

USA and Europe in the International System – Four American Perspectives

The end of the Cold War started a search for a new way of describing the international system.¹ Indeed, the term international system became a major focal point for the discussion, since the somewhat dominant neo-realist paradigm seemed to have missed many central issues that pointed to the system collapse of the Soviet Empire. It was obvious that many conceptions of the international system lacked theoretical clarity, and thus had a tendency to overemphasise the importance of the superpowers.² Other ways of thinking about the international system emerged, which gave importance to new dimensions like regions.³

Scholars in the liberal tradition developed an optimistic view of a “New World Order”. Perhaps the best example of this is Francis Fukuyama’s highly contested description of things as the end of history.⁴ Later on, on the same Hegelian track, scholars such as Alexander Wendt went even further and claimed that it is inevitable that a world state will emerge – something that could be described as super-idealism.⁵ No matter what could be said about these theories, their recognition and status in the debate showed that something radical had happened in the study of the international system.

It was also quite clear that the relations between USA and Europe were going through some kind of change. An academic dispute started regarding the status and importance of this process. The debate touched on several issues and dealt with past as well as present. Seen from a power perspective, many scholars considered the impact of the European integration, the nature of the post-WWII policy in Europe and the differences in capabilities, just to mention a few things.⁶

The debate intensified when George W. Bush became president and a “transatlantic rift” was identified.⁷ The aftermath of the events of 9/11 2001 gave more fuel to this discussion. Perhaps the global war on terrorism (GWOT) finally changed the controversy regarding the split, in the sense that it became generally recognised and the desirability of it became a major issue.⁸

The discussion about transatlantic relations had obvious connections with the debate about the international system after the Cold War. Scholars had to identify the system

¹ This essay is loosely based on Chapter VII in the book Christiansson, Magnus, 2004, *Säkerhetspolitisk teori* Stockholm: Military Academy Karlberg. More about the new theories after the Cold War could be found there. Michael Cole of the Military Academy Karlberg read this text and provided corrections and advice.

² The field was called an “underdeveloped conception” by Buzan, Barry & Little, Richard (2000) *International Systems in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p. 24.

³ See for example Buzan, Barry & Waever, Ole (2003) *Regions & Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁴ Fukuyama, Francis (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton).

⁵ Wendt, Alexander (2003) *Why a World State is Inevitable: Teleology and the Logic of Anarchy* (forthcoming).

⁶ See Hultdt, Bo, Rudberg, Sven & Davidson, Elisabeth (ed.) (2001) *The Transatlantic Link* (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College), for an example of this debate.

⁷ An example of this debate could be found in Grant, Charles (2003) *Transatlantic Rift: How to Bring the Two Sides Together* (London: Centre for European Reform).

⁸ For more about GWOT, see Blank, Stephen J. (2003) *Rethinking Asymmetric Threats* (Carlisle: U.S Army War College SSI).

as globalised, unipolar or multipolar, according to the status they gave the USA and the European integration project. But this ambition followed together with a discussion about preferred foreign- and security policy in Washington and Brussels. Thus, the academic debate about these issues has a confusing and potentially fruitful mixture of descriptive and normative theory.

This debate is not only interesting as regards the structure of the international system. It could also be claimed that this is a formative era for the theory field within international relations, and as such it has an interest in itself. The study of the formative debate regarding the international system after the Cold War, and the controversy over US and European power, could prove important for future efforts to build a genealogy within the field.⁹

It is beyond the scope of this essay to give a fully-fledged platform for the ambition to build a genealogy of the theories of the international system after the Cold War.¹⁰ But it could be argued that such an effort would have to start with some sort of categorisation and typology of the different scholars involved. A study of the theories could lead to a more systematic interpretation regarding differences and similarities – including policy recommendations. The purpose of this study is to make a small contribution to this project.

Furthermore, a hypothesis could be that a formative debate would alter and switch known traditions and propositions, since the input from change in the international system is massive. When we compare scholars, we can notice diverging patterns that are contradictory, even if the point of departure may appear similar. We will also find that scholars from different traditions end up with conceptual similarities in the policy dimension. The conceptual historian Melvin Richter expressed similar assumptions in the following way:

“Historians of concepts have now studied in detail how periods of crisis, of accelerated, radical, or revolutionary change, produce fundamental disagreements about the languages of politics and society.”¹¹

The focus of this text is on four internationally known American scholars: Joseph Nye, Samuel Huntington, Charles Kupchan and Robert Kagan. The central areas of concern are the following: position in an international relations scholarly tradition, preferred perspective, model and description of the international system, the position of USA and Europe in such a system and the policy recommendations and

⁹ Ole Waever concluded, in a 4 ½ page long Endnote in his dissertation *Concepts of Security*, that the term “security” actually lacked a genealogy. His point is simply that it is difficult to trace the different uses of the term, from the times when the theoretical field of security studies started to emerge around the time of WWII. In the Preface Waever claims that his efforts during the 1990s “culminate...in finally trying to tackle the problem of the history/genealogy of the concept security”, in Waever, Ole (1997) *Concepts of Security* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen), the Endnote is found on page 64-68.

