Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor of International Relations and Matthew Zierler is a visiting assistant professor of international relation at James Madison College, Michigan State University.

The Unipolar Concert

The North-South Divide Trumps Transatlantic Differences

Mohammed Ayoob and Matthew Zierler

An article in the *New York Times* on the eve of the 2004 U.S. presidential election began by asserting that the predominant view in Europe seemed to be that "no matter who wins...the consequences for American-European relations will be bad" and that neither France nor Germany, the linchpins of the Continent's transatlantic relationship, would be willing to come to the aid of the United States in Iraq regardless of the outcome.[1] Analyses such as this one tend to portray America's relations with major European powers in one-dimensional terms. They assume everything hinges on Iraq and ignore the dense web of interlocking security and economic interests that bind industrialized Western Europe and America together. As Harvard's Jospeh S. Nye, Jr. has said in refuting the conservative political analyst Robert Kagan's assertion that when it comes to their approach to major strategic and international questions Europeans and Americans are from two different planets: "In their relations with each other all advanced democracies are from Venus."[2]

This commonality of interests was emphasized by Condoleezza Rice in her first trip abroad as secretary of state. Washington's relations with France and Germany had been severely strained by the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq, and Rice was on a fence-mending mission. In a major foreign policy speech on February 8 in Paris, she declared, "History will surely judge us not by our old disagreements but by our new achievements."[3]

This essay suggests that although substantial changes to the international system have occurred since the end of the Cold War, the relationship among the industrial, affluent, powerful countries of the North basically has not been altered. This is because these relationships were only partly driven by the Soviet threat. They were driven as much, if not more, by the need to protect the interests of Western industrialized states vis-à-vis the majority of other states. It was recognized even during the Cold War era that potentially serious threats to the economic and security interests of the powerful and affluent countries could arise elsewhere, especially from the more recalcitrant, radical states in the South.

This assumed there was a "structural conflict" between North and South, and that this was likely to drive the states of the South to "gang up" on the North and use their numbers in international organizations to push through agendas deleterious to the interests of the industrialized powers. The Stanford political scientist Stephen Krasner made this argument cogently and forcefully in 1985, when he advised the North to "disengage" as far as feasible from the South. He considered this essential to prevent the North's undue dependence, especially in the economic sphere, on a web of intertwining relationships with potential adversaries.[4]

The weakness of Krasner's analysis was that it attributed greater cohesion to Third World states than they possessed. He also overestimated their will and capacity to challenge the industrialized countries on issues vital to the latter. He did so because he ignored the vulnerabilities of individual postcolonial states, including the major oil producers such as Saudi Arabia, and their consequent dependence in economic and security matters on the North. Such dependence gravely hampered the translation of their collective rhetoric into meaningful collective action.[5] Despite these shortcomings, Krasner's diagnosis that the interests of North and South diverged, and continue to diverge, in the economic and political arenas was not far off the mark.

From the perspective of the rich and the powerful, post–Cold War events have increased the saliency of challenges emerging from the South, whether in the form of political Islam (especially in its more extreme manifestations), "rogue" states engaged in clandestine proliferation activities, or forces that resist globalization in the economic as well as cultural spheres, perceiving it to be deleterious to their interests. A recent study sponsored by the Council of Foreign Relations and co-chaired by Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Summers concludes: "There is a consensus within the transatlantic community on the numerous challenges facing common interests. These include terrorism, authoritarianism, economic incompetence, environmental degradation, and the kind of misrule that exacerbates poverty, encourages discrimination, tolerates illiteracy, allows epidemics, and proliferates weapons of mass destruction."[6] This is a polite way of saying that the major threats to international order as conceived in the capitals of the North come from the South, particularly from those forces the major powers cannot control.

In truth, there are striking continuities between the Cold War and post–Cold War eras, especially in the political and economic relations between North and South. It is no coincidence, therefore, that North-South relations are increasingly taking center stage in contemporary international affairs. The divisions between North and South are particularly evident in their differences over the American-led invasion of Iraq, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and humanitarian intervention, as well as over major economic issues relating to trade barriers, foreign investment, and questions of equity concerning intellectual copyright and patents.

