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Free Riding or Restraint? Examining European Grand Strategy

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The major U.S. allies seem to be content to let the United States shoulder the burden associated with assuring the security of the West and promoting freedom and democracy around the world, passively free riding on the security provided by the U.S. taxpayer. A different explanation is available, if rarely discussed: Perhaps the Europeans great powers are not merely passive consumers of free U.S. security guarantees; perhaps instead the decisions they have made with regard to their own defense are part of active, coherent, logical, rational grand strategies. Perhaps the choice to pursue strategic restraint is not due to the stability provided by U.S. hegemony but a conscious response to declining threat. This article seeks to explain the grand strategies of some of the great and potentially great powers of the post-Cold War world. Far from being irresponsible international actors, our allies are acting quite rationally in a world virtually absent of serious threat, at least compared to all those that have come before.

Introduction

“The demilitarization of Europe,” argued U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in February 2010, “has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st.”¹ Gates was giving voice to a common complaint in U.S. strategic circles: Europe is irresponsibly weak, content to let the United States shoulder the lion’s share of the burden associated with securing the West and promoting freedom and democracy around the world. According to this view, passive free riding on the back of the U.S. taxpayer is not only morally and strategically unacceptable but dangerous to long-term international stability. European weakness, Gates warned, could provide “temptation to miscalculation and aggression” by hostile powers.

Neoconservatives and other hawks have predictably taken the lead in castigating these poltroon allies. Robert Kagan argued that unlike the United States, “Europe is turning away from power,” so much so that it often seems as if—echoing a popular book on romance—that “Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.”² The ordering is no accident; Kagan insinuates throughout his entire piece that the Europeans have effectively self-effeminized, and are dependent upon the few remaining men in the West for protection in a hostile world.

A different explanation is available, if rarely discussed. Perhaps the Europeans are not merely passive consumers of U.S. security guarantees; perhaps instead the decisions they have made with regard to their own defense are instead part of active, coherent, logical, rational grand strategies. Perhaps they are not shirking their international responsibilities as much as interpreting the threats of the post-Cold War world in a profoundly different way than policymakers in Washington. The choice to pursue strategic restraint on part of Europe is not merely due to the stability provided by U.S. hegemony—which is largely illusory, as will be discussed later—but also a conscious response to declining threat.

This article seeks to explain the grand strategies of most of the great and potentially great powers of the post–Cold War world. Far from being irresponsible international actors, the states of Europe (as well as the U.S. allies in the Pacific Rim, though that is a subject for another article) are acting quite rationally in a world virtually absent of serious threat. Most of our allies are following a clearly recognizable path of restraint. We dismiss their strategic wisdom at our peril.

The Grand Strategy of the Major U.S. Allies

The overwhelming majority of the literature on grand strategy focuses on that of the United States. Even those Europeans who discuss the subject focus far more on what Uncle Sam is doing than on other states.³ The reasons for this are clear: First, as the most powerful member of the system, the behavior of the United States will have the greatest impact upon the system in the next century, for good or for ill. Even though no single state can alone determine the character of politics to come, the grand strategic choices made by the United States will have disproportionate consequences in every corner of the world. Second, strategic flexibility is directly related to power. Weak countries often have their strategies all but determined for them by outside forces. Debates about the proper Polish or Mexican grand strategy would not be terribly interesting, since their choices are constrained by limited resources and powerful neighbors. The set of strategic options before the United States, on the other hand, has no natural limits. Only the grand strategies of the great powers are worthy of too much discussion; that of the greatest, most flexible of power is the most worthy of all.

Yet smaller powers are strategic too. In fact, a good case can be made that since the end of the Cold War most U.S. allies have been following a far more coherent and consistent grand strategy than has the United States, where more than one observer has wondered whether any such strategy exists, or even can exist.⁴ By contrast, most of the major states of Europe have for years followed a clear strategic path, that of *restraint*.

Strategic restraint is a well-known option in U.S. debates, even if its effect on policy has been rather limited. The most useful description remains that of Eric Nordlinger, who fifteen years ago recommended a strategy built on three pillars: “minimally effortful national strategy in the security realm; moderately activist policies to advance our liberal ideas among and within states; and a fully activist economic diplomacy on behalf of free trade.”⁵ Most of the major allies of the United States appear to be adhering quite closely to this prescription.

First, the Europeans participate very minimally in traditional security matters. This disinterest should not be interpreted as incapability, however: Together the twenty-seven EU member states have a GDP comparable to that of the United States (approximately \$14.51 to \$14.26 trillion) and a far greater population (500 to 307 million).⁶ Europeans just do not seem to feel an impetus to expand their military capabilities, as if they have made a strategic calculation about the threats they face and the best way to confront them. Few devote more than 2 percent of their GDPs to defense spending, unlike the nearly 5 percent spent by the United States.⁷ Their militaries are now primarily structured to address what some call “social work,” which is important, both domestically and internationally, but is not directly related to their security.⁸ In fact, most of the ventures that the Europeans have been involved in since the collapse of the USSR have not been primarily related to their own material interests. Security rationales sometimes have been invented to accompany modern crises, such as those in Bosnia, Kosovo (“credibility of NATO” was at stake), and now in Libya, all of which were primarily humanitarian interventions.

The fact that the English and French were the primary forces behind the operation in Libya demonstrates that they have not completely given up on the use of force. But they and the other major European allies do not seem to feel that a large military or overseas presence is the best way to address the remaining systemic threats they do detect, like terrorism, proliferation and the occasional atavistic tyrant. The intelligence and counterterror services of the European countries are in some ways more intrusive and robust than those of the United States, but their conventional militaries are much smaller. Historian James Sheehan summarizes the obvious: "Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century is economically strong but uninterested in transforming this strength into military power."⁹

Second, it should be equally simple to demonstrate that these states remain vigorously engaged in international trade and economics. In fact, fourteen of the fifteen "most globalized" countries in 2010 are in Europe, according to the Swiss Economic Institute.¹⁰ The major U.S. allies appear to believe that the market does not need protection, and that prosperity is no longer dependent upon active military intervention abroad. Multi-national corporations today can generally access the entire world without much fear of undue harassment from host governments, who have strong incentives to provide a healthy, well-regulated environment for trade and prosperity to flourish. Threats to free trade still exist from a variety of criminal predators, but their solution, according to this point of view, hardly requires costly military action. If and when local law enforcement agencies prove incapable of providing protection for the businesses that operate in their territory, modern multinationals surely have the resources to either provide it for themselves, or move out. In other words, the allies have reached the conclusion that Microsoft does not need the Marine Corps and great powers no longer have to use force to guard their economic interests. Today's market will take care of itself.

