

# TRANSWORLD

THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP AND THE FUTURE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

ISSN 2281-5252

WORKING PAPER 28 | SEPTEMBER 2013

How is the United States adjusting to rising powers and power diffusion in the international arena? This working paper investigates post-Cold War adjustments in US policy and discourse on selected transnational issues (terrorism, nuclear proliferation, cybersecurity, and weak states), new forms of intervention (humanitarian interventions and post-conflict stabilization), and rising powers. Evidence of effective US leadership to create cooperative threat management varies by issue: for example, it is strong on counter-terrorism, middling on nuclear non-proliferation, nascent on cybersecurity, and constrained on the “responsibility

to protect.” The issues also vary in how long they have been prioritized by the United States, the level of US commitment to find a solution, their inherent complexity, and the potential for finding common ground given value differences and historic grievances among key players. It is also evident that American policymakers have attempted to draw rising powers into global governance, to create new partnerships, and to invent new cooperative structures to solve common problems; nonetheless, American leaders adhere to the view that the United States remains the “indispensable power”.

## US Adjustments to Global Power Shifts and Diffusion: An Analysis of Selected Security Issues

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Transworld is supported by the  
SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME



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US Security Policy **Terrorism** Non-proliferation **Cyber-security** R2P

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## 1. Introduction

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The United States' economic power is declining relative to China. Europe and Japan are being overtaken by rising state powers such as Brazil, India, Turkey and South Africa. Russia is re-emerging. One scholar summed it up: "Western power has peaked" (Kupchan 2012:74).

Power is not only shifting to different players, it is becoming more diffuse. The National Intelligence Council predicts that by 2030 "no country—whether the US, China, or any other large country—will be a hegemonic power" and that "[t]he empowerment of individuals and diffusion of power among states and from states to informal networks will have a dramatic impact" (National Intelligence Council 2012:iii).

Historically, the United States could partner with a small number of likeminded nations to address global issues (Tocci and Alcaro 2012). Now, a greater number of state and non-state actors must be involved in solving problems, and these new actors bring divergent worldviews and interests. The challenge from emerging powers and non-state actors is not that they will form a new threatening bloc, but that power becomes so diffused that cooperation on vital transnational issues erodes (Jones 2011).

These trends point to a future where the United States has less control and fewer resources than before, and so do its historic partners. Indeed, some scholars believe that power dynamics have already moved "from a 'Ptolemaic' to a 'Copernican' world" in which the "United States is not at the center" and point to examples where the United States has not been able to get desired outcomes (Jentleson 2012:38). Others observe that it has always been difficult for the United States to engineer outcomes and caution that a few setbacks do not necessarily indicate a change in America's power status (Kagan 2012). A few point out "the unpredictability of the moment" and "that there is no final evidence yet of irreversible decline for the West and irresistible ascendancy for everyone else" (Serfaty 2012:3). Most scholars agree, however, that US power is in relative decline, albeit it is likely to remain the most powerful nation for decades (Nye 2011).

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The aim of this Transworld working paper is to examine how the United States is adjusting to these global power shifts when dealing with new security issues. It will examine the changes in American discourse and policy on selected transnational issues (terrorism, nuclear proliferation, cyber-security, weak states), on new forms of intervention, and on rising powers.

The analysis herein keeps an eye on, first, whether American policymakers take steps to draw rising powers and non-state actors into governance by making existing institutions more reflective of the shifting power realities or by designing new cooperative arrangements to address common problems (Williamson and Gates 2012). Second, it considers whether the United States government interacts with other nations in a more respectful, equal and consultative manner (Weber and Jentleson 2010). Third, it looks for patterns in the dynamic relationships between the United States, its historic partners and adversaries, and new players that might reveal insights about the prospects for the future of global governance (Tocci and Alcaro 2012). Last, the analysis looks at whether the United States tailors policies to fit its declining means (Mandelbaum 2010).

## 2. Adjustment to Evolving Security Threats and Domains

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### 2.1 International Terrorism

The United States has careened from an over-militarized, unrealistically ambitious, and gallingly unilateral approach during the early George W. Bush presidency back to a more surgical, limited, and comparatively restrained approach under the Barack Obama administration. At the same time, there have been some basic continuities between the two administrations and both successfully created cooperative networks to combat terrorism.

#### *Adjustment 1: The US changed its discourse from fighting crime to waging war and took on a global leadership role after 9/11*

It took the shock of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11) – only the third time the United States had suffered such a loss from an external actor since its founding – to galvanize the United States to take a global leadership role on combating terrorism.

Prior to the attacks, US policymakers had recognized terrorism as one of several emerging post-Cold War transnational challenges; it was considered an important issue but not top-tier. The Bill Clinton administration, for example, had viewed terrorism through the lens of criminal law and called for increased international cooperation among law enforcement agencies to arrest fugitives and solve crimes (White House 1999).<sup>1</sup> After 9/11, counter-terrorism became the new organizing principle of US foreign policy and the discourse jumped from criminology to war.

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<sup>1</sup> President Clinton's National Security Strategy reads: "As threats to our national security from terrorism, drug trafficking and other international crime increase, U.S. and foreign law enforcement and judicial agencies must continue to find innovative ways to implement a concerted, global plan to combat international crime" (White House 1999:13). Notably, though, the Clinton administration did order air strikes on a training camp in Afghanistan and pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, in retaliation for the al Qaeda bombings of US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998. Both targets were thought to be part of the Osama bin Laden network infrastructure, although the allegations regarding the Khartoum incident were strongly contested.

On 14 September 2001, with the wreckage of the World Trade Towers still smouldering, President Bush declared the terrorist attacks “an act of war” and the US Congress passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) legislation which remains in force more than a decade later. This law authorized the president to “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons.” By this wording, the president was authorized to conduct the war in Afghanistan, to use military force anywhere in the world that the president “determined” al Qaeda members were operating, and to do so without an expiration date.

The Bush administration defined the war broadly – as the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT). The 2002 National Security Strategy observed that this was a new type of war: it was not directed against a nation but against non-state actors. This struggle “is different from any other war in our history. It will be fought on many fronts against a particularly elusive enemy over an extended period of time” (White House 2002:5).

The first battle in this new global war was waged in Afghanistan. The United States – with broad international support – toppled the Taliban government because it shielded Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda followers after the 9/11 attacks. At the same time, out of public view, the Bush administration began a “shadow war” to hunt down, and capture or kill al Qaeda operatives, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The administration initially relied upon the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for this effort but soon authorized the Pentagon’s Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to take the lead.<sup>2</sup> The administration also initiated a massive, secret, and initially illegal (by US domestic law) National Security Agency electronic surveillance program, collecting metadata on international phone calls and internet activity to look for terrorist networks (Gellman 2013).<sup>3</sup> Put differently, the United States conducted an overt war in Afghanistan alongside a global covert war, working in countries outside of designated battlefields, using both the CIA operatives and military forces and technical surveillance (Mazzetti 2013, Scahill 2013).

*(Mal)adjustment 2: The Bush administration overreacted to the threat, overestimated its own power to reshape other nations, and acted unilaterally with disregard for international norms*

The response to the 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington was not a mere adjustment – it was an overreaction. At that time, principals within Bush administration perceived the United States to be an unrivalled power that could use its outsized strength to shape the international environment, without the constraints imposed by allies and international law (Daalder and Lindsay 2003).<sup>4</sup> The United States asserted the right to use “preemptive” military force on another state – disregarding long-standing diplomatic practice and international law – if it believed there was a danger the targeted state might give weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorists (White House 2002:15).<sup>5</sup> The United States government also resorted to severe tactics – such as rendition, torture, and indefinite detention – that violated international treaties and constitutional principles (Pfiffner 2010).

2 President Bush issued the Unified Command Plan in March 2004 which stated that SOCOM now “leads, plans, synchronizes, and as directed, executes global operations against terrorist networks” (Shanker and Shane 2006). This practice has continued under the Obama administration. As Admiral McRaven, the Commander of SOCOM, stated during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2012 “We are the lead Combatant Command tasked with synchronizing the planning of global operations against terrorist networks” (US Senate 2012:2).

3 The Bush administration initially pursued this intelligence program in violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978 which requires a warrant if surveillance of foreign actors involves American citizens. After the warrant-wiretapping program was revealed by the *New York Times* in 2005, the Congress later granted the administration the legal authority to continue its efforts.

4 The new crisis-ridden political climate within the United States gave the president great latitude to take action (Murray and Spinoso 2004) and unleashed the neo-conservatives who held high positions within the Bush administration (Mazarr 2007).

5 The administration used the word “preemptive” (which traditionally referred to legitimate use of force in self defence against an “imminent threat”) when referring to acts normally labelled as “preventative” military force. Preventative military action against an emerging – but not imminent – threat was not seen as a legitimate use of force within international law.

The over-militarized and overly-ambitious reaction to 9/11 cost the United States much political capital. The US invasion of Afghanistan was seen as legitimate. But the administration then chose to invade Iraq, alleging that the Iraqi dictator and old US foe, Saddam Hussein, could give weapons of mass destruction to al Qaeda, and it invaded without the backing of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) or key European allies (Hoyle 2008). The approval rates of the United States plummeted; it was seen from abroad as arrogant, hypocritical, and even dangerous (Walt 2005, Wike 2011).

