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ESSAYS

Controversies over the US Hegemony in the Multipolar World

Adam Gwiazda

Abstract: *Since the end of the Cold War, American hegemony continues to characterize the international system. This hegemony has met with a considerably higher acceptance by other states and other actors of the international system than a world of competing superpowers and political blocs. The main argument developed in this paper is that American primacy may not last forever, but as there is no effective global security mechanism for coping with the growing threat of extremist religious and political movements, the United States will continue to play the unique role of a sole superpower in the international system for a few decades to come.*

Keywords: *US hegemony, multipolar world, NATO, US power, military expenditures*

Introduction

Since the end of the second World War the United States remains the most economically, politically and military competitive nation in the world. The economic crisis of 2008, especially the recent problems in the US housing market, characterized with the flood of defaults on so-called subprime mortgages, and dramatic fall in the in the savings rate and the rise in the trade deficit, raised warning flags among the world's analysts on the overall health of the US economy, as well as its impacts globally (Friedman 2009: 20–21). However the United States is still one of the most competitive economies in the world due to the efficiency of the country's markets, the sophistication of its business community, the impressive capacity for technological innovation that exists within a first-rate system of universities and research centers all contribute to making the United States a highly competitive economy (Wagner 2008: 8).

The American competitiveness and power is even more visible in the political and military sphere. The second half of the XX century and the first decade of the XXI century can be described as the “American century” which, in the opinions of some experts, is ending. Such prediction of the America's decline as the strongest world's superpower has been common every ten years. For example in the late 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s there was the so called Sputnik Shocks “missile gap” and in the 1970s both Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger predicted a world of five, rather

than two, global powers (i.e. the USA and the Soviet Union). On the other hand in the late 1980s Paul Kennedy predicted the ruin of the United States, driven by overextension abroad and profligacy at home. The United States was at that time at risk of “imperial overstretch”, because of “the sum total of the United States’ global interests and obligations is nowadays far larger than the country’s power to defend them all simultaneously” (Joffe 2009: 21, see also Kennedy 1987: 34–35). Such forecasts have not proved true, at least till the end of the first decade of the XXI century, i.e. the period of the longest economic and political expansion of the US in history, which, apart from eight down months in 2001, continued until 2009. Already in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, declinism in America took a break and the United States has become a sole global hegemon being able to provide public goods such as peace and security also to other countries and regions of the contemporary world (Hunt 2009: 12–14).

The main arguments developed in this paper is that American hegemony continues to characterize the international system in the few next decades of this century despite the competition from the side of regional powers, such as China, India, Russia, Brazil and other nations. Those emerging superpowers will rise in the next 20–30 years to challenge US status as a sole superpower, but not to such extent to be able to change the existing world order.

Aspects of the US hegemony

The influence and power of the United States may decline in the next decades but this will not be a decline in economic, political, or military strength. Rather than the United States enjoying the role of the world’s lone superpower, the influence of other countries such as China and India will increase in relative terms. It seems rather improbable that China will dominate and reshape the global system (Jacques 2009)¹. To become a global hegemon China’s has to increase not only its economic and military power vis-a-vis United States but first of all to build a system of institutions that other countries would be willing to join and to create such alliance like NATO as well as to liberalize its political system. As Zbigniew Brzezinski has observed “NATO,s real power derives from the fact that it combines the United States military capabilities and economic power with Europe, s collective political and economic weight (and occasionally some limited European military forces)” (Brzezinski 2009: 10). The fact is that the United States’ liberal orientation has facilitated its leadership and has enabled that country to become a global “pole” in the present still “unipolar” world. And the United States currently possesses the economic and military might, which enable that superpower to exert the decisive influence on the world’s affairs and maintain its primary by default that is for the

¹ Jacques claims that China’s impact on the world will be at least as great as than of the United States over the best century, if not far greater, see Jacques 2009: 18–21.

lack of serious competitors. The basic issue is the question when the balance of global power is bound to shift and whether the gradual decline in the US superpower status in the world financial system will change significantly the gap between the US and its rivals. That gap in economic, technological or military fields is still so large that American's global hegemony will still last for the few, next decades.

