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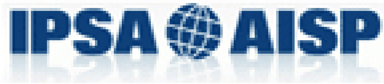
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Empire Defanged? Non-US Perspectives on US Foreign Policy

JORGE HEINE

BOOKS REVIEWED

Jha, Prem Shankar (2006). *The Twilight of the Nation State: Globalisation, Chaos and War.* London: Pluto Press.

Joffe, Josef (2006). *Überpower: The Imperial Temptation of America.* New York and London: Norton.

Malone, David M. (2006). *The International Struggle over Iraq: Politics in the UN Security Council 1980–2005.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mamdani, Mahmood (2004). *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror.* New York: Pantheon.

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The fourth anniversary of the Iraq war is a good opportunity to take stock and examine how the United States has brought upon itself its current impasse. The literature by US international relations specialists on the subject is extensive.[1] Less attention has been paid to the works by non-US authors on the topic.

On the face of it, the present situation faced by the United States in Iraq and in the broader Middle East more generally presents a genuine puzzle. How has the United States, undisputedly the world's only superpower, driven itself into this extraordinary cul-de-sac? To answer that question, some backtracking is necessary.

In 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War, with the United States emerging as the clear winner (see Gaddis, 2005). In 1991, the break-up of the Soviet Union did away with what remained of the vestiges of the "other superpower," leaving the United States as the sole remaining one. The bipolar system of the Cold War was thus replaced by what Charles Krauthammer (1990) has referred to as the "United States unipolar moment," making the latter into the most powerful nation the world has ever seen and disproving earlier forecasts about "declining hegemony" (Kennedy, 1987).

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For many, this opened radically new vistas, including those of a New World Order, marked by everlasting peace and prosperity. It was in these years that we saw a flourishing of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) initiatives, as a new window of consensus made it possible for the five permanent members (P-5) to work together in a manner that had not been possible during the Cold War. These hopes, however, proved short-lived. The world only too quickly saw the eruption of a large number of civil wars and the flourishing of ethnic and religious conflicts in many parts of the developing world, as well as in Europe, particularly in the Balkans. How to cope with those conflicts rapidly became a litmus test of the ability of the international community, and especially of its undisputed hegemon, to forge new rules for the freshly emerging world order. The earlier consensus among the Big Powers quickly faded, giving way to a more antagonistic relationship, albeit one less fraught with tension than during the heights of the previous, bipolar international system.

These changes in the structure and dynamics of world politics ran parallel with the accelerated transformation that took place in the world economy, popularly known as globalization, triggered by the Third Industrial Revolution, that is, the one driven by the IT and communications revolution, and whose starting point became apparent in 1980, when both CNN and the first PCs came on the market.[2] A world in flux demanded rule-making, dispute-settlement, and rule-enforcement capabilities for new situations that could hardly be left unattended.

Ironically, for a president who before his election to the White House had little exposure to and ostensibly even less interest in international affairs, President Bill Clinton quickly grasped that US hegemony could be exercised best within a global order with established rules. He thus gave special priority to the creation of entities such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and getting countries such as China to join it, the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), and the necessary conditions for the IT and telecommunications industry to flourish on a worldwide basis, something not unrelated to the rapid growth of the world economy that took place in the 1990s.

At the same time, and keeping in mind the uncertainties and crises created by the billions and billions of dollars that are transferred from country to country on a daily basis just by pressing a button (or clicking a mouse), the Clinton administration was fully aware of the need to "go to the rescue" of countries undergoing financial crises. This is what the United States did, hand in hand with the International Monetary Fund, in Mexico in 1994–95, in Russia in 1997, and in Brazil in 1998, thus helping to avoid what might have been a collapse of the international financial system.