The strong world reaction, the bloody efforts at nation-building in Iraq, and a sharp decline in American popular support for unilateral military force, taught policymakers about the costs of such an unrestrained approach (Walt 2005, Holsti 2008, Jacobson 2011). In its second term, the Bush administration was more aware of its limits and solicitous of traditional allies in Europe (Gordon 2006).<sup>6</sup>

***Adjustment 3: The Obama administration narrowed the scope of the “war” on terrorism, and returned to a recognition of international law and norms. But it also continued policies and institutional changes started under the Bush administration***

From the start, the Obama administration emphasized respect for long-standing diplomatic practices, international law, and multilateralism. Just two days after his inauguration in 2009, Obama signed an executive order instructing the CIA to stop “enhanced” interrogations and close secret prisons; he also promised to close the Guantanamo prison within a year.<sup>7</sup> These policies were meant to signal to the world a return to the rule of law.<sup>8</sup> Such changes in the US narrative and practice helped create foreign support for Obama and a renewed legitimacy for US counterterrorism efforts.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, the war narrative continued under the Obama administration. The administration stopped using the phrase “global war on terror,” consciously lowering “the temperature of the discourse” (Hsu and Warrick 2009).<sup>10</sup> The “war” was focused more narrowly on al Qaeda and its affiliates.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, the Obama administration favored a more surgical military approach, relying on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs, known as drones) to target al Qaeda leaders and operatives. True, the administration “surged” its efforts in Afghanistan, but with an end date written in, and it also fulfilled its promise to end the US military operation in Iraq. As the drone technology became more advanced, the Obama administration increased the targeted killing of terrorist suspects in places like Pakistan and Yemen.<sup>12</sup>

6 For example, after a discussion of the challenges posed by globalization, the 2006 National Security Strategy acknowledges “The challenges America faces are great, yet we have enormous power and influence to address those challenges. The times require an ambitious national security strategy, yet one recognizing the limits to what even a nation as powerful as the United States can achieve by itself” (White House 2006:49, emphasis added).

7 The latter initiative was thwarted by Congress, who tied his hands using the National Defense Authorization Act, barring the administration from bringing any Guantanamo detainees into the US and restricting their transfer to other countries.

8 The 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism argued that “upholding our most cherished values as a nation” is not only right but “enhances our security,” and that it “enables us to build broad international coalitions to act against the common threat” (White House 2011b:4).

9 Judging by international polls, U.S. credibility on terrorism improved during the Obama administration: a majority in France, Brazil, Italy, Germany, Britain, India and Russia favored US-led anti-terrorism efforts in 2012 (Pew Research 2012).

10 The 2010 National Security Strategy states that “our global efforts to successfully counter violent extremism” are “only one element of our strategic environment and cannot define America’s engagement with the world. Terrorism is one of many threats that are more consequential in a global age” (White House 2010:8).

11 “The United States deliberately uses the word ‘war’ to describe our relentless campaign against al-Qa’ida,” the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism states. “However, this Administration has made it clear that we are not at war with the tactic of terrorism or the religion of Islam. We are at war with a specific organization—al-Qa’ida” (White House 2011b:2).

12 The number of targeted killings surged: it is estimated that there have been as many as 300 drone strikes during Obama’s first term, killing an estimated 2,500 people (Shane 2012). Late in his first term, the Obama administration worked on a counterterrorism playbook to “codify its counterterrorism policies and create a guide for lethal operations through Obama’s second term,” seen by some as the institutionalization of targeted killing (Miller, Nakashima and DeYoung 2013).

The Obama administration accelerated some institutional changes begun under the Bush administration: the Special Operations Command more than doubled its personnel and budget since 9/11 and the CIA Counterterrorism Center (which also operates drones) swelled as well (Feickert 2013, Miller and Tate 2011).<sup>13</sup> It also continued collecting massive amounts of electronic data around the globe, including communications among allies (Shane and Sanger 2013).

After a few years, top Obama administration officials touted that the US had made major progress in eliminating the top leadership of al Qaeda (White House 2011b). The President himself observed that the original al Qaeda network “is a shadow of its former self” (Obama 2013b) and that “the core of al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat. Their remaining operatives spend more time thinking about their own safety than plotting against us” (Obama 2013a).

With a scheduled withdrawal from Afghanistan pending and presidential talk of a weakened al Qaeda network, a debate is emerging in Washington about when the “war” against al Qaeda will end.<sup>14</sup> So far, the Obama administration has relied on the AUMF as the domestic legal foundation to accelerate a clandestine program of targeted killing outside of designated battlefields. The legislation has given the administration much flexibility to conduct a “shadow war.” But the war narrative used by both Bush and Obama – and the enhanced presidential authority that such a categorization legally unleashes – may be reaching its logical end.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Adjustment 4: After 9/11, the United States successfully created many bilateral and multilateral cooperative relationships to pursue terrorists and disrupt their activities*

After 9/11, and despite the loss of American legitimacy over Iraq, the United States did much to forge bilateral and multilateral cooperation on this issue. A series of UN Security Council Resolutions condemned the al Qaeda attacks on the United States and called on nations to cooperate in tracking and disrupting their activities. Early on, the Bush administration talked with China about counterterrorism cooperation and with Russia about bases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to fight in Afghanistan (Kan 2010). Significantly, 54 nations cooperated with the United States in its extraordinary rendition activities during the Bush years (New York Times 2013). The US and Europe worked together to locate terrorist suspects and hinder their activities by sharing passenger data on transatlantic flights and tracking terrorist financing even as they disagreed at times on the stringency needed to protect the privacy of individuals (Mix 2012, Archick 2013). “The intelligence-sharing network within NATO, which was originally designed to gather information on the Soviet Union, has been adapted to deal with terrorism” (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth 2013:141). The Obama administration sought to deepen bilateral counterterrorism partnerships with many countries including India, Turkey, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Australia (White House 2011b:16). It worked with “select European allies” to build the “the will and capacity of key countries in South Asia, Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula” (White House 2011b:15).

13 Notably, the 2012 Defense Guidance states: “Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives,” which points to continued investments in Special Operations (US Department of Defense 2012:3).

14 The president himself stated that “[b]eyond Afghanistan, we must define our effort not as a boundless ‘global war on terror,’ but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America” (Obama 2013a).

15 Some argue that the 2001 AUMF needs to be updated to include new terrorist groups that have emerged after the 9/11 attacks. Others argue that it is time to repeal the war authorization and use peacetime authorities to pursue new terrorist targets, and only if they pose an imminent threat. Yet others argue for a new special court or oversight board to review requests for lethal attacks.

### *Adjustment 5: The United States designed an innovative forum meant to draw emerging powers into the fight against terrorism*

In 2011, the United States, working with Turkey, launched the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF); this effort is an example of the Obama administration designing new institutions to reflect power shifts. The GCTF network includes 29 countries and the European Union (EU), connecting “counterterrorism practitioners and experts” regularly to figure out issues such as “strengthening rule of law institutions and countering violent extremism” (Benjamin 2012). Ten of the countries involved are Arab and/or Muslim, and the Forum excludes Israel. The initial session was co-chaired by the United States and Turkey, and there are five working groups each one co-chaired by a Western and non-western country. For example, the working group on capacity building in the Sahel is co-chaired by Algeria and Canada (US State Department 2012a). The State Department calls this a “signature initiative” intended to strengthen the “the global counterterrorism architecture” (Benjamin 2012). It is too early to tell how significant or effective this initiative will be.

### *Summary and Outlook*

The United States has made important adjustments in its counterterrorism policy. Prior to 9/11, the United States considered international terrorism to be an important but not top-tier national security issue, and approached it from law enforcement perspective. After the attacks, the Bush administration pursued a GWOT, initiating two large-scale interventions and a covert operation to hunt down al Qaeda operatives around the world. The Obama administration has continued the “war” on terrorism, but more narrowly focused on al Qaeda and its affiliates, with greater reliance upon drones and targeted killing. Both administrations have invested in Special Operations forces and conducted massive electronic surveillance campaigns to track terrorist networks. Both administrations have sought and achieved broad international cooperation with European allies and many other countries to disrupt terrorist activity, and there is evidence that the Obama administration has attempted to create new institutions to draw emerging powers into a discussion about how to combat terrorism.

Going forward, three issues stand out as potentially significant. First, US reliance on drones for targeted killing without an open discussion about how this behavior fits with international law is potentially corrosive to international cooperation.<sup>16</sup> The United States has not yet started working on shared international rules to govern this new war-fighting technology. Polls from major countries around the world show opposition to the American use of drones (Pew Research 2012).<sup>17</sup> So far, the use of drones in war-fighting is one issue where the United States is going its own way without an eye to the long-term effect on its image or international governance, even as other countries inevitably gain this technology.<sup>18</sup> This could potentially have a corrosive effect on US legitimacy and intelligence sharing.<sup>19</sup>

A second issue has the potential to erode President Obama’s post-Bush gains in international legitimacy: US surveillance of allies. Edward J. Snowden, a former NSA contractor, released classified documents in June 2013 which revealed the massive amounts of data that the United States gathers about citizens from allied nations

16 Political observers are questioning whether the use of drones outside the traditional battlefield is in accordance with international law and whether the administration’s targeting procedures take into account civilian casualties (Zenko 2013). The UN has begun a special investigation of the military use of drones.

17 Strong majorities in Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Russia, Brazil, Japan, Spain, Mexico, Lebanon, Czech Republic and France disapprove of drones, as do majorities in China, Italy, Poland and Germany

18 Obama’s counter-terrorism record –which includes so many killings and so few captures – has raised questions that the administration chose the lethal approach because the detention of al Qaeda operatives is so politically fraught (Klaidman 2012).

19 Already there are reports that the German Interior Ministry issued rules to limit information about the location of German citizens to “rule out the possibility that German information could be used to plan a drone attack” (Stark 2011).

and some of its spying operations on European diplomats. Not surprisingly, European leaders expressed shock and anger over these activities (Birnbaum 2013).

Third, the US “war” narrative, with its legal accoutrements of enhanced presidential authority and flexibility to use military force, is due to be revisited. A public debate is just beginning about when the war authorities will end. If Congress were to repeal the AUMF, it seems likely that US use of force against terrorist networks would become less routine and frequent.

