Globalisation, the New US Exceptionalism and the War on Terror

ROBERT G PATMAN

ABSTRACT This article focuses on the tensions between a new exclusive US exceptionalism after 9/11 and a globalised security environment. The terrorist attacks in Washington and New York revealed that even the world’s only superpower is vulnerable to the type of transnational violence that had blighted other countries during the post-cold war era. Yet these events, at least in the short term, have served to intensify the ‘distinctive American internationalism’ of the Bush administration. This trend culminated in the USA bypassing the authority of the UN Security Council and leading an invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Nevertheless, there are growing signs that this new American exceptionalism has become a serious impediment to effectively prosecuting the war on terror. In the era of globalisation it is the support of other nations and multilateral institutions that offers the best hope of ensuring that the USA lives in a more secure world. Without moving to a more inclusive form of exceptionalism, Washington will struggle to sustain the level of international support that it needs to prevail in the current struggle against terrorism.

The conventional wisdom since 9/11 is that America’s view of the world has fundamentally changed. Scholars such as Stephen Walt said 11 September had ‘triggered the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of US foreign policy’.1 Certainly, the language of the first George W Bush administration seemed to reflect these sentiments. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 President Bush declared an all-out war on global terrorism and emphasised that it was ‘a new war, a war that will require a new way of thinking’.2

But, despite the rhetoric and claims by the Bush administration, there is little evidence yet that the process of realigning US policy has fully corresponded to the realities of a transformed security environment. It should be emphasised that a new strategic era, characterised by intra-state conflict, had already been in place for at least a decade before the events of 11 September. What happened on that fateful day is that the ‘new wars’ of the post-cold war era caught up with and impacted directly on the US homeland. However, apart from a brief flirtation with multilateralism immediately after

Robert G Patman is in the Department of Political Studies, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Email: robert.patman@stonebow.otago.ac.nz.
9/11, the Bush administration has generally approached the war on terror
with a reinvigorated idea of American exceptionalism—the informal ideology
that endows Americans with the conviction that their nation is an exemplary
one.

This article analyses how a new exclusive form of American exceptionalism
has emerged in the post-cold war period as a potentially grave obstacle to
understanding international security and is now seriously hampering the
prosecution of the war against terrorism in the wake of the events of 11
September. But, while the impact of globalisation in the short term has
intensified a US-centric approach to security, the long-term need to address
the transnational challenges created by the war on terror could have the
opposite effect. President Bush’s new narrow brand of ‘distinctive American
internationalism’, it will be argued, is simply not sustainable in the security
context of a globalising world.

The article proceeds in five stages. The first section examines the notion of
exceptionalism in US foreign policy. The second section considers the how
the end of the Cold War and deepening globalisation redefined the security
environment in the decade years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the
assault on the Twin Towers, and poses the question: ‘how did the US respond
to this new security environment?’ The third part considers President Bush’s
war against terrorism after 11 September and shows how a new form of US
exceptionalism manifested itself, particularly in relation to the 2003 invasion
of Iraq. The fourth section analyses the tension between President Bush’s
brand of US exceptionalism and a globalising security environment. Finally,
the conclusion analyses whether Bush’s new exceptionalism can be sustained
in the global struggle against terrorism.

The parameters of US exceptionalism

The idea of US exceptionalism refers to an informal ideology that endows
Americans with a pervasive faith in the uniqueness, immutability and
superiority of the country’s founding liberal principles, and also with the
conviction that the USA has a special destiny among nations. The founders
of America saw the country as a new form of political community, dedicated
to the Enlightenment principles of the rule of law, private property,
representative government, freedom of speech and religion, and commercial
liberty. This creed is so taken for granted that it is now synonymous with ‘the
American way of life’.

The US national creed has been shaped by three key influences. First,
America is, in some degree, a product of its geography. Relative geographic
isolation has kept the USA out of many European conflicts, kept it almost
immune until quite recently from big power rivalries and enabled it until 11
September to avoid ever having to fight a major international engagement on
its own territory.

Second, the sheer wealth and self-sufficiency of the USA has been an
important historical conditioner. Abundant wealth and resources meant that
the USA has never had to be dependent on, or continually interact with, the
rest of the world. Indeed, because of these riches, the country has sometimes behaved as though it could get along perfectly well without the rest of the world.

Third, the USA was founded on a basis that was Christian, largely Protestant and with strong Puritan and Calvinist beliefs. This early history meant that the USA justified and doubtless actually believed in its military conquests through the use of moral, even religious principles. There is little doubt that the USA has continued to think of itself as a special nation, a beacon on a hill, a country blessed by God's will and one with a moral and religious mission in the world.

So the USA has been an exceptional society, both in terms of its size, its geopolitical and economic position in relation to the outside world, and in terms of its intellectual and ideological history and self-image. But it should be emphasised that the concept of American exceptionalism goes well beyond uniqueness—a distinction to which many nations could lay claim. As Daniel Bell has noted, 'the idea of exceptionalism...assumes not only that the United States has been unlike other nations, but that it is exceptional in the sense of being exemplary'. That is, the USA sees itself as a beacon of hope for other nations. Celebrating the anniversary of the Constitution in 1987, President Ronald Reagan noted in this regard: 'The guiding hand of providence did not create this new nation of America for ourselves alone, but for a higher cause: the preservation and extension of the sacred fire of human liberty. This is America's solemn duty.'

Certainly, no one with any exposure to the USA can be in any doubt that most citizens of the country are genuinely proud of their country and its values. 'This is the greatest nation in the world' is a commonly used piece of political rhetoric. That sort of claim, even though not universally supported, sets the USA apart from most other nations. It is difficult to envisage, for example, a German politician saying that Germany was the greatest nation in the world. A British, French or Israeli politician might say it; but even in those countries the claim would strike many people as dubious, even fanciful.