In other spheres, attempts to make progress toward international regimes that would give greater protection to the global environment, through the Kyoto Protocol, and to human rights, through the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (although the United States ultimately voted against it, after two years of deliberations on it in Rome), were other features of US foreign policy in the Clinton era. They reflected a sense that the main beneficiary of a stable and predictable international order was precisely the hegemonic power, that is, the USA, and that, therefore, it behooved it to take the lead in forging international rules and regimes that facilitated peace and prosperity for all, as well as to pay the price for resolving extant conflicts. The policy followed in Haiti, from its

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occupation by US troops in 1994 to 2000 (see Malone, 1997), as well as the "humanitarian intervention" in Kosovo in 1999 (see Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000) and the somewhat frantic efforts to bring peace to the Middle East (which took up much of the time of President Clinton during his final months in the White House) are good examples of that.

And it was precisely those efforts at "nation-building" that came under special criticism by then-candidate George W. Bush in the 2000 presidential campaign.[3] If for Democrats like Bill Clinton and Al Gore unipolarity meant that the United States had to assume responsibility for the creation and support of international institutions that would lead to an environment more conducive to the exercise of US power, for many Republican leaders and strategists the international scenario called for a very different approach.

For the neoconservative wing of the Grand Old Party, traditionally distrustful of bodies like the United Nations[4] and international commitments that, in their view, would only weaken the unbridled exercise of US power, what really ought to be done was to draw the necessary conclusions from the USA's privileged position in world affairs. Accordingly, rather than coordinate its policies with other actors on the world stage, what Washington should do was to impose them unilaterally. If others disagreed – too bad, there was not much they would be in a position to do about it anyway (see Halper and Clarke, 2004).

Far from rejecting, as they used to do in the past, the accusations about a real or supposed "Yankee imperialism," this school of thought openly embraced the creation of an American empire.[5] According to this diagnosis, 9/11 was not the result of an excessive, but of an *insufficient*, involvement of the United States in world affairs, and the way forward was to strengthen even further the US military apparatus, promote more actively democracy and human rights, occupy (permanently, if necessary) countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, and proclaim shamelessly its imperial condition. As Robert D. Kaplan (2001) put it:

> The more successful our foreign policy, the greater the impact and the influence of the United States in the world and the more likely that future historians will look at us both as an Empire and as a Republic, however different we may be from Rome and from any other empire in the course of history.

A sharp distinction between "good" (that is, the United States) and "evil" (potentially, everybody else), a marked preference for unilateral action, and a penchant for international activism are the key features of this approach to US foreign policy, one that resonated with (if it was not embodied by) some of the key foreign and military decision-makers in President George W. Bush's first administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.

The notion that US foreign policy after 9/11 has simply been a reaction to those tragic events is therefore quite wrong. It has been the product of a certain conception of how the United States should relate to the rest of the world, one that is very different from the one that transpired for most of the 1990s. In fact, the invasion of Iraq ("the equivalent of invading Mexico in retaliation for Pearl Harbor," as one wag put it) was on the table from day one of President George W. Bush's administration, and had little to do with Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, or the "War on Terror," for that matter.[6]

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It is against this background that Prem Shankar Jha, one of India's foremost political analysts, attempts to disentangle the many strands of the United States' current conundrum. Nine years in the making, with a foreword by Eric Hobsbawm and ambitious in its scope and range, this is a book that asks some big questions. Theoretically grounded in the best traditions of political economy, it starts by asking what the future holds for the post-Cold War world, and ends with a detailed discussion of US foreign policy over the past few years, particularly on the so-called "War on Terror" and the Iraq war. It closes with a somewhat ominous-sounding concluding chapter, entitled "Towards Darkness."

Jha's thesis is relatively straightforward: the current "world disorder" (or "systemic chaos" in the words of Giovanni Arrighi) is not simply due to the transition from one international political system to another (that is, from the bipolar one of the Cold War to a unipolar one still in the making), but to deeper, underlying causes. This process reflects, rather, the destruction of national and international institutions under the impact of globalization. Far from unique to this era, this would be what Jha refers to as the fifth cycle in the expansion of capitalism over the past 700 years. In each of them, at the end of the respective cycle, the ensuing destruction and/or collapse of institutions leads to conflicts (that is, wars) between states.

