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# The Past as Prologue?

John Gerard Ruggie

## Interests, Identity, and American Foreign Policy

As a nation, the United States was not only born free, Robert Keohane once remarked, it was also “born lucky.”<sup>1</sup> It found itself far removed from the continuous jostling of European power politics, protected by vast oceans on either side while adjoined by relatively weak and usually friendly neighbors to the north and south, largely self-sufficient in raw materials, able to expand into continental scale, and a magnet attracting a steady influx of newcomers eager to break with their past and make a fresh start. Accordingly, the United States, before the turn of this century, luxuriated in the posture, as described by John Quincy Adams, of being “the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all . . . the champion and vindicator only of her own.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, America’s traditional aversion to “entangling alliances,” first expressed in George Washington’s farewell address, flowed naturally from its geopolitical constitution.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning around the time of the Spanish-American War, however, American leaders felt the world closing in on the United States. In September 1901, President William McKinley delivered a major address on America’s new role in the world at the new century’s first world’s fair in Buffalo, New York. “God and men have linked nations together,” he stated. “No nation can longer be

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1. Robert O. Keohane, “Associative American Development, 1776–1860,” in John Gerard Ruggie, ed., *The Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 90.

2. Adams is quoted in Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750* (New York: Norton, 1989), p. 80.

3. Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

indifferent to any other.”<sup>4</sup> The next day McKinley was assassinated, making Theodore Roosevelt, or TR, president. Roosevelt picked up McKinley’s banner and carried it a step further in his first state of the union message. “The increasing interdependence and complexity of international political and economic relations,” he declared, “render it incumbent on all civilized and orderly powers,” the United States included, “to insist on the proper policing of the world.”<sup>5</sup> But the dilemma was how to interest an increasingly powerful but reluctant America—Congress and public alike—in that mission.

And so began an epic struggle for nearly the next half-century about how to secure sustained American political engagement in world affairs to promote a stable international order, and one that was favorable to the pursuit of U.S. interests. TR lost the struggle prior to World War I, as did Woodrow Wilson in 1919. The interwar period saw a reversion to American isolationism in security policy and erratic behavior in the international economic realm. Before World War II had even ended, Franklin Roosevelt devised intricate and heterodox plans to secure American engagement, but they were never fully tested. For by 1947, as *Newsweek* predicted at the time, the Truman Doctrine “had clearly put America into power politics to stay.”<sup>6</sup> Perceptions of the Soviet military threat coupled with anticommunist ideological fervor, in short, resolved a historic American dilemma.

What will happen now that the Cold War is history? Does not this dilemma become unresolved again? And is not a new framing of America’s political role in the world necessary as a result? In raising these questions I intend neither to predict the recrudescence of 1930s-style isolationism nor to prescribe rabid American interventionism. But I do suggest that sustaining American engagement in the maintenance of world order is likely to become a more difficult task in the years ahead than during the past half-century, and that it is well worth our while, therefore, to look back at pre- and early Cold War attempts to resolve the dilemma, before America’s determination to counter the Soviet threat became taken for granted.<sup>7</sup>

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4. McKinley is quoted in David Fromkin, *In the Time of the Americans: The Generation That Changed America’s Role in the World* (New York: Knopf, 1995), p. 23.

5. Roosevelt is quoted in Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 34–35.

6. See David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 549.

7. For a compatible discussion of the future threat environment and its implications for U.S. military strategy, see Terry Deibel, “Strategies Before Containment: Patterns for the Future,” *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1992), pp. 79–108.

Several factors imply future difficulties. First, no functional equivalent to the “pull-factor” the Soviet threat exerted on U.S. foreign policy is likely to emerge anytime soon.<sup>8</sup> The risk of American overcommitment, a constant concern of many during the Cold War, is reduced thereby, but the possibility of undercommitment increases. And it is reinforced by the lingering effects of the Weinberger/Powell “all-or-nothing” doctrine governing the use of force that gained dominance in the wake of Vietnam.<sup>9</sup>

Second, unless it is counteracted, public opinion will reinforce this tendency. Drawing on the quadrennial foreign policy polls conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, William Schneider finds that in the latest survey, conducted in October 1994, most measures of public support for American international engagement were at all-time lows since immediately after Vietnam—including “defending our allies’ security” and “protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression.” In a Times Mirror survey taken in June 1995, the view that the United States should “mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own” was rejected by just 51 percent of the public while 41 percent agreed, the highest level of agreement since the survey’s inception in 1974.<sup>10</sup>

Economic liberals believe that the forces of economic globalization are sufficiently strong to counter the tendencies described above. They may be right in the long run, but in the near term there are grounds for skepticism. The perceived negative effects of globalization occasion far greater concern among the American public, which widely believes that outsourcing to low-wage countries is responsible for downward wage pressures, wider income gaps, and heightened labor market uncertainties in the American economy.<sup>11</sup> Organized labor has been supportive of just about any form of protectionism

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8. See Deibel, “Strategies Before Containment.”

9. See Christopher M. Gacek, *The Logic of Force: The Dilemma of Limited War in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

10. William Schneider, “The New Isolationism,” in Robert J. Lieber, ed., *Eagle Adrift: American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century* (New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 27–28. In private polls conducted for the 1996 Clinton reelection campaign, chief strategist Dick Morris found that “a core of almost 40 percent of America was really isolationist, opposed to having much of a foreign policy at all.” Dick Morris, *Behind the Oval Office* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 247.

11. Economists do not agree on the magnitudes of the effects, mostly because prevailing models are insufficiently well specified to permit adequate measurement, but they assume that the effects are smaller than the public presupposes. The strongest case for adverse effects is made by Adrian Wood, *North-South Trade, Employment and Equality* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1994); also see Jagdish Bhagwati and Marvin Kosters, eds., *Trade and Wages* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1994), and Dani Rodrik, *Has International Economic Integration Gone Too Far?* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of International Economics, forthcoming).

for two decades. Recent electoral politics have begun to tap into a broader sense of economic insecurity. Ross Perot's 1994 presidential bid appealed largely on "social protectionist" grounds: declining economic opportunities and grave social uncertainties for the middle classes produced by the "giant sucking sound" of high-wage jobs moving out. Perot gained 19 percent of the vote, the biggest third-party success since Roosevelt's Bull Moose run in 1912. In the 1996 Republican primaries, Pat Buchanan lashed out against "stagnant wages of an alienated working class," promised to "insulate" wages from externally induced downward pressure, and proposed a "social tariff" to accomplish that end.<sup>12</sup> In short, a potentially sizable electoral coalition exists, populist rather than partisan in nature, ready for a more mainstream politician who promises social protection against the economic insecurity it associates with the forces of globalization.<sup>13</sup>

Yet another indicator of greater difficulties ahead is provided, albeit obliquely, by Henry Kissinger in his recent book, *Diplomacy*. Without the Soviet threat, realism by itself cannot suffice to frame U.S. foreign policy, Kissinger concludes ruefully. In the new era, a foreign policy strategy based upon case-by-case interest calculations is simply too unreliable. Hence, realism, Kissinger contends, must be coupled with an animating "vision" that provides the American public with a sense of "hope and possibility that are, in their essence, conjectural"<sup>14</sup>—and for which he, the master practitioner of the realist craft, now looks to the "idealism" that he spent his career mocking.

In short, it seems reasonable to proceed on the premise that sustained engagement by the United States for the sake of a stable international order will prove more problematic in the years ahead than it was during the Cold War. That observation, in turn, poses the question to which this article is addressed: what can we learn from previous efforts by U.S. leaders to prevail at comparable historical junctures—when the remaking of the international order was at stake, but in the absence of an overarching threat? Exploring this critical policy concern also sheds light on a significant theoretical issue: prior efforts to achieve American engagement in the cause of world order entailed

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12. Pat Buchanan, 1995 Labor Day speech, quoted by Robert Kuttner, "Look Who Wants to Tinker with Market Forces," *Business Week*, October 2, 1995, p. 26.

13. During the interwar years, extensive U.S. international commercial ties and humanitarian involvement had little or no effect on America's willingness to be systematically engaged in the political and security affairs of the world. See Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966).

14. Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 835.

the role of imagery, ideas, and justifications. A study of these efforts permits us, therefore, to analyze the interaction between ideational factors and interests, whether defined in power-related or functional terms.

The discussion is organized as follows. The first section briefly retells the story of the strategies of engagement American leaders pursued in 1919, 1945, and in the early Cold War years. This recapitulation demonstrates that what Kissinger recommends for the years ahead in fact characterizes the most promising strategy of the past: it linked the pursuit of American interests to a transformative vision of world order that appealed to the American public.

The second section explores the nature of that appeal. I seek to show that there is a certain congruence between the vision of world order invoked by American leaders when “founding” a new international order has been at stake, and the principles of domestic order at play in America’s understanding of its own founding, in its own sense of political community. Furthermore, I indicate why it is inappropriate to dismiss the invocation of these principles as “mere rhetoric” or to squeeze it into the container of idealism.

The concluding section draws out the argument’s implications for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy in the new era, incorporating some of the lessons of the past; and for international relations theorizing, suggesting fruitful areas of interaction between different theoretical approaches but also some possibly unsettling epistemological implications.

### *Strategies of Engagement*

By means of what strategies did previous generations of American leaders seek to persuade a reluctant country that the United States should become actively involved to secure and maintain a stable international order? Which worked, and which did not? This section recapitulates the debates at three prior junctures in this century when the remaking of the international order was at stake, as it is today: the period just before, during, and after World War I; the foreign policy designs constructed during World War II for the postwar era; and the early Cold War years.

