

Transnational Liberalism and U.S. Primacy

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The longer U.S. global military primacy endures, the more puzzling it becomes. If, as balance-of-power theory asserts, the international system abhors imbalances of power, why is it tolerating this particular one? How can it be that the unipolar moment is now in its second decade, with few if any concrete signs of decay?

A first step toward understanding the singularity and the causes of U.S. primacy is to note that the United States enjoys being both the only pole in the international system and on the heavy end of an imbalance of world power. In principle, a unipolar international system need not be imbalanced. Neorealism, the school of thought most concerned with power, implies that a system is unipolar when the second most powerful state cannot by itself counterbalance the most powerful state. For neorealism, only states, not alliances, may be poles.¹ But in theory a pole may be counterbalanced by an alliance of nonpolar states. Thus U.S. primacy presents two puzzles: the endurance of unipolarity and the endurance of the imbalance of power.

William Wohlforth adequately explains why unipolarity is so durable. The lead of the United States over potential challengers is so great that, barring an unlikely abrupt American collapse, it will take decades for any power to gain polar status. The scale of the imbalance is a product of a number of crucial his-

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1. Kenneth N. Waltz makes this clear in his *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979). Other realists agree; cf. Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5–41. For Schweller (*Deadly Imbalances*, p. 17), a pole "must have greater than half the military capability of the most powerful state in the system." Schweller thus implies that a state with 51 percent of the power of the most powerful state is a pole (i.e., is able internally to counterbalance the most powerful state). This is a possible operationalization of the definition of "pole" but not a necessary one, inasmuch as it defines "balance" rather broadly.

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torical events. The United States became the world's leading economic power in the late nineteenth century; it was compelled by World War II to channel that power into military might; during the Cold War, it continued to amass power to counter its Soviet rival, while potential great powers joined it in counterbalancing; the Soviet Union suddenly disappeared in 1991; and the United States was left as the only pole. If Robert Gilpin and other hegemonic stability theorists are correct, the putative law of uneven growth ensures that unipolarity will erode.² The erosion may be slow, however.

Wohlforth is less convincing on the persistence of the imbalance of international power or why the American "unipole" still faces no counterbalancing coalition.³ The United States has the world's largest economy, accounting for 23 percent of gross world product; but the European Union (EU) accounts for 20 percent, China for 12 percent, and Japan for 7 percent.⁴ The United States has no monopoly on nuclear weapons or offensive delivery systems (although in many areas it enjoys a sizable qualitative advantage). In principle, therefore, a balance of power could emerge were enough states sufficiently motivated to increase their offensive capabilities and form an alliance.

Why is the rest of the world not compelled to counterbalance the United States?⁵ Wohlforth and Stephen Walt argue that geography inhibits counterbalancing. The country's physical isolation from potential challengers renders it relatively nonthreatening, and any power that counterbalanced the United States would itself be counterbalanced in its own region.⁶ Other scholars offer institutional, "path-dependent" explanations for continuing U.S. predominance. John Ikenberry argues that the United States and its allies are parties to an implicit constitution that limits U.S. power in exchange for cooperation; moreover, the international institutions that the United States has constructed

2. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); see also Charles A. Kupchan, "After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 40–79.

3. Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World," pp. 37–41, posits an extreme definition of unipolarity, namely, a situation wherein *all* counterbalancing is impossible. This definition, however, does not follow from his assertion that "alliances are not structural," because in that case a unipole could conceivably face a counterbalancing alliance. It also begs the question by implying that unipolarity endures because it is unipolarity.

4. The figures are for 1999. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/xx.html#Econ>.

5. I reduce states' options to two: counterbalancing and acquiescence. States actually have a large number of possible responses to power imbalances; for a nuanced treatment, see Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*.

6. Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World"; and Stephen M. Walt, "Two Cheers for Clinton's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (March/April 2000), pp. 63–79. Wohlforth's argument is about unipolarity, but as discussed above, he also has in mind the lack of a balance of power.

since World War II pay increasing returns, raising the costs of defection over time.⁷ Charles Kupchan and Josef Joffe make similar arguments. For Kupchan the United States is a benign unipole that has offered states restraint in exchange for protection.⁸ For Joffe the United States maintains primacy by following a global Bismarckian strategy, eschewing conquest in favor of making itself indispensable to order in most regions of the world.⁹

None of these arguments can explain why some states are in fact counterbalancing U.S. might. The explanations commit the fallacy of inferring behavior from outcomes: They assert an absence of counterbalancing from the absence of a balance of international power. Following convention, I define counterbalancing as taking internal or external measures, or both, to increase one's military capabilities relative to a particular state or alliance.¹⁰ It is true that neither Western Europe nor Japan is counterbalancing. Neither the formation of an EU Rapid Reaction Force to intervene for humanitarian purposes nor French grumbling about U.S. "hyperpower" constitutes counterbalancing. Japan, meanwhile, recently renewed its U.S. alliance and is cooperating with the Americans on theater missile defense (TMD).

Russia's policy has been more ambiguous. Russia has mostly acquiesced to U.S. predominance, but since 1991 has moved haltingly from a cooperative to a testy relationship with the United States. In particular, Russia attempted to block NATO, and hence U.S., control of Kosovo in June 1999 by attempting to carve out its own zone of occupation; and in July 2001 Russia entered a "friendship pact" with China.¹¹ China, for its part, is clearly counterbalancing the United States. Increases in its gross military spending and attempts to modernize its navy, air force, and missile arsenal are not directed solely at the

7. G. John Ikenberry, "Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 43–78.

8. Kupchan, "After Pax Americana."

9. Josef Joffe, "How America Does It," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September/October 1997), pp. 13–27. Michael Mastanduno has also published work on the persistence of unipolarity. See Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), pp. 49–88. But he seeks to explain how U.S. policymakers are trying to preserve unipolarity, not the outcome of unipolarity (or an imbalance of power) per se.

10. Counterbalancing is thus directed at some state or coalition; not any increase in power will do. Evidence that B is increasing its power to counterbalance A is of two types: timing (when B's power increases closely follow in time those of A), and verbal statements (when officials from B say that B's power increases are intended to counterbalance A). In keeping with the literature on international security, I refer to military power. Economic and cultural assets may also be used to influence others, and indeed America's allies are attempting to counterbalance these forms of U.S. power.

11. Patrick E. Tyler, "Russia and China Sign 'Friendship' Pact," *New York Times*, July 17, 2001, p. A1.

United States. But these efforts were accelerated following U.S. successes in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 and the Kosovo campaign of 1999. Chinese military and civilian officials openly state that they consider the United States the greatest threat to their country.¹²

If it were enough that the United States is half a world away, or exploits its allies relatively little, or includes them in institutions that pay increasing returns, or is indispensable to regional order, then China and Russia ought to act as Japan does: acquiesce to U.S. power or even become a spoke of the American hub. Kenneth Waltz at least does recognize that some states are beginning to counterbalance, but he seems to include Japan on the list (without any concrete evidence), and in any case cannot say why East Asian states are doing so while West European states are not.¹³ Recent explanations for U.S. predominance fall short because they employ the standard assumption that states' domestic institutions and ideologies are unit-level variables that do not belong in a theory of international politics. They hold these variables constant and posit one or another set of incentives facing potential challengers to U.S. primacy, implying that any reasonable state would not try to counterbalance the United States. Empirically, however, the net effect of the incentives clearly varies across states. That can only result from differences among the states themselves.¹⁴

In this article I argue that the degree to which a state counterbalances U.S. power is a function of how politically liberal that state is, measured by the degree to which its internal institutions and practices are liberal and the degree to which liberals influence foreign policy. Political liberalism is an ideology that seeks to uphold individual autonomy and prescribes a particular set of domestic institutions as means to that end.¹⁵ No coalition has formed to counterbal-

12. David Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000), pp. 52–79; Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking': The Concept of Limited Deterrence," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Winter 1995/96), pp. 5–42; and John Pomfret, "U.S. Now a 'Threat' in China's Eyes," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2000, p. A1.

13. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 5–41.

14. For the original justification of this move, see Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. Logically, of course, there is no reason to consider power an international-systemic variable but ideology or institutions domestic; one may conceive of any of these variables in relative and hence systemic terms.

15. As I use the term, liberalism must not be conflated with democracy. The two concepts overlap in theory and practice, but democracy I take to be the rule of the majority. For more on the distinction as it applies to international relations, see John M. Owen, IV, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), chap. 1; and Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6 (November/December 1997), pp. 22–43.

ance U.S. power because political liberalism constitutes a transnational movement that has penetrated most potential challenger states at least to some degree. How liberal a state is affects both how it responds to U.S. power and policy and how the United States treats it. Liberal elites the world over tend to perceive a relatively broad coincidence of interest between their country and other liberal countries. They tend to interpret the United States as benign and devote few state resources to counterbalancing it. In turn, the liberals who govern the United States tend to treat other liberal countries relatively benignly. But antiliberal elites tend to perceive a more malign United States and devote relatively more state resources to counterbalancing; the United States meanwhile tends to treat less benignly countries governed by such elites and their favored institutions.

The interactions between the United States and a given potential challenger are mutually reinforcing, and so each relationship is on a path that is difficult to abandon. Unilateral moves by the administration of George W. Bush on issues such as the environment and missile defense may perturb and even anger U.S. allies, but should not drive them toward military counterbalancing. Similarly, U.S. policies are unlikely to cause China to abandon counterbalancing. The U.S.-Russian relationship is the least settled, in part because the Russian domestic regime is itself unsettled. Should Russia end up with an antiliberal regime, it will likely counterbalance the United States more consistently. U.S. policies toward Russia can have a marginal effect on the fate of Russian liberalism: The more objectively threatening are U.S. gestures toward Russia, the more Russian liberals lose domestic credibility and influence. In this way the power of transnational liberal identity is limited, as is the durability of U.S. primacy. If Americans want to preserve primacy—and the benefits of U.S. primacy outweigh the costs for many non-Americans as well as for Americans—their country must walk a difficult line, simultaneously preserving not only its power but transnational liberalism where it can, and yet guarding against actions that appear imperialistic to foreign elites.

