield to political pressure, even for an instant. If he cannot stand his ground, then he should step down. Yet it is clear that for Woodward the real villain of the piece is Donald Rumsfeld. Tenet may have been weak, but Rumsfeld was much worse. He was overbearing, self-serving, irresponsible, and unaccountable. (Woodward's book was published before Donald Rumsfeld was forced to resign after the November 2006 mid-term Congressional elections). And it is through Rumsfeld that Woodward reveals the tangled nature of the chain of command.

Here we move beyond the policy process to deal with policy implementation. Suskind's book is an indictment of where the decision to go to war went wrong. Yet there are many who believe this is the right war, just handled badly. Woodward explains why such thinking is perverse. The same administration that brought on the war could not have handled it well. *State of Denial* is not just a critique of how the Bush administration views the facts on the

ground in Iraq. Rather it is a much deeper claim about how the administration views itself, how the president understands the roles of his cabinet members, how they view their own place in the government, and how everyone imagines their contribution to history as it unfolds.

Rumsfeld is the perfect illustration for this argument. In Woodward's account, Rumsfeld sees himself as transforming the military, reining in the service chiefs, and micro-managing events both in the Pentagon and on the ground. Along the

way he denies the limits of his own vision, the capacities of his subordinates, and the scope of his reach. The mystery is not that such hubris could lead the United States into a disastrous conflict. It is that it could go unacknowledged for so long and provoke such a weak response.

Both Suskind and Woodward suggest that ultimate responsibility lies with the president. Yet they both also hesitate in the end. We can only hope that future historians will be more aggressive in pushing the case.

# Debating the transatlantic relationship: rhetoric and reality

ERIK JONES\*

The rhetoric surrounding the transatlantic relationship is overblown. To be sure, there is a crisis in relations between Europe and the United States. As a result, the countries of the North Atlantic alliance will have to decide, paraphrasing from the definition of 'crisis' in the 1913 edition of Webster's dictionary, whether their partnership 'must go on, or be modified, or terminate'. Moreover, we have a pretty good idea what that decision will be. Virtually no one believes that relations can continue as they are or that the transatlantic community should be abandoned altogether. Hence, no matter how you choose to polarize the issues at stake, resolution of the present crisis will involve more flexibility and a stronger commitment to multilateral cooperation on both sides of the Atlantic.

This overblown rhetoric builds on a familiar refrain. The current crisis is special because it involves so many issues, because the different points of tension are so tightly interrelated, and because the values at stake are so fundamental. Elizabeth Pond's 2004 book, *Friendly fire*, is a good example. Early in the preface, Pond notes that: 'In the past, however heated the confrontations, transatlantic quarrels tended to be over single issues ... not over a whole range of topics that obstructed conciliation on any one of them and maximized ill will.'<sup>1</sup> She may be right. Yet John Palmer makes precisely the same point in his 1987 book, *Europe without America?* 'It is true that transatlantic friction is nothing new,' he concedes in his opening chapter, and yet 'the situation today is different both in terms of the scale and complexity of those differences and in the way in which economic, political, and security policy differences interact with each other.'<sup>2</sup>

Nor was Palmer's crisis the first of this sort. Josef Joffe describes a similar state of affairs in his 1981 article in *Foreign Affairs*, 'European–American relations: the

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly fire: the near-death of the transatlantic alliance* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution/European Union Studies Association, 2004), p. x.

<sup>2</sup> John Palmer, *Europe without America? The crisis in Atlantic relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 1.

enduring crisis'. Indeed, the opening paragraph of the article contains a sentence that is oddly prescient in the light of recent events: 'Instead of infusing the West with a new unity of purpose, as might have been expected, the crisis over Afghanistan has left a legacy of confusion, distrust and resentment which, in retrospect, turns the many disputes of the past into minor family squabbles.'<sup>3</sup> Somewhat later on in the piece, Joffe points out that 'it is clear that perceptions and beliefs on both shores of the Atlantic are drastically out of phase. The few premises that are still shared by Europeans and Americans are dwarfed by the many disputes where they clash not only over tactics but over *Weltanschauung*.'<sup>4</sup> Joffe's assessment of the transatlantic crisis of the early 1980s was not an isolated one. At about the same time, Christopher Tugendhat wrote in *International Affairs* about 'the wedge of mutual suspicion and misunderstanding which is currently forcing the partners apart ... In the United States there is mounting impatience with what is seen as the softness and unreliability of the allies ... In Europe distrust and in some circles even dislike of the United States has reached disturbing levels.'<sup>5</sup>

Of course, to suggest that we are still living through the same 'enduring crisis' would be wrong. The transatlantic partnership of the Cold War had a number of unique points of tension, not the least of which was the deployment of American nuclear weapons on European soil and their subsequent withdrawal.<sup>6</sup> My point is that while the crisis may be different now, the differences are familiar, at least judging from the rhetoric. Therefore it is worth reconsidering a question raised by Lawrence Freedman more than two decades ago: 'Should we view the current set of trans-Atlantic troubles as just another episode in a continuing story or are there deeper factors that will severely test the durability of the Alliance?'<sup>7</sup> Freedman concluded that while there were deeper forces at work, the alliance could nevertheless 'be turned into a more mature relationship between countries'.<sup>8</sup> Such a relationship remains a possibility. Indeed, the present crisis may even help to bring it about.

I develop this argument below in five sections. The first three sections examine different areas of concern in the current debate. The fourth explains how deeper forces are working to multiply and enlarge the obstacles which any 'more mature' relationship will have to overcome. The fifth concludes with my reasons for optimism in looking to the future.

<sup>3</sup> Josef Joffe, 'European-American relations: the enduring crisis', *Foreign Affairs* 59: 4, Spring 1981, p. 835.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 842.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Tugendhat, 'Europe's need for self-confidence', *International Affairs* 58: 1, Winter 1981-2, pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Korber argues that this was the distinctive feature of the crisis in transatlantic relations during the early 1980s. Stanley Korber, 'Can NATO survive?', *International Affairs* 59: 3, Summer 1983, pp. 339-41.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Freedman, 'The Atlantic crisis', *International Affairs* 58: 3, Summer 1982, p. 411.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

## **Missions and coalitions**

To begin with, it is important to reiterate that there is a crisis in the transatlantic relationship. The crisis is a big one. It may even be the biggest ever.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, resolution of this crisis is not beyond the realm of possibility. Indeed, the broad solution—through which both sides of the Atlantic commit themselves to more flexible cooperation—seems obvious to almost everyone, and has done for many years. If the crisis is worse now than before, it is because that solution has been difficult to implement and not because of some quantum shift in the complexity of the transatlantic relationship. The majority of the points of conflict (or obscurity) are more rhetorical than real. While this rhetoric is often complicated, the underlying principles are not.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has given birth to more than a few of these rhetorical controversies through his frequent press conferences. The most famous centres on Rumsfeld's assertion that 'the mission determines the coalition.' From the context, it appears that the comment—made on 18 October 2001—was originally intended to deflect speculation about the durability of international commitment to the US-led 'war on terror':

From time to time, I see references in the press to 'the coalition'—singular. And let me reiterate that there is no single coalition in this effort. This campaign involves a number of flexible coalitions that will change and evolve as we proceed through the coming period. Let me reemphasize that the mission determines the coalition, and the coalition must not determine the mission ... A month from now, I expect someone somewhere might report that a particular nation is not doing something or has stopped doing something, and the speculation could be 'Is the coalition coming apart or unraveling?' ... Well, let me make clear: No single coalition has 'raveled', therefore, it's unlikely to unravel.<sup>10</sup>

