Marco Clementi · Matteo Dian
Barbara Pisciotta *Editors*

US Foreign Policy in a Challenging World

Building Order on Shifting Foundations

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ISBN 978-3-319-54117-4 ISBN 978-3-319-54118-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-54118-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017937926

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book concludes a research project devoted to studying one of the most intriguing issues in current international relations: the role of the US in the spatially fragmented and highly uncertain contemporary international system. The book attempts to answer at least two fundamental questions: how has the US adapted to such a peculiar strategic environment? To what extent is the US still producing and sustaining order—and what kind of order—at the system level and within the different regional subsystems?

This project has grown over time and has been discussed over the last two years, especially in the panels we organized, to this end, at the Italian Political Science Association conferences in Cosenza (10–12 September 2015) and Milan (15–17 September 2016). Many colleagues participated in these panels in person and others contributed to the project remotely. We thank them all for their highly appreciated scholarship and kind availability.

The project resulted in a volume consisting of four parts. Part I deals with global issues and investigates what the US has done to defend its system-level interests, as well as the fundamental norms and practices on which it built the international order during the Cold War. Parts II—IV deal with the most strategically relevant contemporary regional subsystems: Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific. These investigate the US posture towards these regions; the policies the US has taken to face the most relevant challenges in each of them; and whether, and if so how, these policies have been mutually influential with one another and with global policies.

The US presidential elections took place when our journey was almost over. We factored the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America into the book, combining an issue area perspective with an overall review. Firstly, we asked our contributors to comment on how the Trump presidency could conceivably change the claims they were advancing in their chapters, which were devoted to considering specific aspects of US foreign policy. Secondly, we concluded the book with a chapter that placed President Trump against the backdrop of the US traditional foreign policy culture and posture, in order to grasp what

impact he could have on the basal guidelines of the US grand strategy, as well as on the international system.

We thank the authors of this edited volume for engaging so astutely with the unexpected change in the US leadership. Even though, at the time we are writing—early February 2017—the assessment of President Trump's foreign policy remains a matter for speculation, we are confident that the contributions of our authors offer useful insights into, and reflections on, the prospects for the US and the US-led international order. Of course, the responsibility for any remaining shortcoming rests solely with us.

Pavia, Italy — Marco Clementi
Bologna, Italy — Matteo Dian
Rome, Italy — Barbara Pisciotta

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Introduction: US Foreign Policy in Front of Global Uncertainty and Regional Fragmentation

Marco Clementi and Barbara Pisciotta

1 Looking for One's Place in the World

> Today, the United States is stronger and better positioned to seize the opportunities of a still new century and safeguard our interests against the risks of an insecure world. […] America must lead. Strong and sustained American leadership is essential to a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as the dignity and human rights of all peoples. The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead (White House 2015, p. i).

The introduction to the last *National Security Strategy* (NSS) of the Obama Administration, published in 2015, opens on this optimistic note. According to the document, the United States (US) retains its capacity to lead and is still able to sustain and strengthen the foundation of the liberal international order it has promoted since 1945. America's strength, according to the 2015 NSS, springs from the vitality of its economy, the investments in science and technology, the openness of its society. Moreover, the American role is described as indispensable for the durability of the international order itself, as well as for the promotion of the values of democracy, freedom and human dignity on a global scale.

This is in stark contrast with the America represented by President Trump, whose inaugural address offered a picture of the country and of its international role that was entirely at odds with that of Obama.

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M. Clementi et al. (eds.), *US Foreign Policy in a Challenging World,*
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-54118-1_1

> For many decades we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own and spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon (Trump 2017).

How is it possible for two presidents of the US hold such divergent visions of the state of the nation, and of its relationship with the world, in such a short distance of time? Has America's position actually worsened so fast and so severely? In fact, we know that the US economic performance has recently improved and the country is slowly but steadily overcoming the global financial crisis. In economic terms, the US has been doing much better than the EU countries and some of the so-called emerging powers, like Russia. In political and military terms, the US is still the leading nation of the Western world and the most and best armed state on earth. True, the US is in trouble in settling several important crises that are wrecking many regions of the world. Still, it is difficult to see what kind of global challenge would likely endanger the US existential security and international peace. Why, then, such a great variation in the representation of the country?

Several domestic factors are relevant in this regard. Among them, of course, is the fact that the two leaders have contending political values and principles; and they represent different domestic groups, whose interests relate differently to the external environment. The polarization of American political culture and competition, increased by fundamental social and political transformations, and put on stage by the 2016 primary and presidential elections, do matter as well. The populist revolt against the political establishment is very important too, because Trump chose to distance himself as much as possible from the bipartisan consensus on the role of the country in international affairs and on the traditional guidelines of US foreign policy.

