

THE LIMITS TO HEGEMONY
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS
AND WAR IN IRAQ

'No society has more firmly insisted on the inadmissibility of intervention in the domestic affairs of other states, or more passionately asserted that its own values were universally applicable.'

Henry Kissinger

'Of course, terrorism and instability are the reverse face of empire.'

Norman Mailer¹

'America is unique in time and space', Joseph Joffe has very recently proclaimed: 'the suite of its interests, the weight of its resources and the margin of its usable power are unprecedented'. Discussion of 'unipolarity' and references to the US as a unique super-power – a hyper-power – today usually predicates assessment of its rapidly expanding international presence. In the words of the French foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, US 'power and influence are not comparable to anything known in modern history'. The implications of the 'new' American empire are now widely debated – despite Niall Ferguson's surprising claim that it is an empire that 'does not speak its name'. Ferguson writes that modern America is 'an empire in denial'; an empire 'that does not recognise its own power'. Yet America's imperial reach is widely recognised abroad. It is generally perceived as an exceptional empire rooted in unrivalled economic power, military authority, technological strength, and cultural appeal: an empire uniquely able to project both 'hard power' and 'soft power'. The US has never been more powerful, or more willing to engage internationally. Yet this ubiquitous global presence inevitably provokes deep resistances and escalates international divisions as it confronts an unstable global order.²

American authority is unprecedented – even if, as in the Cold War, the exercise of this power is ultimately circumscribed. It has become routine to speak of imperial America, although it is usually conceded even by its sternest critics that the US is not a conventional territorial empire. In Michael Ignatieff's words: '[the US] is the only nation that polices the world through five global military commands; maintains more than a million men and women at arms on four continents; deploys carrier battle groups on watch in every ocean; guarantees the survival of countries from Israel to South Korea; drives the wheels of global trade and commerce; and fills the hearts and minds of an entire planet with its dreams and desires.'³ Announcing the 'new era' in US national security strategy in December 2002, the State Department noted routinely: 'Today the US enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence' (and, in language consistent of official claims in the American Century it added: 'we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage'). The Bush Doctrine articulated in response to the September 11 attacks put unilateralism at the very centre of American policy: it unambiguously asserted that 'the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others'.⁴

The nature and impact of terrorism since September 11, 2001, express radical changes in international politics. These are rooted in the globalisation of communications and militarism: globalisation has simultaneously made the world's people and regions interdependent and precipitated new fault lines of conflict. In this newly complex international environment, conventional great power supremacy does not guarantee security

at home or supremacy abroad. Despite the unprecedented asymmetry of state power today, the internationalising of new technologies has given radical political groups and so-called rogue states unprecedented – and largely unanticipated – capacities to wage terror campaigns across national borders. William Greider has written in *Fortress America: The American Military and the Consequences of Peace*, that a ‘deadly irony is embedded in the potential of these new technologies’ in information technology and weaponry: Smaller, poorer nations may be able to defend themselves on the cheap against the intrusion of America’s overwhelming military strength’ and invoke terrorism against civilian targets.⁵ Thus as September 11 demonstrated, all states are vulnerable regardless of their military power. The inconclusive war in Afghanistan, along with the aftermath of the assault against Iraq, highlight the ambiguous results arising from the exercise of unilateral power in the current unstable and unpredictable global environment. Although militarily successful in the short-term in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States continues to shoulder the obligations of an occupying power responsible for ‘nation building’ in deeply factionalised and unstable non-Western societies. At the same time, its very military presence and efforts to impose political order invite charges of American imperialism and stimulate anti-Americanism. In short, American intervention threatens to aggravate the very circumstances ostensibly responsible for breeding terrorist assaults against it. However unpalatable to opinion in the US or the West, the identification of America as a ‘rogue superpower’ resonates with many in the so-called Arab or Islamic world, and with large numbers of its critics everywhere. US political interventions abroad – especially those without broad multilateral support – threaten to deepen resistance to American policies and to intensify what Chalmers Johnson and others have labelled ‘blowback’ – violent retaliation against America’s military actions and global cultural presence.⁶ More broadly, the implicit (and at times, explicit) embrace of a rhetoric of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, or a ‘clash of civilisations’ model to explain terrorism or rationalise responses to it, can only deepen the obstacles to agreed international action in a world divided very differently from that of the Cold War era.