¹⁰ This could take the form of a *Begriffsgeschichte*. In line with a German tradition, the conceptual analysis should in principal include both semasiology and onomasiology. Semasiology is the study of meanings of a concept. Onomasiology is the study of all terms in a language for the same concept, see Richter, Melvin (1995) *The History of Political and Social Concepts* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 39.

¹¹ Richter (1995), p. 10.

predictions. Each scholar is presented and analysed from one central title, which underlines that the conclusions are highly tentative. The academic orientation could alter, since the period is formative.

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In the book *Bound to Lead* (1990)¹² the Harvard professor Joseph Nye provided an early theory on the international system after the Cold War. Nye's book refers to a great extent to a debate about the superpower status of the USA which was lively during the last years of the Cold War. It was a discussion about the position and strength of the country, and a lot of the text focuses on the term decline.

Nye adds nuances and puts the American decline in perspective. Even though he acknowledges the importance of geopolitics, he remains critical of the theories on hegemonic wars and the hypothesis that distribution of power (in military terms) could be a source for an assessment on stability and conflict.¹³ The description of power needs to be nuanced. The same goes for the terms "hegemony" and "empire". Sometimes scholars prefer economic strength, sometimes military power, in attempts to define hegemony. There are also many problems with measuring power – the British Empire was never number one in the economic and military spheres at the same time. Furthermore, many historical examples show that power has shifted between the great powers without the outbreak of war.

Nye widens the meaning of power. The expression soft power could be used to describe other factors than military, which could have great importance. It refers to the ability to influence on matters that are considered vital in international politics: culture, ideology and institutions. Soft power gives the possibility to influence and get one's own choices accepted by other states.

The possibility to use power will continue to change. Information technology is of great importance in the analysis of the international system. However, Nye reminds us that interdependence is not the same thing as harmony. Mutual dependence can involve imbalances and two parties can value different things from each other: one classic example is the industrial countries' asymmetrical need of the oil producing countries. This could lead to manipulation within interdependency.

This will ultimately make power a more complex and broadened term. Joseph Nye uses the expression 'power diffusion' to describe this. More factors – like transnational actors, nationalism in weak states and the spread of technology – will become important in the analysis of a country's power.

Since power can exist in different forms, it becomes increasingly difficult to use the terms "multipolar" and "bipolar" as a description of the international system. It is possible to describe one international system when the discussion concerns nuclear weapons and a completely different one if focus is on trade and communications. A

¹² The analysis is based on Nye, Joseph S. JR. (1990) *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books).

¹³ Obviously polemic with regards to Gilpin, Robert (1981) *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press).

broader definition of power makes it more difficult to transfer strength from one area to another.

The USA will continue to be a strong power, according to the traditional measurement of power: military strength, economic resources and population. This stems from the fact that no country is nearly as powerful in all aspects (hard as well as soft power) as the USA. The relevant factors include military strength, economic strength, research and science, national cohesion, universal culture and international institutions.

Europe will not become a single actor on the international scene, and China will need considerable time in order to become a global power. Japan is an economic giant without the military capability or will for expansion.

Nye thus concludes that there will not be a multipolar world. No one can challenge the USA. It is highly unlikely that Europe will drop the security guarantee provided by NATO. East Asia does not have the political cohesion to make it a single unit region. It is thus unlikely that the world will be split into three power blocs (USA, Europe and East Asia).

The system closest to Nye's prediction for the future is called polyarchy, which is defined as empires, interdependence and spheres of influences combined in the same system. Power is distributed to a great many actors, both states and transnational actors. But he makes reservation for the fact that polyarchy might not give the whole picture when it comes to state interests.

Nye wants to see both continuity and change in American policy. The USA should have a strong engagement in international institutions, such as the United Nations. Institutions provide more of a long-term perspective and focus in foreign policy. Nye is particularly satisfied with IAEA and NPT¹⁴.

He is against American unilateralism – which means American action independent of other states in the system. However, there are times when unilateralism can be justified: for example to build international institutions. In cases where violence has to be used (for example intervention), the USA should try to stay within the legitimate framework of the system. A successful policy would make the USA the power that upholds interdependency in the international system.