Yet, we think there is something more than this. There is a substantial uncertainty in contemporary international relations that further complicates the assessment of the relationship between national interests and international dynamics. It could also be this fundamental ambiguity that widens the spectrum of the plausible domestic representations of the position of the US in the international system. Several international factors combine to yield this result.

To start with, power realities are among the most fundamental factors to cause great uncertainty in contemporary international relations, by influencing both US foreign policy and the strategic environment it aims to address. With reference to the former, the focus goes on the formidable capabilities of the US in terms of military, economic and broadly defined ideational, or soft, power. Despite the rise of competitors such as Russia and China, and the process of sequestration enacted since 2011, the US maintains by far the largest military budget in the world.

Moreover, sixth among the first ten nations with the largest military budget are treaty allies of the US. At the system level, this is the unusual power concentration by which some scholars have classified the contemporary system as unipolar, in structural terms (Wohlforth 1999; Ikenberry et al. 2011). What should be noted in this regard is that unipolarity exerts, to a lesser extent, the *shoving and shaping* force that system polarity is thought to exert on the great powers and international competition (Waltz 1979). In a unipolar situation, the unipole meets indeterminate — or very weak — system incentives and constraints (Mowle and Sacko 2007; Ikenberry et al. 2011). Accordingly, contemporary US foreign policy is expected to have a considerable freedom of action and, in turn, possibly head towards diverging directions (Jervis 2011; Snyder et al. 2011).

With reference to the strategic environment, the focus is on the capabilities of the US competitors, namely of the great powers that could bring the most dangerous traditional challenges to the US security and to the stability of the American-led order. China and Russia are the most relevant actors in this regard. In terms of resources, demographic weight, rising military capabilities, China surely appears to be the most formidable competitor for American primacy. The People's Republic has surpassed the American GDP (in power purchasing parity) in 2014. Its military capabilities are rapidly expanding, leading several commentators to state that Beijing aims to achieve the status of regional hegemon in Asia in the foreseeable future (Friedberg 2012; Yoshihara and Holmes 2011). Russia is less equipped from an economic and demographic perspective. Nevertheless, in the past decade Putin has returned to promote an assertive foreign policy, restarting the country's military modernization and returning to play in relevant theatres such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and South East Asia (Allison 2013; Hill and Lo 2013; Trenin 2016). According to some scholars, tension with these countries could significantly soar. The crisis in Ukraine showed the Russian discontent with the current European security settlement, with particular reference to the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (McFaul et al. 2014). The rise of China could trigger a large-scale security competition and even conflict, causing Washington and Beijing fall into a *Thucydides trap* (Allison 2012; Goldstein 2015; Rudd 2015). The fact is that the definition of the US posture towards these countries has not been easy at all. It has been complicated by the great uncertainty about the pace of these states' relative growth and, consequently, about the likely outcomes of these trends, in terms both of international standing and revisionist or status quo attitudes (Buzan 2004; Welch Larson and Shevchenko 2010).

The differential growth of great powers calls into play another important factor of ambiguity in contemporary international politics: the possible in-stability of the US position and role. No matter how powerful the US has become, the possible decline of the country would impair its ability to defend itself and the international order it has built. According to some scholars, the US may have completed its hegemonic cycle (Gilpin 1981; Kennedy 1987; Modelski 1987) and the combination of fiscal constraints and geopolitical overstretching would be the clearest

evidence of this outcome. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq stimulated a debate on the end of the American era and the beginning of an apolar or post-American, post-Western world (Zakaria 2008; Ferguson 2011; Kupchan 2013). The apparent impossibility for the US to disentangle itself from the quagmires of the Middle East appeared to be a clear symptom of the tendency to overexpand security concerns and to blur the differences between fundamental challenges and secondary theatres (Snyder 2003; Layne 2011; Altman and Haass 2010). The global economic recession offered another seemingly clear indication of America's hegemonic decline (Burrows and Harris 2009; Lelong and Cohen 2010; Stiglitz 2010).

In sum, power realities are suggesting that the direction of US foreign policy cannot be taken for granted; the relationship between the US and its most powerful competitors is a decade-long work-in-progress with no clear prospect either for cooperation or conflict; the durability of the primacy and leadership of the US itself is at stake. All these factors combine to make contemporary international relations particularly uncertain and unpredictable. Furthermore, all are necessarily magnified by certain traits rooted in the contemporary conflicts.

