

POWER AND SUPERPOWER

Global Leadership and Exceptionalism
in the 21st Century

*Morton H. Halperin, Jeffrey Laurenti,
Peter Rundlet, and Spencer P. Boyer, eds.*

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FOREWORD

A century ago diplomats and scholars took for granted a world dominated by “the powers” that maneuvered for their own advantage, dispatched armies and navies to expand their domains and advance their interests, and drained the resources of the colonies they had conquered. A half-century ago most of those powers had exhausted themselves in war, and the very notion of “the powers” faded from discourse. The nation that emerged intact from that war, instead of filling the imperial vacuum itself, forged an entirely new order to replace the old—harnessing power to construct a durable peace based on fundamental human rights, social progress and better standards of living, tolerance and justice, and respect for law. By century’s end a very real world community had developed, knit together by transport and trade, communications and institutions, and supported by one very real superpower.

The United States of America entered the twenty-first century as a global leader, emulated for its ideals and ideas as much as respected for its power to shape events. It had the world’s most advanced military; its market strength propelled the world economy. Its scientists broke new frontiers of knowledge; its cultural influence was felt everywhere. It was the linchpin of the international order.

To great power attaches great responsibility, and in the twentieth century the United States displayed exceptional responsibility in using its power in support of the new, inclusive order. Too often, however, great power breeds overconfidence and arrogance. Around the globe, there are many who see American policy as reflecting those tendencies. Just six years into the new century, for example, overreach in Iraq, reversal of arms-control pacts, vendettas against international justice, denial on climate change, and a consistent condescension toward allies have undermined U.S. leadership. Unmistakably, American policy makers’ hubris has begun to squander American power and influence, even as their recklessness is eroding Americans’ economic security.

For Americans to enjoy security and prosperity in the twenty-first century, the United States must reclaim its status as a reliable and visionary global leader whom others wish to emulate. A foreign policy that calls upon America’s awesome strength to bring the world

together, not tear it apart, offers the only sure path to America's continued global leadership and influence.

The safety and prosperity of the American people depend on the complex and abiding links that connect our country to its partners around the world. Events in other lands increasingly affect the American homeland: pollution crosses oceans, diseases do not stop at customs posts, and suicide bombers are not deterred by military action. We have learned through brutal and costly experience that deployment of our military power is not the answer to every problem. The war in Iraq has been the most vivid example of this limitation: Iraq itself is in shambles and our armed forces—overstretched and understaffed—are in dire need of repair. The lawless treatment of detainees in the search for terrorists abroad and the disregard for constitutional guarantees of civil liberties at home have discredited our legitimacy as a moral leader globally.

The way Americans respond to the problems of poverty and fragile states across two-thirds of the globe, how we protect human rights and promote democracy, and whether we can dispel the specter of nuclear catastrophe will test our capacity to exercise leadership around the world as much as how prepared we are to respond to hostile armies. Some of our greatest threats, such as global warming, nuclear terrorism, and deadly pandemics, are literally existential in nature. Comprehensive solutions to such transnational threats necessarily involve multilateral efforts. The tools of our foreign policy include more than the brave men and women of the armed forces. Responsible leadership requires that we utilize the full range of American resources—the economic, diplomatic, and intellectual offerings of the world's most dynamic and innovative society, from academia to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to the business community.

Americans have tasted the fruits of today's "America First" ideology, premised on bellicose unilateralism, blinded by dreams of dominance, and sustained by economic fantasy. But what, many Americans ask, is the alternative? Is there still vitality in the progressive, internationalist vision that led cities the world over to name their grand avenues and boulevards after Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy?

We believe there is. It is this conviction that animates *Power and Superpower: Global Leadership and Exceptionalism in the 21st*

Century. America yearns for a progressive foreign policy that harnesses U.S. power in support of a peaceful and prosperous world. This book aims to chart a course for the realization of that vision in the early twenty-first century.

This volume is the fruit of a partnership between our organizations, the Center for American Progress and The Century Foundation, which we have called the Security and Peace Initiative. We have enlisted a wide array of exceptional talent to lay out for Americans a blueprint for purposeful global leadership. What are the issues affecting the security and well-being of Americans today and in the years ahead? How can we most successfully and cost-effectively grapple with them, working with—rather than against—Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans?

Power and Superpower provides some important answers. All of our writers agree that American security is most effectively advanced by seeking cooperative solutions. On most issues explored here, such as global warming and peacekeeping, there is broad agreement among progressive-minded thinkers about what that cooperative solution should be. On others, such as free trade and the use of armed force, there is an ongoing discussion about the context of a collective solution.

