

**Lettres de Byblos**  
**Letters from Byblos**

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No. 9

TAMIRACE FAKHOURY-MÜHLBACHER

**International Relations  
in an Uncertain Hegemonial World System**

**A Conference Report**

Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme  
International Centre for Human Sciences

Byblos 2005



## Lettres de Byblos / Letters from Byblos

A series of occasional papers  
published by

UNESCO      Centre International des Sciences de l'Homme  
International Centre for Human Sciences

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Published in 2005 in Lebanon by the International Centre for Human Sciences, B.P. 225 Byblos (Jbeil), Liban.

ISBN 9953-0-0573-7



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The Third Byblos Autumn School (6-16 September 2005) was held in Byblos at the Hotel Byblos-sur-Mer in Lebanon.

Organised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Middle East Office, Beirut), the Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut (Freiburg, Germany), the American University of Beirut, and the Lebanese Centre for Policies Studies, and sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the conference brought together a group of political scientists, scholars, academicians, researchers and students.

# **International Relations in an Uncertain Hegemonial World System**

## **A Conference Report**

TAMIRACE FAKHOURY-MÜHLBACHER

### **Objective**

The Third Byblos Autumn School addressed this year the multiple political, social and cultural dimensions which make up our present world system.

Characterized by the dominance of the United States, the new world era, which came into being after the end of the cold war, presents a singular world pattern based on US supremacy and characterized by global interdependence and an unprecedented rise of intergovernmental organisations.

This new international environment revolutionised by rapid communications and new technologies has altered the character of warfare, the traditional concepts of the nation-state, national security and its boundaries.

New concepts of hierarchy and power especially after the September 11 events have shifted attention to emerging actors in world politics, and have forced analysts to reconsider balances of power and to re-evaluate the impact of international actors on the contemporary system.

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The Byblos school examined component units of the system, their relationships, their spheres of influence, and most importantly the reasons behind US supremacy and the future patterns of US behaviour.

While the first part of the Autumn School deals with the attributes of the present world system as well as with the foundations of the US-American empire and the factors that have led to its emergence and that have nurtured its power, the second part proposes to revise international law and international relations after US invasion of Iraq. The third part explores the European and Arab choice of options vis-à-vis US supremacy and the challenges posed by uncertainty and instability in a world oscillating between precarious international cooperation and fears of marginalisation and hegemony. Possibilities of US-self restraint and the limits of American exceptionalism are also underlined.

Throughout the conference, work groups followed by plenary sessions dealt with normative, empirical and predictive questions on international relations and US hegemony.

The themes discussed focused mainly on:

- US instruments of influence: US policy, power and capabilities in addition to leadership attitudes and behaviour
- The impact of US particular interests and its foreign policy on the world today
- Signs predicting a possible decline of US power in the decades to come (domestic and external constraints)
- International relations and the debate opposing the Realist and Constructivist schools
- The relevance and impact of international law on a world system mainly led by drives based on political considerations and interests
- The capability of non-state actors and states to influence political choices and the decision-making process in world politics
- The political choices and options left to Europe and to the Arab world
- Consequences of political choices, predictive patterns of state behaviour, possible changes in the international system and their effects
- Future problems of world politics: The security dilemma, global governance, arms races, deterrence, pre-emptive war, exporting democracy, ethics and war, achieving peace and prosperity, alternatives to US hegemony.

## Part One

### Will the Century be US-American?

#### Theorising the “US-American Empire”: Life with a Bengal Tiger

Professor Dr. Hans N. Weiler

Stanford University, former Rector of Viadrina European University, Frankfurt (Oder).

*Jefferson and the historic mission of the American empire: “May (this decision) be to the world, what I believe it will be (to some parts sooner, to some parts later, but finally to all), the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.” (1826)*

In this first lecture, Weiler compares the experience of living with the US-American empire to young Pi’s experience on the lifeboat in the presence of a huge Bengal Tiger.<sup>1</sup> This comparative metaphor illustrates the challenge of living with, and surviving, unadulterated power.

The US hegemon is compared to a 450 pound-Bengal Tiger known for its strength, cunning, and ruthlessness. Connotations of might and overwhelming strength depicted under this analogous imagery are, for better or for worse, characteristics of the US international actor.

In the introduction, Weiler poses the dilemma of how to coexist with an unrivalled power on the stormy and uncertain sea of the international world order. In other words, how does one coexist politically with a Bengal Tiger, and are there chances of surviving in such a coexistence?

Dealing with American imperialism is not just a matter of theorising, but an attempt at building a viable world order - or at dealing with the tiger without becoming its victim.

Weiler tackles first selectively a body of literature tracing the evolution of the American role and influence in the world throughout history. This body of literature can mainly be divided into three main currents.

Relying on the legacy of “American exceptionalism,” the first school of political thought advocates staunchly the notion of the American empire.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel (2001)

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Conscious of the limitations of the US empire, the second one concentrates on theories that are more ambivalent about the notion of empire. A third school focuses on alternative theories such as institutionalism, multi-polarity, sovereignty, and democracy. A fourth and profoundly sceptical current rejects the notion of American empire altogether and focuses on the constraints and the weaknesses of American power.

The first school which focuses on the notion of American exceptionalism derives its pride and legitimacy from the historical momentous decision which led the United States to declare its independence after having torn down the chains of submission. This experience, articulated by Jefferson, provided the basis for one of the most enduringly powerful theories of American imperialism, which has succeeded in claiming allegiance throughout American history.

This theory has been, according to Weiler, a very important factor in thinking about America's role in the world. Although it has occasionally been accused of naivety, it has had a way of coming back time and again, and has manifested its durability, often in ways less faithful to what Thomas Jefferson had in mind.

The legacy of American exceptionalism has been espoused by numerous writers. Jedidiah Morse, for instance, spoke in 1792 of the American empire that would be the largest empire ever created.

The current American administration leans at times on this missionary rhetoric and on the legacy of religiously connoted writings on the American mission in the world which, according to Ulrich Wehler, represent "the political religion of nationalism."

Neo-conservatives, whose role became more visible after President Bush's accession to power, staunchly advocate the missionary task of a huge American empire. Robert Kagan,<sup>2</sup> for instance, connects himself with Jefferson's idea of an "empire of liberty," and sees the growing American influence in the world as proof of the "transcendental American experience." This experience rests on the premise that, by advancing America's own interests, the interests of mankind would be simultaneously advanced.

This deeply rooted conviction of America's special role in the world has provided, according to these theorists, the foundation of a long era of hegemony based on many instruments of power, one of which was the expansive use of American military power. The result is that the Jeffersonian dream today remains the last existing imperial dream, outlasting other imperial dreams that originated in Paris, Berlin, Moscow or London.

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<sup>2</sup> Read for example, Robert Kagan. *Of paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. New York: Knopf, 2003

Weiler also alludes to other theorists of American exceptionalism such as Michael Mandelbaum<sup>3</sup>, the historian who considers “the liberal Wilsonian triad” of peace, markets, and democracy as the true “liberal theory of history.”

The second current of thought is an intermediate position which tries to explain the phenomenon of American hegemony but takes into consideration the limitations of such an experience.

Represented by scholars such as Michael Ignatieff<sup>4</sup> who highlights, in *Empire Lite*, that the American empire is a provisory solution to the management of crises in the world system based on a “hegemony without colonies,” or by Hans-Ulrich Wehler<sup>5</sup> who advocates the concept of an informal empire for the last remaining superpower which, in Josef Joffe’s words, is rather “lonely at the top,” and needs all the help it can get from other actors in the world system.

The third approach towards the US role highlights theoretical alternatives to the notion of American empire. Robert Keohane<sup>6</sup>, for example, writes that the notion of US supremacy should be reconsidered after the September 11 events. As world politics is increasingly being shaped by non-state actors, the main challenge is how to manage uncertainty in a post-hegemonic world in the wake of the terrorist attacks in New York. Uncertainty, which generates a need for information, necessitates the creation of institutions that provide this kind of information concerning the interests and security strategies of other states.

Joseph Nye<sup>7</sup> concentrates on the concept of hard and soft power to explain America’s hegemony and vulnerability at the same time. These are two facets that contribute to the American paradox: Nothing in the world can be done without the US, but there is very little that the US can do alone. He maintains that although the US remains the leading actor, its strength is not what it used to be, and its obligation to lead is coupled with an obligation to cooperate.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Mandelbaum. *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Public Affairs, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Michael Ignatieff. *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. London: Vintage, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler. “The Chosen Nation: America’s Missionary Nationalism and Germany’s Blunder.” *The Berlin Journal*, No. 6 (Spring 2003), 16-18

<sup>6</sup> Robert Keohane. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, and *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World*. London: Routledge, 2002

<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990

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Another scholar, Stephen Krasner<sup>8</sup>, pictures the international system as a structure devoid of hierarchical authority, and highlights the fact that coercion and imposition are options that the strong employs against the weak. The fact that international institutions operate in a rather fluid environment accentuates the absence of binding norms in the system leaving the world order open to the option of imposition.

Charles Kupchan<sup>9</sup> argues that confidence in the longevity of the American era is dangerous, because there are alternative sources of power on the rise and that the unipolar pattern of world politics is adopting increasingly multipolar traits.

In addition, the end of the “liberal democracy” era, the decline of the nation-state, trans-national integration, and regional fragmentation may also constitute important constraints on the American hegemon.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri<sup>10</sup> talk about the emergence of a new international system in which sovereignty has assumed a rather global form. This global form of sovereignty which they call “empire” differs from previous imperialism, which was basically an extension of the European states’ sovereignty beyond their frontiers. As the notion of empire has no territorial centre of power and is a “de-territorialising” apparatus of rule in the world, the US can no longer form the centre of an imperial project.

The last approach to dealing with US hegemony rejects totally the notion of an American empire. Rashid Khalidi<sup>11</sup>, for instance, talks about the limitations of raw power in the Middle East, and asserts that US hegemony, a disillusioning “siren song of those who tell us that empire is easy and cheap,” has found its limitations in this part of the world.

Worried about the effects of “military humanism,” David Rieff<sup>12</sup> highlights that imperial intervention, while still often the only choice, is no longer acceptable for the solution of humanitarian crises.

Harald Müller<sup>13</sup> warns against the serious dangers lurking behind America’s “confrontative hegemony” - the danger of “un-democratizing” security policy and “de-

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen D. Krasner. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999

<sup>9</sup> Charles A. Kupchan. *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Public Affairs, 2002

<sup>10</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004

<sup>11</sup> Rashid Khalidi. *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East*. Boston: Beacon, 2004

<sup>12</sup> David Rieff. *At the point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005

legalizing” international politics. With little hope, he alludes to the possibility of a European enlightened initiative as well as to the emergence of corrective and self-healing American mechanisms which might re-adjust the US path.

Another argument highlighted by Emmanuel Todd<sup>14</sup> underlines that America’s problem lies not in her strength but rather resides in her weakness: The erosion of the US’ economic power as well as of her democratic integrity - “a superpower that has become economically dependent and politically redundant.”

Not only do these arguments shed light on the debate on the American empire, but also depict why it is hard to come to grips with the singularities of the American experience. Drawing upon the metaphorical resemblances in *The Life of Pi*, Weiler foresees three possible scenarios for coexisting with the tiger in the life boat:

These scenarios focus on

- Satisfying the tiger’s/the hegemon’s legitimate needs
- Drawing a clear and unmistakable boundary between the tiger’s and Pi’s territory
- Setting up a “regime” or a set of rules, enforced by clear and unmistakable signals, to regulate the tiger’s behaviour in the lifeboat.

Thus the core of this strategy for the realm of international relations lies in satisfying needs, respecting boundaries, and accepting a number of rules to ensure coexistence.

Concluding his observations on America’s role in the world, Weiler makes three points:

- Do not underestimate the lasting power of American exceptionalism as it will not go away when President Bush leaves the White House.
- There is something in the American experience that, in the interest of international coexistence, is worth understanding better.
- The weight of the better arguments in the literature reviewed here suggests that the future lies in the successful institutional management of multipolarity and transnational interdependence.

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<sup>13</sup> Harald Müller. *Supermacht in der Sackgasse? Die Weltordnung nach dem 11. September*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2003

<sup>14</sup> Emmanuel Todd. *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003 / Paris: Gallimard, 2002

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## Work Groups

After the lecture, Weiler posed several questions for discussion. These questions were tackled by three groups which presented at the plenary session concise reports mainly focusing on the ambivalent superiority of the United States.

The questions were the following:

- How helpful is Nye's distinction between "hard" and "soft" power in understanding the role of the United States in world politics?
- A number of authors emphasize the role of developments in information and communication technology in shaping the future of international relations. Do you find this view persuasive, and what is in your opinion the role of information technology in the future of international relations?
- What is the empirical evidence for the emergence of a multipolar world system, and how compelling and solid is it?
- How critical is military strength in sustaining US influence in world politics, as compared to economic strength, moral integrity, or diplomatic skill?
- How valid is the argument that a functioning US hegemony is needed in order to effectively deal with humanitarian crises (à la Liberia, Kosovo, Zimbabwe)? If the argument is not valid, how do you propose that humanitarian crises should be effectively handled?
- A hegemon, by definition, needs no democratic legitimation beyond the means (military, economic) to sustain his hegemony. How would a non-hegemonic world system - managed by, for example, international organizations - establish and sustain its legitimacy? Does Hardt's and Negri's notion of "multitude" (2004) solve that problem?
- There are widely contrasting statements in the literature on the role of the United States in the world. E.Todd considers the US "a superpower that has become economically dependent and politically redundant" (2004, 31). Michael Ignatieff argues, with a view to the United States and problems of "failed states": "nobody likes empires, but there are some problems for which there are only imperial solutions" (2003,11). Who is (more) right?
- Charles Kupchan sees a connection between "the end of American primacy" in the world and "the end of a particular historical epoch - that of industrial capitalism, liberal democracy, and the nation state" (2002, 35). Do you agree?
- Is "transnational interdependence" (Nye) a viable alternative to hegemony, American or otherwise?

## Work Groups' Reports

### Group I

#### On US predominance in the international system

US unchallenged position in the international environment is linked to numerous variables: Conception of "invincibility strategies" on the military level, ability to determine shifting alliances and impose its interests, ability to use soft and hard power to choose allies that support its policies and marginalize others, ability to sanction countries diplomatically, economically, and politically, ability to influence international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation, and the International Court of Justice and utilize them as vehicles of American strategies, ability to inflict moral and psychological pressure to influence political outcomes (e.g. pressure on the Syrian regime to comply to US demands).

Despite these variables that indicate US supremacy, it is far-fetched to argue that the United States rules alone.