Over time, however, the idea that 'the mission determines the coalition' has come to represent the essence of American unilateralism.<sup>11</sup> As Charles Krauthammer explains: 'We take our friends where we find them, but only in order to help us in accomplishing the mission. The mission comes first, and we decide it.'<sup>12</sup> This is a much more muscular version of what Krauthammer originally described as 'pseudo-multilateralism: a dominant great power acts essentially alone, but, embarrassed at the idea and still worshipping at the shrine of collective security, recruits a ship here, a brigade there, and blessings all around to give its unilateral actions a multilateral sheen.'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The importance of accepting the significance of the crisis is evident in Michael Cox's recent review of Robert Kagan's *Of paradise and power*. Cox's point is that it is necessary to recognize that the crisis is significant in order to understand why it has reached such proportions. Michael Cox, 'Commentary: Martians and Venusians in the new world order', *International Affairs* 79: 3, Summer 2003, p. 531.  
<sup>10</sup> [http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2001/t10182001\\_t018sdmy.html](http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2001/t10182001_t018sdmy.html).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Josef Joffe, 'Continental divides', *The National Interest* 71, Spring 2003, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The unipolar moment revisited', *The National Interest* 70, Winter 2002–2003, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The unipolar moment', *Foreign Affairs* 70: 1, Winter 1990–91, p. 25.

The more muscular version of the argument is also the more revealing. For unilateralism to work in the manner that Krauthammer describes, the great power must not only be able to accomplish 'the mission' on its own, it must also be able to decide what the mission is in real (and not reified) terms. That is far easier said than done. Most 'missions' have a logic of their own that must unfold no matter how much the 'dominant great power' would prefer things to be otherwise. The close connection between war-fighting and peace-making is only one case in point. The link between environmental protection and energy policy is another. Moreover, once we admit that the mission cannot be defined by the dominant great power in all its many facets, we must also accept the possibility that some missions may be impossible to accomplish unilaterally. Acting alone, the United States has no greater prospect of winning the war on terror than it has of averting global warming. Indeed, Rumsfeld made this point about US dependence on international cooperation explicitly just prior to his assertion that 'the mission determines the coalition': 'The support of allies like Italy and other friendly countries around the world, certainly including the NATO nations and the AWACS that's now flying over the United States *is critical* to the success of what will be a long and sustained campaign to liquidate terrorist networks that threaten all of our people.'<sup>14</sup>

Krauthammer's 'unipolar moment' is not a general condition of the post-Cold War world order. Rather, it is a moment of opportunity generated by an exceptional conjunction of factors. It obtains when the United States has the ability both to define its objectives and to achieve them, acting alone. The US government may nevertheless prefer to adopt a 'pseudo-multilateralism'; but it does not have to and nor, Krauthammer suggests, should it.<sup>15</sup>

The point to note is that this special condition is hardly unique to the post-Cold War era: it appertains to all countries, not just to the United States. Of course, the United States, with its 'demonstrated surfeit of autonomous power', has unipolar moments more often than other countries do.<sup>16</sup> But even second-rank powers, in Krauthammer's language, will find moments when they can both define their interests and achieve them—or at least try.<sup>17</sup> Here we need only think of Britain and the Falklands (or Argentina and the Malvinas), France and Chad, China and Tibet, or Russia and Chechnya. Moreover, we do not have to like what the examples represent: indeed, that is precisely the point.

What is difficult to imagine is that any government would choose to allow the 'coalition to determine the mission' when presented with the opportunity to define its interests and achieve them by acting alone. Consider, for example,

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2001/t10182001\\_to18sdmy.html](http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2001/t10182001_to18sdmy.html) (emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> Krauthammer attempts to make this suggestion more palatable by insisting that the United States act in the global interest rather than in the national interest. However, the problem remains that the US definition of the global mission is no more constraining the real world than the US definition of the mission in general. See Krauthammer, 'The unipolar moment revisited', p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Joffe, 'Continental divides', p. 157. Spurred on by the neo-conservatives, the Bush administration may identify such opportune moments more often than they actually exist. See G. John Ikenberry, 'The end of the neoconservative moment', *Survival* 46: 1, Spring 2004, pp. 8–10.

<sup>17</sup> Krauthammer, 'The unipolar moment', p. 24.

the case of macroeconomic policy coordination in the European Union. Here the constraints on state autonomy are strong—particularly when compared to the restraints of ‘international law’ on the conduct of US foreign policy. The treaty provisions adopted by all EU member states make it clear that they should treat economic policy as a matter of common interest. The specific provisions for macroeconomic policy coordination enjoin the member states from engaging in actions that will impose costs on one another or impede the economic functioning of the union as a whole.<sup>18</sup> By and large, the countries of Europe have abided by these commitments. On occasion, however, they have not. In December 2000, the Irish government reduced its fiscal surplus despite having agreed specifically not to do so only months before.<sup>19</sup> In 2001, the Portuguese government reported inaccurate government accounting statistics. In 2002, the German government failed to live up to its own commitment to trim its fiscal deficit. Later that same year the French government refused to acknowledge that any such commitment was binding.<sup>20</sup> And in November 2003, the French and the Germans suspended the rules for fiscal restraint altogether. In other words, unilateral moments abound in the European Union’s procedures for multilateral surveillance.

The mistake would be to assume that any country is innocent in such matters. Even the staunchest supporters of European economic policy coordination have relied on mechanisms to impose unwanted or unsustainable burdens on the countries around them. In many ways, the smaller states are more adept at such beggar-thy-neighbour tactics and so more prone to use them. For example, Luxembourg relies on banking secrecy laws to attract foreign savings, while staffing its industry with migrant workers and cross-border commuters who generate tax revenue without drawing on social benefits. Meanwhile, Belgium and the Netherlands use prices and incomes policies to hold down relative production costs and so export unemployment to Germany. The German government might try to use similar tactics—for example, by relying on concerted wage restraint to increase competitiveness against the United States: but the result would be to trigger even more strenuous efforts on the part of Europe’s smaller countries and to reduce the whole of European domestic consumption.<sup>21</sup>

Yet for all the defections, European macroeconomic policy coordination should be considered more a success than a failure. The comparison with the

<sup>18</sup> See articles 4, 98 and 99 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community.

<sup>19</sup> Erik Jones, ‘The politics of Europe 2001: adversity and persistence’, *Industrial Relations Journal* 33: 5, Dec. 2002, pp. 385–7.

<sup>20</sup> Erik Jones, ‘The politics of Europe 2002: flexibility and adjustment’, *Industrial Relations Journal* 34: 5, Dec. 2003, pp. 369–71.

<sup>21</sup> The Belgian government conceded this asymmetry during the negotiation of the 1993 European Commission White Paper on competitiveness. Nevertheless, both the Belgians and the Dutch remain committed to the use of concerted wage moderation in order to sustain cost competitiveness *vis-à-vis* their ‘major trading partners’, meaning Germany. See Commission of the European Communities, white paper, *Growth, competitiveness, employment: the challenges and ways forward into the 21st century, Part C* (Brussels: European Commission, 1993), p. 72.

divisions of the 1970s is particularly striking. When the Bretton Woods system broke down and the dollar began its wide fluctuations against European currencies, Europe's different national economies all went in their own different directions.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the sharp swings in the dollar over the past few years have been met with much more stability in Europe, and particularly within the European single currency area. International observers may complain that Europe is not doing enough to improve its economic performance, but they can hardly hark back to the glory days of the 1970s for support. Moreover, the reason for this new-found economic stability is not that the EU member states like multilateral surveillance per se. Given the opportunity, virtually all the countries of Europe have demonstrated a willingness to break the rules of economic policy coordination, even if only in spirit. Nevertheless, these same European countries recognize that multilateral cooperation is more effective than going it alone, at least in general and over the long haul. The coalition does not determine the mission; however, in economics at least, most missions require a coalition response.

