

Washington's New Interventionism: U.S. Hegemony and Inter-Imperialist Rivalries

by David N. Gibbs

Think hard about it. I'm running out of demons. I'm
running out of villains. —General Colin Powell¹

The 1999 NATO war against Serbia poses an intellectual challenge for the anti-interventionist left. On the one hand, critics doubt that humanitarian concerns regarding the fate of Kosovar Albanians could have motivated the United States to initiate this war. On the other hand, if humanitarian factors cannot explain U.S. conduct, then what does? This essay will attempt to answer this question, and will provide an analytical framework in which recent interventionist actions, including the war over Kosovo, can be understood. The basic argument is that the United States has grown accustomed to its position as the world's dominant power and has sought to preserve this status, which provides major political and economic benefits for the United States. Concomitantly, the United States has sought to contain rival capitalist states that threaten U.S. predominance. During the Cold War, the threat of Communism served to legitimate U.S. hegemony over other capitalist states; with the end of the Cold War, the United States has sought to use humanitarian intervention as one of the principal means to reassert its hegemony, to provide a context in which the most striking advantage of the United States—its overwhelming military superiority—can be emphasized.

A major assumption underpinning this argument is that the post-Cold War era has triggered increased tensions among the capitalist democracies, which in turn require these "humanitarian" military assertions to reaffirm the dominant position of the United States.

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Some readers may find this argument odd, since it is widely assumed that the western allies have always welcomed U.S. leadership. In his book, *American Empire*, Geir Lundestad referred to U.S. hegemony over Europe during the Cold War as a case of "empire by invitation," the result of cooperative, mutually beneficial activity between Americans and Europeans.² This image of a "benign" American hegemony has more recently been popularized by Irving Kristol, who wrote in 1997: "One of these days, the American people are going to awaken to the fact that we have become an imperial nation...*It happened because the world wanted it to happen* [emphasis added]...no European nation can have—or really wants to have—its own foreign policy."³ The problem with such views is that they gloss over two important facts: First, they ignore the ambivalence with which U.S. allies have always viewed their subordinate position. Second, U.S. hegemony has been maintained partly through forceful behavior, which has undercut efforts by U.S. allies to establish independent foreign policies. These challenges to U.S. hegemony were present even during the Cold War, but with the end of the Cold War, they have increased considerably. There has been a concomitant rise in U.S. efforts to resist these challenges.

U.S. foreign policy thus entailed a measure of "double containment"—to contain Communism and the capitalist allies of the United States in Europe simultaneously. With the demise of the Soviet Bloc, after 1989, the containment of allies has remained a central U.S. objective. Overwhelmingly, the United States has sought to reassert its power through a revitalization of the Cold War institutional structures, above all, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, widely regarded as the most successful alliance in history. Humanitarian intervention has emerged as NATO's principal mission—and principal justification—in the post-Cold War world.

A Predatory Hegemon?

The theme of rivalry among the advanced industrial states may seem especially anomalous given the long period of amity among these states, which prevailed during the period of the Cold War. The common ideological enemy of Communism served to unite the capitalist powers for this time. It is important to recognize, however, that the period 1945-89 was in some sense a historical aberration. Viewed over a longer period, say the past two hundred years, one could easily conclude that conflict, rather than cooperation, has been the norm among capitalist states; these latent conflicts were masked and

held in check for an extended period during the Cold War.

The agent that facilitated cooperation was of course U.S. hegemony. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, radical scholars such as Joyce and Gabriel Kolko argued that the United States followed an imperialist strategy after the Second World War—to dominate Western Europe and Japan, marginalize political tendencies that opposed U.S. dominance, and dismantle European and Japanese spheres of influence in the Third World. Anticommunism legitimated these U.S. efforts. Much of this New Left scholarship has fallen from favor, as intellectual fashion shifted and a new era of U.S. triumphalism emerged in its place. However, the New Left interpretation has reemerged in new guises. Essentially the same arguments have been advanced by such mainstream figures as Christopher Layne and Benjamin Schwarz, who wrote in 1993:

Two paradoxes have shaped American foreign policy. First although the Soviet Union was the immediate focus of US security strategy, it was really quite incidental to America's liberal internationalist policy. Second, the Soviet Union's existence, ironically, was indispensable to that policy's success.... After World War II, Washington sought an international order based upon... "preponderant [American] power." That objective had very little to do with any existing or projected Soviet actions; in fact, American statesmen knew that their wide-ranging objectives would increase Soviet insecurity and thereby increase the risk of war...the basic aspiration of US security policy since the Second World has not been to contain the Soviets.⁴

The main objective was to establish a liberal international order led by the United States, while it was to be *justified* as a response to alleged Soviet aggression.