Third, the major U.S. allies contribute to what might be considered worldwide social work campaigns. Strategic restraint provides two counsels about humanitarian and developmental assistance: First, that their (usually fairly modest) burdens should be shared and performed in conjunction with the rest of the industrialized world; and second, that they should not be conflated with security or political aid. Foreign humanitarian assistance is cheap, relatively speaking, and often carries benefits for both the donor and recipient alike. Under its Common Security and Defense Policy, the European Union has raised and deployed rather modest forces to contribute to multilateral peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. These countries, which are some of the world's richest, have proven to be quite willing to contribute what they see as their share to humanitarian operations of various types, from Kosovo to the Congo, through multilateral institutions. Strategic restraint hardly entails indifference to the world's problems or an abnegation of international responsibilities, but it does reject the notion that any single state bears responsibility to police the world.

Thus restraint is hardly isolation. No serious analyst of foreign affairs thinks that his or her country can or should cut itself off from the rest of the world, à la Tokugawa Japan. A restrained state would continue to trade, participate in international organizations, and play a role in humanitarian relief efforts. It would merely define threats, interests, and obligations narrowly, and arrange security commitments and military spending accordingly. Restraint has not prevented U.S. allies from contributing to the pursuit of a more just, free, prosperous, and liberal world order. "The power that European states do project internationally," observed Sheehan, "is economic, cultural, and legal, the outward expression of the values and institutions that matter most in their relations with one another and with their own citizens."¹¹ In the end, that the Europeans great powers are following a grand strategy of strategic restraint is not as controversial as why they are doing so. Their choice is obvious; its genesis, perhaps less so.

The Security Environment: Threats and Opportunities in the Golden Age

Kagan suggests that Europeans have chosen their grand strategy because of their military weakness. “The incapacity to respond to threats leads not only to tolerance,” he argued, “It can also lead to denial.”¹² Their low level of capability encourages them to downplay dangers, leading to an almost utopian view of a benign international system. If nothing can be done about evil, the argument goes, then perhaps it is natural to simply deny its existence. Is the heightened U.S. threat perception therefore more accurate, and therefore more rational, as Kagan clearly believes? If it is true that the system contains myriad dangers, then eternal armed vigilance would clearly be called for; if instead those dangers are not terribly dire, then perhaps the kind of strategic choices the Europeans have made might make more strategic sense.

Kagan appears to fundamentally misunderstand the genesis of grand strategy, reversing the causal direction of the process he is describing. Though he would have us believe that capability drives threat perception, history suggests that is exactly backwards. The first lesson of IR 101 is that states in an anarchic, self-help system must address their security first and foremost. Only an insane or deluded strategist would allow low capability to render dangers ignorable, or hope to make them go away entirely. If the Europeans detected threats in the system, these rich states would certainly build large military forces to defend themselves. In other words, U.S. allies do not deny threats because of their low capability. Instead allied capability is low because they do not appear to feel that serious threats exist.

By far the greatest determinant of any grand strategy is the intensity of threats that the state perceives in its neighborhood, as well as in the system as a whole. Generally speaking, there is a direct correlation between the level of danger perceived in the security environment and support for internationalist grand strategies. In other words, the more threat the analyst perceives, the more deeply he or she feels a necessity to be involved in political affairs abroad. It is no coincidence that those with the highest perceptions of threat to the United States—the neoconservatives—also espouse the most muscular, activist grand strategy.¹³ Kagan’s assumption about the subconscious motivations of effete Europeans is understandable, since he and his fellow neoconservatives see the world as a dangerous place where good men must wage constant combat against evil. He begins with his conclusion—that the Europeans are underestimating the threat—and searches for reasons, rather than assessing the possibility that they may in fact be correct in their assessment of the security environment. While Kagan will probably continue to believe that European strategists address their security by wishing threats away, it seems a bit more logical to conclude that they simply do not perceive the same level of threat as do many of their counterparts in the United States.

Restraint is a rational response to a low-threat international security environment. Thus the root cause of allied demilitarization is not a mystery: The great powers of Europe do not perceive much threat in the international system. The first line of the 2003 European Security Strategy reads that “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free.”¹⁴ The opening sentence of the U.S. National Security Strategy that was released three years later struck a quite different tone: “America is at war.”¹⁵ It goes on to describe a tumultuous, dangerous world, where the United States has to lead an effort to “end tyranny” since “the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad.”

Who is right? The next section assesses the extant threat in the international system at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and examines current trends; the one that follows speculates about the staying power of those trends. Do the Europeans feel safe because

the United States provides their security? Would their security behavior be different in the absence of U.S. military presence or alliance commitments? In other words, how much is the United States responsible for European “underspending?”

The Twenty-First Century International System: A Golden Age of Peace and Security

Assessing the level of threat and opportunity present in the international system is hardly a straightforward exercise. No while no consensus exists about how much danger exists in the world today, there are a number of empirical trends regarding conflict and violence that could help create the basic structure within which a coherent grand strategy can be constructed. Taken together, these trends paint the picture of a system with an extremely low level of threat, lower than that for any country at any previous time in world history. According to almost any objective measure, the European sense of danger seems to more closely match the twenty-first century facts.

