

Executive diplomacy: multilateralism, unilateralism and managing American power

FRANK C. SCHULLER AND THOMAS D. GRANT

The vocabulary of international affairs needs overhauling. The statecraft of great powers long found apt description in a dichotomy between multilateralism and unilateralism. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) inaugurated a multivalent system of states marked by the manoeuvring of its members for individual advantage. Within this system, states took account of limitations imposed by the power of other states—but they seldom established coordinate action of an enduring nature. They certainly scarcely institutionalized it. The nineteenth century witnessed tentative steps towards a radically different organizing principle. With the establishment of the world's first standing interstate organizations, such as the Danube River Commission and the International Postal Union, and promulgation of treaties with broad law-making purpose, such as the Geneva Convention, states began to conjoin their foreign policy agendas to form, at least in certain situations, a single, articulated vision. Hitherto there had been alliances—even alliances with sophisticated consultative mechanisms to help allies determine one another's priorities—but the nascent multilateralism of the nineteenth century represented something new.

In the twentieth century several states, pursuing hegemonic ambitions, recalled the classic statecraft of 'every state for itself—but recruited to their cause the vastly augmented material capabilities of an industrial technological civilization. The resulting devastation impelled states as never before to extend the multilateral principle. Indeed, on the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the framers of the Charter cited the calamities of two world wars as cause for a fresh ordering of world affairs. The Charter succeeded in its aim of underscoring the possibilities of cooperation among states and even in achieving real bases for joint action in certain areas of substantive concern. It also cemented the terms by which two subsequent generations would define state behaviour. States in the UN era have been seen as acting either under the rubric of 'multilateralism'—with its connotation of progressive development—or under that of 'unilateralism', with its contrary sense of atavism, disorder and decline.

Yet the words 'unilateral' and 'multilateral', with their implicit contrasting extremes, refer to positions in a discourse lodged in foreign policy deliberations

of the twentieth century, when two or more nations were vying for dominance. The collapse of Soviet communism ended such competition, giving rise to a distribution of global power in which the revival of classic interstate conflict of system-wide scope seems only a remote possibility. The multilateral–unilateral dichotomy was defined in an international environment of interstate conflict and was accepted to further the peace-building imperatives of a divided world. Now that those conditions no longer exist, the terms quite simply have lost their motive force.

Part by default and part by design, America has emerged as the solitary dominant world power. This occurred through a conflux of circumstances, coincidences and innate democratic, capitalistic durability. Today, amid the shambles left by the USSR and before either an ascendant China or a crystallized Europe has formed as a comparable counter-influence, American statecraft verges on a monologue to the subordinate rest rather than a colloquy among peers. This dominance has prompted some observers to advocate that the United States openly adopt unilateralism.¹ The resultant policy would incline the country towards isolationism: to standing alone, to remaining dismissive of allies and deprecating of their concerns and criticisms, to acting independently according to a parochial self-interest. Moreover, it would ignore the signal development of the late twentieth century: the motion of world affairs away from a dynamic in which the old dichotomy aptly categorized the most important exercises of statecraft.

Policy at the extremes

Advocates of the mode of state conduct known as ‘unilateralism’ pride themselves on a hard-headedness sometimes equated with foreign policy realism. On the contrary, stubborn pursuit of unilateralism and its implications smacks of unrealistic idealism and naïveté. The consequences of globalization and the ever-tightening mesh of communication and transportation technologies that knit the world together—cardinal features of the present epoch—find little accommodation in the unilateral frame of mind.

The United States could, of course, wilfully practise unilateralism for a time—perhaps for a long time—before an ad hoc coalition of aggrieved nations banded together to blunt the assertive projection of American exceptionalism over the interests of others. States before have chosen (or have had imposed on them) divorce from developments in the larger world. If the Korea of the Kims, the Rhodesia of Smith, the Albania of Hoxha or the Cuba of Castro could last decades, then certainly a continental engine of vastly greater horsepower could push against the current for generations.

That very scope and power introduce into American statecraft, however, concerns foreign to the hermit state. Even pending a collective response from abroad, a retreat into the indulgence of a purely self-referential mode of policy-

¹ Charles Krauthammer, ‘Unilateral? Yes, indeed’, *Washington Post*, 14 Dec. 2001, p. A45.

Executive diplomacy

making would carry costs, as political frictions from disgruntled nations gnawed away at commerce, investment and security. The response of the European Union to a US-imposed tariff on imported steel within a month of the announcement shows an alacrity suggesting that in fact a coherent countermove would be fast in coming.² The ultimate futility of a single-minded policy would expose itself as the forgone benefits of a more circumspect approach accumulated into an economic and strategic impedimentum.

