

# FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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## Bush and the World

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## THE NEED FOR A NEW WILSONIANISM

IN ITS EMOTIONAL IMPACT, September 11, 2001, may have been the most horrifying single day in American history. As bloody as some of the great battles and disasters of the past have been, the news about them tended to trickle out: most Americans read detailed accounts of Antietam or Pearl Harbor well after the event. On September 11, Americans watched on television, in real time, as the twin towers of the World Trade Center burned and their fellow citizens flung themselves to their deaths from 100 stories up. Americans all watched as the towers imploded, and they all knew that they were witnessing, in seconds, the deaths of thousands of their compatriots in the nation's front yard.

George W. Bush experienced this terrible new reality as directly and as emotionally as any American. The difference was that he could do something about it. The United States was faced with an irreconcilable enemy; the sort of black-and-white challenge that had supposedly been transcended in the post-Cold War period, when the great clash of ideologies had ended, had now reappeared with shocking suddenness. And in Bush, the man seemed to meet the moment. For someone of the president's Manichaeian sense of right and wrong and powerful religious faith—not to mention unilateralist instincts—the Bush doctrine came naturally (indeed, a senior adviser says Bush wrote the language himself). It also seemed to express the rage and grim resolve that many Americans were feeling. Bush's message to the world, first

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delivered on September 20, 2001, was this: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” Either you stand with civilization and good (us), or with barbarism and evil (them). Choose. And to those nations that choose wrongly, beware.

In the year since Bush first gave voice to his doctrine, it has become the animating concept of American foreign policy, transforming the entire focus of his administration. The Bush doctrine has been used to justify a new assertiveness abroad unprecedented since the early days of the Cold War—amounting nearly to the declaration of American hegemony—and it has redefined U.S. relationships around the world. Under the hammer of the Bush doctrine, Pakistan was forced to relinquish its long-time support of the Taliban and its tolerance of al Qaeda, and Saudi Arabia had to confront the fact that 15 of its own disaffected citizens shaped under its fundamentalist Wahhabi brand of Islam had carried out the attacks.

The Bush doctrine has also helped to reinvigorate relations with major powers such as China, Russia, and India, each of which faces its own terrorist insurgency, and all of which are now, in a happily Bismarckian way, on friendlier terms with Washington than with each other. The president has used the Bush doctrine to isolate Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an “axis of evil”—even though almost no one else around the world views them quite that way—and to declare America’s right to preemptively attack anywhere. “My job isn’t to nuance,” Bush once said by way of explaining his blunt unilateralism. “My job is to say what I think. I think moral clarity is important.”

The truth, however, is that a year later there is still very little clarity about the real direction of U.S. foreign policy and the war on terror. First, it is not much of a “war” to begin with. Since the last major battle at Shahikhot, Afghanistan, in March, the effort has gone underground, devolving into the quiet seizure and detention of suspects, the day-by-day interdiction of threats. Indeed, it has become impossible to tell even if “our side” is winning. Much as the Pentagon brilliantly adapted itself to Afghanistan’s mountains, the United States is now taking on terror cells with its own furtive counter cells made up of spooks, paramilitaries, and G-men.

More important, the concept at the heart of the conflict has scarcely evolved beyond its bare-bones formulation of a year ago. The president

keeps using the Bush doctrine to justify new calls to action. But what does it mean to be “with” the United States in the war on terror? Is it a temporary alliance—the “coalitions of the willing” the administration vaguely referred to at the start—or does it mean something more? The enemy is clearly Osama bin Laden and his Islamist sympathizers and collaborators, as well as terror-supporting states. But who is on the American side? And why are so many of those who are included

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A year after the terrorist attacks, there is very little clarity about the real direction of U.S. foreign policy.

in what Bush calls “this mighty coalition of civilized nations,” such as countries in Europe and Asia, still griping that they do not feel a part of any larger cause?

Some of these complaints about the American superpower are not new; indeed, the violent protests that another unilateralist president, Ronald Reagan, touched off with his visits to Europe in the 1980s were worse

than those that greeted Bush on his last visit. Much of the grumbling has to do with foreign—especially European—resentment over the vast disparity in power between the United States and the rest of the world. But the complaints this time have some merit. While Bush talks of defending civilization, his administration seems almost uniformly to dismiss most of the civilities and practices that other nations would identify with a common civilization. Civilized people operate by consensus, whether it is a question of deciding on a restaurant or movie or on a common enemy. The yearly round of talks at institutions such as the G-7 group of major industrialized nations, NATO, or the World Trade Organization (WTO) are the social glue of global civilization. The mutual desire for security and an eagerness to benefit from the global economy supplies the motivation. Diplomacy is the common language.

But Bush, to judge by his actions, appears to believe in a kind of unilateral civilization. NATO gets short shrift, the United Nations is an afterthought, treaties are not considered binding, and the administration brazenly sponsors protectionist measures at home such as new steel tariffs and farm subsidies. Any compromise of Washington’s freedom to act is treated as a hostile act. To quash the International Criminal Court (ICC), for example, the administration threatened in

June to withdraw all funds for UN peacekeeping. Global warming may be occurring, as an administration report finally admitted in the spring, but the White House nonetheless trashed the Kyoto Protocol that the international community spent ten years negotiating, and it offered no alternative plan. One State Department careerist complains that the unilateralist ideologues who dominate the administration have outright contempt for Europe's consensus-based community, with little sense of the long and terrible history that brought Europe to this historic point. When NATO after September 11 invoked its Article V for the first time ever, defining the attack on the United States as an attack on all members, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dispatched his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, to say this would not be necessary because "the mission would define the coalition." One senior hard-liner at a Pentagon meeting summed up the U.S. view thus: "Preserve the myth, and laugh."