Though unipolar characteristics are inherent to the present system, one cannot ignore the multilateral mechanisms and aspects that make up the complexity of world politics. Thus, it is beyond doubt that the present international system is marked by American dominance, but it is also characterized by strong features of global interdependence, and by the rise of other poles of power namely China and Iran.

The war against Iraq (2003) has proven that the US bill is too high when all other actors are excluded. The Middle Eastern states' resistance to the American discourse has also revealed the limitations of hegemony. Furthermore, the fact that exported democracies promoted by the US turned out to be rather failed and fragile systems (e.g. present systems in Iraq and in Afghanistan...) undermined US credibility and highlighted the shortcomings of its democratic vision.

Furthermore, the US discourse on democratisation in the Middle East has proven to be politically volatile. The US promotes democratic regimes, but accepts regimes stuck in the autocratic zone as long as they are subservient to its interests.

US determination to seek legitimacy before invading Iraq reveals its tendency to ignore other poles of power. There are undoubtedly defence mechanisms that keep US hegemony in check. Examples are the considerable weight of the European Union, the US deliberation mechanisms... The US needs the legitimacy provided by the United Nations and the European Union to protect its own political credibility.

Last but not least, non-state actors' impact cannot be underestimated; the invisible war waged by terrorist organisations against the United States indicates that the world hegemon needs world allies to deal with terrorist shadow networks.

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The group stressed additionally that the concept of hegemony was a multifaceted term. When one speaks of US dominance, one should carefully define US areas of dominance. Does the US dominate the world market? Does the US dominate information technology? Does the US decide on its own to wage a war? These questions highlight the fact that hegemony in the present international system is a complex concept that cannot be easily defined.

#### **The tools of US hegemony: Intervention in the name of democracy**

The tools of US hegemony do not only revolve only around coercive military power, but around other and subtler methods of influence. Intervening in a country's domestic affairs in the name of democracy, for instance, has become a rather current case.

US interventions in the Middle East on the grounds that it wants to bring about freedom, democracy, liberalism, and free trade to "oppressed people" have enormously increased. Presenting democracy in an attractive kit to justify the legitimacy of such an intervention is, however, a deluding solution, for the inside of this kit has been rather tricky, and lofty ideals of democracy have remained unattainable.

#### **The indispensability of a multipolar world**

Group I agreed on the indispensability of a multipolar world and on the beneficial impact of interdependence. The recent Katrina Hurricane disaster in the United States and the Iraqi crisis, a Pandora's box, have indelibly proven the necessity of more intergovernmental coordination and coalescence: "Nothing can be done without the US, but the US cannot do things on its own."

### **Group II**

#### **On US hegemony**

The US has tried, since the end of the cold war, to become the centre of the international system and to marginalize peripheries by dictating its own patterns and models on world politics. Other strong powers have tried to join the centre, but they still lag behind and remain unable to keep up with the US pace. In fact, although the European Union, for example, resorts to economic and humanitarian aid to spread its influence in the Middle East, its impact is far less influential than the US role in this part of the world. The US does not hesitate to use hard power in the Middle East, whereas the European Union hopes that other peaceful methods might bring about intended outcomes.

Studying the structure of power among influential groups in the United States helps us understand how the US influences international relations. Political, economic and military elites make decisions that take their groups' interests in consideration. Analysing these interests can help gain more insight into the US expansionist policy.

In addition, one should not forget that US foreign and domestic policies are not solely dictated by the ruling elites but are greatly affected by US multinational companies in the world which sustain US military capabilities.

### **On the limitations of US hegemony**

It is true that the US dominates the world on the military and political levels; however, one should not ignore the US economic dependency, and the fact that there are other powerful economic actors in the world that curb significantly the US absolute hegemony.

Despite the fact that the US remains the main political actor and decision maker in world politics, we notice an increasing cooperation between the European Union and the United States in some cases (e.g. Joint EU and US pressure on the Syrian regime to liberalise, joint EU and US cooperation in post-war Lebanon after former Premier Hariri's assassination in February 2005).

After the Iraqi debacle, it seems that both actors have agreed to divide roles and tasks in the Middle East. Whereas the EU acts as a conscientious softer voice which brings back order by using diplomatic means, the US threatens unresponsive regimes by raising the issues of sanctions.

### **On confronting US hegemony**

Confronting the US by forming an anti-US front in the world seems presently unlikely. Yet, striving to build a fairer international system whose foundations are the regulatory mechanisms of international law can substantially limit the disastrous effects of such a hegemony. Reforming the United Nations by creating a new UN body where countries have equally the power to invalidate the decision of a hegemon may possibly alter some aspects hinging on power imbalances in world politics.

By endorsing principles of democracy, human rights, and international norms, countries can bring pressure to bear on the US. Thus, an efficient enforcement of international law might become an alternative to face up to US supremacy. In addition, global liberalization might also limit US hegemony. When state economies move towards more liberalism, bridge technological and information gaps, and break out of their regional blocs, the US power might lose much of its leverage.

If international organisations can play a relatively significant role, regional organisations seem unable to counteract US hegemony, because the United States can easily establish bilateral relations with member states of a certain regional

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organisation. In other words, the US has the capacity to infiltrate and influence outcomes in regional organisations through its omnipresent power.

## **Group III**

### **On American hard and soft power**

American hard power means using material power to control and compel others. This material power means the capacity to use military power, issue blockades, constraints and finally utilize political power by sanctioning states on various levels.

Soft power is more related to American values, and to how the United States influences states to emulate the American model.

The US has used soft and hard power to consolidate its hegemony. After the Soviet Union's collapse, the first and second Clinton terms consisted in using mostly soft power.

By dominating international institutions such as the IMF and the WTO, the Clinton administration promoted the necessities of a free trade zone and liberalisation.

According to the former American administration, this model based on democracy and free trade should also be spread out in the world and emulated by other states.

The Bush Administration, however, has bet more on hard power. The main characteristics of such strategies were the obvious reliance on the New American Security Strategy which consists in resorting to pre-emptive strikes and enforcement measures.

However, this uncontrolled use of hard power has shown paradoxically a very controversial face of the United States, a face that has bred resentment against the US around the world, and which has resulted in an asymmetrical division of the international environment in two unequal powers forced to coexist in a state of entanglement.

Defining US hard and soft power helps us understand the evolution of US position throughout history. Although America's battle for democratisation is increasingly relying on hard power, one cannot disregard the US permanent utilization of soft power to anchor and consolidate its role in the world. Soft power makes the US omnipresent.

### **On the controversial concept of American hegemony**

Joseph Nye's allusion to three possible kinds of international systems leads us to reconsider the concept of a unipolar world under American hegemony. First, if we look at America's military power, we can safely say that the US dominates "militarily" the

world. However, if we consider economic and cultural aspects, we see that the international system possesses rather multiple poles, and that power equations are ambiguous and blurred.

In fact, we seem to be living in a multipolar world dominated by a superpower. But this dominance does not contradict the fact that other “hyperpowers” do have an influence.

Yet, what is the distinction between the US as a superpower and other powers such as China, Japan or the European Union? Are these “hyperpowers” strong enough to rise against the US? And which ones are more influential than others? Can these “hyperpowers” sit equally at a round table with the US?

These questions demonstrate that US hegemony is rather a complex issue, for US predominance does not hinge on military might but also on economic and political strength, and the way all these variables are intermingled.

In spite of this international façade of hegemony, the US has many internal weaknesses on the domestic level. The Katrina disaster has shown the weak predicament of US domestic policies.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the US ability to move the fighting front away from the US internal scene has diverted attention from internal weaknesses. This capacity to deflect world concentration is an important ingredient of US hegemony.

### **US humanitarian aid**

US intervention for humanitarian reasons does not obey clear-cut criteria. One can safely say that US interference for a humanitarian cause is intricately linked to whether its interests are at risk or not. International humanitarian crises and their relief have resembled a game of interests in which the US moves its pawns on the world check board behind the UN curtains.

### **Plenary Discussion**

After listening to the groups’ reports, Weiler emphasized the hidden vulnerable sides of the US hegemon and warned against overstating the international significance of the United States and overestimating the longevity of US supremacy.

US economic superiority is more a myth than a reality. The US national debt and the problems of the social security system are time bombs that might seriously affect

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<sup>15</sup> On the limitations of US power, read Peter G. Peterson. “Riding for a Fall,” *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2004. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040901faessay83510-p50/peter-g-peterson/riding-for-a-fall.html>

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American initiatives abroad. The US has more or less reached a point where it has no sufficient control over the world capital market. Serious US internal crises (public health, nutrition, obesity, costs of health care, early invalidity) will definitely affect the balance. There is thus good reason to question the US self-image as a healthy dominant power.

However, this does not detract from the fact that multipolarity in the world is marked by a strong US predominance especially in military terms.

In order to analyse the US position in the world, one has to study closely the complex use of US soft and hard power and the shifts in using these two different kinds of power according to contexts and periods. It is thus noteworthy to study the evolution of US power by delineating vectors of soft and hard power. For example, scholarships in education have undoubtedly had a contributory impact on the effects of US soft power.

In conclusion, the era of US hegemony might be coming to a close. The Katrina disaster was an indicator that US capabilities are getting thin, and that the US ability to respond to domestic and international responsibilities is obviously on the decline. The world will have to deal with an increasingly multipolar system, and the US will not be able "to put a front wherever it wants."

A main failing in US foreign policy is the incapacity of the American administration to understand intricacies of international policies and their long-term impact. If major conflicts, for instance, were to arise on the Korean Peninsula or in Iran, the United States would not be able to mobilize adequate resources for effective intervention.

In addition, one must also consider the erosion of American values, the decline of the US monopoly on information technology, and its increasing economic dependencies.

The war on terrorism is also a clear example of the limitations of hegemony. As the US is not only dealing with state actors, it becomes more difficult to speak of a world hegemon. The increasing role of NGOs in the international system turns also our attention to global governance.

Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the US always influences the international agenda. There are a number of areas in which the US role is constrained:

- The international ecological agenda
- The human rights issue
- The issues of economic interdependence.

In addition, the US is unable to impose its cultural influence everywhere. South Asia and Latin America are two major regions that resist US cultural supremacy. We notice increasingly a growing cultural differentiation in the world, and a move away from American uniform perspectives.

Thus, Todd's argument that the US is moving towards more dependency has to be taken seriously. Yet, that does not rule out the fact that American exceptionalism will

not wither away no matter who occupies the White House, for this exceptionalism has become a bedrock of American foreign policy.

There is, however, a real chance to envisage the international system differently by embracing a new way of thinking that does not depend on our usual perceptions or common terminological labels (e.g. uni- or multipolar systems), but that rather concentrates on new concepts of interdependence and global governance.

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## One Empire under God?

### The Impact of the Religious Right on United States' Foreign Policy

Dr. Katharina Hofer  
Jos University, Nigeria

This lecture addresses the relation between the Religious Right in the United States and US foreign policy. It tackles thoroughly the foreign policy areas concerned and directly influenced by the Religious Right as well as the specific themes captured by the latter.

The Religious Right has more publicity than power in influencing America's foreign policy. One could safely argue that US President Bush's policy is mainly to back corporate interest, and that the impact of the Religious Right has been most strongly felt in the arena of domestic politics, welfare policies, UN reform and relations with the global South.

A product of the last century, Christian Fundamentalism, which lays the main foundations for the Religious Right in the United States, had diverged over time from mainstream Protestantism, and had developed fundamentalist and extremist characteristics at least until the 1960's.

The factors that made Christian Fundamentalism shift towards the centre-stage were mainly the growth of the Middle Class in the African-American Diaspora after the Second World War, the anti-Vietnam movement that influenced the American middle class, and a reinvigorated missionary spirit adopted by the Pentecostal and Protestant Holiness movements.

Enriched by missionary activities and increasingly based on biblical texts, this new evangelical movement has acquired, as time went on, a more institutionalised character, and has brought Pentecostalism closer to Protestant fundamentalism.

After the cold war, a third missionary wave occurred as a result of the power vacuum in post-Soviet developing countries which became more receptive to missionary activities.

As governmental aid decreased, these mission agencies were able to influence US foreign policy in the developing world.

Migration and re-evangelisation in the United States by African or Latin American missionaries shaped the development of this movement as well.

## **The impact of the Religious Right on Foreign Policy areas in the US**

Defined by Hofer as an “inter-denominational, political movement,” the Religious Right has attracted many Evangelical Christian supporters, and has had considerable impact on the following Foreign Policy areas in the United States:

### **International development**

Faith-based organisations have acquired growing importance in the US and have affected development projects in aid receiving countries. Developing countries have increasingly assigned projects, formerly administered by the state itself, to these NGOs.

The rise of this faith-based sector through which evangelical organisations have been growing rapidly via privately financed channels, has also been facilitated by diplomatic pressure on governments under the banner of “religious freedom.”

### **Constitutional law**

The “culture war” or war over values<sup>16</sup> is mainly fought on the battlefield of constitutional law in the US domestic arena. The Religious Right has, however, stretched its lobbying for constitutional amendments beyond US frontiers.

Advocates International is, for instance, a world wide organisation of evangelical lawyers with many national branches in the world. Not only does this organisation promote Christian faith but also engages in a fight over values in the legal arena in order to influence political agendas. Advocates International has been interested in numerous activities in the area of family law such as rejecting a bill that facilitates divorce, rejecting rights to couples living together for more than 10 years, as well as proposing to delete the act on Khadi courts in the Ugandan constitution.

In Nigeria, for instance, the battle over values via such channels is by no means an ideological debate over human rights or family values, but more of a struggle that reflects the numerical strength of religious denominations and the right of the majority to impose its own system of law.

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<sup>16</sup> Debated values are, for instance, abortion, the right to display religious symbols in public, same-sex marriages...

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## **International organisations**

Christian fundamentalists' interest in the UN organisation has become conspicuous especially after the cold war. Religious organisations enjoying a consultative status in the UN have as a result doubled in the nineties.

It is worth mentioning that some of these evangelical institutions seem to consider the UN arena as an extended arm of American foreign policy in the fields of international development, international diplomacy and public health.

These organisations also proposed the formation of a permanent "Religious Council" in the UN and have cooperated with religious and political figures from Muslim countries in order to maintain their influence in the public forum and spread certain values in the international arena.

## **Themes captured by the Religious Right**

### **Religious freedom**

Some countries in the global South show reluctance towards these faith-based organisations for two main reasons: These institutions may potentially foment religious conflict in multi-religious societies or promote activities at odds with internal laws. Yet, under the banner of religious freedom, evangelical organisations have used this averseness to pressure countries on the grounds of religious affiliation.

