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Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspectives

edited by
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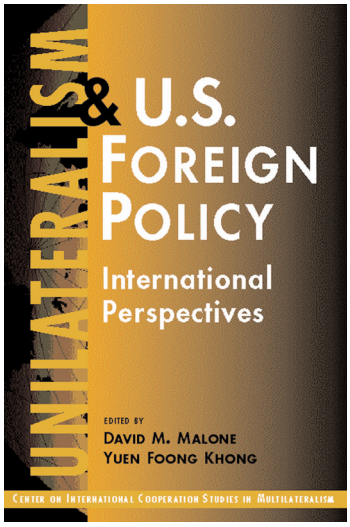

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Unilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy: International Perspectives

David M. Malone and Yuen Foong Khong

"THE UNITED STATES SERVED FORMAL NOTICE YESTERDAY THAT IT IS PULLING out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty . . . a move that clears the way for the development of its own missile defense system, but which will exacerbate fears of a new surge of American unilateralism." So goes the opening line of Rupert Cornwell's reporting of the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in December 2001. Cornwell, the respected Washington, D.C., correspondent of *The Independent* (United Kingdom), goes on to cite several other recent instances of the George W. Bush administration "going it alone": opting out of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, scuppering the tightening up of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and "refusing to ratify the statutes of the International Criminal Court of Justice."[1] The unstated premise of Cornwell's piece is that U.S. refusal to go along with the international consensus is detrimental to the general well-being of the international community.

Has there been a new surge of American unilateralism? Why is the world fearful of a United States that goes it alone? What are the consequences, for both the United States and the world, of a unilateral America? This book seeks to answer these questions. An earlier volume, also sponsored by the Center on International Cooperation of New York University, explored the same issue from a different angle: U.S. attitudes toward multilateralism.[2] The main finding of the earlier book was that the United States was profoundly ambivalent about multilateral engagement. The book also argued that at a time when the U.S. foreign policy agenda was being transformed by transnational challenges that no single country, even one possessing the unchallenged power of the United States, could resolve, this ambivalence carried serious costs for U.S. national interests and for the vitality of international institutions. The discussions and debates among the U.S. contributors that presaged these conclusions were sufficiently passionate as to suggest that a parallel investigation, this time by international scholars, about U.S. approaches to multilateralism and unilateralism would prove illuminating.

Americans are sometimes startled by the strong foreign reactions to and criticisms of its foreign policy. Although some of these criticisms are unjust, others cannot be readily dismissed. At any rate, analysis—preferably dispassionate analysis—must precede criticism. This book seeks to elucidate, for the U.S. policy community as well as for a broader global audience, the manner in which U.S. "unilateralism" is perceived abroad; some of the reactions that U.S. policies have stimulated in other countries; and the likely consequences of this dynamic for U.S. national interests and international institutions. To this end, we sought to identify several of the most significant post–Cold War international issues involving the United States and invited a set of distinguished international scholars and practitioners to explore these issues. The nationalities of our contributors are appropriately diverse, but authors were chosen for their substantive expertise on the issues they address.

In order to achieve a degree of policy relevance, we have given the book a contemporary focus. We concentrate particularly on the foreign policy record during Bill Clinton's presidency and the first year of George W. Bush's administration, although the success of the administration under his father, George H. W. Bush, in forging an impressive international coalition to address the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis has obvious relevance to our undertaking.

Definitions and Guidelines

What concerns us is the degree to which the United States, in addressing global or regional challenges, has committed itself to (or departed from) multilateral frameworks of cooperation, including working within and alongside international institutions as well as paying heed to international norms or law. In addition, we also seek to establish how other countries have perceived and responded to trends in U.S. behavior—and to probe the consequences of these dynamics for the realization of U.S. national interests and international cooperation on common global challenges.

For the purpose of this volume, "multilateralism" refers to the cooperation of three or more states in a given area of international relations. As John Ruggie has suggested, what is distinctive about this form of cooperation is the practice of coordinating relations among the parties on the basis of "generalized principles of conduct," that is, "principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence."[3] Accordingly, multilateralism is "a highly demanding institutional form";[4] it is unsurprising that great powers would find such generalized principles of conduct constraining.

Multilateral frameworks of cooperation can vary along a number of dimensions. These include their level of institutionalization, which may range

from ad hoc coalitions, to international regimes, to formal multilateral organizations; the nature of the commitments and obligations implied, whether they be voluntary, legal (in the case of treaties and conventions), ethical, or political; and their balance between egalitarianism and hierarchy—that is, whether they operate on the basis of equal treatment (like the United Nations [UN] General Assembly) or give certain privileges to their most powerful members (e.g., the UN Security Council, the World Bank, or the acknowledged leadership of the United States in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]).

