

One Year On

Power, Purpose and Strategy in American Foreign Policy

Throughout its existence, *The National Interest* has striven to identify and evaluate the intellectual frameworks that underlie U.S. foreign policymaking. Accordingly, as we approached the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks against the United States, the editors asked a group of distinguished analysts to respond to the following questions:

After September 11 of last year, discussion arose over what had (and had not) changed about international politics and U.S. foreign policy because of the terrorist attacks, but that discussion was (often implicitly) grounded in a broader and older debate about the purposes of American power after the Cold War. Seen from a year's distance, how have the attacks, and the response to them, affected that larger debate? What should be the purposes of American power, and how should the war on terrorism be fitted to a strategy to advance those purposes?

We present the results below.

The End of a Contradiction?

Robert W. Tucker

IN 1996, I WROTE a piece in this magazine on what I considered to be the great issue of American foreign policy: the contradiction between the persisting desire to remain the premier global power, with its order-sustaining role, and an ever deepening aversion to bearing the costs of this position.¹ In the decade that followed the end of the Cold War, debate over U.S. foreign policy centered for the most part on the costs. This was

the major issue in the debate over whether to intervene in Bosnia, the debate being marked even on the interventionist side by a disjunction between interests avowed and costs rejected. It was uncommon to hear the point made that the ends of foreign policy must become more modest if the means were to shrink, though the proposition borders on the self-evident. Instead, endless discussion and debate went on over the costs of a role that was largely taken for granted.

¹"The Future of a Contradiction", *The National Interest* (Spring 1996).

Seen from a year's distance, September 11 dramatically narrowed the contradiction between the ends, or purposes, of U.S. foreign policy and the means available to achieve them. What happened on that day refocused the American people's attention on foreign policy as few events could. A crisis had arisen in which we were seriously and directly threatened. By comparison, even the crisis leading to the Gulf War was not in the same category. September 11 has gone a long way toward restoring something resembling the pre-Vietnam consensus over foreign policy, with its deference to the judgment of the president in determining what our vital interests are and when a threat to these interests justifies the use of force. A willingness to approve the means necessary to wage the war on terrorism, as President Bush conceives the meaning of that war, is the visible result. In turn, this result cannot be easily distinguished from a readiness to grant the means necessary to pursue the larger purpose of American power, that of providing order to a fractious world. Indeed, the administration considers the two purposes inseparable, the terrorist threat simply being, in its view, the greatest threat among many to order in the world today.

Moreover, the cost in American casualties of the war on terror has to date appeared to support the optimistic expectation entertained at the time of the Gulf War that a way has been found to avoid bearing the costs normally attending the use of military power. It was this expectation that figured so importantly in the first President Bush's declaration that the nation had "kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." Many observers argued in the wake of the Gulf War that the circumstances attending that conflict were quite unusual and must account in large part for the low casualties. The campaign in Afghanistan, however, has given added credibility to earlier claims made on

behalf of a new military technology. Thus the anticipation of modest casualties has been joined to what is seen as the compelling purpose of ridding the world of the evil of terrorism.

WHAT WE HAVE today, then, is a foreign policy less beset by contradiction, but that is increasingly militarized as a result of what has become its dominating purpose. Along with this purpose go a number of recognizable traits, above all, a revived sense of mission—in this case, a mission cast in universal terms as the defeat of "every terrorist group of global reach" and a willingness to use the means considered necessary to achieve this mission. It is only in a purely formal sense, however, that the achievement of this mission resembles that of a normal war; that is, the defeat of the enemy. As the President has pointed out on more than one occasion, just because you cannot see the enemy does not mean that he is not there, in any of a number of countries, waiting to strike at you in a multitude of ways. If so, it is, in practice, a war without a readily identifiable end. It is also a war without geographical limits. And it is a war in which the will to strike first is seen as indispensable to effective defense.

All three of these characteristics make multilateral action inherently difficult, if only because they imply an open-ended commitment. It is generally recognized that one effect of September 11 has been to exaggerate this administration's disposition toward unilateralism. Faced with a choice between allies and mission, the administration has to date shown little inclination to sacrifice its view of mission; in the words of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld: "The worst thing you can do is allow a coalition to determine what your mission is." The prospect beckons that the war on terrorism is one we may eventually have to fight alone,

even if, upon reflection, we would prefer to have more active allies than we sought out in the initial stages of the Afghanistan campaign. If we cast a wide enough net, we will almost certainly have to fight it alone.

The present indications are that we will cast a wide net, that the war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda will be followed by an attack on Iraq if efforts to trigger an internal insurrection there fail. The President has publicly committed the nation to ousting Saddam Hussein. September 11 has had the more general effect, too, of reactivating tendencies in American foreign and defense policy that were apparent more than a decade ago during the Gulf War. Then a strategy designed to cope with lawless, renegade states in possession not only of conventional weapons but weapons of mass destruction, and dedicated to the pursuit of aggressive ends, was the objective. The war against Iraq, then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney declared at the time, "presages very much the type of conflict we are most likely to confront again in this new era—major regional contingencies against foes well armed with conventional and unconventional weapons." An interventionist policy of the particular sort that has emerged over the past year was thus foreshadowed a decade ago, a policy whose principal purpose was to keep weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of aggressive and expansionist states.

The "new world order" over which America would preside was not implemented, however. Even if an attempt had been made to carry it out, it would have been hemmed in by those constraints manifest during the period of the Gulf War—a military still haunted by Vietnam, a public still shaken by that same experience, a largely anti-interventionist Congress unwilling to grant the necessary

means but that was nevertheless assertive in foreign policy, and allies whose views had still to be taken into consideration if only because of the Cold War endgame still being played out in Europe. Today, these constraints have all but disappeared, and nothing comparable has arisen in their place. Instead, the war on terror has confirmed American primacy in an altogether compelling manner, while freeing the President of virtually any real constraint on his powers in foreign policy.

HOW WILL the President use his power? To date, the answer has not been reassuring to advocates of multilateralism. It is true that multilateralists have often confused form with substance. American foreign policy has never been quite as multilateral as many of them have imagined. Nevertheless, during the long period of the Cold War, American power was to a substantial degree subordinated to a larger community. This goes a long way in accounting for the degree of trust that power enjoyed. Now, when we are at the plentitude of our power, a president has apparently decided that he can dispense with the sanction of this larger community and go his own way. The new "strike first" military policy is simply the most revealing expression to date of the administration's determination to follow its own path regardless of the views of long-standing allies.

Too weak to oppose American power, yet fearing its exercise, most other nations may be expected to comply with our wishes. Nevertheless, the world's loss of confidence in the benign purview of American power might well turn out to be the principal legacy of the war on terror. It could turn out to be a high price to pay for victory. □

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What Friends Are For

Michael Howard

ONE OF THE problems that today confront American statesmen in dealing with the rest of the world is that the United States considers itself to be "at war", but, with the obvious exception of Israel, no one else does: certainly none of its European or Asiatic partners, let alone such states as Russia or the People's Republic of China. It is not that the rest of us do not understand or under-rate the danger posed by international terrorism. Without having suffered a catastrophe on the scale of September 11, 2001, virtually every state in Europe (not excepting Russia) together with many in Asia, have experienced terrorism for decades, if only as a running sore, and learned to live with it. So far from 9/11 inaugurating a new epoch in world history, it has simply provided terrible evidence of the fragility of the world order in which we have been living for many decades past, something already well known to every intelligence service in the world.

Outside the United States, that revelation has been seen as provoking the need not for a "war", but for better intelligence, better police work, and closer international cooperation in dealing with the problem. President Bush's declaration of a "war on terror" was generally seen abroad as a rhetorical device to alert the American people to the dangers facing them, rather than as a statement to be taken seriously or literally in terms of international law. But further statements and actions by the Bush Administration have made it clear that the President's words *were* intended to be taken literally. The U.S. government has assumed powers inconceivable except in wartime, and shows no sign of relaxing them. The Orwellian implications of the threat to civil liberties posed by the government declaring a state of virtually per-

petual war are certainly alarming if not sinister, but that is a problem for the American people themselves rather than for its allies and associates.

But further clarification, in particular the President's definition of his "axis of evil", has certainly caused problems of interest to non-Americans. The connection between, on the one hand, an act perpetrated by mainly Saudi conspirators using box-knives as their main weapon, and on the other the internationally proscribed manufacture of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein, has never been clearly established. Even more remote has been the connection of Iran, Iraq's deadliest enemy, where a modernizing population is struggling to free itself from the rule of the mullahs; while the citing of North Korea (without any evident consultation with its regional neighbors) as part of this conspiracy bewildered even America's best friends overseas. Further statements, such as that made on June 1st by President Bush at West Point, suggest that the United States now considers itself to be in a state of war with any foreign state whose policy it deems hostile and whose weapons systems it regards as a threat, and to be entitled to initiate the use of armed force against any of them as an act of legitimate self-defense.

Such a claim, involving as it does the dismantling of the entire structure of international law that has been painfully built up, largely under American leadership, over the last hundred years, has dismayed even America's closest associates. The situation has been exacerbated by such other unilateral acts by the Bush Administration as the reneging on the Kyoto Agreement, the refusal to ratify the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court, and the imposition of protective tariffs on agricultural products and steel in response to domestic political pressures. For each of these measures

there may be considerable justification, but cumulatively they have given the impression that the United States, having done so much to create and lead the international community, no longer regards itself as part of it. Taken in combination with the hostility of virtually the entire Islamic world resulting from the perceived lack of even-handedness in America's treatment of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the result has been dramatic: whereas the day after September 11 the entire international community rallied to the support of the United States and nations fell over each other in offering their support, a year later the Americans find themselves in a state of isolation recalling that of the British Empire at the end of the 19th century.