The September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and the Pentagon provoked a chorus of anguished observations that the world and America had changed, utterly, and could never be the same again.⁷ Certainly the nature of the attacks and the televised spectacle they presented were unique. They suggested to many that international conflict between organized states pursuing traditional national interests had been replaced by random terrorist acts – acts linked by fundamentalist ideology and deep resentments against Western and American hegemony in the modern world. September 11 starkly symbolized the vulnerability of the United States – and other Western states – to a new type of warfare. And it confronted them with an elusive and ill-defined enemy against which to retaliate. September 11 suggested that the nature of terrorism had changed. However, precedents are evident in numerous terrorist actions against US and Western interests from the late 1970s. And, as Peter Rogers and others have correctly pointed out that: ‘the methodology and scale of Islamic anti-American violence changed, but the shift was incremental, not fundamental. How quickly the 1993 attack on the World Trade Centre seems to have been forgotten.’⁸

Initially, Washington’s response was considered as it downplayed unilateralism and successfully enlisted European (and Australian) support for a multilateral war against terror. For the first time since its formation NATO invoked Article V of its Charter displaying – briefly – unprecedented solidarity with its surprisingly vulnerable major partner, the United States. However this unity was short-lived. To the surprise and consternation of most of its allies, the United States response did not embrace patient diplomacy or employ genuine multilateralism as it attempted to defeat the Taliban and eradicate al-Qa’ida.⁹

In his 2002 State of the Union address, Bush independently identified the new enemy of the West as an ‘Axis of Evil’ comprising Iraq, Iran and North Korea. No longer could US

policy be defined as a retaliatory response to specific terrorist threats linked directly to al-Qa'ida. Now, 'rogue states' – those which harboured terrorists or were developing weapons of mass destruction – were joined in administration rhetoric as imminent threats to global order and American security. Washington's 'new thinking' on international relations now explicitly incorporated unapologetic unilateralism, 'pre-emptive' strikes and military intervention abroad to achieve so-called 'regime change' and protect America's global interests. It would be misleading to overstate the revolutionary nature of the new Bush foreign policy doctrine, just as it would be misleading to exaggerate the long-term consequences of September 11 on global affairs. While it departed radically, at least in explicit intent, from the reactive international compromises of the Clinton years, the roots and precedents of the Bush doctrine lie in the often frustrated exercise of America's pre-eminent power throughout the postwar years. More immediately, the keystones of the doctrine were evident before September 11. This 'new' direction was most bluntly expressed by the influential columnist and advisor, Charles Krauthammer before the Twin Towers shock: 'The new unilateralism seeks to strengthen American power and unashamedly deploy it on behalf of self-defined global ends'. In the late 1990s, well before September 11, 2001, the very neo-conservatives who have become so influential in the Bush administration identified the removal of Saddam Hussein as vital to US interests.¹⁰ The Bush Doctrine is widely interpreted as expressing the long-frustrated ideas of the so-called neo conservatives in his administration and those linked to 'The Project for the New American Century' – notably Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, William Kristol, and Lawrence F. Kaplan. However, its origins can also be traced to the greatly expanded non-combative role of the American military since the end of the Cold War and the decline of the State Department as the principal source of international policy. 'The US government has grown increasingly dependent on its military to carry out its foreign affairs', Dana Priest has concluded recently in her study, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military*: 'The shift was incremental, little-noticed, de-facto....the military simply filled a vacuum left by an indecisive White House, an atrophied State Department, and a distracted Congress.'¹¹ The 'War on Terror', 'pre-emptive war', 'regime change', the 'shock and awe' campaign in Iraq are public slogans which reflect this fundamental shift. Even the burdens of 'nation building' embraced (at least rhetorically) by the Bush administration are understood primarily in terms of military occupation rather than political security or economic stability.

The 'set of convictions that came to dominate' the Bush Doctrine, Samuel (Sandy) Berger has observed recently, are starkly obvious: 'That the requirements of US national security profoundly have changed. That in a Hobsian world, American power, particularly military power, is the central force for positive change; that it is more important to be feared than admired; that 'root cause' is dangerous, moral relativism: evil is evil and can never be justified.'¹² In the period before the Iraq war, the Administration exhibited absolute confidence in America's massive military advantage. At the same time it exhibited a remarkable willingness to promote American values as universally appropriate and to assert that national interests must be protected regardless of the impact on anti-Americanism or damage to old alliances and relationships.

