

**No End to Empire?
Domestic and Foreign Elite Consensus and U.S. Hegemony**

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Abstract

It has been argued that the George W. Bush administration in the United States instituted a significant break with over half a century of U.S. foreign policy and, by so doing, found itself at odds with what had been the consensus position of domestic and foreign elites on the role of the U.S. in the world. The implication is that the election of a new president, particularly if it were to be a Democrat opposed to the Iraq war, would lead to a reversal of U.S. policy and a restoration of elite foreign and domestic consensus. In this paper, we argue against that conclusion. First, we lay out a model of U.S. policy as certain sequences of activity directed at support for client states and hostility toward enemies. Second, we demonstrate that these activity sequences have been around for many decades -- including after foreign policy disasters -- and that they interlock with complementary sequences on the part of client states and multilateral organizations. Third, we show that some of the most common and multiply interlocked sequences involve the use of military force, including intervention against states considered as enemies. Fourth, we demonstrate that by most criteria, there was little difference regarding common sequences between the Bush administration and its predecessors; and indeed that most U.S. military policies between 2001 and 2008 continued to be interlocked with the policies of other states and of the United Nations. We conclude by showing that even the foreign policy proposals advanced by antiwar Democrats and their advisers fall largely within the broad outlines of Bush administration policy. The implication is that what are often thought as Bush-style policies are not only likely to continue with at best minor stylistic differences, but are likely to receive the backing of international elites, including those connected with the UN.

It is no exaggeration to say that Barack Obama's election as president of the United States raised hopes around the world. The possibility that U.S. foreign policy would be changed in significant ways from that pursued by the George W. Bush administration was eagerly grasped at, both at home and abroad; and although Obama's subsequent appointments of "liberal hawks" or Republicans to high-level positions was worrisome to many, other appointments, as well as actions such as the announced closure of the Guantánamo prison camp, led others to insist that the glass was at least half full.

In our view, this debate badly misses the point. Advocates of either position, as well as those in the middle, presume that individuals, at least in their collective actions, have an extensive range of options among which they can choose, thereby making it possible not only to shift or maintain particular policy orientations, but to opt for a particular orientation in the first place. Our argument in this paper is that such a presumption is mistaken. We claim, in line with a newly published book, that U.S. foreign policy is means-driven, revolving around a limited range of organizationally embedded capabilities for particular sequences of actions, and with policy making determined primarily by the capabilities that are at hand rather than by any long-term goals. Those capabilities are not only limited in number and scope but display strong continuity, remaining in place for decades and being updated rather than scrapped.

Moreover, the particular sequences that constitute the means of U.S. foreign policy are, in important ways, interlocked with sequences often resorted to by U.S. client states and multilateral organizations. Among the most common such interlocked sequences are those pertaining to hostile intervention against states considered by both U.S. elites and many of their counterparts in other

countries as enemies. Such intervention sequences often involve the use of military force, which means that, at least on a priori grounds, we would not expect U.S. military action against enemies – even supposedly preventive action – to be evidence of either some type of deviation from a less bellicose tradition or of some shift to unilateralism in U.S. foreign policy. A look at UN Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping operations over the last 20 years bears out these expectations.

The conclusion is that, in the absence of some major budgetary catastrophe, the U.S. is unlikely to change its foreign policy in more than minor ways on matters of war and peace. In addition, such a lack of change is likely to be supported by leaders of other states and of international organizations.

1. The Nature of U.S. Foreign Policy

Let us start with some basics. Individuals use information about performance as a way of better accomplishing a task; this is a minimum definition of purposeful behavior. By the same token, organizations may also be structured with an eye to accomplishing particular tasks in a rapid and efficient manner. Both private business corporations and government agencies are, from this perspective, purposeful arrangements of purposeful activities; they are, in effect, machines for coordinating the activities of people.¹

What exactly are the purposeful activities of employees in an organization? To answer this question, consider an activity by a single individual, such as attempting to kick a ball into a net. A person attempting to do that will have to move in the direction of the net, while controlling the ball, avoiding other individuals, adjusting for the terrain, and so forth. In other words, the ball-kicker is engaged in a recurring sequence of activities, with error correction as one or more parts of that

¹ The discussion in this section is drawn from Sylvan and Majeski (2009: ch. 1). Here, we have omitted the theoretical issues and all the references from that section of the book.

sequence. The individual in question, of course, can deliberately carry out multiple tasks (though not always simultaneously), each with its own recurring activity sequence. By extension, organizations can have one or more purposes, each revolving around interlocking recurring sequences of intended activities by various persons.