Under the present still centralized world system in which the United States is the biggest and the most influence pole, there seems to be no much room for the creation of the multipolar world system. If we take as a measure of economic power the value of GDP (in nominal terms) and as a measure of military power the spending for defence (military expenditures) both in absolute terms, i.e. dollars and as a % of GDP so it becomes evident that there is no such a country in the world which has at least the economic and military capabilities of the United States (see table 1). It should be pointed out that it is very difficult to present a precise calculation of military spending both for the United States and China. In the United States for instance the Pentagon budget does not include most of the spending on nuclear weapons, which falls under the Department of Energy budget. There are also the supplemental spending bills for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand interpreting China's military expenditure has been a complicated issue. Although China publishes its official defence budget and provides justifications for increases in its military spending, most observers remain skeptical of the accuracy of the official figures (Chen – Feffer 2009: 47–67).

Table 1: GDP and military expenditures in 2007

Ranking	Country	GDP trillion US dollars
1	USA	13,8
2	Japan	4,3
3	Germany	3,3
4	China	3,
5	United Kingdom	2,8
Ranking	Country	Military expenditures in billion US dollars
1	USA	547*
2	United Kingdom	59,7
3	China	58,3
4	France	53,6
5	Japan	43,6

**Excluding about 130 billion dollars spent in that year for the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan*

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2008, Stockholm 2008.

The comparison of the figures presented in table 1 confirms the American primacy both in the economic and military spheres. As regards the value of GDP, so in 2007 only Japan was the biggest competitors to the United States and the total

GDP of all four countries included in that table was at the level of 13,6 trillion of dollars as compared to the US 13,8 trillion. For comparison the combined GDP of all 27 member-countries of the European Union was in 2007 at the level of 16,9 trillion dollars. However it is not relevant comparison vis-a-vis the United States as the European Union does not act on the international arena as a unit and the member-countries have conducted till the December 2009 their own, independent foreign policies on most issues (Smith 2004: 8–9).

The US primacy in the military sphere continues to grow. The fact is that the US spends almost ten times as much on its military as its closest spending competitor, the United Kingdom. Moreover, the second through fifth ranked spenders combined do not reach half the US figure. It should be interesting to compare the US annual defence spending during the Korean war, when it was 126,6 billion dollars (in 2009 dollars) and in the fiscal year 1955 annual spending was 221,7 billion dollars. And in fiscal year 1960, at the administration's end, spending stood at \$ 265 billion (Krepinevich 2009: 150). Since that time the US has increased its military spending very significantly to the present level of roughly 700 billion dollars (only in the first decade of XXI century defence spending has increased more than 45 per cent). It was the price for being the guarantor of the international system in which the United States cannot afford to cut its defence spending. The United States has also to act in such ways in order to preserve its power position and interests all over world. This involves the using of both "soft" and "hard" power as well as engagement in multilateralism.² As regards the soft power, so during the financial crash and already under George Bush administration that kind of power has eroded greatly. It doesn't mean however that since that time the world has been becoming multipolar. The United States still conducts its mostly unilateral foreign policy using both soft and hard power and resolving certain international problem through "coalitions" with some NATO member countries. On the other hand the United States is enough powerful economically, technologically and militarily to be able not only to defend itself and its national interests but also to maintain peace in other regions of the world. It not only spends on defence much more than other regional 4 superpowers but expands its military potential. For comparison, in 2008 China had 2,2 million soldiers versus 1,6 million soldiers in the US but that last country possesses much more tanks, fighter planes, aircraft carriers, submarines with nuclear power and destroyers) than China and other regional powers.