"Unilateralism," by contrast, refers to a tendency to *opt out* of a multilateral framework (whether existing or proposed) or to *act alone* in addressing a particular global or regional challenge rather than choosing to participate in collective action. States opt out of a multilateral framework or act alone because they do not wish to subject themselves to the generalized principles of conduct being negotiated or enforced, or they may find such principles inimical to their national interests. We recognize, however, that there is no clear dichotomy between unilateralism and multilateralism. There are many possible gradations between the two orientations, and there may be complex situations where elements of unilateralism and multilateralism coexist. One of the central conclusions of the previous book in this series (Patrick and Forman's *Multilateralism*) was that it is not only "unilateralism" that is distinctive in U.S. foreign policy but also the frequently "ambivalent," "inconsistent," and "selective" nature of U.S. multilateralism.

With these working definitions as a point of departure, our authors were invited to write in-depth chapters that explored the balance between unilateralism and multilateralism in post–Cold War U.S. foreign policy. We asked them to begin by analyzing the recent behavior of the United States in a particular issue area (e.g., trade) or region (e.g., Africa). If they detected a trend toward or away from unilateralism, to what causes and motivations could this be attributed? What were the consequences of perceived U.S. unilateralism?

We were particularly interested in the form and consequences of U.S. action for efforts to address global challenges (e.g., nonproliferation, protection of the environment); for relations with allies and adversaries; for the strength and credibility of international regimes and institutions; and for the interests of both the United States and its international partners. We hoped, in addition, that each author would offer an opinion about whether U.S. policy had served U.S. interests or had proven counterproductive. We hoped that the resulting chapters would capture a broad range of international views about recent U.S. conduct. We left open the possibility that recent U.S. policy had been more, rather than less, multilateral than in the past and that U.S. unilateralism might sometimes have beneficial effects for U.S. national interests and/or international institutions.

We also encouraged those authors who detected a trend away from multilateralism, and who argued that this had negative consequences, to

offer an opinion as to what an "optimal" form of multilateralism might be, how the United States might have approached the issue differently, and what kind of results would have been possible in such cases. We were particularly interested in any policy implications of findings and ideas on changes in the content and style of U.S. global engagement to correct current weaknesses.

Argument

Virtually all the chapters address these questions head-on, although the emphasis varies. The answers add up to a common theme and constitute the argument of this book. In brief, it is possible to discern a trend on the part of the United States, since the late 1980s, toward unilateral action across a wide range of issues and with a variety of international implications, particularly for the partners and allies of the United States that we aim to discuss. What the earlier book characterized as "ambivalent engagement" on the multilateral front, this book interprets as growing unilateral disengagement. This difference in analysis and tone reflects the more recent focus of this book (including U.S. and international reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001), the different issue areas investigated, and the non-U.S. lens through which the investigators examined the issues. As the synopses of the individual chapters below suggest, the causes of this trend include the unchallenged power of the United States, U.S. attachment to the preservation of its sovereignty, the influence of notions of U.S. exceptionalism, and the domestic political structure of the United States. Although the reactions of other countries to this trend vary, our findings point to the sensitivity of most governments to the conduct of U.S. diplomacy, notably the willingness (or otherwise) of U.S. administrations to engage them multilaterally. When Washington has adopted multilateral approaches, as during 1990–1991 in the Persian Gulf, allies and partners have tended to meet the United States if not all the way, then at least some of the way. In contrast, an aggressively unilateralist stance has often met with international defiance (which may or may not impinge on core U.S. national interests). However, we also argue that even though recent instances of U.S. unilateral action may provide short-term gains for the United States, they act to undermine its long-term interests. When the United States opts out of international agreements that it has played a leadership role in initiating, for example, it seriously weakens the relevant regimes and hinders the prospects for greater global cooperation. These missed opportunities detract from the vitality of an increasingly connected world and make the realization of future U.S. objectives more difficult.