In the next section, I advance an explanation for continuing U.S. primacy that turns on a notion of identity derived from the social theory of Georg Simmel. Following that, I show how the argument is consistent with the evidence in Japan, Western Europe, Russia, and China. I consider various objections to the argument. Finally, I argue that, for its own good as well as the general global good, the United States ought to try to maintain its primacy for as long as it can, including by judiciously promoting and preserving political liberalism abroad.

Ideology and Strategic Preferences

States' strategic preferences—the foreign alignments desired by their governments—are a function not only of their material power but also of the ideology and relative influence of their elites.¹⁶ Ideology shapes strategic preferences because it gives its holders a transnational group affiliation. By transnational I simply mean crossing state boundaries; members of a transnational group may be in or out of the government of a given state.¹⁷ Transnational affiliations provide a basis for identifying with certain foreign states and against others. If elites of one ideology control foreign policy, the state will follow one set of strategic preferences; if no ideology dominates, the state's policy will be incoherent.

POLITICAL GROUPS AND IDENTITIES

Following the German sociologist Georg Simmel, I define identity as the unique set of social groups to which an actor belongs. Conceived of spatially, the “intersection of social circles” that an actor inhabits constitutes his identity. A given person will belong to an infinite number of groups: for example, males, sociologists, Germans, Berliners, and so on. No two persons belong to precisely the same set of groups, and thus each person has his own identity.¹⁸

Most relevant here is a political group, that is, a group constituted by a plan for ordering social life. Any such plan is a rejection of alternative plans, and hence any political group is in competition with one or more other such groups. Because political groups compete with one another, members of a given political group derive positive utility from one another's gains vis-à-vis

16. Cf. Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Autumn 1997), pp. 513–553.

17. Thus my definition is more general than that employed in such works as Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Advocates beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998). For these scholars, at least one actor in a transnational relationship must be nongovernmental (Risse-Kappen, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In*, p. 3); for me a transnational group could in principle comprise only members of governments. J. David Singer refers to what I call transnational groups as “extra-national entities.” Singer, “The Global System and Its Subsystems: A Developmental View,” in James N. Rosenau, ed., *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 21–43. In the past such groups were called *international* (e.g., the Socialist International).

18. Georg Simmel, “The Web of Group Affiliations” (“Die Kreuzung sozialer Kreise,” *Soziologie* [Munich: Duncker and Humblot, 1922], pp. 305–344), trans. Reinhard Bendix, in Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group-Affiliations* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955).

opposing groups. A political group's tactics may include persuasion (which, insofar as it succeeds, expands the group's membership); alliances with other groups with which it shares an enemy; bribery; and coercion.¹⁹

In the modern world, virtually everyone belongs to at least one political group, namely, a nation-state. The social context for a nation-state is global. A given nation-state's plan for ordering social life is that world politics should never work to its detriment. Elites involved in the domestic politics of a given state likely belong to additional political groups, namely, factions with competing visions for ordering public life.²⁰ Typically these groups differ over the proper scope of state power in a given area of social life (e.g., the distribution of resources, civil rights, or the religious beliefs of citizens). Because similar ideas and social conditions often exist in more than one state at once, like-minded elites in two or more states form a transnational ideological group whose members identify with one another across state boundaries. A transnational ideological group need not be centralized or regulated, nor need its members interact with one another (although they may do so, as with the various socialist and communist internationals). What makes it a group is the intersubjective understanding that its members have one or more ideological enemies in common.

As David Skidmore writes, members of a transnational ideological group tend to derive positive utility from one another's gains vis-à-vis opposing ideological groups.²¹ By contrast, they will perceive losses in their own power from increases in the power of opposing ideological groups in other states. Members of a transnational group do not simply see and act similarly; they feel solidarity for one another.²²

19. For discussions of these activities and applications to international relations, see Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), especially pp. 152–164; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests and International Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially the introductory essay by Risse and Sikkink (pp. 1–38).

20. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1976). For Schmitt politics was essentially a struggle among competing ways of life.

21. David Skidmore, "Introduction: Bringing Social Orders Back In," in Skidmore, ed., *Contested Social Orders and International Politics* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997), pp. 5–6. Skidmore refers to competing domestic social orders whose members form cross-national coalitions, rather than to transnational ideological groups, but the concept is virtually the same.

22. Transnational ideological groups are conceptually similar to the transnational civilizations explored in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). Huntington's civilizations, however, are constituted by fundamental worldviews best described as religious. Civilizations and political ideologies may correlate

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

An elite who belongs to a transnational ideological group as well as to a nation-state will have a conception of his state's interests that integrates the visions of the two groups. The national interest for him will include the particular way of life prescribed by his ideology, and hence particular institutions, as well as security from attack. Physical security is a necessary condition for his preferred way of life, but that priority does not necessarily lead him to set aside domestic ideology when thinking about foreign policy. Rather, ideology will to a greater or lesser extent color his perception of foreign threats.

The extent to which an elite will identify threats based on ideology will vary with which component—internal or external—of his conception of the national interest is more threatened. If the greater threat is a domestic ideological enemy, he will defend his ideology more vigorously and identify more strongly with fellow ideologues in other countries. The limiting case is a civil war.²³ If the greater threat is a foreign state, he will defend his country's security more vigorously and identify more with fellow nationals of whatever ideology. The limiting case is an interstate war. When the ratio of internal to external threats approaches one to one, as when his government faces no serious internal *or* external threats, he will feel moderate solidarity with both his ideological group and his nation-state, and will tend to see no conflict between the two groups.²⁴

IDENTITIES AND STRATEGIC PREFERENCES

The more a state governed by an ideology acts as an instrument of that ideology, the more members of its ideological group feel solidarity with that state. A state acts as an instrument of its governing ideology when it promotes that ideology within or without its borders. Revolutionary states are especially prone to such promotions, but normal states engage in them as well.²⁵ It follows that adherents to a given ideology will want to treat more kindly a state governed

to some extent, but political ideologies such as liberal democracy or Marxism-Leninism are trans-civilizational (and civilizations such as Islam are trans-ideological).

23. Cf. Karl Deutsch, "External Involvement in Internal War," in Harry Eckstein, ed., *Internal War: Problems and Approaches* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 103.

24. The process is similar to what Steven R. David has called "omnibalancing," or the balancing of domestic and foreign threats in which leaders of many third world countries engaged during the Cold War. David, however, explicitly downplays any role for ideology in the production of threats. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

25. On revolutionary states and ideological promotion, see Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); on promotion by normal states, see John M. Owen, IV, "The International Promotion of Domestic Institutions," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2002).

by their ideology, particularly one that promotes it; and they will be inclined to be confrontational toward a state governed by an enemy ideology. It also follows that such adherents will derive positive utility from the gains of a state governed by their ideology, and negative utility from the gains of a state governed by an enemy ideology. As outlined above, the intensity of these preferences and utilities will vary directly with the degree to which these adherents face ideological threats in their own countries. In normal times, members of an ideological group will simply be complacent about the gains of exemplary states.

If war is what Clausewitz said it is—"an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will"²⁶—then it is easy to see why adherents to an ideology will have little to fear from an increase in the power of a state ruled by their ideology. Across countries, members of an ideological group share the end of broadening and deepening support for their ideology. Thus the will of a state ruled by members of the group overlaps significantly with the will of group members in other countries. It would make little sense for the latter to invest many resources in counterbalancing that state. Conversely, ideological group members will have good reason to fear, and counterbalance, states governed by an opposing group.²⁷ The empirical record shows that victors in war often impose new domestic institutions upon states they defeat.²⁸

INTERNATIONAL OUTCOMES

The longer states continue to interact in a particular pattern, be it friendly or hostile, the more their governing elites both expect the pattern to continue and act so as to perpetuate it. Departing from the predominant patterns entails var-

26. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapaport (New York: Penguin, 1982), Bk. 1, chap. 2, p. 101.

27. The Monroe Doctrine of December 1823 illustrates that the degree to which governments fear that foreign power depends on the purpose to which that power is likely to be put, and that purpose is often tied to ideology. "The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America," declared Monroe. "We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety" (emphasis added). Monroe went on to emphasize the French imposition of absolute monarchy in Spain, which had ended a few weeks before. The text of Monroe's address is available at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/monroe.htm>.

28. Suzanne Werner, "Absolute and Limited War: The Possibility of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change," *International Interactions*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1996), pp. 67–88; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson, "Nasty or Nice? Political Systems, Endogenous Norms, and the Treatment of Adversaries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (February 1997), pp. 175–199; and Owen, "International Promotion of Domestic Institutions." Of course, war victors often replace the leaders of states they defeat; see, for example, Henk E. Goemans, *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

ious psychic and political costs. Typically it will also entail material costs, inasmuch as prudent elites will use the state to broaden and deepen support for their strategic preferences. They will attempt to bind future governments of their country to their preferred alignments through treaties and membership in international organizations. They will create societal interests in continuing the alignment by encouraging economic interdependence with countries governed by their ideology. They will seek to discourage alignments with states having an opposing ideology by entering fewer treaties and minimizing economic interdependence with them.²⁹

Of course, international alignments do change. Ideologies that stress correctness over consent, such as Marxism-Leninism, tend to yield brittle alliances; adherents to such ideologies are quick to pronounce one another heretical.³⁰ Liberalism, with its emphasis on choice, is less prone to heresy hunting, and hence its alliances are more robust.³¹ But even liberal alliances are vulnerable to the familiar pressures of international anarchy, in particular the security dilemma, wherein steps taken by state A to enhance its security may cause B to feel less secure and thereby to take steps that make A feel less secure.³² The

29. See, for example, Joanna Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Brian Pollins, "Does Trade Still Follow the Flag?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (June 1989), pp. 465–480. Thus the arguments of Kupchan ("After Pax Americana"), Ikenberry ("Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order"), Joffe ("How America Does It"), and others are valid as far as they go; but they only go so far as the zone of liberal states. Put another way, the relations between the United States and its liberal allies on the one hand, and nonliberal states on the other, are "path-dependent," meaning that changing the quality of those relations becomes increasingly costly, in psychic as well as material terms, over time. On path dependence, see Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (June 2000), pp. 251–268.