Like the British then, some Americans now regard this isolation as rather "splendid." Militarily they are so strong, economically so wealthy and culturally so dominant that they feel able to ignore allies who contribute nothing but complications to situations that Washington believes itself quite capable of handling on its own. Initially, President George W. Bush showed much of the skill displayed by his father before the Gulf War in using American wealth, economic pressure and diplomatic skill in building up a winning coalition against the Taliban. But in contemplating a follow-up against Iraq, the administration apparently believes that its own military assets will enable it to dispense with allies, apart from the ever-loyal British (though even so, it should not underestimate the fragility of the domestic support enjoyed over this issue by Prime Minister Tony Blair).

And the administration may well be right. The armed forces of the United States are probably capable, on their own, of defeating any enemy or combination of enemies they are likely to encounter. But as was shown, not only in Afghanistan but in the Gulf War itself, winning wars is not

enough. The wars have to stay won. And unless the United States is prepared to undertake the burden of world empire that the British found too heavy for them—to establish its own viceroys, to breed its own governing class, to inure its people to accept a regular drain of casualties on its distant frontiers—it will need assistance from allies and associates to ensure that the victories of its armed forces are not castles in the sand.

This applies not only to the chain of wars that the United States now seems to contemplate fighting against "rogue states", but even more to the "war against terror"—or rather against international terrorists—that presents the real threat, the course of which is unlikely to be much affected by military victory over Iraq or any other state. The brilliantly successful war against Afghanistan certainly disorganized and probably demoralized Al-Qaeda, but did not destroy it. Terrorism is now not only global but independent of the state-system, and has to be countered by measures that lie beyond the range of America's regular armed forces, or indeed those of anyone else. In focusing on the destruction of "rogue states" the Bush Administration may have settled for something within its military capacity, but in dealing with the consequences of that destruction it will need all the help it can get. Nor is there the slightest reason to suppose that such victories would eliminate, or even reduce, the threat posed by international terrorism. Arguably, they could increase it.

IT MAY WELL BE, as has been powerfully argued by Philip Bobbitt in his remarkable work *The Shield of Achilles*, that the existing structure of world order based on co-operation between nation-states has been rendered obsolete by the communications revolution, and that a new template must now be devised appropriate to the new world of

porous frontiers and “market states.” There is also a case to be made for the neo-imperialist theory that “modern” and “post-modern” states have a moral obligation—again as the British believed a century ago—to nurse “pre-modern” societies toward the blessings of modernity, and if necessary to use force in doing so. But those concerned with the American national interest, like the readers of this magazine, have the right to ask what it is that the Bush Administration has in mind as the ultimate object of its “War against Terror.” If it regards the existing framework of world order, established half a century ago after the Second World War, as no longer competent to preserve the peace, with what does it intend to replace it? In the world wars, the object both of the Wilson and the Roosevelt Administrations—if not of the American people as a whole—was to establish a global community of nation-states based on a commonly accepted rule of law embodying the fundamental human rights on which the United States itself had been established. It was a noble endeavor, challenged after 1918 by the rival ideology of fascism, and after 1945 by that of communism. In 1990 it seemed to emerge triumphant. Now this objective is threatened by cultural if not ideological diversity, and it seems doubtful whether, with the decay of the nation-state, it remains viable at all.

The Bush Administration has clearly lost confidence in the capacity of the existing international order to guarantee America’s national security, and with very good reason. At the moment it seems prepared to use American power to take on the job all by itself, like some benevolent dictator moving to clear up the Augean stables of a corrupt and ungovernable democracy. But then what? The record tends to show that once dictators, however benevolent, have assumed that responsibility, they find it very hard to disentangle themselves and retire peacefully to their

farms. America is in danger of unilaterally involving itself in a host of conflicts whose consequences could irrevocably divert it from what it has always held to be its true and best purposes.

The “war against terror” can end only when the United States has either re-established the old world order in a more effective form, or created a new one more appropriate to the global challenges of the 21st century. Neither task can be achieved unilaterally, or can even be contemplated so long as the United States remains isolated, splendidly or not, from world opinion. American unilateral action, whether against Iraq or any other perceived adversary, is unlikely to command international support unless it can be shown to be a necessary step toward the creation of a more viable structure of international order than that which already exists.

Whatever new structure is created, and however long it may take to build, terrorism will continue to feature as a disruptive element in the world order, as crime exists as a feature of the domestic order. That order has to be either re-established or created; that is, or should be, the purpose of American power. The sooner, therefore, that American statesmen can cool down their bellicose rhetoric and think in terms not of apocalyptic crusades against evil, but of humdrum global policing against crime, the easier they will find it to relate the military campaigns they are planning to the constructive activity of building peace, and to enlist the help of the rest of the world in doing so. This might also help the American people to understand the true nature of the long conflict that now confronts them. Wars may end, but police work does not. □

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A Case of Continuity

Gary Schmitt

“THE MORE things change, the more they stay the same”, goes the old saying—especially, it seems, when analyzing American statecraft in the wake of September 11, 2001.

The changes before us are, of course, noteworthy. First, the strategic concept of deterrence in all of its MAD manifestations has lost its half-century hold on America’s security posture. As President Bush argued in his June 1 commencement address at West Point, the idea of massive retaliation against nation-states “means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend.” Nor does it hold for states governed by leaders willing to use terrorists to wage war by proxy, or who themselves are so committed to their cause that dire threats of retaliation will not necessarily dissuade them from aggression. And given the potential human costs associated with a failure of deterrence in a world of proliferated chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, it follows logically—if not inevitably—that the United States would add “defense” and “pre-emption” to its strategic vocabulary.

Implicit in this change, now coming to be known as the Bush Doctrine, are others. For one thing, the United States is jettisoning the idea that multilateral regimes and global accords are effective routes to disarmament and nonproliferation. At best, they may slow proliferation but, in the final analysis, they cannot be counted on to put this genie back in the bottle. More significantly, a policy of possible military pre-emption puts the final nail in the coffin of Article 51 of the UN Charter, which allows for self-defense only in response to an armed attack. Although Article 51, strictly construed, has been something of a dead letter in

international law for some time now, the Bush Administration is not letting it die a quiet death. In blunt, black letter fashion, the President has resurrected the concept of “anticipatory self-defense.” But even here the Bush Doctrine pushes well beyond the traditional justifications for its use: to wit, that the threat be imminent, leaving no choice, no moment of deliberation. In effect, the United States is making new law here—or, more precisely, applying an old principle to new circumstances. This is justifiable but it is, nevertheless, a potentially profound change in the law of nations.

Internally, 9/11 and the promulgation of the Bush Doctrine means that the debate between conservative realists and neo-conservatives over the priority given to the character of states (“regimes”) has been settled in favor of the latter. The “axis of evil” consists of regimes that cannot be trusted with weapons of mass destruction; changing them thus becomes a strategic necessity. Conversely, the Bush Doctrine puts a premium on working with liberal democracies and expanding their number. A decade ago, the first Bush Administration decided that leaving Saddam Hussein in power was acceptable. Now, a new Bush Administration insists not only that Saddam’s regime must go, but that, in its place, a decent, tolerant and representative government need arise. Likewise, nearly a decade ago, we began the Oslo process believing that it did not matter whether Yasir Arafat was a corrupt thug and ruled Palestinians despotically; today, these are our chief concerns.

Finally, 9/11 has put an end to the idea that the United States is in a period of “strategic pause”, a phrase coined in the 1990s by those who wanted to believe that the globe’s only superpower could take time out from the world stage without its adversaries noticing. Of course, the United States has been busy,

but the general sense was that each and every case of intervention—Panama, Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans—was *sui generis* and reflected no underlying strategic plan. Moreover, it was hard not to notice that these military efforts were conducted with considerable reluctance and were either begun belatedly or ended abruptly. It was also hard for our adversaries not to notice that U.S. defense spending was dropping rapidly and that Washington was spending more time catering to would-be competitors, like China, than revitalizing its alliances in Europe and Asia to meet post-Cold War realities.

What the “strategic pause” crowd forgot was that a great power is either gaining momentum or it is losing it. There is no stasis when it comes to the ambitions and calculations of friends and enemies—all the more so in a unipolar system. Either the United States is engaged in promoting and protecting its vision of the international order or it becomes the target of those who oppose it. Acting as though we can “sit this one out” only invites challengers to think that we are not up to playing the game. In retrospect, the fact that the United States is now at war should be no surprise given the signals America was sending throughout most of the past decade. It should also be no surprise that the war is a war against terrorism, since we have spent nearly all of the past decade ignoring the growing threat it posed.

ALTHOUGH THE changes in U.S. strategy brought about by September 11 are real and significant, the overarching strategy as articulated by President Bush is not new; it is more or less a continuation of U.S. foreign policy as it has existed since World War II. As that war was coming to a close, American statesmen were determined to create a new international order, one that would

rest on American political and economic principles and, when necessary, the application of American power. The lesson of the 1920s and 1930s was that disengagement was not a viable alternative, and the swift post-World War II rise of the Soviet threat in all its ideological and military facets confirmed it.

The President’s decision to return to this path was not inevitable. He could have confined his administration’s response to September 11 to a “police action.” But to his credit, within a few weeks of the terrorist attack, he began to comprehend and speak to the larger, underlying nature of the threat we face. Central to that understanding is his appreciation of the fact that, in a world in which terrorists have global reach and hostile states weapons of mass destruction, what matters most is the nature of our adversaries’ regimes. The risk is too great to leave some in place; *détente* is not an option with the likes of Iraq and Iran. Hence, promoting liberal democratic governance in their place is less an idealistic option than a strategic imperative. The United States is back in the business of shaping a world order—with a vengeance.