In this regard, the most important factors to consider are the diffusion of non-state violence and intra-state conflicts. International and transnational terrorism, internal wars and insurgencies, separatist movements, piracy, organized crime, etc., alone or in combination with one another, are complicating and compromising the results of security policies because they jeopardize the strategic logic by which traditional deterrence and conflict-resolution mechanisms work in the contemporary system. In truth, these phenomena are not novelties of the present time. On the contrary, we know that the Cold War produced a steep rise in the occurrence of civil wars and of conflicts fought by non-state belligerents, as well as a relative decline of traditional inter-state wars (Väyrynen 2006; Human Security Research Project 2011). However, a fundamental novelty exists in the combination of these phenomena with the global strategic architecture, or rather, the lack of it. The point here, is that these phenomena significantly affect inter-state competition and the international order by producing results that are no longer filtered and prioritized by a global competition that unifies the contemporary system in strategic terms.

In this regard, the last factor of international uncertainty we are briefly short-listing is also important. This is the growing autonomy of regional dynamics and theatres. Since 1989, the overall process of economic globalization has further developed, together with deepening processes of strategic and economic regionalization (Lake and Morgan 1997; Buzan and Wæver 2003; Paul 2012). Regionalism — namely, the divergence of patterns of action at the regional level — is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon that can bring about mixed results, either contributing to the stability of the global order (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Adler and Barnett 1998) or weakening and fragmenting it (Lake and Morgan 1997; Acharya 2009; Goh 2013). In either case — this is what we want to emphasize — the results are highly uncertain and depend on factors that also change from one region to another. Thus, the resulting spatial fragmentation of the international system is likely to complicate and make more uncertain the US global influence,

be it in political, military or economic affairs, as well as the US ability to produce and protect the international order.

Thus, contemporary international relations show a great complexity that has hindered the coherent definition of the US grand strategy and has changed it frequently and significantly. We could say the contemporary US is experiencing an ongoing process of strategic adaptation that is the most telling evidence of the great ambiguity and uncertainty through which the country perceives and represents its position and role in the world. Consequently, no contemporary president could have the same confidence in the country's posture towards international politics as that of John F. Kennedy, who, during his inaugural address, stated: "America shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe" (Kennedy 1961).

2 Structure and Content of the Book

This book aims to gain an understanding of how the US has adapted to a strategic environment made extremely complex and ambiguous by a combination of uncertainty in its fundamental factors and fragmentation of its regional subsystems. To this aim, it investigates US foreign policy in the context of certain relevant global issues and in the most important contemporary regional settings.

The first part of the book focuses on some of the most relevant global issue areas to investigate US foreign policy at the system level, and its possible change. This part also asks whether, and if so how, US global policies have taken into consideration the contemporary processes of regionalization. The remaining parts of the volume deal with the most strategically relevant contemporary regional subsystems: Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific. These parts aim to investigate the US choices concerning current issues that are core to specific regional dynamics; to relate these policies to the global US posture; and, ultimately, to assess whether they have positively contributed to safeguarding the international order in the different regional theatres.

It could be said that this book adopts a two-level perspective, since it aims to offer insights into both global and regional US policies. It also adopts a multiplicity of perspectives, since it aims to offer insights into a variety of regional settings. Consequently, we hope that this book will contribute to understand how the US has dealt with the challenge of matching global interests to regional dynamics; the extent to which the US has produced different — possibly inconsistent — economic and security goods in different regional theatres; and, the extent to which the US is still producing order at the system level and within the different regional subsystems.

Part I starts with the core issue of the multilateral frameworks by which the US institutionalized the post-45 great hegemonic bargain (Ikenberry 2001). Carla Monteleone considers the Obama administration's approach towards multilateralism. She underlines that the US is still attaching a core strategic value to the

universal multilateral institutions of the Western order. Yet, overall, the efforts to reform them have been too limited to effectively accommodate the emerging regional powers, thereby contributing to the development of new mini-lateral initiatives at the regional level, such as, for instance, the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which might weaken the stability of the American order in the long term.

Arlo Poletti, Eugenio Cusumano and Stefano Ruzza focus on free trade and the freedom of the seas respectively: namely, on the basal norms of economic and geopolitical openness on which rest the prosperity and global influence of a hegemonic power. Arlo Poletti considers the factors that drove the US to bargain a mega-trade agreement such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). By paying particular attention to the expected distributive effects of the TPP and alternative trade frameworks, he underlines the US strategy to either exclude China from the current trading system or to include it under terms more favourable to the US itself. The competitive logic underlying this regional mega-trade agreement — he concludes — could have ended up strengthening, rather than weakening, the global trade regime.

Eugenio Cusumano and Stefano Ruzza analyse US policies in the face of the substantial resurgence of piracy, with a specific focus on the wide Gulf of Aden region, as a case of global public good provision. The analysis shows that the US has promoted antipiracy operations, committed substantial resources for safeguarding the freedom of the seas, and successfully supported the involvement of the private sector in the provision of maritime security. Notwithstanding a favourable multilateral burden-sharing deal with European countries — Cusumano and Ruzza conclude — the US actually seems to be indispensable to the provision of this hegemonic function.