By now, most scholars of international relations should be aware that levels of conflict have been dropping steadily around the world since the end of the Cold War.¹⁶ Major wars between great powers tend to be rather memorable, so there is little need to demonstrate that there has been no such conflict for quite some time. The data also seem to support what amounts to a “trickle-down” theory of stability: Empirical analyses of warfare have consistently shown that the number of all types of wars—interstate, civil, ethnic, revolutionary, etc.—declined throughout the 1990s and into the new century, after a brief surge of postcolonial conflicts in the first few years of that decade.¹⁷ Whether this represents a fundamental change in the rules that govern state behavior or a temporary respite between cataclysms is not clear, but the post-Cold War world is certainly a more peaceful place than any that came before.

Overall levels of conflict tell only part of the story. Many other aspects of international behavior, including some that might be considered the secondary effects of warfare, are on the decline as well. The average number of battle deaths per conflict per year has been steadily declining, as has the risk for the average person of dying in battle. Overall, the global magnitude of warfare has decreased by over 60 percent since peaking in the mid-1980s.¹⁸ War termination settlements have proven to be more stable over time, and the number of new conflicts is lower than ever before.¹⁹ Those conflicts that do persist have less support from outside actors. When the great powers have intervened in local conflicts, it has usually been in the attempt to bring a conflict to an end or, in the case of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, or to punish aggression.²⁰ World military spending declined by one third in the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall.²¹

Intranational war is also disappearing. The incidence and magnitude of ethnic conflict have declined to their lowest levels since people started collecting data about them.²² This is no doubt at least in part due to the fact that global repression appears to have diminished: The number of minority groups around the world experiencing political or economic discrimination at the hands of states has declined, from 75 in 1991 to 41 in 2003.²³ Furthermore, since war is usually a necessary condition for genocide, perhaps it should be unsurprising that the incidence of genocide and other incidences of mass slaughter declined by 90 percent between 1989 and 2005.²⁴ Coups are also becoming more and more rare.²⁵ Overall, there has been a clear, if uneven, decline in what the Human Security Centre calls “one-sided violence against civilians” since 1989.²⁶

The decline in international and intranational conflict since the Cold War is even more impressive when one considers the growth in the number of countries around the

world. Given the rapid increase in world population and number of countries (the League of Nations had 63 members at its peak, while the United Nations [UN] currently has 192), a pure extrapolation of historical trends might have led one to expect a great deal more warfare than there currently is. This unprecedented, exponential systemic growth has not resulted in the Malthusian clashes for resources that so many predicted.²⁷ Despite a few minor wars and not-so-minor terrorist attacks, it seems clear that more citizens of the twenty-first century—both in terms of raw numbers and as a percentage of the overall global population—will lead mundane, peaceful lives than in any that came before, bothered perhaps by quiet desperation but not by the violence of war. That bears repeating: *Today a far greater percentage of the world's population lives in peace than at any time before in history*, which is a nontrivial, curiously underreported statistic.

The evidence that “war has almost ceased to exist,” to use John Mueller’s phrase, is apparent on every continent.²⁸ At the beginning of 2011, the only active conflict in the entire Western Hemisphere was the ongoing civil war Colombia, but even that is raging at levels far lower than a decade ago. Europe, which has historically been the most war-prone of continents, is entirely calm, without even the threat of interstate conflict. More than one scholar has noted that no war planning now goes on among the European powers, which is a rather stark departure from all previous eras.²⁹ Every one of the two-billion-or-so people of the Pacific Rim is currently living in a society at peace. Only one international war has occurred since the invasion of Iraq, and it can be counted only if the academic understanding of “war” is stretched a bit: Despite the sound and fury that accompanied the 2008 Russo–Georgian clash, the combined battle-death figures appears to be well under 1000, which means it would not even qualify as a war using the most commonly used definitions.³⁰ Even in Africa, where despite a variety of ongoing serious challenges, levels of conflict are the lowest they have ever been in the centuries of written history we have about the continent. The violence that is endemic in certain countries more closely resembles criminal predation than war.³¹ Douglas Lemke has pointed out that, despite the fact that “existing research on the causes of war and conditions of peace suggests the likelihood of war in Africa is especially high,” the continent is the world’s most peaceful in terms of interstate war.³²

Only in the greater Middle East does conflict still regularly occur. It is worth keeping in mind that the wars that United States and its allies began in Iraq and Afghanistan are small, relatively speaking, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is even smaller. And while it is still far too soon to know the fate of the “Arab Spring” revolutions, with the exception of Libya the dictators that have fallen have done so without tremendous, bloody struggle.

None of this is meant to suggest that these places are without problems, of course. But surely it is significant that state survival, the key motive that drives their behavior according to defensive realists, is today all but assured for even the smallest of states.³³ In most eras the obliteration of political entities was a distinct possibility. Polities as diverse as Central Asian empires, Greek poleis, and German “princely states” all were at risk of conquest or absorption by powerful neighbors. That this no longer seems to occur represents an underappreciated break from the past. Since World War II, precisely *zero* UN members have been forcibly removed from the map; the only country to disappear against its will—South Vietnam—held only observer status in the UN. Conquest, it seems, is simply far less common today than it has been throughout history. Territorial disputes, which were the most common cause of warfare in the past,³⁴ have dropped to record low levels, and international borders have all but hardened.³⁵ By any reasonable measure, the world is living in a golden age of peace and security, even if it may not always appear to be

the case. Today states are safe from complete annihilation. The stronger countries are even safer; the strongest are the safest.