As capitalism continues to expand the size of its "container," as Jha puts it, from localities and provinces, to nation-states, regions, and, finally, the whole world, the violence released at the end of each cycle gets bigger and more difficult to manage. In analyzing the end of the "golden age of capitalism," that is, the one running from the end of World War II to the early 1970s, he identifies the transfer of low-wage manufacturing as the single key determinant behind it, and the one that would account for the chronic unemployment that has come to be associated with mature capitalism in so many European countries.

In terms of the actual causes of globalization, Jha emphasizes the obstacles to the free movement of labor that are such a prominent feature of the current international system. Given the wage differentials between developed and developing countries, the pressure to outsource manufacturing and other productive activities from North to South has been irresistible, since the steady flow of migrant labor into the industrialized nations that would have kept wage levels low has been effectively halted.

His analysis is especially perceptive when it comes to comparing the current pressures of globalization on social democracy and the welfare state with those of the First Industrial Revolution on the established mores of pre-industrial society, and its attendant consequences of child labor, pauperism, homelessness, and so on. One response to those conditions was a whole range of rules and regulations designed to alleviate them and to soften the rougher edges of capitalism (that is, labor laws, pension systems, minimum wages, and collective bargaining), all of which have now come under assault under the guise of euphemisms such as "labor flexibility" and "national competitiveness," which put the onus on the fixed factors of production (that is, labor) to bear the brunt of the effort to keep production costs down, while the mobile ones (that is, capital) reap most of the benefits.

Much the same goes for his trenchant observations on how globalization triggered the collapse of the socialist economies, which were unable to deal with the pressures of global competition – as their production systems were designed

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to operate within national boundaries. Various explanations have been offered for the emergence of a significant number of "failed states" across the developing world (Haiti, Somalia, and Afghanistan, among others), but especially in sub-Saharan Africa. For Jha, these countries have been bypassed by globalization, as "economic exclusion has reinforced predatory, clientelistic regimes, whose behaviour has frightened capital and deepened economic exclusion." Jha is critical of the effects of globalization on the developing world, noting that very few countries outside East Asia have actually benefited from it.

After what we might call his "deep background" analysis of the roots of the world's current predicament, Jha (shifting gears, as it were) moves from the underlying economic forces at play to the politics of it, which occupy the second half of this hefty and closely reasoned volume. Here, Jha's point is that we are witnessing the wholesale dismantling of the Westphalian order that has anchored the international state system since 1648. This is due not only to the economic pressures for the creation of a single global market, but also to the proactive role played in it by the United States.

Acknowledging that "the shift from a world order based on consensus among nation states to one based on coercion by a single superpower was signalled by President George W. Bush Jr when he unveiled a new national security doctrine in June 2002" (Jha: 189), Jha argues that this process started much earlier.

According to his reasoning, it was in the 1990s, and particularly with the bombing of Iraq in 1998 and of Kosovo in 1999, that the United States made it clear that the end of the Westphalian order was at hand, and that national sovereignty, as traditionally conceived, had ceased to serve its purpose. This message, originally driven home through multilateral means (such as the United Nations, as in the Oil for Food program in Iraq, or NATO in Kosovo) and later unilaterally, became especially evident in March 2003 with the invasion of Iraq, in blatant disregard not just of national sovereignty, but also of international law and the United Nations Security Council.

Far from being a "mistake," therefore, as it is sometimes portrayed, the invasion of Iraq was a long-in-the-making aspiration, a country "selected by the neoconservative far right to be the guinea pig for their embryonic design to create an American empire, at least as far back as the early 1990s, and possibly the 1970s" (Jha: 228). It was the relentless pressure of this group (out of power at the time, but still very influential) that led the Clinton administration to prevent the implementation of UN Resolution 687 on August 25, 1998, which, according to Jha, was the real turning point on Iraq, and the one that sowed the seeds for what would happen in March 2003.