30. Cf. Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998). See also the vigorous and once-secret debates between Soviet and Chinese diplomats over Stalinism, available on the web site of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project, <http://cwihip.si.edu>. See, for example, Zhang Shu Guang and Chen Jian, eds. and trans., "The Emerging Disputes between Beijing and Moscow: Ten Newly Available Chinese Documents, 1956–1958"; and, specifically on Soviet worries about Chinese communist ideology, see V.M. Zubok, ed. and trans., "A New 'Cult of Personality': Suslov's Secret Reports on Mao, Khrushchev, and Sino-Soviet Tensions, December 1959."

31. See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 35–37; Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*, pp. 35–36; and Mark L. Haas, "Systemic Ideology and National Threat: Ideological Affinity and Threat Perception in International Relations," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000, chap. 1.

32. For definitive works on the security dilemma, see John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 1950), pp. 157–180; and Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167–214.

security dilemma is mitigated but does not disappear among elites who share an ideology but live in different countries. Even if A is a liberal exemplar, policies its government implements to enhance national security may unambiguously degrade B's security. Consider relations between the United States and India, two liberal giants, from the early 1960s through the early 1990s. China's conflicts with both the Soviet Union and India led the latter two to align, which in turn alienated the United States from India. Tensions were exacerbated in the early 1970s when Richard Nixon's administration cultivated relations with China and tilted toward Pakistan. The natural affinity between India and the United States was overshadowed by international rivalries.³³

Even if ideological brethren do not sour on foreign ideological exemplars, their influence within their own state may shrink simply because the foreign exemplar is not conforming to their predictions. An ideology claims to explain the political world and asserts that its own adherents will act rightly, nobly, and peacefully, while adherents to opposing ideologies will act wrongly, shamefully, and aggressively. When those assertions appear falsified, the ideology's credibility is damaged and its support may decay. Like Thomas Kuhn's scientific paradigms,³⁴ ideologies move toward crises as anomalies accumulate. Suppose republicans in B assert that A, being a republic, is pacific (unlike monarchies, which on their reckoning are warlike). If A repeatedly displays unambiguously aggressive tendencies or aligns with B's enemy, thus appearing to threaten B's security, republicanism will have suffered a defeat within B. At that point republicans may either suffer a loss of ideological credibility or conceal their strategic preferences.³⁵ The case of the Italian left and the Soviet Union following World War II is illustrative. Italian communists and socialists were openly pro-Soviet and anti-American, opposing both NATO membership and Marshall Plan aid. They were poised to win the crucial April 1948 parliamentary elections until, two months before the balloting, the communists in Czechoslovakia carried out their infamous coup. When the Italian left refused

33. See, for example, Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Spring 1988), especially pp. 299–302. On the tilt toward Pakistan, see Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), chap. 21.

34. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

35. On the falsification of preferences for political reasons, see Timur Kuran, "Ethnic Dissimilation and Its International Diffusion," in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 35–60.

to condemn this clear act of Soviet aggression, their credibility plummeted, helping the Christian Democrats to win the Italian election.³⁶

Thus realist and constructivist theories that ascribe importance to international interactions are correct.³⁷ Treating another country as an enemy may make it into one, inasmuch as it can weaken those actors in that state who have staked their reputations on one's good intentions toward their country.³⁸ But contrary to the assertions of theories that ignore domestic politics, the rate at which B becomes A's enemy or friend will vary with its degree of ideological affinity with A. Hence a state can act more harshly for longer toward states governed by its own ideology without alienating them.

Transnational Liberalism and Potential Challengers

What follows is not a rigorous test of hypotheses deduced from my argument, but rather some observations on various potential challengers to U.S. primacy. My argument would attribute the persistence of the imbalance of international power to the wide distribution and influence of a particular transnational ideological group, namely, liberals. By liberals I mean elites who hold as normative the tenets of political liberalism, an ideology that asserts the autonomy of the individual as the highest good. Liberals believe that each person (minors, the mentally incapable, and felons excepted) ought to be allowed to pursue her happiness as she sees fit, so long as she does not violate the autonomy of another. Any coercion must be by an authority to which individuals have voluntarily handed over coercive power. Liberalism implies certain governmental institutions, preeminently those limiting the power of the state over the individual. Examples include freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, and religion; various juridical rights; and regularly held, competitive elections. Because they are involved in politics—a struggle for power—liberals may employ illiberal means to liberal ends. Lyndon Johnson used his power as a U.S. senator and then president to liberal ends; but to gain that power he probably

36. James Edward Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940–1950: The Politics of Diplomacy and Stabilization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), pp. 147–150; and Donald Sassoon, "Italian Images of Russia, 1945–56," in Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, eds., *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture, and Society, 1948–58* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), p. 198.

37. Realists making this claim include Stephen Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, who argues that states judge threats based in part upon evidence of aggressive intention. Constructivists include Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), who argues that the norm governing relations among states—whether competitive, cooperative, or altruistic—is built upon the quality of gestures they make toward one another.

38. Of course, treating another country as a friend when it is an ideological enemy may also be dangerous, as the British and French learned in 1939.

stole the 1948 U.S. Senate election in Texas.³⁹ What makes a politician liberal are his ends more than his means. At some point, however, the distinction between means and ends disappears; thus for example I do not classify as liberal former Russian President Boris Yeltsin, inasmuch as he behaved illiberally on so many occasions.⁴⁰

Modern liberalism arose in Western Europe during the Enlightenment (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). From the beginning liberalism was transnational, with elite propagators in Scotland, England, France, Prussia, and elsewhere. The links between liberals in France and Britain's American colonies in the late eighteenth century, brought out most starkly in the two revolutions in these lands, are perhaps the most dramatic evidence. Liberalism continued to spread until World War I, after which it retreated in many regions in the face of fascism and Marxism-Leninism. Although it vanquished each of these ideological foes during the twentieth century, liberalism is not predominant in every region of the world. For now, however, it is the "prevailing nostrum," the agenda-setting ideology that puts its competitors on the defensive in most regions.⁴¹

Table 1 lists military spending by the most plausible counterbalancers. As explained below, the degree of a state's liberalism correlates well with the degree to which it has been counterbalancing the United States.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND JAPAN: LIBERAL ACQUIESCENCE

Western Europe's leading military powers, with the partial exception of France, are not counterbalancing U.S. power. Military spending in France and Germany in the latter half of the 1990s was flat, and British spending actually declined slightly (see Table 1). Far from abandoning the Atlantic alliance through which they have bandwagoned with the United States since the late 1940s, Germany, France, and Britain participated in the 1999 Kosovo air war,

39. The case is made forcefully in Robert Caro, *Means of Ascent: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Vintage, 1991), Vol. 2.

40. Among Yeltsin's illiberal policies were the 1997 law restricting religious freedom and the brutal suppression of the Chechen rebellion. He also chose the competent but nonliberal Vladimir Putin as his successor. For a severe critique of Yeltsin's liberal-democratic credentials, see Lilia Shevtsova, "Yeltsin and the Evolution of Electoral Monarchy in Russia," *Current History*, Vol. 99, No. 639 (October 2000), pp. 315–320. For Yeltsin's defense of these and other policies, see Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000). I thank Alex Pravda and Marcia Weigle for helping me think through this issue.

41. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 33. On the near-global ascendancy of human rights norms (a subset of liberal norms), see Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *Power of Human Rights*.

Table 1. Military Spending, 1995–99 (in 1995 \$U.S. billions).

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Rank (1999)
United States	278.9	263.7	262.2	256.1	259.9	1
Japan	50.1	51.1	51.3	51.3	51.2	2
France	47.8	46.6	46.8	45.5	46.8	3
Germany	41.2	40.3	38.9	39.0	39.5	4
Great Britain	33.8	34.4	32.3	32.6	31.8	5
Russia	25.7	23.4	24.9	18.1	22.4	7
China	12.5	13.7	14.9	16.9	18.4	8
India	8.0	8.2	8.9	9.3	10.2	12

SOURCE: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, http://projects.sipri.se/milex/mex_major_spenders.html.

one of whose purposes was to maintain NATO's credibility. Their dependence on U.S. offensive power in that war—80 percent of sorties were flown by U.S. aircraft—has led them to discuss improving their offensive capabilities.⁴² That concern, in turn, has led to the creation of a 60,000-person EU Rapid Reaction Force to deal quickly with any future humanitarian crises. Only the French have portrayed this new force as independent of NATO, but at the EU summit in Nice in December 2000, even the French agreed that the Atlantic alliance would remain supreme in Western Europe.⁴³ Still, France is more dissatisfied with U.S. primacy than are other U.S. allies, and I discuss possible reasons for this dissatisfaction in a later section.

Neither is Japan counterbalancing the United States. Its aggregate military spending remains around 1 percent of its gross national product. It is increasing its ability to defend itself against missile attacks by building four space surveillance satellites and developing theater missile defense. These policies, however, are clearly in reaction to the North Korean launch of a Taepo-Dong missile over Japan in August 1998. Japan's TMD initiative was at the prodding of the United States itself and is a joint U.S.-Japanese venture.⁴⁴ Indeed, far from attempting to form any anti-U.S. alliance, Tokyo renewed the 1960 U.S.-Japanese security treaty in 1997. The Japanese Diet has yet to approve all of the

42. See, for example, "The Two Main Things," *Economist*, July 31, 1999, survey section, pp. 14–16.

43. "So That's All Agreed, Then," *Economist*, December 16, 2000, pp. 25–30.