Conventional attack, much less outright conquest, is obviously not the leading security challenge facing the West in the minds of most analysts. President Bush has not been alone in his belief that terrorism represents an existential threat to the United States and its allies, especially if weapons of mass destruction were ever employed. It should not take long to demonstrate that such claims are unsustainable. While terrorists can certainly kill people and scare many more, the damage they cause is always localized and temporary. No terrorist attack of any severity can by itself threaten the long-term independence, prosperity, or basic nature of any modern industrialized society.³⁶ The dangers that terrorists pose are more psychological than physical, and they can neither threaten the survival of any modern state nor change the character of Western civilization. Only the people of the West, largely through their own overreaction, can accomplish that. Far from being an existential threat to the existence of the United States, terrorists are at best nuisances, albeit dangerous and occasionally deadly nuisances, to the powerful countries of the world. Even the oft-expressed “ultimate nightmare” of nuclear terrorism, which is exceptionally unlikely to begin with, could not cause damage which would prove fatal to any state.³⁷

Furthermore, international terrorism is not on the rise, hype and fear notwithstanding. The number of worldwide terrorist incidents is shrinking and is currently far smaller than it was during the Cold War. Assuming that the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are (correctly) classified as ongoing guerrilla wars rather than sustained terrorist campaigns, the incidence of terrorist attacks has been steadily declining for two decades. There were 300 terrorist incidents in 1991, for instance, and 58 in 2005.³⁸ This is no accident. An unprecedented level of multilateral cooperation, coordination, and intelligence sharing has occurred since 9/11; there is no meaningful dissention in the industrialized world about the nature of the threat posed by terrorism, and police action to reduce their violence is in the interest of every state. Great-power interests are similarly aligned concerning the other transnational threats of the twenty-first century, such as weapons proliferation, human trafficking, drug smuggling, piracy, etc. It is perhaps worth pausing for a moment to realize that the diplomats of any prior age would have been quite grateful to have our problems. Terrorism and the other irregular threats of the early twenty-first century are in reality quite minor in comparison to those of eras that came before, and certainly do not threaten the existence of any state. Although terrorism is as old as civilization itself and will never be eradicated, it is important to keep the threat in its proper perspective.

By nearly every conceivable measure, the world has been growing more peaceful since the end of the Cold War. Overall numbers are down for every type of conflict, and the magnitude and destructiveness of violence is at a lower point than ever before. The significance of these trends, and their likely trajectory, are much controversial: Why, after ten violent millennia of human existence, should anyone believe that warfare is becoming obsolete, rather than merely at a low point in a cycle? Why should any state change its policies based upon what might prove to be merely a temporary, fortuitous combination of statistical anomaly and hope?

Interpreting the Statistics

It is difficult to disentangle the competing explanations and determine the exact reason for the decline of warfare. Historians are by training and temperament more comfortable with multicausality; political scientists are rarely satisfied by reviews of potential explanations that end up implying that “everything matters.”³⁹ For purposes of grand strategy, two

questions are important: Are these changes in international security likely to be permanent? And second, is U.S. activism responsible for, or even related to, the proliferation of peace? Proper grand strategy cannot be devised until the mystery of war's disappearance is solved.

Kenneth Waltz and others have explained the realist view that nuclear weapons have thrust peace upon the otherwise conflictual system.⁴⁰ Liberal explanations include the expanding number of democracies, multilateral institutions, and the deepening complexity of economic interdependence.⁴¹ Constructivists do not necessarily deny the importance of any of these factors, but give primary credit to a change in ideas in contemporary international society.⁴² Those factors exogenous to the human mind, what Wendt called "brute material" forces, are important only to the extent that they affect the way people think, and that society functions.⁴³ It is ideational evolution, and the corresponding change in behavioral norms regarding conflict, that has been decisive in the eyes of constructivists.

Unfortunately for those who prefer their explanations parsimonious, these factors are not mutually exclusive. They all do have one important factor in common, however: the change they describe is likely to be irreversible. Nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented, and no defense against their use is ever likely to be completely foolproof. The pace of globalization and economic integration shows no sign of slowing. Democracy seems to be firmly embedded in the cultural fabric of many of the places it currently exists, and may well be in the process of spreading to the few places where it does not. The UN, while criticized, shows no signs of disappearing. Both realist and liberal explanations for the long peace are therefore quite stable.

As a consequence, constructivist explanations are stable as well. While nothing in constructivist theory precludes the possibility that ideas about war can change back to their earlier forms, norms tend to develop along a straight line, not a cycle. History contains precious few examples of the return of institutions deemed by society to be outmoded, barbaric and/or futile.⁴⁴ *Normative evolution is typically unidirectional.* Few would argue, for instance, that either slavery or dueling is likely to reappear in this century. "The human environment," argued Deudney, "once changed by the advent of scientific knowledge and technical know-how, cannot easily be returned to its previous state . . . once revealed, knowledge . . . permanently changes the opportunities and restraints of human groups."⁴⁵ As long as science, technology, and economics do not take unprecedented steps backward, major war is unlikely to return, and minor wars will continue to be rare as weak states imitate the behavior of the strong.⁴⁶ Illiberal normative recidivism is exceptionally rare. Thus there is good reason to believe that not only has the world entered a golden age of peace and security, but that the age may well prove to be something more than a temporary peaceful blip in the long, violent history of humanity.

Illusions of Hegemony

How much has the international activism of the United States been responsible for these peaceful global trends? Perhaps it is U.S. power that provides the security that allows its allies to follow a restrained grand strategy. European great powers ride freely on the collective good provided by U.S. military muscle, according to this "hegemonic stability" argument. There are important reasons to doubt this is true, even if in some circles it is the current conventional wisdom.

First, though, the theory upon which it is based: simply stated, the hegemonic stability theory proposes that international peace is only possible when there is one country strong enough to make and enforce a set of rules.⁴⁷ At the height of Pax Romana between 27 BC and 180 AD, for example, Rome was able to bring an unprecedented level of peace and

security to the Mediterranean. The Pax Britannica of the nineteenth century brought a level of stability to the high seas. Perhaps the current era is peaceful because the United States has established a de facto Pax Americana where no power is strong enough to challenge its dominance, and because it has established a set of rules that are generally in the interests of all countries to follow. Without a benevolent hegemon, some strategists fear, instability may break out around the globe.⁴⁸ Unchecked conflicts could cause humanitarian disaster and, in today's interconnected world, economic turmoil that could ripple throughout global financial markets. If the massive spending that the United States engages in actually provides stability in the international political and economic systems, then perhaps internationalism would be worthwhile. There are good theoretical and empirical reasons, however, to believe that U.S. hegemony is not the primary cause of the current golden age of peace and stability.