In that sense, 9/11 was not so much the reason, as the pretext, for attacking Iraq. It also allowed for a wholesale attack on multilateralism, through "the rejection of the military doctrine of deterrence in favour of a doctrine of pre-emption; the subtle, stage by stage elimination of the difference between 'pre-emption' and prevention; and ... the abrupt overthrow of the UN as the emerging seat of international authority" (Jha: 246).

Not surprisingly, given his background (he is a former editor of the *Hindustan Times*, North India's most influential daily, and a leading columnist both for that paper and for *Outlook*, one of India's main weeklies), Jha is especially critical of the way the international media were hoodwinked by Washington in the months and weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq, and how one of journalism's first rules

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(verify and double-check your information with those it will harm) was blatantly disregarded by some of the world's leading media houses, playing directly into Washington's successful efforts to "manufacture consent."

Jha admits that a new world order needs a new hegemon, but also points out that the United States' justification for empire (supported by the United Kingdom) has failed quite miserably, most dramatically in Iraq, and that military force is not enough to ensure such hegemony (see Bacevich, 2006).

By seamlessly integrating two quite different dimensions of international affairs normally treated separately, that is, those of the economic and technological forces at work referred to as "globalization" and the political and security side, Jha has made a significant contribution to the literature. I do disagree with him on a number of issues: he underplays the degree to which the Clinton administration was genuinely committed to multilateralism; he also pays no heed to the degree to which developments in Kosovo (whatever the ultimate designs of Washington and London) were driven by the demands for what has come to be known as Humanitarian Intervention (HI), especially after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when the international community stood idly by as somewhere between half a million and one million Tutsis were killed. Curiously, though perhaps understandably, Jha has little to say on the effects of globalization on his own country, India (though he may be saving that for future volumes). A better editor would also have been able to erase some minor mistakes (Representative Henry Waxman is not a California Senator), but, by and large, *The Twilight of the Nation State* stands out as a first-rate book that considerably enhances our understanding of world affairs, and should be mandatory reading for all those who care about which way our world is going.

A nice companion volume is Mahmood Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*. Much as Jha focuses on the "deep background" economic forces that have shaped the current constellation of world politics and US policy, Mamdani, a Ugandan political scientist and anthropologist of Indian origin, who has taught at the Universities of Dar es Salaam and Cape Town and is currently the Herbert Lehmann Professor of Government at Columbia, asks a different question. If the roots of what is popularly referred to as "Islamic terrorism" are "cultural," meaning that they spring from the teachings and practices of the Muslim faith, what explains that it only came to the fore in full force in the 1990s?

After 9/11, much of the narrative in the western media about this has been framed by Samuel P. Huntington's "clash of civilizations" paradigm and the work of Bernard Lewis (who originally coined the term), which locate the malaise supposedly at the heart of so many young men and women who take up the cause of al Qaeda, Hamas, or the Algerian GIA in a generalized discontent of Muslims with their fate in today's globalized world, and who react against it by flying planes into high-rises or otherwise undertaking suicide missions of various sorts from Kabul to Jerusalem, with occasional incursions into New York, London, and Madrid.

Huntington makes a good case for this at the macro-level, but the *connections* between the broad sweep of his generalizations and the specific manifestations of what Mamdani prefers to call the armed wing of "state-centered political Islam" are less evident, and it is to disentangle the latter that is the main purpose of this little gem of a book, quite unfairly described by the author himself as a modest

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effort. Mamdani thus asks, "why did political Islam, born in the colonial period, not give rise to political terrorism until the late Cold War?" (Mamdani: 14).