44. Richard Tanter, "Japan and the Coming East Asian Explosion," *Arena*, August 1999, p. 44.

details of the new treaty, but the chances of repudiation appear nil.⁴⁵ Despite increasing domestic political costs, successive governments have continued to favor the presence of four U.S. naval bases on Japanese territory.⁴⁶

Japanese and West European relative acquiescence to U.S. power is caused in part by the predominance of liberalism in these societies. Along with North America, Western Europe and Japan are the most liberal areas of the world. Although these countries have antiliberal elements, such as ultranationalists and communists, all are liberal democracies overwhelmingly dominated by liberal elites. To varying degrees their governments often criticize U.S. internal and external policies, even to the point where they sound anti-American. Yet elites in most of these countries do not appear to fear that the United States will use its massive power against them. Many even indirectly support U.S. primacy by asserting that in today's world military power matters little, thereby absolving their countries of the need to counterbalance.

This state of affairs is helped by the relatively benign way in which the United States treats its allies. Although most European elites believe that some U.S. policies, particularly regarding missile defense and the environment, are contrary to their countries' interests,⁴⁷ no one could reasonably construe any U.S. intention to attack or blackmail Europe or Japan. Nor have America's huge military budget, its continuing network of overseas bases, and its ability to project massive force quickly and accurately induced any such fear. In the case of Japan and Germany, this acquiescence to American power is partly the product of deliberate U.S. efforts after 1945 to reconstruct the defeated Axis powers into liberal countries that shared U.S. goals for international and domestic order.⁴⁸ Because the United States imposed its will upon them in the 1940s, they need not fear that it will do so again. Being non-Americans as well as liberals, Western European and Japanese liberals may prefer a multipolar world, but the preference is not strong enough to cause them to devote many

45. Yoichiro Sato, "Will the U.S.-Japan Alliance Continue?" *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (July 1999), p. 10.

46. Lisa Troshinsky, "U.S. Navy Trying to Keep Asia-Pacific Bases Low-Key: Naval War College Guru," *Navy News & Undersea Technology*, June 26, 2000, p. 1. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," pp. 33–35, notes increases in Japanese defensive capabilities but cites no evidence that they are reactions to U.S. power. Indeed, insofar as Japan is rearming, Waltz suggests that it is because of a fear that the United States may decrease its power in East Asia. That may be correct, but it would not vindicate predictions that Japan will counterbalance U.S. power.

47. The tensions surrounding President George W. Bush's June 2001 visit to Europe are illustrative. See, for example, Martin Fletcher and Giles Whittell, "Europe Vents Its Anger against Bush," *Times* (London), June 15, 2001, p. 1.

48. G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer 1990), pp. 283–315.

resources to bring that world about. Not only are they complacent regarding U.S. primacy, but they advocate aiding and abetting that primacy by continuing their alliances and, in the German and Japanese cases, hosting thousands of U.S. forces. Even French elites who carp about U.S. hyperpower and yearn for multipolarity do not call for policies that would go any way toward redressing the international imbalance of power.

That the common bond is at bottom political liberalism is evident in the NATO action in Kosovo in 1999. Here the United States and its European allies put offensive air power—at great financial and, for some, domestic political cost—at the service of liberal purposes. They even agreed that the force should be constrained according to liberal norms. For them the war was not about extending U.S. power into a region traditionally in Russia's sphere of influence. It was rather a multilateral, just use of force that would vindicate human rights in Kosovo. Robert Art argues that the Europeans continue to aid and abet U.S. power primarily out of fear of "renationalization" or a return to the destructive rivalries of the past.⁴⁹ But if that were the entire story, antiliberals in Russia, the country that lost more than any other from the twentieth century's nationalistic wars, should likewise desire to aid and abet U.S. power.

RUSSIA: AMBIGUITY FROM A DIVIDED SOCIETY

The Russian case is complicated. Russian military spending declined slightly in the latter half of the 1990s (Table 1), reflecting the dire situation of the Russian economy. Despite its massive nuclear arsenal, Russia has made no serious attempts to blackmail the United States.⁵⁰ Still, observers agree that Russian policy generally moved from pro- to anti-Western in the 1990s.⁵¹ Two Russian policies in particular appear intended to help counterbalance the United States. First, Russia challenged NATO, and hence the United States, in the aftermath of the Kosovo war by stationing troops in Kosovo. The offensive capability of this Russian brigade is negligible, but it does serve to check Wash-

49. See Robert J. Art, "Why Western Europe Needs the United States and NATO," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 1–39.

50. Russian President Boris Yeltsin did make noises about the United States triggering World War III, but his aides quickly spun the statement into oblivion. See Dmitry Gornostayev, "Clinton 'Might Run Right into a New World War': With That Warning, Boris Yeltsin Intends to Avert Missile Strikes against Iraq," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (March 4, 1998), pp. 5–6.

51. Michael McFaul, "Russia's Many Foreign Policies," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 393–412; and Sergei Medvedev, "Power, Space, and Russian Foreign Policy," in Ted Hopf, ed., *Understandings of Russian Foreign Policy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 15–55.

ington's ability to control events in southeastern Europe. Certainly the Russian military intended the troops to counterbalance U.S. strength in the region, as seen by the troops' seizure of the Priština airport in advance of NATO forces in June 1999.⁵² Second, in July 2001 the Russian and Chinese governments signed a treaty of friendship and peace. Russian and Chinese officials assert that the treaty is not directed against any third country, but the document pledges opposition to U.S. missile defense and formalizes Russian support for Chinese claims to Taiwan. Both governments clearly intend for the treaty to counter the U.S.-sponsored global order.⁵³

Since 1991 the Russian polity has oscillated between authoritarianism and democracy. Political power has been dispersed among bureaus, branches of government, and geographical regions. The dispersal of power has been crucial to the ambiguity of Russian foreign policy, inasmuch as it has allowed various societal interests and ideological groups influence over particular issue areas.⁵⁴ Under Boris Yeltsin's presidency, policy fluctuated all the more because of Yeltsin's tendency to encourage and exploit factionalism within his own government.⁵⁵ Deep ideological fissures tear at Russia because it was never militarily defeated and occupied by the United States; America could not eradicate communism there after 1991 as it eradicated fascism in Japan and Germany after 1945. Russian elites thus include not only liberals—who favor eventual political as well as economic liberalization—but also ultranationalists, communists, and moderates. These factions react to U.S. primacy in predictable ways: Liberals tend to favor acquiescence, the far left and right tend to favor counterbalancing, and the center tends to cut a middle course.⁵⁶ The first observation about Russia's policy toward U.S. power, then, is that it correlates

52. McFaul, "Russia's Many Foreign Policies," pp. 404–408.

53. Tyler, "Russia and China Sign 'Friendship' Pact."

54. See Celeste A. Wallander, ed., *Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996); and Neil Malcolm, "Foreign Policy Making," in Malcolm, Alex Pravda, Roy Allison, and Margot Light, *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 101–168. For an argument that Russian foreign policy has been consistent, see Allen Lynch, "The Realism of Russia's Foreign Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (January 2001), pp. 7–31.

55. McFaul, "Russia's Many Foreign Policies," p. 407.

56. See, for example, Malcolm et al., *Internal Factors in Russian Foreign Policy*, passim, especially the table on p. 24. On the 1992–95 period, Alex Pravda and Neil Malcolm write that Russian "preferences and stances on external issues broadly correspond to those on internal affairs." Pravda and Malcolm, "Conclusion," in *ibid.*, p. 291; see also p. 287. See also McFaul, "Russia's Many Foreign Policies," pp. 393–412; and Elizabeth Wishnick, "Prospects for the Sino-Russian Partnership: Views from Moscow and the Russian Far East," *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 1998), p. 421.

to Russia's domestic structure. Both its policies and its degree of liberalism lie between those of Western Europe and Japan on the one hand, and China on the other.

Second, changes in Russian politics and policy over the 1990s correlate in the same way. At the dawn of Russia's anticommunist revolution, from 1991 through late 1992, political and economic liberals had their way in the Kremlin. Yeltsin's first foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, wanted Russia to become like and join the West. During his early months in office, Kozyrev was almost sycophantic toward the United States, even favoring NATO's eastward expansion. A shift occurred in late 1993, when the Kremlin reversed itself on that issue.⁵⁷ In February 1994 Russia suddenly obstructed NATO's efforts to bring to heel the Bosnian Serbs besieging Sarajevo by announcing that it would send peace-keeping troops to the area.⁵⁸ Yeltsin also began to increase Russia's weapons exports to China and Iran in 1994.⁵⁹ Since then, Russia has by no means returned to the unambiguous counterbalancing policies of the Soviet era, but neither has it been as cooperative as the Japanese and West Europeans. It has sought to slow NATO expansion, although it also joined the Partnership for Peace; it has tried to limit NATO's military actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, although it has done so in part by joining the Kosovo occupation force.

Coincident with Russia's shift away from acquiescence to testiness vis-à-vis U.S. power has been a general reduction in the influence of liberals within Russia itself. Liberals began to lose power at the end of 1992, when Yeltsin fired Yegor Gaidar, his unabashedly reformist prime minister, and replaced him with Viktor Chernomyrdin, a moderate former Soviet official and founder of Gazprom, the natural gas monopoly. Gaidar returned to government briefly in late 1993, but the trend away from liberalism continued as Aleksandr Korzhakov, Yeltsin's authoritarian security chief and bodyguard, began to exert increasing influence over the president due in part to the liberals' failure to end the Chechen rebellion.⁶⁰ In January 1996, a month after the communist

57. Paul Marantz, "Neither Adversaries nor Partners: Russia and the West Search for a New Relationship," in Roger E. Kanet and Alexander V. Kozhemiakin, eds., *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 92–96; and Johanna Granville, "After Kosovo: The Impact of NATO Expansion on Russian Political Parties," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 24–45.

58. Marantz, "Neither Adversaries nor Partners," p. 89.

59. Coit D. Blacker, "Russia and the West," in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *The New Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), pp. 181–182.

60. Chrystia Freeland, *Sale of the Century: The Inside Story of the Second Russian Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000), pp. 159–160; and Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, p. 215.

electoral victory in the Duma, Yeltsin sacked the liberals Kozyrev and Anatoly Chubais, replacing the former as foreign minister with the antiliberal Yevgeny Primakov. But liberal influence increased again following Yeltsin's electoral victory, as the president fired Korzhakov and called Chubais and the liberal Boris Nemtsov into his government. In August 1998 came yet another reversal of liberal fortune, as Yeltsin named Primakov as prime minister; the latter's loyal aide Igor Ivanov became foreign minister. In May 1999 Primakov himself was replaced by the hapless Sergei Stepashin, who was in turn replaced by Vladimir Putin in August.⁶¹ Putin, whose domestic policies suggest decidedly illiberal leanings, became acting president in January 2000 and was elected president the following March.

