

# The Aftermath of 11 September: Increasing International Insecurity

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*Since the attacks of 11 September 2001 the US has chosen a strongly unilateral foreign policy underscored and effectively sustained by military power. In the immediate aftermath it was speculated that US desire to build an international coalition against terrorism and to take military action in sensitive areas would lead it to engage in dialogue with its potential allies in both the developed and developing worlds. This did not prove to be the case as the US has continued to act in opposition to the international community and to back up its foreign policy decisions with force if necessary. This article analyses the current international role of the US and the impact its actions have on the emerging system of international governance.*

The debate on the nature of US power in the world is clearly of concern to anyone interested in issues of development and international relations. Few would dispute that the US is the most powerful single state in the world – the only superpower – and in that regard we clearly live in a unipolar world. However there is considerable debate over the capacity of the US to exercise that power unchallenged. Since the attacks on America

in September 2001 there has been an ongoing debate on the impact of this event on world politics and in particular on the trajectory of the US government's foreign policy. This debate has produced general agreement that the Bush administration has concentrated its focus on maintaining US interests through unilateralist action. There are more divided views on the existing limits to American power and on the capacity of the US to persuade others of the correctness of its policy positions. This article analyses the strategic aims of US foreign policy both immediately before and after the attacks of 11 September. As the US foreign policy agenda is a crucial factor in setting the context in which those interested in issues of development, human security and human rights operate, our aim is to conceptualise and clarify the nature of contemporary US power and to discuss the way in which that power is likely to be exercised in the future.

## Hegemony and unipolarity/dominance

The level and nature of US power is discussed conceptually in the academic literature using the terms “unipolar”, dominant or hegemonic. These distinctions are not purely of interest to theoreticians of the international system. They attempt to encapsulate real differences in our understanding of US influence in international relations. The concept of hegemony (drawing on the writing of the Italian socialist Gramsci<sup>2</sup>) is a much more powerful ideological position than mere dominance. When a state (or elite group) has hegemonic power its analysis, across the range of social, economic and political issues, is widely accepted as the commonsense position becoming in effect the mainstream view of the world. This allows a hegemon to isolate its critics more thoroughly and makes mounting a political challenge to the hegemon's policy very difficult because any such challenge will inevitably take place outside of the ideological framework set by the hegemonic power. The concept of *hegemonic power*, therefore, assumes that the leadership of the most powerful actor is not subject to widespread ideological challenge as individuals, communities and other states are in broad agreement on the fundamentals of the political system.

The potential tension between acting as a dominant power and building a hegemonic position has been a point of debate among those who believe in the defence of American interests though the use of power. During the 2000 US election, Condoleezza Rice, then advisor to George W. Bush and later to become his National Security Advisor, asserted that “American values are universal” and that therefore there is no contradiction in asserting US power, because to do so is to reinforce what she believes to be universal values.<sup>3</sup> In Rice’s analysis, there is a convenient symmetry between American national interests and the promotion of what the US defines as good government and good economic policy. In effect, US practices become the template for the rest of the world. Henry Kissinger, while also an advocate of promoting US interests and power politics, disagrees with this perspective, arguing that “the dominant trend in American foreign policy thinking must be to transform power into consensus so that the international order is based on agreement rather than reluctant acquiescence”.<sup>4</sup> To assess the extent to which the US is able to build consensus around its own perspectives and in the absence of consensus, its capacity to successfully use its dominant position, the liberal academic Joseph Nye divides an analysis of US power into three hierarchical tiers - military, economic and other transnational dimensions, each of which has its own characteristics.<sup>5</sup> We will now examine each of these dimensions of foreign policy activity in turn.

## **Military power**

The US has been the undisputed dominant military power since the end of the Cold War. Although the Bush administration has continued to increase military spending, this is a point of continuity with the previous government. US military spending has been far ahead of any other state since the late Cold War. In the final years of the Clinton Presidency the relative decreases in post-Cold War military spending were reversed and while the scale of new spending has substantially increased since 11 September 2001, this has simply reinforced US dominance rather than created a new balance of power. The US has since 11 September reiterated its intention to maintain its position of military dominance, but it is also clear that it would never have allowed Europe, China or anyone else to match its military might

at any time since the early 1990s.