From this perspective, the relation of means to ends, and of immediate to longer-term goals, appears somewhat different than in the standard accounts of foreign policy. Any purposeful system is purposeful precisely because the recurring sequence of its activities – what it does, i.e., its means – incorporates and is governed by an error-correcting feedback mechanism. *The system's immediate goals, in other words, operate through its means.* Of course, those who use or design the system may have one or more long-term goals in mind, but they are, for the most part, add-ons to the purposeful system itself. A soccer player may want to raise his salary or impress a friend, or even launch a career in politics through a well-executed shot, but those goals have no bearing on the handling of the ball at that particular moment (even if they might lead the player to take a chance at an unlikely shot). Similarly, various U.S. presidents may have wanted to bolster American credibility or, later, to avoid humiliation, but the means chosen – counterinsurgency warfare through search-and-destroy missions, training and equipping of South Vietnamese armed forces, and supporting particular politicians in Saigon – had their own, built-in, immediate, and practical goals compatible with these and many other long-term goals. Indeed, policy-making, as a practical activity, is heavily means-driven: should the U.S. negotiate, or cut off aid, or try to foment a coup, or engage in a bombing campaign? Of course, policy makers hope that accomplishing particular immediate goals will move them closer to achieving various long-term goals, but their only, very slight, influence over the latter is by opting for certain immediate goals rather than others.

We said above that both individuals and organizations can have multiple purposes. To be sure, certain types of organizations may not survive if they do not achieve one particular goal, such as

profit-making for a business corporation. Nonetheless, most organizations are not so limited and are characterized by multiple recurring sequences of purposeful activities. Often, these sequences are carried out by specialists who spend most of their working time engaging in particular sequential activities. Thus, for example, the military may have soldiers who specialize in combat training, others in intelligence, and so forth. *Frequently, the capabilities for generating specific recurring sequences of purposeful activities are given a bureaucratic home within an organization; those capabilities, in a particular organization or part of an organization, are what we mean by **policy instruments**, such that the deployment of the instrument generates the corresponding sequences.*² Hence, as we discuss elsewhere, U.S. foreign policy is marked by the development and continued existence of certain policy instruments, notably those concerned with the maintenance of client states and interventions against enemies.

As we are using the term, policy instruments have built-in immediate goals whenever they are deployed: training a client's military, propagandizing against an enemy leader, and so forth. These immediate goals can be pursued in various times and places, and it is precisely in order to build up this capability that specific policy instruments are developed. However, the pursuit of these immediate goals will differ, at least slightly, from one context to another, depending on the specifics of the country and time. For example, budgetary assistance to a client state will vary not only by the specific policy instrument being employed (e.g., the Defense Department has "coalition support fund" reimbursement to a country's military, whereas the State Department has "economic support fund" payments for programs in health, education, job creation, and "democratic governance") but by the country and time in which the assistance occurs. Thus, a client state like Pakistan, whose

² Certain components of capabilities, such as personnel, budget, and hardware, may be deployed to generate more than one sequence of purposeful activities. A given individual, for instance, may at some times work at bribing politicians and at other times at writing copy for a radio broadcast. However, the particular set of capabilities deployed to generate one sequence of purposeful activities will differ, at least to some degree, from the set of capabilities deployed to generate another sequence; for this reason, each capability, understood as a specific package of skilled personnel, with certain amounts of money and specialized hardware at their disposal, is a separate policy instrument. From this point of view, there are thus two ways of characterizing organizations: as sets of employees, budgets, hardware, and so forth; and as collections of policy instruments. The latter we find of greater interest in the analysis of foreign policy than the former.

regime the U.S. has seen since 2001 as endangered by insurgents, will be aided differently, even with the same policy instrument (e.g., the “Global Train-and-Equip program”), than a client state like Indonesia, where, for various reasons, funds are concentrated on naval interdiction; the latter, in turn, expanded from training naval personnel to track down terrorists to include anti-piracy training as well. *We will call the immediate goal being pursued by the use of a specific policy instrument at a given time and place the **mission** of the policy.* This now helps to characterize the basic issue dealt with in this paper: *when we say that there is **continuity** in U.S. foreign policy, what we mean is that U.S. officials continue, to engage in the same types of missions to maintain clients and act in a hostile fashion against enemies.*