The opposing principle, that of multilateralism, equally miscasts international policy in a world where circumstances may indeed warrant unilateral decisiveness. In the 1920s and 1930s, the League of Nations nurtured multilateral discussions, producing only futility. Rather than mounting individual effective actions against the provocations of Japanese empire-building in China, Italian aggression against Ethiopia or Nazi trial runs for Blitzkrieg and Holocaust, European leaders endlessly consulted one another, grasping for a common denominator that no consultation would ever achieve.

In current circumstances, some unilateral actions override soothing diplomatic nattering. The attacks of 11 September on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon count as an incident deserving of response regardless of the sentiments and sympathies of other nations. The United States, as the superior power in the world, must assume the responsibility of deploying its might for the benefit and welfare of itself and the rest of the world. After all, as a sovereign state, the United States retains the right to exert its might under threat or peril.

As the grace period immediately following the attacks quickly expired,³ analysts in Europe and Asia came to characterize President Bush's military response in Afghanistan as ruthless and punitive. From the *Independent* to *Die Zeit* to the *South China Morning Post*, and from Oxford to Humboldt to Tsinghua, journalists and academics formed a chorus broadly decrying American diplomatic and military measures since 11 September. Governments, though far from reading line for line out of the same hymnbook, have hinted at some agreement with the most critical of media and intellectual voices. Christopher Patten's remarks, if surprising from an avowed Atlanticist, fit well in the climate of a Europeanist bureaucracy, while Hubert Védrine's position surprised nobody familiar with the politics of France. More telling, perhaps, were the divisions initially confronting Tony Blair in the British cabinet, the assumed locus of greatest solidarity with the American administration.⁴

These viewpoints, though, originate within nations where terrorists did not destroy property, murder innocents, and attempt to desecrate the symbols and

² Thomas Fuller, 'Brussels threatens US with retaliatory tariffs', *International Herald Tribune*, 23 March 2002, p. 1; 'Steel safeguard measures confirmed', *European Report*, 29 March 2002.

³ See James Schlesinger, 'A test by terrorism', *National Interest*, Thanksgiving 2001 Special issue, 1 Jan. 2002, p. 5. The former defense and energy secretary expresses concern over the erosion of initial consensus favouring American action.

⁴ Jonathan Friedland, 'Patten lays into Bush's America', *Guardian*, 9 Feb. 2002; 'French foreign minister slams "new US unilateralism"', *Agence France-Presse*, 28 Aug. 2001; Nigel Morris and David Osborne, 'Blair is warned of Cabinet revolt if he backs US military action against Saddam Hussein', *Independent*, 8 March 2002.

culture of a puissant nation, much less undermine the global social order of which that nation forms the most conspicuous hub. In some very real sense, Europe's perspective after September 2001 echoes, if in that reverse direction echoes travel, the dull reply from America after September 1939. Remoteness here deprives the observer of the keenness of vision necessary to form an appropriate response.

The critical nations today further have lacked the military and financial resources to mount a response on the scale of the United States—a point which perhaps incites envy and jealousy, especially among players now relegated to ancillary roles but which within living recollection occupied centre stage. Even as memories of the British Raj or *Algérie française* fade, those of the 'unbreakable [and Soviet] union of free republics' remain vivid enough to spur sentimental pique. Nonetheless, imprudent use of unilateral power justifies criticism and imposes a danger on bystander nations. The test for appropriate use of unilateral power surely resides within the perception by attendant nations of the intent towards betterment of global welfare in the action. Ascertaining what course will lead to such betterment presents, however, a challenge.

Despite preferences for multilateral collaboration, any single power as dominant as the United States is today will inevitably exercise unilateral initiatives. Challenges to its unique sovereign position will call forth single-handed action, in which no other nation either recognizes a responsibility or possesses the capacity and resources to participate. For example, in some military forays the United States has relied on advanced technology and infrastructure, especially in the realms of intelligence and logistics but also in the basics of weapons suites, interoperability and training, that lie beyond the operational or liaison capabilities of any other military organization.

From Bosnia to Kosovo to Afghanistan, American forces have carried out contemporary variations of classic war-making, finding European allies equipped only for the odd specialized support role and after-the-fact peacekeeping duties. NATO countries by the 1980s may well have melded their capabilities for a massive, land-based armour campaign across the north European plain. The more intricate 'out of area' missions of the post-Cold War era, however, which rely on a panoply of power projection apparatuses and institutions coordinated to achieve superiority in littoral warfare and 'low intensity' conflict, lie quite simply beyond any power besides the United States. Systemic mismatches may leave no alternative to unilateral action.