Given that US military dominance has been a constant factor in the post-Cold War world the key questions that arise are - firstly, have the attacks on the US made it more likely it will actually employ its military force and secondly will it do so unilaterally - without the consent of the UN or even the support of most of its allies? Any US president would have responded militarily to the attacks on its national territory and the assault on Afghanistan was broadly supported domestically in the US; even international criticism was muted. That initial consensus has evaporated and any fresh exercise of unilateral US military power could alienate traditional rivals and allies alike, with the qualified exception of Britain. Russia, France, China, Germany and pro-American Arab governments have all rejected Washington's ambitions to overthrow the Iraqi regime. This opposition was apparent as early as the "axis of evil" speech in January 2002 and has been publicly stated on a number of occasions since then.<sup>6</sup> While the Bush administration has managed to keep the US Congress in line, US opinion polls show that a considerable percentage of the US public were unhappy with the prospect of unilateral US action without the support of the UN or at least the major US allies.<sup>7</sup>

The Bush election campaign and early statements of policy were marked by a clear signal that the administration would be more isolationist. Condoleezza Rice wrote in early 2000: "Foreign policy in a Republican administration will most certainly be internationalist ... But it will also proceed from the firm ground of national interest, not from the interests of some illusory international community".<sup>8</sup> She also argued that "using American armed forces as the world's '911' [the US emergency services number] will degrade capabilities, [and] bog soldiers down in peacekeeping roles". Neither did Bush see a major role for US forces in what he called "nation building", later reminding foreign journalists that "during the course of the [election] campaign I made it clear that I thought our military should be used to fight and win war. That's what ... the military [is] for".<sup>9</sup> During the election campaign Republicans constantly criticised US mediation efforts and interventions during the Clinton era from Somalia to the Middle East. Bush made it clear that he would act militarily if necessary to defend US interests but his tendency towards isolationism led initial assessments to assume that this might mean limited use of America's military strength abroad. In line with the rhetoric of the election campaign the first eight months of the Bush Presidency saw

crucial decisions by the administration, such as the clash with Europe on the Kyoto protocol on green house gas reductions, refusals to support treaties on small arms restriction or on chemical and biological weapons and the declared intention of withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with Russia, that did indeed indicate a strong unilateralist and even an isolationist instinct in the White House.<sup>10</sup>

Although there was heavy reliance on US military strength to overthrow the Taliban, this had a high degree of support from other governments and as a consequence there were some signals that US thinking immediately after 11 September might move in a more multilateral direction. The Alliance against the Taliban had active Russian support. There were no real Russian objections to the strengthened US presence in Central Asia and there was even an attempted rapprochement with Iran via Britain. There was a new emphasis on public diplomacy, payment of long overdue UN bills, and a clear attempt at alliance building against the Taliban and more vaguely against networks of "international terrorists". There was also at this time an announcement of an increase in the official development aid budget, admittedly from a very low base as a percentage of US GDP.<sup>11</sup> Clearly it was always envisaged that US military power would be used to attack Afghanistan, and possibly other states, but it was at least potentially to be done in the context of US leadership of an international alliance. Bush himself on 20 September 2001 said the US "will ask, and we will need the help of police forces, intelligence services and banking systems around the world".<sup>12</sup>

By January 2002 it was clear that the multilateralism of the post-11 September coalition was sidelined as unilateralist thinking and action reasserted itself in the face of opposition from allied states. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld in a speech on strategy to the National Defense University in Washington argued that "wars can benefit from the coalitions of the willing to be sure – but they should not be fought by committee. The mission must determine the coalition, the coalition must not determine the mission, or the mission will be dumbed down to the lowest possible denominator".<sup>13</sup> By October 2002 this language had found its way into an official document – "Guidelines to be considered when committing US Forces" which stated: "Avoid trying so hard to persuade others to join a coalition that we compromise on our goals or jeopardize the command structure. Generally the mission will determine the coalition, the coalition should not determine the mission".<sup>14</sup> In a similar vein Rice states that "if the [UN] Security Council

cannot come to terms with strong action, the United States, with whomever else would like to join us, will have to take care of the problem".<sup>15</sup> In academic analysis the most influential US writer within the dominant "realist" school of thought, Kenneth Waltz argued that the relatively rapid overthrow of the Taliban by almost exclusively US force "flatly contradicted" the view that America could not successfully deploy its military might.<sup>16</sup>