One plausible answer, implicit if not explicit in Huntington, would be that this terrorism has been, in a way, a reaction against globalization (a process led by the West, and especially by the United States), whose current manifestations emerged circa 1980, and became especially apparent in the course of that decade. Mamdani, however, not content with such macro-explanations, gets down to the nitty-gritty work of finding out exactly what led to "the developments known as 9/11." Not based on original research or fieldwork, but on an extensive and thorough reading of the relevant literature, as well as on the author's own life experiences and perspectives as a Muslim, an African, and somebody who found himself in New York City on 9/11, the book makes for fascinating reading.

It is well known that Osama bin Laden was recruited by the CIA (with the distinction of "having been invented by the CIA and wanted by the FBI," as Arundathi Roy in her own inimitable way put it) to lead the "American jihad" against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s, after a Saudi prince (Langley's first option) was unavailable. That telling fact, often drowned in the sea of information and analyses that followed 9/11, allows Mamdani to unravel the mystery of the upsurge of political Islam's terrorist groups from the late 1980s onwards, immediately after the withdrawal (and ignominious defeat) of Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

Far from having been an isolated or fortuitous event, that recruitment in Afghanistan, which led to the largest agency operation ever (with a US$3 billion budget, higher than that of all the rest of the agency operations in the 1980s put together), was part and parcel of a much broader pattern of clandestine terror CIA activities. They started in the 1960s in Central Africa (the Congo), continued in Southeast Asia (Vietnam and Laos), as well as in Southern Africa (in Angola and Mozambique) and Central America (in Nicaragua), and culminated in Central Asia in 1979–89. From the mercenaries in the Congo, the Hmong in Laos, Renamo and Unita in Africa, and the contras in Nicaragua to the jihadis in Afghanistan, the pattern is much the same. As direct intervention became unacceptable after Vietnam, proxy wars and low-intensity conflict (LIC) became the preferred US option for dealing with militant nationalism in the Third World. To finance such (often off-budget) initiatives, close links with the drug trade were forged, providing a steady cash flow and a welcome degree of self-financing.

Mamdani documents how the Reagan administration realized that the main battles of the "late Cold War" (that is, from the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 to 1989) would not be waged on the plains of Central and Northern Europe, but in the deserts and jungles of the Third World. It was also in the 1980s that the shift from "containment" to "rollback" took place. The counter-insurgency strategies of the 1960s and 1970s developed by the US military to deal with guerrilla movements thus morphed into LIC to topple revolutionary and nationalist governments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. LIC thrived on terror, obliterating the distinction between military and civilian targets, and operating on the logic that "if only the level of collateral damage could be made unacceptably high, the people would surely vote the terrorists into power as the price of peace."

How does this relate to the rise of terrorist movements identified with political Islam?

Quite simply, it was the US crusade against the Soviets in Afghanistan that not just facilitated their emergence, but actually created them from scratch, "putting

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right-wing Islamism at the global center stage." Mamdani identifies three key elements for this: CIA training in the use of timers, explosives, and other relevant skills; the thorough privatization and internationalization of the Afghan war, with worldwide recruitment through a variety of Islamic organizations (it is estimated that 16,000 Arabs, the so-called "Afghan-Arabs," were trained and fought there and between 600 and 1000 Algerians went home in 1990, with consequences known to all); and Bin Laden ended up as the leading organizer of the most prominent group of the mujahidin fighting the Soviets.

Mamdani's broader point is that it is quite misleading to portray al Qaeda and even the Taliban as somehow pre-modern, anachronistic expressions of a culturally backward religion, fighting a rearguard action against progress and modernity. On the contrary, they are modern political movements, the result of the encounter between their members and leaders with contemporary imperial power. For a decade, the US government preached, cajoled, trained, financed, and organized a "holy war" against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan (and built up Hamas against al-Fatah in Palestine), on the assumption that Islamist movements were the best way to counter "godless Communism" in Central Asia. Well, the chickens have come home to roost, albeit to a different enemy. It is in that sense that it is unhelpful to portray these movements as either a home-grown product or, alternatively, as a foreign import. They are the result of the interaction between local conditions and foreign initiative. As Mamdani puts it, "the result of an alliance gone sour, 9/11 needs to be understood first and foremost as the unfinished business of the Cold War."