The immediate theaters of operation for this “business” are the Islamic Middle East and Central Asia. Ten years ago, Francis Fukuyama noted in *The End of History and the Last Man* that the last outpost in which “the liberal *idea*” was not victorious was the world of Islam. Only Islam constituted “a systematic and coherent ideology . . . with its own code of morality and doctrine of political and social justice” that could be said to challenge liberalism’s reign. Not that Islam could compete in fact—but a radicalized form of it, when faced with liberalism’s primacy, could serve as steward of a potent strain of resentment. As a result, the “war on terrorism” has justifiably become in good measure a “war” on those Islamic-dominated regions that History

has left behind. For some sound and some not-so-sound reasons, the United States has previously regarded this area of the world as exempt from the requirements of liberal rule. When President Bush argued that this “need not and must not be its fate”, he in effect committed the United States to unfinished business.

Obviously, the President has set out an ambitious program and no one should think that a quick, clean victory in this larger campaign is likely. In some ways, where we sit today looks strikingly similar to where we sat in 1947 after President Truman’s speech to Congress on providing aid to Greece and Turkey. Truman, like Bush, was not reluctant to put the issue in stark relief: “At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life.” And like the Bush Doctrine, the Truman Doctrine was criticized for its lack of nuance, its failure to appreciate the world’s complexities. And given how choppy and even chaotic the implementation of the Truman Doctrine was in the months that followed, the critics seemed closer to the truth than not. Conservatives like Walter Lippmann also attacked Truman for sending the United States down a strategic path that was not sustainable.

But, of course, it was sustainable. The reasons were many, but a key one was the certainty that the agenda established by President Truman and the other American statesmen of the period was consonant with the universal and revolutionary principles that had defined the country since its inception. Of course, circumstances and prudence have shaped how those principles have undergirded American foreign policy in particular periods. Nevertheless, the underlying continuity between the principles that animated the American Founding, and that gave rise to the “empire of liberty” it now enjoys and fosters throughout the globe, is far more

impressive than the odd periods of U.S. indifference toward the world.

In the early 1990s, the question was raised as to whether the United States could “return” to being a “normal” power once the exceptional requirements of the Cold War were behind it. The truth is that the United States can never be a normal power, and it invites trouble when it tries. It is rather American “exceptionalism” that is normal, and the Bush Doctrine is the most recent manifestation of it. The American response to 9/11 has not deflected U.S. foreign policy from its historic purpose, but only more precisely defined and re-energized it. □

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Hearts and Minds

John J. Mearsheimer

THE CENTRAL purpose of American power is to provide security for the United States in a dangerous world. Before September 11, other states, especially other great powers, were perceived to be the main threat to the United States. To maximize its security, American policymakers worked assiduously to ensure that the United States held a favorable position in the global balance of power.

This template for thinking about American security policy has been altered somewhat by September 11. The United States still has to be deeply concerned with great power politics, particularly with the rise of China. But now it also has to confront Al-Qaeda, which has the United States in its gunsight and is determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

President Bush has not yet devised a clear strategy for combating terrorism.

Nevertheless, he has been under intense pressure to view September 11 as a transformative moment that calls for the United States to become much more actively involved around the world. Indeed, some conservatives argue that it is time to create an American empire, where the United States dominates the entire globe and shapes it according to its own interests. Presumably, this ambitious strategy would keep great power rivals at bay as well as eliminate the terrorist threat.

This strategy of empire is unilateralist at its core. It aims to allow the United States to operate as freely as possible on the world stage, unconstrained by allies, multilateral institutions or international law. It also calls for a wide-ranging war on terrorism, which means targeting a broad array of terrorist organizations, host states and states seeking weapons of mass destruction.

The key instrument for winning that war is America's mighty military machine. Proponents of empire believe that if the United States makes clear its willingness to use force and then wins a few victories, other foes will either desist from active opposition or even jump on the American bandwagon. This tendency will be pronounced in the Islamic world, where there is said to be a profound respect for winners. According to Charles Krauthammer, "The way to tame the Arab street is not with appeasement and sweet sensitivity, but with raw power and victory." For sure, there will be incorrigible states like Iraq that refuse to accept the new world order. The United States will invade them, topple their rulers, and transform them into friendly democracies. Such ambitious social engineering would not only eliminate Saddam Hussein, but would also convince the likes of Iran and North Korea that they had better dance to Uncle Sam's tune or be prepared to pay the piper.

There is only one thing wrong with this rosy vision of Pax Americana; it is

not going to work. Instead of creating a benign world of pro-American democracies, such an expansive military campaign is more likely to make the terrorism problem worse. Any strategy that relies heavily on military force to combat terrorism is likely to increase hatred of the United States and complicate the task of defeating Al-Qaeda. One suspects that the Bush team understands this point, since so far it has employed the U.S. military to fight terrorism with great caution and circumspection.

Why is an American empire an unrealistic objective? First, empires are very difficult to build today because of nationalism, which causes peoples and states to fiercely resist domination by others. Palestinian resistance against Israel, Afghan resistance against the Soviets, and Vietnamese resistance against the United States—not to mention the collapse of the British, French and Soviet empires—are prominent examples of this phenomenon at work.

Some argue that the United States is different, because it would create a benign empire. After all, it is a democracy, and most Americans believe that democracies pursue enlightened foreign policies. Unfortunately, large numbers of people outside the United States—even in other democracies—are sharply critical of American foreign policy, which is not always benign toward them. Indeed, for the vast majority of people in the world, benign domination is an oxymoron. Therefore, if the United States pursues empire, even a democratic Pax Americana, it will end up as public enemy number one.

Second, using military force to topple regimes and replace them with pro-American leaders is a daunting task. Sometimes it is easy to eliminate hostile regimes, as the United States showed in Afghanistan. The difficulty, however, comes with the nation-building that follows; i.e., putting a friendly and stable regime in place so that U.S. troops can go

home. This is the problem the Bush Administration now faces in Afghanistan, and surely would confront if it invades Iraq. The United States could eliminate Saddam with relative ease, but then it would be stuck—or have to stick others—with the job of occupying Iraq.

Third, the extensive use of military force is no way to deal with terrorists because they make poor targets for conventional military operations. Terrorists operate in small groups and disappear into cities or the countryside when directly threatened. This is what happened in Afghanistan: when the American military closed in on Al-Qaeda, it melted away. Furthermore, trying to stamp out terrorism with military forces is likely to enrage, not humble, the masses in the Islamic world. That anger will surely translate into resentment against the United States, further complicating efforts to eliminate Al-Qaeda.

The final problem with fighting wars to root out terrorism is that most Americans do not have much appetite for participating in the fight. An example: shortly after the World Trade Center fell, 69 percent of Harvard students favored military action against the perpetrators, but only 38 percent were willing to fight themselves. In a recent survey of college students, 37 percent said they would evade the draft if called today. Also, the American military has shown little enthusiasm for combat when it might involve significant casualties. U.S. commanders were reluctant to directly engage Al-Qaeda at Tora Bora and in Operation Anaconda, and there is much evidence that senior officers in the Pentagon oppose invading Iraq.

RATHER THAN pursue an empire with the sword to defeat Al-Qaeda, the United States should adopt a “hearts and minds” strategy that con-

centrates on reducing Islamic hostility toward it. Instead of building an empire—which will increase anti-American hatred and put U.S. forces on the front lines around the world—the United States should seek to reduce its military footprint and use force sparingly.

A hearts and minds strategy contains four main ingredients. First, the United States should not engage in a global war on all terrorist organizations wherever they might arise, but should focus on destroying Al-Qaeda and its close allies. Otherwise, it will squander resources on secondary threats and create enemies out of terrorist organizations that have no special quarrel with America.

Second, the United States should place the highest priority on locking up the fissile material and nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union, because that is where a terrorist is likely to acquire the ultimate weapon. Some conservatives justify a war on Iraq by claiming that Saddam might give Al-Qaeda or other such groups nuclear weapons if he had them. But this claim is unconvincing, because bin Laden would use them against the United States or Israel, who would almost certainly respond with a nuclear strike against Iraq. Saddam is an aggressive despot, but there is no evidence that he is suicidal. If we are really worried about terrorists getting their hands on weapons of mass destruction (and we should be), we should concentrate on the most likely source (Russia) rather than on far less imminent dangers (Iraq).

Third, America should emphasize intelligence, diplomacy and covert actions over military force in its campaign against Al-Qaeda. Of course, circumstances might arise that call for large-scale military assaults, but they should not be our preferred method of operation.

Fourth, the United States should

adopt policies that ameliorate the rampant anti-Americanism in the Islamic world. If such policies are successful, individuals and states in that region would be less likely to support Al-Qaeda and more willing to cooperate with the United States against terrorism. Furthermore, the pool of potential recruits for Al-Qaeda would shrink substantially.

Some might say that this approach cannot work because the Islamic world hates Western culture, not U.S. policies. In this view, they hate us for who we are, and we cannot change our identity. However, it is clear from recent polls and abundant anecdotal evidence that the root of the problem is not MTV or hip-hop, or even the Western values of freedom and individual liberty. Rather, the problem is specific American policies: U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia; sanctions against Iraq; unqualified backing of Israel; U.S. support of repressive regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; and the apparent relish with which the United States uses force against Islamic societies.

Obviously, the United States needs to overhaul its Middle East policies if it hopes to solve the terrorist problem. To start, it should end "dual containment", which requires a major American presence in the region to contain both Iran and Iraq. Instead, the United States should rely on the states in the region to balance each other. Specifically, it should seek to improve relations with Iran, not Iraq, and rely heavily on Iran to contain Iraq (or vice versa if necessary). That strategy would allow the United States to withdraw its forces from Saudi Arabia and act as an offshore balancer in the region, as it did from 1947 until 1990. It follows that Washington should not invade Iraq. Also, sanctions against Iraq should end, as they are costly and ineffective.