## 2.2 WMD and Non-proliferation

The United States has focused on the danger of nuclear proliferation as a top-priority issue since the end of the Cold War. Over the last decade, it has worked to create broad cooperative networks to help manage this global problem. Coincident with the power shift toward emerging powers, the United States government has also adjusted its discourse to be more respectful of the grievances of non-nuclear powers and more cognizant of the mutual obligations inherent in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Despite these adjustments, the United States and the international community continue to have a difficult time forcing compliance from North Korea – which signed the NPT, blatantly violated its dictates, and then withdrew from the treaty – or from Iran, which is pushing the limits of the NPT loopholes, defying admonitions by the UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

### *Adjustment 1: Once the Cold War ended, the United States and Russia reversed course, and began to reduce their outsized nuclear weapons stockpiles*

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 changed the American calculus of the nuclear threat overnight. Instead of worrying about an adversary launching a massive nuclear strike, US policymakers began to fear what could happen to all of the thousands of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, and the accumulated material to make such weapons, in a country undergoing transformational change. Their focus shifted from hoarding needless thousands of weapons to a new fear that terrorists or other states might try to acquire ex-Soviet materials.

Beginning with George H.W. Bush, each American president has successfully negotiated a treaty with the Russians to reduce deployed strategic warheads. The New START Treaty signed and ratified in 2010 is the latest effort. The reduction of allowable deployed strategic nuclear warheads, down to about 1,550 each from more than 10,000 strategic warheads that each nation possessed at the end of the Cold War, is a major achievement.

Still, these figures overstate progress, and far more could be done. These arms control agreements limit only *deployed strategic warheads*, allowing many more strategic warheads to remain in stockpiles that are non-deployed; nor do these agreements limit tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> Some experts argue that deterrence could be maintained with far fewer weapons, and that these target numbers should include stored warheads as well (e.g., Feiveson 1999). And even though President Obama strongly favored reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, he agreed to an expensive nuclear weapons modernization program in order to get enough Republican support for Senate ratification of the New Start Treaty in 2010 (Pincus 2010, Collina 2012). Russia is also undergoing a modernization program, to maintain these higher than necessary levels.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the disparity between

20 When the total stockpile of strategic warheads (both deployed and non-deployed) is considered, the progress made is less laudatory: it is estimated that the US currently possesses about 5,000 strategic warheads and 4,400 for Russia (Kristensen and Norris 2012a and 2012b).

21 Because of this deal with the Senate, the Obama administration actually “increased the budget for nuclear weapons and the weapons complex” (Washington Post 2012). The Obama administration would like to cut deeper and save money but is constrained by Republicans in Congress (Sanger 2013).

the stockpiles of Russia and the United States – who together possess 90 percent of nuclear weapons – and the other nuclear states is so great that more inclusive disarmament talks are not even on the horizon (Kimball and Collina 2012).

### *Adjustment 2: The United States and Russia cooperated to secure nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union*

Working together to secure “loose nukes” has been another – and truly remarkable – adjustment made by the United States and Russia starting in the 1990s. During the Cold War, the idea of the United States assisting Russia in destroying its nuclear weapons or securing its facilities would have been considered a far-fetched fantasy. But Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar sponsored legislation (known as the Nunn-Lugar Act or Cooperative Threat Reduction) to do just that. Signed into law in December 1991 just as the Soviet Union was about to collapse, it has continued more than two decades, with the United States eventually allocating about 1 billion dollars a year to help Russia destroy or secure its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and employ its scientists.<sup>22</sup>

### *Adjustment 3: The United States drew other international actors into the effort of securing nuclear materials*

Other nations and international organizations have joined the effort. In 2002, the G8 (and other donors) pledged to raise 10 billion dollars over ten years to match the US investment in a “Global Partnership against the spread of weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>23</sup> In 2004, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1540 establishing binding obligations for all member states to take efforts to prevent the proliferation of WMD; although, unfortunately, implementation has been slow.

In 2009, Obama set an ambitious goal: a “new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material [...] within four years” (Obama 2009a). He convened a Nuclear Security Summit in Washington the following year to begin working on this effort. Fifty nations participated along with delegations from the EU, UN, and IAEA. Participants agreed to make concrete voluntary pledges to control nuclear materials in their nations (Crail 2012). The State Department reports that “32 countries made over 70 commitments on specific actions to enhance nuclear security at the Washington Summit, and the national progress reports submitted by the participating countries have shown that nearly all of these have been achieved” (US State Department 2012c). As just one example, Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa announced that Indonesia “would move forward with CTBT [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty] ratification without waiting for the United States to ratify” in a major policy reversal (Garcia 2012:8).<sup>24</sup> A follow-on conference in Seoul brought almost 60 world leaders together.<sup>25</sup>

### *Adjustment 4: The United States organized an informal network of states and other international actors to intercept weapons of mass destruction*

Started during George W. Bush’s first term, a network of states formed to intercept smugglers of dangerous materials – called the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) – and another network formed to prevent and respond

22 Through this legislation, former enemies – the United States and Russia – worked together to deactivate more than 7,600 nuclear weapons and 1,500 ballistic missiles along with other WMD-related materials (Nuclear Threat Initiative 2012a and 2012b). Unfortunately, this agreement may now be expiring (Herszenhorn 2012).

23 Reports measuring the success of this initiative are mixed, citing problems with coordination and some nations not living up to their pledges.

24 Eventual entry into force of the CTBT, concluded in 1996, is widely considered a major step in advancing non-proliferation goals and norms. A Republican-controlled Senate voted against ratification by the US in 1999, and the Obama administration has yet to find enough votes in the Senate to re-submit the treaty. Without a US ratification, the CTBT is extremely unlikely to be approved by countries such as China and Iran, whose ratification is needed for the treaty to enter into force.

25 Some have criticized the Nuclear Security Summits as too “incremental” (Hibbs 2012, Kim 2012).

to nuclear terrorism – called the Global Initiative to Combat Global Terrorism (GICGT). The Obama administration pledged to turn PSI and GICGT into “durable international efforts” (White House 2010:24).

The Bush administration started the PSI with ten states (Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom) in 2003. The idea was to voluntarily cooperate in identifying and interdicting vessels that might be transporting WMD-related material weapons, working through existing legal structures, meaning mostly domestic laws (Kaplan 2006).<sup>26</sup> To date, more than a hundred countries have signed onto the principles governing the PSI. The network’s membership includes all of Europe (except Monaco), and importantly it includes Russia. But some major countries are missing, including South Korea, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Brazil (US State Department 2012d). Brazil is “agnostic toward PSI, unable to rise and accept new responsibility for oceans governance. More troublesome, however, are India and Indonesia. Like China, the two Asian states have been particularly unhelpful by actively resisting PSI and even challenging its legality” (Kraska 2012:8). Some observe that PSI activities are declining over time and call for activities to ensure its long-term sustainability (Durkalec 2012).<sup>27</sup>

The GICGT was started in 2006 by thirteen countries and it now has 85 countries that have signed onto its principles, along with the EU, IAEA, Interpol and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime as observers. Russia and the United States serve as co-chairs. “The mission of the GICGT is to strengthen global capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear terrorism by conducting multilateral activities that strengthen the plans, policies, procedures, and interoperability of partner nations”.<sup>28</sup> Participation in the GICGT is one way nations can fulfill their obligations under UNSC Resolution 1540. Some analysts have questioned the likely success of this network, however (e.g., Alcaro 2009).

#### *Adjustment 5: The United States moderated its discourse regarding the Non-Proliferation Treaty, taking on a more equitable and reciprocal tone*

The Obama administration – with its emphasis on a rules-based international order with consequences for those who defy the dictates of the NPT, rewards for compliance, and obligations that apply to the United States as well as a nuclear power – stands in sharp contrast to the coercive and unilateralist perspective of the early Bush years.

The Bush administration labelled Iraq, Iran and North Korea as members of an “axis of evil” with connections to terrorists, and short-sightedly implied that negotiations to bring them back into compliance with the NPT would be fruitless until their regimes had been replaced (Litwak 2007). The administration also claimed the right to unilaterally disarm these regimes, and then it attacked Iraq only to find that it did not possess any WMD. It is possible that Libya abandoned its nuclear weapons programs in December 2003 (after smuggled materials from the infamous Khan network were intercepted through the PSI)<sup>29</sup> because it was scared by the Iraq example (though serious negotiations had reportedly been going on for a long time before). But North Korea and Iran continued their nuclear pursuits, and the fate of Iraq (and later Libya with Muammar Qaddafi’s

26 The states share intelligence, coordinate tracking of suspicious vessels, participate in exercises, and work to strengthen domestic laws in order to board ships, confiscate materials, and punish smugglers. The Bush administration claimed an early success after cooperative efforts between the United States, Britain, Germany and Italy resulted in the seizure of materials at an Italian port from a German ship containing nuclear centrifuge parts headed to Libya – the seizure led to the uncovering of the proliferation activities by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan (Kaplan 2006).

27 Also, according to the Congressional Research Service, there is “little publicly available information by which to measure PSI’s success” (Nikitin 2012:2).

28 See the US State Department web page: *The Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism*, <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c18406.htm>.

29 The Khan network, named after the Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, was a clandestine organization involved in nuclear know-how smuggling operating from a number of countries. It is known to have had contacts with Libya, North Korea, Iran and possibly others. The organization was reportedly dismantled in 2004.

overthrow) may have entrenched their desire for a deterrent against a powerful nation openly seeking their governments' demise.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, the Obama administration's language has focused on behavioral change rather than regime change: the need to comply with a rule-based international order. The 2010 National Security Strategy states that "Both nations face a clear choice. If North Korea eliminates its nuclear weapons program, and Iran meets its international obligations on its nuclear program, they will be able to proceed on a path to greater political and economic integration with the international community. If they ignore their international obligations, we will pursue multiple means to increase their isolation and bring them into compliance with international nonproliferation norms" (White House 2010:23-24). To be sure, the Obama administration still reserved the right for the United States to enforce compliance with these norms: for instance, he stated that the United States may use military force to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, and he ordered the Stuxnet cyber-attack on Iran's uranium-process facilities to slow its progress (Sanger 2012).

