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The dangers of US interventionism

ALAN P. DOBSON

> President Clinton and I . . . have spoken often about the goals of American foreign policy. Boiled down, these have not changed in more than 200 years. They are to ensure the continued security, prosperity, and freedom of our people.[1]
>
> Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State, 1998

Abstract. Both policy articles about US post-Cold War foreign policy and the recent rhetoric of US policymakers appears to be slipping back into the language of the 'arrogance of power', against which Senator Fulbright warned America in the 1960s. In what follows, the USA's style of foreign policy; its criteria for intervention; its invasion of Panama; its capabilities; its intervention in Bosnia; and the impact of contending theories about changes in the international sphere will be examined with a view to casting some light on how the USA has responded to the world outside its boundaries after the Cold War. Finally, in the light of Senator Fulbright's criticisms of US interventionism in the recent past, the essay draws towards its conclusion by specifically addressing the key questions of the whens, whys and wherefores of US intervention into and exits from international crises. It explores some of the problems posed by continuity and change in the struggle to adjust US foreign policy to a non-Cold War world and examines the wisdom of enthusiastic calls for the US to spread democracy abroad.

Introduction

These words beg more questions than they answer. Few would argue about the desirability, in principle, of security, prosperity and freedom, but there have always been disputes about how best to achieve them in a turbulent and often violent international setting. Throughout its history, these matters have occasioned a contentious debate about how the USA ought to relate to the rest of the world. In particular, how should it spread the light of liberty abroad and try to nurture democracy? Should it concentrate on creating a domestic example others would wish to emulate, or actively promote democracy by intervening in foreign realms? Two statements, one pronounced by Chairman Fulbright of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, when the Vietnam War was escalating out of control, the other by Secretary of State Albright, at the end of the first month of the NATO bombing campaign against Serb forces in Kosovo, demonstrate these radical alternatives.

[1] M. Albright, 'The Testing of American Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, 77: 6 (1998), pp. 50–64.

In our excessive involvement in the affairs of other countries we are not only living off our assets and denying our own people the proper enjoyment of their resources, we are also denying the world the example of a free society enjoying its freedom to the fullest. This is regrettable indeed for a nation that aspires to teach democracy to other nations, because, as Edmund Burke said, 'Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other'.[2]

During the NATO Summit, the President and our partners will discuss the need for a coordinated effort to consolidate democracy in Southeast Europe, promote economic integration and provide moral and material support to those striving to build societies based on law and respect for the rights of all.

Our explicit goal should be to transform the Balkans from the continent's primary source of instability into an integral part of the European mainstream. We do not want the current conflict to be the prelude to others, we want to build a solid foundation for a new generation of peace—so that future wars are prevented, economies grow, democratic institutions are strengthened and the rights of all preserved.[3]

The latter sounds rather disturbingly like the early 1960s rhetoric of nation building, 'stages of economic growth' (Walt Rostow) and those extravagant assertions about paying any price and carrying any burden to sustain liberty (John Kennedy). It also challenges claims about the demise of the spirit of assertive multilateralism in the aftermath of difficulties in Somalia in 1993. Recently, no less than at the onset of the Cold War, or in its most violent development in Vietnam, the rhetoric of the USA has often reverberated with the language of overstatement, idealism and overarching ambition for the spread of democracy and the free market. In its most proactive form, it has been applied to the desirability of US intervention in the affairs of other states, either unilaterally, or under the cloak of multilateralism.[4] This essay focuses on these issues and the changed conditions, which now, more than ever, seem to beckon US policymakers into an interventionist role in world affairs.[5]

In the post-Cold War world, Albright had a sense of being 'Present at the Creation' of a new dispensation, just as Dean Acheson had had at the onset of the Cold War, but she did not translate that sense of change into anything that should fundamentally complicate foreign policymaking. 'The test of our leadership, although far different in specifics, is essentially the same as that confronted by Acheson's generation. . . . The challenges we face, compared to those confronted by previous

[2] J.W. Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York, Vintage Books, 1966), p. 21.

[3] Secreary of State, Madeleine Albright before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 20 April 1999, text from the *United States Information Service*, 21 April 1999. The importance of understanding the terrain was very important so far as Albright was concerned because of her bullish attitude on US interventionism: 'The "Munich, not Vietnam" slogan became a familiar shorthand for her view that action is better than inaction, that great powers have an obligation to intervene against evil, and that the unique history of the United States gives this country the moral standing to weigh in on the side of good in almost any global trouble spot', from Thomas W. Lippman, *Madeleine Albright and the New American Diplomacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

[4] Norman Podhoretz, 'Strange Bedfellows: A Guide to the New Foreign-Policy Debates', *Commentary*, December 1999, www.commentarymagazine.com. 'Now (during the Clinton administrations), all of a sudden, the liberal community was sounding positively bloodthirsty'. According to Podhoretz, the cause of this was a combination of multilateralism, legitimising US interventions, and altruism, ibid., pp. 10–11.

[5] Early drafts of this article predated the 11 September 2001 outrages in the USA by many months. Those events have gone beyond beckoning and are now propelling the USA into more intervention, diplomatically and militarily, in the affairs of other states. Nevertheless, the note of caution that this article sounds is perhaps now even more important than before 11 September 2001.

generations, are harder to categorize, more diverse, and quicker to change. But the stakes have not changed.'[6] But trying to categorise the elements of continuity and change is not quite so easy as Albright might have us believe, and successful strategies for practical action depend, at least in part, on an accurate understanding of the terrain in the theatre of operation. What has happened to President Bush's 'new world order', the constraints of relative economic decline, and the reordering of US policy dictated by concerns of strategic overstretch? Do they not count any more? Were they over-exaggerated in the first place, or has the collapse of the Soviet superpower liberated the USA from most of their impact? Does the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar world, or, depending on which interpretation one subscribes to, through the unipolar moment to a multipolar world, not count more than in the specifics? Does the rise and rise of complex economic interdependence, non-state acts of terrorism, the proliferation of functional economic regimes and international organisations not impact in ways that fundamentally change the foreign relations of states? Does the growing importance of international norms and human rights and the global commons—health, population, food, environmental and drug concerns—not create an international consensus on a nucleus of values, which could facilitate multilateral interventions in ways that depart radically from past practice, which were frequently constrained by Cold War rivalries? Does the much-vaunted decline (or at least the radical transformation) of state sovereignty not diminish inhibitions about intervention? And finally, does the interplay between realism and idealism not go on as a defining feature of US foreign policy style with profound consequences for its content? Fully answering these questions may be beyond the scope of this essay, but they demonstrate the complexity of the agenda that must be addressed if Albright's claims are to be supported, refuted, or modified.