² Soft Power is the ability to obtain what a given state wants through cooperation and attraction. On the other hand „hard power” is the use of coercion (military Power) and payment. The term of soft Power was coined by Joseph Nye in a book: *Bound to lead: The Changing nature of American Power*, Harvard 1990 and elaborated in detail in his 2004 book: *Soft power. The means to success in world politics*, New York 2004. See also T.L. Ilgen ed., *Hard Power, soft power and the future of transatlantic relations*, Aldershot 2006: 7–8.

Table 2: Comparison of military force of China and the United States

China		USA
2,2 million	Soldiers	1,6 million
6700	Tanks	8000
1630	Fighter planes	3900
9	Submarines with nuclear power	75
0	Aircraft carriers	11
29	Destroyers	52

Source: CIA The World Factbook, Langley 2009, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

The military power of the US is therefore unquestionable as well as its economic power. The weakest, third type of the US power is ideological cultural “soft power” which has been eroding since the last several years and led to rise of anti-Americanism in many countries. Such anti-American attitudes are often indentified with antiglobalization movements. However in recent times anti-Americanism is also viewed as the most visible form of expression of disapprovalment of the US hegemony and its unilateral foreign policy. In other words if one can disapprove of the United States for what it is or for what it does, so the former is anti-Americanism but the later is not. As Jeffrey S.Kopstein pointed out in practice the line is not so easy to draw. Some people find fault with the United States no matter what it does. It is bad for intervening militarily to stop genocide in Kosovo but equally bad for failing to intervene to stop genocide in Rwanda. It was wrong to promote free trade and globalization in the 1990s but equally wrong for raising tariffs to protect its industries, as it did in the first years of the Bush administration (Kopstein 2009: 368; see also Markovits 2007; Katzenstein – Keohane eds. 2007). Anti-Americanism has been on rise especially in Europe, where – as A.S.Markovits remarks – “is unifying West Europeans more than any other political emotion – with the exception of hostility to Israel. In today’s Western Europe, these two closely related antipathies and resentments are now considered proper etiquette. They are present in polite company and acceptable in the discourse of the political classes” (Markovits 2007: 1). Is should be added that American support for Israel has also made the United States a target for the hatred of Muslim extremists and brought about an increase in anti-Americanism in the majority of Arab countries. There is also well known fact, that George W.Bush unilateral foreign policy and the wars in Iraq and Afganistan fueled anti-Americanism not only among European and Arab political elites but also among Europe’s masses end among citizens of many Arab countries. The question remains open whether and to what extent anti-Americanism diminishes America’s soft power. It seems however, that anti-Americanism will lead to important foreign policy changes not only of the present administration of Barack Obama, but also of other, both democratic and republican administrations. It is also almost certain that

the United States's military power will face few direct challenges in the near future mostly from the side of terrorists and other nonstate actors. Such challenges will not, however, change profoundly the existing unipolar world and will not transform it into a multipolar world. The sole erosion of the American soft power will not make the world multipolar, especially that the November 2008 election of Barack Obama as American's 44th president has to some extent provided an antidote to the erosion of the American image that took place during the Bush presidency³. Despite the fact that the perception of US power has suffered from George W. Bush policy failures in Iraq and Afganistan, and the global financial crisis, American primacy in the contemporary world is still undisputable. However many politicians believe that we are in a multipolar world today, where there are at least three, centres of power, though not equal ones, i.e. the United States, China and the European Union. Some authors recently argued that the current international system is nonpower, in which American unipolarity has been replaced by the diffusion of power to a variety of actors: regional powers, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations. Richard Haass argues that the US' large lead in defence spending is not the best way to make sense of the international system because expenditure is not the same as influence (Haass 2008: 7–8). However all regional powers, international organization non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations are not able to solve any serious global problem without the help of the US. It doesn't refer only to military conflicts, but also to many other global problems. As the recent financial crisis confirms, many multinational corporations were not able to survive it without the massive state support. And no regional power such as China, India or Russia could be able – like the United States – to use military force on a global scale now and in the near future. As some authors rightly point out that “While Russia and China may use force regionally, they are not capable of global reach at present. This means that while Russia, China, and others will have to ask themselves whether the US will intervene when they use force, the US is unlikely to have the same concern when acting outside of potential rivals' spheres (e.g., Iran). Second, if the United States does not act to solve a challenging global problem, it is unlikely that the problem will be solved. Conversely, if the US is committed to solving a global problem, its resources will make a solution more likely. For example, most agree that a solution to the global climate crisis will be much more likely if the US becomes actively engaged in seeking a solution” (Davidson – Menotti 2009: 19).