U.S. Unilateralism and Multilateralism Across Issue Areas

The chapters that follow analyze U.S. behavior since 1990 across a range of issue areas. The first chapter, by David Malone, provides a *tour d'horizon* of U.S. foreign policy, with special emphasis on the 1990s. It highlights the importance of U.S. sovereignty as a defining principle in U.S. dealings with others; it explores the tension between this principle and multilateralism, as well as the way these two principles worked themselves out in the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. Malone's chapter sets the stage for the sixteen chapters that follow, each assessing the extent to which the United States adopted multilateral or unilateral approaches in the given issue area. The spectrum of issues dealt with by the sixteen chapters includes: (1) *rule of law issues*; (2) *peace and security;* (3) *economics and development;* and (4) *regional policy.* The findings and arguments are as follow:

Part 1: The Rule of Law

The United States and the development of public international law. The United States, according to Nico Krisch, has historically been ambivalent about international law. The founding fathers, cognizant of the republic's relative weakness, saw international law as helpful to its security. They even viewed treaties as "the supreme Law of the Land," a view that was included in Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. But they were also extremely cautious about entering into new treaty obligations, as manifested by their writing into the constitution the requirement of a two-thirds majority in the Senate in order to ratify any treaty. Krisch argues that this ambivalence can be seen throughout the twentieth century. On the one hand, the United States took a leading role in the writing of treaties such as the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United Nations Charter, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Human Rights Covenants. On the other hand, as the histories of the League Covenant, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and Havana Charter on the International Trade Organization suggest, the United States recoiled from adhering to the far-reaching obligations of those multilateral treaties. This pattern has persisted to this day. Surveying the post–Cold War making of international law, Krisch finds a United States that continues to lead in fostering treaty negotiations; but he also finds an increased tendency on its part to opt out of the resulting treaties, usually by refusing to ratify them. The International Criminal Court (ICC), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the amended Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Convention on Biological Diversity are cases in point. For

Krisch, this pattern of behavior, which has become slightly more marked since the end of the Cold War, suggests a substantial cleavage between the U.S. role in making international law (which creates obligations for other states) and its willingness to abide by it. Krisch's analysis hones in on two themes, one explicit and one implicit, that will recur throughout this book. The first is a tendency by the United States, especially since 1990, to "establish strong legal rules for other states" while seeking for itself the right to be "exempt from or even . . . above" these rules. The second and implicit theme is that this tendency has become more marked as the United States has grown more powerful. These themes will also be found and elaborated upon in many of the following chapters.

The International Criminal Court. Georg Nolte's chapter on the ICC provides a fascinating behind-the-scenes analysis of how the United States came to reject the "most important treaty in . . . general public international law since the Law of the Sea Convention of 1982." Nolte argues that U.S. behavior during and after the negotiations was unilateral in two senses. Opting out the Rome Statutes was merely "a passive form of unilateralism"; more troubling was its "active unilateralism" in pursuit of "its own vision" of the ICC against the adopted Statute "with the purpose of modifying or reinterpreting important aspects of the statute." For Nolte, this riding roughshod over the expressed objections of the international community reveals a United States bent on remaining "beside" and even "above" the law. What pains Nolte about U.S. behavior is that most of the delegations in Rome "had bent over backward to accommodate the United States" in recognition of its special superpower position. Nolte also believes that supporting the Rome Statute would have advanced broader U.S. national interests by encouraging the prevention and punishment of international crimes, ensuring U.S. freedom of action for humanitarian operations, and reinforcing the global leadership role of the United States. In the final analysis, Nolte attributes U.S. rejection of the ICC to the domestic political situation in the United States, including congressional refusal to let a non-U.S. court try U.S. citizens, as well as to U.S. perceptions of the country's special role in international affairs and attendant concerns that the ICC might be used against the United States for political reasons. Nolte finds those concerns as unconvincing as they are alarming; the United States, it seems to him, sought recognition (in the Rome Statute) as the world's policeman while demanding legal immunity from a functioning ICC. This U.S. arrogation of a special position for itself, combined with its refusal to compromise in Rome, was instrumental in persuading the other states—such as France and Russia, which also had reservations—to support the ICC "in reaction to what they consider excessive unilateral behavior" on the part of the United States.

Human rights. Rosemary Foot finds that U.S. participation in the international human rights regime has improved since the end of the Cold War, but domestic political considerations continue to make its attitude and adherence to these regimes "qualified." The fact that the United States is willing to participate in the multilateral human rights regime can be seen in its ratification of the Genocide Convention (1989), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1992), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1994). But even in these cases the Senate insisted on including significant reservations, understandings, and declarations that qualified the U.S. commitment to the regimes. Moreover, Foot reminds us, the United States remains outside of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and protocol one of the ICCPR. Thus, compared to its European allies, the United States retains a propensity to opt out of a significant number of human rights regimes. Foot attributes this tendency to U.S. feelings of exceptionalism, the separation of powers central to the federal structure of the U.S. political system, and concerns that hostile actors may seek to use the multilateral system as a weapon to attack the United States, the sole remaining global power. She concludes her chapter by suggesting that the selective participation by the United States in the international human rights regime comes at a cost to U.S. reputation while undermining the credibility of the country's external human rights policy.