Despite initial military success against the Taliban, the so-called 'War on Terror' has done little to enhance American security. Osama Bin Laden has not been captured or his influence reduced. Al-Qa'ida has not been destroyed. Terrorist attacks against 'Western' or American targets continue. It is now more than eighteen months since the Northern Alliance and US troops drove the Taliban from power. But security beyond the perimeter of Kabul has not been established; warlordism, opium production and Taliban elements have re-emerged; chronic levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy remain endemic – the conditions

which sustain the very terrorism Washington understandably seeks to eliminate. Amnesty International estimates that more than sixty percent of the country remains chronically unstable. Most observers agree that the Taliban is again influential and that the US-led force of more than 11,000 and the international security assistance force of about 5,000 are simply incapable of demobilising the factions which brutally control this desperate region. Thus it could be argued that the first stage of the War on Terror has not been won. Washington must refocus on Afghanistan's reconstruction and more successfully wage war on terrorist groups in Afghanistan's south and east along the border with Pakistan. Regardless of how successfully the War on Terror is fought on other fronts it can not be won until a viable central government can exert genuine authority over a cohesive Afghanistan. Expressed more broadly, the United States must (re)define its interests in Afghanistan, reinvigorate its nation building efforts, and match both its strategic and humanitarian goals with the required resources.

The attempts by the Bush administration to overthrow the Taliban and destroy al-Qa'ida were justified and appropriate initial responses to the attacks of September 11. Yet Washington's broader campaign in Afghanistan was misconceived. By rejecting collaboration with NATO, Washington signalled its reluctance to share responsibility for the War on Terror. Terrorism is a global phenomenon that requires broad international solutions. The assault on terrorism, and the conditions which sustain it, require agreed, long-term, multilateral cooperation. If such initiatives are identified with unilateralist American ambitions or interpreted as reflecting the Pentagon's military hubris, they run the risk of compounding anti-Americanism and encouraging terrorism. Washington's efforts to justify the invasion of Iraq as somehow linked to September 11 and the spread of WMDs to the rogue Iraq regime alienated many important states initially committed to the US-led response to terrorism internationally. It is now public knowledge that when President Bush publicly authorised war in Afghanistan he privately directed that the Pentagon begin planning for war against Saddam Hussein's regime.¹³ By moving precipitously against Iraq on grounds widely considered spurious by most of its allies and enemies alike, the Bush administration greatly damaged its efforts to construct a lasting alliance against terrorism. At the same time the continuing chaos in Afghanistan and Iraq have brutally exposed the limits of American unilateralism.

By broadening its war on terror to include regime change in Iraq, the US has exacerbated friction with its allies; compromised its anti-terrorist campaigns, elevated the risks of 'blowback', including further terrorist attacks against it and its allies; and compromised its support for agreed norms of international law. Military action against the government harbouring al-Qa'ida was widely accepted as appropriate and just. In contrast, Washington's strained efforts to justify war against Iraq suggested that the Bush regime reserved the right to employ military force selectively in pursuit of short-term national interests. War against Iraq expressed most forcefully the doctrine of unilateral pre-emptive action and intervention which underpinned America's wider foreign policy ambitions.

'An honest intelligence assessment would have raised questions about why we were going after a country that hadn't attacked us', Paul Krugman has observed bitterly: 'it would also have suggested the strong possibility that an invasion of Iraq would hurt, not help, US security.'¹⁴ Additionally, the Iraq adventure and Washington's inconsistent attempts to justify it have greatly weakened the integrity of the Bush administration and damaged the reputation of the intelligence on which its foreign policy is built. Future actions in the War on Terror will be more difficult to justify to a sceptical public both at home and abroad. Events centred on Iraq suggest that neo-conservative ideological preoccupations overshadowed the rational evaluation and pursuit of American interests. It is to be hoped that this situation is not repeated – that more reasonable and reasoned policies will guide future US action.

Alternatives to unilateral action against repressive or failed regimes might be developed through the UN or through a broad coalition of democratic states. Collective efforts to limit violence in Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor suggest that intervention and even regime change can be justified on human rights grounds or when civil violence threatens regional peace and security.

The reconstruction of Iraq presents major challenges for current US policy. These are not restricted to the need to ensure military order and political stability or to sow the seeds of economic recovery. Budgetary difficulties at home might ultimately pose even greater challenges to the United States than those on the ground in Iraq, or Afghanistan. The costs of military occupations and nation-building have already exposed the limits of American power. With 160,000 troops in Iraq and more than 11,000 still in Afghanistan, the costs of winning peace are starkly evident. The US budget has moved from a surplus of \$240 billion in 2000 to a deficit of \$455 billion in 2003. It is estimated that the cost of war and reconstruction in Iraq will be at least \$50 billion and perhaps as much as \$100 billion. In the view of many observers the United States is already showing signs of 'imperial overreach'. Clearly there are limits to the exercise of America's 'hard power'. It appears that the Bush Doctrine will be vigorously invoked only against Iraq: other options, based on shared military responsibility and shared costs, now have a renewed appeal in Washington.