The chapter by Rupal N. Metha and Rachel E. Whitlark focuses on the changing nature of the threat of nuclear proliferation, in relation to the struggle to acquire nuclear latency (namely, the ability to develop nuclear weapons), rather than nuclear weapons themselves. Such a strategic shift — they suggest — makes non-proliferation policies much more difficult, and calls into play a much larger population of countries. The US leadership is still the core asset in the production of this security public good but — the authors suggest — the US has to revise its non-proliferation policy in order to tackle both kinds of proliferation, and possibly play one against the other to bargain with new likely proliferators.

Marco Clementi closes the part on global issues by focusing on the stability of the US primacy and leadership. The chapter investigates whether, and if so how, the US strategic discourse has related the perception of national decline to the overall process of regionalization. Clementi suggests that, apart from the Global War on Terror proposed by Bush Jr., the post-89 US grand strategy has assumed the salience of the decline-regionalism nexus. The conception of decline changed, but the perception of national decline steadily influenced the US regional policies, in turn contributing to the overall process of regionalization.

Part II concentrates on the European continent and addresses both the evolution of transatlantic relations and the thorny relationship with Russia. David G. Haglund

focuses on the role of ethnic identity in US foreign policy. Haglund's investigation goes back to the US grand strategy debate at the time of World War I, moves on to the Cold War period and, ultimately, considers the role of ethnic identity in the definition of contemporary American national identity and its vision of transatlantic relations. He counterintuitively concludes that the relevance of ethnicity has lessened over time, and is now limited to the Anglo-American *special relationship* and the role the latter can play in transatlantic relations.

Andrea Locatelli and Andrea Carati focus on the military dimension of transatlantic relations. Locatelli deals with military capabilities and underlines the US efforts to safeguard its global military superiority via high military expenditures, steady innovation in procurement policies, and doctrinal adaptation. This policy of global primacy has left behind not only possible challengers and competitors, but also the European allies, with the partial exception of the UK and France. The increasing asymmetry in capabilities between the two shores of the Atlantic — he argues — is endangering the effectiveness of the transatlantic alliance. Carati observes that the power gap between the US and the NATO members draws a boundary between the global interests of the US and the regional interests of the secondary allies, thereby influencing the political dimension of NATO and the actual use of capabilities in military operations. He considers the military interventions in Afghanistan and Libya and suggests that regional considerations are relevant in NATO global operations; and, that the global power of the US can reduce the commitment to collective security of European allies.

Barbara Pisciotta analyses the causes of the clash between the US and Russia over the Ukrainian question and suggests a connection with the three aims pursued by US foreign policy in post-communist Europe since the 1990s, namely the promotion of democracy, the expansion of the EU and the enlargement of NATO. Despite America's evident military and economic superiority, Russia has continued to constitute a potential challenger, in terms of revisionist power, particularly since Putin's rise to power.

Part III focuses on the most conflictual contemporary regional complex — the Middle East — in order to assess the US contribution to regional stability and reform, and the relevance of the region to the US domestic political process. Marco Pinfari underlines that the US approch towards the Middle East shows a substantial continuity with the late 1970 s' Camp David paradigm, by which the state-centred resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the key to the stability of a region lacking in both a regional hegemon and effective multilateral institutions. He discusses the reasons why this paradigm has been put under strain by recent developments, including the diffusion of fundamentalist terrorism, the overall growing role of non-states actors, the effects of the Arab springs and the Syrian civil war. Even though these developments have greatly complicated the US role in the region and its relation with regional powers — Pinfari concludes — the US seems to remain the undisputed final arbiter of regional disputes.

The role of non-state actors is a core issue of Oz Hassan's chapter, which focuses on the main bottom-up means by which the US tried to support democratic governace in the region: the Freedom Agenda for the Middle East and North Africa

devised by the G.W. Bush administration after 9/11. Hassan reviews the rationale and the difficult implementation of the Freedom Agenda from its origins to President Obama. He underlines that the process of institutionalization of the Freedom Agenda has been severely hampered by the Arab Springs and the related collapse of the overall regional security architecture, thereby damaging the credibility of the US as a democracy promoter in the region.

Marina Calculli also considers the undeniable relevance of non state actors in the Middle East dynamics, while examining the US strategy and policies in the Syrian crisis. She debates the issue of the US retrenchment from the Middle East in relation to the global decline of the country, and maintains that President Obama theorized the Islamic State as a major threat to the US security and followed Bush Junior's war on terror track. Consequently — she concludes — the US is still engaged in the region, even though the means of this engagement has shifted from classical warfare to shadow wars, consisting in undercover operations and support to proxy non-state belligerents.