The effect is that when Bush does invoke his "we're in this together" rhetoric or talks of creating a "common security framework for the great powers," it rings hollow. It suggests a towering insincerity: fine words, but no real commitment to anything enduring except American security. U.S. security, of course, must be number one on any president's agenda. And the disparity in power does justify a certain degree of unilateral leadership. In recent months, Bush has also, in small ways, begun moderating his unilateralism. Faced with European outrage, he compromised on the ICC, and for the Middle East, he created a "quartet"—the EU, Russia, the UN, and the United States—to oversee the creation of a Palestinian state. But if Bush plays the war leader well, as a global leader he still falls short, for Bush's stunted vision fails to recognize that U.S. security is now inextricably bound up in global security and in strengthening the international community.

September 11 and its aftermath had the paradoxical effect of demonstrating, within the space of a few months, both the unprecedented vulnerability of the United States and its unprecedented power. Its economic and military centers were more vulnerable than anyone had thought possible, and yet within several weeks Americans were displaying more power than anyone thought they possessed on one of history's toughest battlefields, Afghanistan. Even the Pentagon was surprised by the swiftness of the Taliban's defeat, which occurred

despite much naysaying from British and Russians harking back to their own failures in Afghanistan.

What does it mean to possess such power and vulnerability at the same time? It means that America must make use of the full panoply of its tools of hard and soft power to secure itself. On one hand it is clear that the demonstration of U.S. might is needed, and not just to wipe out al Qaeda. The use of overwhelming force in Afghanistan

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**Bush's rhetoric suggests towering insincerity: fine words, but no commitment.**

helped to restore U.S. credibility after a decade of irresolution, halfhearted interventions, and flaccid responses to previous attacks. Bill Clinton's sporadic cruise-missile strikes only seemed to encourage bin Laden, who derided the United States as a paper tiger. But at the same time, the nature of the terrorist threat demonstrated the necessity of bolstering the

international community, which is built on nonproliferation agreements, intelligence cooperation, and legitimizing institutions such as the UN, as well as a broad consensus on democracy, free markets, and human rights. It also demonstrates the necessity of a values-driven foreign policy—and of nation building under multilateral auspices in places such as Afghanistan.

The president himself has occasionally seemed to recognize the full challenge. As Bush said rather grandiosely in a defining speech at West Point, "We have our best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace." The problem is that on this issue his administration is almost as much at war with itself as with the terrorists. Caught in the middle of titanic fights between Secretary of State Colin Powell and his lonely band of moderate multilateralists, the Donald Rumsfeld–Dick Cheney axis of realist unilateralists, and a third group of influential neoconservatives led by Wolfowitz, the president cannot seem to decide which world view he embraces. As a result, Bush has veered between a harsh, pared-down realism, which seeks to stay out of the world (and in which nation building, much less world building, is shunned), and a strident internationalism that seeks to reorder the world "for freedom." But the overall tilt of his administration remains toward disengagement except in the use of

military force. The bottom-line problem may be that the belief system that the president brought into office—which condemned Clinton as a serial intervener and sought to withdraw from U.S. over-commitments to peacekeeping, nation building, and mediation—is in direct conflict with the reality Bush was handed on September 11. And this outdated belief system is giving way too slowly against the incursions of the real world.

The result is ideological paralysis, followed by policy paralysis. For all of Bush's eagerness to look decisive, he has projected an image of vacillation to the world. The president is trying to lead a global fight that cries out for deep U.S. engagement from Afghanistan to Kashmir to the Middle East. But held back by the ideological hard-liners in his administration—and perhaps by his own stubbornness—he still barely acknowledges the global system he is ostensibly fighting for. Even after the attacks, when it became apparent that the enmities between the Israelis and the Palestinians and between the Indians and the Pakistanis would complicate the war on terror, the Bush administration had to be dragged into mediating those conflicts, heels first. Another example is the ICC controversy, in which the administration's scorched-earth refusal to cooperate made its ultimate compromise all the more humiliating.

Vacillation between engagement and withdrawal is a chronic problem in U.S. foreign policy, but under the current administration, it is especially striking. The impression it creates abroad is deeply damaging and has benefited America's Islamist enemies. U.S. allies may be annoyed with Bush's apparent insincerity, but terrorists love it. They believe their patience will be rewarded with the thing they desire most: American inattention and withdrawal. And they may be right. Consider the following cases.

In Afghanistan, after a decade of debate about whether humanitarian intervention in failed states was in the U.S. national interest, September 11 showed beyond any doubt how much harm can emanate from failed states. Bush acknowledged this fact in speeches, even indirectly criticizing his father for abandoning Afghanistan in 1989. He invoked the

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The administration's ideologues have acted to minimize the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.



Marshall Plan in declaring that America will help Afghanistan to develop a stable, free government, an educational system, and a viable economy. Top officials such as Wolfowitz acknowledged that the key to making this work is money. The strategy was also straightforward: channel large amounts of this aid through the Western-friendly leader Hamid Karzai, giving Kabul power and leverage over the warlord-led provinces. But behind the scenes, the administration's ideologues acted to minimize U.S. involvement. Washington pledged a scant \$296 million and fought off congressional leaders who wanted to pitch in more aid. (Bush's budget director, Mitch Daniels, told congressional leaders who wanted to allocate \$150 million for educational and agricultural assistance that they would get no more than \$40 million.) And the administration maintained a doctrinaire refusal to use any U.S. troops as peacekeepers. As a result, other nations were parsimonious with their troops and resources as well. Not surprisingly, as Afghans despair of long-term U.S. involvement, the nation has fallen increasingly under the control of warlords.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, Bush continued his policy of "parking" the Arab-Israeli conflict even as the Palestinian intifada raged out of control. Finally, in an eloquent speech in the Rose Garden on April 4, he declared that "enough is enough" and that America was "committed" to ending the conflict. Bush demanded that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdraw "without delay" from a Palestinian incursion. After months of simply demanding an end to terrorism, Bush appeared to recognize that Palestinians needed some concrete reason to abjure violence—and that only the United States could broker a deal. Powell proposed a peace conference. But two months later, prodded by the hard-liners, Bush lurched in another direction. In a big speech on June 24, he dropped the peace conference and demanded a new Palestinian leadership "not compromised by terror" before he would approve statehood (his three-year target date put resolution conveniently after the 2004 elections). Bush's new stance was morally satisfying: by wishing Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat out of the picture and demanding democracy, he preserved the essence of his doctrine and his conservative, avidly pro-Israel base. But this focus on Arafat effectively gave Sharon a new green light to crack down and continue obstructionist tactics such as promoting