A consciousness of being exceptional has had a profound impact on the evolution of US foreign policy. According to Reginald Stuart, 'Americans have historically found it difficult to step outside of themselves when judging others. And they have rarely realized how much their own values unconsciously smudged the lenses through which they viewed the world.' On the one hand, exceptionalism was used, particularly in the period up to 1941, as a justification for avoiding US involvement in the entangling alliances and quarrels of the so-called old world. This 'go it alone' or isolationist stance assumed that the USA remained a political model for emulation, but insisted that it must limit its global responsibilities to safeguard its internal and external freedoms. For instance, the US Senate declined to support US membership of the League of Nations organisation in 1919. On the other hand, a sense of exceptionalism inspired the USA, especially with the attainment of superpower status after 1945, to embark on a quest to improve the world. By sponsoring and leading multilateral institutions, the USA sought to transform an anarchic, conflict-prone world
into an open, international community under the rule of law, in which
countries could maximise their common security, economic and political
interests.\textsuperscript{8} Thus, without US support, there would not have been a United
Nations, and without US engagement in postwar Europe through the
Marshall Plan and NATO it is difficult to conceive of the Organisation for
Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or the European Union.\textsuperscript{9}

To be sure, American exceptionalism has not been the only factor shaping
the course and conduct of US foreign policy. During the Cold War hard-
headed realism, based on the overwhelming US desire to avoid a disastrous
nuclear war with the USSR, regularly kept exceptionalist impulses at bay.
Such pragmatism manifested itself during the 1956 Hungarian uprising, the
1962 Cuban missile crisis, the Nixon–Kissinger policy of détente with
Moscow in the early 1970s, and President Reagan’s willingness to sign
the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement with Mikhail
Gorbachev’s Soviet government. Moreover, in the 1960s and 1970s American
exceptionalism was weakened by events like Vietnam, Watergate, civil
disturbances, the oil shock, and the Iranian hostage crisis. Yet the tough anti-
Soviet rhetoric of the Reagan presidency coincided with a period of Soviet
decline and reform and helped many Americans once again feel good about
their country.\textsuperscript{10} The idea that America was different and exemplary thus
persisted and indeed flourished with the passing of the Cold War in the late
1980s. But a resurgent US exceptionalism now had to grapple with a new
external factor—globalisation.

The end of the Cold War, globalisation and the evolution of
American exceptionalism

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s offered an extraordinary
opportunity for a reappraisal of US foreign policy. Despite fears to the
contrary, the Cold War did not culminate in a nuclear showdown between
the superpowers. Instead, it passed away peacefully in the late 1980s. A series
of unanticipated but momentous changes in the international landscape
contributed to this. The Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the
collapse of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany,
the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the USSR marked
the end of the bipolar period.

Clearly, the interpretation given to these events would help frame any
subsequent US understanding of the post-cold war world. According to
President Bush (Senior), the collapse of Soviet communism meant that
America had ‘won the Cold War’.\textsuperscript{11} That view was widely shared in the USA
and the outcome was considered, in no small way, to be a triumph for the
American model of national security that had evolved since 1947.\textsuperscript{12} Rather
less attention was given to three alternative explanations for the end of the
Cold War: the view that Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies and personality were
the single biggest factor behind the dramatic improvement in superpower
relations;\textsuperscript{13} the claim that the cumulative degeneration of the Marxist–
Leninist political system forced the USSR to opt out of cold war competition
with the USA; and the argument that the advent of globalisation in the early 1980s facilitated the convergence of external pressures from the Reagan administration on Moscow and long-term domestic pressures within the USSR to create a new impetus for change.15

While disagreement over the causes of the Cold War’s demise generated some uncertainty about the nature of the international system that succeeded it, three distinctive features of the new landscape became immediately apparent. First, there were no longer military confrontations of a system-threatening character. During the Cold War a conflict between the USA and the USSR could have threatened the entire world with nuclear devastation. But, after 1989, it was difficult to conceive of likely conflicts of the same magnitude.

Second, the USA emerged from the Cold War as the world’s only superpower with no real geopolitical or ideological competitors in sight. The collapse of the USSR produced a new Russian state, shrunken eastward and northward by nearly a third of its former territory.16 The EU was preoccupied with German reunification and the reconstruction of a post-communist Eastern Europe. Japan experienced a severe downturn in its economic performance in the 1990s, and China, the world’s fastest growing economy, found itself involved in a delicate transformation that limited its global aspirations. Thus, for the first time in the modern era, the USA could theoretically operate on the global stage largely without the encumbrance of other great powers. In terms of inter-state relations, the relative power of the USA had sharply increased.

Third, the post-cold war world was subject to deepening globalisation. The latter could be broadly defined as the intensification of technologically driven links between societies, institutions, cultures and individuals on a worldwide basis. Globalisation implies ‘a shift in geography’ whereby borders have become increasingly porous.17 Among other things, the process of globalisation involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken, either physically or representationally, to cross them. As a consequence, the world is perceived as a smaller place as issues of the environment, economics, politics and security intersect more deeply at more points than previously was the case.18

Beyond that, however, there is little agreement concerning the impact of globalisation on the role of the sovereign state in the making of foreign and security policy. Three rival schools of thought can be identified. For the hyperglobalists, the growing interconnectedness of national economies through globalisation gradually negates the significance of territorial boundaries and paves the way for the demise of the sovereign nation-state.19 The hyperglobalists contend that one of the crucial effects of globalisation has been to reduce and ultimately eliminate the space for states to manage national security policy. In contrast, the sceptics basically believe that little has changed in the international arena. Rejecting the hyperglobalist position as politically naïve, the sceptics argue that the impact of globalisation on the sovereign state is much exaggerated. On this view the state is not the victim of this process, but its main architect.20 It is argued that the sovereign state is
still the sole institution tasked with the responsibility for establishing the preconditions for governance: political stability, the rule of law, education and training, and security are among the elements that play a part here. Finally, the transformationalists reject the tendency to juxtapose state sovereignty and globalisation. According to this perspective, the state is not automatically diminished by globalisation nor unaffected by it. Rather, the role of the sovereign state in the international system is being transformed by states themselves in relation to the perceived costs and benefits associated with the globalisation process. For transformationalists, sovereignty is a dynamic concept that is undergoing a new phase in its evolution. While it would be premature to anticipate the sudden collapse in the foreign policy function of the state, transnational pressures on the sovereign state from without and within are promoting a broader and more co-operative approach to security.

At the risk of oversimplification and some foreshortening, the US foreign policy orientation at the beginning of the 1990s seemed to place it somewhere between the views of the sceptics and transformationalists. The Bush (Senior) administration seemed confident about constructing a new grand strategy in the changing global context. After all, the US economy was not only the largest in the world, but was also the major engine of global growth and technological change. For this reason, globalisation seemed almost synonymous with Americanisation. Thus, in the eyes of many Americans, the USA had not only prevailed over Soviet totalitarianism, but was now spearheading the process of globalisation. The scene seemed set, according to Francis Fukuyama, for a new, world system based on Western values of liberal democracy, market capitalism and international co-operation. In a memorable phrase, Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War marked ‘the end of history’. Indeed, the crushing military victory of the US-led coalition over Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the Persian Gulf war of 1990–91 seemed to affirm a ‘new world order’ based on US hegemony anchored in some form of leadership association with the UN. But, and this point deserves some emphasis, President Bush’s early post-cold war vision seemed based on an inclusive conception of US exceptionalism that envisaged an expanded US leadership role, albeit one through either partnership with multilateral institutions or in coalitions that enjoyed a wide measure of international support.