*The International Religious Freedom Report*, published by the US government *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour* gathers relevant information on states compromising the Freedom of Religion. This report can be used as a pressure tool in international aid policies.

### **Public health**

Evangelical faith-based organisations have additionally affected numerous fields in public health such as reproductive policies and family planning. The US evangelical "abstinence movement" aims, for example, at influencing sexual patterns in sub-Saharan Africa on the grounds that using condoms has failed to check HIV/Aids.

Other tackled issues pertain to reproductive rights, abortion and contraceptives in developing countries in the Arab world and in Africa.

Faith-based organisations have also touched upon the sector of education and have become prime providers for private education. Some American evangelicals have spread the necessity of home-schooling whereby children are taught at home how to read the Bible under the surveillance of their mothers.

All these issues around which these organisations establish their substructures do not only portray the conflict over moral and religious values but the dichotomies between religious/secular, private/public spheres.

### **Public welfare**

While governmental records on social reforms remain poor, private evangelical agencies do divert increasing amounts of money to back projects for building schools and hospital. Faith-based organisations have become therefore major stakeholders in the international non-governmental development sector.

### **The Middle East**

The Religious Right has backed a pro-Israeli political line in the Middle East and has also supported the US war against Iraq and other military operations in the world.

To what degree the Religious Right influences President Bush's standpoint towards the Middle East is not clear; however, this movement bestows to US foreign policy an ideological base.

### **Determinants for the future of Christian fundamentalism**

Factors that might affect strongly the development of religious fundamentalism depend on developments in North-South economic relations, international governance, the chances of establishing genuine channels of dialogue and societal response to ideological crisis.

Social inequities in the world have had important repercussions on religious conflicts and extremist waves in the Global South. Concurrence over the monopoly of resources seems also to have an impact on aggravating inter-religious cleavages in fragmented societies.

In Nigeria, conflicts between Christians and Muslims on the rise since the late 1980's have not only centred around religious issues, but have also touched upon matters such as disputes over land, and water... Religion has thus been used as the pretext that masks lurking conflicts over ownership matters in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies.

According to Hofer, an improvement in North-South economic relations might mitigate peoples' enthusiasm and responsiveness to political manipulation exercised by some religious actors in the Global South.

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In addition, policies aiming at curbing social marginalisation may impact the future of religious fundamentalism in the US and other parts of the world.

Resorting to authentic intra- and inter-religious dialogue to resolve religious conflicts may constitute a worthwhile method to restrain religious fundamentalism and keep its expansion in check. Yet, it is important to highlight that a dialogue taking place in a disconnected place between religious groups has little chance of success. Genuine dialogue channels should take place *within religious groups* and should transcend attempts aiming at altering relations among religious groups.

Another determinant which might shape the future of religious extremism and limit its ramifications is the act of restoring credibility in democratic affairs and doing away with disillusionment vis-à-vis what democracy can do.

As democracy has not brought about the promised social, economic, and political development in the developing world, and as “democracy” is increasingly interpreted as a tool in the hands of “neo-imperialists” to control the Global South, it seems logical to resurrect the belief in democratic trustworthiness rather than consider religious extremism to be the sole responsible factor for societal and political ills.

## Work Groups

Groups tackled the determinants that might limit the rise of Christian fundamentalism.

Determinants that attracted their attention were ideology crisis, democracy, and the capacity of the UN to check fundamentalism. Case studies revolved around the MENA region.

The groups' remarks pivoted around the following issues:

## Work Groups' Reports

### Group I

#### **Democracy in the MENA and its capacity to check fundamentalism**

The influence of evangelical NGOs in the MENA is on the rise; however, democracy in this region does not seem to be the right future determinant that might limit their ascent for several reasons.

First, democracy as a tool of reform in the MENA has shown its limitations. This system of governance bluntly described - as one of the results of the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of capitalism - failed tragically in the Arab world. The downfall of democratic credibility and incapacity of reform have encouraged fundamentalism groups to lobby against the regime.

The reasons behind the failure of democracy in this region are many:

- Attempts of liberalisation and openness created social inequities between rich and poor
- Opposition to secular democracy exacerbated religious divisions and conflicts
- The reluctance of built-in regimes to respect human rights and the inherited culture of oppression and clientelism hindered the democratic plight
- The withdrawal of the state from social and economic aspects of the citizen's life created a big gap between democratic understanding and the realities of the Arab world. The dominant role of the Arab state has concentrated increasingly on security politics and military aspects of governance.

The failure of the democratic logic has heralded a return to fundamentalism and has made the MENA frontiers less immune against religious extremism and, in this case, against the ascendancy of Evangelical fundamentalism.

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According to Group I, resurrecting the belief in democratic trustworthiness in the MENA might not lead to curbing fundamentalism, for the problem resides in the inability to create and sustain regimes that guarantee accountability and equality in the Arab world.

In addition, the US insistence on applying Western variables in order to measure religious freedoms as well as civil and political liberties in the Arab world has bred a sense of frustration in the region, and has sustained the feeling that democracy remains somehow a concept alien to Arab structures and way of life.

## Group II

### **The role of the United Nations in curbing extremism and fundamentalism**

The United Nations can play an influential role in curbing extremist mentalities. It needs first to promote an intercultural exchange whose goals are to enhance peace and understanding. It also needs to further dialogue based on exposing and not imposing ideas.

Dialogue can soften fundamental mentalities if it is continuous and consistent. Inter-religious exchange can provide a safe neutral ground for religious antagonistic groups to meet and confront each other peacefully.

The United Nations can also carry out extensive studies on the factors that breed fundamentalism. These studies can determine whether causes for religious extremism in specific countries have socio-political or/and economical origins.

Activating UN bodies and financing extensive programs keen on advancing inter-religious discussions are important steps in that direction. The UNDP and the UNESCO, for instance, can in this respect foster dialogue channels whose aim is to advance coexistence, empathy and at the same time *an objective understanding of the other*.

Not only has the United Nations organisation to concentrate on creating spaces of dialogue but it also has to encourage international commerce, and work on ameliorating economic and social welfare in the Global South. Credible development programs that aim at erasing poverty and narrowing gaps of social inequities can achieve wonders.

However, the most challenging questions that arise are how to send forth these possibilities of dialogue and reform and how to remedy to UN internal incapacities and stimulate reform movements.

Countries are entangled in issues of “globalism” that paradoxically carry them away from globalisation. Furthermore, economic reform is not tantamount to a few measures of liberalism. In short, alteration of the existing policies does not only revolve around few amendments and corrections.

The United Nations' future challenge lies thus in affecting fundamentalist ways of thinking through efficient dialogue, and through sustaining authentic ways for reform.

## **Plenary Session**

Throughout this session, remarks targeting the content of work groups' presentations were made. Hofer approved that the failure of the democratic discourse in the MENA has strongly encouraged religious fundamentalism, and highlighted the fact that UN mechanisms and methods need to be refined in order to address the rise of religious extremism.

Furthermore, inter-religious dialogue should not take place in a vacuum but should be goal-oriented. Dialogue should address the issue of living peacefully with others without striving to change them.

With regards to the rise of Christian fundamentalism and its reawakening in the United States, redefining issues used by the religious groups to pressurize the making of US foreign policy can also help us determine more accurately the ways under which US Christian fundamentalism operates and strives to influence the world.

One thing is, however, sure. The Religious Right's impact on US foreign policy lies in areas which have low priority, yet this impact must not be underestimated.

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## Imperial Power Overstretched

Professor em. Dr. Dr. h. c. Oberndörfer  
Chairman of the Board, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, Freiburg

### **Changes in global demography and the impact of the diffusion of modern technology in Europe, the Non-Western world and the USA**

Oberndörfer examines in this presentation whether the new century will be American. Economic, social and political indicators, he argues, reveal that the US will not prevail as the ultimate political power. An American century is thus unlikely simply because of the impact of demography and information technology.

Eminent changes in global politics, global demography, modern science, and technological inventions will deeply influence state interrelationships, hierarchies, and power balances in the international order.

To prove his claim, Oberndörfer explores the relationships between demographics and politics as well as the future prospects of American hegemony. He analyses subsequently protruding weaknesses in American policy, and tackles American nationalism under President Bush.

First, with the estimated growth of world population to 9 billions in 2050, a new world political and demographic map is about to alter existing power relations.

Surprisingly enough, population growth has occurred in the last decades widely unnoticed.

World population has in fact tripled since 1950. This net increase was due to a rise in the global fertility and an improvement of economic and social conditions.

Yet, demographic fluctuations remain presently uneven in different parts of the world. These multi-faceted demographic transitions and global population trends are worthy of consideration, for their impact on the international scene and its composition as well as its structure cannot be underestimated.

For example, while world population is witnessing a net increase in certain parts of Asia such as in India and in Indonesia, the population growth of the European continent, for example, is estimated in 2050 to be as low as 7%.

Population growth rates remain negative in many European countries. If these growth rates continue to fall below zero, population size would slowly decline. Demographers show that the shrinking of the European population can no longer be stopped by massive migration. Even if the fertility rates do increase, the impact will only be felt in 30 to 40 years from now. With the exception of the United States, Japan's and

Korea's populations came to a standstill in the 1970's. This demographic process of aging and shrinking will undoubtedly have many social and political repercussions.

Explaining the impact of demographic change on politics, Oberndörfer predicts important changes in the political world map. Countries such as Germany, Russia, or Japan will end up being middle size players mainly because of demographics. In addition to the shrinking and aging of the Russian population, substantial burdens of a weak economy and the communist legacy will retard Russia's development.

There will be new rising countries that will outrank the old European states because of their population profile, their technological know-how, and the strength of their rising economics.

In the non-western world, developments in modern science and technology have provided new fundamentals for growth since World War II. The modernisation of economies in these regions and the rapid diffusion of information will also undoubtedly alter international politics.

The predicted take off will more likely take place in Latin America and in the near East on account of educational technology, science growth, swift means of communication, and the ability of modern science to cross international waters via Internet.

Moreover, India and China will be the two new giants in world economy. With their higher birth rates and their growing population, they will reproduce the example of Japan in the late 19th century, adopt rapidly trends of Western science and ascend to the rank of unsurpassable key international actors. These countries will build additionally competitive economic models in the coming decades that will challenge the American model. Furthermore, concomitant changes in global culture will detract from the omnipresence of the American culture. This can mainly be illustrated by the fact that English is no longer the predominant language on internet.

In sum, fifty years from now, the world will become much different from now. Future patterns will be less marked by European and American trends.

### **The vulnerability of the American economy**

Despite these predicted changes, the United States remains an exception. On the demographical level, the US population will not shrink but age. This is mainly due to high fertility rates and massive emigration rates. By and large, the US will strongly impact future world economic trends. It is also bound to remain a dominant power in world politics, but how dominant will it be?

Referring to Paul Kennedy who alluded to the decline of American economy and to the correlation between US economics and overstretched political power, Oberndörfer affirms that the US will never be as dominant as it was at the end of World War II.

In order to maintain a certain international balance, the US should have reduced its involvement in world politics and should have taken necessary measures to avoid

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overstretching its powers. One cannot but refer in this context to the vulnerability of the American economic miracle and its possible consequences on the US future role. Economic growth in the US is beyond doubt the motor of global economy presently, but this allegedly powerful economy rests on the shaky fundament of huge public and private debt.

In addition to domestic economic problems, the US will have to shoulder long-term and burdensome costs for its engagement in Iraq since 2003. Continued borrowing and military expenditures will thereby slow down US soaring economic course.

Once economic ground is lost, the US might ask its European allies for help under the pretext that America saved Europe from communism and that the time has come to share burdens.

The development of American economy, underlines Oberdoernfer, will thus run counter to American nationalists' hopes. In fact, the US would fare in the long run much better if it limited its involvement in world politics for the benefit of nationalistic and economic interests.

### **The sources of American nationalism**

Upon tackling the factors of demography and modern technology as well as their influence on imperial power, one cannot disregard the role that US nationalism plays in sustaining American imperialism. In fact, American nationalism was not born overnight, but is an embedded heritage. It constitutes, according to some American observers, a unique experiment bound to survive.

The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the eighties has been interpreted by the US as an incontestable proof of its supremacy and exceptionalism.

After the disintegration of the bipolar world, the US has shown decreasing interest in the future of the NATO, and has at many times conveyed signs of autarchy as well as independence from its allies.

Another factor that reinvigorated American Nationalism was the war waged against Iraq in 1991 under former President Bush. The use of high-tech weapons proved America's superiority over former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's weapons.

The easy triumph in Iraq (1991) and the few American casualties in addition to the fact that war expenses were paid by Japan and Germany boosted US self-esteem, and persuaded it that expanding its boundaries in the world was not beyond reach. This victory also obliterated the bitter defeat in Vietnam.

Historians, argues Oberndörfer, hesitate to link the course of history to political leaders' ambitions. But one crucial factor that also reenergized American nationalism was President Bush's attempt to instrumentalise the September 11 events in order reawaken latent nationalistic feelings as a civil obligatory religion to all Americans.

The American discourse directed against terrorism and the Axis of Evil in the world was undoubtedly responsible for an upsurge of nationalism. In addition, this discourse also justified overstretching the US imperial power on the grounds that combating terrorism has become an international concern. Yet, things did not evolve as expected.

President Bush's determination to attack Iraq in 2003 under the pretext that Saddam Hussein harboured weapons of mass destruction harmed irrevocably America's tradition of liberal democracy. This experience will indeed become President's Bush worst legacy.

Despite these recent setbacks, American liberal traditions have a "chance" of survival, and the legend of American nationalism is not bound to wither soon.

The drives and inherent forces that led President Bush to the White House will not disappear for a considerable time. Yet, the US will become increasingly aware of its own limitations in the economic and political domains. It will realize that it needs friends in world conflict arenas. Indeed, the realisation that unilateralism is detrimental, and that sustaining shared interests on the basis of cooperation might reap better fruits in the years to come, is imminent.

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## Work Groups

Groups examined mainly the relation between demographics, political power and technological advancement. They also engaged in wide-ranging discussions on future perspectives related to US rise or decline. Although diverging viewpoints were voiced, some common remarks resonated throughout the groups' meeting.

## Work Groups' Reports

### Group I

#### **On demographics, political power and technological know-how**

There was a common agreement that demographic growth and technological advancement affected one another. The rising Chinese power is a clear illustration of this strong interdependence.

The link between demographics and political power was considered, however, by the group as ambiguous. In deeply fragmented societies, for instance, demographic changes can lead to ethnic conflicts, to discrimination against minorities and biasedness towards numerically superior communal groups. Moreover, in developing countries such as the MENA countries, untamed demographic growth is turning into a challenge, for the young population has become more like a burden to the state.