new settlements in the Palestinian territories. Islamists used the moment to propagandize again that America was in bed with Israel.

The India-Pakistan crisis is another example of vacillation. For nine months after September 11, at a time of maximum U.S. leverage in South Asia, the administration ignored the seething Kashmir issue that threatened to destabilize that critical region. Only when war threatened to erupt did Bush send Powell's deputy, Richard Armitage, to negotiate a de-escalation in June. As part of that effort, a senior administration official said, the United States was looking for a trade: in return for Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf's promise to stop infiltration across the line of control, India would open up discussions on Kashmir with the United States as facilitator. But Bush, still deeply averse to Clintonian personal mediation, resisted using his unprecedented influence with New Delhi and Islamabad to address the now nuclearized Kashmir issue. This inaction has been a gift to al Qaeda, which has trained Islamic militants to fight in Kashmir and would benefit enormously from a destabilized Pakistan.

On the whole, then, the Bush hard-liners are winning the policy battles. The diplomatically disengaged realism of Rumsfeld and Cheney seems to have the edge over the crusading neoconservatism of Wolfowitz and others, who call for enlarging the "zone of democracy." Even so, in practice most of these conservatives have become united under the banner of neoimperialism, or "hegemonism." This belief holds that the unilateral assertion of America's unrivaled hard power will be the primary means not only of winning the war on terror, but of preserving American dominance indefinitely, uncompromised for the most part by the international system or the diplomatic demands of other nations. Hailing mainly from the antidétente right wing that dates back at least to the 1970s, the Bush hegemonists feel that for too long America has been a global Gulliver strapped down by Lilliputians—the norms and institutions of the global system. They feel vindicated in their assertion of U.S. power by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and of the Taliban a decade later, as well as by the relative ease with which they achieved a key goal, the dissolution of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Their next plan is to preemptively attack Iraq, perhaps by the end of the year.

As a result of the hegemonists' primacy, attempts by Bush moderates such as Powell to push a more all-embracing global agenda have faltered.

A speech last spring by Richard Haass, head of policy planning at the State Department, called for a new, suspiciously Clintonesque “doctrine of integration” that would “integrate other countries and organizations into arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with U.S. interests and values.” It sank quickly out of sight. As Armitage, another Powellite, said later at a congressional hearing, “We are not as far along in a public diplomacy strategy as we ought to be.” Powell, who once envisioned himself as arbiter of the Bush foreign policy, has been relegated to cleaning up the diplomatic imbrolios that the hard-liners leave behind.

Today, Washington’s main message to the world seems to be, Take dictation. But truly effective leaders do not work by diktat, even during wars. Previous presidents offered a compelling countervision

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Even when Bush does wax Wilsonian, he often does so in a policy vacuum.

that inspired the world to their cause. Faced with what seemed to be the breakdown of Western civilization in World War I, Woodrow Wilson declared his plans to build a new world of democracy and open markets in the “common interest of mankind.” Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan all may have

disdained Wilson’s excesses of idealism, but they fought World War II and the Cold War along distinctly Wilsonian lines when confronting alternative world views. Many of the institutions that the Bush hard-liners have so little use for were conceived as part of a new vision to correct the weaknesses of Western democratic capitalism in the face of opportunistic threats like fascism and Marxism-Leninism.

Even when Bush does wax Wilsonian, he often does so in a policy vacuum, making his unilateralist moralism all the more grating on foreign ears. “The twentieth century ended with a single surviving model of human progress,” Bush declared at West Point, “based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance.” Compare this to Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech in 1941—an expression of hope, rather than a declaration of what was non-negotiable—which Roosevelt swiftly incorporated into the Atlantic Charter and, later, the UN Charter.

And as the war on terror grinds on, America is missing the historic chance that Bush referred to. Ironically, what remains of al Qaeda's wounded network has made a common civilization even easier to define, because terror cells are now targeting Europeans and Asians as well as Americans. The credo that drives Islamism—extremist Salafism—is not just anti-American; as scholar Michael Doran has noted in these pages, it sees all of modern civilization as the “font of evil.” In response, this is precisely the moment to put forward a powerful, inclusive idealism with which the world can identify—a countervision that will dispel the lingering attractions of Islamism, especially for younger generations in places such as Iran and the Palestinian territories.

It is true that this is a different kind of war. In terms of hard power, the threat is small compared to the hegemonic challenges posed by Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. But in ideological terms, the challenge that the Islamists pose is similar—a point Bush himself made when he declared in his September 20 speech that the terrorists are “the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century.” They may not have tanks and planes, but they do have a substantial support base in the mainstream Islamic world and the “superempowerment” that globalization has granted to small groups of fanatics. Pakistan, one of the United States' chief allies, is also now a chief launching pad for al Qaeda. Suicide bombing is a way of life in the Palestinian territories, where bin Laden's picture hangs prominently on many walls. Saudi and Persian Gulf oil money continues to fund Salafism, which has a nesting ground and sympathetic roosts around the world. Its message is carried daily by al Jazeera, the pan-Arab “news” station, and even in many U.S. mosques.