#### TR AND WILSON

All of the essential elements of the story were present in its very first instance. One of the folktales handed down about the Versailles treaty fight in the U.S. Senate is that it represented a titanic clash between internationalism and isolationism in which the forces of darkness prevailed over the forces of light. The

tale may have its rhetorical uses, but it is incorrect. The fight was between two forms of internationalism that were not able or did not choose to find common ground, as a result of which both lost: realist unilateralism and liberal multilateralism. Isolationism won by default.<sup>15</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt initially treated America's becoming a world power in unproblematic terms. The United States would simply have to act like other great powers, because it, like they, was affected by and in turn affected a power balance that was increasingly global in scope. Influenced by theorists of maritime geopolitics Alfred T. Mahan and John W. Burgess, Roosevelt was especially concerned about the British navy's steady loss of dominance and with it, he feared, its maritime policing role, including its contribution to safeguarding the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>16</sup> McKinley had followed up the Spanish-American War with a brief imperialist fling, acquiring several naval stations across the Pacific to the Philippines. Roosevelt issued his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, whereby the United States no longer simply warned European powers to stay out of hemispheric affairs but claimed America's right to intervene in them; and he built a navy worthy of a world power, sending it on a symbolic round-the-world cruise.

And yet, as war approached in Europe, Roosevelt, by then no longer president, was unsuccessful in urging American military preparedness on balance-of-power grounds. Nor was there widespread support for his call to arms once war broke out. "I have no influence whatever in shaping public action," he complained to the British foreign secretary, "very little influence indeed in shaping public opinion."<sup>17</sup> As Robert Dallek explains, "most Americans in Roosevelt's day were unprepared to accept his realism as a guideline for current and future actions abroad."<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, McKinley and Roosevelt had already begun to discover the utility of unorthodox foreign policy instruments when realist ways were unavailable, some of which would later form the core of Woodrow Wilson's program. Finding no congressional support for joining Europe in a scramble to partition China, the McKinley administration instead called on the powers to adopt a nondiscriminatory "open door" commercial policy in China, and to preserve

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15. The best recent discussion is Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

16. For a brief summary of the doctrines of "global navalism" and their influence, see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), pp. 83–87.

17. Roosevelt is quoted in John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 286.

18. Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy*, p. 35.

its territorial and administrative form. In 1905, TR, who privately ridiculed international arbitration as “that noxious form of silliness which always accompanies the sentimental refusal to look facts in the face,” successfully mediated the Russo-Japanese War, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>19</sup> And it is little remembered that TR was the first American leader to propose a league of nations: a “World League for the Peace of Righteousness,” he called it in an October 1914 article, to function as “a posse comitatus of powerful and civilized nations.”<sup>20</sup>

Roosevelt’s foreign policy legacy remained ambiguous, however, because, on his own reckoning, he failed to resolve the dilemma of how to get the United States to assume the role of great power. Wilson shared TR’s objective of securing sustained American engagement in the political and security affairs of the world. But he took a different tack toward it.

With election day 1916 approaching, and with the United States still a non-belligerent, Wilson, in a major campaign speech, decried the European balance-of-power system, not so much on idealist as on geopolitical grounds: “Now, revive that after the war is over, and, sooner or later, you will have just such another war. And this is the last war of the kind, or of any kind that involves the world, that the United States can keep out of.”<sup>21</sup> German submarine attacks on American merchant ships demonstrated that neutrality could no longer protect the United States. And with the balance-of-power system having just produced war again in Europe, Wilson concluded: “We must have a society of nations.” He elaborated these ideas in his well-received January 1917 “Peace without Victory” address to the Senate, proposing a postwar league of nations as the institutional expression not of a balance but of “a community of power.”<sup>22</sup> When Wilson asked Congress, on April 2, 1917, to declare war on imperial Germany, he stated solemnly that if Americans must shed blood, it would be “for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.”<sup>23</sup> These were “American principles,” Wilson affirmed. Finally, Wilson’s famous Fourteen Points, proclaimed a year later, combined his pre-

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19. Roosevelt is quoted in *ibid.*, p. 56.

20. Roosevelt is quoted in Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, p. 281. Roosevelt had first broached the possibility of a league in his Nobel acceptance speech nearly a decade earlier.

21. Wilson is quoted in Knock, *To End All Wars*, p. 97.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122.

vious proposals into a comprehensive program for postwar peace: sovereign equality and national self-determination, mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity, free trade, freedom of the seas, transparent diplomacy, and the spread of democracy to autocratic—and for Wilson, therefore militaristic—governments, coupled with a reduction of armaments and the institution of collective security. Success, he explained, would lessen the need for future American sacrifice.

Thus, in their analysis of *why* the United States should be involved in the political and security affairs of the world, Roosevelt and Wilson differed relatively little.<sup>24</sup> But they differed profoundly in the means they chose toward that end. Where Roosevelt tried to “normalize” America to get it to act as he believed a great power should, Wilson appealed to American principles—to American “exceptionalism.” Indeed, with his posse analogy, TR, too, had tried to enlist a distinctly American experience in his cause, the old West before law and order were instituted, but to no avail. The public preferred Wilson’s version until late in the day. “Existing evidence,” the respected Wilson scholar, Lawrence Gelfand, has written, “essentially the considered judgment of seasoned politicians and journalists in the fall of 1918 and well into the spring of 1919, pointed toward solid public support for American membership in the League of Nations.”<sup>25</sup>

In the end, of course, Wilson lost the treaty fight. Public anxiety became aroused by growing fears about American boys repeatedly being sent overseas to fight for the League “every time a Yugoslav wishes to slap a Czechoslav in the face,” TR charged on one occasion.<sup>26</sup> But the fight was lost in the Senate, which had shifted to Republican control in the 1918 midterm elections. In the Senate there were barely a dozen hard-core irreconcilables—so-called because they were opposed to American membership in a League of any form. They alone, therefore, could not defeat the League. Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Mass.), Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and once TR’s mentor, was prepared to vote for the League and deliver enough Republican votes to ratify the treaty, provided that Wilson accepted Lodge’s “reservations.” Fourteen in number (like Wilson’s Fourteen Points), they covered much ground. But in

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24. This point is also argued, at length and persuasively, by Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chaps. 1–2.

25. Lawrence E. Gelfand, “The Mystique of Wilsonian Statecraft,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 1983), p. 89.

26. Knock, *To End All Wars*, p. 229.

essence it came down to this nonnegotiable issue: in Lodge's words, to "release us from obligations which might not be kept, and to preserve rights which ought not to be infringed."<sup>27</sup> In other words, Lodge claimed that the League might pressure—it could not require—the United States to take actions it might not wish to take, and pose a hindrance when it did wish to act. But Lodge's stance was not isolationism; it was unilateralism.

It is far from certain that Lodge's reservations would have done irreparable harm to Wilson's concept of the League; for example, Wilson himself rejected putting American troops at the League's disposal. But he would not or could not compromise.<sup>28</sup> Compounding that irony, Lodge, like his protégé TR, worked assiduously throughout his career to have the United States play a major-power role in world affairs. And yet at this critical moment, by insisting on strict unilateralist means in place of Wilson's soft multilateralism, he, too, undermined his own objective and helped usher in an era of isolationism.<sup>29</sup>

The core lessons that Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower drew from this experience were not only that isolationism is "bad" and internationalism "good" for the sake of international stability and the pursuit of U.S. interests, but, more subtly, that unilateralism had opened the door to isolationism. The link between unilateralism as principle and isolationism as result was this. Having rejected the League, the country insisted, as Senator William Borah, an interwar isolationist leader, put it, that the United States "does propose to determine for itself when civilization is threatened, when there may be a breach of human rights and human liberty sufficient to warrant action, and it proposes also to determine for itself when to act and in what manner it shall discharge the obligation which time and circumstances impose."<sup>30</sup> The next step—and to the early post-World War II generation of U.S. leaders, an inevitable step in view of America's geopolitical constitution—was

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27. *Ibid.*, pp. 258–267.

28. The legislative finale was bizarre. Republican irreconcilables voted *with* the Democrats to defeat the various Republican reservations. Then, on a straight up-or-down vote, the irreconcilables rejoined the Republican majority against the treaty. "Irreconcilables had feared that Democrats would eventually approve reservations, possibly even Lodge's, as a way of saving the treaty. Instead of pursuing that course, Democratic senators enabled the irreconcilables to achieve their goal of keeping the United States out of the League." Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 208.

29. Knock contends that the primary reason for Lodge's actions is to be found in domestic politics. Seen from a Republican vantage, control of the Senate "was as slim as could be, perhaps ephemeral. What would become of the party—indeed, of the country—if Wilson got his League, if the Democrats could boast of [quoting from a letter by former Republican Senator Albert J. Beveridge to Lodge] 'the greatest constructive world reform in history?'" Knock, *To End All Wars*, p. 240.

30. Borah is quoted by Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, p. 7.

to set such a high threshold for what constituted a vital or important American interest that no threat to international peace and security triggered an American response. Not being required, by virtue of any institutionalized undertaking or commitment, to assume any practical stand regarding the forces pushing the world toward war again in the 1930s, the United States took none. Only the direct attack on Pearl Harbor, twenty-seven months into World War II, "broke this emotional deadlock," as Dallek characterizes it.<sup>31</sup>

FDR

In a manner of speaking, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were theorists of international relations in their own right. In contrast, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a tinkerer—"the juggler," as he once gleefully described himself.<sup>32</sup> His plans for anchoring American participation in the creation and maintenance of a stable postwar order exhibit that skill. But insofar as FDR pioneered the use of public opinion data in the White House, those plans were closely attuned to what his personal pollster, Hadley Cantril, described as "the state of mind of the American people."<sup>33</sup>

Roosevelt's hybrid design for the postwar international economic order, which I have dubbed the "embedded liberalism compromise," has been extensively studied.<sup>34</sup> The United States sought a global version of the "open door," which required breaking down the discriminatory trade and monetary blocs, zones, and instruments that had prevailed in the 1930s, as well as lowering barriers to international economic transactions. At the same time, the international edifice of the open door had to accommodate the domestic interventionism of the New Deal. And therein lay the compromise: unlike the economic nationalism of the thirties, the postwar international economic order would be

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31. Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy*, p. 7.