At the close of the Second World War, the emerging U.S. hegemon faced opposition from two principal sources: First, the political left enjoyed unprecedented popularity during this period; Communist parties were major forces in the political systems of Italy and France (and in Japan as well); socialist groups were also influential. Both were suspicious of, or hostile to, U.S. foreign policy. It must be emphasized that this type of anti-U.S. sentiment extended well beyond Communist circles. In a 1947 essay, George Orwell advocated a European form of democratic socialism, independent of both superpowers. Of the potential barriers to socialism, one of most formidable was "American hostility. If the United States remains capital-

ist and especially if it needs markets for exports, it cannot regard a socialist Europe with a friendly eye."⁵ To combat this U.S. hostility, Orwell advocated a pan-European socialist federation, with spheres of influence in parts of Asia and Africa, presumably linked together as a common currency and trading bloc. The political left in Europe was a key impediment to U.S. designs, and was dealt with through direct political manipulation. Samuel Huntington notes that "the United States expended billions of dollars each year attempting to influence government decisions, elections, and political outcomes in other countries," and considerable sums were spent to defeat Communist parties and other radical elements in Western Europe.⁶ In addition, U.S. intelligence operatives used a variety of additional means, including alliances with the Catholic Church, conservative labor unions, and organized crime networks, to undermine radical parties and unions during the late 1940s.

A second major impediment to U.S. aspirations in Europe was the political right, which had a long tradition of protectionist measures, state regulation, and colonial spheres of influence. U.S. efforts to curb these practices caused many Europeans to wonder aloud whether the United States or the Soviet Union was really the greater threat. The normally sober *Economist* noted in 1947:

Not many people in this country believe the Communist thesis that it is the deliberate and conscious aim of American policy to ruin Britain and everything Britain stands for in the world. But the evidence can certainly be read that way. And if every time that aid is extended, conditions are attached which make it impossible for Britain ever to escape the necessity of going back for still more aid, to be obtained with still more self-abasement and on still more crippling terms, then the result will certainly be what the Communists predict.⁷

There can be no question that U.S. policy both during and after the Second World War sought to open previously closed European spheres of influence to U.S. trade and investment. These expansionist objectives were openly expressed in (now declassified) documents. Consider a 1943 document from the State Department's leading Africa specialist:

Overseas trade will be more important than ever before to this nation in maintaining our vaunted standard of living...our country will not be able to maintain our heretofore standard of living or even to approximate it unless we can

produce more, export more, and help by our overseas trade to all lands to raise the standard of living of backward people so that they may absorb more and more of the products of American agriculture and industry.... We have therefore the most vital national interest in this matter. In my opinion it is not sufficient that there be a condition of joint world leadership by Great Britain and the United States...[The United States should not tolerate] agreements which would relegate in any area of the world American influence...to a secondary position.⁸

Such expansionist views generated a significant degree of friction with U.S. allies.

The Cold War was on the surface a bipolar conflict, but the image obscured much complexity. There always were important fissures within the U.S.-led alliance—fissures which appear considerably more important in hindsight than they appeared at the time. The French tendency to challenge U.S. leadership during and after the presidency of Charles de Gaulle is especially noteworthy. De Gaulle criticized U.S. domination of NATO, leading to a French departure from the joint military command and the permanent removal of NATO headquarters from Paris to Brussels. France jealously protected its influence in sub-Saharan Africa from perceived U.S. incursions; De Gaulle's special advisor on Africa policy, Jacques Foccart, became "virtually the main enemy of United States diplomacy in Africa." Foccart's staff "saw the United States, not China or Russia, as the main enemy."⁹ The international role of the dollar and alleged U.S. abuse of its privileged monetary position, were additional objects of Gaullist censure ("The Americans only used the atom device twice on Asia...but they use the dollar on Europe every day").¹⁰ Criticism of U.S. leadership was not confined to France. Not a single European country was willing openly to support the U.S. war effort in Vietnam; from Europe, the war was regarded as misguided and irresponsible. During the 1970s, the Nixon-Kissinger tendency to undertake unilateral actions without consulting U.S. allies—such as the 1971 decision to devalue the dollar and to abandon free convertibility into gold—became additional sources of resentment. Unilateral U.S. actions during the energy shortages of 1973-75 generated further recriminations.

Thus, the Pax Americana was far from an unambiguous benefit to U.S. allies. However, European reservations were kept in check by three factors: First, the United States presented "free" security against the possibility of a Soviet invasion. Few seriously believed that direct

Soviet aggression was a probability; however, it was widely considered a hypothetical possibility throughout the Cold War, owing to the numerical superiority of Warsaw Pact conventional forces in central Europe. Second, the United States was a reliable bulwark against the possibility of radical social change in Europe, and there was an understanding that the U.S. would work behind the scenes against any prospective government by the far left. This aspect of the Cold War represented a tacit alliance between European elites and U.S. foreign policy. Many upper class Europeans no doubt slept better at night knowing this. Third, U.S. hegemony was associated with economic prosperity and full employment. Economic growth during the early period of the Cold War was far above historical averages; in all Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development member countries, there was full, or near full, employment combined with advanced welfare states. And economic growth was beneficial to nearly every segment of society, with major improvements in the material conditions of the working classes. The fact that prosperity coincided with U.S. hegemony contributed to the political legitimacy of the project.