US policy in postwar Iraq is flawed. The longer it takes to establish stability and orderly governance, the greater its failure. If the United States is to share responsibility for a defeated Iraq it must demonstrate that it does not seek a prolonged occupation or special rewards from the war and occupation. Criticisms stemming from within the UN and indeed the US suggest a way forward. 'There was an overwhelming demand for the early restoration of sovereignty', a UN special envoy found in July 2003, and 'the message was conveyed [by the Iraqi people] that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside'. Short term changes have been demanded by US senators returning from a fact finding mission in June 2003. Influential Democrat Senator Joe Biden argued: 'We need to get more troops in. They need to be more effective. We need to take a look at how we get more NATO forces in.' More surprising, leading Republican Richard Lugar supported Biden's appeal: 'we need the help of our allies in Europe and we need the help on the United Nations.'¹⁵ There is little agreement within either NATO or the UN on the allocation of responsibility for postwar Iraq. However, it is crucial that long terms programs for recovery and stability – especially those linked to the distribution of oil revenues – be sanctioned by the UN and accepted by the Iraqi people.

Despite its inability to win broad multi-lateral support or UN approval for invading Iraq, the United States should nonetheless encourage a significant UN involvement in the occupation and transition to representative government. UN involvement should be underwritten by Security Council resolution, and include a special UN representative to work with, and replace, current US leadership to establish a legitimate civilian government. As the *Washington Post* cautioned in April 2003 the US cannot rebuild Iraq 'by wilfully excluding Europe, the United Nations or Iraqis not of its choosing'.¹⁶ Washington's profound difficulties over Iraq demonstrate that it needs to be less willing to wage war and more willing to wage peace; that it needs to be more willing to share responsibility for the painstaking and often frustrating task of reducing violence and promoting civil stability in areas that come under its control as it pursues its War Against Terror.

Current events in Liberia – and for Liberia read any number of unstable post-colonial states – ironically underline Washington's reluctance to wield its massive power without UN-sanctioned support or to become involved in the messy affairs of any 'failed' state. Despite its 'special relationship' with Liberia the Bush administration offered little more than verbal encouragement to those seeking to remove its brutal leader. It is not just the humiliating memories of Somalia a decade ago that feeds America's reluctance to intervene: rather recent

events indicate that intervention, regime change, and nation-building are expensive, inconclusive, and often counter-productive. And it is now unlikely that even so-called 'rogue states' possessing or planning the development of WMDs will be targets of any future application of the Bush Doctrine.

The US has no formal diplomatic relations with Iran – although it obviously has extensive bilateral covert contacts with it. Washington has sought openly to stop sales of military technology to Iran by North Korea, China and Russia. Washington has routinely charged that Tehran supports terrorism – especially Hezbollah, and Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad; that Tehran is aggressively developing WMDs, including nuclear weapons and delivery systems; and that Tehran is willing to transfer its advanced weapons technology to terrorist groups. Iran, more than Iraq, fits Bush's description of a rogue state able and willing to supply weapons of mass destruction to terrorists. The spectre of such rogue actions has shaped American policy since September 11 (even if its intelligence capacity has failed to demonstrate the nature or dimensions of this threat). In Bush's much repeated words, this possibility is 'the greatest danger facing America and the world'.¹⁷

After Iraq, the enemies of the US might be silenced – at least temporarily. The Bush administration is unlikely to attack Iran, North Korea, or Syria. It is possible that the example of Iraq will reduce support for terrorism and slow the acquisition of WMDs in perceived 'hostile states', including Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. It is also possible that the aftermath of Iraq will be a prolonged occupation and factionalised violence, accompanied by a continuing cycle of international terrorism and retaliation.

The overt rationale offered for war in Iraq highlighted deep-seated issues embedded in nuclear weapons proliferation. As more states acquire a nuclear weapons capacity the probability of terrorism employing WMDs grows. Thus efforts to restrain the further development or spread of nuclear weapons or weapons technology have resurfaced as central issues in international politics. Today four nations remain outside the NPT (non-proliferation treaty) – Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea. The war on Iraq was justified (rhetorically at least) as an overdue attempt to limit the spread of nuclear weapons technologies to non-complying (rogue) states. In future, the US may have to return to consensus-building on this issue, using old-fashioned multilateralism and UN-sanctioned accord to constrain further proliferation of WMDs.