President Bush senior was right to envisage a new world. But it did not turn out to be quite the order he or many others in the West expected. In some ways the controversial humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1992–93 was a paradigm of the emerging security order. In 1992 constant civil war and drought had combined to produce a catastrophic famine killing an estimated 300 000 Somalis. An unprecedented United Nations peace operation was the world’s response, with a US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) set up for a lead role. It was the first time in the post-1945 era that the US military had intervened to protect the lives and welfare of foreign citizens rather than national strategic interests. The operation proved to be a profound disappointment.
Nation building was not written into UNITAF’s mandate and instead of striving to stabilise Somalia through political reform, UNITAF concentrated largely on short-term humanitarian needs. When its successor mission, UNOSOM 11, became involved in hostilities with General Aideed’s faction, President Bill Clinton, under pressure from Congress over the growing American casualty list, announced in October 1993 the withdrawal of all US troops within six months. That decision effectively ended the US–UN experiment with peace enforcement in Somalia and eventually led to the humiliating withdrawal of all UN troops from the country in March 1995.

The Somali crisis highlighted seven key features of the post-cold war environment:

1. weak or failed states were now the main source of threat and instability in the world;
2. these new civil conflicts were typically characterised by the absence or inadequacy of legitimate governance;
3. many of the ‘new wars’ were driven by issues of identity and often involved the mobilisation of movements along ethnic, tribal, racial and religious lines;
4. civil conflicts such as Somalia served to stimulate calls for higher standards of governance, including the spread of democracy;
5. the globalised mass media now had the ability, the so-called ‘CNN effect’ to help internationalise internal conflicts;
6. the potential for economic and military overspill from intra-state conflicts challenged the old sovereign distinction between domestic and external policy in the field of security;
7. the capacity of the international community to respond to major security challenges was largely determined by the stance of the USA, the sole superpower.

But if the Somali crisis epitomised the new security environment, the Clinton administration struggled to come to terms with it. Having warned that it would be ‘open season’ on Americans all over the world if the USA pulled out of Somalia in the wake of the bloody confrontation with General Aideed’s forces on 3 October 1993, President Clinton nevertheless proceeded to announce a scheduled withdrawal by March 1994. The announcement was an attempt to quell fierce domestic criticism of Clinton’s handling of the Somali situation. Republicans like John Bolton and Charles Krauthammer, and conservative Democrats Senator such as Robert Byrd, contended that the Clinton administration had abandoned the ‘hard-headed’ approach of former president George Bush, and taken a multilateralist line that had ‘no conceivable connection to the US national interest’. In other words, these observers simply did not believe that the typical failed or failing state was geostrategically important to the USA.

In May 1994 the Clinton administration took a further step to defuse domestic political criticism by passing Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25. This measure codified what Washington saw as a key lesson of the
unsuccessful US–UN operation in Somalia. Henceforth Washington would avoid crossing the crossing ‘the Mogadishu line’ in UN peace operations that had the potential, through ‘mission creep’, to become armed nation-building exercises, with the attendant risk of US casualties. The emergence of the Somali syndrome, therefore, signalled that there would be no ‘new world order’ based on US partnership with the UN and, in future, US involvement in international conflicts would be premised on a narrower understanding of American national interests, including an aversion to casualties among its own forces, rather than humanitarian concerns.

PDD 25 signalled a more unilateral approach to international security under President Clinton, and also the emergence of a more restrictive, essentially exclusive notion of US exceptionalism. It was ‘the Mogadishu line’ mentality that paralysed UN Security Council decision making in the face of two brutal genocides in the mid-1990s. Politically loath to risk casualties, the Clinton administration blocked an early deployment of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda.25 At the same time Washington declined to take an active leadership role in Bosnia until Serbian forces overran one of the UN-designated ‘safe areas’ at Srebrenica in July 1995 and slaughtered 7000 Bosnian Muslim men. As a consequence, about one million people were murdered in ‘ethnic cleansing’: 800 000 in Rwanda and close to 200 000 in Bosnia.26

However, while the Clinton administration moderated its ‘Mogadishu line’ stipulation after the Srebrenica massacre, it did not abandon it. True, fears that conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor could widen did trigger a more assertive US foreign policy. But it was an approach that relied on the use of air power and largely ruled out the use of US ground troops. Furthermore, in Bosnia and Kosovo, the USA conducted these interventions through NATO, a military organisation in which the USA exercised a leadership role, rather than the UN. In the first serious use of Western military power in Bosnia, NATO conducted two weeks of air-strikes on Serb targets in the first half of September 1995.27 That military pressure brought Serb forces to the negotiating table. US diplomats subsequently pushed through the Dayton Accords in December 1995, which formally held Bosnia together as a single country. Sixty thousand heavily armed troops, mostly from NATO (with 20 000 from the USA), went to Bosnia and established a reasonably stable ceasefire.

The Clinton administration also firmly supported the establishment of UN tribunals charged with the indictment and prosecution of individuals accused of crimes against humanity and genocide in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Indeed, in a visit to Rwanda in August 1998, President Clinton publicly apologised for US inaction during the 1994 massacres and implied that military power could be deployed to prevent future genocides.28 Meanwhile, in the case of the Australian-led International Force East Timor (INTERFET) operation in 1999, a UN-authorised intervention, the Clinton administration confined its role to strong diplomatic and political support.

Nevertheless, President Clinton’s scope for moving away from an exclusive form of US exceptionalism was limited by the domestic realities of
Republican majorities in Congress following the elections of 1994 and 1996. And the Republican Party had been transformed during the decade after the Cold War. A group known as the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) became prominent within Republican circles during the Clinton years. Many of the key participants in this group went on to become leading figures in the current Bush administration. They include Vice-President Dick Cheney, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Under-Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.