European leftists could still fantasize about the prospect of a "Europe without America," but during the Cold War this was never a serious possibility.¹¹ Over the past thirty years, however, each of the three factors which undergirded the legitimacy of U.S. hegemony has gradually eroded. First, the period of economic prosperity came to an end during the 1973-75 recession; thereafter, Europe has seen slower rates of growth, combined with permanently high unemployment in many countries. Second, the radical left parties, rather than benefiting from deteriorating economic conditions, gradually declined or diluted the radical content of their programs. This process was already far advanced during the 1980s, and has accelerated since then. Tony Blair's Third Way is only the most obvious public manifestation of a more basic trend. Although there have been some contrary tendencies—such as the surprising resiliency of the former East German Communist party and the 1995 French transport strike—the general picture is one of an increasingly domesticated left. And third, the military threat posed by the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist. By 1991, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the danger of an invasion from the East could no longer be entertained by anyone.

Challenges to U.S. Hegemony

The initial reaction to the end of the Cold War was a remarkable augmentation in U.S. prestige. Many Western Europeans saw the col-

lapse of the Soviet bloc as not only a political victory, but also an ideological victory for free-market capitalism and the "American way of life." The U.S.-led victory over Iraqi forces in the Gulf War of 1991—achieved with unprecedented international support—increased U.S. prestige still further. And there can be little doubt that the popularity of U.S. consumer culture translated into some measure of "soft power," advantageous for U.S. foreign policy. For a brief moment, U.S. triumphalism was shared by much of the advanced capitalist world.

What is interesting is how quickly this triumphalist aura evaporated. A new era of anti-U.S. sentiment emerged worldwide. There are many indications of this loss of legitimacy, but let us begin with a poll taken in France in 1996. In this poll, a plurality of French adults viewed the United States with antipathy. When asked which words they most associated with the United States, the top associations were "violence" (59 percent), "power" (57 percent), "inequality" (45 percent), and "racism" (39 percent). There was, however, one segment of French society that was consistently favorable toward the United States—but disturbingly, these were supporters of the extreme right-wing, racist National Front Party.¹²

It is easy to dismiss this poll as simply another example of French anti-Americanism; but such views extend well beyond France. Writing in 1995, British international political economist Susan Strange criticized the "natural (but destructive) unilateralist tendency in the U.S. political system. Today, my answer, tentative as it must be, is that the only way to remove the present hegemonic, do-nothing veto on better global governance [exercised by the United States] is to build, bit by bit a compelling opposition based on European-Japanese cooperation but embracing wherever possible the Latin Americans, Asians, and Africans."¹³ It is also worth noting the rise in anti-U.S. sentiment in Russia. In early 1999, the liberal Moscow weekly *Moskovskiy Novosti* noted this growing hostility: "The depiction of our overseas neighbor [the United States] in the Soviet era was more sympathetic. The object of hatred was the fat capitalist with the cigar or the hawkish general with an atomic bomb under his arm rather than the ordinary American. But in today's [Russian] novels, the right class origin will not save anyone. On the contrary, it is held against all Americans."¹⁴

This increasing tendency to doubt the value of U.S. hegemony, to regard it as an expression of self-interest, still receives little attention from the U.S. press. But there are some interesting exceptions. Samuel Huntington, who epitomized the close connection between academia and U.S. hegemony, has lately adopted a reassessment.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, he openly ridicules official rhetoric: "American officials...boast of American power and American virtue, hailing the United States as a benevolent hegemon." Madeleine K. Albright "has called the United States 'the indispensable nation' and said that 'we stand tall and hence see further than other nations.' This statement is true in the narrow sense that the United States is an indispensable participant in any effort to tackle major global problems. It is false in also implying that other nations are dispensable...and that American indispensability is a source of wisdom." Huntington goes on to demolish the image of the United States as a benign power:

[The U.S. has] attempted or been perceived as attempting more or less unilaterally to do the following: ...promote American corporate interests under the slogans of free trade and open markets; shape World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies to serve those same corporate interests;...bludgeon other countries to adopt economic and social policies that will benefit American economic interests; promote American arms sales abroad while attempting to prevent comparable sales by other countries; force out one UN secretary-general and dictate the appointment of his successor;...and categorize certain countries as "rogue states," excluding them from global institutions because they refuse to kowtow to American wishes.¹⁵

Around the word, then, there is the increasing perception that the United States has become a predatory hegemon, using its power to advance its own interests. Such perceptions pose major challenges to U.S. hegemonic aspirations after the Cold War.

Renascent Rivalries

Re-creating the Cold War, or at least some reasonably plausible substitute for it has been a general theme of U.S. policy during the past decade, as implied in the epigram from Colin Powell, with which I began this article. Such a re-creation has the advantage of benefiting various interests groups, most obviously the cluster of groups that Eisenhower termed the military-industrial complex. And U.S. government officials, both uniformed and civilian, very much miss the legitimacy that the struggle against Communism conferred on U.S. hegemony on the one hand, and the concomitant subordination of U.S. allies which resulted from this hegemony, on the other. The inconvenient demise of the Cold War has been a serious problem from the standpoint of these diverse interest groups. New means

would be required to maintain U.S. control. In response, the United States has sought to reinvigorate the alliance system left over from the Cold War, the key part of which was NATO.