Neatly dividing international relations into distinct phases often obscures an enduring continuum. The end of the Cold War did end competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in the strategic arena. However, this by itself did not lead to a fundamental restructuring of international politics. Analysts of the post–Cold War era who argue that systemic change came about with the end of the superpower rivalry ignore the fact that today's key issues—i.e., globalization, multilateralism, and fundamentalism—have their roots in the Cold War and before.[7]

Structure and Process in the Global Order

Joseph Nye, in his book *Understanding International Conflicts*, writes of structure and process: "The *structure* of a system refers to its distribution of power, and the *process* refers to patterns and types of interaction among its units."[8] Logically, in order to explain the process by which states interact—whether they act multilaterally or unilaterally, or how they respond to economic or military pressures—it is necessary to understand the structure of the international system.

However, Nye's definition of structure is unduly restrictive if by the distribution of power he means only the allocation of capabilities among the major powers. Such a definition may suffice for neo-realists (and Nye cannot be counted among them), but it ignores the fact that the distribution of capabilities between the strong and the weak is as important as it is among the strong themselves. This is the case because this gap in capabilities determines in large measure the structural power that powerful states wield in particular areas as well as in the international system as a whole. It is the variable that explains the *concentration* of power as opposed to its mere distribution. It is essential to understand this phenomenon of concentration in order to comprehend the nature and degree of structural dominance in international society and its long-term consequences.

The current era is certainly different from the Cold War in that the United States is not only the most powerful state in the international system but that there is no credible challenger to its preeminence. Describing the current distribution of power as unipolar is, on its surface, not terribly problematic.[9] But every redistribution of power does not automatically lead states to discard the patterns of behavior that have existed beforehand. Furthermore, unlike earlier major changes, for example in the aftermath of the two world wars, the recent redistribution of power did not result from violent upheavals. The relatively peaceful transition from bipolarity to unipolarity has not resulted in major disruptions in patterns of state behavior, in existing alliance relationships, or in the rules and norms governing the system. Consequently, unlike the aftermath of the world wars, when new power relations and the rules governing them had to be established afresh, the transition to American unipolarity did not mean that the relationships developed during the prior 50 years suddenly disappeared.

The continuity is evident not only in the relationships among the states of the North, but also in North-South relations. Indeed, the end of the Cold War has made issues of North-South asymmetry more salient. The new vocabulary of post–Cold War analysis, which developed in American and European academia—emphasizing terms such as "globalization," "unipolarity," and "multilateralism," and the apparent tensions among them—may succeed in concealing these continuities, but analysts with a keen sense of history and sociology, not to mention economics, realize that in many spheres the post–Cold War era is the linear descendant of the Cold War period.

A "Unipolar Concert"

Superficially, there seems a tremendous tension today between the conception of a unipolar world that enshrines the dominance of the United States and the dramatic advent of globalization that simultaneously promises economic integration throughout the international system. The terms "unipolarity" and "globalization" are often juxtaposed as if they are antithetical to each other or, at the least, in a state of friction. However, a deeper analysis suggests that the two actually complement each other. Both underwrite the same power relations in the international system. They are instruments for advancing the interests of the dominant concert of powers—an overlapping group of actors that can be termed the Concert of the North Atlantic, plus Japan—in all major spheres of international activity.

This club of rich and powerful states, now known as the North, seemingly concluded in the aftermath of the Second World War that it was in the interest of its members to act in concert. The club's motivation was rooted not only in the presumed threat from the Soviet Union. It was motivated in equal measure by the need to protect its interests, indeed its dominance, over the international system from the economic and political claims of the newly independent states that emerged from colonial subjugation. The need to do so had become particularly urgent because, with decolonization, the states of the West/North were rendered a numerical minority, and the new entrants began to clamor for "justice," "representation," and, in some cases, "reparations" in the form of transfer of resources from the North to the South.[10] That such concerted action was deemed necessary by the industrialized powers was clearly demonstrated by the negotiations during the 1970s on the New International Economic Order, as promoted by the South.

These ended without agreement because the North, led by the United States, was unwilling to lessen its privileged position.[11]

The conviction that the industrialized states must act together was reinforced by the end of the Cold War, which removed the veneer of superpower competition from the reality of a North-South division that was economic, political, military and, arguably, civilizational and cultural. This understanding was reflected in the popularity in the North of the neoliberal argument that absolute gains for all are bound to outweigh relative gains if only the market is allowed to determine economic outcomes unhindered by political and governmental interference.[12] This argument discerned, among other things, a common interest among the affluent in cooperating to further their economic and security goals.