The PNAC drew heavily on the ideas contained in a Defence Planning Guidance (DPG) document that articulated the USA’s political and military mission in the post-cold war world. The document was leaked to the *New York Times* in early March 1992. The DPG stated that the ‘first objective’ of US defence strategy was ‘to prevent the re-emergence of a new [superpower] rival’. Achieving this objective required that the US ‘prevent any hostile power from dominating a region’ of strategic significance. Another new theme was the use of pre-emptive military force against possible adversaries. As a result, the PNAC advocated the active pursuit of US global primacy, and condemned President Clinton’s policy of containment towards ‘rogue states’ like Iraq. From the mid-1990s the PNAC called for the overthrow of Saddam’s regime. In January 1998 Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, along with others associated with the PNAC, wrote President Clinton a letter saying that, if Saddam acquired weapons of mass destruction, he would pose a threat to US troops in the region, to Israel, to the moderate Arab states and to the supply of oil.

Given this domestic political context, the Clinton administration was only prepared to make limited changes to the narrow concept of US exceptionalism that surfaced after the Somali debacle. It found it politically convenient, for example, to publicly blame Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, rather than Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud Prime Minister of Israel, for undermining the Oslo peace process in the late 1990s. It also had few reservations about opposing or expressing caution about major human rights initiatives such as the 1997 Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel landmines and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998.

By the end of the 1990s the Clinton administration was steering a middle-road course between inclusive and exclusive exceptionalist tendencies in US foreign policy.

**11 September, the war on terror, and the rise of exclusive US exceptionalism**

After George W Bush became president in January 2001, there was a clear strengthening in the direction of an exclusive concept of US exceptionalism. The approach was actively promoted by the PNAC group linked to George W Bush’s bid to win the 2000 presidential election for the Republican Party. This perspective strongly rejected the notion of nation building, embraced the traditional view that security was fundamentally determined by the military means of sovereign states, and sought to promote ‘a distinctly American internationalism’. Convinced that President Reagan had successfully used
power and ideas to win the Cold War in the late 1980s, this school of thought argued that the USA had a unique historic responsibility in the post-cold war era to maintain unrivalled power and use it to spread freedom and democracy.

In the early phase of his administration, before 9/11, President Bush clearly strengthened the unilateralist orientation of America’s foreign policy. The Bush administration renounced the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, unsigned the Rome treaty creating an International Criminal Court, withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty and rejected the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. These moves, in the words of one conservative commentator, Charles Krauthammer, seemed to confirm that the Bush administration only engaged in multilateral endeavours ‘when there is no alternative’. He added that this new brand of unilateralism was entirely appropriate given ‘the unique imbalance of power that we enjoy today... The international environment is far more likely to enjoy peace under a single hegemon. Moreover, we are not just any hegemon. We run a uniquely benign imperium.’

It would be difficult to imagine, therefore, a more traumatic event for the Bush administration than the terrorist attacks of 11 September. The most militarily capable nation in the world was totally unable to prevent attacks on its soil against the very symbols of US power and prestige by a transnational terrorist group, al-Qaeda. The 9/11 attacks essentially challenged the notion that the American state could freely determine its own national security in a globalising world. The attacks in New York and Washington demonstrated the inherent vulnerabilities in the world’s most powerful country, a country that had been otherwise regarded as militarily unassailable after the end of the Cold War. Certainly, a key part of the US financial structure was damaged and the New York Stock Exchange itself was closed for four days. The effects of the attacks also spread across the airline and aircraft industries to have an impact on the whole economy. It was only in 2005 that the airline industry returned to pre-9/11 levels.

The initial response of the Bush administration to the events of 11 September was mixed. On the one hand, the Bush leadership used the transformed political landscape in the USA to project a new morally superior version of ‘distinctive American internationalism’. While the loss of almost 3000 innocent lives was not huge by the brutal standards of the ‘new wars’ of the post-cold war era, it was a devastating shock for the world’s sole superpower. For many US citizens the terrorist attacks shattered the USA’s sense of invulnerability. Among other things, the attacks graphically illustrated that there were groups and people in the world who did not view the US as an idealised ‘City on the Hill’. Mindful that many Americans were frightened and confused by 9/11, and conscious that conservative Christians had become a crucial constituency for the Republican party in the 2000 election, the Bush administration moved rapidly to link the terrorist attacks with a Christian world-view.

Declaring an all-out ‘war’ on what was called global terrorism, President Bush characterised the conflict as a long struggle between ‘good and evil’ and said the USA now had a responsibility ‘to answer these attacks and rid the
world of evil’. He proclaimed that other nations would either be with the administration in a ‘war on terrorism’ or against them; and asserted that ‘freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them’. By presenting a world conveniently partitioned into binaries of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, the Bush administration was simultaneously defining itself as good and those who were terrorists or opponents of it as evil or bad.

In the aftermath of September 11, therefore, the Bush administration insisted that the exceptional nature of the USA had not changed. Indeed, President Bush merged a Christian world-view with political language to create a new exclusive strain of US exceptionalism imbued with a fundamentalist moral purpose. It was almost as if Bush was saying that to spread American values in a troubled world was to be on the side of God and to resist them was to oppose God. President Bush promised ‘to whip’ terrorism and confidently predicted that the USA would ‘lead the world to victory’ in the new war on terror. He said the new ‘war’ against terrorism ‘is the calling of the USA, the most free nation in the world’. Though often strange-sounding to non-American ears, President Bush’s rhetoric went down well at home. The president saw a massive surge in his personal approval poll ratings immediately after 9/11 as a shocked populace rallied round the government.

On the other hand, the Bush administration did seem to distance itself from the unilateralism that it was pursuing before the terrorist attacks. It quickly secured a wide measure of international support for a ‘global assault against terrorism’. A UN Security Council resolution, 1368, was unanimously passed just 24 hours after the attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The resolution recognised that terrorism was a ‘threat to international peace and security’ and in effect authorised the use of force by the USA and its allies to curb such threats.

In addition, the NATO countries said they were ready to invoke article 5 of the Alliance Charter that declares that an attack on one member is an attack on all, in order to assist a US response to the terrorist attacks. Then, in late September, the leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) countries issued a communiqué at Shanghai which condemned the 11 September attacks as ‘murderous deeds’ and urged international co-operation in fighting terrorism.