By inviting North Korea and Iran to change their behavior and rejoin the international community, the Obama administration opened the possibility of negotiating a solution. The problem, of course, is Iran's and North Korea's long-standing and deep distrust of the United States.<sup>31</sup> They are unlikely to believe a new American president just because he gives more moderate speeches. The North Korean regime talks openly about wanting a nuclear deterrent against the United States. Iran still perceives the United States to be interested in regime change (Mousavian 2012). The new approach – making the costs of non-compliance, through isolation and sanctions, so high as to bring the leadership to the table, while also offering benefits for cooperation – has not worked, yet. Despite their intention, sanctions are likely perceived by Iran and North Korea as attempts to undermine popular support in the pursuit of regime change.

The United States has worked through the Six Party Talks (with Russia, China, Japan and South Korea) – on and off – to change North Korea's behavior for about two decades. Yet, North Korea has acquired nuclear weapons, conducted nuclear tests, advanced its long-range missile technology, and even threatened to use nuclear weapons on the United States. One problem has been that China, a key player in any sanctions effort as a powerful neighbor, has been reluctant to push North Korea too hard for fear of a collapse. Recently, though, China has signed onto increased UN sanctions.

Isolation of Iran has been more successful. The United States has worked with the EU in an attempt to entice and pressure Iran into compliance. The grouping in this case is the P5+1, which includes all of the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. The EU has been a steadfast leader on this issue, most recently adopting a new round of harsh economic sanctions that go much beyond what the Security Council has mandated (Mix 2012). The current situation appears to be a test whether stark material costs will motivate the Iranian leadership to give up enrichment activities to which they have vigorously claimed they have a right to pursue: Iran's oil production has plummeted and its economy is hurting. To date, Iran defiantly continues its enrichment activity.

If not North Korea and Iran, the Obama administration's changes helped mollify grievances from other nations about the NPT. He talked about "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without

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30 Also, the Bush administration made an exception to the rules by negotiating the US-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act in 2006 and transferring civilian nuclear material to India even though it was not a signatory to the NPT.

31 Kim Jong-un ordered his military in January 2013 to take "substantial and high profile" measures to retaliate against US-championed UN sanctions in response to North Korea's recent ballistic missile launch in violation of UNSC resolution. He later threatened to use a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States.

nuclear weapons” in his historic 2009 Prague speech. He talked about how America “cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it” (Obama 2009a). These words signalled that the United States takes seriously its own obligations under the NPT. On other occasions, Obama has talked about the need to “strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by renewing its basic bargain: countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament; countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them; and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy” (Obama 2009c).<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, the NPT is based on the consent of the parties involved, and to keep this consent it is important that signatories believe that everyone is living up to their obligations (Miller et al. 2012). The Bush administration strained many non-nuclear states’ goodwill toward the NPT with its talk of unilateral preemption to disarm other states while granting itself the right to develop new kinds of nuclear weapons (to target underground bunkers), and these strains were evident in the lack of agreement during the 2005 NPT Review Conference.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the 2010 NPT review conference was seen as a relative success: 189 state parties agreed on a document with dozens of follow-on actions (Aboul-Enein 2010). That said, enough of a gulf still exists between perceptions of non-nuclear states and nuclear states about the responsibilities and restrictions imposed by the NPT that some experts believe it would be difficult to strengthen the treaty and close its loopholes. The NPT is still “widely regarded as a system in distress” (Miller et al. 2012:2).

### *Summary and Outlook*

The United States has worked bilaterally with Russia to reduce the two dominant stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and it has helped mobilize ad hoc and flexible global networks to destroy, secure, detect and interdict nuclear weapons and materials, using the PSI, the GICGT, and now the Nuclear Security Summits. These networks work outside of –but complement – international institutions, and incorporate many more players. The effectiveness and sustainability of these networks will be important to watch.

The more reciprocal language of the Obama administration has contributed to bolstering the legitimacy of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. But the change in rhetoric and policy has not created enough goodwill to strengthen the treaty; and it certainly has not created enough trust to change the behaviour of North Korea or Iran.

Going forward, it is important to acknowledge that other important measures, such as the US ratification of the CTBT, or the UN negotiation of the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (to eliminate the production of fissile material for military purposes), or a Cooperative Threat Reduction program to secure nuclear weapons in Pakistan, or an understanding between Russia and NATO about ballistic missile defense, all seem out of reach.

In short, cooperative efforts around nuclear non-proliferation are wide – but much more needs to be done.

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32 In the 2013 State of the Union, Obama reaffirmed that “we’ll engage Russia to seek further reductions in our nuclear arsenals, and continue leading the global efforts to secure nuclear materials that could fall into the wrong hands – because our ability to influence others depends on our willingness to lead and meet our obligations.”

33 In response, “[t]he 2005 NPT Review Conference ended acrimoniously, failing to act on the consensus of the majority of states for stronger nonproliferation and disarmament efforts or to adopt any of the dozens of useful suggestions proposed by many of the nations present”, James Cirincione (2008) observed. “As other nations concluded that the United States had no intention of fulfilling its NPT-related disarmament obligations, including ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty or moving decisively toward nuclear disarmament, they balked at shouldering additional anti-proliferation burdens.”

## 2.3 Cyber Security

Cyber security is the issue discussed herein where power diffusion most hampers the US effort to find cooperative solutions. Many of the affected stakeholders are private entities adding a layer of complexity not easily resolved through multinational forums. In addition, state actors embrace difficult perspectives about the value of free expression and availability of information, complicating discussions about whether and how to regulate the internet. Also, cyber threats stem from a wide variety of sources—state actors conducting espionage (and potentially attacks), terrorists groups, and individuals engaged in malicious behavior or crimes.

### *Adjustment 1: The United States heightened the status of cyber security to be a top national security priority*

One recent US adjustment has been to raise the priority of this issue.<sup>34</sup> Less than six months after taking office, President Obama released his Cyberspace Policy Review. “From now on,” he proclaimed, “our digital infrastructure – the networks and computers we depend on every day – will be treated as they should be: as a strategic national asset. Protecting this infrastructure will be a national security priority” (Obama 2009d). To signal the issue’s importance, Obama placed a cyberspace coordinator in the White House. A month later, then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates ordered the establishment of a new US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) to be led by the director of the National Security Agency (NSA). The White House later issued an “International Strategy for Cyberspace” in May 2011.

At the same time, the administration has repeatedly warned the public about the dangers of cyber attacks. In the first speech on the topic by a Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta warned in 2012 that the United States was in a “pre-9/11” moment on cyber-security and could face a “cyber Pearl Harbor” (Panetta 2012). His successor as Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, has continued to sound the alarm (O’Harrow and Gellman 2013). The administration made the issue a public point of contention with China accusing it of widespread cyber attacks on the United States.<sup>35</sup>

### *Adjustment 2: The United States focused on offensive cyber war capabilities*

The formation of USCYBERCOM in 2010 indicates a second adjustment— preparing for offensive cyber warfare capabilities, presumably as a deterrent (O’Harrow and Gellman 2013). News reports reveal “[a] secret legal review on the use of America’s growing arsenal of cyberweapons” which “concluded that President Obama has the broad power to order a pre-emptive strike if the United States detects credible evidence of a major digital attack looming from abroad” (Sanger and Shanker 2013). In other words, the Department of Defense has reviewed its guidance for the use of cyber weapons. And we know that President Obama launched the Stuxnet worm to slow Iran’s progress in uranium enrichment, in a joint US-Israeli operation that is one of the first known examples of a cyber weapon used to attack the infrastructure of another country (Sanger 2012).

### *(Attempt at) Adjustment 3: The United States began to protect domestic infrastructure*

A third adjustment—in its early stages—is the protection of domestic infrastructure. The administration

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34 The George W. Bush administration wrote a highly classified strategy for cyber security – the 2008 Comprehensive National Cyber Security Initiative – but it is difficult to assess its impact.

35 For example, the Pentagon accused China of cyber attacks against the United States in a 2013 report to Congress: “In 2012, numerous computer systems around the world, including those owned by the U.S. government, continued to be targeted for intrusions, some of which appear to be attributable directly to the Chinese government and military” (US Department of Defense 2013:36).

has been trying to galvanize private industry to invest in defenses against cyber attacks. After failing to pass legislation due to concerns about government regulation, the president signed an executive order in 2013 to establish preventative standards for private industry in those areas already regulated by the government, such as financial institutions.

#### ***Adjustment 4: The United States started building cooperative security relationships and developing agreement about norms and rules of behavior***

On the diplomatic side, US government documents reveal a nascent effort to lead in norm creation and an awareness of the challenges in doing so. The Cyberspace Policy Review states: “[i]nternational norms are critical to establishing a secure and thriving digital infrastructure. The United States needs to develop a strategy designed to shape the international environment and bring like-minded nations together on a host of issues, including acceptable norms, regarding territorial jurisdiction, sovereign responsibility, and use of force” (White House 2009:20).<sup>36</sup>

The Obama administration acknowledges the difficulty of creating a consensus around international norms in an environment with multiple actors:

“More than a dozen international organizations [...] address issues concerning the information and communications infrastructure. New organizations are beginning to consider cybersecurity-related policies and activities, while others are expanding the scope of their existing work. [...] Agreements, standards, or practices promulgated in these organizations have global effects and cannot be ignored. *The sheer number, variety, and differing focuses of these venues strain the capacity of many governments, including the United States, to engage adequately*” (White House 2009:20, emphasis added).

Subsequently, the White House issued an “International Strategy for Cyberspace” in May 2011, articulating the norms of “upholding fundamental freedoms,” “respect for property,” “valuing privacy,” “protection from crime,” “right of self-defense,” “global interoperability,” “network stability,” “reliable access,” “multi-stakeholder governance,” and “cybersecurity due diligence” (White House 2011a:10).

The United States government is working with NATO, the EU, and a variety of individual countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and India, on cooperative security arrangements and norm creation. It is also working with countries in the Middle East and Asia to build defenses against cyber weapons (Shanker and Sanger 2013).

#### ***Summary and Outlook***

Unlike the issue of terrorism or nuclear proliferation, the United States is only just beginning to adjust to the issue of cyber-security, and it has not yet created robust networks of cooperation.