This achievement reflects the breadth of vision and the commitment of energy of the editors of this volume. Morton H. Halperin has directed our joint initiative, together with Jeffrey Laurenti and Peter Rundlet, and with Spencer Boyer they have sought out some of the country's most incisive policy thinkers to contribute chapters, to debate the issues in expert working groups enlisting extraordinary talents, and to respond to often-penetrating criticisms. The four editors drew on the experience and judgment of the chairs of these working groups—John Ruggie, former assistant secretary-general of the United Nations; Wesley Clark, former supreme allied commander at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); Gayle Smith, former senior director for African affairs on the National Security Council; and Dan Tarullo, former assistant secretary of state for international economic and business affairs.

Simultaneously the editors and working group leaders organized a major national conference, "Power and Superpower: Global Leadership in the 21st Century," to engage a broad range of American and international experts and practitioners in the search

for solutions. That interactive process has enriched the thinking between the covers of this book. We hope this book sparks a discussion of policies and ideas to create a blueprint for a future of sustainable security and prosperity for all.

We are at a historic crossroads. America's forefathers looked to the experience of the Roman republic in creating America's constitutional order. Recently America's policies have seemed more to reflect the counsels of those who exhort us to take on the mantle of the Roman Empire instead. *Power and Superpower* is a reminder that we can safeguard our security, sustain our prosperity, and—no less importantly—secure our liberty if we reclaim those ancient republican virtues of moral strength and respect for law on which America's global leadership was built.

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CONTENTS

Foreword by Richard C. Leone and John D. Podesta	vii
Acknowledgments	xiii
1. Introduction: A World of Rules, <i>Morton H. Halperin and Spencer P. Boyer</i>	7
PART I: AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE U.S. ROLE IN THE WORLD, <i>John G. Ruggie</i>	17
2. The Roots of Liberal Internationalism: Lessons from the Past, <i>Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz</i>	23
3. Ideological Partisanship and American Public Opinion toward Foreign Policy, <i>Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon</i>	49
4. Global Leadership: American Exceptionalism in a Changing World Order, <i>David P. Forsythe</i>	69
5. Law v. Legitimacy: Obligation and Justification in America's Foreign Relations, <i>Jeffrey Laurenti</i>	89
PART II: FORCE AND ENFORCEMENT, <i>Wesley K. Clark</i>	109
6. Force and Legitimacy in the Post-9/11 Era: What Principles Should Guide the United States? <i>James B. Steinberg</i>	121
7. Operations Other Than War: Alternatives to the Traditional Uses of Military Power, <i>James Dobbins</i>	145
8. Renewing the Nuclear Bargain, <i>Ivo H. Daalder, Michael H. Fuchs, and Morton H. Halperin</i>	161
PART III: HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, AND CHANGING NOTIONS OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY, <i>Gayle Smith and Ken Gude</i>	177

9. Strengthening Weak States: A Twenty-First Century Imperative, <i>Susan E. Rice</i>	189
10. The Promise of Democracy Promotion, <i>Michael McFaul</i>	209
11. “Grab Whom You Must: Do What You Want”: U.S. Exceptionalism and the “War on Terror,” <i>William F. Schulz</i>	235
PART IV: GLOBAL ECONOMY, <i>Daniel Tarullo</i>	251
12. Trade Policy: The Exception to American Exceptionalism? <i>Robert Z. Lawrence</i>	259
13. Freedom from Want: American Exceptionalism and Global Development, <i>Stewart Patrick, Nancy Birdsall, and Milan Vaishnav</i>	277
14. The Pivotal Power: The United States and Climate Change, <i>Elliot Diringer and Eileen Claussen</i>	301
15. Standards for Trade, <i>Robert Kuttner</i>	317
PART V: <i>POWER AND SUPERPOWER: GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY: Security and Peace Initiative Conference, New York, June 6, 2006</i>	327
16. Remarks by Madeleine K. Albright	329
17. Remarks by Mark Malloch Brown	335
18. Remarks by Representative James A. Leach	343
19. Remarks by George Soros	355
Notes	359
Index	413
About the Contributors	435