Edoardo Baldaro's chapter considers how the US drew the boundaries of a new regional security complex — the Sahara-Sahel region — and turned it into a front of the Global War on Terror. The US pursued an integrated approach between institution building and counterterrorism and based both on regional partners — acting as proxies — and an effective division of labour with some selected European allies, especially France. Baldaro argues why the US should be considered the crucial actor at the regional level, notwithstanding the fact that the strategy failed to bring stability to the region, and that other extra-regional powers, such as the EU or even China have a stake in it.

Marco Morini analyses the relevance of the Middle East issue in the 2016 American presidential campaign. After describing the early campaign's international context and the past and current public opinion's perception of foreign policy, he discusses the primary candidates' proposals on the Middle East. He suggests that the Middle East dynamics have been relevant to all the candidates, who often linked it to other issues, such as immigration and terrorism.

Part IV focuses on the Asia-Pacific region and aims to highlight the mutual influence between regional and global dynamics. In the first chapter, Matteo Dian disentangles the power, institutional and normative dimensions of the Pivot to Asia as a means of redrawing the boundaries of the fastest growing region of the international system. According to Dian, the core US goal is to consolidate a Trans-Pacific form of regional order rooted in Washington's leadership and free market capitalism, as well as to prevent the rise of Sino-centric regional order, based upon the Chinese leadership and state capitalist practices.

Axel Berkofsky and Simone Dossi focus on two dimensions of the US-China relationship that relate to global commons and which thus have effects on both regional and global competition. Berkofsky investigates the US Freedom of Navigation Military Operations in the South China Sea as a means of upholding the regional status quo, in the face of Chinese territorial claims, and to reaffirm the freedom of the high seas in the face of the Chinese restrictions on the transit of military vessels. He emphasizes that China has not been deterred by the US policy;

on the contrary, China has claimed that the militarization of the occupied islands is a reaction to what it conceives more as display of force than innocent — or lawful — passage. The US presence in the South China Sea can fuel a security dilemma situation; yet — Berkofsky underlines — no other extra-regional or regional powers (e.g. Japan) have so far been willing to contribute to those regional and global public goods.

Dossi aims to investigate another kind of global commons, namely the cyberspace. In order to grasp the Chinese and US perceptions of cyberwarfare and their mutual influence, he considers Chinese governments' white papers on national defence, Chinese debates in academic journals, and US strategic official documents. On these bases, he maintains that cyberspace remains a highly ambivalent domain and argues about the impact it can have on changing the relative power distribution between the two countries and on the future of the US-led international order.

All in all, the above chapters of Part IV show that the Asia-Pacific region is rife with sources of conflict and instability, and that the US-China relationship is basically competitive. According to John C. Hemmings, if one looks at the diplomatic alignments by which the US has pursued regional security, a more optimistic conclusion can be drawn. Hemmings considers the evolution of the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship — from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, and ending with Barack Obama — and suggests that the US has steadily dealt with the regional security dilemma combining China-engagement with alliance-integration. It has tried to integrate and socialize China into regional and global frameworks, so as to turn it into a responsible stakeholder, as well as attempting to normalize the regional role of its allies and to devise burden-sharing solutions. Thus, in Hemmings' view, the US has chained is allies while promoting a security community approach at the regional level.

3 The US Adaptation to Uncertainty and Fragmentation

This introduction cannot do justice to the implications to be derived from the above contributions. However, some concluding remarks on the fundamental questions that have nurtured this book are possible. Let us remember that these questions deal with the strategic adaptation of the US to the complexities and ambiguities of the current international system; and, with the US leadership in the present times, namely the actual US contribution to provide the basal common goods on which the international order rests.

With reference to the first point, one could underline that the US strategies and behaviours show a substantial variation depending on the issues, alignments and regional settings. For instance, the US has struck effective burden-sharing deals with the European allies in safeguarding the freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aden, and in the coordination of the Western intervention in the Sahara-Sahel. Conversely, in the Asia-Pacific, the US has played a leading role much more assertively. It has used resources and influence to build a region-wide security and

economic architecture, via the Pivot to Asia and the TPP. Notwithstanding the process of alliance integration with Australia and Japan, it has neither delegated nor shared the naval military operations through which it is trying to deter Chinese territorial expansionism. While acting as the *leading country* in the Asia-Pacific, the US has become a *leading from behind* country in the Middle East, where it has delegated certain military functions to allies and proxy belligerents on the ground, and has left significant freedom of action to regional competitors like Russia.