Conversely, even a supremely dominant nation may need to rely on other governments to bolster it in areas of weakness. No nation, irrespective of its power and wealth, is likely to be able to muster resources in every specific area and for every specific purpose, while simultaneously upholding all existing commitments and remaining ready to meet all likely contingencies.⁵ During combat in Afghanistan, American units with limited numbers of troops trained

⁵ See William Wallace, 'Europe, the necessary partner', *Foreign Affairs* 80: 3, May/June 2001.

in mountain combat requested Alpine personnel from the United Kingdom and Norway to supplement operations in the forbidding reaches of Shah-e-kot. The United States also drafted Iran into the conflict, albeit quietly and behind the scenes. Certainly Iran had little by way of troops or technology to complement the American effort, but it had—and continues to have—something just as important: geographical proximity and historical linkages to Afghanistan which give it a position of relative influence, involvement and strength. The United States has the ability to carry out a military operation virtually anywhere on the planet unilaterally, but often at a higher cost in life and diplomatic capital than might otherwise be exacted. Influential neighbours to the theatre of conflict can facilitate the political and strategic choreography.

This is not to restate Paul Kennedy's 1980s thesis of 'imperial overstretch'. American economic might undoes earlier assumptions about the strictly fiscal burdens of leadership.⁶ It is a different set of considerations that induces reliance on friends and even makes temporary partners of convenience. Drawing in friends and sometimes foes leverages American power. It can curb the cost of action and, in some cases, generate gains as hitherto undiscovered consensus blossoms into strategic advantage. If managed wisely, then, a dominant nation readies itself for alternating approaches between a solitary journey and a caravan.

A managerial style for superpower statecraft

Envisaging the application of variable tactics that oscillate between unilateralism and multilateralism, and that may suggest a new framework, recalls many aspects of the duties and managerial style of chief executive officers (CEOs) of multinational corporations. On some occasions the CEO must initiate decisions unilaterally without extensive collaboration from the internal organization or external constituencies such as customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders or host government officials. On other occasions, the CEO attempts to enlist support and backing from many quarters, internal and external.

The extent to which the decision-making processes of the chief executive are accepted corresponds to the collective impression formed of the policies enforced. In some instances, trade unions as well as shareholders, suppliers and customers may applaud managers' settlement of a labour dispute. At other times, say when promulgating plant closures or expansion plans, CEOs may attempt to garner the support of various constituencies, including competitors.

The degree of approval for the CEO's decision derives first from the managers' perceived intent on improving the welfare of the corporation; second, from the logic, rationale, fairness and urgency of the decision; and finally on the results. Salubrious intentions and compelling logic can often counteract disappointing or detrimental outcomes. Outcomes favourable in a narrow view but attainment of which involved trampling key constituents,

⁶ See G. John Ikenberry, 'Getting hegemony right', *National Interest* 63, Spring 2001.

wounding egos and broadcasting ambivalent signals may on balance deliver more detriment than gain.

Instead of adhering strictly to a guiding principle of either unilateralism or multilateralism, CEOs seek to advance a strategy founded upon specific principles and objectives. The tactics by which the strategy is implemented follow from the situation, the logic and the urgency of the unresolved issue, as well as from the expedients available to further the tactics. The strategic objective, rather than falling prey to a single-minded obsession with the form of decision-making process, focuses on integrating the multiple factors of an alliance and engendering goodwill. Power is exercised in such a way as to motivate rather than punish, to unify rather than fragment, and to persuade rather than coerce.

Yet, like the CEO of a multinational enterprise, the executive statesman must develop the judgement, the intuition and the timing to exercise force and coercion over allies where necessary to achieve policy goals—and to do so without causing lingering bitterness and resentment. Executive decisions, whether by a CEO or a head of state, conform in general to those principles that are aligned with objectives: they can materialize as unilateral or consensually multilateral choices as long as the resulting directive fits the context and engenders trust and loyalty among allies despite their possible criticisms of any particular initiative.

A number of observers have pointed out that power in international affairs takes more than one form. Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane have argued that power takes three distinct forms—military, economic and cultural.⁷ This last has been dubbed ‘soft’ power, a tag meant to imply not so much a lack of potency as a subtle mode of action. Josef Joffe might add diplomatic prestige to the list, and other formulations have entered the discourse.⁸ The framework helps conceptualize salient features of the present dispersal of influence in international affairs. At one side, US unipolar military power, unmatched by any other nation, remains more conducive to unilateralism than the other two dimensions of power. In the middle, economic power is diffused among a handful of nations. The United States, Europe and Japan account for two-thirds of world product, with China poised to move into fourth place. Decisions in that domain involve an oligarchic process in which the strength of other participants dilutes any national tendency towards unilateralism. In many ways, as Nye states, the third category, of ‘soft power’, equals military and economic sources of power. Instilling demand for products and culture channels economic incentives and political sentiments for cooperation to American allies. As soft power spreads, the need to persuade partners to the viewpoint of the ‘cultural hegemon’ disappears; the viewpoints of all merge into one.