The hegemonists are right about one thing: hard power is necessary to break the back of radical Islamic groups and to force the Islamic world into fundamental change. Bin Laden said it well himself: “When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like a strong horse.” The United States must be seen as the strong horse. The reluctant U.S. interventionism of the 1990s made no headway against this implacable enemy. Clinton's policy of offering his and NATO's credibility to save Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo won Washington little goodwill in the Islamic world.

But to reverse the broader trend of anti-Americanism, Washington cannot simply bomb the enemy out of existence or root it out with its special forces. Homeland defense will improve national security only marginally (and may ultimately be more costly than beneficial to a country whose rise to power was built on its openness to all peoples, ideas, and technologies). So Islamism must also be crushed in the war of ideas. It is at this moment, when the ideologists of al Qaeda are transmitting their message of civilizational war on the Internet and marketing it in hateful ways such as the video of the execution of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, that those who call themselves a “civilization” must give that structure a name.

As Kennedy once said in summarizing what was at stake in the Cold War, “The real question is which system travels better.” Americans believe their system puts the failed economic, political, and social alternatives of the Arab world to shame, but that point does not seem clear to many people, especially in the developing world. If the United States is in fact draining the swamp of terrorism—which is doubtful—it is certainly not filling it back in with something more appealing. This is especially true as the West dithers over the failures of globalization—another Clintonian agenda left adrift by Bush administration ideologues (especially Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill) since the momentum of the 1990s free-market revolution petered out. Even if many terrorists are not directly driven by poverty, the inequities of globalization feed a general anti-Westernism that is a seedbed for Islamism.

Because the world gets only marching orders from Bush and not a common vision, it will be less inclined to follow them, especially if the United States begins to take large-scale preemptive action against states such as Iraq. Preemption may be inevitable against an enemy that cannot be deterred (and the Europeans and Russians seem increasingly willing to sanction a campaign against Iraq), but Washington will need to apply consummate diplomacy to persuade its partners that such a campaign is in their self-interest, and to get them to clean up the mess afterward, as in Afghanistan. It will also need to work hard, diplomatically, to convince others that preemption is not the overriding principle of action in the war on terror—for what will then stop India, for example, from preemptively attacking Pakistan? The United States can only lead by example here. Even during the Cuban

missile crisis, Kennedy worried what the reaction in the UN and the international community might be if he launched a preemptive strike on Cuba, ultimately choosing to defy his hawkish military advisers and opt for a naval quarantine instead.

But to understand where the Bush administration needs to go, it is first necessary to understand where it is coming from. If there is one reason Bush has maintained his hard-edged policies, it is that they continue to be popular with the American people. So if Bush is to change his outlook, Americans must too. And to do so, they must change their own frame of reference.

#### DEATH OF A FOUNDING MYTH

THE DAY after September 11, General Richard Myers was asked at a congressional hearing why the mightiest military in history had failed to protect the heart of American power from a band of men brandishing box cutters. In those early, shell-shocked hours, before the spin set in, the incoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had no ready reply but the unvarnished truth: “We’re pretty good if the threat is coming from the outside,” Myers said. “We’re not so good if it’s coming in from the inside.”

A year later, Americans still seem stunned by how hard it is to tell which threats are coming from the outside and which are on the inside. Whereas other nations, such as the United Kingdom, have long accommodated themselves to domestic surveillance because of the infiltration of terrorists, the United States is just getting started on this road. This confusion is at the heart of the divisions in the American intelligence community, long neglected but now critical to the war on terror. The old clash of interests between the CIA and the FBI had been getting ever more aggravated in the post-Cold War period. The CIA began moving into the FBI’s traditional bailiwick as crime grew more transnational, involving drugs and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In more recent years, the FBI began elbowing into the CIA’s territory, “running” agents overseas in response to the Khobar Towers and the U.S.S. *Cole* bombings. But these mutual efforts barely improved communications, and the two agencies seemed to feel little urgency about doing so—until September 11.

Even now, the idea that borders do not mean much anymore is not an easy one for Americans to stomach. Clinton, the “globalization” president, was constantly harping on this theme, but it never really resonated. One of the nation’s founding myths, after all, is that of exceptionalism: America is a place apart, protected by its oceans. Such hopes as George Washington’s farewell plea for insularity in 1796 or Thomas Jefferson’s warning against entangling alliances sprang from the fact that Americans had a national life of their own, gloriously isolated from Europe and Asia, lording over the western hemisphere.

By the late nineteenth century, without even trying, the United States was already the largest economy in the world. These victories imbued its exceptionalism and its spawn, isolationism and unilateralism, with physical, palpable reality. The founding myth had come true. America’s success in building a continental empire only fed into the cer-

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Unilateralism and  
isolationism are  
ideological twins.

tainty that it could act with total freedom of action. Its pride in its values and ideals made Americans certain that they were always right.

By the twentieth century, the United States was getting pulled into the great wars, starting the now-familiar pattern of intense involvement followed by withdrawal. During the

Cold War, withdrawal was not possible as global entanglement with the Soviets followed the war on fascism. But if the vast oceans no longer protected the United States from nuclear attack once the era of nuclear brinkmanship began, Americans still thought of the threat as “out there,” coming from the sky and across the sea from an alien, less perfect world. And when that conflict ended, it should have been no surprise to anyone that George W. Bush, his conservative impulses unchecked by the need for Cold War-style engagement, sought to shrink America’s presence abroad to a more manageable size and to give voice once again to America’s irrepressible exceptionalism.