This riot of names and sackings suggests that liberals have not held supreme power since late 1992 but that they have nonetheless retained some influence, at least so long as Yeltsin was president. The foreign policy of Russia defies explanation by one variable as much as that of any nation. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the Kremlin's vague policy vis-à-vis U.S. power is partially a function of the power of liberals within the Russian government. The macro-trends away from domestic liberalism and a pro-U.S. foreign policy are roughly coincident. As Alex Pravda and Neil Malcolm write of the 1991–95 period, "The phases through which Russian external policy passed broadly corresponded to stages in internal political development."⁶² Efforts toward the alignment with China, for example, have accelerated since Putin became president.⁶³

A third observation is that although antiliberal Russians exaggerate U.S. hostility to their country, the United States has treated Russia less kindly than it has Western Europe and Japan. The most obvious example has been Washington's refusal to support offering NATO membership to Russia. Other former communist countries—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—have been admitted. Those that have not—for example, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria—are, like Russia, countries that have not demonstrated that they are stable, durable liberal democracies.⁶⁴

61. The chronology is drawn from Freeland, *Sale of the Century*, pp. 340–346; and Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, pp. xi–xvi.

62. Pravda and Malcolm, "Conclusion," p. 301.

63. "Partners of Inconvenience: The Russo-Chinese Partnership," *Economist*, January 20, 2001, p. 4.

64. All in all, it is wise to restrict NATO membership to stable liberal democracies. And as Michael McFaul has pointed out to me, no Russian government has ever formally asked to join NATO. Still, signaling Russia that it is not on the list for NATO membership may aggravate Russian apprehensions about U.S. intentions. For an argument that Russia should be admitted to NATO, see Bruce

A final observation is that even some U.S. policies not intended as anti-Russian have been perceived as such and may have contributed to the waning influence of liberalism in Russia. Events within the country itself are the primary causes of liberalism's decline. Economic reform failed to live up to its promises, most obviously in the August 1998 financial crash that led to the premiership of Primakov. Although recent statistics are somewhat encouraging, the country's economy has shrunk since the end of communism, corruption remains the surest path to prosperity, and average citizens' savings have been destroyed by economic crises. Yet certain U.S. moves appear to have undermined the liberals' claim that the West no longer threatens Russian security. NATO's eastward expansion and the Kosovo war—which was NATO's first use of offensive force, and that in an area of traditional Russian influence—confirmed the predictions of antiliberals and falsified those of liberals. During the Kosovo war, a common complaint among liberals was that the United States was aiding the Russian far left and far right. "Clinton Is an Honorary Member of the Russian Communist Party" may sound like a headline from America's own John Birch Society, but it actually appeared in a liberal Russian periodical.⁶⁵ Public opposition to NATO's expansion spread and deepened following Kosovo.⁶⁶

A similar reaction has greeted accelerating U.S. plans for missile defense. The Russian fear is not simply that a successful missile defense would weaken nuclear deterrence, because the Europeans share this fear. Rather, with the decaying of its conventional forces, Russia has begun to rely on its nuclear arsenal as a war-fighting force.⁶⁷ The inference is that at least some Russian officials contemplate a future conflict with the United States. (Note, however, that the Putin government has responded favorably to U.S. proposals to include Russia

Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 288–297.

65. Sarah Karush, "Kosovo Could Leave Lasting Stain on U.S. Ties," *Moscow Times*, March 30, 1999, n.p. See also Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Aftermath of the Balkan War, the Rise of Anti-Americanism, and the End of Democracy in Russia," *World and I*, Vol. 14, No. 10 (October 1999), p. 310.

66. Granville, "After Kosovo," pp. 38–39.

67. Celeste A. Wallander, "Russia's New Security Policy and the Ballistic Missile Defense Debate," *Current History*, Vol. 99, No. 639 (October 2000), pp. 339–344. For the official Russian view, see Igor Ivanov, "The Missile-Defense Mistake: Undermining Strategic Stability and the ABM Treaty," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 5 (September/October 2000), pp. 15–20. Advocates of missile defense point out that it is not the comprehensive Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star Wars" envisaged by Ronald Reagan. It is limited to intercepting up to thirty missiles, and is thus designed to deter states or other actors with small nuclear arsenals. See "Talbot Predicts Russian Agreement on Missile Defense," United Press International, January 17, 2001, provided by Comtex, <http://www.comtexnews.com>.

in an international missile defense scheme, perhaps because of its own fears of "rogue states.")⁶⁸

CHINA: ANTI-LIBERAL COUNTERBALANCING

China is the second-tier power that is most clearly trying to counterbalance the United States, albeit at a slow pace. From 1995 to 1999, Chinese military spending grew by an average of 10 percent per annum; although that is in line with the growth of China's economy, it does contrast to the *negative* relation between military and economic growth in Western Europe and the United States itself during the same period. Adjusted for inflation, real growth in Chinese military spending from 1987 to 1997 was approximately 4 percent.⁶⁹ The government recently launched a navigation positioning satellite to improve missile accuracy.⁷⁰ China is also modernizing its navy and air force, partly through purchases of foreign fighter aircraft, AWACS and in-flight refueling technology, missile guided destroyers, and submarines as quiet as those of the U.S. Navy.⁷¹ It is also improving its medium- and possibly long-range missiles. In August 1999 China tested its DF-31 missile, with a range of up to 8,000 kilometers; the government plans to put the DF-31 into service between 2002 and 2005.⁷² As discussed above, China entered a friendship pact with Russia in July 2001; its government has also courted India, with little success thus far.⁷³

Many of China's military improvements are clearly better suited to the projection of power than to the defense of home territory. Doubtless Japan, India, Russia, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) states, and of course Taiwan are objects of these power increases. The timing of the improvements, however, suggests that their primary object is the United States. America's stunning successes in the Gulf War spurred the Chinese toward military modernization.⁷⁴ U.S. performance in the Kosovo campaign provided further impetus.⁷⁵ Chinese officials make no secret as to whom they consider their country's

68. See Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Analysis: Russia, NATO, and NMD," United Press International, March 11, 2001, provided by Comtex, <http://www.comtexnews.com>.

69. Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter 1997/98), p. 43.

70. Pomfret, "U.S. Now a 'Threat' in China's Eyes."

71. Goldstein, "Great Expectations," pp. 45–50. Goldstein argues that despite these improvements, Chinese offensive capability remains relatively low. My argument is about Chinese intentions, not the practical effect of these intentions.

72. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1999/2000* (London: IISS, 1999), p. 171.

73. On India, see Martin Sieff, "Commentary: India Slides into Sino-Russian Orbit," United Press International, January 15, 2001, provided by Comtex, <http://www.comtexnews.com>.

74. Goldstein, "Great Expectations," p. 43.

75. Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World," pp. 57–61.

primary enemy to be. People's Liberation Army (PLA) officials are especially anti-American;⁷⁶ recently the civilian side of the government has begun to publicize the same view.⁷⁷ As Avery Goldstein writes, "Early in the post-Cold War era, it would certainly appear that China and the United States rather quickly have come to focus on each other as the two key players in the game and to view each other's actions as potentially threatening. Each worries about allegedly shifting balances of military power and mutual perceptions of resolve. The early signs suggest that a bipolar East Asia would be dominated by recurrent Sino-American conflict."⁷⁸

China's counterbalancing follows from its thoroughly antiliberal institutions and ideology. Since 1979 China has all but abandoned Marxism, yet kept Leninism. It has a partially capitalist economy and a single-party dictatorship. How long such an arrangement can last is not clear, but what is clear is that within the ruling Communist Party no political liberals are evident. Chinese elites tend to interpret U.S. power as malign. Those interpretations are a product of the ideological distance separating them from their counterparts in the United States, Japan, and Western Europe.

Observers agree that the ideological spectrum among Chinese elites today is much narrower than it was in the 1980s.⁷⁹ Having witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, officials in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are determined to retain the party's monopoly on political power, and so entertain no thoughts of meaningful political liberalization.⁸⁰ Elites do disagree, however, over the pace of economic reform and integration into the world economy. The economic (as distinguished from political) liberals, led by Premier Zhu Rongji, have labored long to gain Chinese entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Economic reactionaries have been much less willing to offer concessions to the United States in order to gain WTO membership and have challenged Zhu's power at times over the issue.⁸¹

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–79; and Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking.'"

77. Pomfret, "U.S. Now a 'Threat' in China's Eyes."

78. Goldstein, "Great Expectations," p. 64. Goldstein adds that if Asia became multipolar rather than bipolar, China's suspicions of the United States would be diluted.

79. One should note that it may have been closet liberals in the CCP who smuggled documents to the West in January 2001 that demonstrated the responsibility of specific comrades for the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989. For a careful assessment of the documents, see Andrew J. Nathan, "The Tiananmen Papers, an Introduction," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January/February 2001), pp. 2–10.

80. Michael D. Swaine, *China: Domestic Change and Foreign Policy* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995), pp. 4–14.

81. David E. Sanger, "At the Last Hour, Down to the Last Trick, and It Worked," *New York Times*, November 17, 1999, p. A14.

But it is not at all clear that economic reformers oppose military balancing against the United States or have the ability to say so if they do. The leadership of the PLA, meanwhile, perceives a malevolent United States bent on world domination. The CCP itself also is evidently dominated by virulent anti-Americans, particularly since the Kosovo war. During the war the *People's Daily* "accused the United States of seeking to become 'Lord of the Earth' and compared contemporary U.S. hegemony to the aggression of Nazi Germany."⁸²

Having endured year after year of threatened congressional trade sanctions, countless press attacks from the American left and right, and dozens of lectures from U.S. officials and even entertainers over their violations of human rights, Chinese officials can see clearly that America's will for China is sharply at odds with their own. Were the United States able to have its way, China would have a new, liberal-democratic regime, just as Japan and Germany got when the United States imposed its will on them. That regime would not only uphold human rights and thereby halt the building and maintenance of the Chinese state. It would also allow political competition, and thus end the CCP's fifty-two-year political monopoly on power. It could lead to the breakup of the world's last great formal empire.