Once the Taliban were defeated and it became clear that bin Laden and Mullah Omar were not going to be found, the US sought to move on to other targets but could not generate an international consensus on its new goals. Shock and sympathy for the US position after the attacks on New York and Washington limited criticism of the assault on Afghanistan, but the wider international community was wary of an extended military campaign against multiple targets. The Bush administration asserted its willingness to act unilaterally to defend its definition of US national interest against states considered a threat – primarily Iraq but also Iran and North Korea and even Cuba. This unilateralism has also been displayed in US policy towards the Middle East. The necessity of winning the support (or at least acquiescence) of some Arab governments for an attack on Iraq has not ultimately led to a shift in US policy. Despite the initial tension between Bush and Sharon in late September 2001 the Israeli government has been allowed to portray its assaults in the occupied territories as its local version of the war on terror.<sup>17</sup> The Saudi peace plan, endorsed by the Arab League in March 2002 was effectively sidelined by June.<sup>18</sup> Even when the US has been critical of aspects of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian areas it has not yet attempted to use its dominant position to redirect Israeli policy.

Opposition to the Bush axis of evil speech<sup>19</sup> was so strong that the US quickly readjusted its stance and chose to highlight Iraq above all other potential targets. From this time public statements concentrated almost exclusively on Iraq as the state that threatened international security. In his state of the Union address at the end of January 2002 Bush focused on Afghanistan and al Qaeda, but by June in his high profile speech at West Point there is no mention of bin Laden or al Qaeda by name.<sup>20</sup> In a speech in October 2002, following the publication of a national security strategy document, Condoleezza Rice made many references to 11 September and to Iraq but none to bin Laden or al Qaeda.<sup>21</sup> As the likelihood of finding bin Laden or Mullah Omar diminished the US needed a high profile replacement to maintain the momentum of its war on terror. Iraq was in many

ways the obvious target, not least because it was deemed to be unfinished business from President Bush senior's term of office. It also provided a more achievable objective than destroying al Qaeda.

The US administration, as well as seeking security through pre-emptive strikes, also had other policy reasons for pursuing this military course, the major one being the politics of oil in the region. The US had long followed a strategy of dual containment on Iran and Iraq in a bid to avoid a single regional challenger to its position. The tension with its largest oil supplier in the middle East – Saudi Arabia – post 9/11 – meant the US was more concerned than ever to secure its oil supplies. However, despite the fact that other industrialised countries share a common concern with the US on oil security many of them remained unhappy with the US approach and sought to moderate the Bush administration's plans for war on Iraq. In parallel, Arab governments in the region fear America's long-term intentions. In particular there is a desire to avoid any long term US control of Iraqi territory which might follow an invasion and which would be a focus for anti-US protests in their own territories.

After the attacks on the US, European governments and the EU as a whole had offered unprecedented political support. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) for the first time in its history invoked the mutual defence clause of the North Atlantic Treaty – declaring events of 11 September an attack on the Alliance. However on Iraq the US lost the active support of all EU members except Britain. France used its position on the UN Security Council to oppose a US invasion of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein.<sup>22</sup> The German government was extremely explicit about its opposition to declared US aims on Iraq. Indeed the position of the German Chancellor in opposition to the US was widely believed to be central to his rapid rise in opinion polls through the German parliamentary election campaign in 2002.<sup>23</sup> The response from Colin Powell was to say the US was “deeply disturbed and offended by how the Iraqi issue played into the recent German election”.<sup>24</sup> Relations were further soured when France, Germany and Belgium vetoed a NATO resolution to deploy forces and equipment to Turkey in February 2003.<sup>25</sup> US relations with Russia, which had significantly improved after 11 September, also soured as Russia made clear its opposition to an assault on Iraq. There were advantages to Russian support for the US campaign in Afghanistan, Russia was once again active on the world stage

and it was able to portray its war in Chechnya as an attack on Islamic extremists and terrorists so that even the muted Western criticism of the campaign disappeared. Supporting a unilateral US attack on Iraq would be much more problematic for Putin.