The United States should make a

major effort to end the war between Israel and the Palestinians, because that is the only way America can remain close to Israel and still have good relations with the Islamic world. In effect, that means creating a viable Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, which will require Washington to pressure Israel to remove most of its settlements from those areas. If an agreement is reached, the United States should target aid to Israel so that it can easily defend itself within its new borders. If Israel refuses to end its occupation, America should cut off economic and diplomatic support to Israel. In short, the United States either has to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict or distance itself from Israel. Otherwise, the terrorism problem will never go away, and might even get worse.

Finally, the Bush Administration should tone down its rhetoric about preemptive strikes. It does not make sense to shout from the rooftops that America is committed to striking out of the blue against any group or state it considers evil. Such a policy alienates allies, tips off adversaries, promotes nuclear proliferation and generally makes states less willing to cooperate with the United States. It makes much more sense, as Teddy Roosevelt said, to speak softly and carry a big stick.

The Bush Administration has made progress over the past year in its campaign against Al-Qaeda. But much work lies ahead. The best way to crush Al-Qaeda is not to build a worldwide empire based mainly on military force, but instead to lower America's military profile around the globe while improving its image in the Islamic world. □

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Of Hubs, Spokes and Public Goods

Josef Joffe

WHAT HAS REALLY changed since last September 11? Not very much. Cataclysmic as it was, that event was more like a bolt of lightning that illuminated the essential contours of the international landscape than like an earthquake that reconfigured it. It dramatized, but did not shape, some profound transformations of world politics in the making for at least a decade. These transformations have to do with the nature, distribution and hierarchy of global power. Basically, the aftermath of September 11 has dramatized the centrality of the United States in the international security system.

The real watershed event, in retrospect, was not September 11, 2001 but Christmas Day 1991 when the Russian Empire—a.k.a. the Soviet Union—committed suicide by self-dissolution. Suddenly, the world was no longer bipolar but unipolar, no longer defined by the titanic U.S.-Soviet struggle but by the presence of a virtually unchallenged No. 1: the United States. Because the Soviet collapse unfolded without war and revolution—unlike the cases of the Czarist, Ottoman, Habsburg, Hitlerian and colonial empires throughout the 20th century—the consequences of this drama took some time to sink in. Act One took place in 1990–91 when the United States masterminded the global coalition that laid low Saddam Hussein—unopposed by the Soviet Union, Europe and China. Acts Two and Three followed in 1995 and 1999 when the United States took the lead in bombing campaigns against Serbia—again, virtually unopposed. In the most recent Act, the United States harnessed a global coalition once more, this time against Terror International sited in Afghanistan. The moral of this tale that

stretches from Baghdad to the Balkans to Tora Bora is simple: No. 1 in 1992 has become even more so in 2002.

The war in Afghanistan is in some ways a special case, for it exemplifies a revolution in warfare that has thrust American power into a category all of its own. The war was prosecuted from 7,000 miles away, from Central Command in Florida, in almost “real time.” It dramatized force projection, logistical, and command, control and intelligence capabilities that no nation has ever before come close to deploying. So novel and effective was the campaign that it might have foreshadowed the end of the post-Hiroshima age, which is to say that so powerful were some of the “conventional” weapons deployed there (like thermobaric bombs and the “Daisy Cutter”) that the function of nuclear devices may be relegated to deterrence alone.

Though a new twist in the history of warfare, the war in Afghanistan underscores an old point: the United States is not strong because it has nuclear weapons; it is mighty because it can do without them. Indeed, the power gap between No. 1 and the rest keeps growing. The United States now spends on military capabilities (\$377 billion for this fiscal year) almost as much as the rest of the world combined. If the Bush Administration adds to the defense budget every year as planned so that, by 2007, the United States will allocate \$450 billion, then, *ceteris paribus*, the United States *will* outspend all others combined. Not since the days of the Roman Empire has such a power gap between No. 1 and the rest existed.

This was bound to have consequences, and the best shorthand description of the most important of these is the Rumsfeld Doctrine. That doctrine proclaims that “the mission determines the coalition, and not the other way round”, and its first victim was NATO. Indeed, NATO as we have known it for half a cen-

tury, as an anti-Soviet alliance, is dead. That was NATO I, in essence a unilateral American guarantee binding the United States to the defense of Europe. It has been replaced by NATO II, best defined as a collection of states, now including Russia, from which the United States draws coalition partners *ad hoc*. NATO II, in other words, is a pool, not a pact; accordingly, in NATO II's first war, (some) members acted as chosen handmaidens, not as foreordained beneficiaries, of American might.

THIS REPRESENTS a momentous and still insufficiently appreciated change in Atlantic relations, and to grasp the full scope of American pre-eminence the point must be pushed still further. The aftermath of September 11 has certified America's *global* primacy in terms of both structure and process. No. 1 in the hierarchy of power, the United States is also the foremost impresario of the world's major politico-strategic relationships. America's Cold War alliances with Western Europe and Japan (and briefly CENTO and SEATO) were once the single axis around which American grand strategy revolved. They still play prominent roles, but in a system that is now *tous azimuts*. The proper metaphor is that of "hub and spokes", with America as the hub and players 2, 3, 4, 5 and so on representing the spokes. Who are they?

"Europe" remains a founding member of the system, but as a set of *ad hoc* participants rather than as a single entity, be it NATO or the EU. A privileged European player is Britain, another, though more ambiguously so, is Germany. France is simultaneously an active ally (as in the Balkans or in Afghanistan) and a *quondam* object of containment. Poland—and indeed all the beneficiaries of the American-led enlargement of NATO—as well as Turkey, are useful counterweights against the larger continentals. Europe

itself is a regional version of the American hub-and-spokes system, with the United States ever so subtly playing some against others, or recruiting posses for the intervention *du jour*.

Once the very *raison d'être* of America's Cold War alliances, Russia is the newest spoke in America's global wheel. This does not signify a "reversal of alliances" but it does considerably enlarge America's margin of maneuver. The moment Vladimir Putin dropped Russia's active hostility to missile defense in exchange for drastic nuclear arms control, opposition in Europe and China was all but neutralized. With Putin in the American boat, the war in Afghanistan was enormously facilitated; U.S. bases in Central Asia, the "soft underbelly" of the former Soviet Union, would have remained out of reach if not for Russia's consent. America's bases now stretch around the world: from Norfolk, Virginia via Europe and the Middle East into Central Asia, and from there to the Western and Central Pacific all the way back home to San Diego. By comparison, even imperial Britain at its height looks like a poor second cousin to 21st-century America.

The Middle East is at present a spoke in the making. The United States has not yet imposed peace on the Levant or full discipline on nominal allies like Saudi Arabia, nor yet transformed the regimes of its two major foes, Iran and Iraq. But Ariel Sharon and Yasir Arafat, Riyadh and Cairo, all take their quarrels to Washington and all depend on American might and benevolence. If the United States pulls off its Saddam caper, it will all but complete its quest for dominance over the Middle East initiated with the extrusion of Britain and France after the Suez War of 1956. All that would remain would be the fall of the Islamic regime in Iran.

In the Far East, both large players like Japan and lesser ones like Thailand prefer to huddle under the American umbrella

rather than face China on their own. China, of course, is the long-term strategic challenger but, so far, the subtle American mix of containment and socialization are working much better than did America's all-sticks/no-carrots strategy toward Japan in the 1930s. At any rate, Beijing has not recruited either Russia or the Western Pacific coastal nations into its own orbit. Along with Australia and New Zealand, these remain regional spokes in America's global wheel.

THE HISTORICALLY tutored will notice that this resembles the Bismarckian system on a global scale. Like the Second Reich in Continental Europe then, the United States is No. 1 in the world now—by dint of its strategic centrality, economic dynamism and cultural sway. Yet precisely because of their predominance, each nation has had to find a way to keep numbers 2, 3, 4 *et al.* from ganging up against No. 1. Bismarck limned the solution in his famous *Kissinger Diktat*.² The task, he wrote in 1877—six years after German unification—was to create a “universal political situation in which all the powers except France need us and, by dint of their mutual relations, are kept as much as possible from forming coalitions against us.” Germany thus sought and gained better relations with Britain, Russia and Austria than they might forge among themselves, so to make them “spokes” to Berlin’s “hub.”

The American system today is the Bismarckian one writ large, but will it last longer than Bismarck’s? That system endured until 1893, when France and Russia concluded an alliance against Germany—or, interpreted more generously, for almost half a century, until 1914, when Germany had to fight a war against almost all of Europe. The United States can do better than that if its grand strategy amounts to more than just playing one “spoke” against the other. The

aim should be not only to prevent, but to pre-empt, hostile coalitions by undercutting the reasons for their formation. The point is to make other powers *willing* participants in the American system.

This would be nothing so new. American diplomacy during the Cold War executed this task in exemplary fashion by providing the world with essential services. In social science parlance, the United States acted as foremost producer of global public goods. Just to note the acronyms that stand for those goods—UN, IMF, GATT, OEEC/OECD, NATO, WTO, PfP—is to recognize that all were “made in the U.S.A.” These institutions upheld international security and free trade and thus cemented America’s preponderance by giving other key players potent reasons for choosing cooperation over ganging up.

Alas, during the Cold War it was obviously in America’s interest to deliver the goods and, in a certain sense, to contain itself as well as the Soviet Union. The problem today is that the United States seems to take more out of the system than it invests in it. The clumsy but benign elephant of yore has donned a lion’s clothing, and America’s response to September 11 has only made the change more obvious. America is no predator going a-conquering like yesterday’s hegemons, but by the intermittent growl of his voice and swipe of his mighty paw, this beast tells the rest: “I am the king; go along, or I’ll go it alone.”