A number of European commentators have consoled themselves with the idea that at least America is not isolationist any longer. That is true. But unilateralism and isolationism are ideological twins. They both spring from the same exceptionalist impulse, a deep well of American mistrust about the rest of the world, especially Europe. This is still American scripture, cited by fundamentalists such as Pat



Buchanan and John Bolton, a conservative “Americanist” who argues that international treaties are not legally valid. (In fox-guarding-the-henhouse fashion, Bolton became Bush’s undersecretary of state for arms control policy and promptly dismantled or obstructed nearly every multilateral treaty in sight.) Unilateralism is more politically acceptable today, but like isolationism, it does not accept the encumbrances of the international system.

What many Americans, including the Bush hard-liners, must grasp is this: during America’s periods of intense (if reluctant) engagement overseas, the world that they had wanted to keep at ocean’s length became largely their world. For a century now, Americans have built a global order bit by bit, era by era, all the while listing homeward, like a guest at a party who is yearning for an excuse to leave politely. What many Americans have not understood at a gut level is that it is their party. Every major international institution—the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), NATO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—was made in America. And taken together, all this institution building has amounted to a workable international system, one in which democracy and free markets seem to be an ever-rising tide.

Is there any better way, for example, of coopting the putative next superpower, China, into the international system than to mold its behavior through the WTO and the UN Security Council? Neoconservatives would call this approach “appeasement”; they want to “solve” the problem of China with regime change. But they offer no practical program: Washington is certainly not going to invade and occupy a nuclear-armed nation of 1.3 billion people. And while we await the advent of democracy there, the international system offers Beijing a real alternative to the old geopolitical power struggle, both by holding out the possibility of achieving national prosperity within such a system and by giving the Chinese a face-saving way to say they have no other choice but to bow to the American hegemon. The same policy of institutional envelopment goes for Russia.

Americans must now embrace what might seem a contradiction in terms: a more inclusive exceptionalism, which recognizes that what separates the United States from the world is no longer nearly as significant as what binds it to the world. Especially in today’s world,



where both opportunities and threats have become globalized, the task of securing freedom means securing the international system. The United States faces a tradeoff of time-honored American ideals: to preserve the most central of its founding principles, freedom, it must give up one of its founding myths, that of a people apart. America is now, ineluctably, part of a global community of its own making.

ACCEPTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

FOR THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, it is a sharp irony that America's main ally in the war on terror has turned out to be the global community, and that they now need this despised liberal entity to flesh out the Bush doctrine. As it took power, the new administration insisted it would, as Bush adviser and now National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice wrote in 2000, "proceed from the firm ground of the national interest and not from the interest of an illusory international community." Conservatives wanted to roll back what they saw as the rabid globalism of the Clinton years; they deplored how this globalized society sought to influence the issues that they wanted to reserve for U.S. sovereignty—from land mines to international war crimes tribunals to taxes.

In truth, by the time they took office, these so-called sovereigntists were already putting their fingers in a very leaky dike. Globalization and the world of complex interdependence had rendered many of their arguments moot. U.S. businesses had set up transnational production networks that left them vulnerable both to the desires of overseas governments and to the whims of transnational actors such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The latter, empowered by the global information revolution, have found it easier and easier to pursue their interests divorced from national bases; as Clinton State Department official Strobe Talbott has observed, al Qaeda may be the ultimate NGO. The U.S. economy, meanwhile, had become addicted to the Wall Street-centered international financial system. America had become a net user of other nations' capital, enabling Americans to habitually buy more goods from abroad than they sell to others. This trend became critical to the health of the U.S. economy throughout the 1990s, a decade in which U.S. savings dropped to nearly nothing.

By Bush's inaugural, American dependence on the international system had gone beyond savings and investment, jobs and markets. It was also about maintaining America's military superiority—the very source of its unilateralist pride. As the campaign in Afghanistan showed, much of the best U.S. defense technology is produced by high-tech commercial companies, which supply a lot of the technology that goes into robotic drones, airborne cameras, satellites, handheld global-positioning-system equipment, and systems-integration and telecommunications equipment.

Little of this equipment is produced now by a military-industrial complex sequestered in the United States, as it was during the Cold War. Nor will it be produced that way in the future, despite Bush's huge increase in defense spending. The Internet may have begun, famously, as a top-secret Defense Department project, but those days are long gone. Today Silicon Valley is so far ahead in R&D and product generation that it is simply too expensive and inefficient for the Pentagon to order up its own computer and telecommunications equipment from scratch. And here is the crucial point: these high-tech companies depend on the international marketplace to survive. Indeed, the "dual-use" technologies they produce represent the lion's share of what America's economy has to sell in the global marketplace these days. Supercomputers, for example, are necessary for twenty-first-century warfare—determining everything from warhead design to weather patterns in the event of an air strike—and every U.S. supercomputer company now gets at least half of its revenues from overseas sales. America's defense edge, in other words, depends on the stability and openness of the international economy in a way it never has before.

It is easy for conservatives, of course, to acknowledge the importance of the international economy. The "international community" is another thing. This is still such a nebulous idea that it has always been easy to dismiss as a Wilsonian myth. Yet the international economy no longer exists in a vacuum; there is a growing nexus of markets, governments, and peoples that share common interests and

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The United States desperately needs information on terror groups from Berlin to Kuala Lumpur.

values, and that nexus in turn deepens the international economy. There are old working institutions, such as the Security Council, that sometimes give voice to these interests and values, and new institutions such as the WTO that adjudicate disputes when that nexus breaks down.