We can conclude that Joseph Nye writes in a classical liberal tradition in emphasising both interdependence and international institutions. The roots of this tradition give him the opportunity to explore different sides of power – and so the central perspective could be labelled power diffusion. This leads him to reject any one-dimensional “polarity”, and instead he describes the emerging international system as polyarchy. The USA is the only country that will stay superior in both hard and soft power, and it will continue to play a leading role. As a consequence, Europe will be dependent. Hence, the preferred American policy could be summarised as international leadership.

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¹⁴ IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency. NPT, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Another Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington, wrote a controversial article at the beginning of the 1990s, which later became a book with the title *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).¹⁵ His highly contested ideas were under discussion during the later part of the decade.

The point of departure is that the world after the Cold War is a multipolar system with 8 civilizations. A civilization is defined by its culture – religion, institutions and customs. There can be several states in a civilization; but they are assumed to have more of a cultural community with each other than with other parts of the world. They are not defined in geographical terms. They can develop and change, but nevertheless have a tendency to be of a lasting character. Huntington perceives the following civilizations: the Sinic, the Japanese, the Hindu, the Islamic, the Orthodox, the Latin American, the Western and the African. Western Europe and the USA both belong to the West.

The political situation within a civilization is rooted in culture. The great disputes and conflicts of the future will not be between social classes, rich and poor or economically defined groups – but between civilizations. Certainly, there is a process of global economic and political integration; but this gives birth to counter reactions. Huntington argues that modernisation is absorbed by civilizations, without ever changing them at their core. States are still the most important actors. However, anarchy exists not between states but between civilizations.

There is no “universal civilization”. Only approximately one percent of the world’s population, called “the Davos culture”, have a common, typically Western way of life. There is no universal language – 90 percent of the world’s population does not understand English. There is no “world religion”.

Huntington is sure about Western decline. Western civilization controls an ever-smaller part of the world’s geographical area and its population is decreasing in relation to other civilizations. The same trend applies to military resources. The West demobilised after the Cold War, something that did not happen to the same degree in the rest of the world.

Western decline makes way for others. The non-western civilizations will connect more and more with their own political and cultural patterns – something called indigenisation. This trend exists in parallel with the fact that religion gains an increased role. Both Islam and the Orthodox Church have strengthened their positions after the Cold War. Furthermore, the non-Christian religions are compatible with a modern society, but not with Western values.

¹⁵ The article “The Clash of Civilizations?” appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in the summer of 1993. Highly criticised, the author came back with a reply in the same magazine, in November/December 1993, called “If Not Civilizations, What? Samuel Huntington Responds to His Critics”. His critics included Robert Bartley and Fouad Ajami. In 1996 he released the book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Thus, the question mark from the original article was dropped. The term “clash of civilization” was taken from an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* from 1990 called “The Roots of Muslim Rage” by Bernard Lewis. The summary of Huntington is made from Huntington, Samuel P. (2002) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster).

The wars in the Balkans during the 1990s showed that there was a tendency for outsiders to support a party that belonged to their own civilization. Germany supported Croatia, Russia protected the Serbs, and Muslim countries were on the Bosnian side. Huntington compares the Balkan wars with the Spanish Civil War – the conflict in Spain was about ideology, whereas the wars in the Balkans involved civilizations.

This all leads to the conclusion that the most important divisions in world politics will be defined by religion, ethnicity and civilization. The central question during the Cold War was which superpower bloc to belong to. After the Cold War, the fundamental question is: who are we? The answer to this question of identity will define pacts and alliances.

A civilization consists normally of a core state, which is the foundation for the culture of the civilization. China, India and Russia are all examples of core states. The West is special, since it has several core states. Islam is different because it lacks one.

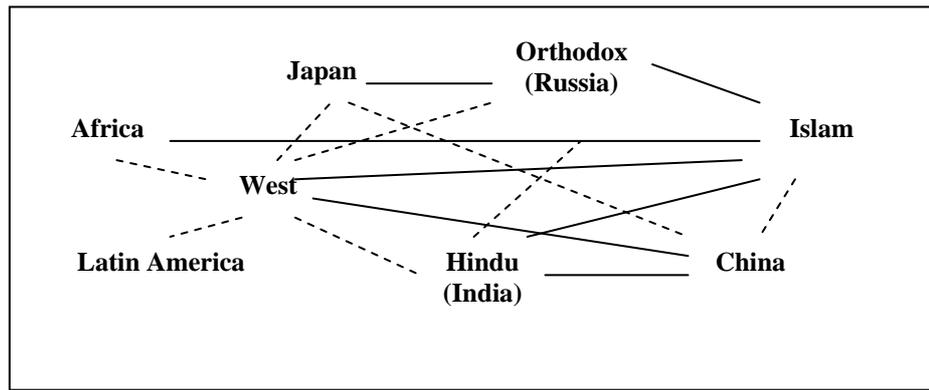
A member state is defined by its identification with the civilization – like Italy and Egypt. There are also lone countries without connections to other cultures, like Haiti and Japan. A cleft country, like Malaysia and Sri Lanka, is split between different civilizations and has difficulty remaining united. A torn country tries to change its identity and civilization. Russia, Mexico and Turkey have all tried to become Western. Australia has tried to become a part of Asia. No torn country has ever succeeded in switching civilization.