The fact that governments have to respond to these demographic challenges and deal with the socio-economic resultants has slowed down the speed of economic progress and the tempo of technological advancement.

Second, it remains somehow unclear how to design suitable governmental policies in order to encourage fertility in countries having low fertility rates. Sometimes, these policies lead to problematic and unpredictable consequences. Their implementation might be also hindered by numerous socio-cultural factors that are beyond governmental reach. In other words, it is not easy to influence variables such as demographics in order to ensure intended outcomes.

Moreover, the impact of emigration on politics and technological progress is also a double-edged sword. On the one hand, migration leads to transfer of knowledge from the North to the South and within the Global South. But migration engenders other problems that cannot be solved overnight, and that create new social disparities and socio-cultural dilemmas: Lack of job opportunities, integration problems, brain drain in the country of emigration...

Although the group could not trace a clear-cut correlation between demography and economic as well as political power, it agreed that direct governmental interventions to promote technological progress and diffuse knowledge remain primordial. Leaving it to slow natural demographic and social processes can sometimes slow down the pace of a country's development.

## **Group II**

### **On demographics and diffusion of modern technology**

The correlation between demography and technological growth was also examined.

Many linkages that associate demographic growth and technology seem to be easily detectable. However, critical questions arise out of this mutual connection which seems simple at first glance, but very complicated once one examines closely the interconnectedness. In fact, other sociological and cultural processes do play an important role in determining the connection between demography and technology.

One should, for example, distinguish between pure technology and the use of technology in the world. The distribution of technological resources is not linked to demographics, but to other more complicated social, economic, and political variables.

### **On US hegemony and technological superiority**

The group predicted that the US would remain a global power in the years to come because of its technological know-how and embedded traditions of supremacy. But, this situation might change in the long run.

Although the US has multiple inexhaustible capacities and tools of power which cannot be easily tired out, its growth might be hindered by the rise of other global powers in which demographic rates and technological expertise would outpace American capabilities.

One should, however, keep in mind that technology and demographics do not make out of a global power a hegemon. In fact, the US supremacy was not only the result of technological superiority and demographic interrelationships, but was also the direct expression of an instrumental powerful nationalism which led to the exportation of American national values across the world. Extending American values and reviving constantly this sense of inherent American nationalism have kept the US sense of hegemony alive. When the call for US nationalism declines, chances are that the American administration will redirect its attention towards solving pressing matters on the internal platform.

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One thing is, however, more or less certain. Although the US has to confront dangers arising from economic and social domestic problems, it will not imminently stretch thin.

## Group III

### On the correlation between imperial stretch and overvaluing capabilities

This group mainly discussed the thin line between imperialism and imperial stretch.

It argued that US imperial global stretch would near its limits, once the state overestimated its capabilities. The Katrina Hurricane disaster showed that the US lacked the economic readiness to contain internal catastrophes. This might decelerate US ambitions for imperial stretch for some time.

Moreover, overrating military capacities might lead the US to a dead end. So many US troops are deployed in different world regions, and military capacities might be in danger of overextension. Hence, a clear line needs to be drawn between the concept of imperialism and imperial overstretch.

The US was able to rise that high, because it adjusted and changed after the fall of an agonizing USSR. Yet, overestimating *this capacity of adjustment* might have reverse effects. One of the most important reverse effects is the alteration of US power ingredients which would become thinner and thinner with imperial overextension.

Some members in Group III disagreed with this hypothesis, and insisted that the US ability to manage local and international capabilities stemmed from its imperial overstretch. It was maintained that the US went to war to give an image of stability as well as to promote a picture of a booming economy, and to invite investors.

## Plenary Discussion

After listening to the groups' reports, Oberndörfer chose to emphasize the importance of migration and its impact on social policies in the world.

Referring to Germany as an illustrative case study, he maintained that the Republic needed emigrants to refresh its demographic tempo. Contrary to many analysts who argue that emigrants are a burden to German economy, he underlined the positive aspects of migration, and asserted that Germany could digest migrants economically. He also stressed the importance of designing new European family policies in the long run, and breaking away from past patterns of social planning.

Benefits of migration notwithstanding, Oberndörfer warned against overrating the impact of migratory processes. Emigration is not the cure for all. Emigrants in the country of immigration tend to emulate the reproductive rates of European societies. In addition, the impact of the culture on the migrant's life does change his original patterns of behaviour. His/her professional situation is not that different from that of the local.

Commenting on the US imperial overstretch, Oberndörfer claimed that despite numerous warnings against overextension, the US was keen on rising upward.

Some inherent US problems can, however, no longer be disregarded. For instance, 30 percent of the American population have no health insurance. Twisted economic and negligent social policies as well as overstretched nationalism might harm the US as time goes by. Recurring social problems will additionally haunt US future history.

Drawing upon America's experience, Oberndörfer stressed the necessity of relinquishing exacerbated nationalism if a strong unified Europe were to be created: If the European Union wants a more active role in world politics, the dream of traditional nationalism has to be forsaken. He outlined that nationalism had an integrative and disintegrative capacity. Its capacity to integrate and to separate makes of it a dangerous tool masking real internal problems beneath the shining veneer of exaggerated devotion to a nation's progress.

In conclusion, Oberndörfer alluded to upcoming changes in future world dynamics. Young rising powers such as India, Malaysia and Thailand will occupy a more important role on the political check board. Considerable future problems will most likely originate in rich and old countries, as well as poor countries with young populations.

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## Part Two

### **International Law and International Relations Theory Revisited after Iraq. How Resilient is International Law against Major Infringements?**

Professor Dr. Dominik Hanf  
College of Europe, Bruges

This lecture, which inaugurates the second part of the Byblos School, sheds light on the normative aspects of international relations, and discusses the validity of international law after President Bush's venture in Iraq in 2003.

Hanf analyses in this presentation to what extent international law is resilient against major infringements, and stresses the relevance of the question in the current international order. Indeed, international law might be seriously endangered in a political context generating transgressions.

This fear is justified by the fact that major infringements do happen, and that these infringements might become so important that they end up undermining the very foundations of international law. In fact, although infringements remain the exception in international law, they attract major attention and staunch criticism. Major and/or persistent breaches of international law in problematic cases such as the occupied territories in Palestine, Western Sahara or the non-respect of the non-proliferation treaty affect seriously the legitimacy of international norms.

Before assessing the question and outlining major recent developments in this field, Hanf recalls the basic characteristics of international law.

Public international law is known as the law governing relations among states. Created by state actors to deal with fundamental issues such as war and peace - but also with issues pertaining to economic, environmental and cultural cooperation - international law is divided into a universal branch which applies to all political entities, and a particular branch pertaining to some regions. Some of these norms have been recognised as *jus cogens* or "higher laws" which have to be respected by any country.

Specialized treaties and conventions, often further developed by international organisations, have conferred since World War II a very sophisticated dimension to international law. This can be measured by the multiplication and growth of these international entities, which have bestowed considerable impetus and dynamics to the field.

Despite the rise and increasing importance of international organisations, states have conserved a dominant role in international law. There are thus the main creators, interpreters and enforcers of international norms.

This is what makes the enforcement of international law rather dependent on state actors. As there is no world police and no coercive mechanisms on the regional and global levels, international law depends on the good will of the state. Even international jurisdiction is not obligatory on the global level ; states can resort to the Hague tribunal, but are not obliged to.

In other words, international rules remain more consensus-based than domestic laws. States have to agree on norms, keep a close eye on their interpretation, and safeguard a great deal of discretion when it comes to their enforcement.

The consensual nature of international law and the great discretion left to the States - when it comes to enforcing international rules - have frequently led some observers to argue that international law cannot be considered as law. "Realists" have particularly difficulties in accepting the legal character of rules whose observance is not subject to bold enforcement mechanisms applicable to most domestic legal systems.

Such a viewpoint is, however, not compelling if one takes into consideration that no law, even in the domestic area, is likely to be observed without being accepted by a large majority of the subjects concerned. Although enforcement procedures do in some cases enhance the "readiness" to observe the law, they cannot - at least in democratic states - secure the application of rules which are not based on a deep consensus among citizens. This truism appears much clearer in the field of international law: Weak enforcement mechanisms do not question the legal nature of international norms but underline their consensual character.

In this respect, it is important to realise that the vast majority of international norms that are not only limited to questions of war and peace or diplomatic and consular relations but that also cover a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues is in fact applied.

Infringements, although they attract much more publicity, remain the exception. This is due to the fact that international law is the outcome of an increasing need - shared by most states - for common policies and regulations at international scale.

The expansion of international law to many policy fields has not been the only development in the field of international law during the last decades. Major shifts have taken place in the field of collective security and international human rights protection. These shifts have undoubtedly influenced the concept of state immunity.

The adoption of the Charter of the United Nations constituted a major development in international law as it banned the concept of a just - including preventive - war. A violent course of action can only take place if conducted or authorised by the UN as a response to a serious threat to peace. The significance of this collective security

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mechanism has been obscured by the political situation during the cold war as the antagonism between the two superpowers caused a permanent deadlock of the UN Security Council, the sole institution entrusted with the application of that mechanism.

This situation changed, however, as the cold war drew to a close. Since the 1991 Iraq war, the UN has authorised various interventions in order to respond to serious threats to peace. This has added considerable credibility to the enforcement mechanism of international law.

The more effective use of the collective security mechanism has considerably weakened the concept of state immunity –especially that human rights considerations have been increasingly accepted by the UN Security Council as serious threats to peace. One can cite, in this context, the cases of Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti in addition to the present UN investigation concerning the murder of the former Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri.

The end of the “structural” deadlock within the UN Security Council as well as a more extensive interpretation of the UN Charter have considerably reduced the *domaine réservé* of the states.

States cannot any more be sure that violations of international law - in particular massive violation of human rights - remain unsanctioned. This practice has acquired increasingly important dimensions that regimes in various parts of the world have been forced to take into account.

The weakening of state immunity can also be examined from the individuals’ perspective.

As the Pinochet case demonstrates, national courts are more inclined than in the past to hear cases filed by individuals against state employees having committed serious crimes against humanity - including heads of states - and to refuse justifications based on the concept of state immunity. The same rationale lies behind the creation of “ad hoc” tribunals such as the courts pursuing crimes committed during the wars in Rwanda and in ex-Yugoslavia and the new permanent International Criminal Court.

Although the Nürnberg trials in Germany after World War II constituted the first precedent to such a development, the latter was subsequently codified by the definition of international crimes in various conventions after the Cold War had come to a halt.

Furthermore, in spite of the fact that this improvement is only noticeable on the regional level, individuals have been granted a better standing. They can thus file complaints and ask for revising state measures and laws.

Finally, one can comment that national legislators and courts take much more into consideration international law than in the past. This enhances the credibility as well as the legitimacy of international norms.

In sum, one can observe that international law is in general observed, for it is based on a broad consensus among states. Moreover, serious violations of international law

are today much more likely to be considered as a threat to peace and, hence, to be sanctioned by the United Nations. By and large, international law appears therefore to be more resilient against major infringements than in the past.

If this conclusion leaves one unsatisfied, this is due to the fact that international law is a product of political bargaining that reflects the relation of powers at a given time. This reality affects unquestionably processes related to setting common rules and imposing sanctions.

Although they are conducted among formally equal states, international agreements reflect often the economic inequalities of the parties involved. More alarming are cases in which sanctions are applied without prior authorisation of the UN Security Council (Iraq 2003) or those in which persistent violations of international rules appear to remain without consequences (occupied territories of Palestine, Western Sahara or Darfour).

This leads us to the conclusion that the effectiveness of international law is maximised when international norms are based on general agreement and when major infringements are "canalised."

The resilience of international law has two connotations: Resilience as elasticity and adaptability or resilience as solidity. International law is caught in this double-faced dilemma: Does it have to prove its immutability or does it have to oscillate between setting principles and adapting to new realities?

This dilemma does not make international law irrelevant, but rather raises the following challenging question: Which principles have to be observed to generate sufficient consensus that does not only reflect mere acceptance but also legitimacy in order to enforce international law?

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## Work Groups

After the lecture, Hanf posed the following questions for further discussion:

International law is produced by unequal states characterized by different political and economic standings as well as by international organisations. Is international law created and imposed by major powers? How do we deal with this question in the light of US hegemony? Is the agenda shaped by equal states or by the most powerful states?

The United Nations has considerable power to sanction states. Do you consider interference in domestic affairs a just matter of principle or is it a negative instance that undermines states' preferences?

If we were to accept the idea of a global policeman, how should this force be organised? On which premises? Given that the United Nations wants and has the resources and the ability to become a global policeman, what would be the changes that the UN constitution has to undergo so that the UN organisation accomplishes such a role?

## Work Groups' Reports

### Group I

#### **On international law, politics and the possibility of reform**

Most states have a say when it comes to ratifying laws, but major powers shape the agenda of international law, and steer its sails on troubled waters of world conflicts. "Instrumentalising" international norms for political ends is one of the greatest danger in the present world order.

In short, one cannot ignore the impact of the international world system, the balances of power, and their effect on shaping and controlling international law. The increasing manipulation of the United Nations by the US is a clear illustration.

Despite the fact that major powers have the capacity to impel mechanisms of international law, these mechanisms remain a beneficial guarantee for justice and relative fairness.

Reforms in international organisations, that revolve around reshaping the UN organisation by introducing mechanisms that guarantee equality of states, and that

prevent powerful actors from having the last say or that guarantee more inter-governmental consensus, can notably solve many problems arising from power imbalances.

As international law is no static outcome but rather a work in progress, it is possible to overhaul institutions so that the latter confront with a new impetus ensuing difficulties.

## **Group II**

### **On the controversial relation between hegemony and international law**

Group II also agreed that law making and international norms are heavily influenced by hegemonic powers; however, participants had reservations as to whether the United Nations should act as a world police power making sure that international norms were enforced.

It is more efficient when UN interventions acquire more consistency and become more transparent. Thus, the first UN objective should be defining clear criteria behind interventions and avoiding selectivity. In other words, the causes, processes, and possible consequences underlying UN interferences in a country's domestic affairs should be with great detail examined. The US war against Iraq, and Israel's violations of UN Resolutions have set up clear precedents of infringement, and are evident indicators of the permissiveness of international law.

Another issue that needs to be urgently tackled is the relation between international law and terrorism. The fight against terrorism has done much harm to international law, and has blurred the boundaries between what is right or what is wrong. Moving towards more clarity and steadfastness is the very first challenge that the UN must rise up to.