Proof that the international community exists—or at least that something other than anarchy prevails—is all around us. It can be found in the lack of serious attempts by other major powers to balance or build alliances against the United States, as realists have predicted. It can be found in the fact that none of the major powers—the EU, Japan, Russia, even China—is engaged in a major military buildup to challenge the lone superpower decades hence. Despite the war on terror and all the disputes it has provoked between Americans and Europeans, the forces of order are clearly much more powerful than the forces of chaos in the world today. In the last decade, financial markets have collapsed several times, and the global economy has held (so far). Antiglobalization protests raged, and the open-market system has remained intact (for the most part). Terror struck down the World Trade Center towers, and the clash of civilizations has not ensued (yet). If there is a coming anarchy, as some realists warn, then the burden of proof still lies with them, because there is hardly a glimmer of it on the horizon. The structure of the post-Cold War world has stayed together through its many stresses and strains, not least because there is no viable alternative.

Even so, scholars such as Joseph Stiglitz and Kevin Phillips increasingly warn that the engine of the international community, the global economy, is choking on its inequalities and cannot sustain itself without some assiduous repair work. All the more reason why Bush must do far more to make the rich-poor divide part of his global vision; the United States still ranks near last among major powers in foreign aid as a percentage of GDP.

But nothing demonstrates more than the war on terror the need for Americans to make the conceptual leap into accepting that they are part of an international community. To fight what have become disaffiliated cells, at least since the al Qaeda leadership was partially destroyed in Afghanistan, the United States desperately needs information on terror groups from Berlin to Kuala Lumpur. This approach cries out for a much more conciliatory attitude by the Bush administration,

but again it was slow in coming. Washington was even reluctant to share intelligence with key allies such as France and Germany. Not surprisingly, cooperation in shutting down terror cells and rolling up their financial support networks has flagged.

The arcane but critical issue of WMD proliferation is another reason why Americans must work harder to flesh out a fuller international community. As the decades pass, it will only grow easier for terrorist groups to obtain such weapons. The likely main threat to Americans will not be ballistic missiles launched from a rogue state that knows it will face massive retaliation; it will be a WMD loaded into a boat or truck by a small number of hate-filled people who lack a “return address” and are undaunted by the threat of retaliation. Missile defense will not work in those cases, and a beefed-up homeland defense will improve only marginally America’s ability to stop them before they are used.

Preemptive action can certainly help, but if overused it could establish a dangerous new precedent for international behavior. So it is clearly in the U.S. national interest to control or cut down the number of such weapons proliferating around the world. That means reducing—or at least holding in place—the number of states that produce them, and curbing the rest. As the Bush administration took office, it had access to a whole slew of useful if flawed tools for helping to accomplish this task, all of them globalist regimes launched by the United States, all of them regimes that would tend to lock in U.S. military superiority. Among these tools are the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. And yet the Bush administration, pursuing its old agenda against sovereignty-crimping treaties much as it continued to resist the nation building that would give terrorist fewer hiding places, abjured most of these tools rather than trying to fix them.

Some of the administration’s policies actually seemed to welcome a world of more nuclear weapons. The nuclear posture review leaked in March 2002 went several steps beyond Clinton’s presidential decision directive of 1997, which first broached the use of nuclear weapons against rogue states. It is little remembered that in early 2001, the Bush administration moderated its objections to China’s nuclear missile buildup—in hopes of blunting Beijing’s opposition to U.S.

missile defense. (A year later, the Pentagon raised alarms that China was, in fact, building up its missile force.) And Bush's West Point speech seemed to dismiss any return to arms control: "We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties, and then systematically break them." To fight this threat, the president continued, "we will oppose them with all our power." Yet raw power does not work to stop nations from passing on WMD knowledge. Nor does it work well to stop other nations from seeking to obtain WMD, especially if they know the United States is working to enlarge and improve its own nuclear arsenal and that it renounces international law and organizations.

Well into the war on terror, the administration continued to pitch for more missile-defense money to take on "terrorist states," even as it waffled over certifying Russia to receive another tranche of money for disposing of WMD material. In a traditional strategic, set-piece way, the Bush administration's pursuit of missile defense could prove to be smart, long-term thinking—if it works. But continuing to make it the centerpiece of an ongoing defense strategy after September 11, while slighting multilateral efforts to contain proliferation, is nothing less than delusional. All these efforts seem to justify anew one of the fuzziest, more derided elements of Woodrow Wilson's old program for peace: reducing arms.

Finally, even if the sovereigntists in Washington do not accept the existence of the international community, the terrorists apparently do. Bin Laden's jihad was launched against "Crusaders and Jews" and the "iniquitous United Nations" as well as America. Indeed, the hostility of bin Laden and his Islamic fundamentalist sympathizers can be properly understood only in the context of the ever-widening—and what they see as corrupting—circle of Westernized international society. Bernard Lewis, the eminent scholar of Islam, traces today's Muslim rage to the final decline of Islamic society after a millennium-long war of primacy and self-esteem with the West. And the writers Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit have argued that Islamists are only the latest incarnation in the history of "occidentalism," or repeated attempts to organize a hostile resistance to Westernization. Today's fundamentalists were preceded by Japanese nationalists in the early twentieth century, early German nationalists and Slavophilic Russians,

and finally by the fascists and Japanese militarists. And if the “West” sticks together, radical Islamists are likely to meet a similar fate: defeat, followed by cooption.

But before Islamism expires, many more Westerners are likely to die from terrorist acts. All the more reason why Bush needs to hurry along the death of Islamism by spelling out a more inclusive alternative to it. This war must end, in fact, the way all successful American wars against fundamentally opposed ideologies have ended in the past: one side must win, totally. And being good Wilsonians, Americans must leave the world a better place so that it does not happen again. That is what America did to Germany and Japan during the U.S. occupation, and for the most part it worked. It displaced the most dangerous elements of those alien societies with Westernized norms. They were made, in short, permanent members of the international community. Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the rest of the Muslim world, must be forced in the same direction. But at this stage of history, it can be forced only by a united front of the international community.