True leadership, however, is not forged in bouts of petulance and hauteur, and power is most effective when it need not be demonstrated. Nor is true greatness exemplified by transparent domestic

²The “Kissinger Diktat” has nothing to do with either Henry Kissinger or an act of imposition. It refers to the spa, Bad Kissingen, that Bismarck liked to visit; and “diktat” is (also) the German word for “dictation.”

maneuvers like punitive tariffs on steel and grossly expanded farm support payments; such moves do not even improve the welfare of America as a whole, the largest exporting nation with a commensurately large interest in free trade. Good leadership is to lift one's own boat by providing a rising tide for others. The quest for relative gains, as always, risks degeneration into zero-sum politics.

These are not outlandish insights. They occur to any would-be leader whilst still in kindergarten. At a minimum, acting with others is more economical than acting alone, even if the costs of co-operation exacted by lesser players with more parochial interests sometimes seem too high. Those who drop most of the ordnance on Kosovo or Afghanistan do not acquire thereby a license to withdraw from the more mundane, but also more important, task of maintaining postwar order. After all, the reward of war is not military but *political* victory—as the United States demonstrated in Western Europe and Japan after V-E and V-J Day.

But these observations, obvious as they may be, do not abound in contemporary Washington. They are overshadowed by a heady sense of America as Gulliver Unbound who must slap away those pestering Lilliputians. But why wait until they seek to match or constrain his strength? “Take care of others in order to take care of yourself” is the proper course for the “indispensable nation” that wants to do better than Bismarck. To lead is to heed—that is not a counsel of wimpishness, but of wisdom. It may be harder for American leaders to accept such discipline after September 11, but not to do so risks the twin peril of overstretch and countercontainment. □

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Avoiding Empire

James Chace

IT GOES AGAINST the American grain to admit that the United States is now an imperial power, but the magnitude of the American economy (twice as large as its sometime rival Japan), its military budget (greater than the next twenty biggest spenders combined), and its new willingness to intervene unilaterally and massively across the globe all mark a decisive turning point in American history. Although the Founders contemplated an American “empire of liberty”, in Jefferson’s words, and although imperialist strategists such as Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge and Alfred Thayer Mahan insisted that the United States have a worldwide reach, Americans have been reluctant to accept an overtly imperial role for the nation. That is still the case. But after September 11, 2001, given the nature of the American response to what happened on that day, other nations increasingly perceive America to be an empire—an informal one, to be sure—in a world where nation-states still retain a mandate to provide for the security of their people. So the question arises: Is there a strategy suited to the current situation—in which the main threat to the nation comes from terrorists who may or may not be protected by the states from whose territory they operate—that would incline America *away* from an imperial vocation?

Strategies generally come about when political leaders are faced with a situation that they were not expecting. The achievement of the immediate post-World War II architects, led by Secretaries of State George Marshall and Dean Acheson, followed a breakdown of the wartime alliance, which led to a mortal rivalry that neither Roosevelt nor Truman had anticipated. The Bretton Woods agreements

that produced the IMF and the World Bank, the Truman Doctrine to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union in the Eastern Mediterranean, the economic rebuilding of Europe spurred on by the Marshall Plan, and the creation of NATO were the result. These institutions became the essential building blocks for a Western (read: American-led) economic, military and political system that not only halted any possibility of successful Soviet aggression, but that also became a broad strategic framework able to incorporate countries outside the Soviet orbit. Its success cannot be denied.

There is no way to predict the structures that will emerge in response to the unexpected post-9/11 world of American supremacy coupled with American vulnerability, or whether these structures will be as sturdy, appropriate and successful as those of the Cold War. But we can examine the landscape in which we are condemned to live. We can try to indicate the roads that should not be taken, as well as the paths that might promise an America that would continue to work for the betterment of its own society and, as the Founders hoped, would show "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind."

THE NEED TO provide for the security of its citizens in such a world as we inhabit is now likely to mean that a power of the magnitude of the United States will act unilaterally far more often than not. This would be nothing new. For much of its history, America has sought to secure its political and territorial integrity without the assistance of other powers. This solitary—or unilateral—approach to security has carried with it an implicitly absolute goal: to prevent America's security from being undermined by the constraints of other powers. Such an approach has brought with it a strong disposition to respond militarily to any perceived threat, for the nation that

chooses to treat any danger—real or potential—as less than vital runs the risk of allowing other powers to seize geographic or political positions of perilous influence. Because of this danger, Americans have never shied away from employing force unilaterally—either in defense of their own borders or on behalf of foreign regimes viewed as vital—as a way of grappling with perceived threats to the nation's security.

In both world wars, the United States joined the conflict late and intended to leave its entanglements as soon as possible. The alliance it entered into with France and Britain in 1917 was quickly discarded at the end of the war; similarly, at the conclusion of World War II, the United States did not expect to maintain any peacetime military alliances. But the advent of the Cold War changed everything: the formation of NATO in 1949 became America's first formal peacetime military pact since the French Alliance of 1778. Although NATO still remains in place after the end of the Cold War, its mission is cloudy, and for Washington it serves mainly to allow the United States to have some control over European affairs.

The war against terrorism tends to pull America back toward its oldest traditions. Such a war knows no borders. Nor is there any likelihood of a formal alliance to rid the world of terrorists. As America continues to ferret out and destroy terrorists who aim to attack the United States itself, its bases, its embassies and its possessions overseas, it will do so alone or with "coalitions of the willing." This implies a permanent garrison state, with American troops acting as international policemen, prepared to attack and destroy any perceived danger to the state—with or without allies. This could mean a kind of endless war, accompanied by pre-emptive strikes (as in likely with Iraq) and selective long-term efforts at "nation-

building" (as in Afghanistan).

If so, the U.S. government will have to bring into balance its commitments and its capabilities to guard against what historian Paul Kennedy has called "imperial overstretch." It will have to allot a considerable portion of its budget to military spending, and make sure that it can afford to do so over many years. Today, it can. (Again, as Professor Kennedy has pointed out, "being Number One at great cost is one thing; being the world's single superpower on the cheap is astonishing.") As long as the terrorist threat is palpable—and as long as the American people are willing to put up with inadequate health and child care, poor schooling and a decaying infrastructure—public expenditures on defense will go unchallenged.

Are there external forces that could prevent this policy from being carried out? Historically, the response to a hegemonic or imperial power's behavior, if it appears threatening to other powers, is to coalesce against it. This is what happened in modern times as other powers acted to curb the ambitions of the Habsburg and the Napoleonic empires. But it did not always happen. When the British empire reached its apogee in the late 19th century, there were rising powers—the United States and imperial Germany—that challenged British supremacy; but since Britain did not directly threaten these powers, or other great powers such as France or Russia, no coalition formed against it. On the contrary, in the case of the United States, an informal entente came into being; Germany was left alone to mount a naval threat to British control of the seas—which, of course, led to a confrontation that Germany lost for lack of powerful allies.

The task for the United States is therefore to see that it does not threaten the safety and well-being of other great powers. China is the state most likely to

challenge U.S. hegemony, though it cannot do so for at least a generation without allies to help it. The European Union may well challenge the United States economically, as America did Britain, but that need not lead to military conflict. In short, the likelihood of a balance of power—military, economic or political—directed against the United States depends on the skills and intelligence of American statecraft. Our behavior will determine whether the great powers and weak states will see the United States as a non-threatening, if not a wholly benevolent, power. If they do, then no balancing against America will take place. If they do not, then the United States will be faced with far greater disorder and eventual threats to its well-being than now appear plausible.

HOW SHOULD the United States act, then, to be perceived as non-threatening? One way is to accept some of the constraints that international agreements require—for example, adhering to the rules of the International Criminal Court, signing a comprehensive test-ban treaty, joining with other nations to curb environmental damage—which will mean that the United States surrenders some degree of its sovereignty. A more daring policy, however, would be for America to *lead* the world into a new internationalism. An international police force, for example, need not be an American one, but it would require American backing to be useful; and the United States alone has the technology and the resources to make such a force effective. An International Criminal Court will almost surely be ineffective without American participation, but an engaged American leadership could make it effective and, at the same time, incorporate Washington's justifiable concern about vendettas aimed at U.S. citizens as a

result of American predominance.

To lead in this would require a sophisticated foreign policy, one that would preserve U.S. hegemony while allaying fears that its ambitions threaten others. Even from a realist perspective, America cannot pursue a successful foreign policy over the long term without a moral component—something both Roosevelts understood—and nowadays that moral component at least implies a range of ongoing international engagements.

In essence, the United States has to accept a far greater degree of vulnerability than it has in the past. Paradoxically, this comes at a time when American power is regnant. Living with this paradox and devising policies that reflect it is the great challenge to America in the 21st century. The challenge resides in learning how to use American power in such a way that the United States is rendered less, not more vulnerable. And all this when “the City on a Hill” that Americans have always hoped would prove a beacon and model for others is still itself under construction and, in some places, badly in need of repair. □

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City, and Citadel, on the Hill

Wang Gungwu

THE CONSPIRATORS who attacked the World Trade Center chose it as a symbol of American wealth and power, and of the supposed helplessness of the poor and the weak

before that power. What they did not intend was to expose the inner struggles of the American soul; they could not have foreseen that the collapse of the two towers threatened how Americans see their country as the City on the Hill.

The idea of the City on the Hill, in Governor Winthrop’s famous locution, expresses a national messianism close to the hearts of most Americans. But, until roughly a half-century ago, Americans lacked the power to project that light upon the world. Since then, however, American leaders have striven to use U.S. power for good, for humanity, for civilization—at least as they have seen it. For most people outside, including in Asia, that is not America’s only heritage, however. Consciously or not, the United States became the successor to diminished European empires, particularly to the great but short-lived empire the British had erected around the globe. Some of the remnants of this heritage, notably in Asia, were placed in American care after the end of World War II. America is thus both exemplar and empire, both a City on a Hill and a citadel that dispatches gunboats and loans with strings attached.