## **Plenary Discussion**

After listening to the work groups' reports, D. Hanf underlined that international law should be indeed considered as a product of power chains. This body of rules and regulations is not immune against power interactions in the international system. However, it is worth mentioning that most international treaties were adopted after they had satisfied the vast majority of the countries that promoted the initiative.

An important question that needs to be addressed is whether weak states are able to introduce provisions in international treaties serving their interests, for major powers have the ability to block the implementation of some rules clashing with their interests.

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All these negative notes notwithstanding, the picture of international law is not that bleak. In fact, the rising role of NGOs and the impact of such institutions on international law benefit more the weak than the strong states.

Although veto powers could block decisions deemed inconvenient by powerful states, strong efforts aiming at shifting centres of power from the Security Council to the General Assembly in the United Nations were made.

At the first glimpse, this initiative sounds very promising, for it heralds a shift towards global democracy. A closer scrutiny allows us, however, to deduce that this move causes many problems. Indeed, one cannot equalize democratic and autocratic regimes in the General Assembly. The legitimacy problem within the UN makes reforms much more difficult than expected.

Moreover, an international organisation which does not take into consideration prevailing balances of power cannot function properly in the real world. It is in fact more realistic and efficient to strike a compromise between ideals and reality - no matter how bitter the latter seems - instead of brooding on impossible reforms.

Creating a UN organisation that acts as a world police force is also a complicated matter. It is difficult to envisage which actor is to be entrusted with such a mission. Creating a supranational UN that is not rooted in the states but whose decisions are compulsory to all states engenders additionally the problem of accountability. How can such a supranational United Nations be controlled? Other authority, accountability and legitimacy problems might in this context arise.

Future speculations about UN reform will undoubtedly deal with how to separate international law from power politics and how to break the causal chains that make out of international actions pure consequences of sheer power politics.

Consequently, reshaping the concept of state sovereignty remains a primordial issue. Many crimes in the past were committed under the pretext of state sovereignty. It is of utter importance, on the one hand, to develop criteria that define what states can do to salvage their sovereignty, and on the other hand, to defend UN decision-making processes against external interferences so that decisions do not reflect pure considerations of state sovereignty and power politics.

The US intervention in Iraq reflected the failure of national democracies and the frailty of public opinion in influencing national actions. To face these shortcomings, how should international law act? How can international law check hegemony and make them obedient?

Unfortunately, many future aspects of international law will depend on US politics.

But empowering international law can be done by strengthening world opinion, promoting information, and enabling powerful and credible NGOs to become major future channels of international law development.

## Has Recent History Validated the Assumptions of Realistic (Neo-Realistic) IR Theory or What is Left of Constructivism?

Professor Dr. Anja Jetschke  
University of Bremen, Germany

After the end of the cold war, a paradigm shift occurred in the theory of international relations. Doubt came as to whether anyone was still a realist. Realism seemed to be hardly distinguishable from other theories such as liberalism or neo-institutionalism, and events appeared to invalidate realist assumptions.

However, four years after the September 11 events, the question is rather what is left of constructivism, and whether recent events have revalidated key assumptions of realism.

To answer these questions, Jetschke underlines first why constructivism is considered as synonymous with a normative and/or peaceful theory, and why this consideration has been altered. Second, she outlines the main differences between the Realist and the Constructivist schools, and compares their key propositions about state behaviour.

Third, she argues that while recent developments in the international arena seem on the surface to give reason to realism, a closer inquiry leads observers to deduce that constructivism provides better explanatory prerequisites which enable a political scientist to grasp the changes that the world had undergone in the last decade.

Last but not least, Jetschke proposes a fusion between the Realist and Constructivist theories to deal with the multi-faceted shifts in the international political landscape. The phenomena of political legitimacy and legitimate enforcement of international norms, mainly described by the Constructivist school, enable the scholar to transcend the limitations of both Realist and Constructivist theories.

Constructivism has earned itself a reputation for being an idealistic theory. After the cold war, Constructivist thought focused on promoting "ideals" such as human rights and other policies aiming at protecting the environment and restricting the proliferation of deadly weapons. The fact that this theory was more concerned with studying norms and ideals as well as detecting how interdependent processes involving moral values and application of norms transform the world to a better place, has conferred to Constructivism the label of a normative school.

In other words, the decline of interest in the Constructivist theory had to do with the dwindling attention to these "good norms" and ideals.

Yet, that does not make the Realist theory the triumphant alternative, for Realism as a theory does not explain outcomes. In order to compare/contrast these theories,

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one should take a closer look at the nature of assumptions upon which the Realist and Constructivist theories have built their foundations. In fact, these assumptions revolving around the nature of the actors, the source and nature of state preferences, and suppositions about international structure highlight the main differences separating the two schools of thought.

## **Realist and Constructivist key assumptions contrasted**

### **First assumption: The nature of the actors**

According to the Realist school, states are the primary actors in an anarchical international system. Foremost, states are the only actors endowed with substantial autonomy vis-à-vis other actors such as international and non-governmental organisations. The latter have emaciated capabilities when it comes to coercing states and proving their own autonomy. Despite their increase, NGOs do not possess much leverage on states, but remain primarily instruments of the states.

Constructivists argue, however, that not only states are influential actors in the international arena but also international organisations, NGOs, and policy networks. Coercive power is less relevant than the power of ideas which rests on persuasiveness, network diversity, size and chance. The power of ideas can be conveyed through many channels not necessarily restricted to the state.

Constructivists refute additionally the Realists' claim that the international system is anarchically organised in an ontological way, and do not consider structures to be prior to actors. Static structures have little predictive capacity and cannot anticipate whether two states would have a friendly or antagonistic behaviour. Identities and identity change in the course of cooperative behaviour play in this case a more important role.

Constructivists also argue that although there might be anarchical systems, other alternative patterns are possible.

### **Second assumption: The nature of state preferences**

Realists maintain that the international system does not differ from a domestic internal system, and that states behave as rational and unitary actors. States are preoccupied with their quest for survival and must acquire and preserve their tools for self-help.

The anarchical pattern of the international system provides states with uniform preferences based on conflict, because resources are scarce. State actors tend to classify their interests according to a hierarchy of importance, and adopt plans of action that would most likely safeguard their interests.

Conversely, Constructivists refute the claim that state preferences are uniform and based on conflict. Preferences are rather shaped by the nature of the identities in question. Second, the nature of the system structure does not predetermine conflicting

preferences, because the international environment is not only solely based on scarce resources, but also on diverse areas of cooperation which allow states to coordinate their courses of action. Moreover, international norms and agreements constitute state identities. For instance, not only does the international non-proliferation regime constrain a state willing to develop a nuclear arsenal, but also defines great and small powers in relation to each other.

### **Third assumption: International structure**

Realists underline that interstate bargaining outcomes reflect the relative costs, threats and inducements directly proportional to the distribution of material capacities among states in the international system. In other words, Realism underlines the fact that states resort to coercion and bribery out of ability and necessity.

As state preferences are considered to be zero-sum, the gain of one state entails the loss of another. Chances of compromise are considered as generally inexistent, and the main tools to reallocate resources are threats or side-payments.

Contrastingly, constructivists do not give much importance to material capacities, and emphasize the existence of ideational or normative components. Thus, outcomes are not necessarily fixed by the allocation of material haves, but are geared by the extent to which international norms are institutionalised and considered as legitimate.

Politics is not only governed by crude interests, but processes of argumentation and persuasion do matter. As a result, not only do powerful states play the most important role in international politics, but also states endowed with credibility and legitimacy. Social learning, and socialization become key methods able to influence international norms and state behaviour.

After contrasting the assumptions of the two schools, what about their respective performances in real life? And does Constructivism stand the test of reality?

The following examples will help add more clarity to the matter at hand.

The present American administration has withdrawn its engagements and support for major international conventions. In March 2001, for instance, it announced that it would not implement the Kyoto agreement which asked for the reduction of carbon dioxide.

One month later, the administration also withdrew from negotiations related to the International Court of Justice. It nullified the signature of the treaty with the ICJ under the Clinton administration, and refused to approve any resolution in the UN General Assembly pertaining to the recognition of the International Court.

The Bush administration also called off its commitments to various international treaties hinging on human rights, and showed its disdain for many fundamental conventions on human rights when it arrested hundreds of individuals in Afghanistan under the suspicion that they cooperated with Al-Qaeda.

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In December 2001, a US report, entitled “Nuclear Posture Review” submitted to the Congress, revealed the US administration’s intention to make out of nuclear weapons a central element in US security politics.

In March 2003, the US invaded Iraq under the pretext that the Baathist regime developed weapons of mass destruction. This highly controversial invasion disregarded the United Nations and ignored the necessity of a prior UNSC resolution.

These examples illustrate the fact that the US hegemon enjoys an unrivalled preponderant role, and that it does not hesitate to use material “soft and hard” power to advance its interests.

These examples at first glance also seem to prove that by defying international norms and organisations, increasing its military capacities, and fighting to preserve its raw interests in an hostile environment, the US validates assumptions of the classical Realist or neo-Realist schools in international politics.

However, to what extent is this true?

Under closer scrutiny, there is more than meets the eye.

Although the US has presently an overwhelming material supremacy, it is in fact working hard to divert this material power into political influence as well as political outcomes and effects. The debate in the Security Council that preceded the war against Iraq proved the sophisticated interrelation between institutional norms and state behaviour.

It is true that the US primary goal was to dislodge Saddam Hussein, yet the fact that it did not enjoy the UNSC support made it struggle hard to confer a halo of legitimacy and credibility to its undertakings in Iraq. In other words, the US might be acting like a “Realist” power, yet the outcomes of its actions do not assert the assumptions of the Realist school.

This fight between US material power and institutionalised international norms proves that more complex intangibles have arisen after the end of the cold war. These intangibles which revolve around political legitimacy, collective endeavour, moral justification of global governance, and legitimate enforcement, can be better analysed by the Constructivist school.

Nevertheless, if we consider the issue of legitimate enforcement, we find out that both Realists and Constructivists cannot deal appropriately with how states which disobey international norms can be convinced to re-apply the norms without subverting the essence of international norms through an incongruous application.

Enforcement, according to the Realists, remains only arbitrary because of the high costs it imposes on a strong state, and cannot but harm the credibility of international law because of the inconsistencies lurking beneath this issue. On the other hand, Constructivists are unable to come to grips with the issue of enforcement, since they consider that international norms emanate out of state identities. Jetschke notes in this

context the necessity of detecting the missing link that takes into consideration the pertinence of a “powerful” international law and which is simultaneously able to deal with “opposition” springing from disobedient states.

Freeing the world from powerful states under the pretext that the latter detract from justice and morality in the international world order is no reasonable argument. The world depends rather on powerful states to act as enforcers of international law given that accountability checks the use of power.

Enforcement, primarily exercised by powerful states, is strongly linked to public argumentation processes which relate action to deliberation procedures.

To state the matter differently, public deliberation and argumentation provide the embodiment of the necessary pressures as well as the nimbus of legitimacy which will justify a state’s course of action in harmony with public opinion.

Legitimate enforcement entails two conditions: The mechanism must be shielded from the interests of powerful states so that the latter do not use enforcement for opportunistic ends.

Secondly, this mechanism must make sure that weaker states are not arbitrarily victimized by the imposition of sanctions.

When a state practices a “deviant behaviour” or does not seem to comply with international law, Realists would dismiss this instance as a case of non-compliance and disregard international values as an important criterion. However, constructivism would search for the motivations pushing a country to undermine a certain international norm.

While some states might justify their action as a means to fight terrorism, other organisations would decry this action as a pure violation of human rights.

For Constructivism, as there is no objective definition of reality, an international norm is the result of a predominant description upon which states collectively agree. Justifications why a norm was undermined refer to the extent to which an international norm is institutionalised or not. The more debatable and shallow it is, the less likely actors will comply to it. Once a state does not refrain from practicing human rights violations after a certain state of emergency, it is likely that its government loses political credibility.

Justifications provided by the actors in such a controversial setting permit to evaluate a state’s intentions and behaviour. When the Bush Administration, for instance, decided to invade Iraq under the doubtful pretext that the regime was developing weapons of mass destruction posing a threat to international security, it proceeded to a systematic search for these weapons. Although the US was aware of its misjudgement and had to admit later on its error, it was obliged to carry weeklong quests and examinations in order to confirm its political accountability and credibility.

US false presumptions did not prevent a full-scale invasion of Iraq. But, the American administration had to pay after the incursion the price of political legitimacy

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as it lost steadfastness and credibility. The loss of political legitimacy is currently reflected in US financial and human losses in the wake of the Iraqi tragic experience.

Ameliorating the conditions for legitimate enforcement might solve many injustices in the world. First, it is necessary to keep in mind that international organisations can provide transparent mechanisms that engender legitimate expectations about state behaviour. These expectations can help define and delimit the concept of compliance.

Legitimate enforcement might become more efficient once these conditions are fulfilled: The creation of a trans-national argumentation process which examines the question of violation and compliance of a particular actor, and a general consensus stating that this actor has indeed violated international norms. Taking into consideration these requisites before resorting to enforcement does maximize chances of state equality and international justice.

This is where Constructivism plays a fundamental role, because it diverts attention from state interactions to issues of global governance and political legitimacy.

In conclusion, by fusing Constructivism and Realism, one can safely argue that the power of strong states can be utilized to implement international norms. State behaviour can thus be used to promote global argumentation processes and thereby legitimate enforcement.

The main plea behind this argument is that the world order can only acquire stability once it is perceived as legitimate.

## Work Groups

The following issues and questions elaborated by Jetschke were dealt with:

### Session 1

#### IR theory and the Iraqi case

Mearsheimer/Walt argue that Saddam Hussein was by no means the irrational, unpredictable President the US government claimed he would be. He was a rational actor who reacted to perceived threats arising from his immediate neighbour Iran and to the economic risks posed by Kuwait. If he had developed an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, he could have been deterred from further developing his arsenal the same way the Soviet Union had been deterred during the Cold War.

Do you believe that a nuclear deterrence policy, as in the example suggested by Mearsheimer and Walt, is a reasonable strategy for a powerful state such as the US to deal with states willing to acquire mass destruction weapons? What are the likely side-effects?

Are the conditions that ensured that deterrence worked during the Cold War still present? Suggestions: Discuss issues such as rationality of actors (How rational do you believe those actors are or those governments developing nuclear capabilities? Can they be trusted?) Discuss the multiplication of states that have acquired nuclear weapons and the domestic bases of deterrence policy.

What are the regional options for limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction? Do you believe that e.g. Asian or Arab states have as much an interest in containing nuclear proliferation as the US has?