By saying that there is continuity to U.S. foreign policy, we do not mean to imply that policy instruments have not changed. Indeed they have, but in a highly constrained fashion (which is a principal reason for the persistence in types of foreign policy missions). When particular instruments turned out to be clumsy or inefficient, they were professionalized, typically by creating specialized bureaucracies within the U.S. government to replace what had been ad hoc policies carried out by business corporations or all-purpose organizations. As a result, policy instruments which failed or worked poorly were improved on rather than scrapped. A second source of continuity is the proliferation of instruments across organizations. Quite often, policy instruments are copied or cloned: an instrument in one department is constructed to carry out missions similar to those of an instrument in another department. Finally, even after policy instruments have become professionalized and have proliferated, they can still be adjusted to take into account changed situations in particular clients such as income growth or the development of narcotics trafficking. In all these ways, then, U.S. foreign policy can be strongly continuous in terms of missions while at the same time exhibiting some constrained change in policy instruments.

We have seen that policy instruments are purposeful, incorporating feedback in order to pursue missions. This implies, at a minimum, that failure to accomplish a mission is, for those who work in the organization as well as their superiors up to the highest levels, a problem. At a maximum, policy instruments may be employed in the first place because some situation is considered to be a problem. The latter may not be considered as grave or regime-threatening but it still is unsatisfactory for some set of policy makers. Of course, it is possible that inertia is sufficiently strong for policy instruments to continue being employed even after the situation is considered satisfactory, but in general this is not the case: at the very least, something about the situation can be improved and that explains the continued deployment of the instrument in question. Hence, both the day-to-day operation of a policy instrument and the resort to it are exercises in problem solving.

Problem solving in foreign policy is concrete and highly practical. It involves multiple actors: those reporting information, those presenting recommendations, and those culling the latter to a manageable number. The final decision might be up to a single person, such as a president or a general secretary, but at the very least, the policy options are already drastically limited and shaped well before the final act. Moreover, a leader cannot simply pluck decisions from thin air, if only because the decisions have to be implemented by others and thus be intelligible to them.

The multiple persons involved in policy making are arguing with each other, and working with the bureaucracy, about highly concrete situations. Both foreign policy problems and proposed solutions are specific: they pertain to a particular difficulty at a certain time and place (e.g., the military of country X is unable to stop village headmen from being assassinated, in spite of the combat training they are receiving from U.S. military advisers). Put differently: problem solving is highly concrete, having to do with particular policy instruments being used to carry out particular missions in particular places at particular times.

2. Interlocked Sequences

To a major degree, U.S. foreign policy revolves around client states, defined as those for which the maintenance of their regime (i.e., the configuration of political and economic arrangements that give formal and informal power to certain types of actors) is 1) considered by the U.S. government as a legitimate matter of concern which 2) is worth considerable political and, if need be, economic and military efforts, should the regime be seen as endangered. In addition, the dominant political forces in the state also 3) consider that characteristics 1) and 2) are themselves normal and legitimate. Thus, much of the U.S. foreign policy machinery consists of activity sequences whose mission is that of transferring economic resources to clients, providing political support for them (typically by covert means), and buttressing their military. Such activities are carried out routinely, but when a particular client is in sufficient trouble that officials in Washington deem it possible for the regime to fall, then other policy instruments come into play, such as emergency financial or military aid, proxy or direct use of military force, or coups d'état in the case of leaders who are considered sufficiently incompetent as to warrant being overthrown and replaced by others from the regime.³

In addition, the U.S. also has activity sequences directed against enemy states, defined as nonclients whose regimes are seen in Washington as choosing systematically to differ with the U.S. on key issues of foreign and domestic economic and political policy. Such states, which share neither a particular ideology nor a certain set of capabilities (many enemies are not considered as posing a military threat to the U.S.), are the object of activity sequences aimed, minimally, at demonstrating hostility and, if the opportunity presents itself, at removing the enemy regime's military support at home or at the maintenance of its armed forces in another state. Most of the activity sequences used against enemy states are adaptations of other sequences used to support clients, although some of

³ By our count, the U.S. currently has some 81 client states, concentrated heavily in certain regions of the world (e.g., Latin America, Western Europe) and largely absent in others (e.g., Africa). A complete list can be found in Sylvan and Majeski (2009: ch. 2).