The central importance of U.S. hegemony in Europe cannot be overstated: Henry Kissinger writes that the Atlantic Alliance was "the prize for victory in the Cold War." NATO was the linchpin of U.S. hegemony in Europe or, in Kissinger's words, "the principal institutional link between America and Europe."¹⁶ In Europe, officials have been less restrained. Gabriel Robin, former French representative to NATO, wrote that the alliance's "real function, which surpasses all others, is to serve as the chaperon of Europe...[It is] the means to prevent it [Europe] from establishing itself as an independent fortress and perhaps one day, a rival."¹⁷ In short, the continued existence of NATO is vital for the continuation of U.S. dominance in Europe. And it is also in Europe that U.S. hegemony has faced its most potent threat: the European Union (EU). The EU threat is threefold: First, the EU is one of the largest single economic units in the world, roughly equal to the United States. The very size of the EU makes it a threat to U.S. hegemony, potentially more formidable, at least in the medium term, than any other power center including China.

Second, political changes are underway within the EU that threaten to increase its independence from the United States. During the post-Cold War period, Germany began to join France in openly advocating European independence. Undoubtedly, the German assertiveness was influenced by the new opportunities that attended reunification in 1990. It was clearly the dominant power within the EU, and, in close cooperation with France, Germany became an advocate for increased European autonomy.

Third, the EU began to adopt specific measures to implement a more independent policy, officially termed the European Security and Defense Identity. This offered the Europeans a chance to establish an independent world role, commensurate with the size and economic weight of the combined European nations. In early 1991, French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl proposed the Western European Union (WEU) as an integral component of the European Security and Defense Identity. This proposal was officially approved in December 1991 at the historic Maastricht conference, and the WEU became the official military arm of the European Union. In addition, France and Germany announced that they would form a Franco-German army corps, "the Eurocorps," to be fully operational beginning in 1995. Though the

Eurocorps was a bilateral measure, undertaken outside of the EU structure, it was presented as the nucleus of a pan-European army, to which other EU members would be expected to join in time.

The possibility of an independent European foreign and military policy was immediately viewed as a potential threat to NATO and U.S. dominance. EU military integration was singled out for criticism, and this led to a series of incidents during 1991-92: National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft wrote directly to Chancellor Kohl and complained about German "ingratitude, despite American support for reunification."¹⁸ President George Bush, himself issued a delicately worded threat: "Our premise is that the American role in the defense and the affairs of Europe will not be made superfluous by European union. If our premise is wrong, if my friends, your ultimate aim is to provide individually for your own defense, the time to tell us is today."¹⁹ In addition, the United States began to actively undermine European military integration. According to one account: "Senior German officials say they continue to feel intense US pressure to back off plans for a European army corps and to make unspecified but apparently unending displays of their commitment to NATO...US officials [are] lobbying smaller European countries to stay out of the developing German-French Eurocorps."²⁰

U.S.-European contention also extended to financial policy. The 1991 Maastricht conference ratified a plan for increased financial integration, with the aim of a single European currency, the Euro, to be introduced in January 1999. Though the Euro was advanced as a technical means to achieve an integrated European market, it was clear from the start that it would also have political implications: the Euro would pose a threat to the U.S. dollar's status as the international reserve currency, as well as a more general challenge to the U.S. position as the world's predominant power. According to Helmut Schmidt, "Americans do not yet understand the significance of the Euro, but when they do it could set up a monumental conflict...it will change the whole world situation so that the United States can no longer call all the shots."²¹ U.S. analysts had essentially the same assessment. Martin Feldstein, former head of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, commented that European monetary integration could "change the political character of Europe in ways that could lead to...confrontation with the United States." European monetary unification could make "the world a very different and not necessarily safer place."²² And the Europeans advanced some inflammatory accusations of their own: in 1992-93, politicians from a range

of ideological perspectives implied that the United States was undermining European financial cooperation, by orchestrating speculative attacks against key currencies.

The Pentagon Reassesses U.S. Hegemony

In March 1992, these latent conflicts between the United States and Europe triggered an interesting controversy: The *New York Times* printed excerpts from a leaked document, a draft of the Pentagon's Defense Planning Guidance (DPG). Although officials later sought to distance themselves from the DPG document, there is no question that it was approved at a high level. Drafted under the direction of Paul Wolfowitz, the Under Secretary of Defense, it stands out in a number of respects: It was one of the major documents of the post-Cold War period that presents an overall framework for U.S. foreign policy; it was not originally intended for public scrutiny; and despite later claims to the contrary, it was drafted and approved, at least in preliminary form, at a high level.²³

The most interesting feature of the DPG document was the suspicion with which it viewed U.S. allies, especially Germany and Japan. According to the *Times* article, the DPG expressed fear that these two countries might begin full rearmament, which could lead to "global competition with the United States and in a crisis over national interests, military rivalry." Accordingly, the preservation of the NATO alliance was emphasized. While the document expressed support for some degree of European military integration, presumably on grounds of economy, the U.S. would actively block European efforts to establish an independent foreign and military policy: "we must seek to prevent the emergence of Europe-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO, particularly the alliance's integrated command structure." Overall, the DPG document stressed the central importance of U.S. primacy: "we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors *from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role*" [emphasis added].²⁴

A later 1994 analysis by a specialist in the U.S. Congressional Research Service reached conclusions that parallel those of the DPG. This analysis notes that, while some segments of the U.S. establishment welcomed the maturing of the European Union, other elements remained "skeptical of the benefits of European integration for the United States.... This tendency suggests that the United States must actively defend its interests in the European integration process and should, when necessary, disrupt community consensus if such con-

sensus might operate against U.S. self-interests. Particularly in the absence of an active Soviet threat against Europe, the process of European integration may have mainly negative consequences for U.S. interests, according to this approach."²⁵ The ideas expressed here, and also in the Pentagon's DPG are inconsistent with image of a "benign" U.S. hegemony, universally welcomed by allies.