Transnational crime. Monica Serrano's analysis of U.S. drug policy characterizes the advent of the drug certification process in 1986 as the "crescendo" of U.S. unilateral action, especially toward its Latin American neighbors, the primary source of drugs entering the United States. For Serrano, what is notable about U.S. drug diplomacy is not only that the United States was unilateral in acting alone; the United States was also intent on using "forceful persuasion and coercion" to get its way even within multilateral settings. The strands of U.S. policy that seem especially unilateral and counterproductive in Serrano's view are U.S. insistence on the "supply control" solution, its unwillingness to consider alternative solutions to its drug problem within multilateral fora, and the swerving-off toward the patently unilateral track of the drug certification process. Serrano attributes this veering-off and the securitization of U.S. drug diplomacy from the mid-1980s to U.S. domestic political forces.

The certification process required the president to certify annually that drug-producing and transit countries were cooperating fully with the U.S. government to stem the flow of drugs into the United States. Those that failed the certification process, such as Colombia, would be denied bilateral

aid and face a negative U.S. vote for loans from the international financial institutions. Serrano argues that certification was ineffectual, singled out smaller states such as Colombia for discriminatory treatment (while Mexico, through which 70 percent of the cocaine aimed at the U.S. market passes, was routinely certified), and proved to be a serious irritant in U.S.–Latin American relations. Certification temporarily ceased in 2001, as efforts within the Organization of American States for an alternative regional drug control regime gathered force. Serrano concludes by arguing that both the regional and global drug control regimes still need to free themselves from the influence of the supply paradigm and embrace a more balanced consumption-supply paradigm.

Part 2: Peace and Security

The United States and the United Nations. Kishore Mahbubani's chapter on the U.S.-UN relationship makes the case for a strong United Nations and argues that recent developments demonstrate that U.S. interests are better served by strengthening the United Nations rather than weakening it. Mahbubani suggests that even though the General Assembly may have passed resolutions that displeased the United States, these recommendations were nonbinding and seldom hurt the country. Within the Security Council and in functional organizations—where things really count—the United States has held great sway, and more often than not the international community has bent over backward to accommodate U.S. wishes. This notion of the international community's willingness to accommodate the United States out of respect for its power and preferences is echoed in many of the chapters in this book (not least those by Malone and Krisch). Given this reality, Mahbubani laments the largely successful U.S. efforts over the last twenty years to weaken the United Nations. He argues that in this increasingly interdependent world, the United States can better serve its interests by working alongside the representatives of the earth's other 6 billion inhabitants and that the United Nations is the only organization through which such cooperation can be effected. As the events of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath indicate, a strong United Nations will be one that serves U.S. interests, whether the task is one of forging a global consensus to combat terrorism or providing a mechanism to rebuild failed states like Afghanistan.

Peacekeeping. Ramesh Thakur's analysis of U.S. policy toward international peacekeeping finds a more subtle mix of multilateral-unilateral tendencies on the part of the United States. He begins by questioning the dichotomy between unilateralism and multilateralism, and he argues that the United States switches between the two approaches according to circumstances. Thakur's overall assessment, however, is that the United States remained

essentially multilateral for much of the 1990s. For Thakur, Washington's multilateral approach can be seen from the way it relied on the United Nations to legitimize and mobilize world opinion in favor of peacekeeping and on NATO to carry out, militarily, peace operations in Europe. Thakur also observes that in the case of non-UN peace operations, the United States would reject a prior Security Council resolution "as a *mandatory* requirement for the use of military force overseas." For him, this suggests an "unresolved" dilemma for the United States, a dilemma that is also discussed in the Krisch, Nolte, and Foot chapters: on one hand, the "instilling of the principle of multilateralism as the world order norm," and, on the other, the attempt to exempt itself "from the same principle because of the . . . belief in exceptionalism, in its identity as a virtuous power."

Use of force. Ekaterina Stepanova agrees with Thakur that Washington is acting multilaterally when it uses the United Nations to legitimize actions involving the use of force, but she considers the use of NATO military power without UN Security Council sanction as more akin to unilateralism than multilateralism. Thus, she regards U.S. efforts to forge the ad hoc multilateral Coalition to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1990–1991 as a good benchmark for genuine multilateralism. The involvement of the Security Council was what gave Operation Desert Storm its multilateral identity and legitimacy, although the sheer number of countries participating actively in the Coalition (more than two dozen) also contributed to both aims. In Kosovo, however, the United States acted unilaterally—even though it acted in concert with NATO to bomb Yugoslavia—because it chose to bypass the Security Council when it became clear that Russia and China would not sanction the use of force against Yugoslavia. Stepanova's analysis leads her to the conclusion that the U.S.-NATO 1999 air campaign against Yugoslavia was an act of "unilateral multilateralism." She concludes that this approach to the use of force was insufficiently sensitive to the security worries of several major U.S. interlocutors such as Russia and China (and, one might add, India).