the former (e.g., long-distance bombing; economic sanctions) are far more elaborated with respect to enemies than for clients.⁴

In executing these various sequences regarding clients and enemies, the U.S. does not act on its own. Certain client states are junior partners which are both stable and have sufficient capabilities (wealth, military force) to aid in the routine or interventionary maintenance of other U.S. clients, as well as in hostile actions against U.S. enemies. These activities occur on both an individual basis (e.g., certain types of economic assistance, or military operations coordinated with the U.S.) and multilaterally (e.g., the OECD's DAC; the IMF; NATO operations). In many, if not most, of these cases, U.S. activity sequences are interlocked with those of its junior partners. Projects may be jointly planned, there may be a division of labor on others, money may be provided, and, of course, political cover can be provided (e.g., the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq).

This interlocking dates back to the 1940s with the U.S. military aid program to Greece and support of exile raids in Eastern Europe. The Korean War saw contingents of European troops serving under U.S. command (repeated decades later during the first Iraq war); John Kennedy engineered OAS resolutions against Cuba; Lyndon Johnson repeatedly called for "more flags" to join U.S. forces in South Vietnam; and so on: for more than a half-century now, the U.S. has routinely sought help (in some cases, major help) in supporting clients and opposing enemies. The successive reconfigurations of NATO to serve in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Sudan are simply a higher-profile manifestation of this U.S. penchant for multilateral support.

In opting for this policy, officials in Washington are not in any way giving up on some notion of U.S. dominance. Rather, they are following a consistent line that began even before World War II had ended. By working with other states and constructing multilateral institutions whose charters

⁴ We currently count five states considered by the U.S. as enemies: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria.

are couched in universal language, the U.S. has achieved what can best be termed hegemony: leadership with the at best grudging, and often enthusiastic, assent of the followers (one historian called this empire by invitation: Lundestad 1986). A key institution in this regard is the United Nations, which was quintessentially Wilsonian in its core idea of liberal principles enforced by the United States and other like-minded states (Hilderbrand 1990; Schlesinger 2003). Roosevelt's initial term for the postwar organization he wanted to create was "the three policemen"; and in spite of the many changes the UN has subsequently undergone, the Security Council, with its theoretically wide scope of action and its continued core role for the U.S. and the other permanent members, has remained very much as Roosevelt envisioned. Chapter 7 of the UN's Charter famously gives the Security Council the power to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and to take action, ranging from sanctions to military operations, with all member states of the UN being obligated to "join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out" those measures. This opens the door, in effect, for the UN to serve as a deputy in the execution of U.S. foreign policy.

In principle, the same could be said of any permanent member of the Security Council. The United States, however, has a far greater number of client states than any other great power (in second place is France, itself a U.S. client); and it also has enemies which are recognized by other UN members as states of concern, not least because the U.S. routinely frames issues in universalistic terms (this is what prevented Britain and France from gaining support in their struggle against the wave of decolonization in the 1950s). As a result, although other permanent members are able to get "their" issues on the Security Council agenda, the United States succeeds with far greater frequency in doing so. Claims that the UN is in some ways outside the control of the U.S. – for example, the observation that the U.S. has not for decades had an automatic majority on the General Assembly, or that it often fails to get its way on human rights issues vis-a-vis Israel – thus miss the point that

on central issues of war and peace, the U.S. has the same potential power in the Security Council as ever (cf. Russett and Sutterlin 1991).

What kind of activity sequences can the Security Council execute in support of U.S. foreign policy? As regards client states, the most important ones involve peacekeeping, a type of operation unthought of in 1945 but which has become used for any number of situations in the past two decades (Bhatia 2003; Heldt 2008; Diehl 2008). Thus, a state threatened by rebel groups or with an unacceptable president can find itself hosting a peacekeeping force voted for, and supported by, the Security Council. One example among many is the case of Liberia, a long-time U.S. client, which was on two occasions in the last two decades the object of Security Council action. In 2003, worsening violence led to calls for the U.S. to intervene; instead, the U.S. put together a package: it applied pressure on the president, the indicted war criminal Charles Taylor, to go into exile; it assembled a West African peacekeeping force, obtaining UN approval for it, having a senior U.S. official named as the Secretary General's representative, authorizing the UN force in neighboring Sierra Leone to assist, and persuading the British to contribute troops to a future UN peacekeeping force in Liberia; and finally, it sent a small number of marines into Liberia as part of these operations, with a larger contingent remaining offshore in reserve.