32. See Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

33. Hadley Cantril, *The Human Dimension: Experiences in Policy Research* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1967), p. 79. Cantril, funded by private sources, started his work for Roosevelt in early 1941. One question FDR had Cantril repeat frequently was: "So far as you personally are concerned, do you think President Roosevelt has gone too far in his policies of helping Britain, or not far enough?" Cantril later summarized the findings over time: "In spite of the fact that United States aid to Britain constantly increased after May of 1941, the proportion of people who thought the President had gone too far, about right, or not far enough remained fairly constant. This was precisely the situation he wanted to maintain during these critical months; hence his eagerness to learn the results of our periodic soundings" (p. 44).

34. For the original formulation in these terms, see John Gerard Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 379–415.

multilateral in character. But unlike the *laissez-faire* liberalism of the gold standard and free trade, its multilateralism would be predicated on the interventionist character of the modern capitalist state, including the United States, which its public had come to expect.

Roosevelt also conducted a campaign aimed at eliminating European empires, again with strong domestic support, though he was restrained by the need to avoid weakening Britain's resolve in the war and to ensure British and French postwar cooperation.<sup>35</sup> And his administration was responsible for the initiation of major international human rights agreements.

FDR's design for the security order was more contested at the time and remains more poorly understood even today—largely because it involved the United Nations, a name he chose personally and proudly announced to Churchill.<sup>36</sup> His juggling act here confused and displeased both Wilsonian liberals and realists. But it resonated with the American public and, given the available options, it made strategic sense.

Not long before Roosevelt left for the February 1945 Yalta conference with Stalin and Churchill, at which the organization of postwar security relations was one of the major subjects of discussion, Cantril sent him a summary of prevailing public opinion toward international affairs. "The present internationalism rests on a rather unstable foundation," Cantril wrote. "It is recent, it is not rooted in any broad or long-range conception of self-interest, it has little intellectual basis."<sup>37</sup> It was not, therefore, to be taken for granted.

Roosevelt's initial impulse, like Churchill's and Stalin's, had run along regional spheres-of-influence lines. FDR favored a "four policemen" scheme, adding China as a counterweight to the Soviets in Asia. But he soon concluded that the American people would find such a scheme too cynical, and he feared that Congress might use it as an excuse to shirk American involvement in the postwar stabilization of Europe and Asia. "The only appeal which would be likely to carry weight with the United States public," Roosevelt explained to British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, "would be one based upon a worldwide conception."<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Roosevelt could not, as he told Soviet

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35. Kimball, *The Juggler*, p. 127. Also see Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 170–181; and Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 126.

36. See William C. Widenor, "American Planning for the United Nations: Have We Been Asking the Right Questions?" *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1982), pp. 245–265.

37. Cantril, *The Human Dimension*, p. 76.

38. Roosevelt is quoted in Kimball, *The Juggler*, p. 96.

Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, “visualize another League of Nations.”<sup>39</sup> It had proved unworkable abroad, and carried too much negative baggage at home. And so he proposed a universal United Nations in which the major powers would play a special role.

FDR had two major strategic objectives in establishing the United Nations. First, and above all else, he saw it as an institutional tripwire that would force American policymakers to take positions on potential threats to international peace and security, and to justify those positions, one way or the other—not simply to look the other way, as they had done in the 1930s.<sup>40</sup> Second, FDR believed that a stable postwar security order also required, in the words of John Lewis Gaddis, “offering Moscow a prominent place in it . . . by making it, so to speak, a member of the club.”<sup>41</sup> Gaddis calls this the strategy of “containment by integration,” in contrast to the subsequent American strategy of containing the Soviets by exclusion and exhaustion. But this strategy required a club to which both Washington and Moscow belonged. FDR hoped that the UN Security Council, especially the institution of the permanent five, would perform that function.

FDR also believed that the United Nations had to have “teeth” and be able to enforce its decisions by military means if others failed in order to possess credibility with the public, serve these geopolitical objectives, and provide deterrent value *vis-à-vis* potential aggressors. But, he assured the American people, “we are not thinking of a superstate with its own police force and other paraphernalia of coercive power.” Instead, the United States and the other major powers, he said, planned to devise a mechanism for “joint action” by national forces.<sup>42</sup>

What, in analytical terms, was the nature of this construction? In effect, and perhaps consciously, FDR tried to reconcile the leagues of Wilson and TR—the one a universal organization of formal equals, the other a big power club.<sup>43</sup> As

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39. Roosevelt is quoted in Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 61.

40. See, especially, Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 508.

41. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 9.

42. Roosevelt is quoted in Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, p. 65.

43. Indicating that it may have been a conscious effort by FDR, he put in place the following foreign policy team after the 1940 election: at the State Department both Secretary Hull and Undersecretary Sumner Welles were Wilsonian Democrats. At the War Department, “the secretaries of the armed forces were TR Republicans; indeed, the new navy secretary . . . had been one of TR’s Rough Riders. . . . The new Vice President was from TR’s faction of the Republican party, the Progressives, as was William Donovan, who was about to head the forerunner of the CIA.” Fromkin, *In the Time of the Americans*, p. 410; also see pp. 420 and 428.

Wilson's Assistant Secretary of the Navy, FDR witnessed firsthand the clash between Wilson and TR, FDR's distant cousin whom he saw often and admired much. Better than most contemporaries or later commentators, FDR understood that Wilson and TR, at bottom, had sought the same end of securing sustained American engagement, which he, too, embraced. He also appreciated how and why their preferred means differed. With the searing isolationist experience as interlude, there was no doubt in FDR's mind about which tack to take: the multilateralism of Wilson, not the unilateralism of TR. But he departed from Wilson instrumentally. Wilson, the committed liberal internationalist, rejected what he regarded as old world power politics as a legitimate instrument within a new world-led collective security scheme. FDR, "the juggler," grafted a collective security scheme onto a concert of power.<sup>44</sup> That move circumscribed the scope of the UN's collective security mechanisms, to be sure, but FDR had no desire, nor did he think it possible, for such a mechanism to operate beyond the firm grasp of the great powers.

By 1944, the lesson that not even the United States could insulate itself against being dragged into war, together with FDR's painstaking politicking, had thoroughly discredited isolationism. In the congressional elections that year virtually all isolationists in both parties lost their seats—despite the fact that in the 1942 midterm elections the Republicans had their best showing since the 1920s, coming very close to taking control of the House and, eleven months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, managing to reelect all but 5 of 115 members with isolationist records.<sup>45</sup> But in 1944, the Republican Party lined up in support of the UN, led by Wendell Willkie, author of a best-selling tract entitled *One World*, who campaigned for its presidential nomination; John Foster Dulles, Wall Street lawyer and the party's leading foreign policy voice; and New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey, the party's eventual nominee.

Wilsonian liberals were critical of FDR, however. They doubted whether he had fashioned "a truly internationalist organization."<sup>46</sup> But that was not his intention. In any case, Wilson, the paragon of liberal internationalism, rejected provisions in the covenant that would have put American forces at the League's

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44. Kimball discusses the connections between Roosevelt's thinking and the post-1815 concert in *The Juggler*, p. 103.

45. Divine, *Second Chance*, chap. 5.

46. Freshman Senator J. William Fulbright took to the Senate floor only days after charter ratification to lament this flaw in Roosevelt's design. Randall Bennett Woods, "Internationalism Stillborn," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Fall 1992), p. 611.

disposal; FDR devised an arrangement that made possible U.S. military participation in UN peace operations.

Realists were aghast, but for a different reason. George Kennan, serving in the Moscow embassy, urged “burying” the proposals for the UN. “We are badly enmeshed in our own unsound slogans,” he admonished Washington in an unsolicited cable, referring to the idea of collective security and being unable to grasp Roosevelt’s heterodox design.<sup>47</sup> The realist barrage of criticism continued into the postwar years, and included “some of the most influential thinkers in this country on the proper conduct of American foreign policy”—in addition to Kennan, Walter Lippmann, Hans Morgenthau, and Reinhold Niebuhr.<sup>48</sup>

But FDR’s chief target had been the public, not intellectuals, through every medium imaginable, from high-level briefings to films and comic books. We have no means by which to measure the effects of these efforts. But as the war in Europe was drawing to a close and just prior to the UN’s founding conference in San Francisco, a Gallup poll reported that 81 percent of Americans favored U.S. entry into a “world organization with police power to maintain world peace”; and of those responding affirmatively, 83 percent described entry as “very important.” A confidential poll taken for the State Department showed similar results: eight of ten surveyed supported the commitment of American forces to the United Nations to help keep peace.<sup>49</sup> Did these views concerning America’s second try at linking itself to the cause of world order reflect merely the triumph of hope over experience, as Dr. Johnson said about second marriages? It seems not. For the same polls also indicated that nearly 40 percent of the public believed the United States would find itself involved in another war within a quarter-century.<sup>50</sup>

We can only speculate what might have happened to FDR’s scheme had the Cold War not ensued. But with the Senate ratifying the UN charter by 89 to 2, and with Congress deciding that once it had also ratified the agreement making U.S. troops available to the UN, on its call, the president required no additional congressional authorization to commit those troops to specific UN missions, the scheme certainly achieved its immediate objective. At least for the moment, the United States was anchored into the international order.

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47. Kennan is quoted in Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, p. 250.