With intense U.S. lobbying and the implied threat in the leaked DPG document, the members of the EU began to lose their enthusiasm for foreign policy independence. Several additional factors complicated these efforts. First, European leaders (even among the French) wished to avoid a complete termination of the Atlantic Alliance; some propitiation of the United States was clearly necessary. Second, longstanding fissures among the EU members intensified during this period and were skillfully exploited by the United States. Britain had always been the most reliably pro-U.S. element in Europe, and the "special relationship" appeared to grow stronger with the end of the Cold War. Britain became a forceful advocate of the U.S. position and acted as a counterpoint to the German-French stance, which aimed at greater independence. Third, smaller European countries continued to feel jealousy toward the German-French tendency to dominate EU decision making and preferred some degree of U.S. influence in order to offset the prospect of German-French dominance within the EU.

As a result of these considerations, European leaders began to emphasize that the WEU was intended to complement and not compete with NATO. The new strategy was formalized at the January 1994 NATO summit, where NATO and the WEU were to be integrated through Combined Joint Task Forces. The following year, the French agreed in principle to resume participation in NATO's military directorate. The Eurocorps was activated as planned in 1995 and had a full strength of 50,000 troops, but the Europeans agreed to an accord "which provides for the Eurocorps' subordination to SACEUR"—the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, a U.S. general.²⁶ In an interview, the first commander of the Eurocorps, Germany's Lt. Gen. Helmut Willmann, went out of his way to link the Eurocorps to NATO: The Eurocorps would "complement U.S. assets and this will benefit NATO. Any idea of competition would be wrong and has to be excluded."²⁷ At the same time, the United States continued to jealously guard its dominance within NATO, and firmly refused French suggestions that a European should be appointed as chief of NATO's southern command.

Thus, early plans for a foreign and military policy that was substantially independent of NATO were undermined. Efforts by the United States to domesticate the WEU and the Eurocorps were initially successful. We will see that the more basic trans-Atlantic rift, which had undergirded the specific dispute regarding EU military posture, was far from settled. But for the moment at least, the United States had succeeded in its efforts to undermine European military independence.

Eastward Expansion

Until now I have been examining the "reactive" side of U.S. hegemony, aimed at protecting NATO against actions that might have weakened it. Another strategy has been to find new, additional functions for NATO. The most important of these efforts has been to expand NATO eastward and to incorporate portions of Eastern Europe under the U.S. military umbrella. The concept of eastward expansion was formally proposed in December 1994; in 1999, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO as full members.

In testimony before Congress, Madeleine Albright implied that eastward expansion reflected shared cultural and political values, as well as enlightened self-interest. However, there is no doubt that an element of realpolitik was also present. Eastward expansion served four purposes: First, expansion gave NATO a new function—preserving order in eastern Europe—which could serve as a partial replacement for the now obsolete objective of preventing a Soviet invasion. Expansion also alienated post-Soviet Russia, thus generating a new threat to the stability of central Europe. It may seem paradoxical that U.S. policy actually has created new threats, but then again, finding threats and enemies has been a basic theme for post-Cold War foreign policy. And finding enemies in Europe is salutary for the purpose of preserving NATO and establishing a plausible function for the alliance—especially since NATO's very existence was being called into question. In 1992, Senator William Roth warned that if a plausible function were not found, "then it is our duty as U.S. legislators to point out that this emperor has no clothes, that, tragically, NATO has degenerated into an alliance in name only and, sadly it is therefore no longer deserving of our support or membership."²⁸ The initial lack of any obvious function was becoming an embarrassment; eastward expansion seemed a plausible new function.

A second purpose of NATO expansion has been to reinforce and augment the U.S. role as the dominant power on the European con-

continent. Expansion reinforced U.S. hegemony, and precluded the dreaded prospect of an independent Europe. According to *Air Force Magazine*: "It is this prospect—the specter of Europe without NATO—that deeply troubles U.S. leaders...For Washington, an important if unstated goal is to ensure continued U.S. influence in the affairs of Europe and to have a major say in Eastern European security developments....For half a century NATO has served as a mechanism for exerting that influence, providing Washington's all important bridge to the continent. Eastward expansion would ensure that the United States would be able to play a similar role in the nations emerging from the old Soviet empire."²⁹ NATO expansion helped to reinforce NATO's central mission: to serve as an instrument for subordinating Europe to U.S. interests.