The main clash between civilizations comprises the West against Islam and China. There are three main reasons for this: proliferation of weapons, democracy and human rights, and refugees and immigrants. China has provided Iran, Iraq and Pakistan with weapons. The Chinese help also included important missile and nuclear technology – North Korea has a nuclear programme. This is all in conflict with the Western interest in limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Democracy has been actively promoted by the West, but in Islam and Asia it has had difficulties becoming established. The West also has had an increased fear of immigration – from Muslim countries, and in the American case, from Mexico. This has led to a more restrictive immigration policy in Western societies.

The fundamental conflict between the West and Islam has deep historical roots. Huntington underscores that this is not a confrontation between extreme fundamentalists and the USA, but rather a deeper cleavage between two civilizations that regard each other's cultures as unacceptable.

Huntington's analysis of the civilizations and their core states puts emphasis on the confrontation of the West versus Islam and China. But he also predicts more co-operative relationships with Africa and Latin America. New forms of "anti-western" co-operation may develop between Islam, China and Russia.

The following illustration shows Huntington's international system:



————— = More conflictual
 - - - - - = Less conflictual

Since the West is declining, its leaders must realise that their civilization cannot play a dominant role. There is nevertheless something uniquely Western to preserve, and to do this there must be more economic, political and military co-operation within the Western civilization. The most dangerous situations appear, according to Huntington, when the West tries to get involved in other civilizations conflicts – since it does not have the power to handle them.

The UN Security Council should be reformed according to the dividing lines between civilizations. Furthermore the different civilizations must accept each other and discover common interests. Therefore, universalism must be rejected, diversity accepted and commonalities discovered. Tolerance is a key word in this respect.

Samuel Huntington represents a different kind of realism. The term power has been overshadowed by culture. As we have seen, Huntington recognises many of the basic realist propositions, such as power politics, anarchy and balance of power. The major difference is that he finds identity and culture as the fundamental driving force in international politics after the Cold War. The international system is thus an anarchy of civilizations. Based on the status of civilizations, he concludes that the West will have to back down from its position of dominance in the system. This includes both USA and Europe. The preferred policy could then be labelled Western co-ordination.

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Charles Kupchan provides an analysis that focuses on the USA. He is a professor at Georgetown University and his thoughts on the international system are presented in the book *The End of the American Era* (2002).¹⁶

The point of departure is historical. Kupchan argues that history can be used as an instrument, to enable us to learn something about the world today. He looks for long-term structures and trends. By looking back, the future could be predicted. There are many flashbacks in his book: the British Empire, the Cold War, the Great Depression of the 1930s, the unification of Germany during the 19th Century, the split of the Roman Empire, the early history of the USA and the Vienna Congress in 1815 – they

¹⁶ Kupchan, Charles A. (2002) *The End of the American Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf).

are all used to confirm and explain his theory. The most important point can be summed up by the book title – American dominance will end.

The USA has been able to enjoy unprecedented power in international politics since the end of the Cold War. The system became unipolar after the Soviet Union disappeared as a strategic competitor. Some of the phenomena associated with the end of the Cold War – democratisation and globalisation – have in practice been Americanisation. Kupchan regards this as a spillover from unipolarity. This is also the case when it comes to humanitarian intervention in the global arena.

Kupchan underscores that interdependence does not stop competition between states. A major crisis could spread very fast due to mutual dependence. The peaceful effect of democratisation is something he dismisses. Democracies, of course, do not attack each other, but they are always threatened by nationalism, which could tear them apart. Furthermore, the international system as such has a countering effect, even if more and more states become democratic. While individual states can be democratised the international system cannot.

Charles Kupchan is a realist in the sense that power and the distribution of power are the two most important factors in international politics. He argues that the Cold War was just one historical era among many. The end of that era, however, will not mean a return to the classic power struggle that Europe experienced during the 19th Century, since several of the features of the system have changed.