A very different book is Josef Joffe's *Überpower: The Imperial Temptation of America*. Written by one of Europe's leading public intellectuals, the publisher and editor of Germany's highly respected opinion weekly *Die Zeit*, one would have expected a trenchant analysis from Joffe's privileged perch, one close to German Social Democracy, an entity whose leader, then-Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, played such a key role in the opposition to the war in Iraq for reasons that now turn out to have been quite prescient. Joffe, a respected political scientist with many books to his credit and who has taught at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford, writes effectively and provocatively, and has a remarkable command both of US foreign policy and of European history.

The question he asks is "how can American power be used wisely?"

Given the difficulties the United States finds itself in in Iraq and the broader Middle East more generally, and the strategic defeat that any withdrawal from Iraq in the near future would entail, few questions could be more relevant. Curiously, though, Joffe seems so fascinated, if not downright mesmerized, by the United States and US power more generally, that he finds it difficult to take the necessary distance to provide a convincing answer. Perhaps nothing shows that as well as his description of the United States as "the world's largest exporter" (Joffe: 240) when, of course, it is no such thing – the world's largest exporter is (and has been so since 2003), of *all* countries, Joffe's own Germany (at US$1112 billion versus US$1037 billion on the part of the USA in 2006 and US$969 billion versus US$904 billion in 2005).

His enthusiastic description of the US military victory in Iraq begs the obvious question about the reasons for the political defeat that followed it. Peppered with phrases like "blazing a trail for democracy across the world is a principle now

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firmly associated with the name of George W. Bush" (really?), "the United States performed brilliantly in Iraq," and "the best explanation is power, opportunity and the devotion to the democratic dogma, the oldest in America's secular religion" (on Iraq), the book shows a rare combination of realist thinking with an almost naive readiness to take US leaders (though not others) at their word as they attempt to rationalize the concatenation of circumstances that led the Bush administration into its present impasse. In so doing, he even muddles a relatively straightforward distinction like the one between "wars of choice" and "wars of necessity," in an effort to make the Iraq war appear in a better light. He also accuses, in passing, Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh of having been on the verge of taking on dictatorial powers as a way of justifying the 1953 US-sponsored coup that toppled him, with consequences that have come to haunt relations between Washington and Teheran to this day.

Paradoxically, the best parts of the book can be found in Joffe's discussion of 19th-century European politics, both on Britain's "balancing" and Bismarck's "bonding," out of which the author tries to draw some lessons for the United States' "building" in today's world. The weakest part is its discussion of the realities of the developing world (what he calls the "Baghdad to Beijing Belt"); at a time when many observers predict that this will be the Asian century and that in a couple of decades India will be the third largest economy, his dismissal of India in a brief paragraph strikes a jarring note. Not surprisingly, it also leads him to have very little to say on the origins of the various terrorist groups inspired by political Islam. In the end, Joffe's timid final conclusion, calling for the United States to "soften the hardest edge of its power," seems hardly commensurate with the magnitude of Washington's predicament.

If Jha provides (among other things) the "deep roots" of current US policy travails and Mamdani sets them in the context of Washington's relations with the Third World in the late Cold War, David Malone, a Canadian scholar, diplomat, and past president of the International Peace Academy, traces the Iraq issue within the United Nations Security Council from 1980 to 2005, exploring the many ramifications of this policy within the key body of the UN system. Combining his own experience at UN headquarters, generous access to top officials, an impressive command of the literature and first-hand knowledge of the broader Middle East (he spent part of his childhood in Teheran), he throws light on many aspects of Washington's "Iraq dilemma" hitherto not present in the public debate.