48. Smith, *America’s Mission*, p. 103.

49. See Divine, *Second Chance*, p. 251; and Cantril, *The Human Dimension*, p. 77.

50. Divine, *Second Chance*, p. 251.

TRUMAN AND EISENHOWER

If the outbreak of the Cold War largely made moot Roosevelt's designs in the security sphere by bifurcating the permanent five, it also provided an even more effective—indeed, sometimes too effective—substitute. Framed by bipolarity and animated by anticommunism, the “discourse of national security,” as Emily Rosenberg describes it, took hold.<sup>51</sup> But multilateralism in security relations did not simply vanish. Its core analytic features—that threats to peace are indivisible and require a collective response—formed the basis of America's security policy toward Europe, and, more problematically, were extended via the domino theory to other Cold War theaters.<sup>52</sup>

In responding to West European security needs, President Truman had four sets of options available: U.S. unilateral security guarantees to one, several, or an organization of European states; U.S. bilateral alliances with the most directly threatened European states; a “dumbbell” model, whereby a guarantee or agreement linked North American and European alliances; or an arrangement that promised equal protection under a common security umbrella for an indivisible grouping of states, including the United States. Each would have satisfied Europe, and each would have served notice on the Soviets that the United States was committed to the security of Europe. Truman chose the last—a NATO containing Article 5 commitments—that a war against one is a war against all, calling for a collective response, a direct descendant of Articles 10 and 16 of the League covenant, on which Lodge had skewered Wilson.

Truman's choice of instrument, to repeat, was not determined by the need to respond to the Soviets. But it had considerable domestic appeal: in addition to deterring the Soviets, the NATO security arrangement, coupled with the impetus that the Marshall Plan gave to European economic unification, promised to transform the “old” European order, making it economically and militarily better able to take care of itself; rendering it less war-prone and therefore less likely to drag the United States into yet another European war; and ultimately making Europe more like the United States. Indeed, Congress with near unanimity adopted a resolution endorsing “the creation of a United States

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51. Emily R. Rosenberg, “The Cold War and the Discourse of National Security,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 277–284.

52. On the generic features of multilateralism, see John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution,” in John Gerard Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 3–47. The link between Wilsonian geopolitical analysis and the domino theory is explored by Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*.

of Europe.”<sup>53</sup> In short, what Wilson had sought circuitously to accomplish via the League, Truman approached more straightforwardly through NATO: an “ersatz collective security” scheme, in Ninkovich’s words, backed by the United States until it could become self-sustaining.<sup>54</sup> Arthur Vandenberg (R-Mich.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, eagerly sponsored legislation paving the way for negotiations of a “collective self-defense organization” consistent with the UN charter.<sup>55</sup> “Why should a Democratic President get all the kudos in an election year?” he asked.<sup>56</sup>

In the Senate, Robert A. Taft of Ohio—“Mr. Republican,” towering intellect, isolationist, but also fierce anticommunist—opposed NATO because he saw it exactly for what it was. “I do not like the obligation written into the pact which binds us for twenty years to come to the defense of any country, no matter by whom it is attacked and even though the aggressor may be another member of the pact.”<sup>57</sup> Taft was prepared to let his isolationism be overruled by his even greater antipathy toward the Soviets, he stated, in favor of U.S. bilateral security ties to specific European countries or a unilateral guarantee to all of Western Europe. But NATO he found too much to swallow, even in the cause of anticommunism.

Some realist practitioners expressed similar concerns. Kennan did not believe that U.S. military commitments of any kind to Europe were necessary. But if they had to be made, Kennan preferred that they take a “particularized” and not a “legalistic-moralistic” form: that is, specific in nature, limited in time, and

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53. Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 38–39.

54. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, p. 170.

55. It is little remembered today that the NATO debate in Congress took place amid an avalanche of resolutions proposing to free the United Nations from the ill effects of the Soviet veto. The State Department opposed these efforts and steered the debate toward Article 51 of the UN charter, co-drafted by Arthur Vandenberg, which permitted the creation of collective self-defense organizations. Vandenberg and other key legislators were concerned that NATO be consistent with the UN charter. Once it was, Vandenberg believed—apparently in all sincerity—that the United States could now act “within the Charter, but outside the [Soviet] veto.” Daryl J. Hudson, “Vandenberg Reconsidered: Senate Resolution 239 and American Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1977), p. 63. The prewar isolationist Vandenberg, according to Lawrence S. Kaplan, “had been converted to internationalism on the strength of the United Nations providing collective security for all.” Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), p. 36. Also see Martin H. Folly, “Breaking the Vicious Circle: Britain, the United States, and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1988), pp. 59–77.

56. Vandenberg is quoted in Lawrence S. Kaplan, “An Unequal Triad: The United States, Western Union, and NATO,” in Olav Riste, ed., *Western Security: The Formative Years* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985), p. 112.

57. Robert A. Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1951), pp. 88–89. Initially, the North Atlantic Treaty was to be in force for twenty years.

contingent on discrete exigencies.<sup>58</sup> For Kennan, NATO was barely an improvement over the UN in this regard. Moreover, Kennan feared that the universalistic language of NATO's security commitments inherently entailed an impetus for NATO to expand—which, of course, it did and continues to do—a prospect the United States, he believed, could ill afford.<sup>59</sup> Kennan lost that debate, and his position contributed directly to his departing the State Department. "Believing that he had exorcised the spirit of idealistic Wilsonianism," Ninkovich writes, "[Kennan] found himself fighting a losing battle with its strategic doppelganger."<sup>60</sup>

The Republican-controlled Senate ratified the North Atlantic Treaty by 82 to 13, suggesting "that a national consensus had been reached."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) introduced legislation in 1950 to establish an East Asian NATO, but the situation on the ground there made that impossible.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, when the Korean War broke out, "the decision to conduct the American response through United Nations machinery was never at any time seriously debated in Washington, and for all practical purposes it was an automatic reaction."<sup>63</sup>

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58. See Anders Stephanson, *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 140; David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 152–155; and Geir Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia, and the Cold War, 1945–1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 172–173, 188–189. In his memoirs, Kennan recalled favoring a dumbbell arrangement, but one in which the two sides of the Atlantic would be linked, not by a treaty, merely by a U.S.-Canadian guarantee of assistance in case of Soviet attack. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 406–407.

59. Later generations of realists have ignored NATO's genesis struggle and the unprecedented security commitments that triggered it, preferring to think of NATO, unproblematically, as simply another alliance. Their doing so rests on Arnold Wolfers's classic essay, "Collective Defense versus Collective Security," in Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 181–204. Wolfers argued, correctly, that NATO was not an instance of collective security but of collective defense. It does not follow, however, that there are no principled differences between NATO's form of collective defense and old-fashioned alliances. Furthermore, Wolfers betrayed considerable confusion about his own distinction. Insisting that NATO was simply a multi-member alliance, Wolfers nevertheless called the 1945 Act of Chapultepec, which led to the Rio Pact, "not . . . an alliance but . . . a regionally circumscribed system of collective security for the Americas." *Ibid.*, p. 190. Oddly, the core concept of Chapultepec—that an attack on one is an attack against all, calling for a collective response—is identical to the North Atlantic Treaty, but Wolfers did not bother to explain the discrepancy in his assessments.

60. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, p. 152.

61. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, p. 37.

62. See Walter LaFeber, "NATO and the Korean War," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Fall 1989), p. 474. The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) established not long after the French defeat at Dienbienphu was little more than a traditional alliance, embodying none of the multilateral features of NATO.

63. Denis Stairs, "The United States and the Politics of the Korean War," *International Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1970), p. 308. Ninkovich adds that a UN action made U.S. involvement "more palatable to a sizable segment of the American public." *Modernity and Power*, p. 190.

The Eisenhower administration pushed these proclivities further, seeking opportunities to institute what the president repeatedly described as “collective security.” Collective security was “a *must* for the future of our type of civilization,” Eisenhower declared, while his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, claimed that it was “the only posture which was consistent with U.S. national security policy as a whole,” referring to the liberal character of America’s political institutions.<sup>64</sup> As the first Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Eisenhower had been an early and ardent advocate of a unified European Defense Community (EDC)—indeed, more so than most European leaders—and he had helped persuade President Truman of its desirability. As president himself, he pushed actively for its establishment.<sup>65</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff came to accept EDC, as did Congress, which proposed to make military aid to EDC countries conditional on the adoption of the treaty. Dulles told the North Atlantic Council in 1953 that if Europe failed to ratify EDC, “grave doubts” would arise in the United States concerning the future of European security, and that America would be obliged to undertake an “agonizing reappraisal” of its role in Europe.<sup>66</sup>

After EDC’s defeat in the French National Assembly, the allies quickly reached consensus on restoring German sovereignty and rearming it within an institutionally more robust NATO. But Eisenhower did not abandon his earlier aspirations. He turned to nuclear energy to strengthen the security dimension of European integration, facilitating the creation of EURATOM.<sup>67</sup> He also planned ways of sharing nuclear weapons with the European NATO allies, and toward the end of his term apparently explored ways of providing an independent nuclear force to a consortium of NATO allies comprising France, Britain, and West Germany.<sup>68</sup>

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64. Both are quoted by Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, pp. 212–213. Neither Eisenhower nor Dulles gave any indication that they were aware of the textbook model of collective security to which realists have always taken such strong exception. They meant cooperative and institutionalized means of pursuing security, though later in the 1950s, trading on the success of NATO, Dulles applied the term indiscriminately to any and all pacts.

65. “Only in collective security,” Eisenhower wrote to his friend General Alfred Gruenther during discussions of the EDC, is there “any future for the free world.” Quoted in Brian R. Duchin, “The ‘Agonizing Reappraisal’: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the European Defense Community,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring 1992), p. 202.

66. Duchin, “Agonizing Reappraisal.”

67. See Jonathan E. Helmreich, “The United States and the Formation of EURATOM,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer 1991), p. 409.