Exaggerated Benevolence, Exaggerated Trust

If U.S. security guarantees are really the primary explanation for European restraint, then these countries are showing a degree of trust in the intentions, judgment, and wisdom of an ally that would be without precedent in international history. If these states detected a good deal of danger in the system, relying entirely on the generosity and sagacity (or, perhaps the naiveté and gullibility) of Washington would be the height of irresponsibility. Indeed it is hard to think of another time when similar choices were made. When have any capable members of an alliance virtually disarmed and allowed another member to protect their interests? It seems more logical to suggest that the other members of NATO just do not share the U.S. perception of threat. Whether the issue is Islamic fundamentalist terrorism or rogue actors like Saddam Hussein and Hugo Chavez, the United States detects higher levels of danger than any other state. During the Cold War, the pattern was the same: United States feared an attack by the Warsaw Pact far more than did the West European allies, who presumably had more to lose if such an event occurred; it worried about the influence of communist China more than South Korea, Japan and the ASEAN states; and it obsessed over the potential pernicious influence of Castro and the Sandinistas more than did the smaller states of the region.⁴⁹ Despite the fact that the other states in the system are all demonstrably weaker than the United States, and are therefore presumably more vulnerable to a variety of threats, they do not seem to worry about their safety nearly as much as does Uncle Sam.⁵⁰ If there was danger out there, as much danger as Secretary Gates and so many in the U.S. national security community insist, then the grand strategies of the allies would be quite different. It is hard to imagine that they would allow Washington to be their only protector in a dangerous world.

In order for hegemonic stability logic to be an adequate explanation for restrained behavior, allied states must not only be fully convinced of the intentions and capability of the hegemon to protect their interests. They must also trust that the hegemon can interpret those interests correctly and consistently. Recent events should be adequate to demonstrate that the allies are not always convinced that the United States consistently demonstrates the highest level of strategic wisdom. In fact, they often seem to look with confused eyes upon our behavior, and are unable to explain why we so often deem it necessary to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. They will participate in our adventures at times, but usually minimally and reluctantly.

Even during the Cold War, the European allies were not always entirely convinced that they could rely on U.S. security commitments. Extended deterrence was never entirely convincing, since few Europeans could be sure that United States would indeed sacrifice New York for Hamburg. In the absence of the unifying Soviet threat, their trust in U.S.

commitments for their defense would presumably be lower—if in fact that commitment was at all necessary outside of the most pessimistic works of fiction.

Overstated U.S. Capabilities

The hegemonic-stability argument overestimates the capability of the United States to maintain global stability. No state, no matter how strong, can impose peace on determined belligerents. The U.S. military may be the most imposing in the history of the world, but it can only police the system if the other members are generally cooperative with that goal. Self-policing must occur, in other words. If its major allies had not decided on their own that their interests are served by peace, then no amount of international constabulary work by the United States could keep them apart. Five percent of the world's population simply could not force peace upon an unwilling 95 percent. Stability and unipolarity may be simply coincidental.

Though the number of U.S. troops stationed in Europe is not large enough to impose peace on anyone, perhaps it is not physical presence but U.S. commitments to help resist aggression that keep the peace. But that implies a reasonable expectation that the United States would intervene in the event of trouble, and today there is at least some reason for any state to doubt the reliability of that commitment. Threats or promises of intervention, to be effective, must be credible. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has not been especially eager to intervene in the internal affairs of states. Even rather incontrovertible evidence of genocide has not proven to be enough to inspire action. In order for U.S. hegemony to be the reason for the current global stability, local actors would have to expect reward for good behavior and fear punishment for bad. Hegemonic stability can only take credit for influencing those decisions that would have ended in war without the presence, whether physical or psychological, of the United States. Ethiopia and Eritrea are hardly the only states that could go to war without the slightest threat of U.S. intervention. Since most of the world today is free to fight without U.S. involvement, something else must be at work. Stability persists in many remote corners of the world where no hegemony is remotely present.

The United States may conceive of itself as the world's police force, but it is not clear that the rest of the world agrees. Police are not effective where their legitimacy is not recognized. Fortunately for the U.S. cop, his beat is a neighborhood that has already rid itself of crime.

Strategy Based on Faith, Not Evidence

It is perhaps worth noting that there is no evidence to support a direct relationship between the relative level of U.S. activism and international stability. In fact, the limited data we do have suggest the opposite may be true. During the 1990s, the United States cut back on its defense spending fairly substantially. By 1998, the United States was spending \$100 billion less on defense in real terms than it had in 1990.⁵¹ To internationalists, defense hawks and believers in hegemonic stability, this irresponsible "peace dividend" endangered both national and global security. "No serious analyst of American military capabilities," argued Kristol and Kagan, "doubts that the defense budget has been cut much too far to meet America's responsibilities to itself and to world peace."⁵² On the other hand, if the pacific trends were not based upon U.S. hegemony but a strengthening norm against interstate war, one would not have expected an increase in global instability and violence.

The verdict from the past two decades is fairly plain: *The world grew more peaceful while the United States cut its forces*. No state seemed to believe that its security was endangered by a less-capable United States military, or at least none took any action that would suggest such a belief. No militaries were enhanced to address power vacuums, no security dilemmas drove insecurity or arms races, and no regional balancing occurred once the stabilizing presence of the U.S. military was diminished. The rest of the world acted as if the threat of international war was not a pressing concern, despite the reduction in U.S. capabilities. Most of all, the United States and its allies were no less safe. The incidence and magnitude of global conflict declined while the United States cut its military spending under President Clinton, and kept declining as the Bush Administration ramped the spending back up. No complex statistical analysis should be necessary to reach the conclusion that the two are unrelated.