In what follows, the USA's style of foreign policy, its criteria for intervention in the affairs of other states, and scholarly attempts to explain the international terrain will be examined with a view to casting some light on how and why the USA has responded to the world outside its boundaries after the Cold War. This examination will include assessments of US interventions in Panama and Bosnia to see how actual practice fits with the prescriptions laid down by policymakers. Finally, in the light of Senator Fulbright's criticisms of US interventionism in the recent past, the essay draws towards its conclusion by specifically addressing the key questions of the whens, whys and wherefores of US intervention into and exits from international crises in the post-Cold War world. It explores some of the problems posed by continuity and change in the struggle to adjust US foreign policy to a non-Cold War world and examines the wisdom of enthusiastic calls for the US to spread democracy abroad.[7] In doing this, it will become apparent that there is often clear

[6] Ibid., pp. 51 and 64; D. Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

[7] For a representative selection of views on US democracy promotion and its problems see: Michael Cox, G. John Ickenberry, Takashi Inoguchi, *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Bruce W. Jentleson, *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Stanley Hoffman, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era* (Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield, 1998); James M. Scott (ed.), *After the End: Making US Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Theo Farrell, 'America's Misguided Mission', *Democracy by Force: US Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), review article of Karin von Hippel in *International Affairs*, 76: 3 (2000), pp. 583–92.

water between what policymakers say policy should be and what actually transpires, and confusion between practical reasoning and attempts to explain practice.[8] In a field dependent upon good practical reasoning to obtain the results desired, there is something slightly ironic that so many academics, not normally associated with the practical, should be concerned to assist policymakers. But, at least, even though their advice were to appear dubious, one should expect them to explain the terrain in which decisions are made accurately and unambiguously. Whether this is the case or not will be explored shortly.

Style

The USA, during the last twenty years of the Cold War, became concerned with what Henry Kissinger and George Shultz both saw as excessive fluctuations in US behaviour. As Secretaries of State, they espoused different policies: Kissinger embraced linkage; Shultz consciously and publicly rejected it, but they both saw the need for active engagement and negotiation with the Soviets to make the world safer and to promote US interests. Either of them could have written: 'Moral exuberance had inspired both over-involvement and isolationism. It was my conviction that a concept of our fundamental rational interests would provide a ballast of restraint and an assurance of continuity.'[9] This is in fact Kissinger speaking, and he was addressing a significant specific (as well as general) danger: the possibility that after the over-exuberant internationalism and the religious-like calling to defend democracy that had led to Vietnam, there would be a retreat into an equally dangerous isolationism that would leave the field clear for the communists to play their power games. That danger never materialised. Indeed, under President Carter there was a threat of a different kind, of over-involvement with his pursuit of human rights. In fact, in the end, the onset of the Second Cold War had more to do with Soviet over-exuberance than American, with their invasion of Afghanistan, deployment of a new generation of nuclear missiles, and their aggressive stance generally on Third World matters. This is not to say that the USA did not provoke and/or react forcefully. It did. But the realism respectively of George Shultz in the Reagan Administration and Shevardnaze and Gorbachev on the Soviet side kept the spirit of pragmatism alive despite harsh rhetoric and a massive arms build-up. Ironically, however, by the mid 1980s, as the structural weaknesses of the Soviet system became ostensible, the USA saw fresh opportunities to exploit by a renewed emphasis on the value of international support for democracy. This might have been seen previously as idealistic over-involvement, but in the hands of Reagan and Shultz it became a carefully calculated realist ploy to gain advantage in the Cold War and pursue US interests. The Reagan Doctrine was fully articulated in 1985, but much earlier in June 1983 Shultz outlined it to the US Senate: 'The forces of democracy around the

[8] I have dealt with this problem under a rather different focus in *US Economic Statecraft for Survival 1933–1991: Of Sanctions, Embargoes, and Economic Warfare* (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2002), ch. 11.

[9] H.A. Kissinger, *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson/Michael Joseph, 1979), p. 65.

world merit our standing with them: to abandon them would be a shameful betrayal —a betrayal not only of brave men and women but of our highest ideals.'[10] With the benefit of post-Vietnam hindsight, similar rhetoric from John Kennedy in 1961 sounds extravagant and unrealistic. With the hindsight of knowing the outcome of the Cold War the Reagan Doctrine sounds simply like a well-calculated realist tactic for the pursuit of US interests.

From Kissinger to Shultz there was an attempt (even under the more ambiguous policies of the Carter Administration) to reorient US foreign policy to a more pragmatic, hard-nosed assessment of US interests. Ironically, by the mid 1980s part of this new realism involved a renewed commitment to support democracy throughout the world. No longer was this seen as a dangerous and extravagant idealistic over-commitment. Instead, concrete pay-offs were expected. It would demonstrate the bankruptcy of the Soviet regime, encourage dissent within the Soviet Union, help destabilise the orbits of satellites like Poland, and challenge the international pretensions of communism. Much to the amazement of neorealists, the Soviet Union collapsed not because of the overt use of power within the anarchic state system, but because of internal problems and the corrosion of beliefs within the Soviet empire, which were partly the result of America's promotion of democratic values.[11] This had impact on what followed because of the efficacy those values seemed to have had in accelerating the dissolution of the communist establishment. While some US policymakers tried to sustain pragmatic consideration of US national interests, at the same time, the lexicon of the foreign policy debate became infused with both the international triumphalism of democracy, most famously expressed in Francis Fukuyama's essay 'The End of History',[12] and the democratic peace theory. Coined in such phrases as 'democracies do not go to war with each other', and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake's commitment to the 'enlargement of democracy and free markets' in his September 1993 'enlargement speech', such language and ideas gained currency.[13] The new foreign policy agenda of the USA, which had set course in the 1970s for a more pragmatic cautious form of realism, was now being recontaminated by what seemed remarkably like conceptions of old fashioned Wilsonian idealism. The difference was that with the 'end of history' it was a realistic objective to pursue democratic values internationally, whereas when the world was riven between democracy and a succession of powerful

[10] G. Schultz, *Triumph and Turmoil: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1993), p. 526.

[11] J.L. Gaddis, 'International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, 17, 1993, pp. 5–58. If neorealism is the leading (in the language of post-positivists/postmodernists) IR metanarrative, then no wonder that the postmodernists have had an intellectual field day. Whether all other pre-postmodern explanations/accounts of international relations are metanarratives in the way that postmodernists allege is another matter, but for an interesting critique of neorealism and for ideas about a possible alternative to the metanarratives of pre-postmodernism see respectively in Alan P. Dobson (ed.) with S. Malik and G. Evans, *Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Cold War* (Andover, UK: Ashgate, 1999), Alastair Murray, 'Reconstructing the Cold War: The Evolution of a Consuming Paradigm', pp. 25–44, and Charles Reynolds, 'Explaining the Cold War', pp. 44–67.

[12] F. Fukyama, 'The End of History', *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), pp. 3–16.