At the same time the US Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, led diplomatic efforts to forge a global coalition against terrorism. Apparently united by a new common enemy, old adversaries like Russia and China expressed their solidarity with the USA’s ‘new war’. Pakistan, a neighbour of Afghanistan, and a former supporter of the Taliban regime, pledged full cooperation with Washington and initially tried to persuade the fundamentalist regime in Kabul to do the same. Meanwhile, the Bush administration injected new energy into trying to revive the stalled peace process in the Middle East. President Bush and General Powell publicly expressed their support for the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state, and repeatedly called on both parties to exercise restraint so that peace negotiations could resume.
The US-led coalition also took a series of economic steps against individuals and organisations deemed to be associated with terrorism. Under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 which, among other things, sought to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts, the USA froze bank accounts of alleged terrorists and threatened to impose fines on organisations ‘trading with the enemy’. On 24 September President Bush issued an executive order to US institutions to block the funds of 27 individuals and organisations. A week later the UK government of Tony Blair announced it had frozen more than £60 billion of UK-based assets which might have been linked to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. On 12 October Washington indicated that $24 million in assets belonging to Bin Laden and his supporters had been frozen world-wide, of which nearly $4 million was blocked in the USA itself.

Finally, with respect to the military dimension, the US and its allies, within days of the atrocities in New York and Washington, began to mass troops, warplanes and aircraft carriers within striking distance in preparation for action in Afghanistan. The military phase of the campaign began on 7 October, when the US-led coalition launched a series of air and cruise missile strikes in Afghanistan against the al-Qaeda terrorist training camps, and against troop concentrations and military installations of the Taliban regime.

These attacks paved the way for ground assaults by armed opponents of the Taliban, most notably the Northern Alliance. The combination of US and local military pressure succeeded in routing the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in much of Afghanistan. By mid-December the Taliban had lost control of all the major cities in the country and was forced to retreat to its Pashtun heartland in the south. In the meantime there was an agreement on 5 December under UN auspices to form a new interim Afghan administration.

It should be emphasised that multilateral diplomacy had played a significant role in ensuring the USA’s military defeat of the Taliban regime and the virtual destruction of bin Laden’s terrorist al-Qaeda infrastructure in Afghanistan. It is understood that China encouraged its old ally, Pakistan, a neighbour of Afghanistan, to respond positively to Washington’s diplomatic pressure and move away from its previously close ties with the Taliban regime. That co-operation included the provision of vital facilities to support the US war effort against the Taliban. Furthermore, Russia was a source of intelligence on Afghanistan for the USA and an important link with the Northern Alliance anti-Taliban opposition group. Russia’s close association with the Northern Alliance really came its own once it became apparent that Washington was looking to this group to do a lot of the fighting against the Taliban on the ground. The support of President Vladimir Putin also helped the Bush administration to secure access to base and air support facilities in Uzbekistan.

But the Bush administration’s encounter with multilateralism was short-lived. Within days of the 11 September attacks, Wolfowitz and I Lewis Libby, the Vice-President’s Chief of Staff and National Security Adviser, had begun calling for unilateral military action against Iraq, on the grounds that Osama bin Laden’s transnational al-Qaeda network could not have pulled off
the attacks without the assistance of Saddam Hussein’s state apparatus. President Bush reacted cautiously to such calls until the completion of the Afghan campaign in late 2001.

In his State of the Union address in January 2002 Bush invoked theological terminology to describe Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an ‘axis of evil’, and warned that he would ‘not wait on events’ to prevent them from using weapons of mass destruction against the USA. He added: ‘Americans are a free people who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity.’ This speech caused considerable offence internationally. Many of America’s allies doubted the wisdom of alienating Iran from the West, and also questioned the alleged involvement of Saddam Hussein’s regime with international terrorism. Moreover, just four months after the Bush administration declared itself keen to build alliances and collaborate closely with its friends in the war on terror, the speech did not even mention America’s allies. The speech seemed to reflect an arrogant impatience with foreign opinion of any kind.

A further indication that Bush’s new strain of US exceptionalism was in the ascendancy was his commencement address at West Point in June 2002. ‘We face a threat with no precedent’ he told assembled graduates, going on to describe the convergence of highly destructive modern technology with shadowy terrorist groups who could not be deterred by conventional means because they have no fixed territory or population centres. Reiterating a new commitment to pre-emption, Bush said: ‘We must take the battle to the enemy and confront the worst threats before they emerge’. He also declared in the same speech that the USA would prevent the emergence of a rival power by maintaining ‘military strengths beyond challenge’.

In September 2002 the Bush administration codified the ideas of pre-emption and global primacy in a document called The National Security Strategy of the United States. It stated that ‘America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones’. But, if the Bush administration now recognised the USA was confronted by new threats, it proposed to deal with them by pursuing ‘a distinctly American internationalism’ that would reflect US values and interests, and use US power and influence to expand freedom and democracy around the world. A key pillar of this US national security strategy would be ‘to build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge’. In the post-9/11 context the USA would seek support from allies and multilateral institutions, but the document emphasised that ‘we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting pre-emptively’.

Indeed, this report took the idea of pre-emption even further. Not only those nations or groups visibly preparing to launch an attack should be in the cross-hairs—any group with access to weapons of mass destruction and the ability to deliver them against the USA should be considered targets, even if it was not known whether they would actually launch an attack. As Charles Kegley Jr and Gregory A Raymond noted, the US stance takes it beyond the realm of pre-emptive war, and into the realm of preventive war.
Although attempts have been made to justify preventive strikes, it remains a ‘bottomless legal pit’ in the words of Kaplan and Katzenbach.\textsuperscript{44}

Iraq was clearly a defining challenge for President Bush’s new brand of exclusive exceptionalism. From early 2002 he repeatedly stated his intention to remove or forcibly disarm the Saddam dictatorship. The Bush administration alleged that Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction remained a clear and present danger to the USA. Despite the absence of compelling evidence, the Bush administration consistently asserted that there were links between Saddam’s secular dictatorship and the fundamentalist al-Qaeda terror network. It argued that it was only a matter of time before Saddam provided al-Qaeda with weapons of mass destruction to use against the USA or its allies.\textsuperscript{45} This rationale fell squarely within the newly defined doctrine of preventive war.