Nuclear policy. Like Thakur and Stepanova, Qingguo Jia sees the United States as adopting a mix of unilateral and multilateral strategies in its approach to nuclear issues. On issues requiring the cooperation of the international community, the United States relied on multilateralism to realize its objectives, as in the renewal of the NPT, the negotiation of the CTBT, and the strengthening of the Missile Technology Control Regime. On other issues, such as nationwide missile defense and achieving full-spectrum dominance in war, the United States felt it had to proceed regardless of international reactions. Focusing his analysis on the George W. Bush administration's repudiation of the ABM Treaty in order to proceed with the development of missile defense, Jia critiques what he regards as a U.S.

insistence on "absolute security" that pays little heed to existing treaties and international sentiments. Jia sees the latter as a consequence of three factors: U.S. status as the sole superpower; U.S. perception of rogue states and rising powers as the new security challenges; and an impulse to impose liberal U.S. values on illiberal states. Like virtually all the other authors, Jia also emphasizes the increasingly interdependent nature of the world and its security problems; in such a world, he concludes, the United States has a unique role to play in charting the path of multilateral cooperation.

Nonproliferation. U.S. ambivalence about multilateral approaches to control nuclear weapons is not limited to the pursuit of national missile defense. As Kanti Bajpai observes, reluctance to accept the constraints binding on other countries and insistence on special privileges has also been apparent in U.S. policies toward the NPT and particularly the CTBT. The difference in U.S. approaches to these two treaties is instructive, however. The United States was a major force behind the initial negotiation of the NPT and its subsequent extension during review conferences in 1995 and 2000, in large part because the NPT is a more unequal treaty that grants the United States differentiated privileges as a nuclear power. Moreover, the United States has made little progress in its NPT commitment to work toward complete nuclear disarmament. In the case of the CTBT, the U.S. Senate rejected a more universalistic treaty to preserve its freedom of action to test nuclear weapons. Bajpai's comparison of U.S. behavior on the NPT and the CTBT leads him to the conclusion that "on nonproliferation . . . the U.S. preference is to be unilateralist at the limit."

Part 3: Economics and the Environment

Multilateral trade and the World Trade Organization. In his chapter on U.S. trade policy, Per Wijkman detects a dual-track approach by the United States since the 1980s. U.S. trade policy has been characterized by "unilateral protectionism" as well as "multilateral liberalism." The result has been, as Wijkman puts it colorfully, "unilateral freewheeling within a multilateral system" that has "created confusion abroad." However, Wijkman provides a key to sort out this confusion by identifying and analyzing the conditions under which unilateral protectionism or multilateral liberalism gains the upper hand. A weak executive branch, strong protectionist sentiments in Congress, and international perceptions of a declining United States create the conditions that foster unilateral U.S. restrictions of free trade, whereas a strong executive branch, a pliable Congress, and international perceptions of a resurgent United States are conducive to free trade and U.S. support for multilateral trading rules. Wijkman sees the former set of conditions as characterizing the last years of Ronald Reagan's administration and the first

few years of Bill Clinton's—hence the unilateralist and protectionist policies of the late 1980s and early 1990s, whereas the latter conditions seem to have returned in the mid-1990s and are continuing into the initial years of George W. Bush's administration. The best indication of this is U.S. willingness to live with the World Trade Organization.

International monetary coordination. Toyoo Gyohten emphasizes the hegemonic role of the United States in the world economy in general and in the global financial arena in particular. Overwhelming U.S. strength in the global financial arena means that there are fewer coequals to consult or negotiate with; moreover, U.S. policymakers and businessmen are so confident of the superiority of the U.S. model that they see their forceful leadership in international finance as natural and self-evidently beneficial. For Gyohten, this go-it-alone approach has had deleterious effects in areas such as the management of international capital flows, the stability of exchange rates, and the independence of the International Monetary Fund.