Even moderate Arab governments lacked enthusiasm for the US war in Afghanistan and their relationship with the US has continued to deteriorate. Iraq was effectively readmitted to the political fold during the year – with even the Saudi and Kuwaiti foreign ministers greeting the Iraqi minister at an Arab League meeting in March 2002.<sup>26</sup> US-Saudi relations were initially strained by the fact that 15 of the 19 hijackers were reportedly from Saudi Arabia and problems have continued with the US refusal to support the Saudi peace plan on the Middle East. The Arab states in general have rejected the potential exercise of unilateral US military power in the region and after some ambiguity the Saudi government announced it would refuse to allow US forces attack Iraq from its bases.<sup>27</sup> While the Arab League supported UN Security Council resolution 1441 in November 2002 that called on Iraq to co-operate with weapons inspections it also rejected any attack on Iraq as a threat to all Arab states.<sup>28</sup>

After a very isolationist start to its Iraq strategy the US ultimately moderated its position in response to international opposition (and some US Congressional and public opinion) to engage with the UN Security Council and to emphasise Iraq's weapons rather than government change.<sup>29</sup> The US, however, made it clear, at all times, that it absolutely reserved the right to attack Iraq if the Security Council failed to act against any Iraqi obstruction. Indeed in some of their statements US diplomats at the UN portrayed the Iraq resolution as the UN's last chance to remain central to the issue. Either a UN resolution would ultimately authorise US plans to remove Saddam or they would act alone. The US did however continue with its efforts at the UN and ultimately the Security Council resolution promoted by the US focused exclusively on weapons rather than regime change in Iraq and did not authorise military action. The unanimous position of the Council in resolution 1441 did not last long, however. As the weapons inspections continued without finding any weapons of mass destruction the US sought to promote a military attack and was opposed by Germany, Russia, China and France, up to time of writing. While each of the three veto holding countries left open the possibility of military action it was clear they did not accept US leadership on this issue.



Events since the defeat of the Taliban have demonstrated that although the US can deploy devastating military force it has found it difficult to persuade even its allies that its use of power or its choice of targets is in the best interests of the wider international community. No individual state or potential alliance may be capable of challenging the US militarily but the US is aware that there is widespread scepticism that its security objectives are common sense. This scepticism exists not only among the populations of allied states but is also shared by their political elites. Even within the US there is a clear anti-war minority opposed to an attack on Iraq and a much larger group opposed to unilateral action. There is no military power that can challenge the US but there are alternative perspectives on the use of military force in international relations in general and on specific cases such as Iraq. The US administration does not hold a hegemonic position because there is no international consensus on the exercise of its military power. The US is open to influence and pressure from other governments, non-governmental organisations and from public opinion, it is thus constrained in how it advances its security objectives and is aware that it may pay a political cost for unilateral action. The US may still choose to act unilaterally and rely on its military strength but it will do so in the face of widespread opposition.

## Economic power

US economic power is based on two components, firstly the actual strength of its economy in the international system and secondly the extent to which the global economy is grounded in "American values" and rules that work in favour of US interests. Whatever economic measure is used – percentage of world trade, GNP or numbers of leading multinationals – the US position is clearly a powerful one but it does not dominate in the economic sphere in the same way it does in the military sphere. In the international economy, the US shares power with other wealthy industrialised states, but unlike the military/security sphere where it enjoys more undisputed power, on the range of policy issues relating to international economic relations it has appeared to enjoy a greater degree of ideological hegemony. The ability of the US to exercise its economic power internationally is determined by its capacity to set the rules of the international economic game

through the Washington-based institutions, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank, and the degree to which it can dominate agenda setting in the WTO (World Trade Organisation). Also significant is the extent to which globalisation has enhanced the influence of the dollar, US stock market and US-based multinationals in the global economy. Looking back over the past two decades at the dominance of neo-liberal economic policy ideas, and also at the fall of communism, it could appear that “American values” had achieved a hegemonic position and now structure the international system. This would certainly be the view of the current US administration.

The reality however is more complex. The US has not been the only source of neo-liberal ideas and while the political culture of the US is firmly grounded in free market ideology and liberal democracy, even here there is division, with distinctions between Democratic and Republican platforms on economic/development policy issues. In the US presidential campaign of 2000 the Gore and Bush camps put forward a significantly different analysis of international economic relations and how they saw that policy fitting into a wider foreign policy agenda. Condoleezza Rice as a key Republican strategist expounded an economic foreign policy platform that was essentially unilateralist and advocated “international economic policies that leverage the advantages of the American economy and expand free trade”.<sup>30</sup> The Republican policy platform was at the same time devoid of a commitment to development and economic aid. The Democratic campaign emphasised: multilateralism and the redefinition of national interest to include issues of global concern; the acknowledgement that the US stood to continue to benefit from globalisation; and a commitment to increase development aid. In contrast to the dominance of military might in the foreign policy agenda of the Republicans, leading Democratic advisers argued that “in many circumstances, economic policies may prove the best instrument for achieving geopolitical objectives”.<sup>31</sup>