More importantly, the neoliberal rhetoric provided a cover for the realist foundations on which North-South relations, in the economic as well as the political-military fields, were and continue to be based. The Australian scholar James Richardson makes this point. Neoliberalism, he argues, has "a striking resemblance to certain forms of realism. Both seek to reinforce the interests of the powerful by enjoining accommodation to them.... The major contrast is that realism places power at the center of its theorizing, whereas neoliberalism shows its respect for power through total silence."[13] Neoliberalism did yeoman service to the industrialized countries by promoting the status quo and making it intellectually respectable while concealing the element of raw power that underwrote this status quo. It did so by implicitly acknowledging the critical role of power while obfuscating its importance by means of the absolute gains rhetoric.

The chasm between North and South also helps explain the nature of the concert and its objective of creating an international order that preserves its privileged position in the international system while containing the level of disorder within it, seen as mostly emanating from the South. Given the congruence of interests among the industrial states of the North, America's unrivaled power does not undermine the unity of the concert; it augments its power vis-à-vis those outside the concert. Therefore, in the current context, unipolarity is compatible with the notion of a concert of powers, albeit one in which one of the members is far more powerful than the others and therefore demands and is accorded due deference. It would be apt to describe it as a "unipolar concert," a term that depicts both the unrivaled power of the concert's leader while simultaneously demonstrating the basic cohesion of its members' interests.

The use of the term "unipolarity," itself a derivative of "polarity," in much of the Western discussion of contemporary international affairs serves a useful rhetorical purpose because it hints that a return to the good old days of balance of power politics is not far away. By doing so, it diverts analytical attention from, and thus obscures the reality of, the real clash of interests between the strong and affluent represented by the concert, on the one hand, and the weak and poor, a much more amorphous group, on the other. By emphasizing unipolarity and the tactical differences that emerge from time to time between the leading power and the pack it leads, members of the concert hide the fact that there is agreement among them about the basic premises on which international order should be organized. Unipolarity is, therefore, a convenient veneer by which much of the blame for excesses committed on behalf of the concert is shifted to the leader of the pack, with the other members of the concert portrayed as "reasonable" actors unable to control the more rapacious instincts of the unipolar power. It allows members of the concert to play the "good cop, bad cop" routine for the consumption of those outside the concert.

This became clear in the case of the invasion of Iraq and, subsequently, on the issue of the presumed threat of Iranian nuclear proliferation. European powers, especially France and Germany, were portrayed in both cases as trying to restrain the aggressively interventionist proclivities of the United States. In the case of Iraq, this allowed them to remain relatively unscathed while criticism was heaped upon the United States in the Muslim world and indeed in much of the South. In the case of Iran, it has provided them leverage with Tehran; it adds strength to their argument that if Iran turns down their "reasonable" offer, the United States may decide to go it alone and Iran may have to face dire consequences for its recalcitrance.

The term "globalization," which has become synonymous with market fundamentalism, serves the same purpose of providing a veneer that hides more than it reveals. Moreover, it has the added merit of meaning many things to many people. As the Harvard professor Graham Allison has pointed out, "As currently used, globalization is too often an ill-defined pointer to a disparate array of phenomena—frequently accompanied by heavy breathing that implies that behind these phenomena, or at their root, is some yet-to-be-discovered substance."[14] The term "globalization" portrays a false image of an interdependent international economy where, once again, absolute gains are privileged over relative gains.

This strategy makes a great deal of sense from the point of view of the concert that sits atop the international economic structure, just as it sits atop the international security structure. It is rational for the powerful to portray their own relative gains vis-à-vis the rest as absolute gains for the entire international society. It also makes great sense for them to make a strong case that the status quo that protects, in fact enhances, the advantages they enjoy is best for all human kind. But, serious analysts must not take such claims at face value. The Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington has portrayed this reality bluntly: "The West is attempting and will continue to attempt to sustain its preeminent position and defend its interests by defining those interests as the interests of the 'world community.' That phrase has become the euphemistic collective noun…to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers."[15]

Globalization has the potential to augment inequality both within states and between them unless it is carefully monitored and shepherded by sophisticated regulatory institutions established by the state. This is the core argument of the economist Joseph Stiglitz's critique of market-driven globalization. He has argued convincingly that for globalization to work effectively and spread wealth around, it must be a "managed" process in which democratic governments exercise more power than the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or global markets.[16] Even the pro-globalization guru, Jagdish Bhagwati, acknowledges the importance of appropriate governance to manage globalization better.[17] Unfortunately, there is not merely a dearth of democratic governments in the South; most postcolonial states do not possess the managerial resources to effectively operate regulatory institutions that would mitigate the more perverse effects of unfettered globalization. Consequently, in the developing world unmanaged globalization acting through the instrument of indiscriminate economic liberalization has the potential to create far more losers than winners.[18]