The Environment. Lucas Assunção argues that while the United States has oscillated between multilateral and unilateral approaches in dealing with climate change, it has become more prone to unilateralism since the late 1980s. Assunção suggests that this trend toward unilateralism is a result of the U.S. desire to protect its domestic economic and trade interests. As the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, the United States would incur the highest costs in cutting down emissions as mandated by the Kyoto Protocol (although it could also exploit its technological edge by developing the means across a broad range of economic activities to combat climate change, thereby creating and strengthening a new source of prosperity for the United States). Unilateral "economic self-defense," as indicated by the U.S. refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol, has been the preferred strategy. Assunção finds this stance shortsighted, coming as it does from the country that had "played a leading role in setting standards and advancing the science of climate change." It seems that as the science became more certain and the costs to the United States became clearer, the United States decided to opt out in favor of its economic self-defense.

Part 4: Regional Perspectives

Latin America. Although Latin America has lived, and continues to live, under the hegemonic shadow of its northern neighbor, Gelson Fonseca finds a regional environment in which it will be increasingly difficult for the United States to act unilaterally. Contrasting the propensity of the United States during the 1980s to protect its interests via unilateral, nonlegitimized military interventions in Central America with its willingness to

countenance a UN-mediated settlement to the civil war in El Salvador, Fonseca argues that democratization, combined with a less permissive international context, gives the United States less opportunity to pursue unilateral military solutions. As he puts it, to act unilaterally one must now argue that one is defending "inestimable values" and that a multilateral solution is impossible because of institutional paralysis and incapacity to react quickly in grave crises. Thus, Fonseca concludes that the United States has shown a general preference for multilateral approaches, but when the stakes are sufficiently high, it is not averse to acting unilaterally (as in Iraq in recent years or in the past in Latin America). Fonseca argues that U.S. unilateralism tends to have negative systemic consequences, and he concludes the chapter by providing pointers on how developing countries can mitigate it while strengthening U.S. multilateralism.

Africa. Unlike Latin America, Africa's foremost concern about post–Cold War U.S. foreign policy is that the United States may consider the region strategically unimportant and therefore neglect it. Christopher Landsberg's analysis of the U.S. role in the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) shows that the United States is aware of the importance of its continued involvement in the security and economic growth of the region. However, the nonconsultative way in which the United States has gone about promoting ACRI and AGOA evinces a unilateral streak that irritates the region's leaders, makes it difficult for its principal ally (South Africa) to advance those initiatives, and, in the end, raises questions about U.S. intentions. Landsberg's essay also points to two interesting developments: First, the perceived unilateral U.S. approach to the Lockerbie incident (i.e., the imposition of sanctions against Libya—later multilateralized in part through the UN Security Council) and the Palestinian issue have enhanced South Africa's role as the "counter-unilateralism" power in Africa, as exemplified by Nelson Mandela's success in pressing, through multilateral channels, for the lifting of sanctions against Libya, and South Africa's recent call for a more multilateral peace process in the Middle East.[5] Second, as the region embarks on multilateral regional initiatives such as the Millennium Africa Recovery/Renaissance Plan, the extent and manner of U.S. involvement will indicate whether the United States is committed to advancing African interests multilaterally.[6]

The United States and NATO. U.S.-NATO interactions in the post–Cold War period can be divided into three phases, according to Sophia Clément. From the early to the mid-1990s (specifically, the signing of the Dayton peace agreement), the United States favored unilateralism by default, in part because NATO was unprepared for the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. After 1995, Clément senses a United States that gave precedence to multilateral cooperation as it coordinated its policies on Kosovo with its NATO

allies. Since September 11, 2001, however, the United States has chosen unilateral military action in its war against terrorism, although it has also relied on a mix of bilateral and multilateral measures to obtain the cooperation of friends and allies in functional areas such as intelligence and the monitoring of financial flows. Like Thakur's chapter on the United States and peacekeeping, Clément also eschews a simple unilateralism-multilateralism dichotomy; each of the phases contain a nuanced description of the interplay between unilateralism, bilateralism, and multilateralism. Clément concludes her analysis by suggesting that unilateralism is not a viable long-term approach in the war against terrorism, and she provides some pointers on what an optimal form of multilateralism might involve.

The Asia-Pacific. In marked contrast to the transatlantic security relationship, which has been founded on the multilateral NATO alliance, U.S. policy toward the Asia-Pacific region has long been based on bilateral relationships between the United States and key actors. As Andy Mack explains in his chapter, the unilateralism-multilateralism dichotomy appears to be less helpful as an approach to understanding U.S. relations with the region. Mack examines the sources and motivations behind the historical U.S. preference for bilateralism and documents Washington's more recent use of "à la carte multilateralism" to adapt to the changing Asia-Pacific security environment. Contrary to predictions by "realist" scholars, he notes, the United States did not disengage after the end of the Cold War but rather redoubled its involvement as the guarantor of Asia-Pacific security. Mack examines the reasons for this pattern, focusing particularly on Northeast Asia, the most volatile potential flashpoint and the location of the most creative regional multilateral initiative, the Korean Energy Development Organization.