Of course, such a variation substantially responds to the specific mixture of historical legacies, current stakes on the ground and regional powers' strategies — be they enemies or friends — that feature in the different issue areas and regional theatres. However, what we want to emphasize is that this variation does not seem to have featured in the overall US foreign policy goals. This variation could be seen as the differential adaptation of the US means to keep pursuing the same fundamental goals. Contemporary US foreign policy would, accordingly, show a clear line of continuity with the past.

A few years ago, Kitchen maintained "the geography of United States foreign policy […] completed its post-Cold War shift of focus — from Europe to Asia, via a Middle East detour" (2014, p. 72). According to a zero-sum logic, these words could mean that the US sailed from Europe to Asia, passing by the Middle East. Yet, they could also be read to mean that the continuity of the American project called the US to focus on Asia rather than on the Middle East. In other words, the contemporary US might be not in the midst of a geopolitical journey from one regional subsystem to another, but simply in the process of strengthening and expanding the post-45 international order.

After securing the values, norms and practices of the liberal order in Western Europe, the US expanded them to Eastern and Central Europe. These chapters suggest the US has tried to uphold them in the face of soaring competition with Russia. They also suggest it has tried to expand and settle them where the sources of international influence could give the highest power returns to the US, as well as nurture the development of alternative principles of international legitimacy and organization.

In this regard, one cannot but note that the contemporary US has continued to make of multilateral institutional frameworks the means to include and socialize new actors into the existing order, both at the universal and regional level, and to exert its tamed superior power at the same time. The US has continued to prevent the adversarial militarization of the global commons and to actively safeguard the openness of the global commons. This is necessary for the smooth working of an international integrated system and for global political and military influence. The US has tried to make Asia similar to Europe, by promoting the basic liberal principles of free trade, democracy and human rights; and by supporting the development of overlapping political, security and trade communities.

Therefore, one could conclude that the US has adapted to the contemporary strategic environment by tailoring its means to different situations and regions while pursuing the same long-term ends. Yet, tailored means do not necessarily imply effective results. With reference to the US contribution to the international order,

we should note that the above chapters illustrate and claim that the US policies have not always been successful.

The reform of the Western universal international institutions has been too limited to accommodate the emerging regional powers. The US non-proliferation policy needs a revision to keep nuclear latency under control. China has not actually been deterred by the US Freedom of Navigation Operations. The US intervention has not increased the stability of the Sahara-Sahel region. The US ability to broker the Arab-Israeli conflict has recently diminished rather than increased. The US efforts to support democratic governance in the Middle East has been short-lived. The US posture towards the Syrian crisis has been highly ambiguous and uncertain. In sum, to say the least, the actual US contribution to the international order at the system level, and within the different regional theatres, is not out of the question. Consequently, the US could face a situation where it is willing to produce the international order but is not fully able of doing so. In such a situation, the prestige of the country as the leader of the system could fade, thereby contributing to the (domestic and international) perception of national decline.

Against this conclusion, one could underline that the US is actually and effectively producing common goods in some issues and regions such as, for instance, the defense of European and Asian allies or the antipiracy operations. But, what is most noteworthy in this regard is the fact that the contributions to this book are arguing that the US is still the indispensable nation, even when and where its policies are failing or not fully successful. This is either because of the lack of regional hegemons in the Middle East, or because the possible regional leaders, such as Russia in Europe and China in Asia, could have revisionist postures towards the international order. This is also because the closest US allies, such as NATO members, are lacking in both capabilities and commitment to substantially share the burden of the global and regional common goods of the liberal international order. The US dilemma, in this regard, is that primacy itself is a requirement of the US indispensability; but, it contributes both to making the international order much more uncertain and reducing the commitment by which the closest allies of the US support it. In this sense — and thus twisting Huntington's phrase (1999) — the current US is a *lonely superpower*.

It is against this puzzling backdrop that Donald Trump's leadership came to the fore. But, with what consequences for US foreign policy and, in turn, for international relations? Each contribution to this book elaborates on the impact that the Trump administration could have on the specific issues investigated. Matteo Dian's concluding chapter offers an overall assessment of this topic and argues why President Trump is likely to reject the foundations of the US foreign policy guidelines and undermine the liberal international order that sustained the American hegemony and international stability alike, according to the bipartisan élites that devised it and defended it for decades.

It is difficult to anticipate the consequences of such a fundamental break with the long-standing American tradition of liberal internationalism, short of expecting that they will be universal. This relates partly to the difficulty of keeping under control

all the pieces of such a complex puzzle and partly to the fact that some pieces are missing.

To start with, it is not clear which of the keywords President Trump has emphasized to distance himself from the US political establishment will be turned into actual fundamental foreign policy goals. Nor is it clear what means the Trump administration will use under what specific circumstances. It is also worth noting that the ambiguity over the future basal foreign policy guidelines is great not only because the Trump administration is in its infancy, but also because there is great uncertainty about its factors and direction. In fact, it is unclear what strategic thinking will inform the Trump foreign policy guidelines, or how the Trump administration will balance the populist ideologues and pragmatists who compose it. The quick and sudden U-turns President Trump made on certain core issues of current international affairs serve to magnify this overall unpredictability.