Chinese officials know that liberalism is a transnational movement. The liberal student protesters at Tiananmen Square were clearly part of a group that included not only fellow Chinese students studying in the West, but also the Western publics who applauded their efforts and were horrified at their brutal suppression. Insofar as the United States is an instrument of transnational liberalism, its overwhelming military power is bound to be a source of fear to Chinese elites, and hence will generate counterbalancing. China is evidently a revisionist power, but precisely because it sees the United States as revisionist. As Steve Chan explains the Chinese view, it is the United States that seeks to violate the sovereignty of China and other states by imposing its vision for the proper ordering of society.⁸³

The United States, for its part, has obliged by making more provocative gestures toward China than toward the liberal democracies. It sends spy aircraft to Chinese coastal waters to monitor naval developments. It sent two carrier battle groups to the waters near Taiwan in March 1996 (in response to Chinese live-fire exercises in the Taiwan Strait, designed to intimidate Taiwan's voters

82. Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World," p. 78.

83. Steve Chan, "Chinese Perspectives on World Order," in T.V. Paul and John A. Hall, eds., *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 208–209.

into rejecting a pro-independence party).⁸⁴ Even Russia fares better than China. In his speech of May 1, 2001, announcing missile defense, President Bush devoted great attention to Russia as a partner and potential democracy, but mentioned China only in passing.⁸⁵ All in all, it is clear that profound ideological differences are at least partly responsible for the difficult Sino-American relationship, and hence for Chinese attempts to counterbalance the United States.

Objections and Replies

In this section I consider various objections to my argument. Skeptics might respond that U.S. policies are entirely responsible for Chinese and Russian hostility; that the EU is in fact counterbalancing U.S. power; that French liberals are alarmed about unipolarity; that China is not really counterbalancing; or that democratic India is doing so.

BLAME AMERICA FIRST

Balance-of-threat theory would suggest that it is sufficient to note that the United States has displayed more menacing intentions toward China and Russia than toward its allies; one need not invoke ideology to explain the outcomes.⁸⁶ This objection fails to appreciate the degree to which acts are open to interpretation: For example, what appeared to Americans an accidental and idiotic bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 appeared to Chinese a deliberate and outrageous effort at intimidation. Furthermore, this objection would need to offer an account of why the United States treats different countries differently to begin with. Why is the United States more suspicious of China than of Japan? My argument provides an explanation. It cannot be simply that countries treat allies better than non-allies, because we would then need to ask why the liberal democracies became U.S. allies and have remained so long after the demise of the Soviet Union. That is a reformulation of the question that motivates this article. Theories emphasizing power transition

84. "Taiwan Votes, China Thunders," *Economist*, March 16, 1996, pp. 39–41.

85. Said Bush: "Today's Russia is not yesterday's Soviet Union. Its government is no longer Communist. Its president is elected. Today's Russia is not our enemy, but a country in transition with an opportunity to emerge as a great nation, democratic, at peace with itself and its neighbors." The implicit comparison with China was as obvious as it was devastating. See the full text at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html>.

86. Balance-of-threat theory posits that a threat has four components: aggregate power, offensive power, geography, and evidence of offensive intentions. See Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, pp. 21–28. In this case the first three are held constant, leaving only the fourth as a possible explanation.

might attribute U.S. treatment of China to the normal realpolitik anxiety over a rising challenger.⁸⁷ Such anxiety is clearly present but cannot be understood apart from China's antiliberalism. Americans are apprehensive about the illiberal purposes to which China would put its power. If power differentials alone accounted for U.S. treatment of other countries, then the United States should treat Russia, a stagnant power at best, as it treats Western Europe and Japan.

It might be further objected, however, that if Americans cared so deeply about whether foreign countries were liberal, they would pour vast resources into promoting liberalism abroad, at least in Russia. In fact, the United States has promoted liberal democracy in Russia. The amount of money directly devoted to democracy promotion has admittedly been paltry. Between 1992 and 1998, the United States extended \$130 million in direct democratic assistance to Russia, only 2.3 percent of the \$5.4 billion offered to Russia during that period (most of the money went to denuclearization, economic reform, and humanitarian projects). But much of this \$5.4 billion, plus International Monetary Fund (IMF) aid of \$16.5 billion and World Bank transfers of \$6 billion,⁸⁸ provided general support for the current Russian regime, which from 1993 onward faced serious challenges from the far right and the far left. The United States (not to mention other liberal states) has provided costly indirect support for political liberalization in Russia. It has not done more because liberalism in the United States itself is so secure; Americans' solidarity with Russian liberals is lower than vice versa.

THE EU IS COUNTERBALANCING THE UNITED STATES

The formation of the EU's Rapid Reaction Force of 60,000 British, French, and German troops could be interpreted as a step toward counterbalancing American power, particularly in light of French assertions that the force will be independent of NATO. Thus far, however, that interpretation is difficult to sustain. The impetus behind the emergency force was the Europeans' inability to handle the Balkan crises of the 1990s without U.S. leadership. In particular, that atrocities continued while the Europeans and Americans dithered,⁸⁹ and that once NATO did take action in Kosovo, approximately 80 percent of the

87. See, for example, Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000).

88. Figures are from Michael McFaul and Sarah E. Mendelson, "Russian Democracy: A U.S. National Security Interest," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Summer 2000), p. 336.

89. Ivo Daalder and Michael O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2000); and Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).

munitions were delivered by U.S. aircraft and missiles,⁹⁰ motivated European elites to develop a better way to handle such crises.⁹¹ A major cause of the EU force, then, is the need to carry out liberal foreign policy more efficiently. Certainly the British and Germans show little desire to counterbalance the United States and are at pains to make clear that they intend for NATO to remain supreme in Western Europe. There remains, however, the matter of the French.

FRENCH LIBERALS ARE ALARMED AT U.S. POWER

If French elites are complacent about U.S. primacy, why do they pronounce so about American hyperpower and routinely call for a multipolar world? With liberal bona fides as strong as those of any nation (in political if not economic affairs), French elites are nonetheless rhetorically different from their German, British, and Japanese counterparts concerning U.S. military power. Most outspoken among French government officials has been Hubert Védrine, the foreign minister, who has called on Europeans and others to “steady and persevering work in favor of real multilateralism against unilateralism, for balanced multipolarism against unipolarism, for cultural diversity against uniformity.”⁹² Other French elites, including President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, have made similar statements.⁹³

The French are following a Gaullist tradition of anti-Americanism that perennially irks and baffles those on the receiving end. During the Cold War France insisted upon an independent foreign policy, developing its own nuclear force, withdrawing from the integrated military command of NATO, and pursuing détente with communist countries even as it remained in the Western camp.⁹⁴ This independent tradition predates Charles de Gaulle by many centuries: Medieval popes contending with Gallicanism, the notion that the Church in France should be directed by the French king rather than Rome, would recognize France’s current behavior. French discontent with U.S. primacy, then,

90. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2000/2001* (London: IISS, 2000), p. 289.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 290; see also Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Toronto: Viking, 2000).

92. Quoted in John Vinocur, “To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a Hyperpower,” *International Herald Tribune*, February 5, 1999, p. 5.

93. Kevin Cullen, “A Call for Limits on ‘Hyperpower’ U.S.: At Kosovo Talks, French Aide Urges Blunting of Nation’s Will,” *Boston Globe*, February 9, 1999, p. A4.

94. See, for example, Stanley Hoffmann, “Obstinate or Obsolete? France, European Integration, and the Fate of the Nation-State,” in Hoffmann, *The European Sisyphus: Essays on Europe, 1964–1994* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), pp. 71–106, especially pp. 80–81; and Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 27–29.

may result from a historic attachment to national independence stronger than that of most nations. Students of French politics note the nation's unusually acute fear that its culture is being supplanted by that of the United States. They also note that France, like the United States, has long seen itself as having a *mission civilitrice*, a quasi-religious duty to bring liberty and culture to the rest of the world; perhaps the world is only big enough for one such *mission*.⁹⁵ Put succinctly, French foreign policy may be less pro-American than that of other liberal countries because French liberals, like their American counterparts, are more nationalistic than other liberals.⁹⁶ That France and the United States are so alike may account for their differences.

Notwithstanding their chafing at U.S. primacy, it is not at all evident that French elites fear that the United States will use its power to impose its will upon them, as realism predicts they should do in an anarchical international system. The most telling sign of fear would be advocacy of policies that would help correct the imbalance of power that the United States enjoys. Apart from French aspirations for the EU's tiny Rapid Reaction Force, such advocacy has not materialized.

CHINA IS NOT COUNTERBALANCING

Several Western scholars have argued that China does not threaten U.S. interests. Avery Goldstein acknowledges China's rise in power but submits that it is less steep than many have represented.⁹⁷ Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross interpret China as a defensive and still weak power, no threat to international or even regional stability.⁹⁸ Steve Chan argues that China is no revisionist power.⁹⁹ Michael Gallagher argues that even on the narrow question of the South China Sea, China is not dangerous.¹⁰⁰ It is clear, moreover, that under Jiang Zemin China has continued the Dengist policy of integrating itself into international society, particularly the liberal international economy. Despite its serious differences with Washington, Beijing is cooperating with the United States and the West on many matters, in contrast to its behavior under Mao Zedong during the 1950s and 1960s.

95. For these and other factors, see Sophie Meunier, "The French Exception," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (July/August 2000), pp. 104–116.

96. I have benefited from conversation with Sophie Meunier on this point.

97. Goldstein, "Great Expectations."

98. Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *Great Wall, Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

99. Chan, "Chinese Perspectives on World Order," pp. 208–209.

100. Michael G. Gallagher, "China's Illusory Threat to the South China Sea," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 169–194.