### Session 2

#### Global governance and the fight against the proliferation of mass destruction weapons

After Iraq, Iran has come onto the international agenda because Western states, most importantly the US and European states, believe that it is implementing a program for the development of nuclear weapons, and that it effectively disguises this program as a program for the civilian use of nuclear energy. The European Union has discontinued its negotiations with Iran after Iranian officials had declared that they used these talks to gain time in order to work on their nuclear facilities. Nuclear proliferation experts evaluate that Iran will take at least ten years to develop a nuclear capacity, provided that a nuclear weapons program is really underway.

You are an international strategist trying to develop an international policy ensuring that the overwhelming majority of countries adheres to the prescription of the Nuclear

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Non-Proliferation Regime. Develop a strategy for an international campaign to strengthen the NPT.

The following issues might guide your search:

- The legitimacy of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime (e.g. is the NPT-Regime legitimate? Why or why not? Do nuclear powers live up to their obligations of ensuring the civilian use of nuclear energy for non-nuclear powers?)
- The role and power of international organisations (How much power do they have? What are their major assets?)
- The role and power of non-governmental actors (e.g. Do they have any role to play or can they be relegated to a second plan? Do you believe that their role is equally small or great in other issue areas than international security?)
- The role of states (Which identities do states have? Should arguments aiming at persuading individual states be adapted to their identities?)

## Work Groups' Reports

The groups dealt with some pertinent questions relevant to their immediate environment, and areas of interest.

The following themes caught their attention:

### **The United States and the ambivalent issue of nuclear deterrence**

The US waged war against Iraq under the pretext that it wanted to deter former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein from developing weapons of mass destruction. One notices that the Bush administration used the same policy of containment and deterrence it had applied during the cold war, yet this time the policy of deterrence acquires a more violent character.

The issue of nuclear weapons has currently become more of a bargaining card in the international scene, and a strategy used by the US to maintain its hegemony by using "sticks and carrots" methods in order to control challenging powers.

In the light of the "Iraq" precedent, President Bush's claim that he would continue pressurizing the Iranian regime to relinquish its nuclear-related programmes and stop endorsing terrorist activities is in fact misleading. The Iranian case demonstrates to what extent it has become difficult to unmask US real intentions behind the security strategy of nuclear deterrence.

In fact, is the US threatening Iran because it has a genuine interest in the nuclear issue or does it have a hidden agenda?

In short, deterrence, mainly nuclear deterrence, formed the core of US security policy during the Cold War. Yet, this issue is being used currently to undermine US challengers under the pretext that they are harbouring chemical, biological, and/or nuclear weapons.

The "instrumentalisation" of the nuclear file has become an important component of US power ingredients. Taming regional dissenters and brandishing the threat of optional violence in case the dissenting regime does not halt its nuclear programme have become new motors sustaining US dominance.

US double-faced policy leads it, for example, to develop a vigilant containment strategy when it comes to North Korea, attack Iraq under the suspicion that the regime was concealing WMD traces, but also turn a blind eye on Israel's nuclear arsenal.

### **The issue of rationality**

Do states always act rational as the Realist school presumes? How do states manipulate the theme of rationality? Does rationality hinge on ideas and motivations?

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The issue of rationality, according to the participants, is a tricky concept that cannot be easily pinned down.

Before the US attacks Iraq, one of its strategies, for example, was to portray former President Saddam Hussein as an irrational actor, and propagate the belief that the Bush administration was undertaking a rational act by invading Iraq to counteract Saddam Hussein's irrational behaviour.

Yet, as Mearsheimer/Walt argued, Saddam Hussein's reaction could be interpreted as a rational reaction to perceived threats arising from his neighbourhood. US campaigns of defamation against Iraq and the Iraqi regime ended up backfiring on the US insofar as the current American administration lost a great deal of its credibility and political legitimacy.

This thin line separating concepts of legitimacy and illegitimacy as well as multi-purpose perceptions of rationality and irrationality transform politics and international relations into unpredictable patterns based more on shifting identities and circumstances rather than subject to assumptions fixedly prescribed by IR theories.

This is why the Constructivist political thought, which focuses more on ideas and perceptions, can grasp the changeable issue of rationality better than the Realist school can.

## **Plenary Discussion**

After listening to the report, Jetschke emphasized the complexity of the "rationality" issue, and argued why constructivism can better come to grips with this complicated matter.

She first asked whether it would be more appropriate to speak of many kinds of rationalities rather than one constant rationality guiding international actors' behaviour.

Upon analysing whether the US had acted rationally as it decided to attack Iraq, one notices that Realism is unable to explain this case, for the actors did not behave as the Realist school expects them to. Defining rationality hinges rather on multi-faceted dimensions which are not ontologically fixed. An instrumental notion, rationality has to do more with motivation, perceptions and conceptions rather than rigid prescriptions.

An arising significant challenge for political scientists is to be able to make assumptions about what international actors want. Do actors take into consideration their national interest at the very moment decisions are made or do they try to figure out what their national interests would be fifty years later. How are strategic undertakings and mistakes defined? How do motives impact strategies? Once these questions

are posed, one tends to engage in a different methodological exercise that Realism cannot rise up to.

Unlike Constructivism which examines preferences to predict outcomes, Realism disregards state predilections and motivations in order to focus on behaviour. Realism states that there is only material rationality, and that the states are confronted with a limited scope of preferences. Trying to decode actors' motivations becomes, according to the school, a hermeneutical exercise that IR theory should not be concerned with.

This leads us to conclude that Realism is presently unable to capture important phenomena such as the rise of NGOs, actors' motivations...

Constructivism has in fact a legitimate place in international relations.

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## Part Three

### Dealing with Hegemony.

#### The Prospects of US Self-Restraint

Professor Dr. Theodor Hanf

Honorary Professor at the University of Freiburg, Director of the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute(ABI) and the International Centre for Social Sciences (CISH)

This lecture explores American policy in the global South in a historical perspective after the end of the cold war, the rise of an American "robust multilateralism", and finally interprets potential signs for US-self restraint as well as symptoms for decline in the US era.

After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, hopes that military spending would be reduced and other socio-economic issues could become on top of the international agenda soared. People yearned for a new decade of peace at the beginning of the nineties, and expected that the end of the cold war would bring about new horizons of tranquillity. In addition, the greater role played by the United Nations in conflict-torn societies was perceived as a positive step heralding more UN involvement in conflict prevention and regulation.

It is true that many conflicts erupted in the third world at the beginning of the nineties, for many of these conflicts were a continuation of the cold war clashes by proxy or through hot means. Yet, the relative success of the United Nations, once the West-East conflict had subsided, engendered a feeling that peacekeeping missions were effective solutions, and that the Security Council had capabilities of enforcement and was endowed with legitimacy.

The UN successful involvement in Iraq in 1991, and subsequent UN peacekeeping tasks, such as the Somalia exercise in 1992, were all signs of the efficiency of the new means to regulate conflicts.

From a normative point of view, it seemed that questions pertaining to human rights and to the well being of the oppressed had become a priority, and that issues related to state sovereignty were relegated to a second plan.

Moreover, the frequent use of soft power, the adoption of international resolutions as well as their application were considered to be the sunrise of global governance.

This general hope that an international world order was emerging meant the death of the Realist school and the resurrection of Constructivism. The US major role in global

relations led scholars to ask whether the new century would be a multinational order characterized by US supremacy or a neo-isolationist century. Would the US practice its policy of “benign neglect” towards the world or would it become more involved?

Under the Bush I reign, the Kuwait Liberation War clearly respected multilateral action and UN involvement. The Somali experience as well announced somehow a “return to an isolationism” which became more pronounced during the Clinton era.

It seemed that US foreign policy under the Clinton mandate - during which the president concentrated on rebuilding domestic economy - was regulated by US economics. Central projects concentrated on the World Bank, the Washington Consensus, privatisation, financial deregulation, and social action plans. During this period, the US was interested in the rise of new markets in the world (Latin America, Mexico...). Resorting to protectionism, it focused on reciprocal and managed trade in which the state intervened as a key actor.

It is worth mentioning that, at times of weakness, former President Clinton chose multilateral action, and diverted general attention towards US investments and state activities.

Promoting democracy in the world, under the Clinton reign, was coupled with criteria of good governance and economy. The US administration argued then that since autocratic regimes could not be but corrupt, a system of control and checks and balances could only produce accountability.

Fostering democratic processes, however, in some areas of the world particularly in Africa was related to dubious criteria. There were “strange love stories” with African dictators in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Congo... A pronounced shady involvement with Afro-militarists shed light on America’s double-faced entanglement in democratic affairs. Nonetheless, there were some pronounced efforts to tame authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia namely in Malaysia and Thailand.

As soon as the post-cold war euphoria started fading in the mid-nineties, US ascending hegemony had to face new sorts of conflict, which were not longer ramifications of the cold war but internal wars in the Global South.

Instead of a clear-cut “world order”, there seemed to be a world disorder. IR optimistic theoretical claims at the beginning of the nineties were altered in favour of more pessimistic viewpoints; the Realist theory re-emerged. Huntington’s and Kaplan’s writings depicted the vision of a new Middle Age which replaced the dream of a multi-lateral world founded on international interdependence and collective action.

Military spending was once again incredibly on the rise in the United States. US defence strategies occupied the forefront, and US dealing with its allies changed. Former President Clinton practiced what was called “assertive multilateralism.” In other words, when multilateral action did not work, he withdrew. The American administration, as a case of illustration, did not participate in the Rwandan exercise as US interests

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were not involved. Displeasure with the UN organisation was expressed by the non-payment of fees.

As the decade of the nineties was coming to a close, the US had managed to shift “benign neglect” towards unilateralism. Attempts of establishing US power and hegemony as well as imposing aggressive tools of westernisation started furtively sneaking.

The historical turning point was the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

Although a whole series of attacks against the US was perpetrated in the past, this was the first time that the attacks happened in the US homeland and not in US embassies or agencies in the world. This event caused a psychological turnabout, and security issues returned to the top of US agenda.

After Al Qaeda terrorist attacks, US policy of outright democratisation in the world was relegated to a second rank. Since 2001, the world has been rather witnessing compromises with dictatorships or semi-authoritarian regimes needed to fight terrorism. US exceptionalism during this period is characterized by a touch of “robust multilateralism”: The American administration is ready to play under a multilateral umbrella if and only if collective action suits its interests. In fact, this robust multilateralism, which implies more versatile alliances than a fixed political course, is not and will never constitute a clear-cut shift towards a multilateral direction. This US approach is more of an attempt to instrumentalise collective action for US ends.

Many recent examples illustrate that US involvement in world areas is a direct expression of its interests:

In Latin America, private foreign direct investment has been promoted, but as terrorist threat in Latin America is practically non-existent, the US has practiced towards the Latin American governments a “friendly neglect.”

In the Middle East, President Bush was originally reluctant to interfere in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Yet, since 9/11, this region has become a test case for US intervention and ability to remodel regimes in order to curb terrorist activities while satisfying US interests. The American invasion of Afghanistan, after a campaign of “demonisation” practiced by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, remains an unfinished case of robust multilateralism, and denotes the US growing habit to start a political business and leave it unfinished. US shady involvement in Iraq, an entanglement that took place against the will of major states in the international community, reflects also the rise of US instrumental multilateralism.

In South eastern Asia, US involvement has also become more pronounced after the September 11 events. The region is perceived as a second front in the fight against terrorism.

In this part of the world, different levels of cooperation with the US are noticeable. Whereas the Philippine government maintains friendly relations with the US, Malaysia remains rather circumspect. Pakistan has become, after the 2001 historical turnabout, an interesting and potential US ally.

As for Africa, America's lack of participation in many peace-keeping missions in Black Africa reveals that this area has, for the time being, a low priority on the American agenda.

9/11 attacks, however, awakened US interest in African states such as Libya and Sudan as well as in failed states such as Liberia that act as laundering spaces for non-governmental organisations.

All in all, America's interests, after the 2001 turnabout, pivoted around boosting anti-terrorism and pressurising states to liberalise/democratise for US political ends.

Upon reading the US National Security Strategy Document (2002), one notes a singular approach promoting multilateral coalition-building but mainly revolving around a unilateral course of action. This report unveils to a great extent the US dilemma between two pathways: Promoting anti-terrorism or promoting real democracy. This has led staunch US critics to talk about the problem of double-standards in American policy.

The American hegemonic behaviour in the world, nevertheless, cannot conceal implicit signs foreshadowing possible trends of US self-restraint in the long run. Rumours that American forces would be reduced in Iraq or that a complete pullout from Afghanistan would take place might not be true, but they still attract our attention to the fact that America might be stretching thin.

The US is ill-prepared for another crisis that might lead to heavy military involvement. The limits of imperial power have not been attained, yet they have become within reach.

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## Work Groups

The groups read and analysed carefully the document issued by the White House on the US National Security Strategy<sup>17</sup> which tackles America's international strategy, its campaign against Global Terrorism and its struggle to defuse regional conflicts after September 11.

Then, they detected key debatable issues that shed light on US international strategy and alliances. The following comments were made:

## Work Groups' Reports

### Group I

#### On US National Security Strategy in the Middle East

Group I discussed how to assess US National Security Strategy in the Middle East region and how to evaluate whether it has failed or not. Divergent opinions notwithstanding, the participants agreed that the US had extended its wings almost to their full length in the region, and that it would think twice in the future before it embarked on a pre-emptive attack.

Some countries in the Arab world seem to believe that US powers are on the wane. Syria, for example, sustains the hope that the US fails dramatically in Iraq so that US threat on the Syrian regime diminishes.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the controversial debate on US Security Strategy and invasion of Iraq leaves many open-ended questions that will unquestionably impact the future international scene: Did the US reach its goals once it toppled the Iraqi regime? How long can the US afford to stay in Iraq? Will US troops make sure that a certain political stability has been reached before they pull out, or are they preparing for building enduring bases in the country? When can they stop interfering? Will the US interfere militarily in other Arab countries (e.g. in Syria) in the post-Iraq era? Or will this experience dissuade it from using hard power?

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<sup>17</sup> See "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," written by Georges Bush on September 17, 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/>

<sup>18</sup> Present indicators, however, signal the contrary. Despite its failings in Iraq, the US is keen on pressuring the Syrian regime and bringing about its compliance with US demands

According to some participants in the group, the invasion of Iraq was a major US failure, because the war inaugurated chapters of never-ending political and social problems. For others, the intervention was a US success inasmuch as the Bush Administration succeeded in transferring the terrorist battlefield from the US to Iraq as “Jihadists” are presently fighting to make their way towards Baghdad. The group also remarked that US national security strategy used universalistic values such as democracy, freedom and peace, to impose its interests and shield itself from terrorist attacks.