In sum, this introductory chapter has argued that US foreign policy has been much complicated by the considerable uncertainty of contemporary international dynamics. It has also underlined some of the most relevant *external* roots of this overall ambiguity. The concluding chapter suggests that the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America has further complicated US foreign policy by greatly increasing the *internal* factors of foreign policy uncertainty, too.

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Part I
The US Amidst Global Influence and Regional Dilemmas

Spatial Fragmentation of, and US Support for, the Main Multilateral Institutions of the Western Order

Carla Monteleone

Abstract The growth of China-led minilateral initiatives mostly of a regional character has challenged the main multilateral institutions of the Western order and, ultimately, US authority. Faced with a progressive delegitimation of the institutional architecture that it promoted after World War II, the US, under the Obama administration, has acted to defend the existing main multilateral institutions of the order (UN, IMF, WB and WTO), attributing them with a strategic role. More than being radical, though, the reforms enacted have been incremental and pragmatic, but always imperfect. More importantly, they have not altered US influence, which is exercised mostly through informal means. This, however, has left room for dissatisfaction and more reform requests, but has added credibility to threats to use the alternative organizations created at the regional level, and this risks undermining not only the existing universal multilateral institutions, but also the existing American-led institutional order.

1 Introduction

The growth of the so-called rising powers has amplified reform requests of the main multilateral institutions of the liberal international order promoted by the United States (US) with the support of its Western allies at the end of World War II, and expanded after the end of the Cold War: United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO). However, even when reforms have been agreed, consent towards the reformed institutions has not increased, and initiatives suggesting contestation have been taken. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank (NDB), the Chang Mai Initiative, the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA), are just a few of the many

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M. Clementi et al. (eds.), *US Foreign Policy in a Challenging World,*
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-54118-1_2

recent minilateral initiatives created by the rising powers, in particular China, that have been presented as a response to the unresponsiveness—at times outright ineffectiveness and unrepresentativeness—of universal institutions such as the IMF or the WB that had *already* been reformed (see, among others, Patrick 2015). However, the promotion by the US of minilateral inter-regional free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), both of which risk undermining the WTO, the organization that has most successfully adapted to power shifts, signals that a discontent, evident during the 2016 presidential election, is also present in the US.

All of this indicates a widespread dissatisfaction with the main institutions of the current American-led international order, and a potential delegitimation of the order itself. While some of these initiatives maintain an inter-regional character, others, and in particular the AIIB, are regional in character and potentially capable of redefining institutional roles and power relations in specific areas, leading to a spatial fragmentation of the international order, and potentially pointing towards a "multiplex world", that is, a composite world in which the American-led liberal hegemonic order is declining regardless of whether or not America itself is declining (Acharya 2014).

It remains to be seen whether the new initiatives will substitute or remain complementary to the existing universal institutions of the American-led liberal hegemonic order, but they already constitute an alternative path for dissatisfied coalitions. However, while attention has been paid to the challenges posed by the rising powers to the American-led liberal international order, less attention (among exceptions, see Vezirgiannidou 2013) has been paid to the promoter of that order and those institutions: the US. Indeed, the US reaction to the creation of the AIIB, the new China-led development bank for Asia, and its decision not to become a member of the new organization, and to request its traditional allies to do the same —a request followed only by Japan—indicate an American unease towards these new initiatives, but also a weaker support from the countries that traditionally backed the American-led liberal international order. It is therefore worth exploring whether, in view of the current power shift (both in terms of rising powers and the decline of its traditional allies), but still preeminent, the US is supporting the institutions of the international order it promoted, and keeping them relevant, or if it is renegotiating the institutional order.

After analysing the theoretical aspects of the relationship between the US and the main institutions of the American-led liberal hegemonic order, the chapter will identify the role played by the universal multilateral institutions in relation to the US, focusing on the National Security Strategies (NSSs) of the Obama administration (the administration that has so far been most affected by the power shift) as well as on the US commitment to support and/or reform them. The chapter will then investigate the current relationship of the US with the four universal multilateral organizations (UN, IMF, WB and WTO), analysing the US position on their reform: whether it opposed, promoted or consented to the reform; the outcome; and what it means for US influence within these institutions. It will be shown that important differences between the four international organizations are present,

but also that, in view of an increasing delegitimation, and despite domestic constraints, over time the US has become more assertive in its defence of the existing institutions, trying to enlarge its otherwise weakened coalition to consent to pragmatic but imperfect adaptations, rather than far-reaching reforms.