In November 2002 President Bush reluctantly turned to the UN to help advance the goal of disarming Saddam’s regime. Resolution 1441 authorised an unrestricted weapons inspection regime led by Dr Hans Blix in Iraq. But the Bush administration quickly expressed its dissatisfaction with this arrangement, and made it clear that the USA reserved the right to act in the absence of support for an additional resolution authorising the use of force against Iraq for failing to meet its disarmament obligations. After an open and bruising split with most UN Security Council members—and with erstwhile allies such as France and Germany—the Bush administration eventually bypassed the UN and led a ‘coalition of the willing’ in March 2003 to remove Saddam from power and, in Bush’s words, diminish the threat of international terrorism.\textsuperscript{46} On 1 May 2003 Bush declared victory in Iraq and noted the ‘turning of the tide’ in the war against terror.\textsuperscript{47}

Such a claim proved to be disastrously premature. In the three years since Bush’s triumphant declaration, the USA has been forced to abandon its abortive search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—the main justification for invading the country—and, despite nation-wide elections for the establishment of an interim Iraqi government in January 2005 and moves to adopt a new constitutional framework, the US military presence has been unable to quell a growing armed insurgency.

The broader justification for the Iraq invasion, and the one which has subsequently gained ascendancy when Iraq’s stockpiles of unconventional weapons failed to materialise, has been the notion that the USA can introduce democracy to Iraq, and thereby reform the Middle East region at large. This latter idea represents US exceptionalism in its purest—and perhaps most naïve—form.

Indeed, the Iraq venture has revealed the extent to which President Bush’s foreign policy has been ‘captured’ by the neo-conservative agenda, with its strong exceptionalist impulse. Certainly, influential neo-conservatives have been appointed to key roles within the two Bush administrations. These include Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and the current US Ambassador to the UN, John R Bolton. So why has the Bush administration been so susceptible to the moralistic, exclusive brand of US exceptionalism? The president’s decision-making style may have quite a
lot to do with it. A purported belief in ‘moral clarity’, ‘gut instincts’ and strong faith have all been hallmarks of President Bush’s leadership. According to Bruce Bartlett, a former treasury official in the first Bush administration, President Bush truly believes he is on a mission from God and tends to rely on his ‘instincts’ for major decisions such as invading Iraq.

But the emphasis on faith has also shaped the Bush presidency in profound, non-religious ways. The president has demanded unquestioning loyalty from his followers, his staff and his senior aides. Apparently, the president does not welcome discussions with staff that confront him with inconvenient facts. Moreover, the emphasis on faith apparently obviates the need for empirical evidence or analysis. A senior Bush adviser told journalist Ron Suskind in the New York Times Magazine:

We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors...and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.48

But at least as remarkable as the transformation of the US government since 2000 has been the broad receptivity of the majority of Americans to President Bush’s interpretation of the nation’s informal ideology—something which can only be partially explained by the trauma of 9/11.

In his televised address to the nation on the eve of the invasion of Iraq President Bush touched on his exceptionalist theme: ‘To all the men and women of the United States Armed Forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you’.49 Contemporary opinion polls showed that just under two-thirds of Americans supported military action against Iraq; furthermore, 56% said that getting UN support for action against Iraq was ‘Desirable, but not necessary’.

During the 2004 election campaign, both George W Bush and John Kerry pledged to continue to fight the war on terror aggressively. Crucially, however, it was Bush’s more exceptionalist vision which held sway. When Kerry suggested that the USA should undertake a ‘global test’ of legitimacy before launching foreign interventions he was immediately attacked by the Republican camp, who said that he would effectively give a veto over US actions to the international community.51

The susceptibility of the US public to the arguments put forward by the Bush administration may be linked to the prominence of religion, specifically Christianity, in American life. First, the vast majority of Americans affirm religious beliefs. For example, in a 2003 poll asking if the individual believed in God or not, 92% of respondents said yes.52 Second, religion is considered to be significant to a majority of US citizens. In polls conducted over 2002 and 2003 57% to 65% of Americans said religion was ‘very important’ in their lives; 23% to 27% said it was ‘fairly important’, and 12% to 18% said religion was ‘not very important’.53 Third, the USA is a predominantly Christian nation with ‘80 per cent to 85 per cent of Americans regularly
identifying themselves as Christians.\textsuperscript{54} Taken together, these factors may help explain why Bush's brand of moral exceptionalism in the war on terror has been one of his strongest political cards.

In addition, while the USA is the world's only superpower, it has been quite resistant to some aspects of globalisation.\textsuperscript{55} It was ranked fourth in the 2005 AT Kearney/Foreign Policy Globalization Index. However, that high ranking had more to do with technological connectivity—the USA ranked first in this dimension—than with its economic, political and personal connections with the rest of the world. In terms of economic integration, a category that measures trade and foreign direct investment as a proportion of GDP, the USA ranked 60th out of 62 countries. With respect to political engagement, which measures participation in international organisations, contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, international treaties ratified, and government transfers, the USA ranked just 43rd. Finally, in terms of the personal contact category, which measures international travel and tourism, international telephone traffic, and cross-border transfers like remittances, the USA ranked 40th.\textsuperscript{56} Thus, in the context of global integration, the US performance is distinctly uneven. It ranked first in the number of internet hosts and the number of secure servers, but lagged far behind many other countries in categories assessing global economic, political and personal linkages. In some ways, the USA appears to be a world unto itself despite globalisation.

All this provides insight into a major gulf between American attitudes towards the Iraq invasion and those of the rest of the world. There were huge public demonstrations in many Western countries—including Britain, Washington's most stalwart ally—in the lead-up to the Iraq war. In most countries a majority opposed the intervention in Iraq. In France and Germany, opposing the US stance paid dividends in terms of domestic political support. The character of the US occupation has only served to confirm international opposition. At Abu Ghraib, as at Guantanamo bay, high-flown US rhetoric about liberation and democratisation have collided head on with the reality of sordid—and possibly systematic—abuses against those in US custody.

By 2005 it was clear that US global standing had suffered major damage. A survey published by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in that year found sharp drops in the USA's favourable ratings abroad. In Britain it received a 58% favourable rating—down from 83% in 1999/2000. In France, the drop was more precipitous—just 37% gave the USA a favourable rating, down from 62%. Sentiments were even more pronounced in Muslim countries. In Turkey, Pakistan and Jordan, Washington scored 30%, 21% and 5%, respectively. More startlingly, the Project found a yawning gap between US self-perception, and that of other nations. Seventy percent of Americans said that the US takes the view of others into consideration either 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount'. The equivalent figures in Britain, Germany and France were just 36%, 29% and 14%, respectively.\textsuperscript{57}

And, while the figures were increasingly bad for the USA and its international image, there are ambiguous signals as to whether it will actively
address the problem, or indeed whether it sees that there is a problem at all. Recognising that ‘anti-Americanism’ has increased is one thing. But it is quite another to accurately diagnose the reasons for this development. At present the Bush administration seems to be convinced that it is the presentation of its policies, rather than their content, that is the problem as far as foreign perceptions are concerned. At about the same time that the Bush administration appointed Karen Hughes to be the Department of State’s Head of Outreach—effectively ‘Ambassador to the World’—hard-line conservative John R Bolton was installed as the US ambassador to the United Nations—above the strenuous objections of many in Congress.