Military spending figures by themselves are insufficient to disprove a connection between overall U.S. actions and international stability. Once again, one could presumably argue that spending is not the only or even the best indication of hegemony, and that it is instead U.S. foreign political and security commitments that maintain stability. Since neither was significantly altered during this period, instability should not have been expected. Alternately, advocates of hegemonic stability could believe that relative rather than absolute spending is decisive in bringing peace. Although the United States cut back on its spending during the 1990s, its relative advantage never wavered.

However, even if it is true that either U.S. commitments or relative spending account for global pacific trends, then at the very least stability can evidently be maintained at drastically lower levels of both. In other words, even if one can be allowed to argue in the alternative for a moment and suppose that there is in fact a level of engagement below which the United States cannot drop without increasing international disorder, a rational grand strategist would still recommend cutting back on engagement and spending until that level is determined. Grand strategic decisions are never final; continual adjustments can and must be made as time goes on. Basic logic suggests that the United States ought to spend the minimum amount of its blood and treasure while seeking the maximum return on its investment. And if the current era of stability is as stable as many believe it to be, no increase in conflict would ever occur irrespective of U.S. spending, which would save untold trillions for an increasingly debt-ridden nation.

It is also perhaps worth noting that if opposite trends had unfolded, if other states had reacted to news of cuts in U.S. defense spending with more aggressive or insecure behavior, then internationalists would surely argue that their expectations had been fulfilled. If increases in conflict would have been interpreted as proof of the wisdom of internationalist strategies, then logical consistency demands that the lack thereof should at least pose a problem. As it stands, the only evidence we have regarding the likely systemic reaction to a more restrained United States suggests that the current peaceful trends are unrelated to U.S. military spending. Evidently the rest of the world can operate quite effectively without the presence of a global policeman. Those who think otherwise base their view on faith alone.

Vague Threats

Assertions that without the combination of U.S. capabilities, presence and commitments instability would return to Europe and the Pacific Rim are usually rendered in rather vague language. If the United States were to decrease its commitments abroad, argued Robert Art, "the world will become a more dangerous place and, sooner or later, that will redound to America's detriment."⁵³ From where would this danger arise? Who precisely would do

the fighting, and over what issues? Without the United States, would Europe really descend into Hobbesian anarchy? Would the Japanese attack mainland China again, to see if they could fare better this time around? Would the Germans and French have another go at it? In other words, where exactly is hegemony keeping the peace? With one exception, these questions are rarely addressed.

That exception is in the Pacific Rim. Some analysts fear that a de facto surrender of U.S. hegemony would lead to a rise of Chinese influence. Bradley Thayer worries that Chinese would become “the language of diplomacy, trade and commerce, transportation and navigation, the internet, world sport, and global culture,” and that Beijing would come to “dominate science and technology, in all its forms” to the extent that soon the world would witness a Chinese astronaut who not only travels to the Moon, but “plants the communist flag on Mars, and perhaps other planets in the future.”⁵⁴ Indeed China is the only other major power that has increased its military spending since the end of the Cold War, even if it still is only about 2 percent of its GDP. Such levels of effort do not suggest a desire to compete with, much less supplant, the United States. The much-ballyhooed, decade-long military buildup has brought Chinese spending up to somewhere between one-tenth and one-fifth of the U.S. level. It is hardly clear that a restrained United States would invite Chinese regional, much less global, political expansion. Fortunately one need not ponder for too long the horrible specter of a red flag on Venus, since on the planet Earth, where war is no longer the dominant form of conflict resolution, the threats posed by even a rising China would not be terribly dire. The dangers contained in the terrestrial security environment are less severe than ever before.

Believers in the pacifying power of hegemony ought to keep in mind a rather basic tenet: When it comes to policymaking, specific threats are more significant than vague, unnamed dangers. Without specific risks, it is just as plausible to interpret U.S. presence as redundant, as overseeing a peace that has already arrived. Strategy should not be based upon vague images emerging from the dark reaches of the neoconservative imagination.

Overestimating Our Importance

One of the most basic insights of cognitive psychology provides the final reason to doubt the power of hegemonic stability: Rarely are *our* actions as consequential upon *their* behavior as we perceive them to be. A great deal of experimental evidence exists to support the notion that people (and therefore states) tend to overrate the degree to which their behavior is responsible for the actions of others. Robert Jervis has argued that two processes account for this overestimation, both of which would seem to be especially relevant in the U.S. case.⁵⁵ First, believing that we are responsible for their actions gratifies our national ego (which is not small to begin with; the United States is exceptional in its exceptionalism). The hubris of the United States, long appreciated and noted, has only grown with the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ U.S. policymakers famously have comparatively little knowledge of—or interest in—events that occur outside of their own borders. If there is any state vulnerable to the overestimation of its importance due to the fundamental misunderstanding of the motivation of others, it would have to be the United States. Second, policymakers in the United States are far more familiar with our actions than they are with the decision-making processes of our allies. Try as we might, it is not possible to fully understand the threats, challenges, and opportunities that our allies see from their perspective. The European great powers have domestic politics as complex as ours, and they also have competent, capable strategists to chart their way forward. They react to many international forces, of which U.S. behavior is only one. Therefore, for any actor trying to make sense of the action of

others, Jervis notes, “in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, the most obvious and parsimonious explanation is that he was responsible.”⁵⁷

It is natural, therefore, for U.S. policymakers and strategists to believe that the behavior of our allies (and rivals) is shaped largely by what Washington does. Presumably Americans are at least as susceptible to the overestimation of their ability as any other people, and perhaps more so. At the very least, political psychologists tell us, we are probably not as important to them as we think. The importance of U.S. hegemony in contributing to international stability is therefore almost certainly overrated.