Regrettably, multilateral regimes, which are often portrayed as mechanisms with the capacity to curtail the more predatory outcomes of free market globalization and economic liberalization, frequently fail to do so. They fail because most such regimes, especially the IMF and the World Bank, reflect the power inequalities, embodied in the weighted voting rules under which they operate within the international system. Those who wield financial and economic power heavily influence their decisions. They thus become a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. In many ways, they conform to the political scientist Sean Kay's definition of globalization. Kay suggests that "globalization is best understood as a technologically facilitated proliferation of the means through which power within the international system is channeled and pursued."[19] Such a nuanced understanding of globalization forces us to reconsider assumptions that globalization is a fundamental break from the power relations of the past and the harbinger of a new future.

An Artificial Contradiction

Recent disagreements within the concert and an increased tendency toward unilateralism on the part of the United States, principally in Iraq but also on issues like the environment, have many predicting the demise of the post–Second World War order and the emergence of an international system predicated on different sets of relationships. Some have proclaimed that this is the "end of the West" as we have known it in international relations.[20] This essay does not mean to belittle these fissures. They are in fact quite real in terms of strategy and tactics. However, we do not believe that these developments will result in a radical change in intra-concert relations or in the use of multilateral mechanisms for two reasons.

First, the Concert of the North Atlantic—with the United States in the lead—maintains its power in the international system by exploiting the multilateral regimes in the financial, trade, and security realms it has worked so hard to create and maintain over the last 50 years. It is therefore unlikely that the United States or the major European powers will eviscerate a mechanism that has served them so well for so long. There have always been disagreements about the design of specific cooperative institutional arrangements. While they may seem more pronounced today, there is nothing to suggest that powerful states are prepared to scrap the fundamental features of the multilateral order over which they preside.

Second, disagreements within the concert are often over policy choices, as opposed to fundamental rules of the system or basic objectives. Deterring and punishing "rogue" states and denying unconventional capabilities to those outside the club are shared objectives from which no member of the concert dissents. This was very clear in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. A reading of the U.N. Security Council debates on Iraq from 1991 to 2003 makes it obvious that there were hardly any differences among the club of powerful states on taking steps that would severely derogate Iraq's sovereignty and eventually bring about a regime change. The imposition of no-flight zones and invasive inspections under U.N. auspices between 1991 and 2003 clearly demonstrated this unity of purpose. The differences were over the tactics to achieve these ends. The same applies to the concert's objectives regarding Iran. The shared objective is to deny Iran nuclear weapons capabilities and to curb its regional influence; the debate is about how best to attain these goals.

A similar situation prevails in the economic arena. While there may be differences over details and even intra-concert bickering about certain issues, for example, the American attempt to impose tariffs on European steel, there is a basic consensus about prying open world markets under the guise of free trade and liberal investment policies, thus making it easier for developed countries to market their high-value-added products and to invest in profitable ventures abroad. This is accompanied by imposing conditionalities, or structural adjustments, on Third World economies that would ostensibly help to reduce their fiscal deficits. It is clear that this can only be achieved through multilateral mechanisms, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Trade Organization. The concert of industrialized states, working through the G-7 in particular, harmonizes its economic policy in such a fashion that it can effectively use these multilateral forums to promote its neoliberal agenda.

We do not mean to suggest that the current multilateral arrangements and initiatives are set in stone. However, it is unlikely that the instrument will be jettisoned, if only because of the deep commitment on the part of the concert to maintain it. Moreover, multilateral institutions in the North are being strengthened as the states from Eastern Europe seek membership in the European Union and NATO. The deepening and broadening of multilateral institutions in the North have had the added effect of reinforcing the divide between those in the concert and those outside. In short, multilateralism has not proved to be antithetical to unipolarity. In fact, the two have worked in tandem to promote the interests of the North in both the economic and security spheres.