There is also the problem of changing balance of power due to the globalization which cannot be identified only with economic and political interdependence

³ After one year many decisions of President Barack Obama have been sharply criticized and the image of Democratic Party in the US and the image of America abroad is to fade again. Cf. B. Niedziski 2009: 10; see also J. Klein 2009: 20–22.

but rather with the set of various phenomena that derive from market forces and which create pressures that are felt by all states, although not to the same extent and with the same “final effects” (Bonanno – Constance 2009: 7–8; see also Gwiazda 2006: 11–18). Thus the consequences of globalization are much weaker in the case of such superpower like the United States in comparison with medium-size and smaller countries. Globalization affects individual states in various ways and tends to reduce the autonomy and capacity of states. It also affects the balance of power between states and transnational corporations (Gwiazda 2003: 115–128; see also Drahokoupil 2008: 4–7). However the nation-states not mention such a superpower like the United States or such regional bloc like the European Union may use in the era of globalization their powers in order to limit their exposure to globalization through, for example, restricting the flow of goods money, data, and people across their borders. Also all other countries can pursue the similar policies aimed at the reduction of some negative effects of globalization. They have, however, much smaller choice of the foreign policy options and instruments, as regards the effects of unipolarity. The effects of unipolarity-contrary to the effects of globalization – that are felt by other states “are not so much a direct function of the distribution of power, as with (arguably) bipolarity, but rather the doctrinal foreign policy choices of the United States” (Kirshner 2008: 365). Due to the extensive engagement of the United States both in the world economy and in world politics it may be assumed that the United States remains not only more powerful than any other state has ever been but will also be confronted with greater political opposition from the side of the emerging regional superpowers. The United States has to face also an increasing competition in the field of economy, in which such countries like China are successfully competing with other countries on the global scale.

Challenges to the US hegemony

It has been clear for years, since the beginning of the 1990s when the United States has become the world’s preeminent power that it has to defend its dominant position and face challenges from the side of emerging powers, various terrorist groups and even from its allies in Europe. According to some experts it is just the European Union which is the only actor capable of challenging American primacy in the near future. For example Charles Kupchan maintained in 2002 that the European Union possessed the economic capability to be considered a great power. Kupchan acknowledged that the EU member countries had to act as one unit in international relations in order to serve as a rival to American power, but he noted that the EU member countries had increasingly been coming together politically and suggested that the then proposed EU constitution would cap the trend (Kupchan 2002: 21). However the rejection of the EU constitution by France and the Netherlands has

hindered the EU road to political unity, but the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 has created the new chances for the EU to become the serious rival to the US. The similar view has recently been expressed by Parag Khanna, who had argued that China and the European Union are joining the United States to form a world with three “relatively equal centers of influence”. Each power center has its own “diplomatic style”: the United States works through “coalitions”, China operates through “consultations” and Europe seeks “consensus”. The fate of world order, however, will hinge on how the next tier of states – the so-called Second World, or “tipping-point states” – choose to ally with or resist these three competing poles (Khanna 2008: 61–62).