The nuclear option is disturbingly attractive, at least at a policy level, to the Bush administration. Four months before September 11 Bush declared that 'Nuclear weapons still have a vital role to play in our security and that of our allies'. Preparing for war with Iraq, Bush went further declaring that 'the United States will continue to make it clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force – to the use of WMDs against the United States'. His administration's Nuclear Posture Review reactivated research and development into nuclear weapons. More broadly, the US has refused to ratify the 1996 Comprehensive Test ban Treaty; and has ignored the crucial Article Six of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which obliges the five officially-recognised nuclear powers to negotiate the reduction (and elimination) of nuclear weapons. 'The Bush administration', George Perkovich of the Carnegie Endowment has charged, 'essentially favours a strategy of repeated regime change plus a large, steadily modernising nuclear arsenal'.¹⁸

Given decades of successful 'containment', despite nuclear proliferation, it is remarkable that US policy doctrine now implies that possession of WMDs (or planning for such weapons) by so-called 'rogue states' is sufficient to justify war against that state. Indeed, current strategic doctrine suggests that Washington may take pre-emptive military steps before WMDs are developed or to deter a state from developing such weapons. At the same time the Bush administration has repudiated the established nuclear non-proliferation regime. Thus it could be argued that US policy has accelerated attempts to acquire such weapons and

aggravated the current crisis over North Korea. The contradictory and potentially devastating outcomes of current policy should be acknowledged, especially as the impasse over North Korea has dramatically raised the stakes of such a radical shift in US policy. Internationalism, not militarism, must be invoked to manage issues embedded in the development and proliferation of WMDs. To cite Stanley Hoffman again: 'There is no substitute for a policy of concerted diplomatic pressure exerted by the UN and of collective, and selective, measures of coercion. These range from much stronger international controls on imported technologies to more intrusive inspections than in the past. They could ultimately include the use of force under international auspices against nuclear power plants that are being built or operated. This means a reinforcement, not – as Bush proposes – a repudiation, of the present nuclear non-proliferation regime.'¹⁹ Second order diplomacy must be exhaustively pursued; collective initiatives must be employed; rewards for compliance might be proffered. The US should join such initiatives even if they are all UN-sanctioned, and it should indicate its 'good international citizenship' by accepting non-proliferation arguments and limitations on its nuclear arsenal.

America's War on Terror revealed – starkly – the decline of Western European solidarity with Washington – solidarity so assured during the decades of Cold War. No solid geopolitical axis of Western states exists today, and little agreement is evident about the extent or nature of the threat of terrorism. The geographical centre of conflict – both cultural and military – is no longer Europe, but the Middle East or the Arab world. The fault lines that divide the world are increasingly cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic, rooted in complex histories of colonised peoples struggling for recognition in an ostensibly post-imperial world. And if many Arab/Muslim states and people are hostile to America's overreaching global authority, significant sections of Europe are variously reluctant to endorse American leadership in global affairs.

Not surprisingly, military intervention in Iraq has accelerated Washington's efforts to promote the so-called 'road map' for settling the intractable Palestine-Israel question. Washington and its allies now accept that progress here is vital if broad Islamic and Arab resentment over the occupied territories is to be addressed. The need for a just settlement which includes a 'viable' Palestine has apparently been accepted. Installation of the moderate Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian Prime Minister and agreed restraint on both sides, have provided a window of diplomatic opportunity which Washington must exploit. In endorsing the current revitalised peace initiative *The Sydney Morning Herald* correctly observed: '[I]f Mr Bush steers a settlement, he may well find other Middle East pieces fall more or less evenly into place. Without settlement, the prospects of enduring peace across the region, or containing terrorist ambitions across the globe, are remote indeed.'²⁰

Thus the United States must again become involved in an urgent and genuine search for peace between Israel and the peoples of Palestine. Washington's perceived double-standard on UN resolutions relating to Iraq and Israel highlights the need for an even-handed US role in the Middle East. The recently released 'road map' for peace and reduced violence suggests progress is not impossible. Crucially, the reception given American policy generally in the Arab world hinges as much on the intractable Palestinian issues as on individual American actions in Iraq or on US policies towards Iran. And, as widely acknowledged in recent months, anti-Americanism and the sources of terrorism are embedded in the Palestinian perception that Israel enjoys a 'special relationship' with Washington that sanctions the routine suppression of the rights of Palestinians. Peace in the Middle East, and an easing of anti-American extremism, cannot be realised unless both Israel and Palestine are separately independent and secure.