For all these reasons, Washington simply cannot afford the resentment and lack of cooperation that a unilateralist America engenders. Accepting the reality that it is part of a larger global system does not mean a significant loss of sovereignty—the great American fear that has such deep roots in exceptionalism. The current champions of exceptionalism still believe they are fighting an overweening globalism, even the threat of world government. But these worries are ludicrously exaggerated: governments and nation-states still plainly define the world. The international community, as real, powerful, and growing as it is, shows no signs whatever of fostering a world government. The idea is absurd on its face: even as Bush beefed up his defense budget last year to Cold War levels, about \$390 billion, the combined budgets of all the major multinational organizations—the UN, the ICC, the World Bank—amounted to less than \$20 billion.

Yet none of this means that American unilateralism is all bad.

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Few Europeans have appreciated the extent to which their relevance to Washington has ended.



THE TEMPTATIONS OF UNILATERALISM

SOME EUROPEANS have all but given up on Bush—the “Toxic Texan,” as he was called by one continental editorialist—and are merely waiting until they can get back to a Clinton-like administration, which is now remembered as happily multilateralist. They have faulty memories. True, the Clintonites may have done a better job of papering over transatlantic differences and sounding multilateralist. Clinton fudged U.S. opposition to the ICC and the Biological Weapons Convention, and he deferred far more to European sensitivities over the ABM Treaty. But when the going got tough—think of Richard Holbrooke at Dayton, or Madeleine Albright at Rambouillet—the Clintonites could act just as unilaterally as the current Bush team.

Today’s unilateralism, in other words, has less to do with the peculiarities of Bush’s “cowboy” mindset or even exceptionalism than with the sheer inequality in hard power between the United States and the rest of the world—especially Europe, which is where most of the complaints come from. America behaves unilaterally because it can, and it is always at moments of national crisis when this impulse is strongest. This fact of life is not going away anytime soon. The Europeans are learning during the war on terror what the Japanese learned in the Persian Gulf War: vast economic power gives you leverage mainly in economics, unless the will exists to turn it into something more. Europe can be a big dog at WTO talks and on issues such as anti-trust, harrying giant U.S. multinationals such as GE and Microsoft. But as Japan found out upon Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, global security is another matter. Tokyo proved during the Gulf War that it was not ready, it turned out, to be the new Rome of the “Pacific Century.” And in this now-critical realm of hard power, Europe has, like Japan, been shown to be a “pygmy,” to quote the rueful words used by NATO Secretary-General George Robertson.

Few Europeans have appreciated the extent to which, when the Cold War ended, their relevance to Washington ended too. The institutions of the transatlantic community were built on the idea of great-power cooperation, a “concert of power,” in Wilson’s phrase, with America the superpower as first among equals. Never mind that the disparity of power between the United States and Europe was just as



great at the end of World War II. The limitations of technology and the delicate balancing act of Cold War deterrence, of forward-based missiles and troops directed against the Soviet bloc, required real cooperation.

After the Cold War, George H.W. Bush and Clinton made a good show of pretending nothing had changed. But in fact everything had. In a broad strategic sense there was no concert any more; there was only a one-man band. NATO, even as it expands as a political organization, is less relevant than ever to America's strategic considerations. NATO is still useful—as it proved in the latter stages of the Afghan campaign—but as an outpost of American power, rather than a partner to it.

Well before September 11, the contours of this new world system began to take shape. But neither the Americans nor the Europeans fully acknowledged that their roles were being newly defined, and that was one reason for all the ill feeling as the war on terror commenced. Whether the world likes it or not, American power is now the linchpin of stability in every region, from Europe to Asia to the Persian Gulf to Latin America. It oversees the global system from unassailable heights, from space and from the seas. Since September 11, this is becoming true in long-neglected Central and South Asia as well. And if Bush has his way, this rise to hegemony will continue. As he said in his West Point speech, "America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge."

If America now faces the problem of how to behave on the world stage with too much power, Europe must confront the fact that its rhetoric too often outstrips its lack of power. If Europe is increasingly speaking with one voice on world crises such as the Middle East, this voice remains unbacked by a unified power structure. As German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer told me last May, "We are 200 years behind you. In an institutional way we have just now reached the level of the Federalist Papers." And European governments are still spending only tiny amounts on the much-touted European rapid-reaction force, which underneath the politesse of Foggy Bottom most of Washington mocks.

So both sides, in truth, must make some adjustments. U.S. allies must accept that some U.S. unilateralism is inevitable, even desirable. This mainly involves accepting the reality of America's supreme might—and, truthfully, appreciating how historically lucky they are

to be protected by such a relatively benign power. It means understanding, for example, why the United States, as the global stabilizer most often called on for robust intervention, should get special consideration from the ICC. The standing division of labor should be acknowledged and expanded: the Europeans must chip in with peacekeeping just as the oil-guzzling Japanese, during the Gulf War, paid for much of that effort. With the nuclear shadow mostly lifted, many Europeans can no longer stomach the idea of being led by those simplistic, moralistic Americans. But if they want to be “postmodern” states that no longer wage war, they will have to pay the piper: Washington must take the lead in setting the agenda, even if it should not entirely dictate it.

Yet the adjustment Americans must make is just as great. It is precisely because American power is so dominant that Americans must bend over backward to play down, rather than harp on, the disparities. This is not just a matter of being nice, or doing “coalitions for coalitions’ sake,” as some internal critics of Powell’s lonely multilateralist efforts contend.