Third, NATO expansion was strongly supported by U.S. business interests. According to a 1998 article in the *New York Times*, "American arms manufacturers who stand to gain billions of dollars in sales of weapons, communications equipment, and other military equipment if the Senate approves NATO expansion, have made enormous investments in lobbyists and campaign contributions to promote their cause in Washington."³⁰ Military contractors such as Boeing, Motorola, TRW, and United Technologies each paid \$250,000 for the privilege of participating in NATO's fiftieth anniversary in 1999, as official corporate hosts. In addition, nonmilitary investors, including Eastman-Kodak, Ford, and General Motors also supported NATO, presumably because of the entrée that NATO provides for U.S. corporations in both eastern and western Europe.

Fourth, expansion consolidated the U.S. position in a new sphere of influence and checked the influence of competitor states. There was apprehension that the Europeans, especially the Germans, would become dominant in the east. In early 1992, the *Washington Post* offered this assessment:

German influence in the region—especially in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland—has become pervasive... "It is our natural market," said Otto Wolff von Amerongen, for years the chairman of the Eastern Committee, an industrial group that helps German businesses make deals in Eastern Europe.... "Germany is positioning itself to dominate not only eastern Germany and not only Eastern Europe but also the Soviet markets once they become viable," said Christian von Thun-Hohenstein, an investment banker.... "They'll have an automatic 'in' in

the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe because they will be the suppliers of the capital goods."³¹

The expansion of NATO ensured that this German influence would be diluted to some extent.

And so, NATO had a new function. To be sure, the defense of Eastern Europe against a series of hypothetical and ill-defined threats may lack the legitimacy and instant public support that "defense against the Communist threat" conferred upon U.S. hegemony in an earlier era—but at least it was something.

Nevertheless, the view of NATO as an instrument of U.S. domination in Europe remains widespread among European analysts. And the conflicts between Europe and the United States were never really resolved during the 1990s. On the contrary, U.S.-European discord in the area of military affairs continued through the end of the decade. The French never rejoined NATO's military component, and they continued to criticize perceived U.S. arrogance. As recently as November 1999, the *Economist* noted: "Many French politicians and businessmen...want to create not just a defense identity for the European Union but also a common front against the English-speaking world. It is in that context that they—and quite a few Germans—see such events as the recent merging of their defense-manufacturing giants."³² An elevated level of tension between Europe and the United States has become a basic feature of international relations during the post-Cold War era.

The Threat of Trade Blocs

In this section, I will broaden the scope of analysis to consider how politically driven disputes between the United States and Europe interact with the international economy.³³ The basic problem may be summarized as follows: Contemporary international economic relations are characterized by a high level of multilateral trade and investment, mediated by a series of institutions that are global in scope. Contrary to popular belief, the process of globalization has not always been associated with improved macroeconomic performance; indeed average rates of GDP growth worldwide have declined during the past thirty years, even as globalization has deepened. However, there is no doubt that globalization has benefited certain elite business groups, especially in the United States, and these groups are promoters of globalization. U.S. domination of international economic institutions also has provided asymmetrical benefits to U.S. investors, a point that is

well understood by the investors themselves. As one U.S. banker noted in testimony to Congress in 1991: "I think that one of the tremendous advantages of the IMF to the United States is the *appearance* [emphasis added] of a somewhat arm's length relationship that has helped us to get a lot of things done because it is not the United States imposing standards... That has worked to our advantage, and I just would like to emphasize that we at least attempt to project that arm's length relationship, because it serves our purposes quite well."³⁴

In addition, the U.S. government benefits from globalization, especially the liberalization of international finance, since this frees up capital and aids in financing chronic international accounts deficits. U.S. Treasury bonds and other dollar-denominated debt service instruments are more attractive to foreign purchasers due to the unique function of the dollar in the international economy. Thus, a wide range of interest groups within both the public and private sectors of the United States favor globalization. However, there is fear that tensions among the advanced industrialized countries could cause a breakdown of multilateral trade, and produce a more protectionist system. Renascent isolationist tendencies within the United States, especially from the political right, are an additional concern.

There is a direct connection between these economic issues and the more "political" disputes discussed above: NATO is widely viewed as assurance that the commercial ties that have bound Europe and the United States in the past will continue, and that the prospect of protectionism can be forestalled. The U.S.-Japan security treaty serves a similar function in the Far East. Before examining these issues in depth, however, I will emphasize that there is indeed apprehension that the globalized economic relationships that have so painstakingly been built up over a period of decades will gradually break down. One possible scenario is that a new system will emerge, comprising three mercantilist, semi-enclosed trading and currency blocs: Western Europe, with Germany and France as its core, and based on the Euro; North America, with the United States as its core and based on the dollar; and East Asia, with Japan as its core and based on the yen. In this scenario, trade and investment would proceed relatively freely *within* each of these three economic zones, but would be subject to significant barriers *among* the three zones.