'The Europeans simply no longer agree with the US. They don't agree about the terrorist threat. They don't think Osama bin Laden is a global menace. They don't take Washington's

view of rogue states. They don't agree about pre-emptive war, clash of civilisations, the demonisation of Islam, or Pentagon domination of US foreign policy. Such views are interpreted in the United States as "anti-Americanism".²¹ Iraq and the War on Terror heralded a new international landscape where established formal alliances carried little weight and temporary alliances were joined to wage or support war. 'We are witnessing a sea change vis-à-vis everything that has been built up since World War II', Francois Heisbourg claimed as the UN struggled with the Iraq issue: 'This is the new America. It does not have permanent alliances, it has partners of convenience. It's now the mission that determines the coalition.'⁸ The 'Coalition of the Willing' is not a permanent alliance, but an immediate response to a perceived crisis. US isolation from its traditional allies as it prepared for war against Iraq was evident in its failure to enlist strong support in the UN, or from regional friends like Mexico, Canada and Chile. More broadly, traditional friends and allies in NATO have complained that defeat of the Taliban has 'reinforced some dangerous instincts' in US foreign policy, 'that the projection of military power is the only basis of security; that the US can rely on no-one but itself; and that allies may be useful only as an official extra'.²² Differences between Washington and its allies over Iraq hinged largely on disquiet over the precedent of 'regime change' which the forced removal of Saddam Hussein established. Many of the nations that refused to join the 'Coalition of the Willing' argued, in effect, that invasion of Iraq was the wrong war, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reasons. Yet it would be premature to assume that the pragmatic and factionalised international responses to US plans for Iraq imply a permanent change in alliance politics. Since the end of the Cold War international relations have become increasingly fluid; alliances and cooperation often issue-specific. Moreover, the 'new America' observed by Heisbourg now shows signs that it recognises the importance of conventional alliances, shared international responsibilities and routine diplomacy. (This is particularly evident in US efforts to negotiate broadly over North Korea and Iraq and to publicly value the role of the UN and traditional allies in the War on Terror and postwar Iraq).

A fundamental lesson of the Cold War is that the policies of containment and deterrence directed against conventional state regimes need not fail. Washington now appears to accept this dictum in relation to North Korea; but it rejected the view that a strategy of deterrence was appropriate against Iraq. While deterrence is not an effective policy against non-state actors, like al-Qa'ida, it must remain an attractive option to the US in its dealings with conventional states. And, deterrence backed by multi-level diplomacy, is capable of fostering genuine coalitions of willing allies – even if this willingness is crisis-specific and does not extend to supporting pre-emptive strikes, or preventive war, or regime change.

Ironically, as Washington manufactured its reasons for war in Iraq, the nuclear threat posed by North Korea was real, immediate and growing. Pyongyang possesses chemical and biological weapons; it continues to develop its nuclear weapons capability; and it exports weapons, equipment and contraband. In contrast, the so-called nuclear threat posed by Iraq was neither concrete nor imminent. Iran also poses a far more tangible nuclear-related threat than did Iraq. Thus the US-led invasion of Iraq highlighted fundamental contradictions in its efforts to deal with the self-proclaimed 'Axis of Evil'. The (very narrow) 'Coalition of the Willing' was arguably able to take action against Iraq because that state did not possess a viable nuclear weapons program, or a dangerous capacity to retaliate militarily to forced 'regime change'. Thus Iraq has exposed the limited options confronting the US in its efforts to deal with any rogue nation that actually possesses a threatening nuclear weapons (WMDs) capacity. The doctrine of pre-emptive intervention is impotent against states possessing a significant military capacity and WMDs. Moreover, the Bush Doctrine and the invasion of Iraq have arguably stimulated further development of nuclear weapons programs in both North Korea and Iran.

Concerns with destabilising issues ranging from Islamic fundamentalism to nuclear proliferation are shared by all major powers, including Russia, India, China and Japan. By naming North Korea in the Axis of Evil the Bush administration has belatedly felt obliged to re-emphasise the importance of broad regional cooperation, and bilateral collaboration with China. Anticipating a shift in Sino-American relations conditioned by September 11, Avery Goldstein has argued that Washington should mute its concerns over human rights, Taiwan, and China's regional ambitions in order to promote it as a strategic partner opposed to terrorism. Bush declared immediately after the al-Qa'ida attacks that the US and China 'can accomplish a lot when we work together to fight terrorism'.²³ More recently, China has played a crucial role in mediating with North Korea. This has reduced the expression of bilateral differences over Taiwan. Nonetheless, the Taiwan issue remains unresolved and potentially very dangerous. The US remains adamant that Taiwan cannot be reincorporated forcefully into China, while China reserves the right to use force to reintegrate Taiwan.