**Exclusive US exceptionalism and the globalisation of security**

The persistence of the al-Qaeda threat, the deepening insurgency in Iraq, a possible US–Iran confrontation, the rise of Islamic militias in Somalia and the declining level of international support for the USA suggests there is a growing tension between President Bush’s brand of ‘distinctive American internationalism’ and the requirements of combating terrorism in the era of globalisation. In the space of the five years since 9/11 a new sense of exclusive American exceptionalism has manifested itself in a number of negative and counterproductive ways in the struggle against terrorism.

First, the Bush administration assumed it could, in a globalising world, declare war on global terrorism after 9/11 without clearly defining who or what was the enemy. The administration identified al-Qaeda as the chief suspect almost immediately, but did not want to specifically target it on the grounds that it might preclude military action against states that had allegedly supported Osama bin Laden’s organisation. While the reluctance to explicitly target al-Qaeda in the war on terror reflected the Bush administration’s determination to maximise the USA’s capacity to act, it seemed blind to the possibility that such open-endedness would involve substantial costs in an interconnected world.

In the absence of a clear identification of the adversary, Bush’s zero-sum formula that ‘either you are with us or you are with the terrorists’ may have made political sense in the USA, but it inevitably compromised its ability to win external support. Unable or unwilling to distinguish between value-driven terrorists like bin Laden and territorially motivated insurgents in places like Chechnya, the Palestinian territories and Kashmir, the Bush administration seemed to signal to the outside world that it would back any government, however repressive, if it supported the USA in the war against terrorism. Thus, in a near replay of the Cold War, the USA seems to be downgrading human rights and aligning itself with sometimes rights abusive regimes that claim to support US security goals.

Second, by declaring ‘war’ against a loosely defined adversary—terrorism—the Bush administration has generated an expectation and demand in the USA for spectacular military action against an identifiable foe, while short-term military successes against adversaries in Afghanistan and Iraq have hardly diminished the real level of threat presented by international terrorism. At the
same time the emphasis on a US military victory over vaguely defined enemies has facilitated goal displacement or ‘mission creep’. That is, a situation where a core objective becomes captured by a secondary or even unrelated consideration. This tendency has been clearly evident in the Bush administration’s preoccupation with Iraq. The claim that Saddam Hussein’s regime was linked to al-Qaeda was not supported by any compelling evidence and led some Republican observers like Brent Scowcroft and William Odom to conclude that the invasion of Iraq was a dangerous distraction and ultimately a major strategic disaster for the USA.\textsuperscript{61}

Third, the Bush administration’s depiction of the war on terrorism in stark ‘good versus evil’ terms has helped to privilege the USA’s national security interests over human rights and the rule of law. That constitutes a grave strategic error. These principles lie at the heart of the liberal democratic system and play a key role in legitimising and distinguishing democratic rule from the activities of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, which are dedicated to destroying such norms.\textsuperscript{62} Such principles are vital political weapons in the long-term struggle to discredit groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic world. Yet the faith-driven Bush administration has had few qualms about backtracking from these core principles in the war on terror.

Internally the Bush administration has used its ‘war’ powers to justify a massive expansion in the jurisdiction of the federal government. A new Department of Homeland Security, second in size only to the Defense Department,\textsuperscript{63} was established. At the same time, the Patriot Act, rushed through in the wake of the 11 September attacks, defined terrorism to include direct action by protestors, widened the use of wire-tapping on telephone calls and emails, and also authorised the Attorney General to detain foreign nationals on mere suspicion, without any of the legal protections of the US Constitution.\textsuperscript{64}

As an upshot, 650 alleged al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects were held from late 2001 at a US military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, without trial, charge or access to lawyers. The Bush administration has argued consistently that inmates held there are not ‘prisoners of war’ with rights under the Geneva Convention, but ‘enemy combatants’. In June 2004 the US Supreme Court overturned the Bush administration’s policy of indefinitely detaining citizens and foreigners alike as enemy combatants, a ruling which has triggered a clutch of habeas corpus applications by detainees at Guantanamo Bay.\textsuperscript{65} In February 2006 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan backed the call from a UN-appointed independent panel to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay.

There are also grounds for believing certain senior members of the Bush administration have felt free to engage in illegal tactics in order to discredit some prominent opponents of the US invasion of Iraq. Lewis Libby, Chief of Staff for Vice President Dick Cheney, resigned on 28 October 2005 after being indicted for making false statements in a federal investigation into the leaking of news in July 2003 identifying Valerie Plame as an undercover CIA agent. The disclosure was widely seen in Washington as retaliation for the vocal criticism of the Iraq invasion by her husband, former ambassador.
Joseph C Wilson, who had been dispatched to Africa by the CIA in 2002 to investigate intelligence reports about Iraqi efforts to acquire uranium.66

Externally the Bush administration has insisted on its sovereign right to dispense ‘American justice’ in the global war on terror. This approach sits uncomfortably with the notion of due process in an international context and has contributed to a culture of impunity in the prosecution of the war on terror.

There have been serious allegations concerning US violations of human rights in Afghanistan, the US detention centre at Guantanamo Bay and Iraq. In particular, reports of abuse at the US-run Abu Ghraib prison, 20 km west of Baghdad, became headline news in late April 2004.67 Photographs showing hooded and naked Iraqi prisoners being humiliated and maltreated sparked anger across the world. An investigation headed by Major General George R Fay into the role of military intelligence personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison found that the scandal was not just caused by a small circle of rogue military police, but stemmed from failures of leadership rising to the highest levels of the US command in Iraq.68

The Bush administration has also adamantly opposed the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). It is a court of last resort, intervening only when national authorities cannot or will not prosecute. More than 90 countries, including virtually all the USA’s allies and friends, have ratified the Rome statute which created the ICC. But, while the ICC should make it easier to bring war criminals—and that could mean terrorists—to justice, the Bush administration believes it would undermine US sovereignty.69 It fears that the ICC could seriously limit US military and political options, including the use of pre-emptive force against possible terrorist targets. So the Bush administration finds itself trying to drum up international support for the war on terror while continuing to oppose the strengthening of international law enforcement.