[13] M. Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12 (1983), pp. 205–35; for a more recent exposition see his 'Peace, Liberty and Democracy: Realists and Liberals Contest a Legacy', in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion* (n. 7 above); J. Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1997).

totalitarian opponents, it had not been. Democratic enlargement became one of the buzz-concepts of US foreign policy, but the way the Cold War ended gave a misleading impression of the compatibility of the pursuit of democratic values abroad with the realist agenda in the new world order.[14]

Criteria

Why, how, when, and where to engage US forces overseas have been questions in the forefront of American minds, since the Vietnam *imbroglio*. These are important and particularly problematical questions for liberal democracies, which on the one hand affirm the sanctity of autonomous state sovereignty in domestic affairs, but trumpet abroad the universalism of human rights on the other. There is insufficient space here to review the academic literature on this question,[15] but for our purposes it is more important to get some idea of what the USA presently practises. During the last decade or so, the political morality of US interventionism seems to have been largely taken for granted under the guise of nurturing democracy or providing humanitarian help, and debate has simply centred on calculations of costs and exit strategies.[16]

Although the end of the Cold War liberated the USA from some longstanding systemic constraints and opened up new possibilities for multilateral security operations, there remained substantial worries and concerns about future US interventionism. Back in 1984, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, at the National Press Club on 28 November, promulgated the Weinberger Doctrine, which laid down guidelines for the overseas use of military power.

1. Our vital interests must be at stake.
2. The issues are so important for the future of the United States and our allies that we are prepared to commit enough forces to win.

[14] For the pragmatic form of US realism, see Robert S. Litwak**,** *Detente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969–76* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For fascinating insights into the Cold War, spiced with some traces of Western triumphalism, 'Perhaps the pond had simply dried up [for totalitarianism]', see John L. Gaddis*, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 295. For the latter part of the Cold War, see Raymond Garthoff**,** *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1985). And for a provocative view of the end of the Cold War, see Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, 'The Cold War ended when Soviet leaders became committed to domestic reform and to a concept of common security that built on the reality of nuclear deterrence, and when Western leaders reassured and reciprocated'**,** *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 376.

[15] T.G. Weiss, D.P. Forsythe and R.A. Coate, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), appendix A. A good introduction to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate in IR is in C. Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992). This debate in its broader political theory incarnation was sparked off by Michael Sandel in his *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 [2nd edn. 1998]), which challenged the ideas of John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971): the best commentary on this debate is S. Mulhall and A. Swift*, Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

[16] This is not to ignore the cutting-edge work by American political philosophers on justice and its implications for multiculturalism and international relations. For entry into this field, see Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

3. We have clearly defined political and military objectives, which we must secure.
4. We have sized our forces to achieve our objectives.
5. We have some reasonable assurance of the support of the American people.
6. US forces are committed to combat only as a last resort.[17]

These criteria did not ignite a moral debate in Washington, nor did they receive unanimous agreement. Weinberger's counterpart at the State Department, George Shultz, believed that the USA had to be both more assertive and prepared to take greater risks, as indeed his department had done over the US invasion of Grenada in 1983—'The entire Grenada operation was driven by the State Department.'[18] Despite Weinberger's failure to reflect the moral complexities of intervention in his guidelines, or to get consensus on them within the Reagan Administration, they nevertheless constituted a general official guideline until the end of the Cold War demanded their refinement.

The end of the Cold War accelerated a trend to see the concept of security in a different light. Liberated from the constraints of bipolarity, which was bedrocked, in security terms, on the respective nuclear deterrents of the two superpowers, less traditional notions of security began to gain currency. This was part of a general shift in IR studies away from seeing the nation state as the primary actor. The result was a proliferation of studies that explored what Arnold Wolfer's benchmark article in the early 1950s had called the inherently ambiguous concept of security.[19] After being locked into the confines of superpower military rivalry for over forty years, all of a sudden this branch of IR studies was liberated and able to consider more broadly-cast definitions that had previously been pushed to the periphery or totally excluded from consideration by the imperative of survival in a nuclear-perilous world. According to writers such as Buzan, in his widely read *People, States and Fear,*[20] there was need for radical change which would incorporate crime, drugs, health, economics, and identity among other factors into studies of security communities. These ideas further complicated conceptions of the international terrain that confronted the USA after the end of the Cold War. The main American response was in terms of three priorities: first to emphasise the importance of democracy and human rights; secondly, and largely complementary to the first, advocacy of and expansion of the free market; and thirdly, emphasis on regional security problems that impacted either on its first two priorities, or directly on US national interests that were now more flexibly defined to incorporate some of the new security thinking.

[17] C. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990).

[18] Shultz, *Triumph and Turmoil*, p. 343.

[19] A Wolfers, 'National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol', *Political Science Quarterly*, 67 (1952), pp. 483–92.

[20] B. Buzan, *People States and Fear* (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Simon & Schuster, 1991). For more recent discussion about security under conditions of increasing globalisation and the changing character of state sovereignty (albeit that the modern character of sovereignty is still hotly contested), see Martin Shaw, *Global Society and International Relations* (Cambridge, 1994). For an interesting debate which casts light on post-Cold War security questions and on different attitudes towards modern sovereignty see 'Realism vs Cosmopolitanism: a debate between Barry Buzan and David Held conducted by Anthony McGrew', *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), pp. 387–98.

President George Bush and his Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, reoriented US policy to regional conflicts. As Powell put it, the Cold War 'US—Soviet standoff imposed a sort of bipolar lock on the world and, in many ways, held the world together. That lock has been removed. New tectonic plates shift beneath us, causing instability in a dozen different places.'[21] The Cold War with its nuclear dangers might be over, but 'America must shoulder the responsibility of its power. The last best hope of earth has no other choice. We must lead.'[22] There would be no wild oscillation away from internationalism into isolationism, as some advocated, such as the right-wing Republican Pat Buchanan, but while regionalism was the new focus, the actual criteria for going in or staying out seemed remarkably similar to those enunciated by Weinberger under the previous dispensation.

The new strategy envisaged by Bush and Powell involved dealing with capabilities and threats. 'Conceptually we refer to our new capabilities-oriented armed forces as "the Base Force". This concept provides for military forces focused on the Atlantic region, the Pacific region, contingencies in other regions and on continued nuclear deterrence.'[23] Powell further explained that:

> When a 'fire' starts that might require committing armed forces, we need to evaluate the circumstances. Relevant questions include: Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?[24]

At the end of Bush's presidency Powell recorded a litany of successful US missions: they harmonised well with the new post-Cold War security agenda. Ranging from removing a dictator in Panama and using limited force to support democracy in the Philippines, to rescuing both the US embassy in Somalia and international citizens from Liberia, to mounting the Gulf War and humanitarian relief operations in Iraq, Somalia, Bangladesh, Russia and Bosnia the reason 'for our success is that in every instance we have carefully matched the use of military force to our political objectives.'[25]

But just how accurately does this sum up the US experience during these crucial hinge years of the closing of the Cold War and the opening onto a new world order? One of the things that Bush had suggested was that there was indeed something new in international relations because of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Just what this newness consisted of is subject to various interpretations, but amidst the clamour of debate certain claims seemed to be widely heard: no more bipolar world; more scope for co-operation and multilateral action; more scope for freedom, democracy and the free market; and more ability to concentrate on that broader conception of security which Cold War nuclear priorities had pushed to the periphery. At the same time, according to the Weinberger rules of engagement as refined by Bush and Powell, there would be more need to look to regional crises and assess US policies

[21] C. Powell, 'Enormous Power, Sobering Responsibility', *Foreign Affairs*, 70: 5 (1992), pp. 32–46, at 41.
[22] Ibid., p. 33.
[23] Ibid., p. 41.
[24] Ibid., p. 38.
[25] Ibid., p. 39.

by carefully balancing objectives, power and likely outcomes. US intervention in Panama in 1989 provided an early benchmark to gauge the extent to which the new US foreign policy fitted in practice with its template of criteria for, and aims of, intervention.