China may indeed remain relatively weak, hold defensive intentions, and aspire to mere regional dominance, yet still be counterbalancing U.S. power. As for China's cooperation with the West, it is possible to engage economically with a country while simultaneously counterbalancing it militarily. Certainly the United States did so vis-à-vis Great Britain in Latin America during the late nineteenth century. Indeed, if China does desire to increase its national power, recent Chinese history demonstrates that the Dengist route is more promising than was the disastrous Maoist route. Even the most anti-American Chinese understand that China needs capital and technology from abroad to become a great power; while military technology may come from Russia, capital must come from the United States and its allies. Thus does the United States have leverage over China, but PLA and CCP officials clearly intend for this leverage to be temporary. Only Chan really contradicts my argument. He appears to define a revisionist power as one that challenges a broad conception of world order (namely, Westphalian sovereignty), rather than as one that challenges the existing hierarchy of power and prestige. On the latter, more standard definition, it is difficult to deny that China is revisionist.

INDIA IS COUNTERBALANCING

If China is counterbalancing the United States, is not liberal India doing the same? In May 1998 India tested a nuclear device, placing itself firmly in the nuclear club and thereby boosting its deterrent power exponentially. Indian military spending steadily increased from 1995 to 1999 (Table 1), at a greater average annual rate than that of any leading power save China. India has also reciprocated Chinese interest in a security relationship, hosting dozens of Chinese officials on a nine-day visit in January 2001 to discuss cooperation.¹⁰¹ As already noted, India has a history of anti-Americanism dating from the early 1970s.

In an earlier section, I explained how my argument does not rule out a security dilemma among liberal states. In the early 1960s, India's need to counterbalance China drove Indian liberals to embrace a Soviet alignment and the resulting alienation from the United States. In the early 1970s U.S. cultivation of China and Pakistan, driven by a need to contain Soviet power, deepened this alienation. With the Cold War over, it is more accurate to say that India is no longer counterbalancing the United States. Some hard-liners in the Indian military do favor developing long-range missiles that could strike the United

101. Sieff, "India Slides into Sino-Russian Orbit."

States, but they are losing the policy contest to those who want to target only China and Pakistan.¹⁰² Various students of Indian politics judge that it is those two regional rivals, rather than the United States, that were the object of the nuclear tests. The tests were also a product of a long-standing desire among many elites to make India a nuclear state, coupled with a desire to end international pressure to sign the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by presenting the world with a *fait accompli*.¹⁰³

Despite the developing Sino-Indian thaw, Indian leaders are greatly concerned about Chinese military modernization. Thus far India has decided not to join the incipient Sino-Russian alignment, and progress in Sino-Indian relations is mostly a product of China's reducing its support of Muslim terrorists.¹⁰⁴ China evidently has made these concessions out of increased fear of U.S. missile defense¹⁰⁵ coupled with recent U.S. courting of India. That courting intensified during 2000 with a long visit by President Bill Clinton to India and a reciprocal visit to the United States by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee; both visits were replete with statements about common democratic purposes.¹⁰⁶ Although Indians, like the French, call for a multipolar world, Indian elite rhetoric is generally much less anti-American than it was in previous years. Some elites are openly pro-American,¹⁰⁷ and some foreign policy experts are discussing a strategic partnership with the United States.¹⁰⁸ Overall, Stephen Cohen likens India's attitude toward U.S. primacy to that of France: Both have a "different and not necessarily hostile view of how the world should be organized."¹⁰⁹ In contrast to China, then, India's increases in power are not directed primarily at the United States.

102. Sadanand Dhume, "Choosing the Target: Hardliners Want Nuclear Missiles That Can Hit America," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 16, 1999, p. 30.

103. Šumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 148–177; and Mohammed Ayoob, "Nuclear India and Indian-American Relations," *Orbis*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Winter 1999), pp. 59–74.

104. "Partners of Inconvenience," *Economist*, p. 4.

105. Sieff, "India Slides into Sino-Russian Orbit."

106. Nayan Chanda and Susan V. Lawrence, "Nuclear Balancing Act: Prospects of Warming U.S.-India Ties Are Causing Unusual Concern in China," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 16, 2000, pp. 26–27. See also Vajpayee's address to the U.S. Congress. Atal Behari Vajpayee, "Advancing Democracy: A Natural Partnership of Shared Endeavors," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. 66, No. 24 (October 1, 2000), pp. 740–741.

107. One of the most determined is S. Prasannarajan, senior editor of *India Today*. Prasannarajan calls anti-Americanism "redundant," an "ism . . . long ago repudiated by civil society everywhere." Prasannarajan, "Redundancy of Anti-Americanism," *India Today*, September 16, 2000, <http://www.india-today.com/webexclusive/columns/prasana/20000917.html>.

108. Stephen P. Cohen, "India Rising," *Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 2000), p. 46.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Preserving Primacy

In this section I discuss how Washington might maintain the U.S. preponderance of power, and defend the notion that it ought to do so.

HOW TO PRESERVE U.S. PRIMACY

If U.S. leaders want to preserve the favorable imbalance of international power, they must not only maintain the country's prosperity and edge in offensive military technology. Because liberal elites around the world tend to acquiesce to American primacy, U.S. leaders should also try to maximize the number and influence of liberal elites in potential challenger countries. The task in Europe and Japan appears relatively simple: Do not allow liberalism to fail as it did in Germany in the 1930s. U.S. efforts to continue prosperity in Western Europe and East Asia not only help the U.S. economy directly, but also help assure the survival of political liberalism and hence U.S. primacy. The task in Russia is more difficult, as the deep economic crisis there has undermined liberalism and thus the complacency regarding U.S. primacy. The task in China is more difficult still, perhaps prohibitive.

HELP LIBERALISM FULFILL ITS PROMISES. U.S. administrations during and after World War II understood that if the Western bloc were to survive, liberal institutions had to survive; and if those institutions were to survive, they had to make good on the liberal promise of the good life for a majority of citizens. Weimar Germany had fallen in 1933 under the weight of 6 million unemployed German men. Thus Washington implemented the Bretton Woods system and the Marshall Plan, and until the 1970s tolerated persistent current account deficits with its allies in order to foster their economic recovery. Circumstances between the United States and Russia today are vastly different from those between the United States and Japan and Germany after World War II. Russians are more responsible for their country's future than West Germans or Japanese were, and it would be hubristic to think that the United States can have more than a marginal effect on the future of liberalism there.

In Russia liberalism is ailing but still has a pulse. Given the atrocious conduct of the Russian military in Chechnya, a strong moral case can be made for suspending IMF aid to Russia. Given the poor return on previous aid, a pragmatic case for the same is easy to make as well. Yet U.S. policymakers must consider the consequences for Russian liberalism of such a measure. Russia's economy trudges on but remains in deep trouble. Communist and ultranationalist politicians continue to fulminate against liberalism and the West in the State Duma. An end to IMF aid would worsen the economy and also

weaken the influence of economic interests who benefit from such aid, interests who as discussed above have been pro-Western.¹¹⁰

DO NOT THREATEN VITAL INTERESTS. Other measures would also be counseled by realists and international institutionalists who stake U.S. primacy on America's moderate behavior: The United States should not threaten the vital interests of potential challengers. As argued above, such threats can strengthen antiliberals in such states and eventually turn even liberals against the United States. The probability is virtually nil that the United States would make any move that would alarm Japanese or European liberals into thinking that it intended to blackmail them or seize their sovereign territory. As already discussed, most Russians have already begun to perceive such threats from the United States. On balance, it may be worth the damage to relations with Russia to use force when humanitarian crises erupt in southeastern Europe and Central Asia in the future. But Washington should at least recognize the possibility that in the long run such policies undermine the very U.S. primacy that makes them possible.¹¹¹

On the other hand, Vladimir Putin's own antiliberalism and attempted centralization of power may be rendering the issue moot. Putin seems a pragmatic nationalist whose main priority is making Russia more efficient. He supports market economics and a strong central government that can control the parliament, the republics, and the oligarchs. But he is evidently no political liberal. Like some of Yeltsin's old subordinates, his government has bullied the press, most clearly in the June 2000 arrest and brief detention of media baron Vladimir Gusinsky, whose outlets had been Putin's most vigorous critics.¹¹² He has also weakened the checks and balances of Yeltsin's Russia by forming and relentlessly subsidizing a new Unity Party, which quickly gained a majority in the Duma; by abolishing various government ministries that had independent power bases; and by reorganizing Russia into seven districts governed by his own appointees.¹¹³ His most clearly illiberal policies have been in suppressing the rebellion in Chechnya, where Russian troops have indiscriminately used

110. For a vigorous and extended argument that nurturing liberalism in Russia is in the security interests of the United States, see McFaul and Mendelson, "Russian Democracy."

111. Cf. Bruce D. Porter, "Russia and Europe after the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies," in Wallander, *Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, pp. 121–145; and Michael Mandelbaum, "Introduction: Russian Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective," in Mandelbaum, ed., *The New Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), pp. 14–20.

112. John Lloyd, "Vladimir Putin," *New Statesman*, July 31, 2000, p. 16.

113. Masha Gessen, "Moscow Dispatch: New Depths," *New Republic*, September 11, 2000, p. 14. On the tendency for centralized regimes to be less open to transnational influences, see Risse-Kappen, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In*.

force against civilians and medical personnel.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, liberal reformers such as Chubais retain some influence.¹¹⁵

CHINA AND REALPOLITIK. Because China evidently has no political liberals, the United States should handle it differently from other potential challengers. Being fundamentally opposed to America's domestic norm of political liberalism, Chinese elites are predisposed to fear any expansion of U.S. power. Their harsh reactions to the Belgrade embassy bombing in May 1999 and the U.S. EP-3 collision with a Chinese jet fighter over Hainan Island in May 2001 are symptomatic.¹¹⁶ In a sense, these events confirmed a prediction of Chinese antiliberals—namely, that the United States is aggressively building a world empire—and thus undermined whatever political liberalism remains in China. Furthermore, it is difficult to find a Chinese elite who does not express a deep passion for reuniting Taiwan, long a U.S. client, with China, or who does not resent U.S. statements over his country's violations of human rights.