But if President Bush’s ‘distinctive American internationalism’ has bumped up against the constraints of a globalising world, there are some signs of incremental adjustments in its foreign policy thinking. For one thing, the administration has moderated its early opposition to nation building. Since 9/11, it has increasingly recognised that failed states matter to US national security, not because of the geopolitical importance of any such state individually, but because these societies potentially provide safe havens for criminal organisations such as terrorist groups to plan, prepare and launch attacks against Western targets.

Moreover, the Bush administration has abandoned its early policy in the Middle East of ‘assisting but not insisting’. Since 9/11 Bush has become the first US president to publicly endorse the idea of an independent Palestinian state. To be sure, the Bush administration has continued generously to finance and arm the Likud-led government in Israel, and, in April 2004, it publicly endorsed the unilateral initiative of Ariel Sharon to implement only a partial withdrawal from the occupied territories, a move which seemed to undermine the internationally backed ‘Roadmap for Peace’ initiative.

Furthermore, the Bush administration has also moved a little on the issue of global poverty. Before 9/11 the free market orientation of the Bush
government meant that the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of good governance in the developing world was not a priority in Washington. But, within six months of 9/11, Bush had launched the Millennium Challenge Account initiative that called for economic and political reforms in developing countries as a precondition for new additional aid. The US pledged to increase its core development assistance by 50% over the next three years, resulting in an annual increase of $5 billion by 2006.  

**Conclusion: can the USA sustain its new exceptionalism?**

Compared with other nations, the US historical experience has been exceptional. It has helped to shape a package of attitudinal and behavioural traits that are part of the American heritage. But the end of the Cold War and deepening globalisation are fundamentally reshaping the international system in which the USA is located. The hope, entertained by the hyperglobalists in the early 1990s, that the security function of the state would increasingly be absorbed by a multilateral body like the UN, backed by the USA, proved to be premature. After the Somali debacle of 1992–93, the Clinton administration abandoned the idea of inclusive US exceptionalism in favour of a more exclusive, realist conception which assumed Washington could selectively respond to the challenges of the new security environment of the post-cold war world. Unilateralist tendencies were further strengthened when George W Bush took office.

The events of 11 September brutally exposed the limitations of the exclusive strain of US exceptionalism. On that fateful day the terrorist attacks on the homeland of the world’s only superpower confirmed that globalisation is transforming both the nature of the sovereign state in the international system and the relations between the two. The USA found itself subject to non-state violence that had already blighted the lives of so many people elsewhere during the post-cold war era. In the security environment of a globalising world, extraordinary power does not guarantee invulnerability. Paradoxically, the USA is today both more powerful and more vulnerable than previous global powers in history.

But the Bush administration has shown little real inclination to come fully to terms with the interdependent nature of the new strategic era. Since January 2002 it has expanded the boundaries of ‘distinctive American internationalism’ to explicitly include the idea of moral superiority in the war against terrorism. The tendency towards unilateralism has encouraged disproportionate reliance on the military in US foreign policy. The 2003 conflict in Iraq exemplified these problems. Far from weakening international terrorism, the preventive invasion of Iraq by US-led forces seems actually to have boosted the international position of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, and severely damaged America’s international authority and image.

Such outcomes indicate that the exclusive exceptionalist thinking of the Bush administration has contributed to a misunderstanding of the role of military power in an increasingly interconnected world. According to Joseph
Nye, the USA cannot secure political influence through hard power alone.\(^71\) It also requires the use of ‘soft power’ through the projection of values such as popular democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, and the support of multilateral institutions. Moreover, the steady expansion of these ideas through globalisation has actually narrowed the scope for the exercise of coercive pressure by a democratic superpower. The basic problem for those advocating US global primacy within the Bush administration is that other democratic governments must listen to the opinion of their voters, and that means it is not always possible to comply with the Bush administration’s national security agenda in places like Iraq.\(^72\) As globalisation assists in the further expansion of democracy, this problem will increase rather than diminish.

At the same time, the Iraq invasion has also shown that Bush’s exceptionalist state does not seem willing yet to open itself up to the new levels of international co-operation that are essential to effectively countering global terrorism. The main effect of the security policies put in place by the Bush administration since 9/11 has been to reduce cultural and commercial contacts between the USA and the outside world by introducing onerous clearance procedures for travel to the USA or tightening security on the transport of goods.\(^73\) But it could be argued that the struggle against terrorist networks and their supporting states requires shared intelligence, international police cooperation, the strengthening of international law enforcement and sustained global diplomacy.

All this points to the fact that the security challenges of a globalised world cannot be solved unilaterally by the USA or any other power. If the costs for a war on terrorism are to be held to a level acceptable to the US public, a more multilateral and less exceptional approach will have to figure more prominently in future US foreign policy thinking. In the age of globalisation it is the support of other nations and multinational institutions that offers the best hope of ensuring that the USA lives in a more secure world. And, while the country has been less affected by globalisation than many other states, it is still being gradually transformed by it. In 2003 international trade accounted for nearly 24% of America’s GDP, up from around 11% in 1970; the 7.3 million passports issued to Americans in 2003 was almost double the number given a decade earlier; and the percentage of America’s foreign-born population reached a new high of 28.4 million in the 2000 census.

Yet it will not be easy for the USA to move from its current exceptionalist thinking. In his 2006 State of the Union address President Bush spoke about the war on terror and presented the American people with a stark choice between continuing with his ‘distinctive American internationalism’ or retreating into an isolationist stance. But that is essentially a false choice. There is a clear and viable alternative for American leadership in a globalising world. As Theodore Sorenson has noted, a former president, John F Kennedy, wanted the USA to lead by force of example, not by force of arms; by the multilateral use of US diplomacy, and by US support for the United Nations and the rule of law.\(^74\) It is interesting that, under conditions of globalisation, the revival of a more inclusive form of US exceptionalism...
may be the most effective American option for coping with the new security challenges of the 21st century.

Notes

15 Patman, ‘Reagan, Gorbachev and the emergence of “new political thinking”’, pp 578 – 579.
38 Armstrong, ‘Dick Cheney’s song of America’, p 81.
51 http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6158694/.
53 Ibid., p 82.
54 Ibid., p 82.
55 Gibney, ‘Globalization, American exceptionalism and security’.

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73 Gibney, ‘Globalization, American exceptionalism and security’.