Internationally, there are many challenges to the US administration’s variety of neo-liberal economic development. In spite of the dominance of neo-liberal thinking and the catalogue of changes that this has produced in the policy regimes of all EU states there remains a distinctive European form of capitalism with a relatively high social welfare provision. Obviously European states are not the only dissenters. Recent developments in Latin America, including the election of the Brazilian Workers Party leader Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva as

President and the election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (as well as the popular defeat of the US-supported coup attempt following his election) indicate that large numbers of people support politicians who advocate economic policies that are looked upon with disfavour by the US establishment. These events are part of a counter-hegemonic movement that has strengthened since the end of the 1990s and which was manifest for a time in the anti-global capitalist protests. These ideological challenges to the dominance of economic neo-liberalism had their antecedence in the widespread criticism faced by the international financial institutions (especially the IMF and the World Bank for the role they played in forcing structural adjustment programmes on developing countries) and also in the campaign to cancel the foreign debt of the world's poorest countries. Although the political climate post-9/11 has damped down the appetite for street protest, and many activists and organisations have shifted their energies into a more specifically focused anti-war movement, the widespread dissatisfaction with unregulated capitalism on which those protests were founded is expressed in other forms of political action.

One of the major criticisms of the US response to the 11 September attacks was its failure to either acknowledge or deal with the causes of terrorism. The administration responded to criticism over its lack of soft policies to complement the military stance in *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* published in September 2002.<sup>32</sup> In this document the major threat to the US is described as coming from failed states – an idea that has formed the basis of the response to those who argued there was a need to address global inequality, poverty and oppression as root causes of international terrorism. The administration in its policy pronouncements during the past year has turned this perspective on its head by arguing that poverty does not cause terrorism but that failed states (which may also be poor as a result of their failure) tend also to be anarchic and provide havens for terrorists. Therefore, in the eyes of the Bush administration, inequality and poverty *per se* do not result in terrorism, rather it is the failure to embrace democracy and free market values that blocks the path to development and also helps to produce governments willing to allow terrorists to operate in their territory. As Bush argued: “poverty doesn’t cause terrorism. Being poor doesn’t make you a murderer ... Yet persistent poverty and oppression can lead to hopelessness and despair. And when governments fail to meet the most basic needs of their people, these failed states can become havens for terror”.<sup>33</sup>

This analysis of the links between state failure and terror now influences US development priorities and also its view of how the World Bank and the IMF should monitor and allocate development spending. In the 2002 US *National Security Strategy*, economic policy issues are included as two out of eight key points. The first of these economic points advocates promoting global economic growth through free markets and free trade, arguing that policies “that further strengthen market incentives and market institutions are relevant for all economies – industrial countries, emerging markets and the developing world”.<sup>34</sup> The second point seeks to “expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy”. The document also justifies the administration’s decision to make military action its priority as well as retrospectively defending the US’ comparatively small commitment to development aid by stigmatising decades of massive development assistance as having failed to spur economic growth and having propped up “failed policies” while “relieving the pressure for reform and perpetuating misery”.<sup>35</sup> From the perspective of the Bush administration it is the existence of these failed states, following inappropriate development strategies, rather than the international system, which is to blame for global poverty. The goal of international development aid therefore from this viewpoint – should be focused on changing governments’ objectives and economic strategies towards a neo-liberal model.

One of the central planks of this new policy was the announcement of a New Millennium Challenge Account that will provide \$5 billion (over 3 years) of new spending specifically targeted at those countries that follow a programme of economic and political reform which has US approval.<sup>36</sup> The administration also stated its commitment to ensuring that the World Bank and other development banks apply economic based criteria to their lending and include private sector developments as targets of funding, with the aim that expenditure will “increase productivity growth in developing countries”. The administration clearly states that the additional aid will be linked to what it defines as sound policies and that the funds “will be distributed to developing countries that demonstrate a strong commitment” towards three criteria: good governance, the health and education of their people and sound economic policies that foster enterprise and entrepreneurship. The final policy area is spelt out clearly as “more open markets, sustainable budget policies, and strong support for individual entrepreneurship”.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the strong focus on promoting American values there is a deep vein of condescension in the statement that qualifying countries “will be encouraged to actively engage with us [the US] in formulating uses for MCA funding through a participatory process involving local and federal elected officials, civil society, and development partners”.<sup>38</sup> In the words of President Bush this is a “new compact for global development, defined by new accountability for both rich and poor nations alike. Greater contributions from developed nations must be linked to greater responsibility from developing nations. In return for this additional commitment, we expect nations to adopt the reforms and policies that make development effective and lasting”.<sup>39</sup>