While Bush has proclaimed that the US can 'not tolerate' a nuclear-armed North Korea, and re-iterated that states developing WMDs will 'be confronted', Pyongyang has very publicly accelerated the development of its nuclear program. Pre-emptive military action against this member of the Axis of Evil is unlikely in the aftermath of Iraq. As Paul Kelly has perceptively observed, direct military intervention is no longer a viable option in American policy. 'Pyongyang's lesson is that imposed regime change is an option only before the rogue state has a nuclear capability,' he observed: 'Iran's lesson is that imposed regime change is not an option in a nation of reasonable size and political weight'.²⁴ To date, fortunately, brinkmanship rather than blunt confrontation has guided negotiations on the North Korean issue. Nonetheless there remains a very real threat of another war on the Korean peninsula. Washington has little choice other than to persist with efforts to find a broad-based regional solution – even as it covertly encourages Beijing to intercede directly with Pyongyang. The US can best manage its interests in the Asia-Pacific by nurturing patient, multi-layered diplomacy, regional consultation, and shared responsibility for agreed action to resolve specific problems. The current six-power negotiations centred on North Korea are an overdue step towards engaged multilateralism. It is to be hoped that these discussions serve as a successful model for future US efforts in crisis resolution.

Unilateralism, even without military adventures abroad, risks alienating allies, exacerbating anti-Americanism and provoking retaliatory militarism and weapons development. It provokes the spectre of a superpower jealously pursuing its separate interests without regard for interests shared with either friends or enemies. Nor does leadership of so-called coalitions of the willing erase concern with unilateralism. Indeed, Washington's clumsy efforts to enlist such a coalition for war in Iraq provoked a deep schism within Europe and NATO. And belated attempts to embrace the UN or multilateral peace-keeping after an America-led military victory are widely seen as cynical and self-interested attempts to defray the costs of 'nation building' without compromising US interests. Germany and India, for example, have both indicated willingness to join a UN operation in post-Saddam Iraq, but the US actions since September 11 have alienated many within the UN and undermined co-operation with or through the UN.

Unilateralism and pre-emptive strikes threaten to bring greater instability to world affairs and even greater disrespect for established conventions in international relations. Walter Russell-Meade, of the Council of Foreign Relations in New York, expressed a now widely held view when he claimed, as Bush sought to enlist a willing coalition to invade Iraq: 'We are headed for a tumultuous century and, if the UN's rule is reduced there will be no international structure to keep the peace.'²⁵ Other commentators argue that in an age of terror and diminished internationalism the United States and its close allies should join a 'global covenant to raise the UN to a radically higher level of integrity and effectiveness'.²⁶ While

this appears an unlikely development it is nonetheless important that the Bush administration support international efforts to establish a more just and equal international community. Its refusal to join the International Criminal Court; its reluctance to ratify the Kyoto Protocols establishing environmental safeguards; its fluctuating support for the UN; and its recent decision to fast-track research and development on low-yield nuclear weapons, have undermined its international appeal as a liberal society and a 'good international citizen'. To cite Hoffman again: 'In foreign policy, following norms of self-restraint and international law and institutions can augment the real power of a strong country even if such norms curb the harshest uses of military power'.²⁷

The Bush administration's current policies overstate America's ability to effectively exercise its 'hard power' and undervalue the need to share responsibility to promote international order. While confident of the preponderance of its military authority, US policies explicitly seek to universalise 'a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests' – values defined as human dignity, liberty, and justice, principles 'right and true for all people everywhere'. Evelyn Goh has perceptively concluded – before America's current difficulties in Iraq were evident – that a strategy built on military supremacy, assertive intervention to protect national interests, and expansive ideological ambitions 'can be expected to exacerbate existing problems'.²⁸ The direction of American foreign policy, along with the extreme ideological rationale given publicly for it, must change if the roots of international instability and violence are to be successfully addressed.