Inasmuch as Chinese elites seem predisposed to interpret U.S. actions as ipso facto threatening, there seems little that Washington can do to prevent Chinese counterbalancing in the long run. Conciliatory gestures may help Russian liberals, but there appear to be no Chinese liberals to help. A Gorbachevian reform movement would have to arise in China, with the attendant emergence of politically liberal elites, for Chinese views of the United States to change. And Gorbachevian reform is what the CCP is most determined to prevent. Thus for the present the United States must deal with China as with any adversary with whom cooperation is possible, but alignment is not.

WHY PRESERVE U.S. PRIMACY?

Some foreign policy experts contend that the United States ought not to try to preserve its primacy in any case. Robert Jervis writes that primacy is "a game not worth the candle." For Jervis, relative gains in today's world simply are not important enough to warrant the resources needed to pursue them. Major power war is unlikely; military power is not fungible enough to give the United States relative advantages in economic and other affairs; and global stability may be maintained by a concert as well as by a military hegemon.¹¹⁷ If

114. McFaul and Mendelson, "Russian Democracy."

115. Chubais is director of the state-owned electricity monopoly, scheduled for privatization over the next decade. See "Russia Adopts Energy Reform Plan," United Press International, May 19, 2001, provided by Comtex, <http://www.comtexnews.com>.

116. On the latter incident, see "Beyond Hainan: The Worry about China," *Economist*, April 14, 2001, pp. 1–2.

117. Robert Jervis, "International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?" *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 52–67.

Jervis is correct, the United States might have other reasons to promote liberalism abroad, but preserving primacy is not one of them. In a rejoinder Samuel Huntington notes that, by definition, having more power is better because it allows a state to have its way more often. Power “enables an actor to shape his environment so as to reflect his interests. In particular it enables a state to protect its security and prevent, deflect, or defeat threats to that security. It also enables a state to promote its values among other peoples and to shape the international environment so as to reflect its values.”¹¹⁸ Huntington’s propositions are undeniable in the abstract, but in practice is Jervis correct? Are the benefits from maintaining the imbalance of international power really worth the costs?

Insofar as prestige itself is a good, there is no substitute for primacy. Liberals do not acknowledge it readily, but psychic benefits increase with one’s rank in the power hierarchy. It is not only the French who pine for the days when their nation was predominant. Yet, like all positional goods, prestige is dangerous to pursue and ought not to be a state’s top priority. What of more concrete interests? The interests of the United States and its liberal-democratic allies are not congruent, but as I argue above they do overlap significantly, inasmuch as their governing elites share a common vision for domestic order and thus tend to share common enemies. Were the EU or Japan to gain parity with the United States, U.S. security would not be seriously jeopardized so long as each country or bloc retained its liberalism. The United States would have to suffer the many irritations and welfare losses that come from equality or subordination, including submitting to allies’ agendas and preferences, irritations that the allies themselves have endured for many decades. Coordination would become more difficult in the absence of a military hegemon or “power of last resort.” Collective actions such as humanitarian intervention would thus be more difficult to carry out unless the powers, in concert-like fashion, divided the world into spheres of influence.

More dangerous would be the supplanting of U.S. primacy by a coalition of illiberal states. The most likely combination, given current trends, is a Sino-Russian alliance. Were such an alliance to form tomorrow, it would certainly not be equipped to counterbalance U.S. might, but several decades hence it might just. We know from recent history what such a balanced international system would be like. The tighter the Sino-Russian alliance, the more it would resemble the bipolar Cold War international system. Most of us do not miss the

118. Samuel P. Huntington, “Why International Primacy Matters,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 69–70.

Cold War.¹¹⁹ Those nostalgic for the days when Americans were unified against the communist adversary have somehow forgotten the wrenching disagreements that spanned the entire Cold War period over how far to oppose that adversary, or even whether it was an adversary. National disunity was much greater between 1968 and 1975 than at any time since. We may all be Kennanites now, but we were certainly not all then.

A world in which U.S. power was balanced by a coalition of illiberal powers would be one in which the United States devoted vast resources toward the pursuit of relative gains through internal and external balancing. As in the Cold War, there would be benefits such as security-driven technological innovations that eventually increased the efficiency of the civilian economy. But the costs would almost certainly outweigh such benefits. Other bipolar international systems, such as when the Habsburgs and French dueled over Europe or Rome and Carthage vied for control of the ancient Mediterranean, were even more dangerous (in part because nuclear deterrence did not exist).¹²⁰ Better for the country, and for the world, that the U.S. preponderance of power continue. For the world, not just any primacy is better than none. German primacy under the Nazis, or Soviet primacy, would have been far worse for all than a balance of power. As Huntington writes, it matters *which* country exercises power.¹²¹ An imbalance that favors the United States, while not without costs and humiliations to non-Americans, is on balance better for most of the world.

Conclusion

"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever." So wrote George Orwell in 1948, when totalitarianism seemed the wave of the future. More recently, an anonymous wit has said of life in Britain under New Labour: "Imagine a velvet glove coming down to caress a human face—for ever."¹²² Orwell's boot was the totalitarian model that seemed ascendant in the 1940s; the velvet glove might equally be applied to the U.S.-led world order. The United States is indeed a restrained, benign hegemon. It is far away from the countries that have any prospect of ever challenging its pri-

119. Cf. John J. Mearsheimer, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1990, pp. 30–40; for a more scholarly version, see John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.

120. On the relative dangers of bipolarity, see Copeland, *Origins of Major War*, pp. 11–34.

121. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," p. 70. For a compelling defense of U.S. primacy, see Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World."

122. Quoted in Martin Ivens, "Brown Moves Fast in the Wake of Disaster," *Sunday Times* (London), January 28, 2001, pp. 1–18.

macy. It enriches itself to be sure, but by promoting economic efficiency and thereby enriching other countries as well, rather than by conquest. It uses its power not to subjugate but to establish and uphold order via institutions that yield increasing benefits over time. If the United States is an imperial power, the world may never have known such a benevolent empire.

Yet the United States also instantiates an ideology, liberalism, that is repulsive to the actors who dominate a number of countries. America's every success—and there have been many since the early 1980s—strengthens the credibility of liberalism everywhere. Its successes thus threaten the prospects of antiliberals in their own countries. When these antiliberal actors see the United States, they see not restraint, but bullying; not benignity, but a metastasizing cancer; not a distant great power, but a vigilante able to hurt them quickly; perhaps a velvet caress with one hand, but a handcuffing with the other. To them, uses of force to vindicate human rights are hypocritical efforts to extend American power, and U.S. allies who participate in such efforts are stooges.

An explanation of why the United States retains its primacy thus must go beyond noting that benefits to its allies from the American-built world order outweigh the probable costs of building an alternative order. It must also go beyond noting that geography makes counterbalancing the United States especially difficult and unrewarding. If these explanations were sufficient, no rational state would even try counterbalancing; rather, all would seek to do as Japan and Germany did after 1945. In fact, many countries are counterbalancing, most important China. With the partial exception of France, countries are counterbalancing U.S. power in inverse proportion to the influence that liberal elites have over their foreign policies. The argument that the United States is a benign hegemon is one that only a liberal could make. Thus the lack of a balance of international power is caused in part by the widespread penetration of most potential challenger states by liberalism. Liberal elites everywhere belong to a transnational group whose members identify with one another's successes. Because the United States is the leading liberal country, its unprecedented power engenders in most non-American liberals not fear but acquiescence (actual if not rhetorical). America's postwar reconstruction of Germany and Japan into liberal democracies reflected Washington's understanding that extending liberalism meant extending U.S. power.

Domestic ideology is not everything. International interactions may reinforce or reverse the identities that membership in a transnational ideological group produce. The United States may not do whatever it likes and blithely assume that it will never generate counterbalancing. Even liberal elites are also

citizens of nation-states whose interests are not fully congruent with those of the United States. Should U.S. policies degrade the security of a state, it may be compelled to counterbalance, liberals or no. Thus did India counterbalance the United States during the Cold War; thus has Russia inched toward doing in recent years. Still, those who doubt the importance of political liberalism should ask themselves whether they are genuinely indifferent toward the future of Russian or Chinese liberalism. If not—if they would prefer for Russia and China to be mature liberal democracies—they should then ask whether that preference is solely out of moral concern for Russians and Chinese, or whether it might also be out of a concern for the quality of those countries' relations with the United States.

U.S. primacy is not eternal, but it can last much longer than many believe, and the United States may act at the margin to extend its life by promoting liberalism abroad. In so doing, it faces a dilemma: Promoting liberalism further alienates antiliberals even as it empowers liberals. It is a platitude that U.S. foreign policy must be judicious, but it is nonetheless particularly true as regards the export of liberal-democratic institutions, including human rights.¹²³ China is the most problematic case and probably presents the most serious long-term challenge to U.S. primacy. But its very antiliberalism, and that of other states and transnational movements, helps to keep liberals elsewhere content with the current imbalance of world power. Insofar as the label "liberal" has any meaning, it requires an opposite, some concrete variety of "antiliberalism." Should antiliberal actors disappear from the world, transnational liberalism would follow, and so would U.S. primacy.¹²⁴ The United States benefits from a peculiar equilibrium. Globally, antiliberal actors are weak enough not to threaten U.S. primacy but strong enough to enable its continuance. This equilibrium cannot last forever. But Americans and others fortunate enough to enjoy the fruits of U.S. primacy should enjoy it while it lasts.

123. On democracy promotion, see Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi, eds., *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Gideon Rose, "Democracy Promotion and American Foreign Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/01), pp. 186–203.

124. For further discussion, see Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*, pp. 234–235; and John M. Owen, IV, "Pieces of Maximal Peace: Common Identities, Common Interests," in Arie Kacowicz, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Ole Elgström, and Magnus Jerneck, eds., *Stable Peace among Nations* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), pp. 74–91.