The invasion of Panama

The problem was General Manuel Noriega. A one-time recruit of the CIA when Bush had been Director in the 1970s, Noriega in the late 1980s was now no friend of the USA. He voided the May 1989 Panama elections and remained stubbornly in power threatening, as Bush claimed on 20 December in justification of the US invasion, American lives, democracy and the integrity of the Panama Treaty: in addition he was an active agent in the illegal drugs industry.[26] The range of concerns reflected the broad criteria of the new security agenda and its regional focus. However, the new template was not always closely followed. There were no concerted attempts to mount a multilateral response to the crisis (weak attempts at mediation by the OAS soon failed), and even the weighing up of costs and benefits appeared to be more cavalier than one might have expected. What Senator Fulbright once termed 'the arrogance of power' was rather too evident in the final decision to intervene.

In the key decision-making discussions, 'George Bush sat like a patron on a bar stool coolly observing a brawl while his advisers went hard at it.'[27] National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft wanted to know possible casualty numbers and what would happen if Noriega got away. No one could give him answers. But it was anticipated that a lot of 'real estate would get chewed up' and that there would be 'chaos' in the early stages. In other words there was no guarantee that if American forces went in that they would be able to control the situation. According to Powell:

> The key issue remained whether we had sufficient provocation to act. We had reasons—Noriega's contempt for democracy; his drug trafficking and indictment, the death of the American Marine, the threat to our treaty rights to the canal with this unreliable figure ruling Panama. And, unspoken, there was George Bush's personal antipathy to Noriega, a third-rate dictator thumbing his nose at the United States. I shared that distaste.
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> . . . The questions continued thick and fast, until it started to look as if we were drifting away from the decision at hand. . . . But then Bush, after everyone had had his say, gripped the arms of his chair and rose. 'Okay, let's do it', he said. 'The hell with it'.[28]

So much, one might say, for careful and objective application of the rules of engagement. Old fashioned hegemony over the Western Hemisphere and the long US tradition of unilateral military action there tell us more about the invasion of Panama than the new security agenda, the rules of engagement for regional crises, democratic enlargement, and the desirability of multilateral operations. With regard to Panama there does indeed seem to be continuity in US foreign policy, though not necessarily quite in the way that Albright was later to talk of it. But then is the

[26] Dumbrell, *US Foreign Policy*, p. 133.
[27] C. Powell, *A Soldier's Way* (London: Hutchinson, 1995), p. 424.
[28] Ibid., p. 425.

character of the Panama operation really surprising, because for all the talk of new world orders Bush remained stubbornly conservative and realist in his foreign policy. Even in the Gulf War, while it seemed to promise much for the future with co-operation from Russia and with the imagery of multilateralism, one could also account for affairs in traditional realist terms invoking national interests over oil supplies and the need to get others to pay for the military operation because of continuing fears about US overstretch and relative economic decline. Furthermore, while Powell and others later held up the Gulf War as a prime example of how to intervene in a regional crisis, nevertheless one of the cardinal contemporary rules of engagement was not applied. An exit strategy was never fully worked out. Ten years on, substantial US military forces still police the area and seek to ensure the success of the UN mission concerning weapons of mass destruction. The end scenario is uncannily similar to the Korean experience and both should tell us something of the dangers of intervening in an attempt to control situations. Neither the strategy for Panama or for the Gulf War appear to have been clear at the outset: in Panama, if Noriega had escaped, things could have run out of control; in the Gulf, the absence of an effective exit strategy means that a running out of control is still possible.

Thus despite the declaratory rhetoric, there remained uncertainty about the way the international system had changed and considerable ambiguity about both the style of US foreign policy and the application of its criteria for engagement in regional crises. For a while, the Clinton Administration looked set to disperse that ambiguity and come out and commit the USA more fully and actively to democratic enlargement, humanitarian causes and human rights, and multilateralism through the media of organisations such as the UN, NATO and the OAS. To see whether or not this materialised, Bosnia is a good test case, however, before looking at US intervention in Bosnia, we need to review Clinton's policy positions on interventionism and introduce another element into our considerations, which so far has only been given passing mention: US capabilities in the post-Cold War world.

Criteria again—Clinton administration's policy on interventionism—and capabilities

In 1992 Bill Clinton won the presidential election and in January 1993 ushered in a new administration. Clinton committed the USA to a much more proactive position on intervention through assertive multilateralism. On appointing Madeleine Albright as the US Permanent Ambassador to the UN in January 1993, he explained that with the end of the Cold War the USA was well placed to play a 'central and positive role for peace'.[29] Several in the Clinton team, including National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and Albright, both as Ambassador to the UN and Secretary of State, were enthusiastically committed to an active US policy that would not shy away from intervention and which upheld the principle of expanding both the free market and democracy.[30] It was widely expected that the review Clinton ordered of

[29] Quoted from Michael G MacKinnon, *The Evolution of Peacekeeping Policy Under Clinton: A Fairweather Friend?* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. xv.
[30] Lippman, *Madeleine Albright*.

peacekeeping operations, which emerged in 1994 as PDD 25, would follow in the wake of the administration's enthusiasm for assertive multilateralism. But, it did not. Between its inception and the issuing of the report came disaster in Somalia when 18 US Rangers, under UN operational command, were killed on 3 October 1993 by local bandits. As a result, partly because of Congressional pressures and partly because of lack of courage on the part of Clinton and key figures within his government, PDD 25 by May 1994 had been turned into a much more cautious policy document than had originally been expected.[31] 'Clinton ultimately signed a document which signalled a complete reversal of what he had intended to sign 14 months earlier.'[32] He rejected assertive multilateralism and adopted a cautious set of guidelines that harked back to the Weinberger–Powell Doctrine.

The concern with capabilities is threefold: first, without capability the debate about criteria for intervention is moot; secondly, relatively reduced capabilities have been closely linked with more emphasis on multilateral operations; and thirdly, one line of ethical argument is that not only should there be sufficient capability to intervene, but it must also be of a quality and quantity to be able to produce more efficacious results than if intervention were not undertaken in the first place. For the present only the first two points will be addressed, consideration of the third will come later.