On the other hand Fareed Zakaria argues in his recent book that American’s downscaling is the natural consequence of a transition towards an increasingly multi-centric world. The planet is characterized by the political, economic and social ascent of new stakeholders. He predicts that, “in the next few decades, three of the world’s four biggest economies will be non-Western (Japan, China and India)” (Zakaria 2008: 74). Thus the United States and Europe will necessarily have to re-think their roles. Zakaria tries to foresee not the decline of America, “but rather the rise of everyone else” (Zakaria 2008: 1). He roots his analysis in the forces of capitalism and modernization and predicts the end of the monopoly of Western and particularly European culture on global models of development. The coming decades will be marked by the challenge of building a new post-Western modernity (Zakaria 2008: 36–38).

This however doesn’t mean that the US hegemony decline in favour of new Asian superpowers. Zakaria points first of all at China, which he describes as “the most successful development story in history” (Zakaria 2008: 89) and at India being the “world’s fastest growing free market democracy” (Zakaria 2008: 131). At the same time he believes that the United States is well-equipped to continue to be the dominating superpower on the international scene and will maintain its dominance in many strategic sectors such as defence, new technologies and research. In his opinion the United States should to accommodate, rather than resist, these modernizing states, allowing them to become “stakeholders in the new order” in exchange for their strategic cooperation. The fact is that the United States itself built and maintained its global leadership and now in order to preserve it will need to give up its unipolar policy, engage other great powers, and champion rules and institutions that are forged out of compromise and mutual adjustment.

The question still open is whether other regional superpowers will be willing to cooperate with the United States to create the new international order within the “old” structure marked by the America hegemony? It is also hard, to predict all effects of the extraordinary rise of China (Bergsten et al 2008: 7–12) which in 2009

become the largest exporter in the world surpassing Germany and its share of world exports jumped to almost 10% up from 3% in 1999. It should be pointed out that China takes an even bigger slice of American's market. In the first ten months of 2009 American imported 15% less from China than in the same period of 2008, but its imports from the rest of the world fell by 33%, lifting China's market share to a record 19%. So although America's trade deficit with China narrowed, China now accounts for almost half of America's total deficit, up from less than one-third on 2008 (Fear of the dragon 2010: 65). China's exports are likely to grow more slowly over the next decade, as demand in rich economies remains subdued but its market share will probably continue to creep up. Projections in the IMF's World Economic Outlook imply that China's exports will account for 12% of world trade by 2014 (IMF World Economic Outlook 2010: 4–5).

The most striking feature of China's exports dominance is the rapid rise of the surpluses in the Chinese foreign trade balance. Those surpluses brought about China's official foreign-exchange reserve assets soaring to more than \$2.5 trillion (including funds transferred to the recently created sovereign wealth fund) as of this writing from a humble \$ 150 billion at the beginning of XXI century. What is more important for the United States is that some two-thirds of it was channeled directly into the US economy, and particularly into Treasury and quasi-official bonds-making China the single largest foreign creditor to the US government. This, in turn, allowed American households to borrow and spend unflinchingly for a full half-decade without having to worry about the impact of sharply rising external deficits on dollar interest rates. China also effectively financed the US consumption and housing boom and eventually the subprime finance bubble (Anderson 2009: 25). In practice China has become one of the largest US creditors and this makes the US – China relations very vulnerable. The growing China's exports dominance increases also hostility both in the US and Europe. Some experts argue that by holding down its currency (undervalued yuan compared to the US dollar) to support exports, China "drains much-needed demand away from a depressed world economy". Therefore countries that are victims of Chinese mercantilism may be right to take protectionist action⁴. However "from Beijing, things look rather different. China's merchandise exports have collapsed from 36% of GDP in 2007 to around 24% last year. China's current-account surplus has fallen from 11% to an estimated 6% of GDP. In 2007 net exports accounted for almost three percentage points of China's CDP growth; last year they were a drag on its growth to the tune of three percentage points. In other words, rather than being a drain on global demand, China helped pull the world economy along during the course of last year"

⁴ Such opinion was recently expressed by Paul Krugman, in the New York Times, quoted according to: Fear of the dragon 2010: 66.