The Cold War was a secular civil war whose origins were established long before World War II by European ambitions to dominate the world; when those ambitions failed, the United States and the Soviet Union, two self-appointed interpreters of the Enlightenment, sparred over the wreckage. Thanks to the Cold War’s Manichean characteristics, however, the United States could emphasize the light that its people stood for against the darkness of godless communism. Accusations of American imperialism or neo-colonialism, and a host of other unflattering images, were brushed aside. This was made easier by the fact that the Communist opposition could not disguise its ruthlessness, was poor in marketing its ideological wares and was ulti-

mately a failure in economic performance. With the end of the Soviet Union, however, the second side of the American metropolis came into clear view; in glaring light, the imperial side of the City, its citadel, could not be hidden. Without a zone of darkness in opposition, the double American heritage of civilizing mission and informal empire stood more sharply exposed than ever before.

September 11, and the understandably forceful response to that tragedy, have together brought America's dual international personality to the global center stage. America's actions now, more than ever, will affect which side of its character will predominate. Above all, the actions that matter most fall into two categories: how America sees its allies and friends, and how it sees its adversaries and challengers.

Let me take up these two categories in turn, but it must be said that, so far, great uncertainty shrouds our understanding of American intentions. At its core, U.S. power exists to protect its national interest; and if the United States were an ordinary country, it would be obvious that it has much more power than is necessary for that purpose. The United States can, if it wishes, destroy any regime that stands in its way. But the question is: What *is* its way? The war on terrorism may be narrowly focused on certain groups of terrorists, or widened into a crusade against all those ill-disposed toward the United States and its allies. In declaring a state of war, it is not clear to many national leaders in Asia whether the United States is genuinely debating the scope of retaliation—or whether it is practicing a form of strategic ambiguity that will allow it to pick and choose whom, when and where to support or destroy. If the former, debate may be portrayed as the City agonizing over how best to gather all good people to a great cause. If the latter, it suggests that the

United States is determined to expand its power to achieve absolute security against all comers, the seed of the will to empire. Inevitably, this uncertainty will be interpreted around the world against the evidence forthcoming as to how America conceives of and acts toward its friends and enemies.

As to its friends, does America want its many friends and allies simply to stand to be counted, but otherwise just wait for the telephone to ring; or does the United States wish them genuinely to share in seeking a long-term answer to protect what they all believe in? This depends on the purposes to which American power is applied. It is one thing for that power to be used to protect modern civilization, another to seek absolute national security at all costs. The former task requires genuine partners; the latter would drive them away.

In practical terms, of course, it is understandable that decisive retaliatory action needed to be taken quickly after September 11; there was not time for Washington to assemble both a civilizational and military coalition. But it would be wise to remember how habitual and infectious such actions can become. Think of all the bold men who extended the borders of the Spanish and British empires and were rewarded for their heroism, but whose actions led to manifold imperial burdens and to the ultimate repudiation of what that power wrought. Many Americans still prefer that the ideals of the City on the Hill triumph through good practice, by example rather than by imposition. The more the American people can still share these ideals with the rest of the world, the stronger the values would become embedded among all those who feel they have experienced them. The American social experience itself—a genuine multiculturalism—is the best proof of that proposition. There is nevertheless the danger that this aspect of American lead-

ership will be seen as weakness and vacillation by those who see no alternative to taking on the burdens of empire.

The second question, whether the United States should try to win new friends or draw a new zone of darkness, is an easier one to answer. Since the end of the Cold War, there are no godless threats to humanity's spiritual needs—at least no armed ones. Most Americans believe that Cold War victory came because they were on the side of the angels. But increasingly large numbers of people around the world, not least in Asia, see other spiritual sanctuaries on offer, such as some new expressions of old religions like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism or strict normative practices wrung out of secular ideals. There are renewed rival claims for the right to offer the light of decency and self-respect. For such people, the only potential descent to darkness lies now in the economic globalization represented by unceasing capitalist expansion.

Until now, that potential was checked by calls for freedom, equality and fraternity, and the finer points of individual rights and legal institutions that reflect universal human needs. For many, even in Asia, Western Europe and the United States have argued persuasively that they should provide the leadership to underline those calls. Thus, it is up to them to go forth together to win converts to their point of view. But the temptation is great in the United States to identify a new zone of darkness as a cluster of recalcitrant dictatorships or a murderously distorted medieval faith, and to tie its national interest to the elimination of such a zone. Thus the divisions among Americans, and among American friends and allies, about who the enemy is today and who it will be tomorrow, also get to the heart of the purposes of American power. This is why the "with us or against us" rhetoric of the Bush Administration is

bound to be misunderstood, especially in Asia. Asians can be against terrorism but also against the unbridled, unregulated expansion of American-based global capitalism at the same time.

CHINESE IMPERIAL history may provide some guidance in this regard. For its first two hundred years (3rd to 1st century B.C.E.), imperial China created wealth and power beyond its dreams. By the middle of the Han dynasty (end of the 2nd century B.C.E.), its frontiers reached the ocean and the heart of Eurasia, covering all it needed for its long-term security. At the same time, it developed a rationale for power and the rhetoric of a universal civilization. Thus, the Han polity "all under Heaven", "the Middle Kingdom", became the dominant reality for most of Asia. Its continuance under successor dynasties led Chinese elites to believe that the purposes of power were to ensure not only imperial viability (largely regime maintenance for each dynasty), but also the defense of civilization. Toward this end, realistic appraisals of the enemy were necessary. There was also need for dependents, allies and friends, the more the better, especially if they could be accommodated within the institution of tribute-bearing as a system for diplomacy and defense.

The results were impressive, even if imperfect. The system was supported by forward defense along the land borders to the north and west, but enemies did nevertheless break through from time to time. Ultimately, power was needed to protect civilization, but the moral and political ideals with which the Confucian mandarins shaped that civilization mattered more in converting enemies and restoring power into Chinese hands again and again. In the end, during the 19th century, their complacency and their unwillingness to adapt to new realities brought the whole edifice down, but the

hegemony that China enjoyed was never maintained through physical power alone.

It comes down to the purposes of power. American power surpasses all others in ways not dissimilar to that enjoyed by the Chinese, albeit in a smaller world, for 2,000 years. Although China finally made the mistake of underestimating its enemy, and paid dearly for it, the formula that worked for them so well and for so long was to erect a system to collect the greatest number of dependents, friends and allies, share with them the best products of its wealth and power, and avoid projecting zones of darkness that they were then committed to destroy.

Will America's enormous power make it easier or harder for the United States to endure as a great power in a much larger world? The United States is not a bit like the closed world of mystery and authority that China sought to project. Today, there is so much openness, shared knowledge and interdependence, and the power of the United States is awesome in ways unknown in history. Clearly, the United States will not follow the footsteps of Alexander, Genghis Khan, Napoleon or Hitler, by depending on aggressive power. But just as clearly, it still feels insecure about its power and would surely guard against the self-satisfied attitude of the Emperor Qianlong in 1793 when he said that his empire needed nothing from the outside world. What would best sustain the United States as a superpower is its ability to convince others that the purposes of its power are not directed against any country, any religion or any other civilization but that those purposes have been, and will continue to be, honed in support of a "Middle Kingdom" whose spiritual capital is a City on the Hill. □

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Misreading September 11th

Charles A. Kupchan

THE EVENTS of September 11 produced evident changes in U.S. foreign policy, immediately elevating to a top priority efforts to enhance the security of the homeland and to combat foreign terrorist groups. The Bush Administration has pursued these new missions with admirable determination and speed, declaring a new era in which the fight against terror has redefined the international landscape and the primary objectives of America's global engagement. To be sure, the attacks on New York and Washington warranted a shift in U.S. priorities, but it is nevertheless premature to announce the opening of a new era and the consequent emergence of new geopolitical fault lines.

Important and effective responses to the events of September 11 have been made at the tactical level: enhancing intelligence capabilities abroad, preparing military operations against non-state actors and tightening domestic security. Much less has changed at the strategic level. The dictates of international politics make traditional priorities as relevant as ever; Washington still needs to focus on managing relations among major states, integrating rising powers into global markets and councils, and using multilateral institutions to promote cooperation, peace and development. In similar fashion, despite steady bipartisan support for the ongoing war against the Al-Qaeda network, it would be unwise to conclude that September 11 has durably reversed America's diminishing interest in foreign engagement, shoring up U.S. internationalism for the foreseeable future. The popular comparison to Pearl Harbor may well prove erroneous, for the difficult struggle against terrorism is ill-suited to engendering public attention and sacrifice over the long term.

Therefore, even as the United States remains vigilant in countering the threat of terrorism, it must guard against misreading that threat and exaggerating the extent to which it defines a new international system. The problem of terrorism should not delude America into thinking that it has entered a brave new world when it has not. Entertaining such illusions will impel the United States to pursue a misguided grand strategy that will ultimately do much greater damage to U.S. national interests than the terror attacks themselves.

THE MOST significant effect of September 11 has been America's awakening to non-conventional threats to its security. Prior to the attacks, the Bush Administration was scaling back U.S. commitments in peripheral areas and designing a military prepared to take on conventional adversaries with high-tech, stand-off weaponry. It has since altered course, deploying ground troops and special forces in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Philippines and other locales that were previously deemed outside the scope of America's core security interests. The vulnerability of the homeland has also lent urgency to the task of protecting against weapons of mass destruction (WMD), prompting redoubled efforts to develop missile defense and plans for pre-emptive strikes. Whatever the means, keeping WMD out of the hands of terrorists and rogue states will remain a primary objective.

The United States will also continue to focus on non-military efforts to neutralize terrorist threats, such as rebuilding human intelligence capabilities, strengthening international cooperation among intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and improving capacities for tracing financial flows and freezing assets. Tighter border controls, more domestic surveillance, increased security at airports

and seaports, and greater readiness for biological attack will become permanent elements of efforts to protect the homeland. These shifts in U.S. policy are significant, and they should do much to help counter the threat that they have been designed to meet.