The policies embedded in the *National Security Strategy* and in the development aid programme including the Millennium Challenge Account reflect what the Bush administration describes as a forging of a new consensus. Bush described that new consensus as meaning that “the objectives of assistance – and the strategies to achieve those objectives – must change”.<sup>40</sup> While the Bush administration claimed to have achieved such a consensus with the international community at the UN Conference on Finance for Development in Monterrey in March 2002, this is an overstatement - underlining that in multilateral organisations the US may be an influential voice but it is not a hegemonic one. Anthony Arnold writing in the *Harvard International Review*, while pessimistic about the outcome of Monterrey, sees it essentially as a continuation of a policy package rather than a new departure. The failure of Monterrey to meet the needs of developing countries he describes as a joint failure of the US and Europe.<sup>41</sup>

In international policymaking on aid and development, as on other economic issues, the US is a powerful and influential voice and in many instances its ability to shape policy is enhanced by the coincidence of interests between it and the other wealthy industrialised states. However while the powerful position of the US, especially in the Washington-based institutions, the IMF and World Bank, allows it to have a major influence on the world economic system it does not do so from a hegemonic position. Not only is there widespread criticism of the direction of US influence on development issues but the outcomes of international agreements do not correspond to US policy. For example, in spite of the many shortcomings of the final outcome of the UN Monterrey Conference the language used reflected a variety of influences of which the US was only one and it also

contained a commitment to debt cancellation although the US administration did not promote this initiative.

## Other transnational issues

The relative coincidence of interests between wealthy industrialised states that is evident on issues of trade and development does not extend to the full range of transnational issues. During the last two years there have been crucial debates on the environment and on human rights where the US has not been able to achieve its policy goals.

The Kyoto Treaty on greenhouse gas emissions, designed to slow down global warming was negotiated during the Clinton Presidency in 1997 but is still going through the process of ratification by the time of the US Presidential election in 2000. During the negotiations under Clinton the US won concessions because of the perceived need to have it on board and as a result the initial aims of environmental NGOs, and even of the EU, were diluted. While Bush's opposition to the treaty was well known before his election, his formal announcement that he would not seek to have it ratified by the US Congress generated international resentment.<sup>42</sup> During his first year in office, despite considerable diplomatic activity, the Bush administration has failed to achieve any significant support for a fundamental rewrite of the Kyoto protocol. The EU ratified the treaty in early 2002.<sup>43</sup> Russia, Canada and China announced they would sign Kyoto at the UN summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa in September 2002.<sup>44</sup> It is now likely that the treaty will take effect without US involvement – isolating them from the debate and demonstrating the failure of its diplomatic power on this issue. The extent of this isolation can be seen in the thresholds for ratification. To come into effect the Kyoto Treaty had to be ratified by a number of developed states that would collectively account for at least 55% of the industrialised countries' carbon dioxide emissions. As the US alone accounts for 33% of such global emissions, the promoters of the Treaty had to get almost every other major industrialised state to ratify the Treaty if it was to come into effect without US support.<sup>45</sup>

The US also suffered a diplomatic failure on the International Criminal Court (ICC). This failure was especially significant given that the US had publicly made the court an issue of military

and security concern. At the founding conference in Rome in July 1998, the ICC was launched by a vote of 120 to 7 - the seven who voted against were the US, China, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Qatar and Yemen. The US ultimately signed the treaty but made it clear it was only doing so to allow it take part in meetings and negotiations on the detail of ICC and had no intention of ratifying the Treaty. On 11 April 2002 the ICC came into force as 66 UN member states had lodged ratification papers with the UN in New York. This was a major defeat for the Bush administration that had opposed the whole concept of a permanent international war crimes tribunal that would have jurisdiction over its soldiers and officials. Following the establishment of the Court the US administration launched a new initiative to secure an exemption for Americans from the Court's jurisdiction and even went so far as to threaten to veto the renewal by the Security Council of a UN mission in Bosnia in July 2002 and other UN missions as they fell due for renewal if their demands were not met. There was little support for the US position, given the rules governing the ICC which allowed states to try their own citizens. In addition to this the jurisdiction of the court is limited to the world's most serious crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and prosecutions cannot be retroactive.