The debate about missions and coalitions tends to assume that anyone would steadfastly adhere to one side or the other. There is precious little evidence to suggest that is the case. The United States emphasizes flexibility but admits that cooperation is important. The Europeans emphasize cooperation but with due regard for flexibility. Striking a balance between these two points of view is a matter of degrees and not absolutes, of will and not principle.

### **Capabilities, values and expectations**

Examples drawn from economics may unfairly skew the analysis. To a greater or lesser extent, every government has access to economic instruments that it can use to beggar its neighbours, and all governments use them. However, every government also recognizes the dynamics of interdependence, wherein retaliatory measures and feedback mechanisms make it impossible to ignore the actions and reactions of others.<sup>23</sup> The distribution of military capabilities is much less democratic and the dynamics of security interdependence are perhaps more subtle. Although the world remains a dangerous place, only a few countries ever confront the necessity to use military force. Fewer still have substantial armies. Only one country is a superpower.

Within the realm of security, it is possible to imagine a stark contrast between the attitudes of the superpower and the attitudes of those countries that have little need to resort to the use of force and few resources to do so. Put

<sup>22</sup> Erik Jones, *The politics of economic and monetary union: integration and idiosyncrasy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 5–7.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the classic statement of the problem was written to inform US policy-makers of the necessity for cooperating with their European counterparts. See Richard Cooper, *The economics of interdependence: economic policymaking in the Atlantic community* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

bluntly, the United States has the resources and the self-confidence to recognize unipolar moments in the conduct of foreign policy; Europe does not. This is a principal theme in Robert Kagan's book *Of paradise and power*.<sup>24</sup> Kagan's premise is twofold. First, US security guarantees during the Cold War encouraged European governments to allow their military abilities to atrophy. As a consequence, 'Europe's military weakness has produced an understandable aversion to the exercise of military power.' Second, the pattern of European integration during the post-Second World War era has intensified European reluctance to use force. 'Whatever its architects may have intended, European integration has proved to be the enemy of European military power and, indeed, of an important European global role ... Europe does not see a mission for itself that requires power. Its mission is to oppose power.'<sup>25</sup>

Kagan's thesis has attracted a large body of commentary, both critical and admiring.<sup>26</sup> Whatever the judgements reached, all seem to accept that there is an underlying connection between capabilities and values, and specifically between the capacity to project force and the willingness to do so. Where they tend to differ is in their assessment of the nature of power, the direction of causality and the implications for world order. In synthetic form, the antithesis of Kagan would run something like this. Military force is not the only or even the most important source of state power. The atrophy of European military capabilities reflects and did not cause the desire of Europeans to develop other resources for power projection. This decision to opt for alternative power resources was based on a realistic assessment of the threats to national security in a globalized world. The most pressing problems facing Europe and the United States may be solved only through cooperative, non-violent intervention. The United States would do well to emulate the European emphasis on non-military elements in the conduct of foreign policy. Moreover, aside from the dispute over military power, and particularly over Iraq, the United States has no greater collection of friends in the world than is to be found on the other side of the Atlantic. Failure to heed that fact can only make the United States weaker, not stronger.

This synthetic critique is resonant, particularly given the recent tragic turn of events in Iraq. In response, Kagan has been careful to qualify his position, both in an afterword to the paperback edition of his book and in a subsequent essay in *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>27</sup> The thrust of this qualification, and the emerging consensus in the debate, is that the United States should temper its own urges to act unilaterally—both because it will not succeed and because it may engender

<sup>24</sup> Robert Kagan, *Of paradise and power: America and Europe in the new world order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> The citation is taken from the essay that launched the volume. See Robert Kagan, 'Power and weakness', *Policy Review* 113, June 2002, [http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan\\_print.html](http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan_print.html).

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Cox, 'Commentary', pp. 523–32; David P. Calleo, 'Power, wealth and wisdom', *The National Interest* 72, Summer 2003, pp. 5–15; Philip Gordon, 'Bridging the Atlantic divide', *Foreign Affairs* 82: 1, Jan.–Feb. 2003, pp. 70–83; Tony Judt, 'America and the world', *New York Review of Books* 50: 6, 10 April 2003, pp. 28–31. See also Robert Cooper, *The breaking of nations: order and chaos in the twenty-first century* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), pp. 155–72.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Kagan, 'America's crisis of legitimacy', *Foreign Affairs* 83: 2, March–April 2004, pp. 65–87.

reactions that are ultimately harmful both to the United States and to the world.<sup>28</sup> By implication, irrespective of the superpower status of the United States, the dynamics of interdependence are no more subtle for security than for economics.

Yet for all the commentary surrounding Kagan's thesis, there is more to the transatlantic relationship than just power and weakness. Indeed, the argument about capabilities and values is misleading. It focuses too much attention on the preponderance of American military might and it exaggerates European military weakness. Moreover, much of the debate about the Kagan thesis has taken place within the context of US foreign policy analysis, where the link between capabilities and values is almost self-evident. By contrast, relatively few commentators have considered the notion of Europe that is implicit in Kagan's argument. Even fewer have made the connection between the Kagan thesis and the analysis of European foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

The notion of Europe is important because it is such an obvious source of confusion across the Atlantic. Foreign policy analysts in the United States refer to the European Union as 'Europe' in the same casual manner that they refer to the United States of America as 'America'. However, such aggregation does injustice to the many and deep divisions between European states, particularly in the matter of foreign and security policy. Within Europe, there is less interest in the link between capabilities and values and more interest in the problem of expectations.<sup>30</sup> Which countries should be expected to contribute to the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP), which will sit on the sidelines, and which will obstruct progress? How are the different coalitions of member states likely to change from one policy area to the next? Should the EU become involved only when all member states are in agreement, or should smaller groups have the right to resort to 'enhanced cooperation'? Such questions are anything but idle. Indeed, they express at the European level precisely those concerns that the debate about missions and coalitions addresses in the transatlantic relationship.

Any consideration of a European CFSP makes it obvious that the relationship between capabilities and values is country-specific. To begin with, Europe is home to a number of self-proclaimed neutral countries. Among the neutrals, Sweden presents an anomaly for any general claim about the link between capabilities and values. Sweden spends relatively heavily in order to assure its neutrality, while Austria, Finland, Ireland and Switzerland do not. In fact, Sweden falls just behind Greece in the world rankings for defence outlays, despite the fact that Greece is a non-neutral member of NATO and despite the

<sup>28</sup> See also Charles Kupchan, 'The rise of Europe, America's changing internationalism, and the end of US primacy', *Political Science Quarterly* 118: 2, 2003, pp. 225–8.

<sup>29</sup> For a notable exception, see Calleo, 'Power, wealth and wisdom', pp. 11–14.