Going forward, it is clear that there are obstacles to global consensus on cyber-security. The political dynamics evident at the World Conferences on International telecommunications (WCIT) illustrate this difficulty. Some countries, notably Russia and China, pushed for International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a UN agency, regulation of the internet and an equal role by ITU member states in the management of the internet. The

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36 A 2008 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report summed up the situation, saying “[t]he international aspects of cybersecurity have been among the least developed elements of U.S. cybersecurity policy.” What is needed is a “cyber regime, modeled on the Missile Technology Control Regime or the G-8’s Financial Action Task Force”, which “would bring together like-minded nations to develop international norms, common policies, and responses and to share sensitive national information on cybersecurity” (Langevin et al. 2008:20; 22).

United States, much of Europe, Canada, Japan and others disagreed. This led to seventy countries signing onto a new telecommunications treaty in Dubai in 2012, while fifty-five nations, led by the United States, walked out. This conference revealed a divide over basic values about government/society relations and privacy.

More recently, however, the US ability to provide leadership on norms regarding an individual's right to privacy and the independence of internet providers from government control has been seriously corroded by the revelations about the extent of NSA surveillance and its collusion (albeit imposed) with Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft and other corporations.

## 2.4 Weak States

Certainly by the 1990s, and perhaps earlier, US policymakers had identified weak or failing states as a potential security risk to the United States.<sup>37</sup> The United States and the international community dealt with the fragile states transitioning out of inclusion in the Soviet Union, the failed state of Somalia, boat people fleeing from the economic and political distress in Haiti, the instability caused by the break up of Yugoslavia. But it was the attacks on 9/11 that heightened US attention to this issue, demonstrating how conditions in a weak state allowed al Qaeda to organize an attack on the United States. As the 2002 National Security Strategy observes: “[t]he events of September 11, 2001 taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states” (White House 2002:v).

### *Adjustment 1: US policymakers and military leaders linked conditions in weak states abroad to the national security interests of the United States*

As a part of the Global War on Terror, the US government focused on providing more security assistance and other aid to help stabilize fragile states. If al Qaeda in Afghanistan taught Americans about the potential dangers of weak states, the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq taught the Bush administration that fighting instability required more than military power—it required changing the conditions of people's lives and their perceptions (Hodge 2011). As a result, the US military started taking on more non-traditional roles in places like Africa for the purpose of conflict prevention, so-called “phase zero” operations meant to shape the environment so that stable institutions can be built and extremism and violence do not develop (Ploch 2011).

The Africa Command (AFRICOM), started in 2008, epitomized this new approach. Its theater strategy included, inter alia, “promoting stability, security and reconstruction efforts; turning the tide on HIV/AIDs and malaria” and “strengthening democratic principles by fostering respect for the rule of law, civilian control of the military, and budget transparency” (Reveron 2010:88). In practice, this new US presence in Africa combined traditional military training, exercises and intelligence sharing with development activities such as building schools and roads, drilling wells, and offering medical and veterinary services. Rear Admiral Anthony Kurd, Commander of the Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) stated that “What we're doing here is the indirect approach of countering violent extremism” (quoted in Reveron 2010:103).

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37 The 1998 National Security Strategy, for example, states that “[a]s governments lose their ability to provide for the welfare of their citizens, mass migration, civil unrest, famine, mass killings, environmental disasters and aggression against neighboring states or ethnic groups can threaten U.S. interests and citizens” (White House 1998b:7). Clinton administration officials were already talking about how solutions to complex humanitarian crises require an “integrated approach” across government agencies, emphasizing the need for “preventative diplomacy”, and highlighting efforts to build regional capacity to strengthen states or deal with crises (White House 1998b:7). The Clinton administration also started the African Crisis Response Initiative in 1996, in collaboration with international partners such as the UK and France, to help train African nations to deal with peacekeeping and humanitarian crisis (White House 1998a).

As discussed below, the Bush administration, and then the Obama administration, pushed to develop inter-agency cooperation and a whole-of-government approach to dealing with fragile or failing states.

### *Adjustment 2: US policymakers prioritized “building capacity” in other states and regional organizations*

Over the last decade, the US government has prioritized building capacity in other states. Secretary Gates articulated the logic: the “strategic reality demands that the U.S. government get better at [...] helping other countries defend themselves [...] by providing them with equipment, training, or other forms of security assistance” (Gates 2010:2).<sup>38</sup> The United States has substantially increased its investment in security assistance programs. During the Bush administration, security assistance expanded from “49 to 149 countries over eight years” (Reveron 2010:55). To give just one example of a security assistance program, through the Global Peace Operations Initiative, started in 2004, the United States has directly trained nearly 175,000 peacekeepers and supported the training of nearly 50,000 by other partners, like the EU, as well (US State Department 2013a).

### *Adjustment 3: The United States pooled resources with other nations and international actors to deal with piracy off the horn of Africa*

There are issues related to weak states – such as combating piracy off the Somalia coast and in the Gulf of Aden – where broad-based cooperation has been created. The UN Security Council authorized states, acting in accordance with the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia, to stop the pirates and find means to prosecute them. Led by the United States, nations are working together in the Combined Maritime Force’s Task Force and in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. The latter group includes almost seventy states (including major European states, China, and Russia) and several international organizations (including the African Union, Arab League, the EU, and NATO). “On any given day, up to 30 vessels from as many as 20 nations are engaged in counter-piracy operations in the region. This force includes countries new to this kind of effort, like China, India, and Japan” (Kelly 2012). Russia has conducted anti-piracy exercises with NATO; the United States has done so with China.

### *Summary and Outlook*

After the Cold War, and especially after 9/11, US policymakers began to understand that US security was linked to conditions in places like Africa; the US government began to substantially increase investments in development and security assistance. Looking ahead, however, the US government is likely to trim, and attempt to rationalize, these security assistance programs due to budget constraints.<sup>39</sup>

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38 For example, in 2005, the Bush administration issued a Presidential Decision Directive 44 in order to improve “coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization assistance for foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife” (White House 2005). By 2010, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) had elevated “building partnership capacity” to a critical mission (Daggett 2010).

39 A recent State Department report criticized the dispersed management of security assistance programs; it observed that “[t]he U.S. approach to security capacity building is characterized by a multiplicity of programs and a lack of national strategy laying out clear priorities and processes” (US State Department 2013b). And the latest Defense Guidance forecasts greater selectivity in security assistance programs: “A reduction in resources will require innovative and creative solutions to maintain our support for allied and partner interoperability and building partner capacity. *However, with reduced resources, thoughtful choices will need to be made regarding the location and frequency of these operations*” (US Department of Defense 2012:5-6, emphasis in original).

## 3. Adjustment to New Forms of War

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### 3.1 Humanitarian Interventions

In the decades since the end of the Cold War, US presidents of both parties have slowly come to accept the norm that the United States, working with the international community, must respond to mass atrocities, genocide or humanitarian crises that occur within states. But American presidents also face strong domestic constraints pressuring them not to put American lives at risk unless a crisis affects US national interests. As a result, we see a pattern where, on the one hand, the United States will respond to mass atrocity and genocide: it will supply humanitarian aid, logistical support, and intelligence. It may even fight a war from the air. On the other hand, presidents are reluctant to put American troops on the ground to stop an ethnic cleansing or genocide in countries where the United States has no direct strategic interest.

*Adjustment 1: The United States discourse on genocide and mass atrocities has evolved to where it now accepts a responsibility to act, although not necessarily with direct military intervention*

At the start of the post-Cold War era, the idea that the United States was obligated to help when others faced humanitarian disasters was not widely accepted. Secretary of State James Baker's off-hand comment about ethnic conflict in Bosnia – that the United States “did not have a dog in that fight” – reflects an old attitude that far away atrocities are not necessarily America's business. Still, even then, President George H.W. Bush chose to send 26,000 troops to help deliver food and humanitarian assistance in the failed state of Somalia.

President Clinton criticized Bush Sr. for his reticence to get involved in Bosnia. But Clinton, chastened by the severe public reaction when American soldiers were killed in Somalia in October 1993, soon accepted this old view. He issued a presidential directive (PDD25) that limited US military involvement in humanitarian crises to those that had bearing on US national interests.<sup>40</sup> The US inaction in response to the Rwandan genocide derived from this logic—US national interests were not perceived to be at stake.

A change in discourse occurred sometime in the late 1990s, probably as a remorseful reflection on the US ethical failure in Rwanda and relative success in Bosnia and Kosovo. By 2000 the Clinton administration's language acknowledged that severe humanitarian crises do affect US interests and require some response. His last National Security Strategy states: “the intersection of our values and national interests make it imperative that we take action to prevent – and whenever possible stop – outbreaks of mass killing and displacement” (White House 2000:47).

The administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama also accepted that there must be some response; still, they shift the onus onto the *world* to stop genocide or mass atrocities.<sup>41</sup> The United States has endorsed the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), meaning the responsibility of the “broader international community” to stop genocide or mass atrocities when a sovereign state commits such crimes or is unable to prevent them (White House 2010:48). The United States will reliably assist. But no administration asserts that the United States will take the lead on this issue or use its military might to do so.

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40 “The decision on whether and when to use force is therefore dictated first and foremost by our national interests”, the 1995 National Security Strategy states. “Second, in all cases, the costs and risks of U.S. military involvement must be judged to be commensurate with the stakes involved” (White House 1995:12-13).

41 The 2006 National Security Strategy states: “The world must act in cases of mass atrocities and mass killing that will eventually lead to genocide even if the local parties are not prepared for peace” (White House 2006:17).

*Domestic constraints and presidential caution:* A consistent pattern of behavior emerges: American presidents do not put US troops on the ground during active fighting to stop mass atrocities; but they may use the American military in activities short of putting troops in harm's way.