If the Europeans no longer play a big part in America’s military planning, they remain an essential ally in the strategy of institutional envelopment, coopting the Chinas and the Russias into the international system. And if the Bush team wants to see a global division of labor that works, it cannot expect the Europeans and others to blindly sign on to peacekeeping and nation building without being genuinely consulted on overall strategy beforehand. It would be much easier to win converts on Iraq, for example, if the Europeans were being asked to help develop a long-term strategy for turning that nation, post-Saddam, into a stable, Western ally. For these reasons, the administration cannot simply swat aside institutional constraints it does not like. In the case of the ICC, for example, it would have been far more effective for the administration to argue as a signatory for safeguards for U.S. troops—even to hamstring the court, if necessary, from the inside—than to simply reject it as an outsider.

One problem with proposing a new Wilsonianism is that because America is so dominant, any attempt to trumpet universal values from Washington is likely to be resented more than it was in the past. Presidents such as Wilson or Reagan were able to bring the world along with them because the world was far more afraid of the alternative. But

now there is no alternative: there is only the big, bad superpower. The saving grace is that America no longer needs to work as hard to build a world anew: that structure now exists. Washington simply has to back it up.

Bush himself said it best during his campaign in 2000: "Our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power. And that's why we've got to be humble and yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom. ... If we are an arrogant nation, they'll view us that way, but if we're a humble nation, they'll respect us." The mystery is why the Bush administration now thinks it must carry a big stick and speak loudly at the same time—why it feels it must declare its values "non-negotiable." That only turns one into the schoolyard bully. And bullies always have their comeuppance.

#### A NEW CONSENSUS

THERE IS a middle choice between the squishy globalism that the Bush sovereigntists despise and the take-it-or-leave-it unilateralism they offer up as an alternative. A new international consensus, built on a common vision of the international system, is possible. In today's world, American military and economic dominance is a decisive factor and must be maintained—as the right believes—but mainly to be the shadow enforcer of the international system Americans have done so much to create in the last century, in which the left places much of its trust. It is this international system and its economic and political norms that again must do the groundwork of keeping order and peace: deepening the ties that bind nations together; coopting failed states such as Afghanistan, potential rogues, and "strategic competitors"; and isolating, if not destroying, terrorists. As Henry Kissinger wrote, "the dominant trend in American foreign-policy thinking must be to transform power into consensus so that the international order is based on agreement rather than reluctant acquiescence." Or, as Senator Chuck Hagel, a Republican increasingly critical of the administration, recently summed it up, "We need friends."

In terms of practical policy, it is never easy to find the right mix of unilateralism and multilateralism to make this work. Washington must strike the proper balance, warning the world that it will permit

no other power to challenge America without being overbearing about it, and reassuring the world of America's essential benignness without encouraging the idea that it has gone "soft" or will withdraw. Achieving this will be a task of long-term, assiduous diplomacy requiring "the virtuosity of a Bismarck to pull it off," in the words of Washington analyst Andrew Krepinevich.

It will also require some political sacrifice. The peculiarity of American foreign policy is that it must be sold to the American people. And unilateralism is so much easier to sell and conceptually so much cleaner than multilateralism. The benefits are immediate: a strong image for the president, higher poll ratings, and in Bush's case, preserving a conservative base. But the costs are long-term and diffuse: the threat of WMD slipping through, the distant notion that Europe or China may start to oppose U.S. hegemony decades hence, the degree-by-degree warming of the globe. As for multilateralism, on the other hand, its benefits are long-term and diffuse for the same reasons and its costs immediate: an image of compromise and weakness, which is something no American president likes, especially when fighting a war.

But American presidents, Bush included, must bite the bullet (or the ballot) and accept this consummate responsibility, even if it costs them some votes. That blithe Cold War description, "leader of the free world," must be restored and broadened. If America wants to maintain its primacy, direct, if not constitutional, responsibility for the entire global system must be written into the job description of every American president. In practical terms, Bush must talk forthrightly about the international system that benefits all; he must systematically support its institutions even if he does not always agree with them; and he must dwell somewhat less on what is purely good for "America."

As is well known, Woodrow Wilson died an embittered failure, even though his ideas later became what Kissinger called "the bedrock" of U.S. foreign policy in the twentieth century. Before September 11, some scholars, such as Frank Ninkovich, had declared the usefulness of "the Wilsonian century" over. Wilsonianism was "crisis internationalism," Ninkovich wrote in 1999, and the post-Cold War world return to normalcy, "provided the occasion for dispensing with [Wilsonian policies] altogether." Well, now the world has a crisis again.

And it may be Wilson, the first president to actively internationalize American values, whose ideas are needed most in the war on terror—even if they must be applied in a different way.

This is not the view of George W. Bush's Washington, of course—though more and more Bush officials are finding it useful to invoke that loaded term “international community.” Indeed, the Bush team is most focused on the political winds blowing from its right. Some conservative pundits began calling last September for an even greater assertiveness abroad than Bush was willing to impose. They sought to establish an American empire that would, like traditional imperial powers, invade foreign lands according to its unilateral whim, all with the aim of keeping Americans safe.

But it is simply not in America's national DNA to impose a new Pax Romana. The United States is a nation whose very reason for existence is to maximize freedom (exceptionalism again). And in any case the pursuit of empire is a prescription for certain failure: every great empire in history, no matter how enduring, has fallen eventually to its own hubris, having built up a tide of resentment among its subjects or enemies. The United States is doing that already just by occasionally veering too far into unilateralism. The only practical solution is to bolster the international community to which, as Powell said upon his nomination as secretary of state, the United States is “attached by a thousand cords.” 🌐