⁷ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977); Joseph Nye, ‘The new Rome meets the new barbarians—how America should wield its power’, *Economist*, 23 March 2002.

⁸ Josef Joffe, ‘Who’s afraid of Mr. Big?’, *National Interest* 64, Summer 2001; ‘“Bismarck” or “Britain”?’ Towards an American grand strategy after bipolarity’, *International Security* 19: 4, Spring 1995.

Executive diplomacy

A further dynamic adds a new dimension to the multipartite division. Where once power was concentrated in formal organs of governance—or at least, in the hands of parties that bowed to the commands of public authorities—power in the present has diffused to small groups and individuals no longer tethered to conventional understandings of public order. Transnational relations, which flourish outside the direct purview and control of governments, figure prominently in this dynamic. Such relations draw in bankers with wire transfers just as much as terrorists disseminating information, technology and weapons.

Effectiveness in foreign affairs, with executive diplomacy distinguished at some times by unilateralism and at other times not, would seem to require personality as much as game theory ploys; defence of principles as much as strict policies; and demonstrated wisdom for the common good and integration as much as cleverness and intelligence in rounds of negotiation. No decision or course of action will please all constituents equally. Many may criticize a policy as being less beneficial than, or inferior to, an alternative, but in relation to the total present and expected future benefits of a relationship with the United States the discord never rises to a level sufficient to prompt disloyalty or instigation of enmity. As with a multinational enterprise, a CEO's decision that adversely affects managers in one country seldom provokes disruptive outcries and objections, especially when the affected executives retain their jobs and still anticipate a bonus at the year's end.

Communicating towards consensus

Foreign affairs today, for the United States and indeed every other power, entails treading on untested ground amid unprecedented complexities. Technologies in communication and transportation, shifts in political and economic circumstances (as, for example, in Russia, China and developing nations) and transformations in social and cultural values all interact to complicate diplomatic endeavours. The scope and the conventions of diplomacy seem to necessitate enlargement in tasks and outlook.

Diplomacy, which will involve some intricate mixture of unilateralism and multilateralism, and perhaps ultimately a transcendent framework rising away from that dichotomy, assumes a socialization process in the spirit of the German philosopher and leading public intellectual Jürgen Habermas. Harmonious conflict resolution, according to Habermas, relies on social interaction and inter-relationships, which over time, because of mutual understanding or sympathies, blunt the initial demands of each party. The Habermas proposition maintains that through social commerce conflicting parties, instead of forging a traditional compromise with each party ceding concessions to the other, will gradually modify their positions until they fuse an agreement founded on a stance that appears dramatically different from either starting point.

Habermas's notions derive from Hegelian philosophy, invoking the triad of thesis, antithesis and resolving synthesis. The outcome consists of an endpoint

resulting from a progression more creative than grudging reduction of initial divergences to some common denominator.

According to Habermas, communicative action takes two forms—‘consent-oriented’ and ‘success-oriented’. The latter includes arguments that have the purpose of influencing others to adopt ends that the party making the arguments wishes to attain. It also includes more coercive interventions in the physical world, designed to induce others to pursue or promote—or at least to forgo impeding—those ends.

By contrast, ‘consent-oriented’ communication does not aim to achieve an end that the communicator has judged *a priori* desirable. Rather, it seeks agreement or mutual understanding (*Verständigung*) about something in the world, in order to identify the basis on which parties can proceed to action, notwithstanding viewpoints that at the outset might have seemed mutually exclusive. Consent-oriented communication may well produce a position that goes beyond a mere compromise between the discussants. A new viewpoint arises from the search for common ground.⁹

The Habermasian approach to foreign affairs through consent orientation does not exclude use of the traditional elements of diplomacy—logic, gamesmanship, subtle deployment of power. It does reframe the context of foreign affairs to redirect actions towards a strategic goal—integration of nations—and efficiency in addressing the responsibilities of power. It recognizes change and evolution over time with the emergence of opportunities and threats. It acknowledges the appropriateness of different policies for different regions and different political, economic and religious systems. It appreciates the disparate interests of nations without dismissing the interconnectedness of politics, commerce and social migration. Most importantly, the ‘socialization’ of foreign affairs permits policy-makers to rearrange priorities and to revise positions in accordance with strategy and the pressing issues of allies.