An early survey of post-Cold War literature observed that 'most multilateralists are skeptical of the argument that the United States has either the capability or the prerogative to lead the world.'[33] That perception of shortfall in capability was partly formed as a result of the debate about US decline that had raged in the 1980s and it led some US realists to see multilateralism, not as some form of idealist version of collective security, but as a cheaper and more effective way of implementing US national interests under conditions of relatively diminishing resources. In his *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,*[34] Paul Kennedy's theory of imperial overstretch appeared germane to contemporary US experience in the 1980s, but it was challenged, among others, by Joseph Nye in *Bound to Lead,*[35] Samuel Huntington in 'The US—Decline or Renewal?'[36] and Susan Strange in 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony'.[37] The anti-declinist arguments range from the claim that Kennedy used a misleading baseline from which to calculate US economic strength, that is, the US position in 1945 was grossly inflated because of the short-term effects of World War II, to claims that he had misunderstood the nature of modern economic power and that in all key sectors the USA is still preponderant. The complexity of the modern world, the ambiguous nature of the concept of power, and the contingencies that afflict the position of states, even states as powerful as the USA, in a constantly changing world, make it impossible to resolve this debate satisfactorily.

[31] MacKinnon, *Evolution of Peacekeeping*, and in particular annex 1, PDD 25; Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Washington,DC: Brookings Institute, 1999).

[32] MacKinnon, *Evolution of Peacekeeping*, p. 32.

[33] K.W. Styles, *Case Histories in International Politics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 132.

[34] P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987).

[35] J. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

[36] S. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations', *Foreign Affairs*, 72: 3 (1993), pp. 22–49.

[37] S. Strange, 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony', *International Organisation*, 41: 4 (1987), pp. 551–74.

However, in the meantime, it is difficult not to be impressed by Martin Walker's claim that the price of US hegemony 'can no longer be described as burdensome'.[38] The 1996 cost of the US military was less than 4 per cent of GDP—the smallest percentage since 1940. For this outlay the USA maintained a technologically superior arsenal, a powerful Rapid Deployment Force, had 20,000 troops in Bosnia, and 100,000 in Europe and Asia respectively, patrolled the waters off Taiwan and in the Persian Gulf, and enforced the no-fly zone in Iraq, to name only the highest profile US international military roles. The conduits of US hegemony apparently still ring the world, keeping it safe for liberalism, the free market, and democracy.[39] By 1998, with the employment rate and inflation down, and GDP growth running at 4 per cent, some academics were talking of a Second American Century. 'The American economy is in the eighth year of sustained growth that transends the "German miracle" and the "Japanese miracle" of earlier decades'.[40] There are still doubting Thomases, but they speak with muted voices compared to the heady declinist days of the 1980s. What is at issue for us in all this are suggestive conclusions about the two issues at hand: the US presently does still have the capability to continue to intervene on a massive scale in the affairs of other states (irrespective of what might be the case in the near future); and, if it wishes, to do so unilaterally, though multilaterally may often be a preferred option in order to gain the moral high ground and spread costs.

Intervening in Bosnia

As Clinton came into office there were still ongoing debates within Washington about the future role of the USA in international affairs: options ranged from a neo-isolationist fortress America, to unilateral or multilateral interventions either to protect US interests, or for humanitarian or democratic causes. In the election campaign Clinton had been critical of Bush and had spoken out in favour of a more positive US policy on Bosnia. However, at the same time the most resonant anecdote of the 1992 election was: 'its the economy stupid'. Clinton expended most of his energies in the early years of his first administration on domestic issues, or on foreign economic issues such as the North American Free Trade Area. On Bosnia both rhetoric and policy fluctuated wildly. But, the bottom line until 1995 was that the USA maintained a distance between itself and a formal peacekeeping intervention, though it provided intelligence and military supplies and helped to broker the Bosnian-Croat alliance. Nevertheless, Clinton averred that there were no US interests directly involved and public opinion did not mandate a more vigorous line. However, while the rhetoric and policy prevaricated, the Bottom-Up Review of military strategy initiated by the president was released in September 1993 and appeared to confirm the internationalist and Wilsonian idealist aspects of Clinton's

[38] M. Walker, 'The New American Hegemony', *World Policy Journal*, 13: 1 (1996), pp. 18–26, at 21.

[39] Alan P. Dobson, 'Britain, the USA and the Question of Hegemony', in Geir Lundestad (ed.), *No End to Alliance: the United States and Western Europe, Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 134–67.

[40] M.B. Zuckerman, 'A Second American Century', *Foreign Affairs*, 77: 3 (1998), pp. 18–31.

rhetoric. Apart from the more predictable conclusions about maintaining technological superiority and restricting the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the emphasis was on regional conflicts, US ability to deal with two major ones simultaneously, and the fostering of democratic values and preparedness to 'participate effectively in multilateral peace enforcement and unilateral intervention operations that could include peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, counter-drug and counter-terrorism activities.'[41] So, regional intervention policy was still the main focus with a stronger commitment than Bush's to democratic enlargement. The death of US soldiers in Somalia in October 1993 and the subsequent US withdrawal had impact on Clinton's policy and made him more cautious, but neither the Administration nor public opinion turned sharply away from internationalism and US policy in Bosnia was transformed in 1995, despite PDD 25, with the commitment of 20,000 US troops, the launching of the Holbrooke mission which led to the Dayton Accords and the now ongoing US military presence in Bosnia.[42] Was this brought about because of a purposeful commitment to humanitarian interventionism and democracy? Warren Bass gives an emphatic 'no' in answer to that question. He speaks of the USA 'Blundering into Boldness'.

> The State Department's Bosnia study confirms that most senior foreign policy officials, most notably the president himself, were surprised to learn in June 1995 that U.S. troops might soon be on their way to Bosnia whether the administration liked it or not. The confusion stemmed from an earlier presidential decision that, should the situation on the ground become chaotic enough to prevent UNPROFOR . . . from functioning, NATO would intervene to help the blue helmets flee. . . . While an intervention to limit U.N. failure would be dangerous and humiliating, the White House figured that reneging on its promise to NATO would destroy the remains of its credibility and devastate an already frayed alliance. . . . What one Clinton adviser called "the single most difficult decision of [Clinton's] presidency—to send troops to Bosnia" has been made without anyone realizing it.[43]

US intervention in Bosnia does not appear to have been decided on because of any directly threatened US interest; democratic enlargement was hardly a primary consideration; humanitarian pay-offs were forthcoming, but the ethnic cleansing of previous years only brought forth wordy condemnation and little action—and the final decision to go in was not precipitated by humanitarian moral outrage; only lip-service was paid to exit strategy; and capability was not an issue. US intervention appears as the result of contingency, poor administration in the White House, lack of careful consideration of what appeared to be a limited engagement (to help UN forces pull out), and overuse of idealistic rhetoric which helped to create a more receptive domestic US response to intervention in Bosnia when it actually came.[44]