Beyond these adjustments to U.S. strategy, however, it is difficult to sustain the case that September 11 has wrought a more fundamental transformation of world politics. Three major changes were predicted just after September 11; none have come to pass.

First, many analysts predicted that the globe's major powers would come together in a coalition against terror. The Bush Administration agreed, with the President asserting "a new threat to civilization is erasing old lines of rivalry and resentment between nations."³ But September 11 has hardly brought harmony to great power relations. Despite the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, America and Europe have since drifted far apart, with the EU chagrined by America's unilateralism and its seemingly exclusive focus on fighting terrorism with military force. Beijing and Washington still differ on many core issues. Relations between the United States and Russia have certainly improved, but this rapprochement stems from a unique set of converging interests unlikely to be replicated elsewhere.

Initial assessments of the impact of the attacks on New York and Washington also pointed to a permanent change in relations between the rich North and the impoverished South. Inequality and poverty were allegedly breeding resentment and anti-American sentiment, putting the industrialized and developing worlds on a collision course. Thomas Friedman's "super-empowered angry

³Remarks by the President at The Citadel, December 11, 2001.

man" was turning a socio-economic gap into a geopolitical divide; Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations seemed to be finally taking shape (though this was not necessarily Professor Huntington's conclusion).

Again, such pronouncements have proved either premature or downright illusory. The central cleavage fueling the terrorism spawned in the Middle East is within the Islamic world itself as it tries to come to terms with modernity, not between the United States and Islamic society. The illegitimacy of governing regimes, clan and factional rivalries, pervasive poverty and a sense of having been left behind by history are the root causes of disaffection within the Islamic world. It is true that this disaffection can fuel widespread anti-American sentiment, but demonstrating against U.S. Middle East policy is not the same as carrying out terror attacks against U.S. targets. The strategic threat that the South poses to America comes from a few isolated groups and rogue regimes, not from the developing world—or the Muslim world—as a whole.

Mounting deterioration and deprivation in the South unquestionably warrant America's attention and resources. As was the case before September 11, however, the South poses to the North a humanitarian emergency, not a strategic challenge. The North-South divide will become a geopolitical fault line only if America turns it into one, narrowly viewing developing countries as breeding grounds for terrorism rather than as distressed polities in need of structural reform and humanitarian aid.

A third misreading of the events of September 11 concerns their likely impact on the trajectory of U.S. internationalism. Prior to the attacks on New York and Washington, the Bush Administration was abandoning the liberal internationalism of the past five decades in favor of both neo-

isolationist and unilateralist extremes. Washington was backing away from peacekeeping missions and pledging to focus more attention on the Western Hemisphere at the same time that it was distancing itself from international institutions—the ABM Treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court—that might constrain the country's room for maneuver.

For many, the events of September 2001 promised to arrest this trend. As Andrew Sullivan wrote a few days after the attack, "We have been put on notice that every major Western city is now vulnerable. For the United States itself, this means one central thing. Isolationism is dead."⁴ G. John Ikenberry claimed that terrorism would push the United States "back toward a more centrist foreign policy" that "stresses alliances [and] multilateral cooperation", thereby providing "new sinews of cohesion among the great powers."⁵

It is unlikely, however, that terrorism will inoculate the United States against the allure of either neo-isolationism or unilateralism. These inclinations run far deeper than the personality of the Bush Administration. In the long run, America's leaders may well find the country's security better served by reducing its overseas commitments and raising protective barriers than by chasing terrorists through the mountains of Afghanistan. The United States has a strong tradition of seeking to cordon itself off from foreign troubles, an impulse that could well be reawakened by the rising costs of global engagement. America's initial response to the attacks of September 11, after all, was to close its borders with Mexico and

⁴Andrew Sullivan, "America at war: America wakes up to a world of fear", *The Sunday Times*, September 16, 2001.

⁵G. John Ikenberry, "American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror", *Survival* (Winter 2001–02), pp. 19–20.

Canada, ground the nation's air traffic, and patrol the country's coasts with warships and jet fighters. It is worth recalling that attacks against Americans in Lebanon (1983), Somalia (1993) and Yemen (2000) induced the United States to withdraw its forces, not to take the fight to the perpetrators. The long-term consequences of the threat of terror may well be an America that devotes much more attention to the security of its own territory and much less attention to resolving problems in distant lands.

It is equally doubtful that the threat of terror will ensure a responsible Congress and a more engaged and attentive public. Bipartisan rancor did disappear instantly on September 11, 2001, and the public stood firmly behind military retaliation. But these were temporary phenomena arising from the shock of the moment; after a few months, partisan wrangling returned and the public mind again began to wander. As one reporter commented on December 2, "The post-Sept. 11 Congress has now almost fully abandoned its briefly adopted pose of high-minded bipartisanship."⁶

The relatively rapid return to business as usual stems in part from the new nature of the challenge at hand. From the 1940s through the 1990s, American leaders had in Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union dangerous and identifiable enemies against which to mobilize the nation. Terrorism represents a far more elusive enemy. Instead of facing a tangible adversary with armored columns and aircraft carriers, America now confronts sleeper cells and disparate groups of extremists schooled in guerrilla tactics. With much of the struggle against terrorism occurring quietly beyond the public eye, evocative images that help rally the country around the flag will be few in number. In the wake of the attacks on New York and Washington and the anthrax scare that followed, President

Bush asked of Americans not that they make a special sacrifice, but that they return to normal life by shopping in malls and traveling by air. Even as American soldiers were fighting and dying in Afghanistan, ABC was trying to woo David Letterman to its late-night slot to replace *Nightline*—one of the few network programs that provides even remotely in-depth analysis of foreign news. As before September 2001, keeping the American public engaged in international affairs promises to be an uphill battle.

The threat of terror also appears to be intensifying, not moderating, America's unilateralist proclivities. Despite offers of help from abroad, the United States preferred to act largely alone in the main battles against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Although terrorists pose a collective threat, they single out specific countries when they strike. Understandably, the attacked country has a much stronger motivation to hit back than others. That is why Israel, Russia, Britain, France and most other targets of terror have been on their own in responding to terrorist attacks on their territory. For better or worse, the type of threat posed by terrorism is more likely to stoke unilateral action than to tame it.

THE DISTANCE between the United States and its putative partners has only increased since the effective end of the fighting in Afghanistan. President Bush's designation of Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an "axis of evil", his determination to topple Saddam Hussein, and his strong support for Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians have exacerbated strains across the Atlantic. Even staunch allies such as Germany have begun to urge that the EU take steps to restrain a wayward America.

⁶Adam Clymer, "A House Divided. Senate, Too", *New York Times*, December 2, 2001.

Rather than changing the underlying dynamics of international politics, the events of September 2001 have only added the need to combat terrorism to an already long list of priorities. Perhaps the main danger ahead is that U.S. policymakers will continue to believe that the international system has changed much more than it has, holding a view of a global landscape that bears little resemblance to that envisaged by the rest of the world. If this misperception continues, the United States may well succeed in eliminating the Al-Qaeda network, but at the expense of the alliances and institutions that remain the bedrock of international peace and prosperity. □

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Definitions, Doctrines and Divergences

Pierre Hassner

CONTRARY TO what some Americans believe, Europeans have known for a long time about the evils of terrorism and the need to fight it. They know, too, that the world has become a very insecure place due to the ability of small groups of fanatics to inflict unprecedented harm upon civilization. Most also recognize that a world ruled by law—from which inequalities of power and the possibility of war have been eliminated—is an impossible dream; and that a stable, multipolar world based on the balanced rivalry and cooperation of several more or less equally powerful states is not

remotely at hand. In the real world, Europeans know that the United States is much stronger in the classical sense (i.e., militarily and economically) than any rival state or coalition, and that it is the most effective force for good, today as yesterday, against totalitarian threats.

But Europeans tend to believe that the legitimacy and efficacy of American hegemony and of its war on terror depend on a more differentiated view of the world than that evinced by its current mood, which somehow combines a feeling of victimhood, vulnerability and invincibility all at the same time. A sense of moral and military superiority over the rest of the world seems to be forming as the essential basis of America's war on terror, and if it does, the legitimacy and efficacy of American hegemony will suffer. There is more to hegemony than superiority, more to power than military might, more to terrorism than Al-Qaeda or Islamic fundamentalism, more to the fight against them than "war" in the classical sense—and much more to ruling the world, dealing with its problems and fighting its dangers, than can be found in the philosophy of American unilateralism or benevolent empire.

THE BEST introduction to understanding the difference in the attitudes of Americans and Europeans toward the war on terrorism is perhaps the formulation of the Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev, who says: "The Americans feel they are engaged in a war, the Europeans feel they are engaged in preventing one." This is true, but only half so. Both Americans and Europeans *are* engaged in a war against Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations; the war worth preventing is a wider war of the West against the rest, a real clash of civilizations; or a war between rich and poor, North and South, center and periphery, former colonizers and former colonized; or a war of Christians, Jews (and perhaps

Hindus) against Muslims. It is absolutely crucial to maintain the distinction between the organized terrorist movements that hate liberalism and modernity and thrive on ideological fanaticism and, on the other hand, the sources of their recruitment, support and the sympathy they inspire in the greater part of the Islamic and, more generally, in the underdeveloped world—which are feelings of humiliation, oppression and exclusion. This distinction is all the more important as it is precisely the strategy of the terrorists to blur it by provoking the repression of wider circles of the population that they falsely claim to represent.