The complex interactions between Saddam Hussein's regime and the four different US administrations it had to deal with in 23 of the 25 years covered in this book raise many questions. They go from the reasons for Washington's "Iraq tilt" in the Iran–Iraq war in the 1980s to Saddam's seemingly foolhardy invasion of Kuwait in 1990 to George H.W. Bush's decision not to take Baghdad in the first Gulf War, and include as well those related to the willingness of the international community (that is, the Security Council, and especially the P-5) to set up the Iraq sanctions regime, the most elaborate ever concocted by the UN, and one whose humanitarian, political, ideological, and organizational consequences reverberate to this day.

Though he explicitly eschews any theoretical approaches, Malone sets his engrossing tale (a former journalist, he combines a reporter's eye for detail, the telling quote, and abundant information with the scholar's compulsiveness for

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TABLE 1. *United Nations Security Council Operating Modes*

	Mandates	Discretion	Accountability	Expertise
Politico-Military	Wide	Ample	Not much of an issue	Political Judgment
Legal-Regulatory	Narrow	Restricted	Crucial	Technical

documentation, such that the book has 1071 footnotes, two extensive appendices [one listing UNSC resolutions on Iraq and another with a chronology of events] plus a 551-item bibliography) within a conceptual framework that allows us to decipher many riddles of the Iraq saga and of Baghdad's relations with the rest of the world. Table 1, adapted by this reviewer from Malone's narrative, shows the gist of his argument.

Malone posits that in the exhilarating immediate post-Cold War period, as the United Nations was freed from the shackles of the bipolar dynamic of the previous 40 years, many possibilities for concerted Security Council actions opened up, and were, in fact, implemented. From March 1991 to October 1993, the UNSC passed 185 resolutions (five times the rate of previous decades) and initiated 15 new peacekeeping operations (in contrast to 17 in the preceding 46 years). The total number of "Blue Helmets" reached an all-time high of 78,444 in July 1993, in places as far-flung as Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia, as well as in Angola, El Salvador, Haiti, Mozambique, and Rwanda; these numbers started to drop in early 1995, falling to 14,374 in November 1998. The world body also took on ever-more ambitious tasks, including the sanctions program against Iraq, setting a pattern present to this day (witness the current attempts, driven by Washington, to impose sanctions of various sorts both on Iran and on North Korea).

The literature on the effects of economic sanctions is by no means unanimous in its evaluation of their impact on target regimes. In the case of Iraq, however, the humanitarian effects were quite obvious: the total deaths "attributable to the sanctions" ranged "from half a million to a million and a half, with the majority of the dead being children." The economy, on the other hand, was "set in reverse," with an urbanized, mechanized society being pushed back into subsistence agriculture, and generating, in so doing, an understandable resentment among a whole generation of angry, young Iraqi men, who, unsurprisingly, were not ready to receive the uniformed representatives of the main proponent of those sanctions with garlands, as some in Washington had fantasized in early 2003.

Ceteris paribus, it is difficult to quarrel with the argument that, at least in principle, in some circumstances it is better to impose sanctions than to invade. Malone, however, posits that the shift from what he calls the politico-military mode (the established pattern in previous UN Security Council initiatives such as in Korea in the early 1950s, or in the Congo in the early 1960s) to the legal-regulatory one in the 1990s (of which the Iraq sanctions regime is the most prominent example) imposed a wholly new set of demands on the UN Secretariat as well as on the UNSC and the P-5, for which they were unprepared.

The extraordinary fiasco of the Oil for Food (OFF) program (which ended up handling US$64 billion while it lasted) painstakingly documented in the Volcker Report, on the one hand, and of the US government's ultimately unfounded

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allegations about Saddam's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), on the other, could at least partly be traced to this discrepancy. The latter was inevitable in a situation of elaborate legal regimes demanding a high level of technical expertise and accountability, yet effectively managed by political masters (that is, the P-5, but especially the USA, as "first among equals"). The latter were not really interested in whatever factual evidence could be produced on the ground by the likes of Hans Blix, and their only concern was to advance their own political agenda. As Paul Wolfowitz so candidly put it, WMDs were "settled on" as "the one reason that everyone could agree upon" (Quoted in Tanenhaus, 2003).