68. See Steve Weber, “Shaping the Postwar Balance of Power: Multilateralism in NATO,” in Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters*, esp. p. 258.

In a similar though less consequential institutional move, Eisenhower occasioned and facilitated the invention of UN peacekeeping when he opposed three of America's closest allies, Britain, France, and Israel, at Suez. Eisenhower described the UN action as yet another element in the collective provision of security. For realist commentators it was the height of folly, "permitting the very foundations of American policy [to be] swept away," Kennan complained bitterly, "the victim of an empty legalism."<sup>69</sup>

The Kennedy administration broke this historical pattern. Whereas U.S. leaders from FDR to Eisenhower had "groped for a definition of the world role their country should play," David Fromkin writes, "pursued by doubts that they had got it right," Kennedy's best and brightest "took it for granted that the United States was a superpower with global interests and responsibilities."<sup>70</sup> The country, apparently, agreed. It remained to be seen if America was, indeed, prepared to pay any price, bear any burden, as the young president proclaimed. But, notably, by the time Kennedy came along opinion pollsters had lost interest in asking the public about the desirability of an active U.S. role in the world, so invariant were the affirmative responses.<sup>71</sup> Their interest soon would be rekindled by Vietnam, after America grasped the full meaning of Kennedy's proclamations.<sup>72</sup>

I bring this discussion to a close with an analytical reprise. Internationalist leaders from the turn of the century on down have sought to devise strategies of international engagement for the United States. They have differed little about why such engagement was deemed necessary; differences lie in their preferred means toward that end. Realists, beginning with TR, have sought to "normalize" America, urging it to act like other great powers do. Prior to the Cold War Americans were unresponsive, perhaps because they did not see America as a normal great power, and for good reason: in geopolitical terms alone there had never been a great power like it. But even after the advent of

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69. George F. Kennan, letter to the editor, *Washington Post*, November 3, 1956, p. A8; also see Hans J. Morgenthau, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, November 13, 1956, p. 36; and Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p. 198. The episode is discussed briefly in John Gerard Ruggie, "The False Premise of Realism," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 63-64.

70. Fromkin, *In the Time of the Americans*, p. 7.

71. Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (December 1992), p. 460; and personal communication from Holsti, September 1996.

72. Recall Eisenhower's warning in 1953, as the French position in Indochina was deteriorating: "No Western power can go to Asia militarily, except as one of a concert of powers, which concert must include local Asiatic peoples." Quoted in Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 81.

the Cold War, judging by Truman's and Eisenhower's concerns, Americans seemed to require more persuasive reasoning. The outbreak of the Cold War may have "put America into power politics to stay," as *Newsweek* put it in 1947, but Truman and Eisenhower both wondered how long that would last.

Wilson, far from seeking to normalize America, drew on its sense of difference—on American exceptionalism—linking the quest for sustained U.S. international engagement to America's self-defining ideas at home. FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower also sensed that realism, by itself, was an inadequate base and so they, too, embraced similarly grounded reformist aspirations for the international arena, linking U.S. engagement to a broader vision of world order that they felt would resonate with the American public. Unlike Wilson, however, they had no aversion to balance-of-power politics. Thus, FDR built a universal security organization onto a concert of great powers, while Truman and Eisenhower coupled America's transformational agenda abroad with the process of bipolar power-balancing.

But there are many aspects of American exceptionalism, as Lipset has recently documented empirically.<sup>73</sup> Precisely which of them have endured in these prior foreign policy quests? Why? Do the answers have any bearing on the future? These questions take us into the realm of identity politics.

### *Imagining America*

The common element in the world order postures of Wilson, FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower is a set of distinctive organizing principles: security cooperation by means of more comprehensive and institutionalized arrangements than the traditional system of bilateral alliances; an "open door" world economy comprising uniform rules of trade and monetary relations together with minimum state-imposed barriers to the flow of international economic transactions; anticolonialism grounded in self-determination; antistatism grounded in individual rights; and the promotion of democracy. In contrast with TR's and Lodge's unilateralist prescriptions based in realism, these are multilateral principles that entail a mildly communitarian vision of world order.<sup>74</sup>

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73. Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1996).

74. These principles are multilateral insofar as they express a preference for open and non-discriminatory orders of relations among states, based on diffuse reciprocity. It goes without saying that the United States, as a leading world power, has never sought to endow multilateral organizations with significant independent authority, so these two forms of multilateralism—orders of relations among states and formal organizations that operate within such orders—must not be

These organizing principles express general milieu preferences, that is, preferences concerning the overall contours and direction of international relations. They do not predict specific day-to-day policy choices. Reconciling universals with particular circumstances, domestic and international, is always contingent and problematic. Nevertheless, we have seen that in the three prior instances in this century when the remaking of the international order was at stake—in 1919, 1945, and post-1947—these American leaders reached for these principles. Perceived interests, of course, influence milieu preferences and even more so whether or not these preferences are enacted in any particular instance. But a country that is as powerful as the United States and, relatively speaking, as well insulated from the vicissitudes buffeting most other countries, often has more than one means available to satisfy its interests. Hence, America's balance of choice versus necessity, to borrow a phrase from the classical realists, often leaves substantial freedom of choice. In exercising that choice, these leaders believed, or at least behaved in a manner consistent with the belief, that multilateral world order principles enjoyed a particular resonance with the American public that other ideas (especially "normalization") would not evoke, and thus would help to institute sustained U.S. international engagement.

There would not be much news in an argument that leaders' concerns with evoking domestic support shape foreign policy, and that some efforts to persuade succeed while others fail. But I postulate a more specific hypothesis to account for the recurrent recourse to multilateralism: there is a certain congruence between these principles for the "founding" (construction or reconstruction) of an international order and the principles of order at play in America's understanding of its own founding as a political community. Multilateral organizing principles are singularly compatible with America's own form of nationalism, on which its sense of political community is based. Below, I first explicate this argument; I present some evidence in its support; and I indicate why it would be wrong to dismiss it on the grounds that it represents mere rhetoric or idealism.

#### AMERICAN NATIONALISM

A nation, by definition, is an imagined community. It is imagined because, Benedict Anderson notes, "the image of their communion" lives in the minds of its members, bonding people who will never know one another while

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confused with one another. For a more elaborate discussion, see Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution."

depicting non-members, including those known personally, as alien.<sup>75</sup> America's form of nationalism differs from that of most other nations, however. Most nations claim an "organic" basis in either land or people, and these are the usual referents of a nation's foundational myths. The American form of nationalism, in contrast, has no such organic basis. "America—wanting a land which always bore its name or a people who always identified themselves as 'Americans'—is the imagined community *par excellence*."<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, the very act of communion—the principled basis on which the American community was constituted and is continually reconstituted—has played the decisive role in America's definition of itself as a nation.

"No assembly of men can constitute a nation," the conservative philosopher Joseph de Maistre wrote in antipathy to French revolutionary ideas of nationhood. "An attempt of this kind ought even to be ranked among the most memorable acts of folly."<sup>77</sup> Yet that is precisely how America formed itself as a nation. Thus, America traditionally has viewed itself as a willful community, or an elective community, "making a new nation out of literally any old nation that comes along," as G.K. Chesterton remarked.<sup>78</sup> In principle, anyone can become an American. But that fact is made possible, in turn, only because the American concept of political community rests not on the exclusive organic specificities of traditional nations but, in the words of political theorist Tracy Strong, "a universal or general foundation open in principle to everyone."<sup>79</sup>

American nationalism, then, is a civic nationalism embodying a set of inclusive core values: intrinsic individual as opposed to group rights, equality of opportunity for all, antistatism, the rule of law, and a revolutionary legacy which holds that human betterment can be achieved by means of deliberate human actions, especially when they are pursued in accordance with these foundational values. Being an American is defined as believing and doing these things.<sup>80</sup>

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75. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983), p. 15.

76. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 251.

77. Quoted in Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind*, trans. Judith Friedlander (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 13.

78. G.K. Chesterton, *What I Saw in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1922), p. 14.

79. Tracy B. Strong, "Taking the Rank with What is Ours: American Political Thought, Foreign Policy, and Questions of Rights," in Paula R. Newberg, ed., *The Politics of Human Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 50.

80. To avoid any possible misunderstanding, note that I am describing a dominant belief system—America's foundational myth—not an empirical reality that has held equally well for all Americans at all times.

The multilateral world order principles invoked by Wilson, FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower bear a striking affinity to America's sense of self as a nation: an expressed preference for international orders of relations based on "a universal or general foundation open in principle to everyone," not on discriminatory or exclusionary ties. The anti-colonial, self-determination, and human rights strains require little elaboration. The "open door" world economy is an equal opportunity principle, which, in a limited sense, is how the McKinley administration already meant it when it presented the open door notes regarding the future of China to the great powers at the turn of the century. In (re)constructing the security order, the appeal to, and of, collective efforts in support of general principles, as opposed to bilateral alliances based on particularistic grounds, expresses a similar normative orientation. In short, the multilateral world order principles that American leaders have invoked when the remaking of the international order has been at stake reflect the idea of America's own foundational act of political communion.

What evidence exists to support this claim? American exceptionalism has been documented at least from the time of Tocqueville; Lipset's recent survey of this country's atypical political culture, institutions, and practices has a long and distinguished pedigree.<sup>81</sup> American advocacy for multilateral world order principles is also well documented and is broadly accepted as an accurate rendering of U.S. milieu preferences outside the security sphere. In the study of security relations, which has been dominated by realists, any imputed role for multilateral principles has been and remains controversial, far more likely to be dismissed as rhetoric or idealism than to be taken seriously, an issue to which we return momentarily. No direct evidence exists of the relationship I have hypothesized between America's inorganic nationalism and multilateralism, however, because it has never been explicitly studied. Below, I present some (necessarily) indirect evidence that lends support to the plausibility of the hypothesis.