Eleven years earlier, the Security Council was also used to bail out Liberia. This time, the situation had begun with an advance on the capital by insurgent forces under Taylor's command. Since at the time, Taylor was backed by Libya, a long-standing U.S. enemy, the U.S. decided that he had to be opposed. One of the proxies chosen was a West African multilateral force (ECOMOG) led by Nigeria and the other U.S. client in the region, Ghana. This force was bitterly opposed by Taylor, all the more so when it began advancing into his territory. The U.S., claiming to be neutral, supported ECOMOG politically and financially while closing the door on a ceasefire as the multilateral force was on the offensive.

Over the next year, political and military maneuvers took place. The U.S. paid for Senegal to contribute experienced troops to ECOMOG as a way of strengthening the force and weakening Taylor's francophone African support; it also put pressure on another francophone source of weapons to Taylor, Burkina Faso. When Taylor launched a new offensive in the fall of 1992, the U.S. strongly supported ECOMOG's aggressive response: it provided target spotters for a bombing campaign by Nigerian aircraft and tactical advice for a shelling campaign by the Nigerian navy, it called for "full support" to ECOMOG as the only way to avoid direct United States or United Nations intervention"; and it engineered a Security Council resolution imposing "a general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia" except those destined for ECOMOG.⁵

What these two situations show is that actions authorized by the Security Council are part of a general array of policy instruments used by the United States to protect clients and harm enemies. In particular, the policy instrument called peacekeeping has, very much like the sanctions envisaged in the UN Charter, morphed into a set of activity sequences, each of which is interlocked with sequences from other states and from the U.S. Thus, an arms embargo decreed by the Security Council was used in support of a pro-government multilateral force, itself supported by the U.S.; in the later intervention, the Security Council approved a regional peacekeeping force, authorized contingents from an existing UN force to be used in a different country, and planned for an additional UN force to be used in the near future. Each of these efforts involved extensive coordination with various states, chief among them the U.S.

It is interesting to note that the 2003 Liberian intervention came after the highly unpopular (not to mention illegal) U.S. invasion of Iraq. As with all Security Council resolutions, a majority of 9 out

⁵ Both this and the preceding case are drawn from Sylvan and Majeski (2009), which contains references, including to particular Security Council documents.

of 15 votes is required, as well as an absence of negative votes by the five permanent members. In fact, the key resolution (1497) setting up the various peacekeeping forces was, alone among the Council's five resolutions on Iraq during 2003, not voted unanimously, since Mexico, Germany, and France abstained in protest over a clause in the resolution removing International Criminal Court jurisdiction over peacekeeping personnel (a particular U.S. fetish at that time). In other words, even at the height of international discontent with the Bush administration, the U.S. was still able to have the Security Council act in support of its objectives in a particular client state and exempt its soldiers from international criminal oversight. No doubt the U.S. was aided in its 2003 Liberian actions by the thuggish nature of Charles Taylor (though, in 1992, the UN proved ready to support a different thuggish leader) and the particularly dire humanitarian situation at the time; but this mixture is hardly uncommon. The next year, for example, the Security Council authorized a peacekeeping force in Haiti after the U.S., in essence, kidnapped the country's president and spirited him to Africa; the arguments were that he presided over a vicious and incompetent regime and that the country faced a humanitarian crisis.

It is this kind of characterization we have in mind when we refer to the U.S. ability to couch its proposed missions in universal terms. Typically, the leader of the country or of an armed opposition group is described as criminal or megalomaniac; his behavior as flouting the will of the international community; and the result of his rule as an economic and human rights catastrophe. In the face of this type of situation, opponents of UN action find themselves in political difficulties: they can argue against particular kinds of sanctions or military action, but they cannot easily claim that nothing at all should be done. The result is an authorizing vote for an operation which, if unsuccessful or resisted, can then serve as a wedge for a subsequent vote or, as in the case of the bombing campaign over Bosnia in 1995, authorization for subsequent military action by UN officials interpreting the situation in light of existing resolutions.