This double-faced game makes one doubt whether concepts of security strategies and pre-emptive wars make the international system a better place.

Participants also questioned to what extent the concepts of security strategy and civil liberties are reconcilable. The post-September 11 legacy, which mainly concentrates on pre-emptive attacks, prevention of terror, forging alliances to combat the axis of terrorism, has ended up undermining the issue of civil liberties. Arbitrary anti-terrorism measures have at times infringed on human rights, and eroded some democratic bases.

In sum, is sacrificing civil liberties in exchange for security justifiable? How to delimit the boundaries between civil liberties and anti-terrorism? Should international actors resort to the military option every time security interests are at stake? Are diplomatic endeavours efficient in such cases?

In conclusion, the group highlighted the importance of raising awareness not only in developing countries plagued with conflicts but also in developed and conflict-free countries in order to avoid asymmetrical security concepts based at times on misconceptions of “the other.” In fact, cultural and social misperceptions have profound repercussions on human and civil rights issues.

## **Group II**

### **On the tricky question of democratisation in the Arab world**

This group mainly dealt with some issues arising out of the US National strategy document (2002) and that are relevant to the Arab world.

Participants contemplated a rare but striking case which draws attention to the complicated issue of democratisation under US auspices in the Arab world.

Provided that an Islamist government accesses power democratically in a certain Arab country, how would the US react?

Expected US scenarios are as follows:

- The US would refuse dealing with such an Islamist government

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- The US would not oppose such a move in case its interests are not at stake.

US forceful promotion of democracy in the Middle East neglects thus many sensitive issues that the Arab world has not yet dealt with. In fact, is the rule of an Islamist government after democratic elections in the people's interest or should such a rule be prevented?

US promotion of democracy as a prerequisite for peace and security in the Arab region does not allow the Arab world to deal with fundamental questions related to the political culture of the countries themselves, and to people's aspirations.

Second, US insistence on democratisation in the Middle East on the one hand, and reluctance to endorse reform measures suggested by the Palestinian Authority on the other hand, make the whole issue rather dubious. Does the US want to promote reforms that only suit its interests or is it dedicated to achieving genuine improvements towards liberalisation?

Group II also pondered eventual consequences of an American withdrawal from Iraq. The group reflected on three possible outcomes or scenarios:

- A sudden US military withdrawal might leave a power vacuum in Iraq which may become an attractive shelter for extremists. Thus, the presence of US troops for the moment contains the Iraqi problem and prevents the exportation of instability to other neighbouring countries
- An internal civil war between Iraqi religious communities would possibly break out after the American troops' departure
- The American withdrawal would be followed by the rise of a semi-authoritarian Iraqi regime that would be nonetheless US friendly.

All these scenarios leave out the possibility of a democratic Iraq. Sadly enough, the Iraqi example reflects dramatically the failure of the US to conciliate stability and democracy in the Middle East.

Alternative arising Arab models shaped by US influence draw our attention to the fact that America might not be at all interested in real democracies but is satisfied with the emergence of liberalizing regimes that are not hostile to the US Security Strategy.

Many measures of reform that took place in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states were the result of US incentives and soft power, and were not the result of a democratic inner overhaul. Syria, the reluctant power resisting change, has attracted US wrath since September 11 and the Iraqi invasion. However, it is doubtful whether the US is interested in a democratic Syria or in a friendly and compliant Baathist secular Damascus.

## Plenary Discussion

After listening to the reports, Hanf proposed to discuss eventual solutions to certain controversial issues. Concerning the first group's allusion to the possible rise of an Islamist government by democratic means, he maintained that the accession of an Islamist power might be at times the only available option to get rid of a corrupt and decrepit government. If democratic patterns are well implanted in the country, there should be institutional mechanisms to overthrow the Islamist government in case the latter did not respond to peoples' aspirations. In case such mechanisms lack, there is a danger that a plain rotation of power is more of a double-edged sword than a real chance for democratic development.

He then asked whether Arab states could afford an American failure in Iraq after what had happened. Although Arab states are unable to alter the prevailing situation, they can still remind the United States of its international obligations vis-à-vis Arab populations and regimes irrespective of security issues. In fact, now that inner turbulences in Iraq have reached an unprecedented degree, the US should stay long enough in Iraq to fulfil its duties, and work on a gradual political stabilisation.

Is there something that the Arab world can do to alter US precepts in the Middle East?

Despite the fact that the fragmentation of the Arab world prevents it from making efficient pressure on the US, Arab elites could at least attempt to influence and inform American public opinion as well as the US press. This might impact - slowly but surely - on US foreign policy and international strategies in the long run.

Compelling the American administration is an utopian perspective, but influencing American elites and intelligentsia (inter-university contacts, congresses, exchange of ideas) might be an efficient way to set about a gradual change.

Upon dwelling on regime changes in future Iraq and in other Arab countries, Hanf reflected first on the current discourse regarding system transition and federalism in Iraq.

The whole scholarly discussion about consensus democracy and power-sharing in Iraq has been, ironically enough, instigated by the US which raised the issue of communal segmentation and confessionalism before Iraqis had even thought about it. Nevertheless, the question that arises is whether a consensual democracy in Iraq would lead to disorder and to a reinforcement of cleavages.

The emergence of a new Iraqi autocratic state is also on the card; however, this new state would more likely resemble a case of shared authoritarianism. Between an unstable consensual system and a semi-authoritarian facade, what options does future Iraq have?

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In other Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, gradual changes are within reach. Although these slow processes of change guarantee somehow interior stability, they cast a shadow on the magnitude of democratic progress. Syria remains the only solid police-state unwilling to liberalise politically. The reason why the regime is to some extent solid, despite recent turbulences, is because it has imposed an authoritarian style of governance that does not interfere in the private citizenship's sphere. As long as citizens do not deal with politics, they enjoy relative degrees of freedom.

Last but not least, the ambivalent link between civil liberties and security issues was tackled. As a matter of fact, uncontrolled interventions can seriously erode human rights. If security is given top priority, freedom is seriously threatened. This is why anti-terrorist laws should be carefully examined and kept in check. It is the duty of civil society organisations to make sure that these laws do not compromise international and national norms of justice.

## Europe's Options<sup>19</sup>

General Introduction by Professor Dr. Theodor Hanf

### **The European Union: General remarks**

Europe has been changing at a very rapid pace in the last decade. The set up of the European Union whose members have increased to 25 countries has endowed the continent with an extremely complex and institutional arrangement with shared policies and perspectives.

An economic federation, the European Union has administrative as well as executive commissions and institutions invested with real power.

European law, the current currency, and the Schengen policy are tantamount to a shared socio-economic space, and a shared freedom of movement with no visa constraints. These measures have successfully built foundations of commonalities linking EU states and EU citizens. Despite increasing cooperation and rapprochement among these states, a common foreign policy remains nebulous and blurred. As the EU constitution is still in limbo, European foreign policies remain inter-governmental.

### **On transatlantic relations**

The European position towards the United States reflects some kind of disappointment and embitterment as the past faithful companionship has not been able to exert much influence on America, or influence US trajectory. After the cold war, the gap between European policies and US action plans has indeed become more and more visible. Although the present European relation to the US reveals a certain "anti-Bushism," it is worth mentioning that this anti-Bushism does not denote an anti-American attitude, but an antagonism towards the present American administration.

Europe finds itself militarily unable, unready and unwilling to spend on military ends as much as the US does. Politicians and scholars agree at this stage on the uselessness of forming a European army. As Western Europe has forgotten war, it has become rather unpopular to increase military capacities. No European government can actually make the parliament accept a bill on increasing military spending.

There seems to be no genuine transatlantic reconciliation on the war against Iraq, but there are certain practical arrangements between Europe and the US or "marriages of convenience" denoting a certain pragmatic cooperation based on forgetting the past and forging new common plans of action.

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<sup>19</sup> This topic has been mainly tackled by the groups that engaged into in-depth discussions on Europe's options in the world and the future of the European Union

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## Work Groups

Different readings were assigned for analysis and further reflection on European options.

Main highlights dealt with:

- The European Union Neighbourhood policy, an Introduction written by Manuela Moschella
- The EU Mediterranean and Middle East policy<sup>20</sup>
- The EU relations with West Bank and Gaza Strip<sup>21</sup>
- The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the MEDA programme<sup>22</sup>
- The EU and the Middle East Peace process<sup>23</sup>

## Plenary Discussion

### The European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU identity

The participants discussed together the relevancy of the European Neighbourhood Policy and its implications. This policy which aims at creating good political and economic relations with surrounding countries intends at the same to demarcate the EU boundaries and delimit its capacity of extension.

Such a policy has indeed many advantages. It provides neighbouring countries with the possibility of constructing new economic channels and deepening socio-cultural interactions with the European Union. It also enables the EU to deal with the challenge arising out of geographical proximity with other countries, and to define a consistent security strategy.

This EU constructivist approach concentrates on regional “burden sharing,” and provides many incentives to surrounding states. Enticements do not only revolve around closer economic integration, but also around institutional reforms, liberalisation, and an active EU role in settling disputes and guaranteeing institutional reform.

Proclaiming its readiness to help in building solid and new institutions, the European Union strives at the promotion of political stability in the surrounding region.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/med\\_mideast/intro/htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/intro/htm)

<sup>21</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gaza/intro/index.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Synopsis available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/)

<sup>23</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/mepp/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/index.htm)

By emphasizing differentiation or the recognition of political and economic differences among states, and progressivism or the necessity of fulfilling special prior criteria in order to achieve closer economic integration, the European commission addresses the challenges that may arise from cooperation, and envisages the establishment of concrete tools and instruments to concretise this approach with neighbouring countries.

Last, this policy admits undoubtedly that the EU stability and security hinge closely on the stability and well-being of its neighbourhood.

Once the European Neighbourhood Policy had been thoroughly discussed, several enticing questions were raised: Is Modern Europe only geographical? How can we delineate culture and geography in order to draw a more comprehensive European identity? Is Europe an idea or a geographically determined entity? Can Europe afford "extension" before "consolidation"?<sup>24</sup>

It was agreed that the European concept is not longer based on old geographical European frontiers but has become rather dependent upon cultural, economic, sociological affinities and ramifications. Europe will definitely face in the near future urgent problems arising from the process of shaping a fixed and stable European entity.

The question of European borders is thus linked to the question of European finality. Will Europe leave the idea of EU membership open-ended? To what extent can it stretch the EU concept? Will it slow or quicken the process of EU integration and admission of new states?

The participants emphasized the EU need to settle in one way or another and slow down the process of extension in order to come to grips with pending problems.

Indeed, the EU, a political animal with a unique character, will most probably be very careful in future foreign policy making. Its world interventions will be more like suggestions to adopt a certain political option, but will not tend towards imposing definite courses of action. The European Union will be more preoccupied with matters related to economic integration and institutional building: How to get rid of monopolies? How to introduce free market? How to establish institutions built on the rule of law? How to encourage political reforms?

More importantly, the European Union will impose itself as a model of emulation in the international system, but will not claim the role of hegemony assumed by the US.

### **Is the European Union a political option for the Middle East?**

The participants discussed finally whether the European Union was a political option for the Middle East. Responses were rather pessimistic.

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<sup>24</sup> Former French President François Mitterrand's statement on EU policy

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First, regarding the Middle East peace process, the EU cannot do much. It can of course open up and encourage channels of cooperation as well as intensify contacts based on diplomacy and provide economic support. Some even noted that the EU could assume the role of “a second conscience” in the Middle East reminding the carefree US of its limitations. However, the EU is unable to influence the outcome of the peace settlement process for many reasons. One prevalent reason is that the EU lacks strong stands in this part of the world. Its stances towards the Arab-Israeli settlement were criticized for their looseness.

European troops have rather proved their efficiency in peace-keeping missions; enforcing a peace settlement has not been a prominent item on their agenda. This makes the US the only viable power broker in the region.

Europe’s options in this part of the world remain constrained by realist considerations. In fact, the US which does not refrain from using military power in the Middle East has better chances to influence and shape outcomes.

A speculative question was raised at last: Can the MENA or some of its states become someday part of the European Union? Would Arab nations be eligible for EU entry? How far can the EU afford to extend beyond its “European” frontiers? If it is Turkey now, why not Lebanon later on?

Misgivings in Europe, arising as a result of controversial debates on a possible Turkey’s membership, foreshadow pessimistic prospects. On the other hand, many polls commissioned by think tanks in Europe reveal, for instance, that, despite reluctance, a high percentage of interviewees support Turkey’s entry (official candidate) and even an eventual Morocco’s membership (not an official EU candidate.)

Nevertheless, the participants expressed their doubts as to the feasibility of such an assumption. On the one hand, it is more likely that the EU will continue encouraging Interim and Association agreements on Trade and economy with Arab states as well as setting up cooperation councils to increase contractual relationships. As the European Union cannot overstretch indefinitely, it might even slow down the process of accession talks of some EU candidates in order to rethink its strategies. Questions concerning whether integrating new members will detract from Europe’s abilities and capacities have become hotbed issues in West Europe. Some European conservative parties promote privileged partnerships with other countries such as Turkey but not full membership.

On the other hand, integrating the MENA in the EU does not guarantee solving the problematic issues of fragmented identities and divided societies, but may on the contrary exacerbate communal and societal cleavages. Second, the question of an Arab final identity and the attachment of many Arab states to the concept of an Arab final homeland are serious obstacles. Third, schemes of integration might pose serious economic problems related to foreign labour in the MENA (e.g. Lebanon).

## Arab Options

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In order to analyse the dilemmas and options of the Arab world in an uncertain world order, one has to deal with three main controversial approaches: The link between terminology and the Empire Policy or the Greater Middle East, democratisation in the Middle East and its connotations, and finally economics in the Arab world.

First of all, the Arab region has always been given multiple geographical names according to historical phases and legacies. Depicted as the Levant, the Orient, the Near East, or the Arab East, this part of the world acquired a new name during the cold war: The Near East became the enlarged Middle East. Soviet and Western concurrence turned the Middle eastern territory into a bipolar arena reflecting contradicting affiliations. The Arab world became subsequently the dominant denomination or the prevailing terminology adopted by the United Nations.

After the cold war, a new Middle East was re-established: A new Middle Eastern entity, conscious of the existence of a new state, Israel, in the region was supposed to be different from the old one. A new term, MENA (Middle East North Africa), became widespread; people even talked about "Mena'ist" affiliations.

As the 20th century came to a close, the Middle East reflected new evolving political interrelationships in the international order. A new product of post-September 11 events, the Greater Middle East is a newly shaped Arab identity suggestive of a recent geo-strategic reality which now extends to Afghanistan.