The United States, in managing its power as the sole remaining superpower, must combine dominance in some domains—military, cultural—with co-leadership in others—economic, diplomatic. Any semblance of a prolonged period of US unilateralism represents only an ephemeral phase of diplomacy. Adhering to a strict, uniform regime of unilateralism would be impossible, even if policy-makers tended to favour it. American interests cannot readily disentangle themselves from those of America’s partners and allies.¹⁰

As a consequence, the United States can hardly expect to command the agenda in all situations and at all times: to do so would cause disaffection among allies and possibly stimulate active opposition among other powers. American power may manage itself best when strategically modulating between the two modes of communication defined by Habermas: (1) unilateralism in seeking the success of goals defined primarily within the American political system; and (2)

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).

¹⁰ See Richard Holbrooke, ‘America, a European power’, *Foreign Affairs* 74: 2, March/April 1995.

Executive diplomacy

multilateralism in seeking mutual understanding among the broader international political system.

No set of rules exists to determine when policy should favour unilateralism or multilateralism. These decisions rest with the finesse, skill and political intuition of leadership. In many cases, however, the context and circumstances point to the more effective approach. The movement towards integration through private actions, commerce, travel and communication technology increasingly narrows the possibilities for differences among nations about a particular action.

Multilateral consensus sometimes may already prevail prospectively about the direction and form of a response by the United States. Indeed, the United States in cases may effectively act unilaterally in the secure knowledge that its allies will concur with very little consultation. Britain's initial support of the US retaliation against the Taliban illustrates how integration, including commonality of ideas and values, curtails some of the need to initiate long, complex negotiations among allies before taking action. Integration then corresponds to a tacit form of Habermas's consent-oriented communication. In many other instances, US policy-makers will recognize the importance and utility of engendering a consensus. At times, the forcefulness of success-oriented communication may suit the situation. At other times, through continued dialogue and discourse, consent-oriented communication may achieve a superior result than any to be gained through bluster and compulsion. A style of leadership that emphasizes consent-oriented communication from the president and members of his administration to the ranks of mid-level bureaucracy in attaining the requisite consensus would seem to accomplish American goals and objectives with more efficacy than the singularity of either unilateralism or multilateralism.

Executive diplomacy deployed

American leaders constantly balance the two modes of communication, day-to-day statecraft demanding the right mix of consent-oriented conversation and success-oriented exhortation. Whether on tariff issues such as steel or agricultural products, or on initiatives in international governance, like the landmine ban, the Kyoto Protocol or the International Criminal Court, foreign policy-makers face Habermasian choices. Often, however, with mundane issues, the process of choosing lies well beneath the radar of general public awareness. A crisis of the proportion of that now coming to a head in the Near East, therefore, furnishes an extraordinary opportunity for the overt and public deployment of the executive approach to managing American power.

Success-oriented communication assumed a prominent position in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist provocations of 11 September 2001. A flood of commitments of international support ensued. Key constituencies within the US government endorsed the approach. A decisive drive towards early objectives in the war against terrorism in particular made sense from the standpoint of Pentagon planners responsible for securing operational success.

Indeed, the Department of Defense went so far initially as to urge avoiding a multilateral declaration under the article 5 collective defence provision of the NATO Treaty. To involve allies in the response to the attacks, armed forces leaders reasoned, would hamper pursuit of legitimate objectives. But a success-oriented mode of policy-making will inevitably carry costs, just as much as a course that awaits consensus for every measure taken in the national interest. Shifting and modulation between approaches comprises the mechanism of executive diplomacy, which secures longer-term ascendance and success of a far broader substantive scope.

The movement of the US administration towards a new centre of gravity became manifest with George W. Bush's speech to the UN General Assembly on 12 September 2002. Positioning American policy firmly within a multilateral framework, the speech described Iraq's violations of the UN mandate for disarmament and expressed the need for concerted action by the international organization to respond to the breach—lest the organization render itself inert in the manner of the League of Nations.

The speech initiated a discourse within the Security Council and beyond of great intensity and eight weeks' duration. The result: a synthesis from diverse viewpoints of a strongly worded Security Council resolution. Winning the unanimous support of the fifteen members of the Council, Security Council resolution 1441 of 8 November 2002 did much more than locate some common baseline on which all parties could agree. It opened the door to a renewal of inspections that, while permitting the current Iraqi regime to endure, would establish a scope and intensity of international oversight in Iraq likely to exercise transformative effect on that country. Neither a retreat to appeasement nor a pretext for war, resolution 1441 epitomized the Habermasian conversion of orthogonal positions into a wholly new concept. As such, the UN process as the Bush administration engaged with it refreshed American diplomacy in multiple arenas.