<sup>30</sup> The following paragraphs were influenced strongly by Christopher Hill's analysis of the 'capability–expectations gap' in Europe. See Christopher Hill, 'The capability–expectations gap, or conceptualizing Europe's international role', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31: 3, Sept. 1993, pp. 305–28.

continuing tensions between Greece and Turkey.<sup>31</sup> The Swedish military also participates in a wide range of peacekeeping operations around the globe. The official explanation is that ‘Active participation in peacekeeping operations is a way for Sweden to underscore its opposition to war and violence and its interest in international peace and human rights.’<sup>32</sup>

Germany is an anomaly as well. The early history of European integration is littered with suspicions that Germany would reassert its aggressive tendencies, despite having been decisively defeated in the Second World War, with all the humiliation, destruction and disarmament that such defeat involved. The belligerent attitudes of the Germans were assumed to exist independently of the capabilities of the German state. Indeed, belief in the persistence of German martial values explains why many postwar politicians in Europe believed Germany should never be given both the autonomy and the ability to wage war. The solution of the 1950s was to bind Germany within European institutions. Hence, for example, Article 2 of the protocol used to modify the Brussels Treaty Organization into a Western European Union leads off with the following amendment: ‘The sub-paragraph of the preamble to the Treaty: “to take such steps as may be held necessary in the event of renewal by Germany of a policy of aggression” shall be modified to read: “to promote the unity and to encourage the progressive integration of Europe”.’<sup>33</sup>

European integration exists, at least in part, because the relationship between capabilities and values is—or is perceived to be—different for different countries. European institutions are intended to lock down expectations. In this way, and where vital interests are at stake, Europeans are willing to let the coalition determine the mission. The security commitment written into the 1948 Brussels Treaty (and underpinning the WEU) is much stronger than that written into the 1949 Treaty of Washington (which underpins NATO). In the event of ‘an armed attack’, WEU allies ‘will ... afford ... all the military and other aid and assistance in their power’. Meanwhile, a NATO ally ‘will assist ... by taking ... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force’.<sup>34</sup> An alliance with the United States may afford its members the luxury of allowing differences in either values or capabilities to result in differences in expectations. An alliance of only Europeans cannot.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, it should be admitted that Greece spends roughly twice as much as Sweden when measured as a ratio of GDP. However, this still does not explain the rough comparability between the two countries in absolute terms, nor does it eliminate the disparity between Sweden and, among others, Finland. The data are taken from Jeffrey Chamberlain, *Comparisons of US and foreign military spending: data from selected public sources*, CRS Report for Congress RL 32209 (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 28 Jan. 2004).

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.sweden.se/templates/FactSheet\\_\\_\\_\\_4173.asp#3](http://www.sweden.se/templates/FactSheet____4173.asp#3).

<sup>33</sup> The text of the 1954 Paris agreements is available online from the official website of the WEU, <http://www.weu.int>.

<sup>34</sup> The Treaty of Brussels is available at <http://www.weu.int>. The Treaty of Washington is available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm>.

However, this institutionalized notion of Europe loses cohesion once vital interests are no longer at stake.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the composition of European coalitions becomes more flexible and mission-specific. Obviously, such flexibility has important implications for the effectiveness of European security operations and the efficiency of European military procurement.<sup>36</sup> Europeans have proved to be extremely reluctant to strengthen their joint capabilities. Instead, the predominant strategy for EU member states has been to try to manage expectations both with respect to each other and with respect to third parties. The emphasis in CFSP is on the 'common', and the elaboration of a European security and defence identity (ESDI) is logically prior to any discussion of a European security and defence policy (ESDP). Within this context, there is less danger that Europe will be unable to secure its objectives in the world than there is that 'Europe' will fail to materialize while the rest of the world is waiting for it to act.

The internal weakness of 'Europe' implies that some European countries may have to act alone or in concert with non-European powers if they are to achieve their foreign and security policy objectives. It also implies that there will be times when some countries side with the United States while others do not. Finally, it implies that the United States may have to deal alternately with individual member states and with the European Union when it reaches out to its European allies. Even as the United States relearns the importance of cooperation, Europeans must acknowledge that such cooperation can only be flexible. What matters is not just capabilities and values, but expectations as well.

### **Leadership, legitimacy and the rule of law**

Most polarized depictions of the debate about transatlantic relations are misleading. No one outside the narrow group of ardent neo-conservatives has seriously argued that the United States should not seek allies. Likewise, very few voices in Europe have claimed that the United States is beyond redemption or that the Atlantic alliance is beyond repair.<sup>37</sup> The real issue was never whether there should be cooperation; nor is it whether the cooperation should be flexible. Rather, it is over who leads and who follows. It is about how leadership is justified. And it is about the rules for determining whether a given act of leadership is just.

<sup>35</sup> And it breaks down altogether when it clashes with vital, or even relatively important, national interests, as discussed above.

<sup>36</sup> See Cooper, *The breaking of nations*, pp. 157–8; Andrew D. James, 'The defense industry and transformation: a European perspective', in Daniel S. Hamilton, ed., *Transatlantic transformations: equipping NATO for the 21st century* (Washington DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, 2004), p. 175.

<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that there was not vitriol on either side. For two perspectives on the mutual antagonism in the present crisis, see Timothy Garton Ash, 'Anti-Europeanism in America', *New York Review of Books* 50: 2, 13 Feb. 2003, pp. 32–4; Tony Judt, 'Anti-Americans abroad', *New York Review of Books* 50: 7, 1 May 2003, pp. 24–7.

Once again, the master phrase-maker is US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. His suggestion that Europe be divided into 'old' and 'new' surged through political debates on the continent like a jolt of electricity. Yet viewed in context, the comment is much less an allusion to west European decadence than it is a complaint about the refusal of Europe to follow the lead of the United States:

*Question:* Sir, a question about the mood among European allies ... If you look at, for example, France, Germany ... it seems that a lot of Europeans rather give the benefit of the doubt to Saddam Hussein than President George Bush.

*Rumsfeld:* Now, we rarely find unanimity in the world. I was ambassador to NATO, and I—when we would go in and make a proposal, there wouldn't be unanimity ... And, by golly, I found that ... if there's leadership and if you're right, and if your facts are persuasive, Europe responds. And they always have ... Now, you're thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don't. I think that's old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the east. And there are a lot of new members ... Germany has been a problem, and France has been a problem.<sup>38</sup>

Rumsfeld's frustration is palpable. When the United States used to lead, Europe used to follow. Now that is no longer the case. To borrow from Michael Cox, Europe 'is no longer prepared to be pushed around by the Americans'.<sup>39</sup>

The debate about declining US leadership has shifted attention away from military capability and into two different but overlapping areas: 'soft power' and 'legitimacy'. Meanwhile, the terms have become so laden with meaning that they have to be introduced in inverted commas. 'Soft power' describes the vast array of resources short of the use of force that states can call upon in order to achieve their objectives in the international system.<sup>40</sup> 'Legitimacy' describes those attributes of state action that make the exercise of power acceptable to different groups. The two concepts overlap in so far as states do not have to use force when they can persuade different groups to accept the legitimacy of state action. Borrowing from Robert Cooper, 'legitimacy is as much a source of power as force'.<sup>41</sup>

The two concepts are different, however, because soft power is a state endowment while legitimacy is in the eye of the beholder. US policy-makers can make all the arguments about the legitimacy of their actions that they want. The strength of such arguments is necessary but insufficient. What matters is that the arguments are accepted. By implication, the very existence of a conflict over the legitimacy of US leadership is a problem—not because one side is right and the other is wrong, but because the two (or many) sides disagree.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2003/t01232003\\_t0122sdfpc.html](http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2003/t01232003_t0122sdfpc.html).

<sup>39</sup> Cox, 'Commentary', p. 531.

<sup>40</sup> The classic statement is Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Bound to lead: the changing nature of American power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). However, the notion of 'soft power' is as old as the study of 'international relations', if not older. See e.g. E. H. Carr, *The twenty years' crisis: 1919–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pp. 97–134.

<sup>41</sup> Cooper, *The breaking of nations*, p. 167.

Of the two strands in the debate about leadership, the discussion of legitimacy is the more important. To be sure, the United States should invest in soft power resources, just as it should strive to convince other countries and peoples that its values are worth upholding, that its intentions are honourable, that its policies are meritorious and that the consequences of its actions are for the good of all.<sup>42</sup> However, the real challenge is to create a framework within which such resources can be deployed without creating a sense of manipulation, where the pattern of leadership is consistent with the underlying logic of any claim to legitimacy, and where all parties are more interested in resolving disagreements than in raising them.