Ultimately under sustained pressure and the threat of a US veto on the renewal of all UN peacekeeping operations the UN Security Council passed resolution 1422 which asked UN members not to seek prosecution of individuals involved in UN authorised operations for a (renewable) one year period. This was condemned by human rights groups such as Amnesty International who argued that it violated the fundamental purpose of the ICC.<sup>46</sup> However the compromise was deemed unacceptable by the Bush administration, as it wanted an exemption of all US citizens from the reach of the court. Having failed to persuade the Security Council of this, the US administration sought bilateral agreements with individual countries, where those countries would agree not to hand over US citizens to the ICC. The US was applying a lot of pressure on states and it was credibly reported it was telling aspirant NATO members that it would block their membership if they refused to sign bilateral immunity agreements with the US.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately Romania, Israel, East Timor and Tajikistan indicated they would sign such agreements and the EU foreign ministers also agreed to allow individual states to sign agreements, provided they were limited to US military and officials on

overseas missions and that the US agreed to try them in its own jurisdiction.<sup>48</sup> This compromise by the EU was however heavily criticised by some member states including Germany.<sup>49</sup>

The US achieved some progress from its point of view on the ICC, but it could not prevent the court being established and it is unlikely to persuade the majority of states to sign immunity agreements. The depth of the rebuff to US diplomacy is illustrated by the relative speed (according to UN standards) by which the Court was brought into existence. The Canadian head of the Court's preparatory commission was quoted as saying it would take between 10 and 20 years for sufficient states (a minimum of 60) to ratify the Treaty in their national parliaments.<sup>50</sup> In the end it took only 4 years for 66 states to do so.

In these crucial, public debates on the environment and international human rights the US position is not a dominant one. Proponents of a realist world view argue that this does not matter as these issues are of little consequence, ranking below military and economic issues in importance. However these are very public debates where the US has chosen to deploy considerable resources to achieve its goals and where it has failed. Classical realists at least would be the first to acknowledge the importance of the appearance of power in this regard. By fighting and losing on Kyoto and the ICC the Bush administration has weakened its image of dominance and this may have knock-on effects in the security and economic domains.

## Conclusion

The US is clearly the only state with a claim to superpower status. In this regard we live in a unipolar world and the US government has considerable power to shape the international system according to its own national interests. However the US is not a global hegemon in the sense of having the capacity to provide leadership to the international community within parameters defined by its national interests. The Bush administration has faced serious challenges to its strategy on Iraq. It provoked a crisis within NATO and its position led to large global protests against its policy, with millions of demonstrators taking part and with particularly large demonstrations in the US' strongest ally, Britain. The Irish government's ambiguity also clearly added to the largest political protest in modern times in Dublin. At a less



dramatic level the US also saw clear defeats for its diplomacy on the Kyoto Accord and the International Criminal Court while its position on development aid and trade continued to be actively challenged. These facts illustrate that there is a continuing battle of ideas in international forums, and that the capacity exists to challenge the vision and the values bound up in the promotion of US national interests.

In the short term, however, we may see a period in which US military action in pursuit of its political goals will become more likely and that this military action will in turn generate increased regional instability. In the economic sphere the knock-on effect of the Bush administration's military actions will undermine (but not prevent) the effective generation of international regulation outside of those areas that correspond to US interests. The pressure from wealthy industrialised states (usually acting in broad agreement with the US within this sphere) is likely to ensure that the World Bank, IMF and WTO continue to develop the regulation of world trade and intellectual property rights in a manner which favours wealthy states over poorer ones. The pressure for a more progressive position, linking globalisation in trade and finance to improvements in human security, sustainable development and human rights, will continue to be expressed on the streets by the anti-global capitalist movement (and implicitly by the anti-war movement) and in multilateral forums by NGOs and states. The current US administration will however continue to strongly resist pressures for a more ethical regulation of globalisation and will seek to narrowly define international trade and finance agreements to ensure they follow a free market model.

The gap between US power and its capacity to provide leadership will however provide opportunities for alternative visions of the international system to emerge. The Jubilee 2000 campaign, the anti-global capitalism protests, the new debates around sustainable development, the progress made on Kyoto and the ICC and the political changes in Brazil and Venezuela have laid the groundwork for a more coherent challenge to the perspectives promoted by the Bush administration and indicate that the policy offensive of the US government will be met by an increasingly coherent alternative vision.