(Fear of the dragon, 2010: 66–67). Whatever interpretation of China's global trade expansion will be adopted it seems that China's rising share in world exports and in the US Treasury and quasi-official bonds cannot be viewed as too serious challenge to the United States as well as to European countries and the world financial system (Gwiazda 2008: 31; see also Roach 2009: 47–48).

The rapid economic growth and global expansion of China cannot also undermine the dominance of the US both in the field of economy. The United States comes out ahead among major powers in terms of per capita income, with 47,000 dollars per inhabitant. It is followed by France and Germany (both in the 44,000 dol. range), Japan (38,000 dol.), Russia (11,000 dol.), China (2,900 dol.) and India (1,300 dol.) (CIA The World Factbook 2009)⁵. It is not clear how China could soon beat the United States in this regards, which has a per capita income that is 5–7 times as large as China's. Also in absolute terms the US GDP was in 2008 worth 14,3 trillion dollars, i.e. three times as much as the world's second-biggest economy, Japan's and only slightly less than the economies of its four nearest competitors combined – Japan, China, Germany and France. It should be noted that the rate growth of China's economy dropped in 2009 by half from a historical high of almost 12 percent in 2007. Moreover China is so export dependent and it devotes only 35 percent of GDP to private consumption, compared with 60 percent in many Western Countries. Therefore China has to rebalance its economy away from the investment and export-led growth model that worked in the last years and toward domestic consumption. Such shift will bring about further decline in the rate of growth of the GDP. But even if we assume that China's economy grows at 7% in, co China's GDP will increase from 3,3 trillion dollars in 2007 to 6,6 trillion dollars in 2015 and to 13,2 trillion in 2025. At the same time, assuming 3,5% annual growth for the United States, US GDP will grow in 2025 to the level of 28 trillion dollars. Thus by that time China will have more than two times lower GDP than the United States (Santoro 2008: 19–20; see also Schmid ed. 2009: 20). In the contemporary world the only challenge to the dominance of the US economy is the European Union with its GDP of 18 trillion dollars. However the not fully integrated 27 states cannot be viewed as a serious strategic unit which may challenge the American hegemony in the next 1 or even 2 decades. As was said earlier that hegemony rests not only on economic but also on military power where the US is the undisputable leader. In 2008, it spent 607 billion dollars on its military, representing almost half of the world's total military spending. The next nine states spent a total of 476 billion dollars and the presumptive challengers to US military supremacy – China, India, Japan and Russia – together devoted only 219 billion to their militaries. The

⁵ There are other estimates of Chinese GPP per capita of 6,0 thousand dollars, which include the undervahred yuan and other factors, see also Bergsten, 2008: 19; Goldstein – Lardy 2008: 23–24.

military budget of China, the country most often “named” as the world’s next superpower, is less than one-seventh of the US defense budget. Even if one includes among potential US adversaries the 27 states of the UE, which together spend 288 billion dollars on defense, the United States still outweighs them all – 607 billion compared to 507 billion dollars (Joffe 2009: 26).

The power of a given state is not just a matter of the value of GDP or growth rates. All prognoses that show China surpassing the United States in 20 or 30 years do not include such sources of power as education and R&D as well as the set of ideas and values shared by all democratic states. Thus the struggle between the US and China in this century will be as much about belief as it is about power. The similar struggle has occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union when the Cold War was at its root a battle of ideas. At that time it has become visible that U.S. ideology was less in need of outside validation than Soviet ideology. The fact is that Chinese leaders have been not able to settle the looming dilemma of growth versus democracy and have emerged as defenders of the “old Westphalian system”, preferring to restore an international order in which national sovereignty is inviolable, whereas the Americans hope to transform political systems through their brand of “liberalization” and “democratization”. The biggest concern for the Chinese, therefore, is not invasion, but that an “American-led world will try to stop them from fulfilling their ambitions and their destiny and that the denial of Chinese ambitions abroad could ultimately their ability to rule at home” (Bergsten 2008: 102). On the other hand China’s rise, both militarily and economically, relies on the maintenance of a favourable international environment. However the lack of transparency regarding its spending and the direction of its military planning in the long run erodes confidence that China has only peaceful intentions.