#### NATION AND WORLD

The fact that, and the manner in which, the United States has made "a new nation out of literally any old nation that comes along" produces a bias in favor

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81. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*. Lipset makes it clear that he means "distinctiveness," not exceptionalism in the sense of somehow being better. That is also how I use the term here. For a lively debate among historians, which seems as much political as historiographical, see Ian Tyrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (October 1991), pp. 1031–1055, and Michael McGerr, "The Price of the 'New Transnational History,'" in *ibid.*, pp. 1056–1067.

of multilateral organizing principles for constructing/reconstructing the international order. The foreign policy implications of domestic ethnic politics provide one source of supportive evidence for this claim; and the deepening scholarly understanding of the structure of public opinion on foreign policy issues more generally suggests that the hypothesis merits further attention. I take up each in turn.

Evidence of a relationship between interethnic accommodation at home and multilateral organizing principles abroad itself comes in several clusters. First, multilateral principles on key occasions that are of interest to us have served to manage potential instability in domestic ethnic politics. For example, before the United States entered World War I, the British ambassador in Washington reported to London Wilson's fears that America's taking sides in the war might unleash serious domestic ethnic clashes.<sup>82</sup> Wilson's "Peace Without Victory" speech, in which he proposed settling the war short of the unconditional surrender of Germany, reflected this concern, as did his desire to base the postwar security order on the common defense of general principles rather than on discriminatory bilateral alliances.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, after World War II, "multilateralism favored everybody's homeland."<sup>84</sup> The domestic ethnic politics of country-by-country allocations of U.S. aid and security guarantees at best would have been highly complex, and at worst highly divisive. As it was, the multilateral approach of the Marshall Plan and NATO made it possible to assist Western Europe as a whole. That had the effect of transforming the domestic politics of ethnic identities into more of a median voter issue, thereby avoiding interethnic rivalries and enhancing bipartisan support for the policy.

An even greater push to "go multilateral" may be generated in the future by what the Israeli political scientist Yossi Shain calls U.S. diasporas in the era of multiculturalism.<sup>85</sup> Shain notes that more ethnic communities than ever have become empowered in the United States, including groups of Asian and Latin American origins as well as African Americans. Their foreign policy influence is likely to grow in a post-Cold War world, Shain argues, in which fewer

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82. This report is paraphrased by Fromkin in *In the Time of the Americans*, p. 118.

83. *Ibid.*; also see Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, pp. 319–323; and Knock, *To End All Wars*, pp. 133–137, 165.

84. Peter F. Cowhey, "Elect Locally—Order Globally: Domestic Politics and Multilateral Cooperation," in Ruggie, ed., *Multilateralism Matters*, p. 169.

85. Yossi Shain, "Marketing the Democratic Creed Abroad: U.S. Diasporas in the Era of Multiculturalism," *Diaspora*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 85–111; and Shain, "Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 109, No. 5 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 811–841.

international, structurally determined friends and foes exist. The choice for U.S. policymakers in such an environment is between fragmenting relevant areas of foreign policy along an ever-larger number of ethnic lines or transforming ethnically defined preferences into multilateral directions. History suggests that, except for special bilateral relationships, the latter course is the more likely.

The relationship between American nationalism, multiculturalism, and foreign policy orientations has also been explored in a recent study of public opinion.<sup>86</sup> It adduced two findings of interest to us: that the advent of multiculturalism has not undermined the prevailing sense of American nationalism; and that multilateralism is a viable foreign policy instrument to accommodate heightened multicultural awareness.

No state in the Union is more ethnically diverse than California. When asked if there are unique American qualities, and if so what they are, 80 percent in a statewide poll responded affirmatively. Of those who did, 85 percent mentioned specific traits "familiar to the readers of de Tocqueville," including individual rights, equal opportunity, and cultural diversity.<sup>87</sup> In a national poll, respondents divided roughly 5:3 between "assimilationist" and "distinct cultures" views as their preferred model for America. "Strikingly, whites, blacks, and Hispanics did not differ in their responses to this question."<sup>88</sup> Nativist impulses, not surprisingly, were most pronounced on the issue of immigration, as it always has been throughout American history. But the perceived threat was far more likely to be defined in economic terms (loss of jobs, higher taxes to pay for welfare and social services) than cultural. The researchers also constructed composite "nativist" and "multicultural" indices. "Clearly, both outlooks are [statistical] minority viewpoints."<sup>89</sup> Blacks and Hispanics scored

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86. Jack Citrin, Ernst B. Haas, Christopher Muste, and Beth Reingold, "Is American Nationalism Changing? Implications for Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (March 1994), pp. 1–31. Their analysis is based primarily on data from a 1991 California Poll, supplemented by the 1992 University of Michigan's American National Election Study survey.

87. *Ibid.*, Table 2, p. 12. Advocates of multiculturalism themselves are turning away from what Garry Nash has termed "promiscuous pluralism," in search for a "stretching of the we." For example, David Hollinger, sensing no irony in his position, recommends that multiculturalists locate this wider "we" in "the civic character of the American nation-state," a "nationality [that is] based on the principle of consent and is ostensibly open to persons of a variety of ethno-racial affiliations"—a "civic nation . . . built and sustained by people who honor a common future more than a common past." See David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic, 1995); Nash is cited on p. 82; the other quotations are from pp. 113, 85, and 84.

88. The rest of this paragraph summarizes Citrin, Haas, Muste, and Reingold, "Is American Nationalism Changing?" pp. 13–15.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 20; see also Table 5, p. 21.

higher on multiculturalism, but it was decisively a minority viewpoint within those groups as well.

On the issue of foreign policy, the study concludes that the more numerous competing forms of ethnic and cultural identity in the United States today may make the task of forging new domestic coalitions in support of an activist foreign policy more complex in the years ahead. But the essence of America's collective identity—the authors' term for it is "cosmopolitan liberal"—"remains a relative bedrock that could provide support for diverse foreign policy positions."<sup>90</sup> High among the positions for which support exists is "instrumental," though not "ideological," multilateralism.

In sum, one relatively direct link between the character of American nationalism and the political efficacy of multilateral world order principles exists through the mechanism of accommodating differences of ethnos, race, and religion among Americans in keeping with the concept of civic, as opposed to organic, nationhood.

A more general source of evidence comes out of the new consensus in research on public opinion and foreign policy. For some fifteen to twenty years after World War II, the so-called Almond-Lippmann view held sway among students of this subject.<sup>91</sup> This view included three propositions: that public opinion toward foreign policy issues is highly volatile, offering little systematic guidance to policymakers; that it lacks coherence to the point of amounting to "non-attitudes"; and that it had little impact on policy in any case. Among the major foreign policy specialists who subscribed to this view were George Kennan and Hans Morgenthau.

The new consensus, in essence, has turned these propositions on their heads.<sup>92</sup> The public is shown to be no better informed than was previously assumed, but it is believed to manage its information efficiently. Foreign policy attitudes are highly stable, the new consensus holds, and change "in ways that are regular, predictable, and indeed generally sensible, given the values that citizens hold and the information made available to them."<sup>93</sup> Moreover, atti-

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90. *Ibid.*, p. 26. Liberal here refers to a belief in the validity of such principles as liberty, individualism, popular sovereignty, and the like, not to partisan-political orientation.

91. For a good summary which I am following here, see Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." Also see the articles in "Of Rifts and Drifts: A Symposium on Beliefs, Opinions, and American Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 1986).

92. The most comprehensive challenge to the old view has come from Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

93. Robert Y. Shapiro and Benjamin I. Page, "Foreign Policy and Public Opinion," in David A. Deese, ed., *The New Politics of American Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 217.

tudes are now believed to be highly structured. "The American public makes sharp distinctions among [foreign] policies, favoring some and opposing others. Moreover, these distinctions tend to be coherent and consistent with each other: they fall into regular patterns that make sense and that fit with an overall system of values."<sup>94</sup> Lastly, although precise specifications are few, it is now believed that public opinion does affect the making of foreign policy. Influence flows in both directions: Leaders use information about attitudes "for the purpose of leading, persuading, or manipulating the public."<sup>95</sup> And there is evidence that the public reciprocates, for example, at times to restrain extreme positions that political leaders may hold.<sup>96</sup> In short, the recent literature depicts the public as being not much better informed but more rational, even wiser, than was previously believed.

Of greatest interest to us here is how public opinion toward foreign policy issues is structured. Consider first the number of dimensions along which opinion is believed to fall. In the early postwar period, it was assumed that a single internationalist-isolationist dimension sufficed, and survey questions were posed accordingly. By the late 1970s, and especially once Ronald Reagan came to office, it was deemed desirable to differentiate liberal from conservative variants of internationalism. The former was soon recast as multilateralism, the latter as unilateralism, and both were contrasted with isolationism.<sup>97</sup> But that distinction, in turn, left ambiguous where views on the role of force fit in. Debates continued about how many new categories were required and whether they were appropriately considered attitude "types" or underlying "dimensions" that generate types. Multilateralism initially was introduced as an attitude type, but more recently it has been identified empirically as a dimension by William Chittick and colleagues.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, they distinguish multilateralism from other attitudinal dimensions by virtue of a factor they term "identity." By identity they mean how inclusive the referent community is or how transcultural the values are that respondents' foreign policy attitudes

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94. Ibid., p. 218.

95. Ibid., p. 232.

96. See, for example, Miroslav Nincic, *Democracy and Foreign Policy: The Fallacy of Political Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and the literature review in Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy."

97. See Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "The Three-Headed Eagle: The United States and System Change," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (September 1979), pp. 339-359; and Eugene R. Wittkopf, "On the Foreign Policy Beliefs of the American People: A Critique and Some Evidence," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 1986), pp. 425-445.