So, where does all this leave US policy and its criteria for intervention in regional crises? From what has been argued so far it is clear that there is some mismatch

[41] C.W. Kegley and E.R. Witkopf, *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* (New York, St. Martin's, 1995), p. 415.
[42] For US public opinion and Somalia see Kull and Destler, *Misreading the Public*.
[43] W. Bass, 'The Triage of Dayton', *Foreign Affairs*, 77: 5 (1998), pp. 95–108, at 99.
[44] For an insight into the early administrative chaos in the White House see William Doyle, *Inside the Oval Office: The White House Tapes From FDR to Clinton* (London: London House, 1999).

between theoretical models/explanations of the post-Cold War world and the experience of US foreign policy, as well as between actual policy and guidelines drawn up by US policymakers. Part of the problem lies with the complexity of the post-Cold War world and the inadequacy of models to deal with it, part of it lies with unclear thinking that mixes up and confuses practical reasoning with explanation, and part of it lies with a tendency to believe in rules of engagement that generate over-optimistic faith in their power to prevent the USA from becoming over-entangled in the affairs of other states.

The new scenario—defining the terrain

The questions of how to conceptualise and how to deal with the post-Cold War world, have brought forth a bewildering array of answers which are often mutually incompatible. The range covers the following: hegemony theory with an inclination to the idea of a unipolar system with great scope for US intervention;[45] a back-to-the-future multipolarity in which there are at present no potential hegemonic challengers to justify a large counterbalancing overseas US military presence;[46] a fear of clashing civilisations which would compound the problem of morally justifying cross-cultural interventions;[47] a neorealist scenario of nuclear proliferation which would make intervention prohibitively dangerous;[48] democratic enlargement driven by complex economic interdependence and the demands of the global commons which would eventually bring peace and prosperity to the world, but in the meantime existing democracies remain challenged by the question of whether to intervene or not in states during their transitional phase to democracy;[49] the emergence of regional and competitive blocs in an anarchic world system where blocs replace states as the main actors. And all these are largely at the policy-oriented level. Once one turns to more purely theoretical innovations the possible perspectives proliferate even more with the postmodernist/post-positivist attack on what they claim to be the metanarratives of traditional IR (that is, explanations with some form of truth claim based on a foundational, or convention-based epistemological position) and the emphasis on deconstruction, the celebration of a multiplicity of different narratives and the claim that any dominant narrative is the product of power. With so many different and competing theoretical models to choose from, IR studies may be compounding the very problem it set out to solve, namely, to represent the system in a conceptually simplified way so that it can be understood/explained and effective action taken, most importantly of all to avoid

[45] Walker, *American Hegemony*; Nye*, Bound to Lead*; T. Smith, 'In Defense of Intervention', *Foreign Affairs*, 73: 6 (1994), pp. 34–47; Zuckerman, *Second American Century*.
[46] J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, 15: 1 (1990), pp. 5–57.
[47] Huntington, *Clash of Civilisations*.
[48] K. Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Relations', *International Security*, 18 (1993), pp. 44–79.
[49] J.R. Huntley, *Pax Democratica: A Strategy for the 21st Century* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998); Doyle, *Liberal Legacies.*

war.[50] But, the confusion does not end here. The new security agenda also has problems.

The new approach to security, best exemplified by Buzan,[51] which embraces economic, identity and other security concerns and which de-emphasises but does not abandon states in favour of security communities, has been forcefully challenged by Baldwin and Freedman. Baldwin criticises Buzan for intermingling conceptual and empirical analysis, which he claims creates confusion. 'Understanding the concept of security is a fundamentally different kind of intellectual exercise from specifying the conditions under which security may be attained. Indeed, conceptual clarification logically precedes the search for the necessary conditions of security, because the identification of such [empirical] conditions presupposes a concept of security.'[52] If agreement about conceptual clarity and its role in security studies cannot be agreed upon by security experts then what hope is there for the poor benighted policymaker who is pressed by circumstance and time to make a decision? Thus, not only do we have a bewildering and often mutually incompatible range of models and scenarios to represent international relations, but we also have radical disagreement about what security is and how it is to be pursued.

Freedman's criticism is more straightforward, at least in its declaratory nature.

> Once anything that generates anxiety or threatens the quality of life in some respect becomes labelled a 'security problem', the field risks losing all focus. Such an agenda is conceivably rich, and is certainly inclusive, but it can also be off-puttingly vague. Practitioners are likely to reach inappropriate conclusions if they insist on squeezing issues that vary so widely into one, unsuitably broad, conceptual framework geared toward dealing with military threats.[53]

So, from an agenda that, among other things, sought to broaden the concept of security to make it more relevant and useful for policymakers in the new post-Cold War dispensation, yet another academic disagreement has arisen. So far as Baldwin and Freedman are concerned the new security scholarship is conceptually confused and inappropriately focused: one might note that these are the very same criticisms levelled at 'old security studies'. As we have noted, there is little doubt that the USA has the capability for intervention, but exactly what kind of world it is intervening in and what notion of security it should develop appear to be ontological and conceptual challenges that IR studies have done as much to obfuscate as to clarify.

The character of the new US foreign policy

In this perilously complex world what has been the dominant style of US response? Certainly the dominant rhetoric has shifted towards idealism, even if actual practice

[50] For some interesting comments on post-Cold War IR theory see Georg Sorensen, 'IR Theory After the Cold War', *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), pp. 83–100, though I think that the advocacy of adopting a middle ground between positivism and postmodernism does not solve the problem addressed.

[51] Buzan, *People, States and Fear*.

[52] D. Baldwin, 'The Concept of Security', *Review of International Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 5–26, at 8.

[53] L. Freedman, 'International Security: Changing Targets', *Foreign Policy*, 110 (1998), pp. 48–63, at 53.

has retained a degree of caution and pragmatism.[54] But, one of the earlier arguments claimed that US idealism in the post-Cold War scenario had moved closer to realism in that its goals seemed to be more achievable. Democratic triumphalism has had impact. In 1994 an article in the leading policy journal *Foreign Affairs* lamented Clinton's failure to pursue this agenda vigorously.