Envoi

These findings support those of the earlier companion book insofar as U.S. ambivalence toward multilateralism is concerned. However, our chapter authors make clear that in the last decade the United States has been pursuing increasingly unilateral strategies across a wide range of issues. What explains this growing U.S. preference for unilateralism? This question is especially relevant in light of the earlier book's thesis that the nature of the new international challenges makes them less susceptible to unilateral U.S. solutions.

Although factors specific to each of the issue areas are important in explaining the U.S. approach, the contributors in this book point to several common underlying factors.[7] One of the most obvious recurring factors is the condition of unipolarity, in which the United States possesses far greater power resources than any of its allies and adversaries. Few of our chapter

authors are surprised by the desire of a hegemon to foster bargaining outcomes favorable to itself or its conception of what is good for the international community. Thus, when the United States partakes actively in multilateral activities—in the negotiations over the ICC and climate change, for example—but then rejects outcomes that may cramp its sovereign style or are inimical to its economic interests, it can get away with this kind of unilateral behavior. Although the power equation explains this in part, U.S. interlocutors have also become used to the pleadings of successive U.S. administrations that their constitutional situation (specifically, the strength of Congress in policy formulation) makes it a special case. They may be irritated by U.S. exceptionalism, but they tolerate it on many issues. On other questions, where the cost to them of U.S. exceptionalism is high (e.g., potentially, on climate change), frustration and resistance are greater, even among close allies such as the European Union (EU) member countries and Canada.

Congress's prerogatives in ratifying treaties, regulating commerce, and controlling the purse strings all bear importantly on the U.S. ability to act multilaterally. Related to this are of course issues of domestic politics. George W. Bush, for example, was strikingly candid about the reasons for the U.S. refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol: the economic costs for domestic growth and hence the international competitive position of the United States were deemed unacceptable. When Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso criticized the United States for imposing tariffs on imported steel in March 2002 on the grounds that it went against the thrust of the planned Free Trade Area of the Americas, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick was equally frank about the rationale behind the tariffs: domestic political reasons. (Zoellick's cabinet colleague, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, went even farther, according to a *New York Times* report of an ostensibly off-the-record talk to the Council on Foreign Relations: he disagreed with the tariff decision and believed it would be self-defeating because "the move would cost more jobs in the United States than it would save," but he obviously lost the argument on domestic political grounds.)[8]

Inextricable from issues of political structure is the conception and domestic appeal of U.S. exceptionalism—the widely held belief in the United States that its values and institutions are the best yet devised, the conviction that the world needs to adapt itself to American ways rather than vice versa. More deeply, U.S. exceptionalism can be seen as a widely held conviction among Americans that the United States, by virtue of its unique attributes, has a special destiny among nations. The U.S. belief in a national mission at the international level is an important impulse for its unilateral action. In February 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright drew tellingly on this tradition before a domestic audience. U.S. global leadership was indispensable, she argued, because "we stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future."[9] Such views, so couched, have naturally grated on other countries. However, all of the contributors to this book would

likely accept that the United States retains certain core "systemic" responsibilities for international order and stability.

Yet the United States is not the sole country possessing an exceptionalist view of itself and its role in the world. France, for instance, may represent an even more striking case of the phenomenon, particularly with regard to cultural policy. Yet as the evolution of its African policy in the 1990s demonstrated, an exceptionalist France (unlike the United States) may no longer have the means or the will to act unilaterally in former spheres of influence. French approaches also suggest that the alternative to great-power unilateralism may not be multilateralism; it can also be inaction (cloaked in diplomatic rhetoric and often underpowered policy initiatives).

One difference between France the United States is that whereas the former has historically fostered several geographically defined spheres of influence, the latter's sphere of influence remains global. The United States is the only country in such a position in the early twenty-first century. In the words of Egypt's Nabil Elaraby, one of the leading recent ambassadors on the UN Security Council, the United States is not so much the last remaining superpower as the "supreme power" of the age.[10] It is not only the country's global reach but also its widely perceived global responsibility (even more sharply advocated by other countries than within the United States) that tripped up the initially doctrinaire George W. Bush administration in early 2001.