North v. South: Economics

The self-serving nature of the North's claims about the advantages of unfettered globalization and the integration of the world economy on terms determined by the industrialized countries is obvious in the economic arena. Bringing down barriers imposed by state boundaries allows the economically powerful states to penetrate weak and vulnerable societies, especially those without adequate regulatory mechanisms and with unrepresentative regimes, many of which are dependent upon the major powers for their security. Moreover, the majority of economic interactions that make for interdependence in a "globalizing" world take place within the triad of North America, Europe, and Japan. As the globalization scholars Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson have pointed out, "Capital mobility is not producing a massive shift of investment and employment from the advanced to the developing countries. Rather foreign direct investment (FDI) is highly concentrated among the advanced industrial economies and the Third World remains marginal in both investment and trade, a small minority of newly industrializing countries apart."[21] According to William Drozdiak, president of the American Council on Germany, "Over the past eight years, Americans invested twice as much in the Netherlands as in Mexico and ten times as much as in China.... Conversely, Europe provides 75 percent of all investment in the United States....[22]

The disproportionate benefits of globalization that go to the developed states are not limited to FDI flows. This argument may also be extended to the protection of intellectual property and patents, to the access the North enjoys to the markets and cheap labor of the Third World, to the hundreds of billions of dollars spent by the North in farm export subsidies, to the imposition of trade barriers.

The skewed nature of globalization is demonstrated above all by the fact that while much is made of the need for the unfettered mobility of goods and capital globally, no voices are raised in the North in favor of the free movement of labor across the globe. Even Turkey's prospective but contested membership in the EU has been made contingent on Ankara accepting severe limits on the migration of Turks to Europe, in contrast to the unregulated movement among the citizens of the current EU member states.[23] The logic of economic globalization enhances the interests of the powerful against the weak, of the rich against the poor, but rarely vice versa. Furthermore, these rules are becoming embedded in an increasingly institutionalized and legalized multilateral order that makes it difficult to bring about radical transformations in the near future.

North v. South: Politics and Security

In the political arena, tearing down the sovereignty barrier in the name of humanitarian intervention serves much the same purpose of preserving the dominance of the North. Such interventions undertaken selectively to punish "rogue" states, such as Iraq and Yugoslavia, send the message that opposing the international establishment is likely to incur heavy costs. The selectivity with which the normative injunctions of the emerging global society are applied makes this very clear. Interventions take place when it suits the strategic and economic interests of the "coalition of the willing and the able" (read the Concert of the North Atlantic). Where it does not suit the dominant concert, the evolving norms of supposedly global society are disregarded. The cases of Rwanda and Sudan illustrate this outlook.[24]

The selectivity leads to two important conclusions. First, sovereignty continues to be a cherished value so far as powerful states and their clients are concerned. Advising the weak to dispense with sovereignty and with their preoccupation with state security and relative gains is one thing, applying it to powerful states and their coalitions is quite another. As Dartmouth professors Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno have pointed out, the argument that sovereignty has been superseded as the organizing principle of international political life cannot be successfully sustained unless it is demonstrated "by reference to 'critical' cases.... The clearest set of critical cases would involve instances in which the exertion of some form of international authority significantly constrained major powers in their pursuit of their interests.... If we look at the present processes of international decision making [the veto power of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and the G-7's domination of international financial institutions], however, the prospect of finding such critical cases appears to be unlikely."[25]

Second, the rhetoric of globalization and the global society is employed to provide a facade for dominion of the North over the states of the South. James Richardson has captured this reality very lucidly: "Self interest now appears to dictate that the leading powers remain associates rather than rivals, as balance of power logic would have required, but the anarchic system structure points to their retaining a military capability to protect their favored position against the less favored."[26]

The retention of vastly superior military capability is currently achieved through what has come to be known as the revolution in military affairs (RMA) or the military technological revolution, which the security expert Eliot Cohen has summed up thus: "What can be seen by high-tech sensors can be hit, what can be hit will be destroyed."[27] The hierarchy of military power has seldom been as rigidly stratified as it has become today as a result of RMA. The United States sits in lonely glory at the top of the technological-military pyramid.[28] The advanced industrialized countries plus Israel are clustered two-thirds of the way up, with China and India somewhat lower down. All the rest form the base of the pyramid, and from their perspective, the view is frightening.