> Much suffering could be spared if the United States, working with other countries through multilateral institutions like the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), or NATO, took a clear position on what is not tolerable in world affairs and then moved decisively to enforce the collective will in areas where such efforts could produce results. A historical opportunity to give structure and meaning to the post-Cold War world is being missed and will be ever more difficult to recover later.[55]

This liberal democratic agenda envisaging widespread interventions to enlarge democracy and enforce standards of conduct and human rights, operates from a number of assumptions, which both beg important questions at the heart of the debate between cosmopolitans and communitarians and always (or nearly always) tends to identify the position of the USA with the collective good. These ideas have arisen in various forms in the rhetoric and policy statements of the USA. In *Pax Democratica*, James R. Huntley, with the approbation of Lawrence Eagleburger, proposes an alliance of democracies, working together to foster economic and security communities that would be able to act multilaterally in promoting an ever enlarging peaceful democratic community. But, it would be one that was ready to intervene to put right the wrongs of non-democratic states. In considering how to implement this, however, Huntley identifies the realist rub for multilateralism:

> At least initially, the United States probably would not accept a situation in which it could be committed to war against its will; the voting must be carefully calculated. On the other hand, it should not be possible for Luxembourg, or Portugal, or even France or Britain alone, to immobilize the Alliance in the face of a preponderant majority.[56]

It seems rather anomalous in this idealistic game that respect for *force majeure* could trump what is right (assuming that the USA is not infallible) and that there should be one rule for the strongest and another for all the rest. In fact this new idealism appears to be premised on three very shaky foundations: first that there are no alternatives to Western liberal democracy worthy of serious consideration; second that democracies are inherently peaceful and hence that they do not go to war with each other; and thirdly that under US leadership there will be a growth of multilateral actions. The first assumption exhibits a closed mind that seems to be alien to the very tradition that has spawned it. The second, even if it were true, would still pose problems for relations with non-democratic states. And the third has not only the serious defect identified and glossed over by Huntley, but also a series of *de facto* problems namely: US unwillingness to act decisively on global warming; its reluctance to pay its UN dues; and—

> American reservations surfaced during the past year in negotiations to ban anti-personnel land mines, to prohibit the use of child soldiers, and to establish an international criminal

[54] See Michael Cox, 'Wilsonianism Resurgent? The Clinton Administration and the Promotion of Democracy', in Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, pp. 218–43.
[55] Smith, *In Defense of Intervention*, p. 35.
[56] Huntley, *Pax Democratica*, p. 164.

court. In each case, Washington paid lip service to the proposal while U.S. negotiators worked hard to weaken it. Because of these reservations, the international community has shown a new willingness to bypass the United States in strengthening human rights law.[57]

The conclusion from all this is that on the one hand, in practice, the USA does not live up to its own professed ideals. From this perspective it looks to outsiders as if the USA is manipulating the language of idealism to further its own interests and its purpose is thus no different from that which uses traditional forms of power for achieving security in an anarchic world order. On the other hand US rhetoric suggests that realism and idealism are reconciled by the implicit claim that American ideals are universally valid—democratic enlargement and promotion of the free market—and by the implicit assumption that the USA has the power to realise this new world order—'a historical opportunity to give structure and meaning to the post-Cold War world.'[58] This attitude not only dismisses the debate between the cosmopolitans and communitarians too lightly, it also raises important practical problems. Among these is the danger of rhetoric acquiring a life of its own, particularly in democratic states where popular pressures and demands can turn the rhetoric around to press decision-makers into more consistency with their expressed ideals than they ever intended. The act of juggling national interests with altruistic ideals then becomes lopsided towards ideals until it leads into expensive national interest costs. If the rhetoric of idealism continues to suggest it might be otherwise, or that there is no difference between the ideals of the USA and those of other states properly understood, then at best there will be confusion, at worst imprudent and expensive commitments that will neither benefit the USA or the world community. In other words, the USA may be in danger of another bout of the 'arrogance of power' as it unilaterally makes its way in the world, sometimes under the cloak of multilateralism, to spread democracy and the free market. To illustrate more clearly the dangerous practical consequences inherent in this, the argument will shortly return to the issue of criteria for US intervention.

So far I have suggested that IR models of the post-Cold War world and the new security agenda have done little to make the job of practical and strategic reasoning by policy-makers easier. Indeed, the conflicting opinions about what the world out there is really like and what an appropriate security agenda might be may have puzzled and confused policymakers more than it has helped them. This is particularly worrying when the capability question seems, for the time being, to have been decided in favour of US ability to act widely in the international sphere, either unilaterally or multilaterally. In short, with American intervention capability intact and with inhibitions about intervention weakening as Vietnam recedes, as traditional notions of state sovereignty wane, and as the end of the Cold War has removed the danger of opposing countermoves by another superpower, the time for US interventionism appears to be ripe. On the style of US foreign policymaking we have seen that there has been a revival of Wilsonian idealism that has gained considerable leverage, partly because it seems a more realistic enterprise than before to try to

[57] K. Roth, 'Sidelined on Human Rights: America Bows Out', *Foreign Affairs*, 77: 2 (1998), pp. 2–6, at 2. In early 2001 Clinton signed up to the establishment of an international criminal court, but there is little chance of the US Senate ratifying that.

[58] Smith, *In Defense of Intervention*, p. 35.

implement globally the ideals of American liberal democracy. In weighing up whether or not to take action, the scales now seem to be on a table tilted in favour of intervention. However, while many feel that the table should be tilted in this way, it is instructive to note that the intellectual foundations upon which it rests are shaky, the rhetoric that surrounds it can confuse, complicate and mislead, and hopes for multilateralism seem over-optimistic and based on an over-simplistic analysis. This simplicity is evident in the criteria for intervention and the unwarranted faith in exit strategies.

Intervention and exit strategies

Much of the debate about criteria for US intervention has fed off the longstanding concern about just wars, but at the same time has neglected the difficulty of calculating moral costs, especially those that might be incurred because of events running out of control, in favour of emphasis on rather mechanical assessments of the problems of intervening in and exiting from a foreign state. In an article in the late 1980s Gordon Graham highlighted two important issues that have often been overlooked in more recent times. He begins the crucial part of his argument by claiming that the key features of just war theory are:

> Intervention must be in a good cause. Those who intervene must have a reasonable hope that their intervention will be successful. The evil and damage which the intervention entails must be judged proportionate to the harm it is designed to remedy.[59]

Graham acknowledges that many of the terms in this definition may be interpreted to suit the state interests of the intervener and will thus in effect be communitarian values masquerading as cosmopolitan or universal values, but he claims that there are some objective standards that could be agreed. '. . . whether the intervention contemplated by a state is indeed a just cause, as that state conceives a just cause, will be a matter of fact . . .,'[60] If the USA says that it is intervening in Central America in order to promote democracy and defend civil rights, then the justice of the intervention will depend upon:

> its being the case that democratic freedoms for the individual do not at present exist, that the steps employed do actually make the emergence of such institutions more likely, and that the benefits of such a result, to the inhabitants of Central America, are likely to be greater than the evident costs.[61]

In short there are criteria that can be used to assess the effectiveness of interventions, but only after the event. This should not come as a surprise as the key question to be asked of strategies for action is: Do they work? Graham believes that this criterion exposes how short of the mark most interventions fall. But he wants to

[59] G. Graham, 'The Justice of Interventionism', *Review of International Studies*, 13: 2 (1987), pp. 133–47, at 142. A more recent work which sheds light on these issues is the collection of essays in Terry Nardin (ed.), *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[60] Graham, *The Justice of Interventionism*, p. 142.