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE U.S. ROLE IN THE WORLD

John G. Ruggie

More than any other country, the United States was responsible for creating the post-World War II system of global governance. For Franklin Roosevelt, the key challenge was to overcome the isolationist legacy of the 1930s and to ensure sustained U.S. engagement in achieving and maintaining a stable international order. Old world balance-of-power reasoning in support of that mission held little allure for the American people—protected by two oceans, with friendly and weaker neighbors to the north and south, and pulled unwillingly into two costly world wars in the span of a single generation by that system's breakdown. Accordingly Roosevelt framed his plans for winning the peace in a broader vision that tapped into America's sense of self as a nation: a modest form of constitutionalism embodying rules and institutions promoting human betterment through American-led collective security, free trade and stable money, human rights and decolonization, as well as active international involvement by the private and voluntary sectors. For Roosevelt's successors, the need to counter the Soviet threat reinforced the mission and in many respects made it easier to achieve at home and abroad. This variant of American exceptionalism became the basis for a global transformational agenda whose effects are unfolding still.

In doing so, America pursued its own interests, to be sure. But it defined those interests broadly enough and over a long enough

time horizon for them to be framed within a rules-based system that encouraged not merely acquiescence but active participation by other and lesser powers. Others saw their own interests taken into account and were given an institutionalized role in the system's management. The United States also preserved the right and exercised the option to act unilaterally. But when it did, more often than not it framed the deviation in ways that sought to make it appear consistent if not with the letter then at least the spirit of the rules—thereby acknowledging their legitimacy. John F. Kennedy's measured response to the Cuban missile crisis—still the most serious security threat the United States faced in all of postwar history—comes to mind. In contrast, when the United States offered no convincing basis for the international legitimacy of its actions it often paid a heavy price, as in Vietnam long before Iraq.

In short, while the postwar order was based on a structure of power that pivoted around the United States, it also enjoyed widespread ideational appeal and normative support, coming to be valued in its own right and in large measure even viewed by others as the natural order of things. Perhaps the decline of this unusual liberal internationalist edifice would have been inevitable, in light of emerging power shifts in the world at large. But the global governance policies and practices of the Bush administration have brought it on with the speed and searing intensity of lightning, while making it exceedingly difficult to ever fully reconstruct the world we have lost.

But we must not over-romanticize the past either. From the start, America's postwar project exhibited the conflicting effects of two very different forms of American exceptionalism. The vision Roosevelt evoked was one. But all along the United States also has sought to insulate itself from the domestic blowback of certain of the rules and institutions it helped create. While the executive branch traditionally drove the multilateralist agenda, the "exemptionalist" resistance was anchored in Congress. In drafting the United Nations Charter, for example, the U.S. delegation introduced language "re-affirming faith" in fundamental human rights. But because the support of Southern Democrats was critical to the Charter's ratification by the Senate, keeping Jim Crow laws beyond international scrutiny obliged the United States to balance that reaffirmation by adding what became Article 2.7: that "nothing contained in the

present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”

Reacting sharply against U.S.-initiated negotiations of several UN human rights instruments, beginning with the Genocide Convention, the Senate nearly adopted a constitutional amendment in 1954—the Bricker amendment—which, in effect, would have eviscerated the president’s formal treaty-making powers. In addition to the existing ratification requirement of a two-thirds Senate super-majority, the amendment would have required subsequent implementing legislation by both houses of Congress and approval by all state legislatures. As part of a deal with the Senate, President Eisenhower was forced to withdraw from further negotiations on international human rights instruments the United States itself had introduced. That same domestic political constituency has historically resisted all forms of international jurisdiction and spearheaded congressional opposition to the United Nations—Senator Homer Ferguson, Republican of Michigan, sponsored a resolution as early as 1948 threatening the creation of a new international institution if the impediment of Soviet vetoes in the United Nations Security Council were not removed.

During the Cold War, presidents from Harry Truman to George H. W. Bush sought to minimize the international embarrassment resulting from the exemptionalist impulse, especially in relation to civil rights, often acting through executive agreements or other such means when treaty ratification was beyond reach. Starting in the 1990s, however, a broader and more unrestrained exemptionalist opposition to global governance emerged. Its intellectual agenda was driven by the conservative think tanks established in the 1970s and 1980s to create a permanent legacy for the so-called Reagan Revolution. But its success also reflected the end of the external disciplining effects that the Cold War rivalry had imposed, as U.S. foreign policy became subjected far more extensively to a domestic politics that itself was increasingly polarized. In the 1994 midterm congressional elections, exemptionalism captured both the House and Senate—on the basis of a common Republican platform called “Contract with America,” which claimed, among other things, that “the Clinton administration appears to salute the day when American men and women will fight, and die, ‘in the service’ of the

United Nations.” In January 2001 that same political movement took over the White House as well.