However, the United States is clearly not insensitive to the views of others. The drastically revised and improved terms of reference for military tribunals established to try detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, announced by Washington in mid-March 2002, demonstrated that international criticism by allies on the ground in Afghanistan had elicited a significant and broadly positive response from Washington.

What have been the consequences of U.S. unilateralism in the post–Cold War era? In a couple of areas, U.S. unilateralism may have made a positive contribution. Implicit in Ramesh Thakur's chapter, for example, is the argument that the United States, in bypassing the Security Council and using NATO to intervene in the Kosovo conflict, advanced the worthy cause of saving the lives of Kosovar Albanians.

In general, however, U.S. unilateralism—especially the decision by the United States not to join regimes that it has a role in negotiating (e.g., the ICC, the Kyoto Protocol)—weakens the particular institution and foreign perceptions of the common good. The U.S. decision to opt out of an international institution also tends to damage its reputation as well as undermine the capacity of allied governments to sell to their own publics the idea of partnership with the United States in controversial ventures. (This was the case for U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, who came under heavy domestic bipartisan fire in early 2002 for his staunch support of U.S. objectives in Iraq at a time when the United States seemed indifferent to the value of

U.K. support, e.g., by slapping punitive tariffs on EU, including British, steel exports to the United States.)

A variant of how unilateral behavior can undermine one's reputation relates to U.S. approaches to Latin America and Africa. A priori, the hegemonic status of the United States makes many observers in those two regions suspicious of U.S. intentions. U.S. inconsistency, as well as coercive and nonconsultative behavior, makes it even more difficult for many to trust the United States, even when the latter's intentions are benign. In areas such as nuclear policy, the use of force, the United Nations, climate change, international crime, human rights, and the ICC, all the authors agree that the particular multilateral regime is dealt a serious, though not necessarily fatal, blow when the United States opts out of the agreement. The contributors agree that a more multilateral U.S. approach to global and regional challenges will better serve the international community as well as U.S. interests. Thus, Thakur's analysis of peacekeeping shows that a United States more deeply engaged with the United Nations is able to get more done. Similarly, Gelson Fonseca advocates an Inter-American future that moves away from the frequent U.S. unilateral military interventions of the past to a more multilateral approach that is more likely to serve long-term U.S. interests

Few serious international analysts question the need for U.S. leadership on a broad range of international issues, but some U.S. assumptions underlying the exercise of such leadership have been sharply contested, not least in the fields of human rights and global environmental stewardship (where the U.S. public has often seen itself as being in the lead). In the weeks immediately following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, U.S. foreign policy seemed to take a 180-degree turn, newly emphasizing the value of allies and concerted action with partners, but as time passes this increasingly looks like a tactical adjustment rather than a strategic reorientation.

Strong international cooperation on terrorism seems unlikely to endure unless the George W. Bush administration also shows greater sensitivity to the views of allies on such issues as climate change, international criminal courts and tribunals, and defense issues other than terrorism. It is in this context that the contributors assay inquiries into non-U.S. perceptions of the U.S. approaches to multilateralism in recent years.

Notes

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1. *The Independent,* December 14, 2001, p. 3. The fact that Cornwell is positively disposed toward the United States can be seen in his comment, "I'm disturbed by all this hostility to America," with reference to the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. Weekend Review, *The Independent,* January 26, 2002, p. 4.

2. Stewart Patrick and Shepard Forman, eds., *Multilateralism and U.S. Foreign Policy.*

3. John Gerard Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters,* p. 11. See also Stewart Patrick, "Multilateralism and Its Discontents: The Causes and Consequences of U.S. Ambivalence."

4. Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters,* p. 12.

5. This latter development has been facilitated by the African National Congress's steady move away from unqualified support for the tactics of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and a more evenhanded policy toward all parties to the conflict. For example, South Africa strongly advised PNA Chair Yasir Arafat against proceeding with a Unilateral Declaration of Independence, even after the failure of the 2000 Camp David summit.

6. The presence of President Mbeki of South Africa, alongside President Obasanjo of Nigeria and several other African leaders, at the G8 Summit in Genoa in July 2001 to advocate support for the MAP indicates a certain openness among all G8 members to such proposals, in principle, although the principal champions of giving priority to African issues within the G8 have been the United Kingdom and Canada.

7. Cf. Stewart Patrick, "Multilateralism and Its Discontents," pp. 7–10.

8. *New York Times,* March 16, 2002.

9. From an interview with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on NBC-TV's "The Today Show" with Matt Lauer, Columbus, Ohio, February 19, 1998.

10. Interview with David Malone, New York, January 1996. Mr. Elaraby has since been elected to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

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