Few more robust alliances have developed than that between the United States and the United Kingdom; their joint patrol of no-fly zones in Operations Northern and Southern Watch constitutes, as of adoption of resolution 1441, the one operative element in UN enforcement of Iraqi obligations under Security Council resolutions. Pre-eminent among the tasks of executive diplomacy, then, is to sustain British–American coordination. The record of the 'special relationship' could well lead an imprudent US policy-maker to take British support for granted. British opinion in the immediate aftermath of 11 September lined up firmly in support of military action in aid of the United States. As the United States was seen to set a direction less reflective of multilateral commitment, however, support eroded.¹¹ Bush's address to the UN thus had an urgent purpose. Doubts in Westminster certainly lingered after

¹¹ 'Latest on Blair, Bush and Sept. 11th', MORI, 10 Sept. 2002, <http://www.mori.co.uk/polls/2002/sep11.shtml> (tracing change in opinion).

Executive diplomacy

the speech, but Prime Minister Blair's cabinet found a balance among internal differences and made clear that the UK stood committed to action within the UN framework now embraced by Bush. Skilful alternation between clear expressions of national intent and integrative diplomacy at UN level paid dividends in government support from a key ally. Perhaps most tellingly, UK opinion began shifting among the public at large, back towards the levels of support for joint US–UK action that prevailed in autumn 2001.¹² The tandem effects of consent-oriented and success-oriented behaviour in foreign policy-making could scarcely reveal themselves more plainly than this.

Yet amid the transatlantic colloquy over Near Eastern policy, one assumption has in recent months gone largely unchallenged: namely, that the United States—and in particular the present administration—is moving on a vector towards ever greater disregard for the views of allies, while countries in western Europe are growing more and more committed to the multilateral path. Contrasts in international relations drawn in such simple terms sometimes fail to reflect underlying realities.

Hesitancy about action against Iraq undoubtedly prevails in France, with French cabinet members declaring the need for extensive UN Security Council output before action can be considered legitimized. The stance in Paris could hardly seem more multilateralist—until specific and national French interests are examined against the substantive policy espoused. Trade interests in the Near East, not excluding Iraq itself, plus a substantial Near Eastern and North African population in France, inform views at the Quai d'Orsay at least as much as, if not more than, abstract commitment to a particular form of international decision-making process. In this light, calls for two Security Council resolutions—rather than 'merely' one—as the prerequisite to action can begin to look less like multilateral aspiration than an extension into the UN arena of traditional statecraft in pursuit of national interest.

Germany presents its own example. Since the foundation of the Federal Republic in 1949, German foreign policy has contained two bedrock features. First, Germany has integrated itself into multilateral processes to an extent never before undertaken by a major state. Though this development had its origin in a postwar arrangement that curtailed key elements of the state's sovereignty, it went beyond the strict requirements of the allied powers—and, more tellingly, continued beyond the final settlement and reunification in 1991. Measures by Germany in the international arena, whatever their means of implementation, have taken place with heightened regard for the need for consensus. Recognition by Germany of Croatia and Slovenia in late 1991, some weeks ahead of the 15 January 1992 date on which other states had agreed, left German decision-makers feeling that they had burned their fingers, and marked only a temporary foray into a more forward mode of policy-making. Even in that case, the

¹² 'Poll shows big shift in public mood on military action', *Guardian*, 17 Sept. 2002, p. 1 (reporting results of weekly tracking poll and identifying the 'prospect of UN support' as shifting opinion further still in favour of action).

Federal Republic had endeavoured to describe its action as one based on collective decision-making.¹³ Second, a profound rejection of force as a prime instrument of foreign policy took hold after the catastrophe of the Second World War.

In the national elections of 22 September 2002 these two core convictions were exposed to a novel strain. Caught in the exigencies of a close-fought election campaign, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder appears deliberately to have tacked towards a more critical posture with regard to American policies. It seemed clear at the outset that the chancellor would mirror the prevailing opinion that military action could take place only with a UN Security Council mandate. However, towards the end of the campaign he sharply qualified this multilateralist view, of a piece with half a century of practice by the Federal Republic. Sensing opportunity in anti-war sentiment—and calculating that voters were worried that the CSU challenger, Edmund Stoiber, might defer too much to American priorities—Schröder stated that Germany would not commit forces to operations against Iraq, even in the event of Security Council authorization. Anti-biological warfare units of the *Bundeswehr* stationed in Kuwait would be withdrawn, and the republic would follow what the chancellor described as a ‘German way’.