More than a half-century after the Bricker amendment, race is no longer the political driver of the exemptionalist quest that it once was. Its base today is animated by a more diffuse set of social issues that also include abortion, gay rights, gun control, capital punishment, unfettered property rights, and the role of religion in politics and policy making—coupled with distrust of government and, therefore, even more so of international entities. Since 9/11, of course, exemptionalism has been reinforced by the existential fear of terrorism. A look at a “red states/blue states” electoral map of the United States indicates, however, that the exemptionalist base has not traveled far since the Ohio senator for whom it was named introduced his nearly successful amendment. But it became increasingly powerful as a result of the political realignment that began in 1968 when George Wallace first started to peel Southern white working-class voters away from the electoral coalition that FDR had constructed in support of his domestic and international agendas.

So where do we stand today? What do these developments augur for the future? The four chapters in this section are intended to deepen our understanding of critical dilemmas and choices our nation faces today vis-à-vis the international order we did so much to create and sustain.

Charles Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz are pessimistic. Looking back at the roots of liberal internationalism, they go so far as to characterize America’s postwar posture as an interlude, the exception rather than the rule in American foreign policy, preceded by isolationism and followed by unilateralism. The conditions that favored it were unique, they argue, and have weakened over time, while new forces point in a very different direction. The threat of terrorism advantages the political extremes, not the center; globalization widens income disparities, further fueling partisanship; and unipolarity makes it easier for politicians to adopt foreign policy positions that play well in their districts rather than work best in the international arena. The key factor, they conclude, is how domestic politics will unfold.

This is the terrain explored by Robert Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon. Public opinion surveys consistently indicate support for cooperation with other countries and for the United Nations, coupled with reluctance for the United States to go it alone. But these attitudes

have little if any electoral impact. Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon explain why: the overriding feature of public opinion regarding foreign policy today, they indicate, is a polarization along partisan and ideological lines that began in the 1970s and has become more pronounced over time. Indeed, such differences over the Iraq war, they point out, have been far greater than over the Korean and Vietnam wars. They also note, however, that the public relies heavily on leaders in forming its views, and partisan polarization among political elites preceded and helped shape the formation of current public opinion, thus offering a ray of hope for a possible attitudinal shift back toward the political center.

David Forsythe examines the costs and contradictions of the Bush administration's unilateralism and concludes that it is not sustainable. Asking himself whether it is possible to reinvent an FDR-like foreign policy framework for the new era, he is cautiously optimistic—with an emphasis on caution. He proposes key elements of UN reform, ranging from the Security Council to the Human Rights Council, which he believes would remain true to the interests of the United States and the spirit of liberal internationalism while also accommodating major emerging powers like China and India.

Perhaps these rising powers will peacefully claim greater influence in a world order based on the rule of law—if a law-based order prevails. But Jeffrey Laurenti warns that Washington's growing propensity to exempt itself from the constraints of international law has undermined that order, driving a deep wedge between America and its traditional allies and weakening America's global leadership role. For a quarter-century, he argues, conservative “sovereignists” have chipped away at American respect for treaty obligations, most notably regarding international organizations, human rights, and regulation of force. In place of law, leaders have to invoke alternative principles to persuade relevant publics to support their actions, but Laurenti suggests that, cut loose from legality and formal institutions upholding it, “legitimacy” can seem highly subjective and sharpen conflict as much as resolve it.

Two broad inferences can be drawn from these chapters. One concerns the central importance of domestic politics, the gateway through which any newly invigorated progressive foreign policy has to pass. Here the American political system is beginning to demonstrate the resilience of its design. On the issue of how to treat detainees in the amorphous War on Terror, the country is relearning

the core civics lesson that we have three branches of government, not just one. The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled against the administration, and Senator Lindsey Graham, a conservative Republican from South Carolina, describes his efforts to sustain the Geneva Conventions against administration efforts to weaken them as “a signal about who America is in 2006.” On the critical challenge of climate change, we are rediscovering the virtues of federalism, as states and cities take the lead in the absence of policy at the national level—even the business community, fearing potential future liabilities, has become actively engaged by adopting voluntary emissions caps. The successful pushback against privatizing Social Security demonstrated that even amid the deepest partisan divisions a sense of social solidarity continues to prevail. And for their part, neoconservative pundits have had to acknowledge that there is no linear relationship between military power and international legitimacy—and, even more important, that legitimacy matters.