The extreme disparity in military power and its political consequences have been emphasized over and over again since 1990. It was made explicit during the first Gulf war and, with increasingly greater clarity, during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan in 2001–02. It was dramatically driven home by the American campaign of "shock and awe" conducted against Iraq in March-April 2003. What impressed much of the South with regard to these military ventures was not the righteousness of the causes espoused by the dominant concert or the unipolar power acting on its behalf. What overawed countries of the South was the enormous destructive power the coalition, and especially the United States, was able to bring to bear on its enemies from long distances, thereby making itself immune to retaliation. The precision and impunity with which the U.S.-led concert was able to destroy the vital military nerve centers of Iraq and Yugoslavia, rendering them incapable of defending themselves, was perceived as a technological miracle that dwarfed even the nuclear weapons revolution in terms of its actual impact on military affairs.

The revolution in military affairs and the use of precision weaponry by the United States and its allies has left an indelible mark on the psyche of the Third World political elites. One the one hand, it has increased their feeling of insecurity. On the other, those among Third World elites who continue to harbor a defiant streak or perceive their countries to be in danger of being labeled "rogue" states have been spurred to find "equalizers" that may deter powerful states from initiating military action against them. This means either obtaining weapons of mass destruction, however rudimentary, along with long-range delivery systems (nuclear, chemical, biological warheads, plus missiles) or employing "terror" tactics that make the use of advanced weaponry politically unacceptable. Thus, the highly asymmetrical distribution of conventional military capabilities, a product of the military-technological revolution, has brought about an equally asymmetrical response.

The attempt to attain weapons of mass destruction and missile capability by "states of concern," including North Korea and Iran, as well as terrorist attacks on soft targets in the United States and elsewhere in the North, should be seen at least in part as a response to the acquisition and use of precision weaponry by the United States and its allies. For those in the South bent on defying the dominant concert of powers, and especially the unipolar power, weapons of mass destruction and terrorist tactics seem to be the only equalizers against the precision-guided conventional weaponry that can be unleashed by the United States and the concert it leads. This adds to their attraction for those who are unwilling to embrace the new world order, with its military, economic, and normative corollaries, that the dominant concert is intent upon imposing on the international system.

An Elaborate Pretense

The fevered debate over the question of unipolarity and American hegemony is a smokescreen that obscures the fact that there is a group of powerful nations with a shared outlook and goals. Disagreements do arise among the members of what we have called the Concert of the North Atlantic, but they are over strategy and tactics, not objectives. The United States, as all leaders do, sometimes moves so far ahead of the other members that it makes the rest of the pack very uncomfortable. It is in this context that arguments about the value of institutions that bind the hegemon are made.[29] However, as the Kissinger and Summers report makes plain, "disagreements on policy, not differences over the utility of international institutions, have caused most of these [recent] clashes" in the transatlantic relationship.[30] The European insistence that the United States give more attention to multilateralism is a plea for consultation among members of the concert, not an argument to strengthen institutions of global governance where the less powerful would have a major voice. This is a distinction that must clearly be borne in mind by analysts engaged in debating the merits of multilateralism versus unilateralism. For those outside the concert, multilateralism and unilateralism often appear as variations on the same theme of uninvited intervention.

The institutional constraint argument is made largely to draw the leader back in to the pack rather than make it accountable. Those outside the pack continue to remain marginal actors in the international arena, if not mere spectators. Eventually, compromises are reached that restore the unity of the pack without embarrassing the leader too much. This is clearly demonstrated by what has been happening in the wake of the war against Iraq. The fact that these maneuverings have not been completely successful is due in large part to the all-pervasive insecurity in Iraq as a result of the resistance by insurgent forces there. It is reasonable to assume that minus the insurgency, the United States and France and Germany would have reconciled their differences sooner and would be working together in Iraq through multilateral mechanisms.

In our view, the discussion about unipolarity versus bipolarity and multipolarity, or about the relevance or irrelevance of unipolarity to the age of globalization is marginal to the major problem facing international society. The major impasse facing international society today is the huge disparity in power between the Concert of the North Atlantic and most of the rest of the members of the international system. This disparity and the cavalier use of power by the dominant concert—not just by the United States—against selected targets have created a situation that threatens the already fragile normative consensus underpinning international society. The unilateral actions on the part of the United States, as in Iraq, threaten not so much the integrity of the concert as they do the foundational norms of international society, such as sovereignty and nonintervention. If this trend continues, we may end up with a hyperrealist world in which "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." This backsliding toward anarchy, despite the solidarists' naive claims to the contrary, is a prelude to a serious breakdown of order in the international system.[31]