Institutions by themselves are only part of the answer.<sup>43</sup> So too is any appeal to the 'rule of law'. Writers like Anne-Marie Slaughter may be correct to identify the importance of international legal norms as one of the 'clear, cruel lessons of Iraq'.<sup>44</sup> However, institutions are prone to inertia and international law is weak. Legitimacy is easier to maintain in a well-institutionalized and transparent legal order.<sup>45</sup> But it is difficult to establish and it is nevertheless prone to crisis (and abuse). Hence even staunch advocates of the UN system are wont to admit to the need for US 'participation and leadership'.<sup>46</sup> Institutions require leadership and leadership requires institutions. The alternative is a situation where any use of power gives rise to suspicion, where state action is its own source of opposition and where the state effectively consumes its own legitimacy.<sup>47</sup>

The trick is to strike a balance between leadership and the rule of law, giving enough transparency and formal equality to bring diverse groups into cooperation while reserving enough freedom of manoeuvre to prevent institutional sclerosis and to respond to new challenges. Moreover, finding this balance is as much a part of domestic politics as of international relations. Just like the need for legitimacy, the need to balance leadership and the rule of law is a universal requirement.<sup>48</sup>

Europeans have been struggling with the balance between leadership and the rule of law for some time, the process taking expression most recently in the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to negotiate a constitutional treaty for the European Union. Two features of this struggle are particularly striking.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Joseph S. Nye Jr, 'The American national interest and global public goods', *International Affairs* 78: 2, Spring 2002, pp. 233–44.

<sup>43</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, *After victory: institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'The clear, cruel lessons of Iraq', *Financial Times*, 8 April 2004, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'A dangerous myth', *Prospect* 95, Feb. 2004, pp. 11–13. See also Stanley Hoffmann, 'America goes backward', *New York Review of Books* 50: 10, 12 June 2003, pp. 74–80.

<sup>46</sup> Brian Urquhart, 'World order and Mr Bush', *New York Review of Books* 50: 15, 9 Oct. 2003, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> This is essentially what many critics of current US policy have accused the Bush administration of doing in the transatlantic relationship. See e.g. Ivo H. Daalder, 'The end of Atlanticism', *Survival* 45: 2, Summer 2003, pp. 147–66.

<sup>48</sup> Much of this conventional wisdom is expounded at length in the sociological literature of the late 1960s and early 1970s. See e.g. Theodore J. Lowi, *The politics of disorder* (New York: Norton Library, 1971), pp. 169–85; Michel Crozier, *The stalled society* (New York: Viking, 1970), pp. 19–36.

The first is that the member states of the EU are as willing as they are to accept the constraints of EU law, even when it is inconvenient, and even when the European Court of Justice rules against them.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, such acquiescence in the European legal order is so pervasive that eyebrows are raised only when it is withdrawn. The refusal of France and Germany to abide by the stability and growth pact came as a surprise to most observers, despite the fact that economists had long suggested that sanctions would never be used and despite the absence of legal force across much of the procedure for handling 'excessive deficits'.<sup>50</sup>

The second striking feature is that the member states have had such difficulty finding agreement on the appropriate formula for weighted majority voting in the Council of Ministers. This issue has bedevilled every IGC since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. It was the main point of contention behind the collapse of the Brussels European Council summit of December 2003. And yet students of European decision-making are quick to point out that the member states only rarely subject decisions to a vote—even under those procedures which allow for qualified majority voting. The overwhelming ethos in the Council of Ministers is to strive for consensus rather than to make progress irrespective of dissent. Given the importance of consensus, the difference between the two formulas on offer at Brussels is not worth bringing down the constitutional treaty as a whole.<sup>51</sup>

The constitutional impasse reached at the end of 2003 reflects the continuing difficulty that Europeans face in finding an appropriate balance between leadership and the rule of law. German and French insistence on ensuring that larger countries have greater influence than smaller in the Council of Ministers is grounded in the need to secure Franco-German leadership in an EU that includes a large number of much smaller countries. For the smaller countries themselves, the struggle has been to prevent Europe from becoming a Franco-German condominium. Certainly there is nothing new in this pattern of events.<sup>52</sup> The mistake would be to assume that the current tension is only about the balance between large and small.

The balance of power among member states is important primarily in so far as it affects the legitimacy of the EU as a whole. And it is that legitimacy which matters: not any given formula for majority voting per se. France and Germany may succeed in leading Europe to a constitutional treaty—and, given the changes of government in Spain and Poland, there is every sign that they will—

<sup>49</sup> See Leslie Friedman Goldstein, *Constituting federal sovereignty: the European Union in comparative context* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> The European Commission has chosen to challenge this decision before the European Court of Justice. However, the challenge was based on procedural principles and not on the rules for excessive deficits per se. The ECJ heard arguments in the spring of 2004 and a judgment is expected by the summer.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Ludlow made this point at the SAIS Bologna Center on 22 April 2004. See also Peter Ludlow, 'Brussels breakdown', *Prospect* 95, Feb. 2004, pp. 38–43; Erik Jones, 'Competing models for Europe's constitutional debate: the basics', *Journal of European Affairs* 2: 1, Feb. 2004, pp. 8–19.

<sup>52</sup> Erik Jones, 'Small countries and the Franco-German relationship', in Patrick McCarthy, ed., *France–Germany, 1983–1993: the struggle to cooperate* (New York: St Martin's, 1993), pp. 113–38.

but they cannot ensure that the outcome is acceptable. Moreover, repeated insistence on the constitutional significance of the new treaty seems to be making matters worse rather than better. As British Prime Minister Tony Blair's decision to call a referendum on the constitutional treaty has revealed, important groups across the EU fear the implications of a European rule of law as much as if not more than groups in the United States fear the United Nations.<sup>53</sup> As Anne-Marie Slaughter suggests, European attachment to legal principles is instrumental and not ideological.<sup>54</sup> The ideological voices are almost all to be found on the other side of the European debate.

If there is a meaningful division between old Europe and new Europe, it is between the informal leadership of the Franco-German couple in times past and the more difficult partnership between France and Germany looking to the future. The need for Franco-German reconciliation no longer provides sufficient legitimation for the creation of European institutions. Instead, European institutions must play a double role: they must enhance the efficiency of the Franco-German partnership and they must provide the framework for legitimating Franco-German leadership.<sup>55</sup> Alternatively, European institutions must provide a legal order within which large-country leadership is no longer so necessary for Europe to function or for integration to progress. Neither alternative is going to be easy to bring about.

In this sense at least, the constitutional crisis of Europe is similar in many respects to the crisis in the transatlantic relationship. Both communities—the European and the Atlantic—must be accepted as legitimate; both require leadership; and both are grounded in the rule of law. The difference is that the tensions within Europe are far greater than those across the Atlantic. The differences between European countries are more pronounced. And the stakes are higher. By comparison, the rhetoric about transatlantic crisis is out of all proportion.

## Deepening divisions

Nevertheless, there is a crisis in transatlantic relations. Indeed, finding an acceptable formula for cooperation across the Atlantic may be more difficult now than ever before. To return to the question posed by Lawrence Freedman in the 1980s, there are deeper factors that are severely testing the durability of the Atlantic alliance. However, these factors have less to do with changes in the transatlantic relationship than they have to do with changes on either side of the Atlantic.

<sup>53</sup> The British press is filled with examples of opposition to the constitutional treaty. Some of this opposition is spilling over into the American press as well. For a representative example, see Anthony Beevor, 'Why Britain should vote "no"', *International Herald Tribune*, 11 May 2004, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Slaughter, 'A dangerous myth'.