98. See, most recently, William O. Chittick, Keith R. Billingsley, and Rick Travis, "A Three-Dimensional Model of American Foreign Policy Beliefs," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (September 1995), pp. 313-331. Dimensions are determined by factor analysis.

encompass (for example, support for narrow particularistic interests versus support for universal human rights). In this scheme, nativism, where it is not isolationist, is closely associated with a preference for unilateralism in foreign policy, and a more expansive identity with multilateralism.

There is also some evidence to suggest that a hierarchy exists in the structure of foreign policy opinions. Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley have tested a model suggesting that attitudes on specific foreign policy issues reflect more general foreign policy "postures" (isolationism, for example). These postures, in turn, are constrained by general beliefs or "core values" (such as patriotism or the [im]morality of warfare).<sup>99</sup> Because the questions included in their survey concerned U.S.-Soviet relations at a single point in time during the Cold War, the model cannot help us directly here, but the idea of such a hierarchy is highly suggestive.

In sum, it is not possible at this time to perform direct public opinion-based tests of the relationship I have imputed between the inorganic form of American nationalism and multilateral world order principles. But what we do know about the structure of public opinion certainly does not contradict the existence of such a relationship and, indeed, lends it some support. That multilateralism features prominently in foreign policy attitudes is no longer in dispute; the only question is whether it functions merely as a category of attitudes that rises or falls with events, or as an underlying dimension that reflects identity factors and generates attitudes. Furthermore, our imputed relationship is consistent with the hierarchical model of foreign policy attitudes—where core beliefs constrain postures, and postures predict attitudes.

To conclude, the manner in which certain domestic ethnic differences are accommodated as well as the structure of public opinion on foreign policy issues suggest that our hypothesis is, at minimum, plausible. Sense of self as nation and preferences for world order principles both reflect a bias in the direction of greater openness, more typical inclusiveness, and nondiscrimination than one would expect in the case of a country solidly rooted in an organic specificity of nationhood.

A third—and by far the most direct—evidentiary source would open up if one could assume that the leaders who were doing the things described in the previous section knew what they were doing, and that they knew what they

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99. Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "How are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (December 1987), pp. 1100–1120. For a cross-national replication, see Jon Hurwitz, Mark Peffley, and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Foreign Policy Belief Systems in Comparative Perspective: The United States and Costa Rica," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (September 1993), pp. 245–270.

were saying when, as Wilson did, they described multilateral world order principles as “American principles.” But that source is still inadmissible because we know that leaders do and say things for a variety of reasons other than those they state. So I turn next to the vexing role of ideational factors and political discourse in the framing of U.S. world order policy.

#### IDEAS, IDEALISM, AND INTERESTS

Because we are entering hotly contested terrain here, I want to be very clear about the specification of my argument and its scope. In the first section, I argued that at the three previous instances in this century of reconstructing the international order, American leaders advocated multilateral organizing principles as a “vision,” borrowing Kissinger’s term, to animate the support of the American public. After the outbreak of the Cold War this vision, in the security sphere, was folded into the process of balancing the Soviet Union, but it did not disappear. Next, I argued that this vision evokes organizing principles that are embedded in America’s own inorganic form of nationalism, and I offered the best evidence available in support of my contention. What I want to show now is that the conventional tendency to dismiss such instances of political persuasion as being “mere rhetoric” or to attribute them to “idealism” is problematic in the cases under consideration.

Let us begin with the issue of rhetoric. Based on what is known about Wilson, when he addressed the Senate in 1917 and spoke of the “American principles” for which the nation would fight imperial Germany, the odds are that he believed what he said. Nonetheless, it is theoretically possible that material interests alone drove the decision and that he was dressing it up in rhetorical garb. But is the same likely to be true of FDR’s explaining to Anthony Eden why he believed that the American public would not support a spheres-of-influence approach to the organization of post-World War II security relations, and that a universal form, therefore, should be established? Is it plausible of Eisenhower when he wrote to his brother Milton that “the establishment of collective security by cooperation is a *must* for the future of our type of civilization”? Or when he wrote in his diary that “we must seek . . . collective security for the free world. Any alternative promises little more than tragic failure”?<sup>100</sup> Leaders do not usually practice mere rhetoric in private dealings with close wartime allies, let alone in letters to siblings or in their own diaries.

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100. FDR’s remarks were quoted above; the Eisenhower quotations are from Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, pp. 212–213; italics are Eisenhower’s.

Perhaps rhetoric is not the appropriate term, then. Perhaps idealism is at work. The case against characterizing these episodes as expressions of idealism consists of several parts. To begin with, of the four presidents involved in our story, only Wilson has ever been accused of being an outright idealist—and he not entirely correctly, as John Milton Cooper shows persuasively in his joint biography of TR and Wilson.<sup>101</sup> It is true that the others were accused of succumbing, at times, to something realists called the Wilsonian legacy and, thus, of being indirect idealists by descent—including, as we saw above, FDR regarding the UN, Truman and NATO's indivisible security commitment, and Eisenhower during the EDC debate and at Suez. But that charge, in turn, triggers two responses.

First, the author of the Wilsonian legacy doctrine, E.H. Carr in his classic polemic, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, lumped together the shrinking band of liberal internationalists with just about every other strand of idealism in interwar America, and pinned them all on the alleged lingering effects of Wilsonianism.<sup>102</sup> But by far the largest segment of American idealists at the time were isolationists, not Wilsonian internationalists. The Kellogg-Briand pact, which promised, implausibly, to end war by treaty, was one of Carr's prize illustrations. Yet, as Manfred Jonas points out, William Borah, Republican of Idaho, "did more than any other man to bring about approval of the Kellogg-Briand Pact by the Senate in 1929."<sup>103</sup> And Borah had been a leading irreconcilable in 1919, forming what he called a "Battalion of Death" to prevent ratification of the League's covenant. Such anomalies, however, have not deterred successive generations of critics from perpetuating the "Wilsonian legacy" myth.

Second, there is scant evidence that any of these leaders acted contrary to American interests, at least as they perceived them. Wilson was trying to solve the same geopolitical puzzle that drove Theodore Roosevelt: the world is closing in on the United States, how do we engage in it? The post-World War II group was equally interest-driven. The issue becomes complicated, however, because the same domestic ideational factors that were reflected in the world order vision that these leaders articulated *also* shaped their conception of American interests. Consider, again, FDR's conversation with Eden about spheres of influence. Some abstract entity called the United States might well

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101. Characterizing Wilson as an idealist, in contrast to TR, does not fully capture their positions, according to Cooper: "In domestic affairs the two men professed to reverse these positions; in foreign affairs, they were by no means polar opposites." Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, p. xiv.

102. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1946).

103. Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, p. 49.

have found its postwar security interests fully satisfied by the four policemen scheme FDR had initially favored. But what FDR said to Eden, in effect, was that the *real* United States, given his understanding of what it was and where it was, would not accept, or might drop out of, a postwar security order based on spheres of influence. And so off to the UN it was. Similarly, Truman was not convinced that the various available alternatives to NATO's indivisible security commitments would suffice, then and even less so in the future, to keep the U.S. engaged in Europe, as a result of which American interests, to Kennan's horror, became defined in considerably more expansive terms than the mere abstract strategic logic of the situation alone would have dictated. And Eisenhower, while accepting this expansive conception of U.S. interests, also feared that some of them would seem so remote to the American public that only collective legitimation would prove successful, and that only collective efforts would avoid exhausting America's treasury and morale.

But are we not left then, in the final analysis, with the old realist saw that the American people are idealistic, and that sophisticated leaders are forced to play on that idealism to get anything done? That may or may not be true in general terms; the contention is too sweeping to tackle fully here. But within the scope of the present argument, I would make the following observation. This issue is an issue in the first place because of America's geopolitical constitution. If the United States were landlocked in the middle of a dense strategic complex made up of relative equals, in which the external sector loomed large, chances are that the challenge these American leaders struggled with would have been resolved long ago. But even today, as Eric Nordlinger demonstrated in his provocative book, it is possible to travel a long way down the road of isolationism without appearing foolish.<sup>104</sup> Keenly aware of that fact, this cadre of leaders acted on Weber's dictum that ideas are interests, too. Moreover, their belief that these American ideas also would enjoy some efficacy abroad does not betray undue naiveté because, as noted, the American nationalism on which the ideas drew is itself founded on principles that are more universalistic and transcultural than those of most other nations.

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104. Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). Nordlinger represents a contemporary version of the "city on the hill" strain of isolationism that has been present in American political life almost from the start. This holds that the United States should lead the world by example that others will want to emulate, as a result of which the United States can shape the international order without significant intervention in it. Indeed, many who have held this view contend that intervention abroad would serve only to degrade the purity of the American model at home. Clearly, this strain of isolationism also draws on American "exceptionalism" for its inspiration.

It is ironic that the American public's attitudes regarding why and how it would consent to helping construct or reconstruct the international order, so deeply rooted in America's fundamental geopolitical reality, should be confused with idealism by none other than realist theorists of geopolitics.

These issues are not easily resolved, nor is it easy to persuade those who hold very different views. My objective here is more modest. I contend that within its specified scope conditions—American policy postures toward the construction/reconstruction of the international order—the standard objections one would anticipate to my argument do not trump. The world order visions articulated by American leaders on these occasions cannot be summarily dismissed as rhetoric, nor can they be readily swept into the convenient dustbin of idealism. What is more, the interaction of ideational factors and material interests at these junctures was highly complex: ideas not only shaped how interests were pursued, but in some cases helped define the interests the United States subsequently did pursue. Finally, the conceptual bridge that FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower built between America's sense of exceptionalism, on the one hand, and the international order, on the other, is a remarkable achievement—not only for keeping the United States engaged, but also for helping to transform Europe and to institute multilateral organizing principles globally to a far greater extent than would have been the case otherwise: in economic policy, decolonization, human rights, democracy promotion, and even in the sphere of security relations.