NOTES

1. Kissinger, in P. Walters, 'Brute Force', *The Weekend Australian*, 15-16 March 2003; Mailer, 'Only in America', *New York Review of Books*, 27 March 2003, p. 51.
2. Joffe, 'Gulliver Unbound: Can America Rule the World?', *CIS Occasional Paper 85*, 5 August 2003, pp. 1-5; Ferguson in Flachra Gibbons, 'US "Is An Empire in Denial"', *The Guardian*, 2 June 2003; Védrine, cited in Joffe, op. cit.
3. Ignatieff, in Mailer, op. cit., p. 51. See also Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*, Boston, 2002.
4. Bush, 20 September, 2002, in US Department of State, *US National Security Strategy: A New Era*, 7: 4, Preface.
5. Grieder, cited in Douglas Kellner, *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy*, Lanham, 2003, p. 43.
6. Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2000. The term 'blowback' originated in US military strategic planning documents.
7. Fox Television labelled its commemorative coverage *The Day America Changed*; CBS called its program *The Day That Changed America*.
8. Peter Rodgers, 'Words and War', *The Weekend Australian*, 7-8 September 2003.
9. For a balanced discussion of European responses and the rapid evaporation of multilateral support for the United States, see Tony Judt, 'Its Own Worst Enemy', *The New York Review of Books*, XLIX: 13, 15 August, 2002, pp. 12-17.
10. Charles Krauthammer, 'The New Unilateralism', *The Washington Post*, 8 June 2001, cited in Judt, 'Its Own Worst Enemy', op. cit. For a discussion of US planning towards Iraq before September 11, see Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, New York, 2003.
11. Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace With America's Military*, New York, 2003, in *New York Review of Books*, 27 March 2003, p. 19. See also, for contrasting

analysis of the role of military primacy in American policy: 'Doomed to Fail: America's Blind Faith in Military Technology', *Parameters*, 13, Winter 2002-03; US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'Joint Vision 2020: America's Military, Preparing for Tomorrow', at www.dtic.mil/jv2020/index.html. For details of this group's influential proposals, see, for example, W. Kristol and R. Kagan, *Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, Washington DC, Project for the American Century, 2000, and R. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York, 2003.

12. Samuel R. Berger, 'Power and Authority: America's Path Ahead', The Brookings Institution, *Brookings Leadership Forum*, 17 June 2003 at www.brook.edu/comm/events/20030617berger.htm.

13. See Note 10, above.

14. Paul Krugman, 'Pattern of Corruption', *The New York Times*, 15 July 2003.

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19. Hoffman, 'America Goes to Baghdad', *The New York Review of Books*, L: 10, 12 June 2003, p. 78.

20. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Editorial, 16 April 2003.

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22. Heisbourg, in Patrick Walters, 'Brute Force', *The Australian*, 15-16 March 2003; Martin Walker, 'Power Prevails...', *The Australian*, 26 March 2003.

23. Goldstein, Bush, in Nicholas Khoo and Michael L. Smith, 'The Future of American Hegemony in the Asia-Pacific', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 56: 1, pp. 65-81.

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25. Walter Russell-Meade in Geoff Kitney et.al., 'The Great Gamble', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15-16 March 2003.

26. See Paul Monk, 'On the Brink of Irrelevance', *The Diplomat*, April-May 2003, pp. 24-25.

27. Hoffman, 'America Goes to Baghdad', op. cit.

28. US National Security Strategy 2002 cited in E. Goh, 'Hegemonic Constraints: The Implications of 11 September for American Power', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 57: 1, April 2003, p. 92.

"In many corners of the world, hotbeds of military confrontation persist, people are dying every day. As a rule, it takes a coordinated legal assessment of a situation by the UN Security Council to understand who is right and who is wrong, who is the aggressor and who is the victim. Otherwise in the era of fake news, falsification of facts, and hybrid warfare there is the risk that black would be presented as white, unlawful as legitimate, and true facts would be buried behind catchy TV images and social media posts", Medvedev says in the article. Washington also insisted on the mandatory participation of China in the agreement, which Beijing has already rejected, stressing its nuclear arsenal is very small in comparison to the US and Russia. Failed States in Post-Soviet Expanse. No society has more firmly insisted on the inadmissibility of intervention in the domestic affairs of other states, or more passionately asserted that its own values were universally applicable. No nation has been more pragmatic in the day-to-day conduct of its diplomacy, or more ideological in the pursuit of its historic moral convictions. No country has been more reluctant to engage itself abroad even while undertaking alliances and commitments of unprecedented reach and scope. The singularities that America has ascribed to itself throughout its history have produced two contradictory attitudes: A/1236 (XII) (1957); Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty, UN Doc. A/2131 (XX) (1965 Declaration); Status of the Implementation of the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Security, UN Doc. A/Res/40/9 (1985); Economic Measures as a Means of Political and Economic Coercion against Developing Countries, UN Docs. A/25 Judge Ago expressed some surprise at the assurance with which the Court in its [Nicaragua] Judgment (para.