### Footnotes

- 1 We would like to acknowledge the work of Delma Campbell as research assistant on the project from which this article is drawn.
- 2 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, (eds), Lawrence and Wishart, 1971

- 3 Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the national interest", *Foreign Affairs* 79 (1), 2000, p. 49
- 4 Cited in Michael Hirsh, "Bush and the world", *Foreign Affairs* 81 (5), 2002, p. 41
- 5 Joseph Nye, "The American national interest and global public goods", *International Affairs* 78 (2), 2002, p.238
- 6 For the "State of the Union/ Axis of Evil" speech see [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html). For examples of criticism see *Financial Times* 16 February 2002 and 18 February 2002; *New York Times* 16 February 2002; *Agence France Presse* 31 January 2002
- 7 As late as October 2002, a majority of Americans, 60 per cent or more, would support an attack on Iraq only if it had UN approval. Without that approval, support for a unilateral American attack plummeted to not much more than 20 %. See for example *Chicago Tribune*, 27 October 2002.
- 8 Rice, 2000, *op.cit.*, p.62
- 9 Roundtable interview with foreign press 18 July 2001: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010718.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010718.html)
- 10 There is a good summary of US-Europe tensions on these issues in *Chicago Tribune* 28 July 2002.
- 11 The UN target for official aid is 0.7% of GDP. The average EU spend will rise to 0.39% by 2006, while even with these increases US official development aid will be just 0.15% of GDP: *The Guardian*, 23 March 2002.
- 12 Address to joint session of Congress 20 September 2001: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/2001/09/20010920-8.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/2001/09/20010920-8.html)
- 13 See [www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020131-secdf2.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020131-secdf2.html)
- 14 *New York Times*, 14 October 2002
- 15 *Financial Times* 23 September 2002
- 16 Kenneth Waltz, "The continuity of international politics", in Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (eds.), *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, Palgrave, 2002, p.348
- 17 See *Washington Post* 8 September 2002
- 18 Avi Shlaim, "The United States and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" in Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.178-9
- 19 See [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html)
- 20 See [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html)
- 21 See [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html)
- 22 For a good discussion of French role see *The Guardian* 19 October 2002
- 23 *Agence France Presse* declared on 13 September 2002: "Anri-war stance pulls Schroeder ahead in German election". See also *The New York Times* 15 September 2002 and Conor O'Clery, *The Irish Times* 25 September 2002.
- 24 (US) *Federal News Service*, 26 September 2002, hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee subject: US policy toward Iraq.
- 25 *The Irish Times* 13 February 2003
- 26 *Financial Times* 30 March 2002
- 27 *Ibid.*, 4 November 2002
- 28 *New York Times* 11 November 2002; *Financial Times* 11 November 2002
- 29 *New York Times* 22 October 2002
- 30 Rice, 2000, *op. cit.*, p.6
- 31 W. Cutter, Spero Bowman, Joan Tyson, Laura D'Andrea, "New world, new deal", *Foreign Affairs* 79 (2), 2000, p.82

- 32 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* available on <http://www.whitehouse.gov>
- 33 Speech to Inter American Development Bank 14 March 2002: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020314-7.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020314-7.html)
- 34 *National Security Strategy, op. cit.*, p.17
- 35 *Ibid.*, p.21
- 36 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020314-7.html>
- 37 Millennium Challenge Account Update: [www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2002/fs\\_mca.html](http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2002/fs_mca.html)
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Speech to Inter-American Development Bank, 14 March 2002: [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020314-7.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020314-7.html)
- 40 *National Security Strategy, op. cit.*, p.21
- 41 Anthony Arnold, "Development dilemmas: the Monterrey Conference", *Harvard International Review*, Fall 2002, pp.11-12
- 42 *New York Times* 29 March 2001, 4 April 2001; *Financial Times* 16 May 2001
- 43 *The Guardian* 5 March 2002
- 44 *The Independent* (London) 4 September 2002
- 45 *The Guardian* 5 March 2002
- 46 See <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/IOR510072002!Open>
- 47 *The Irish Times* 27 August 2002
- 48 *New York Times* 9 October 2002; *Financial Times* 3 October 2002
- 49 *The Irish Times* 1 October 2002
- 50 *Ibid.*, 12 April 2002

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