### *Conclusions*

This interplay between ideas and interests in the framing of U.S. policy toward "remaking" the international order has practical, as well as theoretical, implications for the post-Cold War era.

First, the practical matters. Sustained American engagement to help create and maintain a stable international order historically has not been part of the natural international order of things. Our discussion has shown that achieving it has been a non-trivial task. The Cold War era may well prove an interlude in a more enduring American dilemma: how to be politically not only *in* the world but of *it* when no overarching external threat exists. Adjusting U.S. foreign policy to the post-Cold War international context entails, therefore, more than modifying the scope and intensity of specific commitments to fit with narrow, case-by-case strategic assessments. It also requires that some framework of policy be devised that makes sense to the American people and that specifies milieu goals to which they will aspire.

One major difference between the earlier instances of remaking the international order and now is, of course, the institutional legacy FDR and his successors left behind, which to some extent functions in ways that would not surprise them. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a case in point, albeit belatedly and grudgingly so. On the eve of the 1992 presidential election the Bush administration had little desire to become militarily involved. Once in office, the Clinton administration, despite its campaign rhetoric, focused on domestic issues and followed suit. But the institutional tripwire FDR had planted ultimately kicked in. When the United States did become involved, it was in large measure to salvage the ill-fated UN operation and, even more important, the reputation of NATO.

But relatively few such tripwires exist in the security sphere, and the future effectiveness of those that do exist cannot be taken for granted. Our analysis suggests the outlines of a U.S. policy posture toward the post-Cold War international security order: to build on existing institutional bases by coupling continued U.S. engagement to strategies of transformation designed to achieve greater indigenous sustainability. U.S. security policy in Europe and East Asia, the two major Cold War theaters, as well as toward UN peace operations in third world regional disputes, can all be fruitfully approached with this aim in mind.

NATO is central to all “what now?” considerations regarding the future of the transatlantic security community. U.S. political attention has focused almost entirely on NATO expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. But building up the capacity of the European Union (EU) to act militarily within NATO and having eastward expansion be more of a European-led process, coupled with the EU’s own expansion, would more effectively ensure a sustainable basis for this security community. It would be more equitable toward the United States, and thus enjoy greater long-run domestic support in this country; it would be less likely to create a self-fulfilling prophecy *vis-à-vis* Russia, triggering a Russian threat where none now exist; and it would more effectively lock in economic reforms, democratic transitions, and the protection of minority rights in Eastern and Central Europe than a U.S.-led expansion of NATO, which has little day-to-day practical leverage over any of these developments.<sup>105</sup> There is no better venue to begin this process than to prepare the Western European

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105. For a more extensive analysis and proposals along these lines, see John Gerard Ruggie, “Consolidating the European Pillar: The Key to NATO’s Future,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 1997), pp. 109–124.

Union, the EU's fledgling security arm, to assume from NATO's Bosnia mission the inevitable long-term peacekeeping role.<sup>106</sup>

No NATO equivalent exists in East Asia. The U.S. bilateral alliances with South Korea and Japan, instituted at the time of the Korean War, served as the cornerstones of U.S. containment policy. With the end of the Cold War, these alliances have become politically exposed in the United States ("why are we defending our most successful economic competitors?") and in the region (especially U.S. ground forces on Okinawa). Furthermore, the case for a continued U.S. military presence in East Asia has to be made to the American public almost entirely on balance-of-power grounds ("engaging" an emerging China, reassuring neighbors about one another), which is typically not a compelling basis. Japan has taken modest steps to deepen and diversify its self-defense role, but remains constrained by regional suspicions. The strategy that follows from our analysis is for the United States to use its alliances as a means to promote greater regional security cooperation. This would involve incorporating into the emerging regional power balance as many mechanisms as possible that promise to enhance transparency and help build confidence, with the aim of achieving viable regional frameworks for conflict resolution in the medium term and moving toward the ideal of a regional security community in the long run. Modest regional and subregional building blocks are beginning to take hold. Potentially the most important is the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>107</sup> The Australian security specialist, Paul Dibb, points out that solidifying these mechanisms will not be easy, due to the absence of a cooperative tradition in, as well as the sheer strategic complexity of, the region. But at the same time, he believes, "there is the sense [in the region] that an opportunity exists that should be exploited before it is too late."<sup>108</sup>

Finally, after a brief post-Cold War euphoria, the United Nations is in a precarious state. Members countries were quick to assign it new tasks but not to upgrade its capabilities—or even, notably in the case of the United States, to pay the bills. Clearly, the UN performed poorly in Somalia and Bosnia. But

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106. Thomas L. Friedman has made a proposal to this effect, in "If Not Us, Them," *New York Times*, November 24, 1996, p. E-15.

107. For good overview, see Paul Dibb, "Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia," Adelphi Paper No. 295 (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 1995); also see Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN Regional Forum," Adelphi Paper No. 302 (London: Oxford University Press for the IISS, 1996).

108. Dibb, "Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia," p. 67.

if Soviet armies had marched across the central front in Europe in the early 1950s, NATO would not have performed well either because it had not yet been equipped to. It took considerable time, effort, and money for it to become the effective military institution that we now take for granted. The point is simply this: to whatever extent member states wish to ratchet up the UN's role, they must also upgrade its capabilities.

Support for the UN among the American public remains high—in 1995, according to a Republican polling firm, 69 percent of the public supported relying on UN forces to deal with conflicts that did not directly threaten the United States, compared with 17 percent in favor of unilateral U.S. action.<sup>109</sup> William Schneider's analysis of the 1994 Chicago Council survey found that "support for strengthening the United Nations as 'a very high foreign policy goal of the United States' was 51 percent, its highest level in 20 years," and the only significant internationalist indicator to rise. In addition, "a majority supported U.S. participation in international peacekeeping forces. Fewer than 1 in 5 said we should not take part."<sup>110</sup> The public was split over whether the United States should accept a UN commander or insist on its own. Ironically, at 54 percent, the UN enjoyed higher approval ratings among the American public than either the legislative or executive branch of the U.S. government.<sup>111</sup>

But these views, it seems, either are not as salient in voting or simply not as well organized politically as opposition to the UN. The Republican Congress has been hostile, the Democratic administration chastened though generally supportive. The U.S. military has become quietly engaged with the UN, however, convinced that "gray area" conflicts—those beyond the scope of traditional peacekeeping but short of all-out warfare—are here to stay, and that outside the NATO and East Asian contexts, collective responses through the UN in many instances will prove the most viable and sustainable option. For the UN to become an effective collective instrument in gray-area peace operations, major doctrinal innovations are necessary, predeployment planning and more standardized training must be instituted, and its capacity to field and command forces must be enhanced.<sup>112</sup>

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109. "U.S. Public Support for U.N. Unexpectedly Grows, New Poll Shows," United Nations Association of the United States of America, December 7, 1995. The survey was conducted by the Wirthlin Group.

110. Schneider, "The New Isolationism," p. 27.

111. "U.S. Public Support for UN."

112. For an elaboration, see John Gerard Ruggie, "The United Nations and the Collective Use of Force: Whither or Whether?" *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 3–22.

Turning to theoretical issues, one must be wary not to generalize too far from a single case, especially the United States, so atypical in geopolitical constitution and the form of its nationalism. Nevertheless, two observations are warranted. First, various explanatory factors—in our case, primarily strategic interests and collective identity—interact in complex ways, depending on the situation. For example, the Soviet threat made a major difference to resolving the dilemma internationalist leaders had faced before, but even so its effect was merely to modify the role of identity factors in shaping the U.S. posture, not eliminate it. Moreover, identity factors on occasion contributed to the very definition of U.S. interests, e.g., creating the United Nations and the form of NATO's security guarantees. Had we also addressed issues in which efficiency concerns play a larger role—institutional designs to reduce information or transaction costs, for example—it would have been necessary to include explanatory factors featured in neoliberal institutionalism. In short, our discussion demonstrates the need for contending theoretical approaches in international relations scholarship systematically to engage one another, specifying under which conditions what combinations of factors best account for outcomes in the world of actual international relations. Doing so requires that we abandon the quest for monocausality that is characteristic of so much theoretical work of the past decade.

At the same time, the ease with which various theoretical approaches can simply be made additive must not be exaggerated either, because, in some measure, they do embody significant epistemological and even ontological differences. In particular, ideational factors—principles, norms, identities, aspirations—do not always fit neatly into the mechanical notion of causality and neo-Hempelian explanatory protocols employed in conventional international relations theory.<sup>113</sup> It is hard to know how to accommodate FDR's conceptual juggling or Truman's and Eisenhower's quest to devise viable strategic visions, for example, in which interests and identities were so inextricably related, within those epistemological formulas. For each of these leaders was engaged not merely in an *enactment*—which is how agency is typically depicted in standard theories—but, as Ninkovich puts it, in “an active process of interpretation and construction of reality.”<sup>114</sup> The products of that process fit well

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113. For a discussion of these issues in the context of recent international relations theorizing, see John Gerard Ruggie, “Peace in Our Time? Causality, Social Facts, and Narrative Knowing,” *American Society of International Law, Proceedings, 89th Annual Meeting* (1995), pp. 93–100, and the sources cited therein.

114. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power*, p. xv.

enough into the standard protocols: commitments, alliances, institutions, military doctrines, force structures, and the like, are readily rendered as explanatory factors of subsequent events. But to understand the process itself requires concepts of causality and explanation that are more interpretive in character, capable of encompassing the dialogical dimensions of communicative action within a framework of shared meanings, and not simply the monological chain of cause-and-effect relations characteristic of the world of brute observational facts. This article constitutes a modest instance of that genre.