The challenge is that the nature of the new threats faced by the international community, many of them led by non-state actors, are likely to demand more rather than fewer of these legal-regulatory regimes, since, by definition, the politico-military mode of yesteryear would be ineffective to deal with them. Yet, in some ways, the former require even more legitimacy than the latter, as they mean engaging in quasi-legislative behavior, from a body that is not a legislature, and far from being representative, is a "museum piece of 1945 vintage" in Michael Ignatieff's words (Ignatieff, 2003). The instrumentalist approach followed by the United States toward the Security Council is therefore especially problematic. Malone has no illusions about any of the other P-5 members not being instrumentalist in their dealings with the UNSC; in the end, it is a question of degrees, and it would seem that the United States overstepped the limits, as it moved from its "institutional instrumentalism," that is, investing in the long-term benefits to be derived from a stable and predictable world body whose legitimacy is unquestioned, to a "realist instrumentalism" in which "The Council was just one potential Coalition among many available to it, and in other Coalitions, there were no vetoes." This was taken to its ultimate logical conclusion by the March 2005 National Defense Strategy, as it stated "our strength as a nation will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international fora, judicial processes and terrorism." As Malone rightly points out, this suggests that "discussing a matter in the Security Council or arguing a matter before the World Court is likened to negotiating with terrorists."

Malone is less surefooted when he comes close to "current events" than when he is dealing with the complex dynamics of a body he knows so well, and his hopes for a window of peace in the Middle East as a result of Yasser Arafat's death have (predictably perhaps) not been borne out. The same goes for his curious prediction that John Bolton's "tough love" (?) approach to UN reform could be fruitful. But those are quibbles. This is a brilliant, nuanced work that, in focusing on the Iraq issue at the UNSC during a quarter-century, illuminates the inner workings of the United Nations' apex body, its changing role in world affairs, and the considerable difficulties the United States faces as it tries to come to terms with exercising the responsibilities of being the world's only remaining superpower.

As Brian Urquhart (2007) has observed, the occupation of Iraq is likely to be one of those key turning points in international affairs, equivalent to the Suez crisis for a previous era. Suez marked the end of any British aspirations for a stand-alone, global role in world affairs. It is unlikely that Iraq will signify a similar fate for the United States. Yet, it should also be evident that it will lead to a reassessment of the American rush toward empire.

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Notes

1. See, among others, Fukuyama (2005a), Johnson (2004, 2005, 2007), Lustick (2006), and Diamond (2005). For some broader reflections on the next phase in US foreign policy, see Lieber (2004). On the so-called "War on Terror," see Shapiro (2007).
2. For a recent review of the literature on globalization and its implications for international politics, see Milner (2005).
3. For the subsequent efforts at nation-building that the Bush administration did undertake, see Fukuyama (2005b).
4. For an analysis of the complex relationship between the United States and the United Nations, see Valdés (2002).
5. One of the leading publications to take up this cause has been *The Weekly Standard*, a small, but highly influential, magazine published in Washington DC and widely read in Republican circles.
6. On the Iraq war, see Gordon and Trainor (2006).

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Biographical Note

JORGE HEINE (PhD, Stanford) is CIGI Professor of Global Governance at Wilfrid Laurier University and a Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, Ontario. He served previously as Ambassador of Chile to India (2003–07) and to South Africa (1994–99), as well as a Cabinet Minister in the Chilean government. He has been a Visiting Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford and a Research Associate at The Wilson Center in Washington DC. He is the author, co-author, or editor of eight books, and his most recent articles have been published in *PS: Political Science and Politics, India Quarterly, Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, and *Estudios Internacionales.* ADDRESS: Department of Political Science, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5, Canada [email: jheine@wlu.ca].

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