These denominations given to the Arab world are far from being neutral, but are clearly relations of power. In other words, the name given to the region connoted the program designed for the region and insinuated its boundaries and constituents. We notice presently a tendency to perceive the region as part of an ethnic project which decodes entities according to their religion. This new "ethnisation" has served to define the characteristics of a new regional trajectory shedding light on the mission and components of the Middle East.

The Greater Middle East Initiative launched by the American administration has been calling for economic liberalisation, democratisation, human rights and good governance as well as deep institutional reforms. Yet, the question that this plan has been avoiding to answer is why this region needs reform.

The Arab world is in fact dominated by a bipolar vision dividing the region into dichotomous concepts: Countries supporting terrorism/countries endorsing anti-terrorist

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measures, countries prone to liberalization/autocratic regimes containing seeds of extremism, stable countries/countries prone to war and internal conflicts.

The main idea governing reform in the Arab world is that if one succeeds in creating democracies, peace will be indirectly promoted as democracies do not engage into war against each other. However, many questions arise regarding this assumption: Don't democracies of the poorer countries fight each other (Pakistan and India)? Don't democracies produce nuclear weapons? This naïve vision of the Democratic Peace theory entails indirectly that only rich democratic countries do not fight each other.

Second, democratisation in the Arab world has been presented as a project addressed to the rulers and not to the people. In Egypt, for example, some measures of liberalisation adopted by the Egyptian regime have created an illusory effect of transition. But, these measures did not cause any substantial change in the regime. Even though opposition parties are now allowed to exist, these marginal parties do not interest the people. In Yemen, liberalization attempts have not altered the crux of the system.

Arab regimes negotiate with the idea of reform suggested by the US, but what is really proposed is a kind of pluralism and not a genuine form of democracy. Prevailing systems in the Arab world can be described as emergent liberalised autocracies or authoritarian liberal regimes. These systems are indeed far from democracy.

This helps us deduce that the message behind democratisation is elsewhere. It rather aims at economic liberalisation. It is worth mentioning that this divorce between democratic politics and economics in the Arab world impedes any authentic change. Talking about real democracy in the Arab world is de-emphasized in favour of a simplistic vision of economic liberalization irrespective of how political systems are.

Even efforts of economic liberalisation have not reaped their promised fruits. The Arab world has economically functioning countries contributing to empowering the capitalist world economy because of the oil sector, but unable to privatise efficiently and properly. The post-war Lebanese example of privatisation is a striking example of this general state of economic non-performance in the Arab world. The dream of a country based on *laissez-faire* and on a global economy which links the Western world to the Arab hinterland has not concretised - despite Paris I and Paris II conferences - in Lebanon.

The Arab regimes' inability to launch a consistent movement of reform is not only the result of American brutal interference or of failed economies, but also a consequence of some internal Arab flaws.

Democracy in the Arab world has been blocked by central questions of security. Whenever security contradicts with human rights, security overrules and prevails. The national question and the Arab-Israeli conflict form the two predominant poles of the "security" debate. A great factor explaining the endurance of authoritarian rule in the region has been the pretext of existential intrusion of the Israeli state. This excuse has

been used to build military regimes and to block various reforms leading to more openness.

When Arab regimes speak of democracy, they ask where the “Arab street” is. When they talk about change, they forget that there had been waves of change crushed by the same authoritarian Arab systems.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has encouraged tremendous imbalances between the society and the incumbents who have nurtured security systems to protect allegedly nationalistic and Arab interests. The conflict has been used and misused to build military regimes which have neither quenched the Arabs’ need for reform nor liberated Palestine. This clash between security priorities and elusive ideas of democracy have made the whole debate on reform, its pathway and trajectory rather worthless.

If we take a closer look at historical happenings in the Arab world, we notice that regime change has taken place in the Arab world as a result of several concomitant internal and external factors.

First, external actors were able to penetrate the porous frontiers of the Arab world due to the oil factor and to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Western powers have either changed regimes or legitimated them. To state the matter differently, legitimacy bestowed upon certain Arab countries depended on a green light given by the US or Europe.

When citizens felt that legitimacy given by external players had begun to vacillate in their country, they revolted and called for change.

The case of the Lebanese “Intifada of independence” which followed former Premier Hariri’s assassination in February 2005 illustrates this claim. This radical social and political awakening was not only caused by Hariri’s slaying but because the Syrian licence in Lebanon had been perturbed by the United States.

The problem behind the legitimacy of Arab regimes leads us to allude to the problem of “the democratic model” proposed to these regimes:

America’s ambition to transform Iraq from an autocratic to a democratic example in the Middle East was a drastic failure. Iraq has conclusively collapsed as a possibility for an Arab model against terrorism and a model of state-building in this region.

After the demolition of the Iraqi state, the ruins were unable to rise from the ashes. Terrorist manoeuvres in Iraq, a mixture of attempts to impose or re-impose an unclear Iraqi vision, are indirectly the consequence of a failed state-building mechanism.

Upon analysing the most striking Arab problems and why Arab options are so scarce, one cannot but allude to the flawed process of assessing and dealing with Arab economies.

*The Arab Human Development Report* based on criteria set by the prevalent international mood concerning economic criteria does not take into account Arab realities or Arab indicators, but contrasts Arab realities with Western standards.

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In the report, foreign investment is a major criterion, but questions relating to the actors willing to invest in the Arab world, the kind of investments likely to succeed in this region or whether the Arab people are consumers or investors by nature are all relegated to a second plan.

The economic picture in the region is reduced to a simple economic equation: Western world investments serve the purposes of armed struggles, and satisfy the needs for high consumerism in the Arab world.

Modelling Arab politics and economics according to extrinsic Western standards led scholars and observers to deal in the Arab world with "explanations of absence." Arguments revolve around why democracy does not exist in the Arab world, why the Arab world does not resemble the West, or why the Arabs are unable to adopt Western experiences, but little is known of what there is or what the Arab world is really like.

Relying on exterior models made the Arab world unable and hesitant to produce models or explain existing flaws. The Arabs are encouraged through foreign intervention to emulate *The Model*, but know little about the genuine structure of Arab economies and societies.

Yet, external intervention alone does not explain the failure of reform in the Arab world.

Basic defects in Arab mentalities do retard and procrastinate development. Thus, Arab nations ask for human rights, freedom, and good governance, but do not strive to invent a pattern of governance worthy of the structure of the Arab world. This "lazy mental exercise" denotes rather a passive Arab attitude which wants to consume the imposed model rather than exercise a conscious inventive role. Moreover, ideals in the Arab world have tended to be volatile. Great talks about democracy, good governance, and norms do not possess adequate ideological trajectories.

The Arab world has also not dealt conscientiously with movements of regime transitions from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. The only prevailing existing model, depicting a transition from a raw autocratic state to the democratic zone, is the Iraqi experience based on violence and blood to dislodge an authoritarian ruler. Is that the price to pay for democracy?

If other regimes want to adopt the path of democratisation, how do they go about? Who really wants democracy? The rulers or the people? What are the means of democracy? which inherent forces does the Arab world have to support the democratic struggle?

The Arabs' insufficient knowledge of their own region and the habit to resort to lofty concepts and then to forget them - irrespective of realities and structures - have unfortunately destroyed several bridges.

Many Arab countries have measures of democracy already injected in their historical trajectory or in their political culture. Augurs of liberalization that happened in the last decade were neither imposed by the US nor imported from the Western world. The

examples of the Algerian liberalisation movement after which parties flowered, and elections took place, the “Intifada of the bread” in Morocco after which the opposition came to power, or the evolution of Jordan from a closed monarchy to a monarchy which accepts a sizeable parliament after two major uprisings in the southern part of the country, cannot be disregarded. These important changes were not the product of international pressure, but the natural outcomes of revolts for social issues.

A recent example is the democratic revival or the Beirut spring in post-war Lebanon after the assassination of former Premier Hariri. The democratic revival was not only the result of international pressure on Syria, but also the expression of popular awakening and an unabated civil society.

Despite all, the Arab world is still plagued with two main structural problems: The relation between oil and authoritarianism, and the idea of a *Rentier state* which blocks any attempt of accountability or good governance as the society which finances its rulers has not might over them.

In conclusion, many pending issues in the Arab world retard categorically the process of democratisation and makes Arab options rather limited:

- The question of minorities
- The Arab-Israeli conflict
- National issues related to institutional reforms, social matters, and the role of civil society versus the state. Should civil society be stronger than the state? When society eats up the state, is state-building threatened? What about the opposite?
- The economic question and the unclear correlation between democracy and economics in the Arab world: Is it possible to promote democracy in the Arab world irrespective of the prevailing economic system?

Recommendations for a starting point should aim at dispelling misunderstandings and naïve caricatures of liberalization processes, as well as proceeding to a deep inquiry on what the capabilities of the Arab world are.

The process of democratisation in the Arab world has to be seen as part of a whole patchwork which necessitates linking several issues and finding indirect approaches to obvious problems. Instead of tackling solutions as a means to an end, the Arabs are called to separate items, itemize problems into small components, find small solutions, detect interrelationships before talking about *raw democracy*.

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## Work Groups' and Plenary Discussion

The following issues were thoroughly tackled:

- Political, social, and economic problems of Middle East
- The dilemmas behind US strategy in the region
- The Arab menu of options

Participants agreed that problems in the Middle East cannot be generalised. Adopting an approach of differentiation in order to locate and identify problems is crucial. Although some countries present some similarities, one cannot ignore the particularities of each state in the Middle East. For example, while Lebanon's problem seems to be particularly related to the vulnerability of civil rights and corruption, Syria offers the example of a solid authoritarian regime which cannot easily liberalise. Iraq remains a country in transition under severe internal and external strains...

The US strategy in the Middle East has several purposes: Maintaining a solid control over the area, democratising the region, and bringing about a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is, however, dubious whether the process of democratisation and the peace settlement would mirror the Arab world's goals. Through this strategy, the US intends most probably to control sources of oil in the region, and prevent implicitly the rise of the Chinese power in the Middle East.

Moreover, the participants asked whether the US Greater Middle East Plan remains the only option for the Arab world. Do Arab states have other pertinent choices? Can they control "the reverse domino effect" through which the US aims at forcing Arab countries to open up by toppling the Iraqi regime?

Sadly enough, Arab options seem limited. Since the future of world politics will be mainly preoccupied with the fight against terrorism, the Arab world will remain a focal point in the years to come. US capacity to influence the detours of the Arab-Israeli policy and defend Israel's supremacy in the region will also hinder an Arab global action.

As the Arab League remains unable to do much because of internal fragmentation, and lack of consensus over a plan of action, it is more likely that Arab frontiers remain porous and vulnerable to external interventions.

An important feature of world politics that also constrains Arab options is the prevailing nature of the debate on terrorism after the September 11 events. The formidable act of terrorism that was perpetrated against the US changed the international scene in no time. Some critics underline that the Arab world seems to be paying the price of this "televised Ben Laden's strategic imagination."

The fact that the Arabs are in the eye of the storm after Al Qaeda attacks has considerably undermined their courage to act and respond to US threats. Arabs are presently preoccupied with the dichotomy of Islam/Islamism: How to save the concept of Islam from terrorism? How to define Muslim peoples' identities? Is Muslim culture incompatible with democracy? Is there a culture that cannot go along with democracy? Is Islam dangerous to democracy?

The Arab nations' moral, economic and political energies are being used to combat terrorism and endorse an endless anti-terrorism campaign as well as concentrate on many vain ideological debates. In Saudi Arabia, educational programs were changed ; military options were used in Iraq. Syria has to deal with the Damoclean sword of US pressure, and convince the present Bush Administration that it is doing 'enough' to fight terrorism.

All in all, one cannot tackle the spectrum of problems in the Arab world without dealing with these issues and their implications on Arab menu of options and possible courses of action.

Some participants argued that had it not been for US interventions, we would not have had the advancements that took place lately in the Arab world (Egyptian elections, Syrian pullout from Lebanon in April 2005...). Nevertheless, what is puzzling is that many years ago the US did exactly the contrary: It gave Syria the green light to control Lebanon (1990), acknowledged Syria's authoritarian regime, and endorsed former President Saddam Hussein's political course. These contradictory US stand-points have contributed to the loss of US credibility in the Middle East. Thus, the legitimacy of a US intervention is questioned mainly because of unreliable US motives.

Furthermore, the US plan to redesign the Middle East stumbles on many obstacles. First, increasing awareness and information technology in the Arab world have driven away many simplistic ideas related to democratisation and the like. The alleged triumph of American values and economy with globalisation is to some extent disputable especially after the September 11 attacks. There is a general agreement that US exceptionalism has led to an irrevocable and vehement cultural clash. This clash is causing the expression of differences through violent means.

### **What to do?**

Despite this gloomy image that the participants depicted, there are still many potentialities that the Arab world can take advantage of. First of all, Arab scholars have to stop searching for religious codes, roots or origins for modern political doctrines and thought in the Arab world, but rather deal with present Arab structures. Second, they should no longer focus on why Arab societies are resistant to democracy, but should rather analyse the present Arab systems and their prospects of change and evolution. In other words, Arabs should reject the idea of a social and historical determinism, and the concept that democracy is linked to unchangeable social requisites. The belief that democracy is the only teleological outcome that should happen - under the same

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conditions that shaped European democracies - cripples to some extent Arab political progress.

By demystifying the idea of democracy, Arabs can move more rapidly towards shaping democratic features simply by changing institutions. Instead of focusing on hermeneutical debates, they should work on instilling conditions for a gradual and internal change such as establishing the rule of the law, creating transparent institutions, separating powers without falling into the trap of democratic discourses.

Democracy has been historically perceived as a synonym of a revolutionary change which brings about a radical political change. Arab nations paradoxically consider democracy today as an imposed alien element. The reason is that US pressure in the Middle East has created more a semblance of pluralism than credible paths of democratisation. The outcome of the Iraqi experience will definitely not bring about democratisation as a chain reaction.

In order to restore the Arabs' belief in democracy, it is of prime importance to dispel correlations between socio-political requisites and democratic institutions and tear down invented obstacles to democracy. Past scholarly assumptions that democracy can only flourish under certain conditions of economic prosperity and social homogeneity have been invalidated by new studies.

All in all, there is no precondition or determinism that hinders the genesis of democracy in case energy, will, and political organisation are available. The Lebanese case in the Arab world offers a striking example of how democracy, its revival but also its collapse, are not directly determined by socio-cultural 'static' conditions.

Democracy may be created under the strangest circumstances.

## Appendix: Participants

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