In Somalia, the Bush Sr. administration mobilized 26,000 US troops to help create conditions where food and humanitarian assistance could get through to starving populations—but it did so believing the troops faced little risk (Strobel 1997). In Bosnia, the United States' belated military action was strictly an air campaign until the Dayton Accords created a cease fire and peace agreement. Then the United States sent about 20,000 troops to join 40,000 European troops as a stabilization force. In Rwanda, the United States remained uninvolved while the Hutus raged genocide against the Tutsis. Only after the rampage was over did the United States send military troops to assist in the subsequent refugee crisis. In Kosovo, President Clinton made clear that he would not send in ground troops; NATO attacks were limited to air strikes. In Darfur, the George W. Bush administration was forthright in calling the conflict "genocide" – but still the US response was limited to humanitarian assistance; nor did President Obama send troops to Sudan.

One reason presidents are so "casualty phobic" is that they foresee domestic repercussions.<sup>42</sup> Since the Vietnam War, the US public has been loath to get involved in other countries' internal wars if there is a cost of American lives. If the military goal involves "internal political change," meaning interference in political institutions in a country, a majority of Americans tend to oppose it (Jentleson 1992, Jentleson and Britton 1998, Murray and Spinosa 2004:103). A plurality – not a majority – will tend to support military action in response to a humanitarian crisis if American troops are put at risk; although many more will support low-risk humanitarian assistance. In contrast, the American public will support mobilizing troops to stop one nation from attacking another, what Jentleson (1992) labels "foreign policy restraint."<sup>43</sup> In other words, US interest needs to be involved before a majority of the public will support a military operation that puts American troops in harms' way, which, in turn, affects the behavior of the US Congress and the president.

### *(Possible) Adjustment 2: In a break from the past, the United States shared leadership during a military intervention*

When Qaddafi, the late Libyan dictator, threatened that he would "show no mercy" to rebel forces fighting against his regime, President Obama worked with French President Nicholas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron to prevent what seemed to be an impending slaughter of civilians. The US military role was limited to providing key military assistance to NATO air strikes against the Libyan air force and air defense capabilities. The French and the British took the lead, flew most of the bombing sorties, and had the Special Forces on the ground guiding the bombing.

President Obama's behavior in this instance is both ordinary and remarkable. It is ordinary in that it fits the pattern described above. He lent air support when called upon by the Arab League and European allies to do something. He used military force in a manner that did not put American troops on the ground in harm's way.

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42 The Clinton administration is especially forthright about offering assistance that does not entail putting Americans lives at risk. "U.S. support capabilities such as airlift, intelligence, and global communications" can be mobilized to assist multilateral peace operations; but U.S. combat units could only be used "when the risk to American troops is minimal" (White House 1995:16, 12).

43 Likelihood of success, multilateral cooperation, and bipartisan support are other variables that influence public support (Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2009, Eichenberg 2005, Larson and Savych 2005).

It is remarkable for an American president agreeing to take part in a military action in which the United States was not in the lead (at least not publicly) – and even trumpeted this behavior as a model for the times. In his words:

“The United States was proud to play a decisive role [...] But let’s remember that it was the Arab League that appealed for action. It was the world’s most effective alliance, NATO, that’s led a military coalition of nearly 20 nations. It’s our European allies – especially the United Kingdom and France and Denmark and Norway – that conducted the vast majority of air strikes protecting rebels on the ground [...] This is how the international community should work in the 21st century – more nations bearing the responsibility and costs of meeting global challenges” (Obama 2010a).

Here is an example of the United States sharing control with other major powers—albeit in an episode where the United States was reluctant to take the lead at a cost to American lives.<sup>44</sup>

The subsequent French intervention in Mali – where the United States again played a supportive role (although providing less significant assistance) to another power – adds some credence to the idea that a new pattern of shared leadership and burden is emerging between the United States and a few European powers.<sup>45</sup>

### *(Lack of Effective) Adjustment 3: The United States and Europe fail at creating a UN Security Council consensus to halt the humanitarian crisis in Syria*

The UN Security Council was able to pass Resolution 1973 to employ all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya because Russia and China abstained. But this UN Security Council Resolution did not call for regime change and once the NATO operation went so far as to remove Qaddafi from power, Russian and Chinese leaders felt manipulated. “The unintended consequence was that Russia and China, as well as the emerging powers on the Security Council (Brazil, India, and South Africa), are no longer willing to countenance UN Security Council resolutions that could lead to military interventions to overthrow regimes elsewhere in the Arab world” (Indyk, Lieberthal and O’Hanlon 2012:39).

So now the West is unable to get an international consensus to act against the Bashar al Assad regime despite his brutal behavior toward the opposition in Syria, and other civilians.

### *Summary and Outlook*

The change in US discourse about the responsibility to act in the face of atrocities is significant, but presidents still face domestic constraints to putting American lives in danger to help others in need. Notably, in Libya, the Obama administration illustrated the potential for a shared leadership model between the United States and European powers in addressing humanitarian interventions. At the same time, however, politics at the United Nations over the question of whether to intervene in Syria show a split between the United States and Europe on the one side and Russia, China, and some other emerging powers on the other. These patterns tell us that intervention within a state to stop atrocities – if it calls for regime change – is an area of cooperation between the United States and its NATO allies, but not a broad-based global effort that incorporates rising powers.

44 Obama has focused on the prevention of atrocities. He created an Atrocities Prevention Board in 2012. This is a high-level interagency group responsible for monitoring warning signs of atrocities and creating options for preventative action.

45 Significantly, the president faced substantial criticism from Republicans over Libya. For some, the idea of America taking a supporting rather than a leading role was an affront. There was domestic blowback to the idea of “leading from behind.”

## 3.2 Post-Conflict Stabilization

The United States has undergone something of a cycle since the end of the Cold War. Initially it was reticent to get involved in long-term post-conflict reconstruction. But by the mid-1990s, it gradually committed to the stabilization efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo. By the 2000s, it had fully embraced nation-building to counter the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, a stance that spilled over into its policies toward weak states. Now, full circle, the United States is withdrawing from Afghanistan and signalling that it wants to avoid future large-scale stabilization efforts.

*Adjustment 1: Initially reticent, the United States gradually assumed more responsibility, along with coalition partners, for providing public security, restoring government institutions and services, and restarting the economy first in Bosnia and especially in Kosovo*

The United States and the international community become more involved in peace operations once the Cold war ended. At first, US policymakers and military leaders planned for their efforts in these “military operations other than war” (MOOTW) to be a quick fix; they were determined not to get bogged down in long-term reconstruction of other societies. Troops were sent into a crisis to solve an immediate humanitarian problem – to provide shelter and food to the Kurds in Northern Iraq, to open travel routes so that aid could flow into Somalia, or to restore the democratically-elected president of Haiti to power. Deployments were meant to be surgical and brief: to fix a problem within a limited time frame and then leave. The US administration and military leaders remained reticent to take on the complex roles of institution-building or development activities during these stabilization efforts.

The US effort in Somalia, for instance, did not involve stabilizing the governing institutions and economy of that country. In Haiti, the US troops (first in the US-led Multinational Force and then in the follow-on United Nations Mission) assisted in creating a police force and organizing local and national elections, but then departed before a stable administration had been achieved or viable economic reforms had been implemented (Dobbins et al. 2003). The US was trying to avoid “mission creep” (Zinni and Koltz 2006, Priest 2003).

Eventually, the Clinton administration came to understand that a longer and more involved process of reconstruction was necessary to produce sustained results. That realization is evident during the Bosnian intervention, where President Clinton committed about 20,000 US troops as part of the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) for a year after the Dayton Accord Agreement was signed in December 1995; and initially about 10,000 of the troops in the subsequent NATO Stabilization force (SFOR).<sup>46</sup> The mission of IFOR was initially limited; it did not even include law enforcement activities. However, troops involved in SFOR became involved in restoring public services, economic reconstruction, and internal governance issues, such as shutting down extreme nationalist radio stations (Dobbins et al. 2003:96-97)

After leading the NATO intervention in Kosovo, the United States initially contributed approximately 7,000 US troops to the Kosovo Implementation Force (KFOR) at its height. The military had a broader mandate in this operation: it involved preventing renewed hostilities but also “ensuring public safety” and “coordinating closely” with the “work of the international civil presence” (Dobbins et al. 2003:115). “Throughout the 1990s, the United States became steadily better at nation-building. The Haitian operation was better managed than Somalia,

<sup>46</sup> The United States, France, and the UK bore the greatest burden for these efforts, but many other nations contributed as well. The European Union Force Althea (EUFOR Althea) took over in Bosnia in December 2004.

Bosnia better than Haiti, and Kosovo better than Bosnia" (Dobbins 2005).

However, the Clinton administration got did not create a bipartisan domestic consensus in support of these nation-building efforts. George W. Bush famously stated in his debate with Al Gore during the 2000 presidential campaign that "I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building." Condoleezza Rice quipped that "We don't need to have the 82nd Airborne escorting kids to kindergarten" (Gordon 2000).

### *Adjustment 2: After counterinsurgencies develop in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States embraced the military's role in stabilization and reconstruction and the need to develop a whole-of-government approach*

The unexpected counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan brought a widespread transformation in US policymakers' attitudes about stabilization efforts and also in the governmental structures set up to address the issue. The Bush administration was unprepared for the chaos and violence that ensued in Iraq. Faced with the high stakes of failure, US policymakers and military leaders rediscovered – in the words of General David Petraeus – "the age-old counterinsurgency tenet: Eighty percent is political, twenty percent is military" (Hodge 2011:156). The United States government then embraced nation-building in a manner not seen since the Vietnam War (Hodge 2011).

The civilian side of the US government was not able to respond quickly to the new demand for personnel to help with governance reform, humanitarian assistance, and the rebuilding of infrastructure in Iraq and Afghanistan. Underinvestment in the State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID) during the 1990s made them unready to meet the surge in demand to create stability in conflict situations, or in fragile states. Consequently, the Pentagon took on new nation-building, developmental and humanitarian assistance roles.