3. U.S Resort to the UN

Given the U.S. position in the Security Council, the powers of the Council, and the frequency with which the Council acts in support of U.S. wishes, we would expect that the U.S. should turn to the Council with some regularity. This is indeed the case, as can be seen in analyses of types of activity sequences, on the one hand, and of general patterns of Council action, on the other.

In addition to peacekeeping, the United States regularly induces the Security Council to approve other types of activity sequences. The first of these is sanctions, which we saw put in place in Liberia. Iraq, too, was subject to sanctions, as were Sudan, Serbia, and Libya, to name some of the most prominent U.S. enemies. Another kind of Security Council-authorized sequence is inspections for certain types of weapons, such as were imposed on Iraq following the first U.S. war with that country. A variant of such inspections are the ones carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency (against U.S. enemies Iran and North Korea), which can and does report its findings to the Security Council for enforcement action (sanctions, in the case of Iran).

A third type of Security Council action, turned to with repeated insistence (and often at the behest of the United States) in recent years is the use of international tribunals. Sometimes these are ad hoc, created (as in the case of the former Yugoslavia or for Charles Taylor) for particular wars or individuals. At other times – and these have occurred without U.S. opposition, even during the G.W. Bush administration – they involve referrals to the International Criminal Court itself (as in the 2005 Council action on Sudan).

Two other types of Security Council action are more overtly military in nature. The Council imposed a no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, less than two years after it authorized the use of military force against Iraq because of its actions toward Kuwait. Although the Council did

not in fact authorize a no-fly zone over Iraq, three of its permanent members claimed that earlier resolutions by it were tantamount to approval. This was an argument that those same three members, along with their NATO allies, used to justify the Kosovo war; and that two of those members used regarding the second U.S.-Iraq war. Of greater significance, in our view, is a fifth type of Security Council action, built on an expanded notion of peacekeeping and which we would call post-conflict cleanup. At times, the Council has set up such operations after wars in which the U.S. used, or at least strongly supported, proxy forces (usually those opposed to a U.S. enemy regime): Angola, Cambodia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and, most recently, Somalia following the U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion. At other times, the Council set up missions after military operations by the U.S. and some of its allies which did not receive a green light, namely, the air war against Serbia over Kosovo, and the invasion of Iraq (in Afghanistan, the Council authorized an international security force along with the normal array of post-conflict operations; technically, it did not authorize the U.S. invasion – billed as an act of self-defense and thereby requiring no UN permission – but in a resolution after the overthrow of the Taliban clearly supported that action).

It is important to understand that the Security Council's post-conflict resolutions were clearly a decision to accept what the U.S. had done. This is not to deny the myriad of practical and political problems which Council members (including the U.S.) wanted to be solved, but it is to point out that the UN need not have interlocked its activity sequences anywhere near as tightly with the U.S. as it did. In the end, the difference between moral blackmail and political approval is thin; and Council members opposed to the U.S.-led wars were nonetheless willing to work with the newly installed political authorities on a host of issues. (This may well be what led to the bomb attack on the UN representative in Iraq in 2003.)

As the set of countries mentioned as targets of Security Council resolutions makes clear, the U.S. has used the UN to engage in multiple activities regarding both U.S. clients and U.S. enemies,

especially the latter. For the most part, this is not due to a paucity of U.S. resources; given the UN's habitual poverty, what it supplies is certainly not money. Nor is it the case that the UN necessarily has greater diplomatic or political skills in dealing with pre- or post-conflict situations. Rather, the Security Council, by dint of its involvement in a situation, can bestow legitimacy on U.S. actions and thereby unlock other states' resources. In situations where the U.S. prefers not to send its own ground troops, or where particular U.S.-backed politicians are seen as quislings, or where sanctions can easily be evaded by neighbors, then the UN's involvement greatly increases the chance of success at an acceptable cost. In addition, a UN blessing makes it harder to claim that the U.S. is simply using its power rather than incarnating the attitudes of the international community.