The reaction to this announcement, however, revealed a depth of popular commitment to multilateralism that exposed the chancellor’s shift as inherently risky. Talk of such an independent course triggered alarm and, among people at the centre of the political spectrum, a degree of lost confidence. As a political tactic, it succeeded—energizing voters of the critical left, who flocked in unprecedented numbers to the polls to support Schröder’s junior coalition partner, the Green party. It was this, indeed, that seems to have won the SPD a second term in office. But the tactic well may have diminished the chancellor’s standing among centrists at home, not to mention allies abroad.¹⁴ The consensus-seeking instinct of the German polity has become entrenched to the point that it tempers even the pronounced hesitancy of Germans to participate in armed conflict. Use of force without international consensus remains anathema to Germans; but inaction, in the face of a consensus requiring action clearly expressed through the proper UN process, may well be perceived as tantamount to abdication.

Just as much as locating American policy within a multilateral framework sustains the sinews of transatlantic ties, it also fosters objectives with allies in the Near East itself. After the United States commenced operations in Afghanistan in autumn 2001, the government of Saudi Arabia took a very circumspect

¹³ See, generally, Thomas D. Grant, ‘The Yugoslav recognition crisis’, ch. 6 in *The recognition of states: law and practice in debate and evolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), pp. 149–211.

¹⁴ Alan Cowell, ‘Schröder uses London visit to try to fix rift with US’, *New York Times*, 25 Sept. 2002; Tony Paterson, ‘Schröder clings to lead despite fury over “Hitler” jibe as Germany goes to the polls, Condoleezza Rice says relations with the US have been “poisoned”’, *Daily Telegraph*, 22 Sept. 2002, p. 32.

Executive diplomacy

approach.¹⁵ Recourse by the United States to the UN in September 2002 evoked what might well be identified as a more approving reception. The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, stated on 16 September, 'If the UN takes a decision, by the Security Council, to implement a policy of the UN, every country that has signed the charter of the UN has to fulfil it.'¹⁶ Though obtaining a UN mandate remained as of late September an objective yet to be achieved, the Saudi position after Prince al-Faisal's statement appeared to have come far closer to cooperation. With jurisdiction over Prince Sultan Air Base, the linchpin of defence infrastructure in the Gulf region, the government in Riyadh numbers among America's most crucial allies—and is thus a crucial interlocutor in the dual-mode dialogue of executive diplomacy.

Recruitment of the international organization was a product of prudent modulation by the Bush administration to consent-oriented statecraft, after some months of clear communication of American intent. The clarification of Saudi views in September 2002 was in turn spurred in no small part by the substantial legitimating force of the UN. This relieved an important ally of a potentially debilitating domestic political burden. Saudi leaders could scarcely have turned to their subjects and explained that it was an *American* request that led them to tender use of bases on Saudi territory for operations against Iraq. A mandate from the most broadly constituted international organization, by contrast, was another matter. Subsequent retrenchment by Saudi leaders appeared to temper the mid-September pledge of coordination with UN decisions. It remains to be seen how well the desert kingdom carries the costs a shift from consensus entails. Whatever the ultimate course set in Riyadh, integration of a US viewpoint with multilateral institutional process rendered the work of consent-seeking a lighter burden all around.

Similar benefits accrued in other countries of the region. Marwan Muasher, foreign minister of Jordan—a country which, as military analysts have noted, would furnish an advantageous starting point for special forces units tasked with neutralizing Scud and other missile emplacements in Iraq's Western Desert—said in September that Jordanians hoped armed conflict could be averted but that 'Jordan has a strategic, political and economic relationship with the United States, and certainly, Jordan will not jeopardize this relationship.' The foreign minister of Qatar, Hamad Bin Jasim al-Thani, also gave some indication of a positive reception to the United States initiative before the UN: 'We always consider requests from our friends. We consider the United States our ally.'¹⁷ The Al Udeid Air Base, a 15,000 foot runway in Qatar, is the longest in the Gulf and a valuable infrastructure asset for military operations. The United States, quietly committing itself to consensus-building before the General Assembly, garners support far more surely than it would through hortatory crescendo.

¹⁵ Alfred B. Prados, *Saudi Arabia: current issues and US relations* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 6 March 2002), p. 4.

¹⁶ BBC News, 16 Sept. 2002.

¹⁷ Daniel Williams and Nora Bustany, 'Arab countries bending to US influence on Iraq', *Washington Post*, 23 Sept. 2002, p. A1.

George W. Bush's UN address brought key allies closer to American objectives than at any point since the immediate aftermath of the 11 September atrocities. Its consent-seeking orientation is by no means a sudden shift or a new concept. From 1998 onwards, with the decay of the inspections regime in Iraq, key European states and Canada plainly stated their support for robust measures to re-establish respect for relevant Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq, and the United States accordingly deployed executive diplomacy in its consent-seeking mode.¹⁸ Going to the UN in September 2002 continues this trend.