<sup>55</sup> Erik Jones, 'Franco-German economic relations: from exchange and convergence to collective action', in Patrick McCarthy, ed., *France-Germany in the twenty-first century* (London: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 57–81.

### *Unity and diversity*

The contrast between the United States and the European Union as systems for economic governance is an obvious source of confusion. The newspapers are quick to report that the two economies are roughly equal in size and that the euro is a currency to rival the dollar. However, they are slow to explain what the implications are of having a centralized, federal system on one side of the Atlantic and a coordinated collection of national governments on the other. The differences play out in two dimensions: predictability and process.

To begin with, the EU is more dependent on predictability in economic conditions than is the United States. This is true for the simple reason that predictability facilitates coordination. So long as the EU member states can predict what economic conditions will look like, they can plan their separate policies with an eye to managing the multiple interdependencies and feedback loops that operate within and across European national borders. When the predictions fail, coordinating a response is difficult. When the failure is more important for some countries than for others, coordination breaks down altogether.

Economists will recognize this argument as a soft version of the concern for asymmetric shocks in a monetary union. However, the point is not to suggest that the single European currency will break down. That seems unlikely, and increasingly so. Rather, the objective is to explain why EU policy-makers are much more concerned about movements in the dollar than the US policy-makers are concerned about movements in the euro. Europeans complained when the dollar was strong and they complained again when the dollar was weak. Both times, the complaints fell on deaf ears. Successive US Treasury secretaries, both Democrat and Republican, simply could not understand the reason for all the fuss.<sup>56</sup>

The European Union is also much more deeply committed to reform as a process than to the achievement of specific results. For example, the Lisbon Strategy embraces a host of 'processes' designed to make Europe the world's most competitive economy by 2010. Yet as the March 2004 European Council summit demonstrated, maintaining the process of reform is the overriding objective. Moreover, it is an objective that is shared by all member states and all political parties. Indeed, it was designed to be globally acceptable and broadly encompassing. The stability and growth pact is more controversial, and yet the idea of fiscal consolidation as a process also has wide and deep support. Member states may slip in their commitment and they may experience prolonged episodes of 'derogation', but they will not renounce the virtues of stable money or sound finances.

This emphasis on process is not shared by the United States. The alternation between Democrats and Republicans creates important and intentional discontinuities in the way the US economy is managed. Within this context, the willingness of the Bush administration to run up huge fiscal deficits is an

<sup>56</sup> This argument is adapted from Jones, *The politics of economic and monetary union*, pp. 123–41.

obvious source of concern. The United States may lay claim to the world's richest and most dynamic economy, but such advantages must be nurtured if they are to be maintained. By neglecting the importance of process in order to achieve a desired result, Bush appears to be throwing caution to the winds while at the same time sowing the seeds of future volatility. Moreover, such volatility threatens not only to undermine the predictions of European economists, but also to challenge the processes of economic policy coordination more generally.

Finally, as European integration deepens in the economic realm, predictability and process become more ever more important; and, as a result, the differences between the EU and the US as continental economic systems increase. So do the possibilities for misunderstanding and confusion across the Atlantic.

### *Interdependence and inattentiveness*

Meanwhile the economies of the United States and the European Union continue to grow together, Americans and Europeans visit each other with ever-increasing frequency, popular cultures are intermingled, and families are interspersed and interconnected. It is no secret that globalization and interdependence are most intense among the advanced industrial societies of the world, and particularly within the Atlantic community. The United States and the European Union may have new and important relationships with other parts of the globe, but they remain tightly interconnected.

The key difference between the two in this context is that the United States is evolving into an ever more tightly integrated national culture. It is diverse; it is multi-ethnic; and yet it is also deeply patriotic and deeply American. The shock of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror' have reinforced these tendencies. But it did not create them. The deepening of American culture has been evident for some time, with implications that are both positive and negative when seen from the outside world.

The European Union, by contrast, is experiencing a resurgence of interest in preserving national diversity. Moreover, the diversity that is sought in Europe is not just the quaint folklore of regional festivals. It is deeply grounded in the reaction to economic insecurity in the West and the recent exit from communist domination in the East. That said, it would be a mistake to regard the European desire for national and cultural diversity in only negative terms. One of the huge advantages of the expansion of university exchange programmes, for example, has been the greater appreciation of the importance of national difference.

The problem is that it is relatively easy for different Europeans to have an individual relationship with the United States. It is relatively difficult for different Americans to understand or appreciate the diversity that is Europe. From an American perspective, European culture is a jumble of goulash and pilsner, Bach and Brahms, impressionist art and existentialist literature. Viewed

from any given national perspective, this jumbled view of Europe translates as inattentiveness despite the best of intentions and the closest of relations. Moreover, it can only grow worse as Europe grows larger. At a popular, visceral level, the transatlantic relationship suffers as a result.

## **Reasons for optimism**

The debate about the transatlantic relationship is overblown. It is not, however, unnecessary. Indeed, by building up the rhetoric of crisis, the debate may actually force both Europeans and Americans to confront problems they might otherwise prefer not to face.

Consider two recent changes of posture, one American, the other European. The American change is in relation to the importance of partnership. The US National Security Strategy published in September 2002 included a whole chapter on the need to 'develop agendas for cooperative action'. That chapter is the penultimate in the document, the opening paragraph focuses on America's leadership role, and the references to NATO seem more a blueprint for reform than a celebration of achievement. Nevertheless, the chapter does admit that 'there is little of lasting consequence that the United States can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe.'<sup>57</sup> As the crisis in Iraq deepened, this notion of partnership became more important. And as the conflict in transatlantic relations simmered, the rhetoric of partnership came to the fore. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, US Secretary of State Colin Powell made it clear that, 'above all, the president's strategy is one of partnerships ... Partnership is the watchword of US strategy in this administration.'<sup>58</sup> Such rhetoric may be unrepresentative, and a number of Republicans have accused the Secretary of State of failing to communicate the President's view accurately, but it remains an important shift in emphasis nonetheless.<sup>59</sup>

The European change is in reference to multilateral cooperation. The EU's strategy document went through a very public drafting, with a preliminary version presented to the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003 and a final version presented at the Brussels European Council the following December. The June draft included a section called 'Strengthening the international order' that alluded to the importance of 'an effective multilateral system'. In the December draft, 'effective multilateralism' is part of the section title. The new draft also includes reference to arrangements for sharing NATO assets; it insists on the need for 'more effective use of resources', and it suggests that 'our aim should be an effective and balanced partnership with the USA.'<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: The White House, Sept. 2002), p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Colin L. Powell, 'A strategy of partnerships', *Foreign Affairs* 83: 1, Jan./Feb. 2004, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Newt Gingrich, 'Rogue State Department', *Foreign Policy*, July/Aug. 2003, pp. 42–8.

<sup>60</sup> Javier Solana, *A secure Europe in a better world* (Brussels: Council of Ministers, 20 June 2003); *A secure Europe in a better world: European security strategy* (Brussels: Council of Ministers, 12 Dec. 2003).

The crisis in the transatlantic relationship is a crisis of will and not of principle. And it will be overcome through action and not rhetoric. Looking beneath the rhetoric, there is some evidence to suggest that the will to overcome the crisis exists. Indeed, Lawrence Freedman may have been right all along. In reaction to the crises of times past, the United States and Europe may actually have established a 'more mature relationship', or at least something resembling one. It is complicated. It is conflictive. And it is often heated. But it is too important to let go. Understanding this fact should not foster complacency. Rather it should encourage politicians on both sides of the Atlantic to support the flexibility and cooperation that virtually all parties admit is necessary to bring the crisis to an end.