The possibility of trading blocs is anathema to internationalists. A particular point of concern has been the growth of regional free trade areas, the most famous of which are the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). These agreements are

usually presented as advances for free trade and investment; the problem is that such agreements include, as a concomitant of integration, clauses that reduce trade and investment flows between regions. These regional trade organizations could become the institutional cores of future trading blocs. Indeed, one study of NAFTA concludes that many of its U.S. backers were industries seeking integration with Mexico and Canada as a way to *increase* barriers against imports from competitor industries emanating from Europe and Asia.³⁵ Fearing their more protectionist features, many liberal economists have turned critical: Jagdish Bhagwati condemned regional trade agreements, which "have become a pox on the world trading system."³⁶ The EU has been singled out for criticism, and Michael Aho noted the "growing danger that the EU could turn inward and isolate itself."³⁷

In addition, there are signs that Japan is considering a yen-based bloc for East Asia. In 1994, Chalmers Johnson, president of the Japan Policy Research Institute, observed: "I believe Japanese officials and the mass media are preparing the public for disengagement from the United States in favor of the United Nations and Asia... Japan's beginning to find its place in Asia and its talk of Greater East Asian Coprosperity Sphere—not built at the point of bayonet but on true prosperity—is as idealistic as the European Union."³⁸ Anger over perceived U.S. domination and arrogance, especially its handling of the 1997-98 economic crisis in East Asia, increased interest in a Japanese-dominated economic zone in East Asia. Strong U.S. support for IMF austerity programs has been a point of contention. The fact that U.S. companies backed these IMF programs and then purchased Asian assets at very low prices as a result of the collapse in local currency values augmented suspicions. These developments led to criticism of U.S. "imperialism" in Asia, possibly leading to a new receptiveness to augmented Japanese influence in the region. In 1999, Eisuke Sakakibara, Japan's Vice Minister of Finance—who had led criticism of U.S. conduct during the Asia crisis—foresaw the prospect of a "genuine yen bloc emerging in about 10 years."³⁹ The impediments to implementing such a bloc would be formidable, but it is noteworthy that the idea is being considered in Tokyo, and would gain further support in the event of new shocks.

The growing economic tensions have led to political competition between Europe, the United States, and Japan for privileged access to prospective markets in underdeveloped countries, with each seeking to "steal" spheres of influence from the other. The United States sought to gain access to German spheres of influence in Eastern

Europe and French spheres of influence in Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa. U.S. oil companies actively compete with their French and Italian counterparts for access to the lucrative oil fields of Central Asia. Economic influence in South America has been a particular point of contention: The United States has been assiduously promoting an expansion of NAFTA to encompass all of North and South America. The possibility that several Latin countries will adopt the U.S. dollar as their official currency may accelerate their incorporation into a U.S.-led sphere of influence. The Europeans have responded with economic initiatives of their own: In 1997, *Business Week* lamented that "while the Congress and the Clinton Administration dither over moves to create a free trade bloc covering the hemisphere by 2005, the European Union is barging in and bolstering its economic links with the region."⁴⁰ Amidst Japanese efforts to deepen ties with East Asian neighbors, both the United States and Europe have sought privileged access to Asia.

There is thus a fairly widespread perception that the institutions of globalization are fragile and could be replaced in the future by protectionist blocs. In 1999, the *Economist* observed: "First bananas, now beef, soon genetically modified foods...Trade relations between America and Europe have rarely been so bad...The mood in both Washington and Brussels is resentful and uncompromising. Events could easily get out of hand."⁴¹

In order to contain these tensions and to ensure that they stay within certain bounds, U.S. foreign policy turned, once again, to the North Atlantic Treaty Association. The reinvigoration of NATO has become the panacea for virtually all types of tensions between the United States and Europe. Robert Hutchings, a former member of the U.S. National Security Council staff during the Bush (senior) presidency, states that a permanent military presence in Europe "had an economic as well as a security dimension and indeed was acquiring an increasingly economic logic and rationale." With the end of the Cold War, "trade issues loomed larger—and now would be played out without the galvanizing element of the Soviet threat. It was as Bush put it in a speech in the Netherlands just before the Maastricht summit, 'the dangers that old Cold War allies will become new economic adversaries—cold warriors turned to trade warriors.'⁴² Similarly, Michael Lind implies that the Clinton presidency was seeking to prevent "Euro-American rivalries by preserving U.S. hegemony in Europe through the refurbishment of NATO."⁴³

In addition, NATO enables the United States to exert influence over European economic policy, and serves as a conduit for U.S. commer-

cial power. This source of influence is highly prized by U.S. officials. According to one analyst:

[T]he presence of U.S. forces on the [European] continent, endows the United States with considerable leverage. Indeed, the influence provided by its NATO involvement may even extend to other bilateral and multilateral issues, including those in the economic field. One American diplomat reportedly stated that by exerting its military weight in Europe through NATO, the United States is able to "tell the Europeans what we want on a whole lot of issues—trade, agriculture, the gulf, you name it."⁴⁴

U.S. policymakers object that they have no *ex officio* voice in European economic affairs of any consequence. According to Jonathan Clarke, "a multilateral NATO-like institution between the United States and Europe has never existed. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [now the WTO] with its global membership is a pale shadow of NATO."⁴⁵ In the absence of a direct trans-Atlantic economic link, NATO must by default serve this function.