It follows that any specific strategy in the war against terrorism must get away from moral absolutes and fuzzily defined abstractions. What, for example, is the criterion wherein we define terrorism as “evil”? Is it the deliberate targeting of innocent civilians? But how then were the strategic bombing raids carried out by the Allies in World War II morally distinct from the attack on the World Trade Center? Is the war against terrorism, as some recent presidential pronouncements would seem to suggest, a Holy Alliance of all Great Powers against all insurgent movements, where each ally brings its own definition of terrorism corresponding to its own national or ideological opponents (Chechens, Kashmiris, Albanians, Uighurs)? Is it a war only against global or transnational terrorists, leaving aside local movements? Do we distinguish between states and non-state movements or even individuals? Or is the campaign a defensive operation by the United States (and anyone willing to join it) against those terrorists who specifically threaten to inflict harm on it and its allies while leaving aside all others or even joining forces with them? What, in short, is the evil to be extirpated?

It is clear that American policy and public opinion now tend to neglect these

distinctions, and to see the United States and those who wish it well as the incarnation of the good and those who wish them harm as the incarnation of evil. Of course, one may have to accept evil allies against even more evil or more dangerous enemies; it was legitimate to be allied with Stalin against Hitler. The truth must sometimes bend in the face of strategic necessity. But no such bending should justify morally beautifying the man who perfected the destruction of Grozny; or the authors of genocide in Tibet; or the man responsible for the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla and for countless other reprisals against civilian populations.

Similar problems concern the definition of war. It is legitimate to speak metaphorically of a war against terrorism as one speaks of the war against drugs, cancer or poverty, and even to connect it to the eternal war between good and evil. But as religious writers from Reinhold Niebuhr to Michael Novak have warned, seeing ourselves as the Children of Light fighting against the Children of Darkness carries the danger of self-righteousness and *hubris*, and may lead us ultimately to become fanatics ourselves. One should never lose sight of Arthur Koestler’s saying during the fight against communist totalitarianism: “We are defending a half-truth against a total lie.”

However that may be, this never-ending conflict and this metaphysical confrontation must be sharply distinguished from the concept of war in the Western tradition, lest we fall into the trap laid by bin Laden’s declaration of *jihad*. A war, classically, is an organized activity with a beginning and an end, and with rules concerning both the legitimate ways of waging it (*jus in bello*) and the legitimate causes for declaring it (*jus ad bellum*). Of course, our time offers many examples of undeclared and unfinished war, but this does not obviate the need for rules and standards. This is essential, too, for defin-

ing the status of combatants who must either be protected as prisoners of war or prosecuted as presumed criminals.

Of course, terrorists pose a special problem. Necessity may dictate executing them summarily in times of war. Necessity may also, in an emergency, lead to a selective disregard for legal guarantees in order to prevent an imminent crime or catastrophe (although it should never justify torture with such thin alibis as practicing it by proxy or outside one's own territory). But the point is that the burden of proof should be on those who practice the exceptional treatment. What is deeply worrying is not that principle be breached in extreme circumstances, but that the breach should be made into a generalized doctrine, the criticism of which should then be branded as anti-American.⁷

The same applies to the new doctrine of pre-emption. No reasonable person would deny that if a state has reliable information on a terrorist or on a deadly criminal act about to be perpetrated, it should not wait for the deed to be done but should seize the suspects. Nor would many deny that a pre-emptive strike against a state that is, to the best of one's knowledge, about to attack is justified in certain circumstances. But none of this displaces a central concern of both political philosophy and modern strategy to avoid the security dilemma, the "reciprocal fear of surprise attack", the temptation of "launch on warning" postures or of pre-emptive war. Certainly, the new American doctrine is based on a valid and urgent concern: the impossibility of deterring terrorists who welcome suicide and who offer no targets for retaliation. But, once again, to generalize out of this situation a *doctrine* centered around the idea of launching a unilateral first strike against any state that possesses or builds weapons of mass destruction, is suspected of helping terrorists, and hence may, one hypothetical day, facilitate the use of the

former by the latter against the United States, means extending the notion of pre-emption to an arbitrary and open-ended "anticipatory defense." It means creating a situation of permanent or open-ended exception and insecurity—in practice, permanent war—since there will always be some terrorists and some weapons of mass destruction left, and since suspect states that have been deterred so far may themselves be tempted to pre-empt. Even conceptually, the only end in sight to such a war would be total and, so to speak, totally uncontrolled control by the United States.

THIS BRINGS US to broader ambiguities that surround the notion of American hegemony or empire. There is no question that the conditions for American supremacy have grown with every conflict of the last century. Neither World War I, nor Nazism, nor Communism nor apocalyptic terrorism were invented or provoked by the United States—but in each case its role was decisive in resisting the threat to freedom and civilization. In each case, too—even the last one—it emerged more powerful and better able both to extend its influence (to new territories in Central Asia these days, for instance) and to organize the peace. But in each case daunting obstacles occluded the way of the latter task, inducing contrasting

⁷This is one way in which Leo Strauss explained the difference between Machiavelli and Aristotle. The former took his bearings by the extreme cases and delighted in showing how far they could be carried and how they revealed the truth about politics, whereas the true statesman, in the Aristotelian sense, took his bearings by the normal case and, while knowing that no action can be totally excluded in the face of an evil enemy, made every effort to return to normal priorities and behavior as quickly and as completely as possible.

temptations toward both excessive ambition and withdrawal. Woodrow Wilson's excessively idealistic faith in abstract principles and international institutions, for example, was followed by a partial retreat to half-isolationist unilateralism (except in economic matters). In the 1940s and 1950s, on the other hand, the United States got the balance right. It managed to establish its hegemony solidly on the three pillars of military protection, economic aid and the creation of multilateral institutions. It maintained a high degree of freedom of action, while giving its allies a feeling of belonging and participation. It neither withdrew from responsibility nor overreached, except in the tragic case of Vietnam.

Building a new order after November 1989 and, even more, after September 2001, however, is a much harder task. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union created a constraint that disciplined both America's impulse toward withdrawal and excessive ambition. Today the very nature of the threat encourages both temptations. Anarchy and civil war in faraway lands encourage the reluctance to intervene; decentralized fanatical terrorism encourages the temptation to pre-empt. The prospect of "needing" to reform the political culture of nearly the entire Islamic world demoralizes some, energizes others toward nation-building.

The international scene as a whole, too, has become more complex and difficult to control; other actors have emerged, making it harder for the United States either to withdraw from the world or to control its economic and political institutions: reciprocity becomes inevitable and the cost of ignoring it increases. Last, but not least, global issues involving security, the environment or world health increasingly call for multilateral cooperation and institution-building. So while the use of force cannot always be left to multilateral institutions or to coalitions of the willing,

the prevention and resolution of conflicts cannot be left to the unilateral actions of one power, even a benign one.

WE ARE THUS left with a structural problem of the international security order—but the American administration seems not to credit the problem at all. It tends toward the primacy of unilateralism and military power, a tendency that surely will harm the legitimacy and the long-term stability of American leadership. What seems to stand in the way of the acceptability of U.S. hegemony, in this respect, are two kinds of American exceptionalism: the imperial and the nationalist.

America's imperial exceptionalism consists of a complete asymmetry of rights and duties between the hegemon and the rest of the world, in the U.S. refusal to recognize any superior law or authority that might limit its freedom of action. The last ten years have been occupied by the debate between sovereignists and interventionists, the first claiming that the sovereignty of states was and remains the basis of international order, the second that absolute sovereignty should give way to the right of intervention in favor of human rights. The United States seems to have solved this dilemma, as far as it is concerned, by claiming for itself *both* absolute sovereignty *and* the absolute right to infringe, including by military force, into the sovereignty of others.

America's exceptionalism offers not only the grandiose face of imperial *hubris*, but also the narrower one of parochial national interests. Any imperial power has to balance its narrow national interests with the interests of the system it leads. The Bush Administration, however, seems not to have gotten the hang of this balance, and so America diverges ever further from its best friends and closest allies. It does not hesitate to abandon its

free-trade gospel in favor of the interests of its steel industry or its farmers, or to undermine its own efforts against weapons of mass destruction because of the distaste of its biotech industry for international intrusion.

Moreover, while the logic of empire leads ultimately to Caracalla's edict, by which the Roman emperor extended citizenship to all the subjects of his empire, the current American policy pushes to an extreme the distinction between Americans and non-Americans, between the human rights of an American citizen and of an alien, between the value of an American life and that of allied soldiers, let alone of civilian populations or of enemy combatants. This inclination has always existed in the United States—witness Congress's reluctant attitude even toward those international treaties that correspond to American ideas and ideals—but this is an inclination that should be mitigated if America is to rule by invitation and consent rather than by force alone. This is all

the more so since Americans are clearly not prepared to undertake the risks and accept the costs—moral and political as well as economic—of direct rule.

America's objective should be an international regime that combines its hegemony with respect for international law and multilateral institutions; and those can have no effective role of advice and consent if they do not contain an element of autonomous or non-American power, hence some form of multipolarity. The choice is between an attempt at authoritarian global U.S. rule tempered by anarchic resistance, on the one hand, and, on the other, hegemony tempered by law, concert and consent. What happened last September 11 did not change this choice; it has just made it clearer and more urgent. □

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A Difference of Opinion?

There are still those who profess not to know the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter. The difference is clear. The definition of terrorism is simple and unmistakable. Terrorists use random violence on as large a scale as possible against civilian populations to make their points or get their way. Anyone who claims to be confused at this point in history will have to face up to being known as an apologist for terrorism.

—George P. Shultz, "The Work of Diplomacy", May 29, 2002
(speech published by Foreign Policy Research Institute)

Labeling either side's methods as illegitimate is highly questionable. Each side fights in the way it finds most advantageous, and the moral and ethical difference between Palestinian suicide bombings and Israeli collateral damage seems dubious. The basic rule is to fight on the most advantageous terms possible.

—Anthony Cordesman, "Escalating to Nowhere: The Israeli and Palestinian Strategic Failure" (Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2002)