# cowboys and lawyers: an institutionalist critique of US foreign policy

*erik jones*<sup>1</sup>

*'...cowboys have been replaced by lawyers (in all their ambiguity). Lawyers fight battles, not cowboys. Lawyers also threaten, cajole, negotiate, mediate, and intimidate. And it is lawyers to whom we turn in moments of turmoil or crisis.'*

When the United States President is called a cowboy, the implication is usually negative. However, this is not the case for George W. Bush. Indeed, Bush Jr. seems to revel in his status as America's cowboy president. This is obvious not only given his penchant for entertaining foreign dignitaries at his range in Crawford, Texas. It is also apparent in the mannerisms that he has adopted and that he believes reflect the wisdom of a simpler time.

As President, Bush Jr. strives to project a coherent image. He speaks bluntly and in a folksy manner. He portrays his administration as decisive and independent. He adheres to a strict moral code. He focuses relationships on feelings of personal loyalty. He is prepared to use force. And he is determined to invest in American military capability. All of these attributes are associated with the cowboy myth. All are now also hallmarks of US foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

Of course the irony is that real cowboys have all but disappeared as a social force in the United States, even in Texas. The 1990 Texas gubernatorial campaign of Clayton Williams died on horseback. Williams rode out with reporters to impress them with his

southwestern authenticity and succeeded in underscoring how anachronistic cowboy values sound in modern political discourse.

In Texas, as elsewhere, cowboys have been replaced by lawyers (in all their ambiguity). Lawyers fight battles, not cowboys. Lawyers also threaten, cajole, negotiate, mediate, and intimidate. And it is lawyers to whom we turn in moments of turmoil or crisis.

If we could imagine a Texas lawyer as myth, it would be James Addison Baker III. As Secretary of State at the end of the Cold War, Baker displayed a potent combination of integrity, shrewdness, and nerve. Such characteristics are also held by other well-known Texas jurists. Robert Strauss, who was America's last ambassador to the Soviet Union, could also illustrate the lawyer as myth.

The replacement of cowboys by lawyers is no accident of history.

Lawyers are better suited to the times. And the difference between now and then is not only a question of domestic politics. It is international as well. And it can be seen in the tension between realism and institutionalism as frameworks for understanding the international system.

Hence my argument is that the Bush administration should trade in its cowboy affectation for a more legalistic one. By failing to do this, the Bush administration is not only unattractive. It is also ineffective. What is more, it is encouraging other countries to pursue the legalistic line. And in a conflict between cowboys and lawyers, the lawyers win.

This argument is developed in three sections. The first deals with realist interpretations of the cowboy myth. The second turns to institutionalist questions of rights, obligations and power. The third section offers some conclusions.

## **COWBOY REALISM**

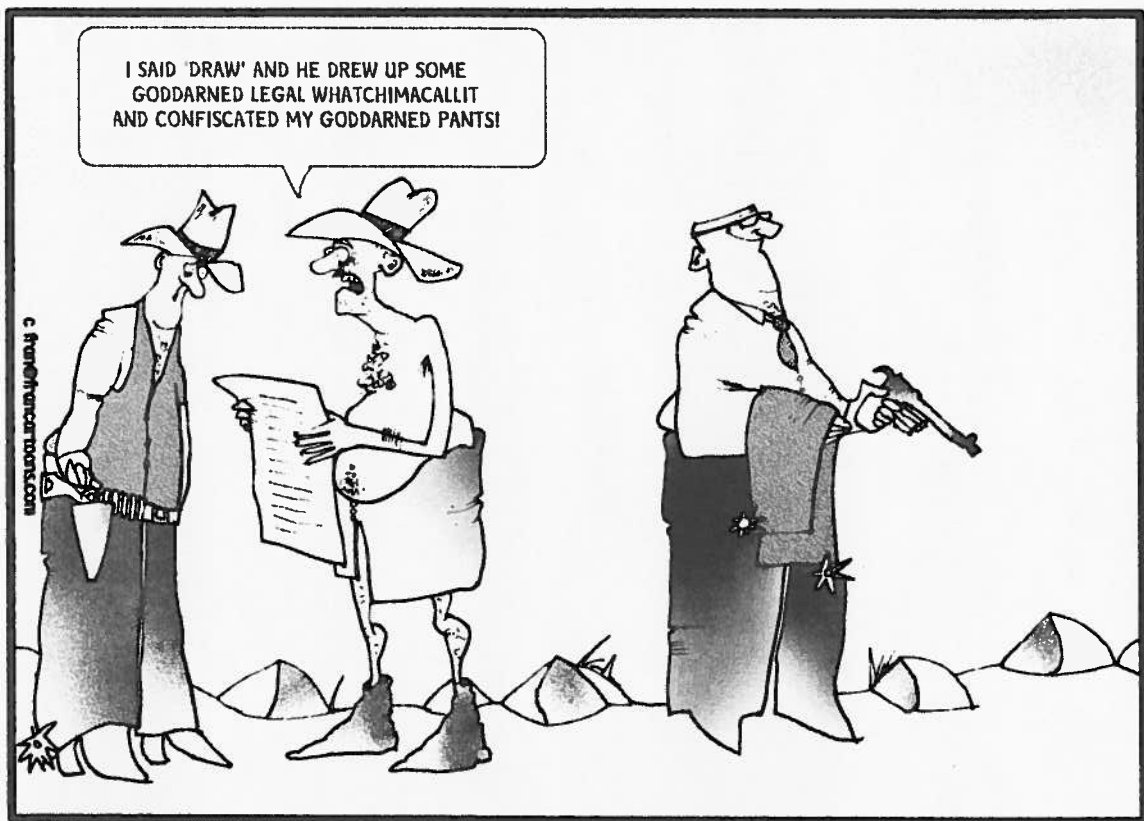
The cowboy state is an artefact of international realism. Classical realism casts the state as loner on the frontier of civilisation and surrounded by hostile forces. Structural realism posits the state as individualist, acting within the company of other states but according to its own inviolable conceptions of self-interest. Post-Cold War realism focuses on states in exceptional circumstances. It allows for some states to live in a society bounded by rules – Kagan (2002) refers to these states as 'Europeans'. But it insists on the existence of others that either reject rules (rogue states) or that must choose to ignore rules in the pursuit of higher justice. These states are equally 'outlaw' in the sense that they do not adhere to the common codes of other states.

Nevertheless, the actions of the rogue states justify the exceptional behaviour of the others. Without making light of real human tragedy, the United States post September 11 is as aggrieved as 'The Outlaw Josey Wales'.<sup>3</sup>

If we are to debunk the relevance of the cowboy myth for international relations, we must confront all three realist conceptions of the state – the loner, the individualist, and the outlaw. Of these, the classical realist is the weakest. States do not operate on a frontier and they are hardly alone. On the contrary, the world is crowded with states. The United Nations has 191 member countries, the World Bank has 184, and the International Monetary Fund has 182. Moreover, the proliferation of states as an institutional form is itself a product of state behaviour. Borrowing from Daniel Philpott (2001), it is a 'revolution in sovereignty' not unlike that which brought states into being in the first place.

Within this crowded world of states, the classical balance of powers seems out of place. Either there are too many powers to balance, or there are too few. The existence of too many powers over-complicates the calculus of balance unless some overarching structure (like the Cold War) is in place. The existence of too few powers leaves much of the globe outside of the balance and so gives rise to too many possibilities for conflicts of interest to spread from the periphery back into the core. Either way, emphasis on the state as loner can only result in a self-imposed isolationism.