It is often suggested that contemporary U.S. foreign policy lacks any economic rationale, and that purely political or prestige factors must account for interventions after the end of the Cold War. This in essence is a restatement of the familiar globalization argument, and it asserts the following: As business interests now have virtually unfettered access to world markets, old-fashioned military power is an anachronism. The continued U.S. interest in military force has thus become separated from of any economic logic. Clearly, this argument is mistaken. As we have seen, U.S. foreign policy continues to have a economic logic, which is to preserve an open trade system against threats of regionalization, through the institutional structure of military alliances.

Continued U.S. military power provides other advantages as well. The military-industrial complex remains a significant economic actor, and it favors continued U.S. hegemony in Europe and elsewhere. A wide variety of economic interest groups thus favor an aggressive U.S. military posture, despite the advent of globalization—or indeed because of it. As U.S. investments become more globalized over time, they depend to a greater extent than before on military power to protect these investments, especially in unstable regions such as Africa or the Middle East. *New York Times* columnist, Thomas Friedman noted: "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden

fist—McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell-Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps."⁴⁶ In short, globalization is not at all antagonistic toward the idea of military intervention. On the contrary, military adventures and globalization are closely intertwined.

Conclusion: Hegemonic Interests and Humanitarian Intervention

We have seen that preserving the Cold War alliance structure, especially NATO, has been one of the central objectives of U.S. policy during the past decade. Yet there remains the problem of justification. The considerable expenditure of resources that NATO requires must be justified to legislatures and voting publics in both the United States and Europe, while other treaty obligations (such as the U.S.-Japan treaty) also must be justified. To achieve these objectives quite simply requires enemies. Yet, the search for enemies has failed to yield any "threat" that even remotely resembles Communism, either in terms of its ideological potency or overarching plausibility. There is thus a large void in contemporary international relations. On the one hand, little has changed: NATO and other key U.S. alliances remain virtually intact; the U.S. military that undergirds these alliances has almost the same level funding that it had during the height of the Cold War. Few of the major weapons procurement programs begun during the Cold War have been cancelled. On the other hand, the purported threat that had justified the creation of these structures in the first place—Communism—has virtually disappeared. The need for threats and enemies—the note on which I began this discussion—has been a central theme of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. The idea of preserving stability in Eastern Europe is surely helpful, but by itself is insufficient as a general justification. Efforts to generate new military strategies, based on new threats have suffered from inherent implausibility, often to the point of being plainly ridiculous.

The role of humanitarian intervention in this context is clear: It provides a rationale for U.S. hegemony and the Cold War institutions on which this hegemony is based. Indeed, it has given these institutions a new lease on life. Humanitarian operations serve to draw the capitalist democracies together—in a "glorious" moral crusade that is rhetorically similar to the Cold War—and helps surmount the various issues that divide these states and strain their unity. And the moral crusade is led by a seemingly benign United States, which must furnish the military support that these operations require.

Humanitarian intervention offers additional advantages: It appeals to influential segments of the U.S. public, especially political liberals, thus forging new constituencies for intervention. To be sure, this strategy also has its shortcomings: The U.S. military itself has been cool to the idea and has gone along with some measure of reluctance. From the standpoint of the professional soldier, humanitarian operations do not offer the technical challenges of traditional warfare. The lack of clear-cut military objectives or exit strategies—conditions that typify humanitarian intervention—have been objects of concern for military elites, who seek to avoid any repetition of the debacle suffered in Vietnam. The continuing effect of the “Vietnam Syndrome” on the U.S. military has been a significant limitation. Even the civilian elements of the foreign policy bureaucracy, which have been more supportive, hold ambivalent views about making humanitarian intervention the basic justification of U.S. hegemony. But then again, no strategy is perfect, and the lack of adequate alternatives has moved humanitarian missions, by default to some extent, into center stage. Humanitarian interventions serve to justify continued U.S. hegemony over its allies, with attendant political and economic benefits to the United States. Post-Cold War U.S. intervention thus has a clear rationale, supported by concrete interests.

Notes

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33. One counter-argument is that globalization has already proceeded so far that it has become irreversible. According to this view, fears of regional trade blocs are exaggerated and unwarranted. For reasons of space, I am unable to consider this argument at length, and will reach no firm conclusions about which side is correct in the debate over the effects of globalization and the possibility of trade blocs. Instead, I will emphasize the following key point: A significant number of policymakers and influential economists perceive a threat of trade blocs. This perception—or possibly misperception—has had a marked influence on U.S. foreign policy.
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The Uses of Death

Philip Morris Co. officials in the Czech Republic have been distributing an economic analysis concluding that cigarette consumption isn't a drag on the country's budget, in part because smokers' early deaths help offset medical expenses.

The report, commissioned by the cigarette maker and produced by consulting firm Arthur D. Little International, totes up smoking's "positive effects" on national finances, including revenue from excise and other taxes on cigarettes and "healthcare cost savings due to early mortality."

The premature demise of smokers saved the Czech government between 943 million koruna and 1.19 billion koruna (\$23.8 million to \$30.1 million) on health care, pensions and housing for the elderly in 1999, according to the report.

—*Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2001