Note that this is true even for supposedly unilateral actions by the U.S. In point of fact, the U.S. almost never intervenes militarily against an enemy without some sort of coalition behind it. In the Kosovo war, the U.S. had NATO behind it which, because of the latter's unanimity rule, meant that every member state (including supposedly pro-Serb ones like Greece) continued to give approval for the operation. As we mentioned, a similar point can be made regarding the second U.S.-Iraq war: the "coalition of the willing" was broad and included a number of U.S. allies, and the U.S., of course, sought a second Security Council resolution until the last minute. Even the John Bolton-inspired attempt to interdict the shipping of weapons of mass destruction through naval boarding operations, the Proliferation Security Initiative, was a kind of caricature of the General Assembly, containing no fewer than 93 participants (including such traditional naval powers as the Holy See and Andorra).⁶ Similarly, the Bush administration's crusade against the International Criminal Court involved extensively-negotiated Security Council exemptions for U.S. troops during the administration's early years (the effort since was discontinued). In short, on any number of day-to-day issues of policy toward clients and enemies, the supposed unilateralism of the Bush administration was symbolic and highly limited.

⁶ The same can be said for the idea, advanced by advisers to both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in 2007, of a so-called Concert or League of Democracies (Carothers 2008). On the Proliferation Security Initiative, see <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/c10390.htm>

Let us now turn to general patterns of Security Council action. If we keep in mind that in order for the Council to act – including not only the initial authorization of peacekeeping operations but their annual or semi-annual renewal – the U.S. and the other permanent members must at the least abstain from casting a negative vote, then we can get an idea of U.S. use of the Security Council since the end of the cold war by looking at Table 1.⁷ As can be seen, during the three post-cold war presidencies of Bush the elder, Clinton, and Bush the younger all saw a significant number of Security Council resolutions. The actual figures fluctuated considerably from year to year, depending to a great degree on events over which the U.S. had no direct control, but it should be noted that there was no appreciable diminution of the number of resolutions during the G.W. Bush administration as compared with Clinton. Indeed, as the data presented in Figure 1 show, there is essentially no discernable difference between the Clinton and Bush the Younger administrations either in the average number of UN Security Council resolutions per year or across all three administrations in the average number of UN Security Council Resolutions about US enemies per year. From these numbers, it is very hard to see either a disregarding of the United Nations or a significant shift from one presidential administration to another.

We now turn to Table 2, showing peacekeeping operations carried out under a UN flag. Here again, the numbers increase drastically in the early years of the table, with some operations being wound up even as others were authorized. Interestingly, there was only one operation that was refused an extension (that for Macedonia in 1999) because of a permanent member (here, China) casting a veto, an action that was not subsequently repeated. Strikingly, in light of the supposed antipathy of the G.W. Bush administration to work with the UN, there are no discernible differences in the numbers of overall votes for peacekeeping operations as compared with the Clinton administration.

⁷ Tables 1 and 2 are based on information collected by Elena Gadjanova, whom we thank for her efforts. The list of resolutions concerning U.S. enemy states does not cover purely bilateral relations between such states and others, except when the latter are, or were, an object of UN solicitude (e.g., Iraq's actions toward Kuwait). Figure 1 is constructed from the data presented in Tables 1 and 2. However, since makes comparisons across the three Presidential administration, the data for 1988 (Reagan's last year) was eliminated in the analysis.

(There is a drop in the number of new operations authorized, but the baseline is so low that it is difficult to draw many conclusions.) The numbers for the latter are themselves eloquent, given that this was the period during which the Black Hawk Down incident in Somalia was said to have traumatized U.S. policy makers into avoiding new UN action (MacKinnon 1999). Again, as data presented in Figure 1 demonstrate, there is essentially no discernable difference among the three administrations either in the average number of UN peacekeeping authorizations and extensions per year or in the average number of new UN peacekeeping operations authorized per year.

What these numbers, as well as the types of activity sequences, point to is a broad consensus on the part of both U.S. elites and their counterparts in many other countries that certain states or rebel groups act in unacceptable ways and should be dealt with by various means, including those under the aegis of the United Nations. Although there are often disagreements over means or timing, the magnitude of the problems deemed to be caused by those states or rebel groups is such that existing policy instruments, often completely untailed to a particular situation, are pressed into service over and over again. This is not simply a matter of high-level officials around the world feeling bad about a humanitarian disaster and throwing money and other forms of aid to the victims, but of explicit political decisions to support certain groups and oppose others with various measures, including the use of military force. To put it formulaically: U.S. and other states' elites are in sync and have been for many years, no matter who occupies the White House.