China’s recent global economic expansion, especially in such regions as Asia, Latin America and Africa can be viewed as a desire to shape the geopolitical environment conducive to the Chinese interest both economic (to secure raw materials and markets) and political. As some experts argue “China wants more than it has”, while “Russia wants back what it lost. Both countries want more, but for themselves, not for all. Driven by selfish purposes, powers such as Russia and China cannot be what the United States was at its best in the twentieth century a state that pursued its own interests by also serving those of others and thus created global demand for the benefits it provided” (Joffe 2009: 31; see also Gwiazda 2009: 117–138). Contrary to Russia and China as well as to other states the United States has a mission in the world. Thus it would be very difficult to imagine Russia, India, China or even the European Union as guarantors of the world order in which all those superpowers could be accountable for action affecting global security and prosperity like the United States was in the last 60 years. The fact is that the United

States remains and will remain for some time yet the “operating system” of the global order, the “Windows” of international politics. It is not certain, however how long that operating system will work or when it will be replaced by another, more effective systems. What seems to be clear is the fact that outright rejection of the existing operating system international community and mass acceptance of a new one may occur at some point, but it would be a costly rejection and would most likely happened only after a long-term process of delegitimation and the arrival on the scene of an attractive alternative.

Longer path to multipolarity

The problem is that for the time being there is no such attractive alternative and the United States still will remain for some time “the default power” which does what other, regional superpower and international organizations cannot or will not do. Some experts doubt whether in today’s world there is “someone” who “would actually live in a world dominated by China, India, Japan, Russia or even Europe, which for all its a enormons appeal cannot take care of its own backyard” (Joffe 2009: 35). Some others experts project the emergence in two decades bipolar international system consisting either of the US and China or the US and the European Union. Much depends, however, on the future more or less unilateral or multilateral US foreign policy and yielding power and influence to other superpowers and international organizations. In order to maintain a leading role in the world the United States should share its military, technological and economic dominance with other states. Instead of being the lonely superpower the United States should take up the role of “honest broker” in the contemporary world (Zakaria 2008: 233). That new role implies, however, that the United States has to define its foreign policy priorities, restablish a belief in multilateralism, adapt a wider range of flexible solutions to many global problems including “the long war” with terrorism and restore its reputation it has lost during the George W. Bush presidency. Perhaps the future developments in the international system as well as president Barack Obama multilateral approach in his foreign policy will promote a new paradigm of the US foreign policy. This doesn’t mean the withdrawal of the United States from the role of the only superpower being able to shape a one-world system that serves its interests and the interests of its allies. As in 2007 Barack Obama said there is need to re-define America’s role in the world rather than escape from it. Referring to the failure of the Iraq war, he recognized that “after thousands of lives lost and billions spent, many Americans may be tempted to turn inward and cede our leadership in world affairs. But this is a mistake we must not make. America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, and the world cannot meet them without America. We can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead

the world, by deed and by example...” In other words “the American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew” (Obama 2007: 3–4; see also Farer 2009: 5–12). Even if there are signs that American primacy will not last forever, so there still is the chance of maintain one-world system under fading US hegemony that will be much more acceptable by other states and international community than a world of competing superpower and political blocs. That last world will certainly be not conducive to “relative” stability and peaceful “competition” of all states and other actors as today world, where American hegemony has been strikingly more benign than the dominance of other states and political blocs in the past. As long as there is no effective global security mechanism for coping with growing threat of extremist religious and political movement and some rouge states, the United States will be destined to play a unique role in the international system for a few decades to come.

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