We see signs of this impending anarchy in unilateral military actions in defiance of international consensus and in doctrines justifying preventative, and not merely preemptive, war. We see it in escalating international terrorism and what appears to many as an approaching "clash of civilizations" between the "Judeo-Christian" North/West and the Muslim world. We see it also in the attraction that weapons of mass destruction hold for the weak, as suggested by the evidence linking the Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan to the dissemination of nuclear know-how. Notwithstanding the Libyan decision to renounce weapons of mass destruction and Iran's increased, although hesitant, cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the incentive to proliferate has increased during the past decade. North Korea's recent public admission that it possesses nuclear weapons may be a harbinger.[32] This may very well be the case because acquisition of such weapons appears to the weak to be their most effective defense against the advanced weaponry of the powerful. Efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction as well as the spread of international terrorism demonstrate that the imposition of order, when it is not tempered with justice, creates a backlash. This is a lesson that the capitals of the major powers can overlook only at their own peril. ●

Notes

1. Richard Bernstein, "Many in Europe See U.S. Vote as a Lose-Lose Affair," *New York Times*, October 29, 2004.

2. Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), p. 20. This counters Robert Kagan's argument that "on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus" (*Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* [New York: Knopf, 2003], p. 3).

3. Stephen R. Weisman, "Rice Calls on Europe to Join in Building a Safer World," *New York Times*, February 9, 2005.

4. Stephen D. Krasner, *Structural Conflict: The Third World against Global Liberalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

5. For an analysis that juxtaposes the collective aspirations of Third World states and their individual vulnerabilities, thus elucidating the apparently schizophrenic tendencies they demonstrate, see Mohammed Ayoob, "The Third World in the System of States: Acute Schizophrenia or Growing Pains?" *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33 (March 1989), pp. 67–79.

6. Henry A. Kissinger and Lawrence H. Summers, *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership: Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), p. 7.

7. For the view that the Cold War heralded a systemic transformation, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); and Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

8. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2004), p. 37 (emphases in original).

9. For the case that America's current global predominance constitutes unipolarity, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "American Primacy in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81 (July/August 2002), pp. 20–33.

10. This is what Hedley Bull aptly termed "the revolt against the West" that went beyond issues of politics and economics to the norms and rules governing international society. See "The Revolt Against the West," in *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 217–28.

11. Krasner, *Sructural Conflict;* and Robert A. Mortimer, *The Third World Coalition in International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1986).

12. For the classic explanation of neoliberalism, see Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

13. James L. Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics: Ideology and Power* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), pp. 89–90.

14. Graham Allison, "The Impact of Globalization on National and International Security," in *Governance in a Globalizing World*, ed. Joseph S. Nye and John D. Donahue (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 72.

15. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, p. 184.

16. Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

17. Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

18. See Dani Rodrik, *The New Global Economy and Developing Countries: Making Openness Work* (Washington, DC: Overseas Development Council, 1999).

19. Sean Kay, "Globalization, Power, and Security," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2004), p. 11.

20. See, for example, Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Knopf, 2002); and Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power*.

21. Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 2.

22. William Drozdiak, "The North Atlantic Drift," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84 (January/February 2005), p. 89.

23. Elaine Sciolino, "Turkey Advances in Its Bid to Join European Union," *New York Times*, October 7, 2004.

24. See Mohammed Ayoob, "Humanitarian Intervention and State Sovereignty," *International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 6 (spring 2002), pp. 81–102.

25. Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, "Introduction: International Intervention, State Sovereignty, and the Future of International Society," in *Beyond Westphalia? State Sovereignty and International Intervention*, ed. Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 17.

26. James L. Richardson, "The End of Geopolitics?" in *Charting the Post–Cold War Order*, ed. Richard Leaver and James L. Richardson (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), pp. 45–46.

27. Eliot A. Cohen, "A Revolution in Warfare," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75 (March/April 1996), p. 45; see also, Lawrence Freedman, "Revolutions in Military Affairs," in *The Future of War*, ed. Gwyn Prins and Hylke Tromp (Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2000).

28. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and William A. Owens, "America's Information Edge," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75 (March/April 1996), pp. 20–36.

29. See G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

30. Kissinger and Summers, *Renewing the Atlantic Partnership*, p. 20.

31. For discussions of the notion of international society in an anarchical international system, see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); and Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a sophisticated solidaristic conception of international society, see Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

32. James Brooke, "North Korea Says It Has Nuclear Weapons and Rejects Talks," *New York Times*, February 10, 2005.