DOD's Directive 3000.05, issued in 2005, embodies this change in thinking and in missions. The 2009 version of the Directive states that "[s]tability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations." It states that the military needed to "[l]ead stability operations activities to establish civil security and civil control, restore essential services, repair and protect critical infrastructure, and deliver humanitarian assistance until such time as it is feasible to transition lead responsibility to other U.S. Government agencies, foreign governments and security forces, or international governmental organizations." (US Department of Defense 2009:2)

There was also a push to increase civilian capabilities and interagency coordination in stabilization efforts. For example, a new office in the State Department – the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS, now the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations) – was tasked with coordinating stabilization and reconstruction efforts. The Obama administration built on these trends and further heightened the emphasis on a "whole-of-government" approach. It promoted the 3 D's: Diplomacy, Development, and Defense. (US Department of Defense 2010:v-vi)<sup>47</sup>

### *Adjustment 3: The United States aspires to withdraw from Afghanistan and stay out of future large-scale stabilization efforts*

The wars and stabilization efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been costly in terms of US lives and resources,

<sup>47</sup> The QDR also states that "preventing conflict, stabilizing crises, and building security sector capacity are essential elements of America's national security approach" (US Department of Defense 2010:75).

and these interventions overlapped with the worst recession since the Great Depression during the 1930s. The American public tired of both interventions. President Obama tapped into this public sentiment when he said it was time for the United States to do nation-building at home.

Not surprisingly, as the wars wind down in Iraq and now Afghanistan, the United States government does not plan to get involved in another large-scale post-conflict stabilization effort. The 2012 Defense Guidance states that “U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations” (US Department of Defense 2012:6, emphasis in original).

That said, the United States and its NATO allies plan to leave some forces in Afghanistan after the drawdown in 2014. It seems likely that the American contribution to this force will be a smaller percentage that it currently bears in NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), where in 2013 there are fifty nations contributing 100,000 troops but almost 70,000 are from the United States.

### *Summary and Outlook*

Over the last decade, the US government reorganized itself to work across agencies on the complex problem of stabilizing other states. This change shows an evolving appreciation of the need for interagency coordination and the application of “smart power” (Nye 2011). The question emerges, though, about what will happen to those capabilities as the United States ends its large-scale involvement in Afghanistan. Finally, the pattern of history shows that post-conflict stabilization is a domain of cooperation between the United States and NATO and the EU; not a broad-based cooperative effort drawing in rising powers.

## **4. Adjustment to Rising Powers**

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### *Adjustment 1: The United States modified its discourse, acknowledging the debut of new powers and the need to change governance structure to accommodate them*

Recognizing broad global trends, the Obama administration has imbued its discourse and actions with a vision of a common rule-based international order where old and new power centers share in the responsibility for its upkeep. The US discourse has moved away from talk of primacy or preserving dominance.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the administration talks about renovating old governance structures to make room for rising powers and non-state actors, modernizing old relationships and alliances, and creating new and more inclusive forums to deal with collective issues. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2013) provided a metaphor for this change, emphasizing the innovation, irregularity, and complexity of new governing networks:

“[Former President Harry] Truman and [former Secretary of State Dean] Acheson were building the Parthenon with classical geometry and clear lines. The pillars were a handful of big institutions and alliances dominated by major powers. And that structure delivered unprecedented peace and prosperity. But time takes its toll, even on the greatest edifice. And we do need a new architecture for this new world, more Frank Ghery than formal Greek.”<sup>49</sup>

At the heart of the Obama administration’s narrative is the idea that a common global governance structure

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48 This view was most blatantly expressed in a leaked 1992 Defence Guidance (US Department of Defense 1992:1).

49 Frank Gehry is an architect known for extremely daring and unconventional structures such as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain which has curves on the exterior which appear random.

already exists and new players are welcome, if they play by the rules and share responsibility for its maintenance. The United States assumes the role of enforcer if others break the rules – preferably working with others, but alone if necessary. “The United States does not fear the rise of peaceful, responsible emerging powers,” Obama (2012) explains:

“[W]e welcome them, because when more nations step up and contribute to peace and security, that doesn’t undermine American power, it enhances it [...] And so we seek an international order where the rights and responsibilities of all nations and peoples are upheld and where countries thrive by meeting their obligations and they face consequences when they don’t.”

### *Adjustment 2: The United States reached out to rising powers to create strategic partnerships and forums to promote cooperation*

The Obama administration reached out to rising powers. Building on policies started by George W. Bush, President Obama called the relationship between the United States and India “one of the defining and indispensable partnerships of the 21st century” (Obama 2010b) and rhetorically supported India’s aspiration for eventual permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council. The Obama administration also supported the shift from the G8 to the G20 to update the institution to better reflect economic realities.

In 2009, the administration focused on creating new forums to create cooperative relationships with both China and Russia. Obama and the former Chinese President Hu Jintao established the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue to discuss a broad range of issues at the highest levels. This forum replaced the Strategic Economic Dialogue (led by the Treasury) and the Senior Dialogue (led by the State Department), bringing together a wider range of high-level officials. Likewise, Obama and former Russia’s President Dmitry Medvedev, as part of the US “reset” policy to reengage Moscow, agreed in 2009 to establish the US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission: a forum to find areas of cooperation over a wide range of working groups.

Then in 2010 the Obama administration created a series of new partnerships and dialogues with other rising powers: the US-India Strategic Dialogue; the US-Brazil Defence Cooperation Agreement; the US-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership; and the US-South Africa Strategic Dialogue. As already discussed, the Obama administration convened forums for dealing with global issues that had broad-based participation. The Nuclear Security Summit and the Global Counter-terrorism Forum, co-chaired with Turkey, represent two such efforts.

Examined together, these new partnerships make it clear that the administration set about to engage different power centers, reduce tensions where they existed, and include rising powers in shared problem solving.<sup>50</sup>

### *Adjustment 3: The United States focused more on Asia*

China is obviously the rising power that matters most. The basic approach taken by the Obama administration was a continuation from earlier presidents, with an added adjustment. President Obama, like all his predecessors since the end of the Cold War, encouraged China to act as a “responsible stakeholder” (to use the 2005 phrase

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50 The 2010 National Security Strategy emphasizes this effort: “We are working to build deeper and more effective partnerships with other key centers of influence—including China, India, and Russia, as well as increasingly influential nations such as Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia—so that we can cooperate on issues of bilateral and global concern, with the recognition that power, in an interconnected world, is no longer a zero sum game. [...] International institutions must more effectively represent the world of the 21st century, with a broader voice—and greater responsibilities—for emerging powers, and they must be modernized to more effectively generate results on issues of global interest” (White House 2010:3).

of then-Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick) in the global order.<sup>51</sup> Each president has understood – sometimes only after winning election – the stark reality that economic gains come with US-China cooperation and conflict between the two nations only brings high costs. Each administration has pursued a policy of engagement.

At the same time, the United States has hedged against the possibility that China will flex its military power in its region. As the Clinton administration's National Security Strategy in 1993 said "we must carefully watch the emergence of China onto the world stage and support, contain, or balance this emergence as necessary to protect U.S. interests" (White House 1993:8) The strategies written by the Bush and Obama administrations say the same.

In response to signs of a more assertive China in 2010 and 2011 – especially its assertion of "core" interests in the South China Sea – the United States adjusted its strategy to focus more on Asia. The 2012 Defense Guidance explains that "U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, *we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region*" (US Department of Defense 2012:2, emphasis in the original).

While the document talks about the importance of "an underlying balance of military capability and presence" for the stability of the region, the so-called "pivot" is not primarily military in nature. The increase of troops in Australia, at about 2,500 Marines in rotational deployments, is more symbolic than real, considering the more than 70,000 troops that the US stationed in Japan and South Korea for decades. True, more US naval ships will be in the Pacific than in the Atlantic by 2020. Still, much of the shift is about increased attention to the region and strengthening of alliances and partnerships.

As Jeff Bader, who served as Senior Director for East Asia Affairs on the National Security Council between 2009 and 2011, explained: "[The President's] been trying to talk about a multifaceted U.S. presence in the region in which, frankly, the military presence is not going to be increasing. If you leave aside this Australia deployment, it's basically flat" (Brookings 2012:41). The US has bolstered ties with Japan, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Passage of the Free Trade Agreement with South Korea in 2011, promotion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia with ASEAN are all part of this rebalancing. In short, the message is more offshore balancing than containment.

The 2012 Defense Guidance talks about how the US relationship with Europe must "also evolve". It calls "Europe our principal partner in seeking global and economic security, and will remain so for the foreseeable future". It states that the Europeans are "are now producers of security rather than consumers of it" (US Department of Defense 2012:2-3). Basically, it suggests that European states, who are capable and at peace, can do more to contribute to their own security, while the United States shifts some portion of resources to a more unsettled region for the good of the international order.

So far, the shifts seem incremental: The US pulled out two brigades from Europe, resulting in a reduction of 10,000 to 15,000 troops (Jaffe 2012). But the United States still plans to maintain 68,000 troops in Europe (Leatherman 2012), it has reaffirmed the importance of NATO, and it has two geographic commands (EUCOM and AFRICOM) based in Germany.

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51 The 2010 National Security Strategy states "We welcome a China that takes on a responsible leadership role in working with the United States and the international community to advance priorities like economic recovery, confronting climate change, and nonproliferation" (White House 2010:43).

The United States is not turning away from its most important strategic relationship; it is sharing the costs of providing security with capable partners. As Hillary Clinton has said, “certain commitments” such as NATO “need to be embedded in the DNA of American foreign policy” (Clinton 2010). A scholar observes, “America can be more of a trans-Pacific power without turning into less of a trans-Atlantic partner, and Europe can also renew its Asian vocation without turning its back on the Atlantic” (Serfaty 2012:147).

### *Summary and Outlook*

The United States has recognized the importance of engaging new rising powers – such as India, Turkey, and Brazil – and incorporating them into international governance structures. And the United States has attempted to establish cooperative relationships with Russia and China as well.