Shortly after the speech, the White House comprehensively expounded American security priorities. The official report *National Security Strategy of the United States*, issued on 17 September, marks a further refinement of the executive diplomatic way of managing American power. In its preamble, the president indicates that the United States will not 'use [its] strength to press for unilateral advantage' but instead to 'create a balance of power that favors human freedom'. The report fleshes out this general commitment. Alliance-building numbers among the key weapons identified for fighting global terrorism.¹⁹ The report emphasizes the role of joint action in unseating the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, suggesting that future operations in the war against terrorism will take cooperative form. Inter-allied coordination in the effort to disrupt terrorist financing marks a further element of the report's consent-seeking orientation. The report makes just as clear that the United States, in the integrative project of seeking consent, also keeps a sharp focus on priorities that it judges non-negotiable. Free markets and free trade, representative democracy, human rights and rule of law number among the lodestones. Some months before the publication of this document, the president emphasized the enduring nature of substantive commitments, albeit within a framework flexible as to means. 'Different circumstances', he indicated, 'require different methods, but not different moralities.'²⁰

Key decision-makers in some countries are taken aback when presented with American statecraft in this success-oriented mode. By the same token, to be seen to swerve too far from the consent-oriented path, or to take a mis-step in balancing it with the success-oriented path, can carry a price. Helen Fessend, senior editor at *Foreign Affairs*, identified just such a price arising from omissions in US diplomacy towards Germany—for example, a recent decision by Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld not to schedule a meeting with visiting CDU foreign minister-in-waiting Wolfgang Schäuble.²¹ Consultative measures, low in cost and easy to apply, can yield substantial returns in limiting the risk of provoking anxiety over a perceived drift towards unilateralism.

¹⁸ US Department of State, *European leaders' statements supporting US position on Iraq*, 17 Feb. 1998.

¹⁹ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington DC: The White House, Sept. 2002, pp. 5–9.

²⁰ President George W. Bush, speech to graduating cadets, United States Military Academy, West Point, 1 June 2002.

²¹ Helen Fessend, 'Schroder's peace dividend: the US is partly to blame for the chancellor's uncompromising opposition to war with Iraq', *Financial Times*, 19 Sept. 2002, 'Comment and analysis' section, p. 13.

Executive diplomacy

The task of maintaining a balance between consent-seeking and success-seeking communication continues with respect to Iraq. At the time this article went to press, it remained too early to tell whether the administration in Washington had successfully applied executive diplomacy to this vexed and high-stakes issue of international peace and stability. Initial signs, however, appeared promising. Long-standing allies, each with particular sensitivities in both domestic politics and international position, found in American recourse to the UN a valuable and informative measure. *National Security Strategy* enunciated clear goals, as well as clear commitment to continuing multilateral engagement. Before any resolution is reached in the Near East, further modulations in method will inevitably occur.

A new model: complementary modes of communication

The old dichotomy of unilateralism and multilateralism is perhaps still useful in categorizing specific exercises of state power in international affairs. A deployment of resources or shift in diplomacy may occur with more or fewer allies and thus may invite description as more or less multilateral. However, the terms no longer present viable alternative principles for managing the statecraft of the United States in the international system over which it presides. Something broader is needed.

Communication must reside at the heart of contemporary American statecraft. The rapid advance of technology and the meshing of economic and political interests across borders certainly has not pushed states to the margins of public order in the world community. But the role of states has become one of relative rather than absolute significance amid vastly multiplied interests and interactions. Habermas, in philosophizing over the dynamic of domestic social conduct, developed a conceptualization of pronounced relevance to the modelling of superpower statecraft abroad. Managing American foreign policy requires first an acknowledgement of the overlapping and shifting constituencies that view themselves as stakeholders, direct or indirect, in the actions America undertakes. Second, it requires a principle that accommodates two complementary modes of communication: consent- or consensus-oriented—seeking to triangulate potentially clashing viewpoints to achieve common ground; and success-oriented—seeking to achieve concrete objectives and persuade relevant players to assist or acquiesce in their pursuit.

Like the effective running of a multinational enterprise, executive diplomacy, even with an incisive strategy and a dynamo of power, can operate effectively only when its various constituencies are all but seamlessly integrated. Such integration becomes feasible when the executive statesman recognizes when and to what extent to rely upon the varying dynamics of the management of power. The quest for consensus and the drive for success, deftly balanced and appositely applied, offer an alternative to the outdated model of multilateral-unilateral extremes.