In the end, one can never be sure why our major allies have not gone to, and do not even plan for, war. Like deterrence, the hegemonic stability theory rests on faith; it can only be falsified, never proven. It does not seem likely, however, that hegemony could fully account for twenty years of strategic decisions made in allied capitals if the international system were not already a remarkably peaceful place. Perhaps these states have no intention of fighting one another to begin with, and our commitments are redundant. European great powers may well have chosen strategic restraint because they feel that their security is all but assured, with or without the United States.

Conclusion

Kagan and his ilk err not only in their description of current strategic realities but, much more significantly, in their prescription of the proper path forward. Although the United States and its major allies are indeed following different grand strategies, everyone would probably be better off if the adjustment was made on *this* side of the oceans. The Europeans are not irresponsible, effeminate, free-riding dupes; they are instead following a distinct grand strategy, one that makes far more sense in this golden age of peace and security than the path the United States has chosen to follow. For making this choice to be restrained, they do not seem to be paying any serious price. They are no less secure, prosperous, or free than is the United States.

Today the United States, by devoting such an enormous amount of money toward building and maintaining vast military capability, is the lone holdout against strategic restraint. While the rest of the world cuts back on its spending, the outlying United States soldiers on, from Clinton to Bush to Obama, alone and unthreatened. Perhaps the United States is correct in comprehending the dangers that still exist in the international system; perhaps, however, it could learn something from the behavior of the other members. The conclusion of the many is probably more accurate than the conclusion of the one. Since the logical default option of the United States should always be to spend less, to get the maximum amount of security at the minimum cost, surely it is worth at least attempting to see whether the Europeans are right.

Although great insecurity has traditionally accompanied great power, this need not be the case. Presumably better policy and increased security would arise from a rational, realistic assessment of threat. Insecurity, whether real or imagined, tends to lead to expansive, internationalist, interventionist grand strategies. The more danger a state perceives, the greater its willingness to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. The “preventive” war in Iraq is the most obvious consequence of the inflated U.S. perception of threat, but it is hardly the only one. This particularly American pathology is in need of diagnosis and cure, lest Iraq be not a singular debacle, as Barry Posen has warned, but “a harbinger of costs to come.”⁵⁸

Notes

1. Brian Knowlton, "Gates Calls European Mood a Danger to Peace," *The New York Times*, February 23, 2010.
2. Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 3. See also Gary Schmitt, "The Demilitarization of Europe," *Wall Street Journal*, October 6, 2010.
3. Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); and Colin S. Gray, *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).
4. Robert Jervis, "U.S. Grand Strategy: Mission Impossible," *Naval War College Review*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 118–133; Steven A. Yetiv, *The Absence of Grand Strategy: The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1972–2005* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, *U.S. Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, Enemies and Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Walter A. McDougall, "Can the United States Do Grand Strategy?" *Orbis*, vol. 54, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 165–184.
5. Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4. See also Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997): 5–48; and Barry R. Posen, "The Case for Restraint," *The American Interest*, vol. 3, no. 2 (November/December 2007): 6–17.
6. See the CIA World Fact Book, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html>; and Giampaolo Lanzieri, "First Demographic Estimates for 2009," EU Statistical Office (eurostat), available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-QA-09-047/EN/KS-QA-09-047-EN.PDF.
7. In 2009, only five NATO members spent more than 2 percent of their GDPs on defense: The United States, United Kingdom, France, Greece, and Albania. Japan spent just under 1 percent. See "Facts on International Relations and Security Trends," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, available at <http://first.sipri.org>, accessed January 2010.
8. Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 1 (January–February 2006): 16–32.
9. Quoted by James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2008), xvi.
10. *KOF Index of Globalization 2010* (Zurich, Switzerland: KOF Swiss Economic Institute), January 22, 2010, available at http://globalization.kof.ethz.ch/static/pdf/press_release_2010_en.pdf, accessed March 22, 2010. A similar index kept by A. T. Kearney for *Foreign Policy* magazine, which includes "political engagement" in its calculations, still lists sixteen European states in the top twenty-five. "The Globalization Index," *Foreign Policy*, no. 163 (November–December 2007): 68–76.
11. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?*, xvi.
12. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*, 32.
13. For a discussion of both neoconservative grand strategy and its exceptionally high level of threat, see Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *American Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
14. European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels, December 12, 2003, 1.
15. White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: Government Accounting Office, March 2006), 1. The 2010 National Security Strategy released by the Obama Administration is not as stark in its language, but clearly senses danger in the world.
16. Ted Robert Gurr first reported these counterintuitive trends nearly a decade ago; see his "Ethnic Warfare on the Wane," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 52–64. Since then, the compilation of non-events has been recorded by Peter Wallensteen and Mikael Eriksson, "Armed Conflict, 1989–2003," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 41, no. 5 (September 2004): 625–636; Ted Robert Gurr and Monty G. Marshall, *Peace and Conflict 2005: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts*,

Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2005); Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report 2005* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Lotta Harbom, Stina Högladh, and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Peace Agreements," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 43, no. 5 (September 2006): 617–631; and Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Global Report 2009: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility* (Fairfax, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, December 2009).

17. Not all scholars agree about the decline of warfare, but the point of departure is over the way "war" is defined. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), for instance, has produced findings that seem to contradict the assertion that warfare is on the decline (see their Web site, <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/index.htm>). The scholars at the UCDP have drastically altered the basic definition of "war" commonly used in both conflict studies specifically and international relations more generally. Nearly four decades ago J. David Singer and Melvin Small argued that no set of hostilities qualified as a war unless "it led to a minimum of 1000 battle fatalities." *The Wages of War, 1816–1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972): 35. The Correlates of War project notes today that *The Wages of War* "established a standard definition of war that has guided the research of hundreds of scholars since its publication" (available on their Web site, <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>). It is worth noting that the 1,000 battle-death threshold was considered to be very low by Singer and Small, who commented at the time that other works in the field used minimums that were more than double that figure in their calculations.