[61] Ibid., p. 143.

say more than this. He believes that two features of intervention strongly mitigate against success, irrespective of the quality or quantity of the means of intervention. The first is lack of control by the intervener, especially in countries where culture and values may not be fully understood. The second problem is that intervention by definition is something short of conquest and thus in the end, once the exit strategy has been implemented, the intervener is dependent upon third parties for consolidating or carrying forward whatever success might have been achieved. This factor, more than anything else, compounds the problem of controlling the situation in order to effect change—the goal at the heart of every intervention.

Conclusion

A sense of democratic triumphalism has encouraged an over-optimism that sees US ideals and interests reconciled through the idea that the US system is good, and what is good in Washington is good everywhere else. That in turn has spawned much unwarranted and analytically unsophisticated propaganda about the efficacy of US-led multilateralism in support of democracy, the free market, and the protection of human rights. It has also elevated concern about the technicalities of exit strategies over grand strategy priorities and the moral considerations that should properly be addressed in any talk of intervention in another state. Such thinking fails to come to terms with the incompatibilities identified in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, and it fails to give sufficient weight to the continuing disjunctions between the interests of states and between the interests of states and conceptions of world communities. Asserting that there is an identity between the interests and ideals of the USA and an ideal world community simply will not do. It is dangerous for the USA: it is dangerous for everyone else. The challenge is to balance interests and ideals in an heterogeneous world, and reconcile the desirable with the possible. This should not be read as the traditional conservative prescription of bromides to make this imperfect world tolerable. Much hangs on 'desirable and possible' here. There may be much more agreement among states about abstract moral principles (even though they cannot be logically demonstrated and thus they cannot meet the conditions for being regarded as foundational in the strict sense) than the communitarians allow. And there are more practical problems about the application of 'agreed' moral principles than the cosmopolitans allow because of historical legacies, developmental and geographical positions, and the requirement for judgement and action in circumstances where information is incomplete and effects can only be inadequately calculated. Thus, on this understanding, the possible and the desirable are more ambitious than in the usual conservative agenda, and are primarily practical and not cosmological ethical problems. However, I have neither space, nor do I need to convince the reader to accept this position, in order to make the point about the importance of practical judgement in any forceful intervention by one state in the affairs of another.

A precondition for any kind of effective action involves a sensitive appreciation of the way the world is. On this Albright seems a little complacent in her insistence that only the specifics have changed when it appears to many that the system is changing. Economic interdependence is a reality, as are the challenges of environmental

degradation, disease, and uneven economic development. These changes affect the idea of state sovereignty and that in turn is modifying notions of security and the ethical and practical constraints on intervention. However, no theory as yet seems to have captured the richness and complexity of the international terrain, and yet there is consensus that it is rich and complex (perhaps we need more narrative explanations until theory can match the challenge). Nor has theory provided a reliable framework or a guaranteed route to appropriate analysis for decision-makers. Perhaps Freedman provides a useful perspective here (even though he glosses over both ontological and conceptual problems) with his view that security in the old style military understanding will continue to be dealt with in the traditional nation-state manner, while economic problems and the global commons issues lend themselves more to effective treatment by multilateral action. With specific reference to the problem of intervention, there are no clear and simple answers, even when the policymakers bring with them a sensitive appreciation of the systemic terrain. The Panama and Bosnian case studies demonstrate that no matter how many times the rules of engagement are refined and revised, and no matter how carefully policy-makers dissect the problem of exit strategy, when the time to make decisions comes they cannot be taken in accordance with a rational formula. Different situations may have similarities, but not enough to allow for a mechanical application of rules and procedures. Also, as Graham highlights, intractable problems are always present because of inherent difficulties in controlling situations in other countries, in particular the clash of values and cultures (the cosmopolitan–communitarian issue) and these problems are compounded by the need to hand over to third party hands once the exit strategy is effected. Attention might thus be most appropriately directed, not at an efficient exit strategy, but at what happens afterwards, which will inevitably refocus attention on the priorities of grand strategy and the morality of interventionism.

This is not to say that interventions should never be mounted. It is to say that they are always more complex and fraught with unexpected dangers than any formula or model has so far captured and that more reserve is required than has been in evidence in much recent literature, which sees the present world situation as an opportunity for the USA to take an aggressive lead in defending and spreading the benefits of liberal democracy and human rights abroad.[62] Strategies are about practical reasoning that allows us to move from one situation to another in order to achieve specified results. The criterion appropriate for assessment here is: does it, or did it work? This is different from explanation where the question is, is it true, or accurate? To answer the latter kinds of question one must have, in principle, the ability to refer to some form of criteria to demonstrate truth or accuracy (the word truth here is used not as an absolute, but in the sense that this is closer to the truth than that, or that this is more accurate than that). Part of the difficulty with IR as a discipline is that it has not provided sufficiently clear criteria to establish its claims about the terrain. It has also often glossed over the moral domain, and tended to

[62] The edited collection by Cox et al., *American Democracy Promotion,* contains an interesting range of essays on these matters; and Theo Farrell 'Humanitarian Intervention and Peace Operations', in John Baylis et al., *Strategic Studies in the Contemporary Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) suggests the idea of optimists and pessimists with regard to the viability of interventionism.

confuse practical reasoning with explanation. Even when the theories speak clearly, their different perspectives cannot be reconciled as they proceed from different assumptions. Policymakers might be better served by narrative explanations of what has happened in the recent past, and by practical and strategic thinking, which give sufficient scope for moral arguments and avoid the confusion between practical strategic thinking and explanation.

Some, who agree with the practical implications of what has been argued here, may take comfort from the conservative victory of George W. Bush over the more liberal Al Gore, but complacency should not set in. While conservatives may not succumb so easily to the call of idealism as liberals, they are more susceptible to patriotic vanity and that can be just as dangerous a route to interventionism as the desire to promote ideals. Both lead to an arrogance of power.

In this interdependent world, and interdependent even for the enormously powerful USA, Senator Fulbright's 1966 prescriptions for the international role of the USA would not work. Nevertheless, his warnings should still be heeded. They have been echoed recently by Charles William Maynes in his 'US Unilateralism and its Dangers' which has a different focus, but a rather similar message to what has been argued here. In particular, the need to safeguard against a particular kind of mindset, reinforced by extravagant rhetoric, which portrays an uncritical and unreflective picture of the USA and its mission in the world. Maynes gives a wonderful quote that exemplifies this danger. When Madeleine Albright was asked why so few other states agreed with the US analysis of and action towards Iraq, she replied: 'it is because we are America, we are the indispensable nation, we stand tall—we see further into the future.'[63] No doubt Fulbright often heard similar sentiments echoing from the White House of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

[63] Charles William Maynes, 'US Unilateralism and Its Dangers', *Review of International Studies*, 25: 3 (1999), pp. 515–18.