Isolationism is not a viable strategy for any country, be it the United States or Zimbabwe. The interdependence of the world's economies is so great as to make every country vulnerable to the actions of others – a fact widely appreciated since the end of the 1960s (Cooper, 1969). Indeed,



this crowded and interdependent world is even too much for structural realist conceptions of the state as individualist. Such conceptions admit that the international system is predicated on the proliferation of states but insist that these states retain considerable autonomy in the pursuit of their own self-interest. The debate with structural realists concerns the limits to state autonomy. What marks the boundaries of state action?

The answer lies in the primacy of predictability. More than anything else, states trapped in a crowded and interdependent world require predictability in the actions of their counterparts. Predictability makes it possible for policymakers to build interdependence into their own calculations of policy and response. Predictability stops the diffusion of power across the state system and reinforces the authority of the state itself.

But predictability is best ensured by common institutions (rules, norms, conventions). In turn, such institu-

tions must apply to whole sets of countries either within clearly defined networks of interdependence (regional groups like the European Union) or across the world as a whole. This explains why countries are willing to join international organisations even when membership is not in their material self-interest (Gruber, 2000). It also explains why countries have been willing to accept third-party dispute resolution even when it is not backed up by separate means of enforcement (Goldstein, 2001). The need for predictability is so strong that it operates as an overriding domestic interest that is common to all states and that constrains their individualist impulses.

And yet there are exceptions. Some countries choose to flaunt the requirements for predictability in order to seek individual gain while others feel they must act unpredictably to reestablish order. The world as a whole may be structured around institutions and yet some

states choose to operate outside that legalistic framework. The disadvantages for rogue states are obvious. Not only do they lose many of the benefits of interdependence, but they also lose the benefits of predictability. As outlaws they are not only isolated, but they are also taken advantage of by friends and enemies alike.

The implications for the 'good' outlaw are more difficult to unpack. To do so it is necessary to reconsider how institutions are created. The argument is that predictability is important in a crowded and interdependent world, and that this predictability is best served by common institutions. However, this argument ignores the problem of collective action. Simply, if too many actors are involved in the negotiations, nothing will result. The successful development of common institutions depends upon the existence of a small number of powerful actors capable of agreeing what will be the norms, rules, or conventions, and then convincing or coercing others to follow (Keohane, 1984).

The 'good' outlaw can only come from within the ranks of that group which was powerful enough to constitute order in the first place – otherwise its defiance of authority would draw down the censure of that limited number of powerful states. However, this raises the question of how the rest of the world is to accept the imposition of rules by a country or countries that refuse to exercise similar restraint.

The point is not about equality within the rules, where all actors are to be treated as formal equivalents. No international institution works on that basis because all recognise differences in relative power and prosperity. Rather the point is about equality before the rules, where all actors are equal in accepting the necessity for

institutionalised predictability.

The good outlaw challenges the assumption of mutual restraint and imposes the costs of unpredictability on other actors in the international system. As a result, the expectation should be that these actors will organise to impose some form of predictability on the actions of the cowboy state (Ikenberry, 2001). They may not have the immediate resources to do so. But they will try nonetheless. And in trying they will draw down on the resources of the cowboy state – forcing it to fend off the construction of constraining international regimes and denying it the benefits of the very institutions which it created and which it claims to be trying to defend. A good example is the current dispute between the United States and its European allies over the International Criminal Court (ICC).

## **LAWYER INSTITUTIONALISM**

Efforts to counterbalance the exercise of power outside the framework of international institutions brings the cowboy state into conflict with the lawyers. In symbolic terms, it is easy to side with the cowboy. The positive attributes of rugged individualism – even when violent – contrast well with the many ambivalent qualities of the legal profession. Nevertheless, in a crowded world of interdependent states organised around common rules and institutions promulgated by a few relatively strong countries, the lawyers have better resources. Indeed, the lawyers can outmatch any cowboy state no matter how powerful it may appear in material terms.

Legal power derives from the manipulation of two relationships: between rights and obligations; and, between

predictability and uncertainty. The relationship between rights and obligations is negotiated. Different parties bargain over what they expect to receive and what they are willing to commit. And focused or persistent negotiators can ultimately get good deals for their clients (Odell, 2000). The relationship between predictability and uncertainty is imposed. The coercive force behind legal action lies not only in the threat of third-party intervention but also in the prospect that a breakdown in negotiations could cost one party more than the other either directly or through indirect effects (Crozier, 1970: 19-36).

Such legal power is ubiquitous in an institutionalised world economy. So long as the institutions remain robust and the principal actors remain committed, the exercise of legal power will serve primarily to reinforce the system. It is when one of the principal actors – namely the United States – chooses to operate outside the system that the trouble begins.

Negotiations with the US take on a double-edged imperative. Other countries want to get the best deal for themselves, but they also want to impose a cost on the United States. The burden of these costs in individual terms may be marginal. But the aggregation of marginal costs can quickly become important.

At the same time, the US finds itself embroiled in a series of bilateral negotiations in order to support its position outside the global institutional framework. It must ensure that its forces will not be charged in the ICC, it must protect its agriculture, and it must preserve employment in the steel industry, all through additional bilateral negotiations each of which implies a separate cost.

Finally, the US must forego the benefits associated with multilateral

institutions. It must construct coalitions of the willing – not only in the fight against terrorism and in the rebuilding of Iraq, but also in its efforts to shield industry from the cost of environmental protection. The opportunity cost of such coalition building must be added to the costs of the negotiations themselves.

The point to consider in all of these costs is that the benefits to any given country outside the United States are marginal at best. Indeed, the risks of driving hard bargains are often considerable. This was the lesson learned by Turkey during the war with Iraq. It was also the lesson learned by France. Turkey lost what promised to be considerable financial assistance and France lost much good will and economic cooperation. However, in both cases it is important to distinguish between the specific negotiation and the overarching strategy.

Voices in Turkey and France may have expressed concern that their country overreached itself in the particular situation surrounding the conflict with Iraq. However, few, if any, have questioned whether the underlying strategy of challenging the United States was inappropriate. On the contrary, it seems clear that both countries view challenging the Bush Administration as a necessary act of statesmanship. The only question is whether they will come out better the next time around.

## REJECTING COWBOY AMERICA

In any institutionalised conflict, the lawyers win no matter which party prevails. And the party that prevails is most often endowed with the best lawyers. Like it or not, lawyers constitute an unavoidable social force at

both the domestic and the international level. Therefore it is odd that the Bush Administration would choose to model its image after the cowboy myth. It is even more odd that the Bush Administration would allow this image to play a role in the conduct of foreign policy.

Cowboys may achieve a personal justice. But it is not a lasting justice any more than the cowboys themselves are an enduring social force. Modern justice is bound up in rights and obligations, rules and institutions, predictability and interdependence. Such justice is often imposed by the strong, but it must also be accepted by the weak. And it must be binding on all parties in order to be secure. The Bush Administration ignores that reality to its own peril and to the peril of US foreign policy.



#### Notes

1 The author would like to thank Stefanie Weitz for excellent research assistance.

2 In his now-famous essay on 'power and weakness', Robert Kagan (2002) puts it this way: 'Americans are "cowboys," Europeans love to say. And there is truth in this. The United States does act as an international sheriff, self-appointed perhaps but widely welcomed nevertheless, trying to enforce some peace and justice in what Americans see as a lawless world where outlaws need to be deterred or destroyed, and often through the muzzle of a gun. Europe, by this old West analogy, is more like a saloon-keeper.'

3 'The Outlaw Josey Wales' is a 1976 western directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. Josey Wales is a farmer who becomes first a Confederate soldier and then an outlaw as he attempts to avenge the murder of his family by Union soldiers. The film revolves around the instability of society and the need to use violence to counter the forces of chaos.

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