From this perspective, we would not expect very much change with the new Obama administration. No doubt torture will be resorted to less frequently, if not abolished entirely; no doubt, too, that troops withdrawals (but only of combat forces) from Iraq will be accelerated; no doubt, as well, that on issues such as family planning and climate change, there will be a marked difference in tone and occasionally substance from the previous administration. Nonetheless, on issues of war and peace, few differences are likely to surface. The U.S. will continue to support its clients and oppose its

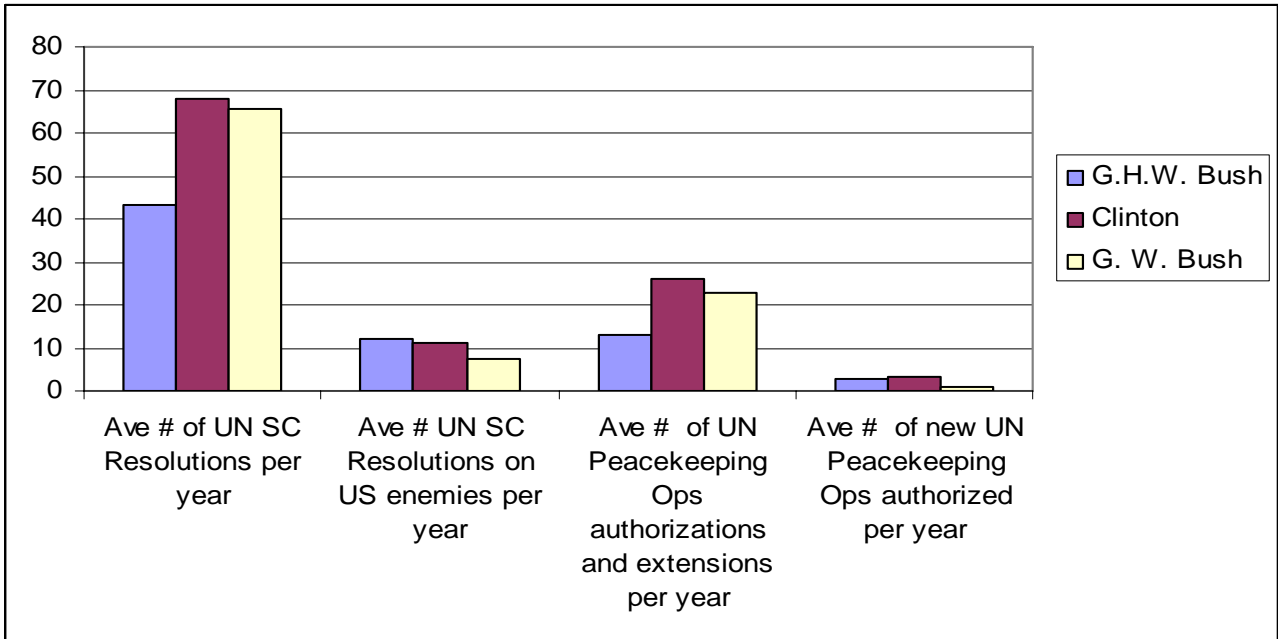
enemies by the same means it has employed for many decades; it will continue to pursue these policies with the help of its allies; and it will continue, in support of the same policies, to turn to the Security Council, which will, in many cases, respond positively to U.S. appeals. Only a global financial meltdown might cut into other states' resources, and perhaps even those of the United States, sufficiently to impair future joint interventions. For now, there is no foreseeable end to empire.

Table 1**Security Council Resolutions in General, and About U.S. Enemies, After the Cold War**

Year	Total UN SC Resolutions	Resolutions on U.S. Enemies
1988	20	1
1989	20	0
1990	37	12
1991	42	14
1992	74	22
1993	93	27
1994	86	9
1995	65	11
1996	57	10
1997	54	9
1998	72	12
1999	65	9
2000	50	3
2001	52	9
2002	68	8
2003	67	8
2004	58	7
2005	72	10
2006	87	8
2007	55	5
2008	65	5

Table 2**UN Peacekeeping Operations Authorized, Extended, or Expanded, After the Cold War**

Year	Authorizations, Extensions, or Expansions	New Authorizations
1988	6	2
1989	8	3
1990	12	0
1991	12	5
1992	21	4
1993	25	6
1994	29	2
1995	27	4
1996	23	2
1997	26	4
1998	27	2
1999	27	4
2000	23	1
2001	20	0
2002	21	1
2003	19	1
2004	21	3
2005	28	1
2006	30	1
2007	25	2
2008	20	0

Figure 1**Comparing the Three Post Cold War Presidencies**

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