The UCDP data holds that that once the 1,000 casualty minimum has been passed, any violence that results in *twenty-five* "battle-related" casualties per year, including civilians, should be counted as a war. Once war is redefined in this manner the numbers skyrocket. Thus the uptick in restarted wars reported by the 2008 and 2010 CIDCM *Peace and Conflict* reports result from adoption of the 25 battle-death threshold; it is little wonder that they find that restarted wars outnumber new ones by a factor of five to one. See J. Joseph Hewitt, "Trends in Global Conflict, 1946–2007," in J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Peace and Conflict, 2010: Executive Summary* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2010), 19–20.

This article uses traditional definitions. For a complete demonstration of how both the incidence and magnitude of war continue to decline, see Marshall and Cole, *Global Report 2009*.

18. Andrew Mack, "Global Political Violence: Explaining the Post–Cold War Decline," *Coping with Crisis Working Paper* series, International Peace Academy (March 2007): 7; Bethany Lacina, Nils Peter Gleditsch, and Bruce Russett, "The Declining Risk of Death in Battle," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3 (September 2006): 673–680; and Marshall and Cole, *Global Report 2009*, 4.

19. Nils Petter Gleditsch, "The Liberal Moment Fifteen Years On," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 4 (December 2008): 694.

20. Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946–2004," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 5 (September 2005): 623–635; and Mark W. Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force," *International Organization*, vol. 55, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 242.

21. See Mary Kaldor, "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control," essay prepared for the Social Science Research Council, December 8, 2001, available at http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor_text_only.htm.

22. Gurr and Marshall, *Peace and Conflict 2005*, 1.

23. See the data kept by the Minorities at Risk Project, *Minorities at Risk Dataset* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2010), available at <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>.

24. Christopher J. Fettweis, "War as Catalyst: Moving World War II to the Center of Holocaust Scholarship," *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 5, no. 2 (June 2003): 225–236. Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report 2005*, 41. The authors analyze the genocide dataset maintained by Barbara Harff.

25. Mack, "Global Political Violence," 1.

26. Ibid, 8.

27. See, for instance, John Orme, "The Utility of Force in a World of Scarcity," *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 3 (Winter 1997/98): 138–167; Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000); Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); and Colin H. Kahl, *States, Scarcity, and Civil Strife in the Developing World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

28. John Mueller, "War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 124, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 297–321. See also Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Virtual State: Wealth and Power in the Coming Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Robert Jervis, "Theories of War in an Era of Leading Power Peace," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 96, no. 1 (March 2002): 1–14; Raimo Väyrynen, *The Waning of Major War: Theories and Debates* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Christopher J. Fettweis, *Dangerous Times? The International Politics of Great Power Peace* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010).

29. See Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12; and Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 269.

30. The exact numbers are still a matter of some dispute, but all estimates have battle casualties lower than 1,000. See Natia Kuprashvili, "Georgia: Conflict Toll Confusion," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, September 25, 2008, available at <http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=346852&apc.state=henpers> (accessed June 19, 2009).

31. See Jeffrey Gettleman, "Africa's Forever Wars," *Foreign Policy*, no. 178 (March/April 2010): 73–75.

32. Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 163.

33. On defensive realism, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01): 128–161.

34. John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Stephen A. Kocs, "Territorial Dispute and Interstate War, 1945–1987," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 57, no. 1 (February 1995): 159–175.

35. Anthony Smith, "States and Homelands: The Social and Geopolitical Implications of National Territory," *Millennium*, vol. 10, no. 3 (September 1981): 187–202.

36. See John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

37. John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

38. Terrorist incidents are tracked in the Global Terrorism Database by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland. As of August 7, 2009, the data is accessible at <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>.

39. See the essays in Colin and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

40. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (September 1990): 731–745. See also John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," *International Security*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Spring 1986): 99–142; and Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay," *International Security*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Spring 1990): 42–64.

41. In addition to the limitless literature on the democratic peace theory, liberal explanations for the golden age can be found in Rosecrance, *Rise of the Trading State* and *Rise of the Virtual State*; Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 51, no. 1 (January 2007): pp. 166–191; Gleditsch, "Liberal Moment Fifteen Years On"; Edward D. Mansfield and Brian

M. Pollins, *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); and Stephen G. Brooks, *Producing Security: Multinational Corporations, Globalization, and the Changing Calculus of Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

42. Evan Luard, *War in International Society: A Study in International Sociology* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1986); John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); and James Lee Ray, "The Abolition of Slavery and the End of International War," *International Organization*, vol. 43, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 405–439.

43. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94.

44. This point is made by Jervis in "Theories of War," 9; see also Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, 312.

45. Daniel Deudney, "Geopolitics and Change," in Michael W. Doyle and G. John Ikenberry, eds., *New Thinking in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 107.

46. The suggestion that characteristics of successful states are imitated throughout the system is one that is shared by all the major schools of thought in international relations. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 127.

47. On hegemonic stability theory, see Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); and David A. Lake, "Leadership, Hegemony, and the International Economy: Naked Emperor or Tattered Monarch with Potential?" *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4 (December 1993): 459–489.

48. William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996): 18–33; Ferguson, *Colossus*; and Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World's Government in the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

49. See Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995): 269–270.

50. George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977); James Chace and Caleb Carr, *America Invulnerable: The Quest for Absolute Security from 1812 to Star Wars* (New York: Summit Books, 1988); John A. Thompson, "The Exaggeration of American Vulnerability: The Anatomy of a Tradition," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 23–43; Dana H. Allin, *Cold War Illusions: America, Europe and Soviet Power, 1969–1989* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); and Robert H. Johnson, *Improbable Dangers: U.S. Conceptions of Threat in the Cold War and After* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

51. Michael O'Hanlon, "America's Military, Cut to the Quick," *Washington Post*, August 9, 1998, p. C1.

52. Kristol and Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," 24.

53. Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 11.

54. Christopher Layne and Bradley A. Thayer, *American Empire: A Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 117.

55. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 348.

56. On exceptionalism, see Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Oxford, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); and Charles Lockhart, *The Roots of American Exceptionalism: History, Institutions and Culture* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003).

57. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 348.

58. Posen, "Case for Restraint," 13.