Barack Obama started his presidency with the idea that he could also reshape great power relations – or at least he would try. The president gave two speeches in July 2009 – one to a Russian audience and one to a Chinese audience – with the same message. In an interdependent world, old power politics do not work. We face common problems and progress can only be made by working together.<sup>52</sup>

Initially, Obama got an encouraging response. Both Russia and China acquiesced to the UN resolutions to tighten sanctions on Iran and to intervene in Libya, for example. But as it became clear that core issues of concern to China and Russia, such as Taiwan or ballistic missile defense in Eastern Europe, would not be resolved, then tensions returned.

Obama’s vision of the United States forging a new era of cooperation by focusing on common interests, with itself as the agenda-setter, is too simple. It is probably inevitable that some competition and disharmony will exist between the US and China and the US and Russia given their history, level of (mis)trust, and power status. Russia and China have different perspectives, values, and priorities. These countries will not accept US leadership easily. They will want to pursue their own agenda. In the issues covered herein, for example, we see a split between the West and Russia and China over Syria—with the former calling for Assad’s removal from power and the latter protecting his regime—and a split over internet governance. But while tensions may be unavoidable, they will also likely stay controllable given shared interests.

## **5. Conclusion**

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*How has the US government adjusted to the increase in number and diversity of important players in international affairs, and its own declining resources? Is the United States still able to lead others to act cooperatively in solving the transnational security problems addressed in this working paper? To what extent have US leaders altered their views about America’s role in the world?*

The US government recognizes the global trends and is responding to them. It accepts the need to redesign international governance structures and create new partnerships to fit changing power realities. At the same time, leaders within the United States clearly foresee a future where the United States remains at the center of global governance.

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<sup>52</sup> At a graduation ceremony in Moscow, Obama said “given our interdependence, any world order that tries to elevate one nation or one group of people over another will inevitably fail. The pursuit of power is no longer a zero-sum game -- progress must be shared. That’s why I have called for a ‘reset’ in relations between the United States and Russia” (Obama 2009b). He repeated the message that “the most pressing dangers we face no longer come from competition among great powers” at the first meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue with China (Obama 2009c).

As shown herein, the US government, starting with the second Bush administration, has begun to create innovative institutional arrangements meant to draw in a wide range of partners around transnational security issues such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation and piracy. The Proliferation Security Initiative, the Nuclear Security Summits, the Contact Group on Piracy Off the Coast of Somalia, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum are examples of voluntary networks created to solve collective security threats.<sup>53</sup> These networks are meant to complement and enhance more traditional international institutions.

On some issues, however, US leadership has been more reserved, and value differences between the West and Russia and China are more pronounced. On these issues, widespread cooperation is less forthcoming. The West has not succeeded in rallying the new rising powers to support a more robust response to the Syrian civil conflict under the norm of “responsibility to protect.” And efforts to define rules about cyber-security are still in the early stages.

The adjustment in how the United States interacts with other nations, more as equals requiring consultation rather than as dependents who follow, is still unfolding and it is difficult to determine the extent of change.<sup>54</sup> Some scholars see the behavior of the Obama administration as a marked change from the past, a “shift [...] from dominance to political leadership” (Stepak and Whitlark 2012:58) or as pursuing a “different relationship to the rest of the world” (Kagan 2010). Others argue that there is a basic continuity between the Obama presidency and previous presidents (Cohen 2009) or reserve judgment about whether there has been a marked change (Weber and Jentleson 2010:38 and 167).

What is clear is that the Obama administration understands the need to be perceived as legitimate and fair. Its discourse about the “power of example,” about the need to follow international rules in its counterterrorism campaign, and about how the United States has obligations, too, under the NPT, attests to this understanding. It has embraced the lessons of “soft power” and “smart power” (Nye 2011).<sup>55</sup> That said, some of its practices (e.g. widespread NSA surveillance and use of targeting killing) and inactions (e.g., not closing down the prisons at Guantanamo) still threaten to erode US legitimacy.

Most striking, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton continued to describe America’s role in the world with language of the “indispensable nation” (borrowing a phrase from the Bill Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright). They used this term somewhat differently than the Clinton administration, with more emphasis on the need for the United States to inspire others to shoulder a common effort.<sup>56</sup> Their idea was that the United States remains unparalleled in terms of “magnetic pull” as well as its military power.<sup>57</sup> The emphasis was on the United States’

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53 The efficacy of these networks, and the extent of buy-in from key emerging powers, needs further study.

54 One example illustrates the challenges in reshaping these relationships. Barack Obama reportedly encouraged, or at the least did not oppose, Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and former Brazil’s President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to play a mediating role in negotiating with Iran over its nuclear enrichment activities. But when the permanent members of the UN Security Council agreed to tighten sanctions, Obama chose to go with the consensus on the Security Council rather than the so-called “Tehran Declaration” negotiated by Turkey and Brazil. This decision caused both Erdoğan and Lula to vote against the UNSC resolution, and prompted the Foreign Minister of Brazil to write that the decision “confirmed the opinions of many analysts who claimed that the traditional centers of power will not share gladly their privileged status. [...] It is time that in grave matters of war and peace, emerging nations such as Turkey and Brazil – and others, such as India, South Africa, Egypt and Indonesia – have their voices heard” (Amorim 2010).

55 Yet, in some cases, the United States still acts outside of common rules – or in a fashion that does not lend itself to the Golden rule – as seen in US extensive use of drones for targeted killing without a public discussion about how this new war-fighting technology and counterterrorism strategy abides by international law.

56 When discussing the 2010 NSS, Hillary Clinton said that “great power is exercised by primarily one nation, but there are many other existing and emerging powers. [...] So in a world like this, American leadership isn’t needed less, it’s actually needed more. And the simple fact is that no significant global challenge can be met without us. [...] Thus, leadership means overcoming those obstacles by building the coalitions that can produce results against those shared challenges” (Clinton 2010).

57 This point was made by Jake Sullivan, the Director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Office, at a talk at American University on October 30, 2012.

power to get others to work together cooperatively. “[T]he United States is still the only country that has the reach and resolve to rally disparate nations and peoples together to solve problems on a global scale,” Hillary Clinton observed as she was leaving office in 2013. “Our ability to convene and connect is unparalleled, and so is our ability to act alone whenever necessary” (Clinton 2013).

The Obama administration does not talk or act as if US power has declined substantially. While it talks of the need for others to take up responsibility commensurate with their power, it does not yet speak of equal co-direction, or an equal division of labor with other actors. Except for the example of “leading from behind” on Libya, there is little sign that the US government accepts the idea of “alternative centers of control in the provision of global public goods” (Weber and Jentleson 2010:173). The language still suggests that the United States *must* be the leader for any activity of importance to occur because no other country or organization is willing or able to take on the responsibility of convening others to solve global problems. For example, President Obama talks about the future as “an American century because no other nation seeks the role that we play in global affairs. That includes shaping the global institutions of the 20th century to meet the challenges of the 21st” (Obama 2012). Current Secretary of State John Kerry reiterated this view: “we will continue to lead as the indispensable nation, not because we seek this role, but because the world needs us to fill it. Not as a choice, but as a charge” (Kerry 2013). In Hillary Clinton’s words: “So we can’t allow in this very big complex world that is so demanding to have the United States absent anywhere” (Clinton 2010).

In short, US leaders still see the world through a “Ptolemaic” framework (to use Weber and Jentleson’s metaphor) where the United States is at the center. And because US leaders still see the United States as the most powerful nation in the world and as the necessary leader to create collective solutions, there has been little public debate about the need for a changed conception of America’s role in the world. Certainly, there is increased talk of “partnership” and “building the capacity of others.” But the American body politic has not begun to make the psychological adjustment to a reduced and more consultative relationship with the rest of the world that would need to accompany a shift to a “Copernican” perspective.

The persistent portrayal of the United States as the “indispensable nation” also inhibits transformative change in terms of matching reduced budgets to limited policy objectives in a revised grand strategy for conditions of austerity. The Obama administration’s apparent solution is a “light footprint” around the world (Sanger 2012:420-425).

An unanswerable question is the extent to which the strategic vision of the Obama administration will be embraced by future presidents, particularly one from the Republican Party. The current fractures within the Republican Party make it difficult to discern what its opposing vision might be. Historically, however, the Republican Party has been more ardent about American exceptionalism and the need to assert American dominance and less likely to cede control over some international governance issues to other actors. At the same time, however, the analysis herein shows that both Republican and Democratic administrations have created broad-based innovative institutional structures to deal with transnational security threats and leaders from both parties see the benefits of establishing cooperative relationships with China, India, and other important powers.

Whether the American resolve to maintain US global leadership is prescience or denial is beyond the scope of this working paper. It is enough to observe that on the one hand, evidence shows that the US government is adjusting to global shifts: it is creating new forums for more inclusive governance, building affiliation where possible with rising powers, reaffirming old partnerships, working to maintain US legitimacy, and shifting its attention to Asia. On the other hand, the US leadership does not foresee, and it is not preparing itself or the American public for, a Copernican future where the United States is no longer at the center of global governance.

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## THE PROJECT

In an era of global flux, emerging powers and growing interconnectedness, transatlantic relations appear to have lost their bearings. As the international system fragments into different constellations of state and non-state powers across different policy domains, the US and the EU can no longer claim exclusive leadership in global governance. Traditional paradigms to understand the transatlantic relationship are thus wanting. A new approach is needed to pinpoint the direction transatlantic relations are taking. TRANSWORLD provides such an approach by a) ascertaining, differentiating among four policy domains (economic, security, environment, and human rights/democracy), whether transatlantic relations are drifting apart, adapting along an ad hoc cooperation-based pattern, or evolving into a different but resilient special partnership; b) assessing the role of a re-defined transatlantic relationship in the global governance architecture; c) providing tested policy recommendations on how the US and the EU could best cooperate to enhance the viability, effectiveness, and accountability of governance structures.

## CONSORTIUM

Mainly funded under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme, TRANSWORLD is carried out by a consortium of 13 academic and research centres from the EU, the US and Turkey:

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