The second inference concerns the international realm. It is not an empty slate on which America can simply inscribe its preferences when or if they were to change. Traditional allies have been alienated, the major emerging economies are beginning to flex their political muscles, and Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations,” which seemed oddly hyperbolic a decade ago, appears ever closer to becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy in relations with large parts of the Islamic world. Some of these developments are well beyond American control, but others have been severely exacerbated by recent U.S. policies. The United States possessed an enormous reservoir of soft power, in Joseph Nye’s terminology, by virtue of the fact that the universal values for which we stand and which we promoted came to define the norms of civilized behavior among states and peoples. Here the potential loss to America is greatest. Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, the torture memos, rendition, illegal domestic wiretapping—these acts amount to the moral equivalent of asset stripping, because it is difficult if not impossible to invoke the power of norms against others when we ourselves raise their violation to the level of official doctrine. For our own sakes if for none others’, we must ensure that *this* becomes a mere interlude in the history of American foreign policy.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. John Kerry, George W. Bush, moderated by Jim Lehrer, September 30, 2004, transcript, First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate, Commission on Presidential Debates.

2. George W. Bush, “President’s Remarks to the National Association of Home Builders,” Office of the Press Secretary, October 2, 2004.

3. For a discussion of the debate’s significance, see Michael Signer, “A City on the Hill,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* 1 (Summer 2006): 33–34.

4. Our discussion focuses on neoconservative views (built around righteousness) as opposed to traditional conservative views (built around sovereignty) regarding U.S. engagement with the world.

5. Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term “American exceptionalism” in 1831 in *Democracy in America* to describe the major differences between the United States and other nations.

6. See Harold Koh, “On America’s Double Standard: The Good and Bad Faces of Exceptionalism,” *The American Prospect*, October 2003, A16.

7. Richard Haass, *The Opportunity: America’s Moment to Alter History’s Course* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 27.

8. S/Res/661 (1990).

9. The embargo was subsequently relaxed by S/Res/1483 (2003).

10. See S/Res/1483 (2003).

11. S/Res/1546 (2004).

12. For an excellent summary of the development of international law in the early twentieth century, see Philippe Sands, *Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules—From FDR’s Atlantic Charter to George W. Bush’s Illegal War* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 1–22.

13. *SS Lotus (Turkey v. France)*, Permanent Court of International Justice, Series A-No. 10, 1927.
14. See Sands, *Lawless World*, 7–8, describing the lack of international law to control state behavior.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Harvard University Commencement Address, June 5, 1947.
19. Press Conference, March 21, 1963, U.S. State Department Auditorium.
20. International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973.
21. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973.
22. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, 1985; Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, 1987; Convention against Torture, 1984.
23. For a description of the shift toward American unilateralism during George W. Bush's first administration, see John Ruggie, "Doctrinal Unilateralism and Its Limits: America and Global Governance in the New Century," *American Foreign Policy in a Globalized World* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
24. Examples include U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson confronting Soviet ambassador Valerian Zorin at the United Nations Security Council during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the United States gaining Organization of American States approval of a quarantine of Cuba to isolate the USSR during the standoff.
25. Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (*Nicar. v. U.S.*), Jurisdiction and Admissibility, 1984 ICJ REP. 392, June 27, 1986.
26. S/Res/660 (1990).
27. In June 1999, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1244, authorizing the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to begin the long-term effort of building democracy, self-government, and stability in the region.
28. Citing fears that U.S. soldiers were at risk for being prosecuted by politically motivated prosecutors at the ICC, the government went so far as to pass the American Servicemembers' Protection Act, derided by many as The Hague Invasion Act. The Act not only prohibits American cooperation with the ICC, but also authorizes the president to use any means necessary to release any American national who is detained on behalf of the Court.
29. See Human Rights Watch, "The Road to Abu Ghraib," 2004, describing the practice of rendition during George W. Bush's administration.

30. See Sands, *Lawless World*, 21. Many believe that American willingness to be bound in the economic arena may be based more on corporate interests and influence than a commitment to multilateralism.

31. In 1999 and 2000, for example, America's favorability rating in Turkey was over 50 percent.

32. See Peter Beinart, *The Good Fight: Why Liberals—and Only Liberals—Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 139.

33. Koh, "On America's Double Standard," A19.

34. For a discussion of the positive side of American exceptionalism, see Signer, "A City on the Hill," *Democracy* 1 (Summer 2006): 33–44.