2 The US and the Institutional Order

The organization of the international political system promoted by the US with the support of its Western allies at the end of World War II represents an innovation, compared to previous orders (Ikenberry 2001).[1] It is based on leadership sharing, a system of rules and multilateral universal institutions, yet it promotes American interests and values. This is reflected in the four main universal institutions. The UN project was basically an American creation (Puchala 2005, p. 573). In the financial and development areas, the structure, location, and mandate of the IMF and WB were determined by the US (Woods 2003, p. 92). In the trade area, the US played a leading role in GATT negotiations and promoted its transformation into the WTO in the 1990s (Sen 2003, p. 116). Thanks to special privileges and factors related to governance, funds and personnel, in these institutions the influence of the US on decision-making outcomes has traditionally been remarkable.

The US combined its hegemonic role with multilateral institutions to share transactional costs and give the hegemonic structure a greater stability (Attinà 2011, p. 97). By choosing an international order based on multilateralism, the US created legitimate and durable rules and institutions capable of promoting its interests, while reassuring weaker states of power restraint by the dominant state. These rules and institutions moderated power asymmetries, and, over time, path dependence and the growth of institutional dividends made institutional change more difficult (Ikenberry 2001, 2011).

This innovation was made possible by the domestic character and preferences of the US (Ruggie 1993), but also by an environment in which norms of self-restraint in the use of force by states, democratic practices, a world public opinion, norms of sovereign equality and universal participation, and the principle that legitimate authority is based on reciprocally binding agreements that should be equally applied to all members started being diffused (Ikenberry 2001; Modelski 2008; Finnemore and Jurkovic 2014; Reus-Smit 1997; Hurd 2007). Once established, multilateral institutions have introduced formal procedures in the government of the global political system that have transformed the political organization into an institution-based leadership organization and, through agreed procedures for collective decision-making, have linked formal-legal institutions, political legitimacy and democracy (Attinà 2008, p. 125). This creates the expectation that within multilateral organizations decision-making processes should be(come) inclusive

[1]The terms organization and order will be used interchangeably.

and democratic. The relationship between the US and the current main institutions of the American-led order is then subject to pressures deriving from changes in material factors, especially power shifts, but also from institutional and normative factors, taking place at both the domestic and the international level.

Besides being a hegemon, the US is a great power. This creates a role tension. When no real challenger is on the horizon, it is more difficult for the US to sacrifice its short-term interests in favour of long-term ones (Cronin 2001). The US has always tried to build its institutional order, avoiding real restraints on its policy autonomy and political sovereignty, and to gain as much policy discretion as possible, while locking in weaker states (Ikenberry 2003), and hegemony provides the US with the privilege of instrumental or pragmatic use of multilateral organizations (Foot et al. 2003). However, the recently more frequent US recourse to unilateralism has been traced to structural factors: the end of the Cold War and the greater difficulties for American Presidents to resist parochial groups and veto players who oppose multilateralism at home. These structural factors are an obstacle towards American re-engagement with multilateral institutions, and allow—at most—fragmentary and incremental adjustments in different areas and institutional venues (Skidmore 2005, 2012).

Over time, this risks undermining the already weakened institution-based leadership order. But, whether and how the US should promote institutional reforms in view of power shifts is highly debated. According to Brooks and Wohlforth (2009, 2016), because the US is still in a position of strength and lacks immediate competitors, it should reform international institutions now that it can still persuade other states to adapt the existing institutions to the new challenges. But, this opportunity will not be available for long. Others are more sceptical that this is possible. Some believe that unipolarity is already over, so the US is no longer capable of organizing the international system: it has neither the credibility nor the legitimacy to do so, and rising powers have no interest in locking themselves in now, as they will shortly be able to reshape the international system and construct an order that reflects their interests, norms and values (Layne 2012). Others share the assumption of unipolarity, but believe that the US cannot reform international institutions now because there are no systemic reasons for weaker states to cement US power advantage into a new institutional order (Voeten 2011), or that being a unipole is not a sufficient reason to reform the institutions (Legro 2011). Schweller (2011) argues that the conditions for the US to reform the international institutions no longer exist because we have already entered a delegitimation phase, in which practices of soft balancing and criticism of the existing order are undermining and challenging the legitimacy of the hegemon's right to rule, and its established order. Finally, once in place, international organizations gain autonomy and authority (Finnemore and Barnett 2004), making attempts at reshaping them more than difficult.

Whether the new minilateral and regional organizations should be taken as an indicator of contestation in the transition from a hegemonic to a post-hegemonic era, and whether they can undermine the existing multilateral institutions, are widely-debated topics. Brooks and Wohlforth (2016) minimize the contestation element. They believe that the rising powers are only asking for an increased status