Kupchan identifies the creation of three regional blocs in the world – the USA, Europe and Southeast Asia. There is a clear trend that Europe will start competing with the other two. When the EU has expanded to include the new member states, its strength will make it a strategic competitor of the USA.

American foreign policy has historically been influenced by two traditions – one active and one passive. The policy that dominated for a long period was isolationism. This was a clear expression of the Monroe Doctrine, which, for example, dragged the country into WWI only against its will and interest. This policy has historically been a result of a situation of balance between different interests within the country. President Roosevelt succeeded in breaking the isolationist tradition with a skilful policy that took into account the different internal conditions within the country in order to be able to be active in the global arena.

The strong and increased involvement after the fall of the Berlin wall (in the Balkans, Somalia and Iraq) is regarded as a short-lived exception. The development after 9/11 2001 could mean that the USA will withdraw from global affairs. A reason for this is that interests within the country diverge – the East Coast is activist, while both the South and the mountain states in the West are more passive. Kupchan thus argues that the USA will be more and more reluctant to become engaged in international conflict.

Kupchan wants to see a change in American foreign policy. He is a supporter of something that is reminiscent of Roosevelt's policy from the inter-war period – something he calls new internationalism. The policy should be a balance between realism and liberalism, where the ideal is to reach feasible minimal goals rather than impossible maximum ones.

The USA must prepare for a strategic withdrawal. An important term in connection with this is strategic restraint. Kupchan regards this restraint as a way of handling the emerging multipolar system. A declining power must abstain from only pursuing its own interests. The policy should make way for other powers, in order to avoid confrontation. Otherwise, the USA might have to withdraw without being able to influence the new order. A way of acting with strategic restraint is to make one's goodwill known to the emerging powers in the new strategic situation. The USA has a unique chance to prepare for its strategic withdrawal.

Further, he argues for a greater influence from international institutions. They are important instruments to channel the American strategic withdrawal. The country will be progressively more dependent on them as the world becomes more multipolar. Kupchan imagines the EU, USA, Russia, China and Japan meeting on a regular basis in a directorate (without the right of veto), where strategic issues will be discussed.

Furthermore, Kupchan links his thoughts to an even greater theory on historical change. History is about progress, but it moves forward in cycles. The driving force is the mode of production and its development. The states in the world will rise and fall in historical epochs; which has been the case since the dawn of mankind. At present, a digital era is emerging.

Charles Kupchan writes in a modified realist tradition. He is convinced that power is a central theme in international relations, but his preferred perspective is historical. After analysing the factors that are central to the distribution of power, he argues that the USA will lose its place as the dominant party in the system. There will be a shift towards multipolarity. This leads him to argue that American policy should focus on strategic restraint, in order to accommodate change in the system.

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Robert Kagan gives a completely different analysis of the future for the USA. He is associated with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and his book *Paradise and Power* (2003)¹⁷ has had a tremendous impact on the international debate, not least in Europe.

According to Kagan, the differences between USA and Europe are so massive that they belong to two different worlds. It is with this division in mind that the title of the book should be understood. Kagan argues that the Europeans and Americans no longer share a strategic culture. Americans can, in contrast to the Europeans, divide the world more easily into good and evil, friends and enemies. There is a tendency to use force in international politics and focus on results in foreign policy. Europeans, in contrast to Americans, tend to approach things with patience and subtlety. In European policy, diplomacy, negotiation and dialogue play an important role. These differences lead to the fact that Europe and USA do not understand each other anymore.

¹⁷ Kagan published an article as early as June 2002 called "Power and Weakness" in the magazine Policy Review. In 2003 the book *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* was published at Alfred A. Knopf. In this essay, Kagan's references are from Kagan, Robert (2003) *Paradise & Power* (London: Atlantic Books).

This is not a static relationship. The traditional situation in Europe, up until at least WWI, was characterised by power struggle and war. The nation states on the continent were created in a violent environment and both Napoleon and the British Empire expanded through violent means.

The USA was from the beginning the great hope for classical liberal ideas, with her roots in the Enlightenment. The country became an advocate for trade and international law during the 18th and 19th Centuries, and it had as its guiding principle the avoidance of conflict on the European continent. Kagan interprets this as a result of the fact that the USA was not a strong power in the international system.

Europe started to lose power after WWI. The conflict saw the end of three of its five great powers (Wilhelmine Germany, Austro-Hungary and Tsarist Russia). The policy during the period up until WWII was influenced by a belief in collective security and the League of Nations. When Germany grew stronger under Hitler, western powers like Great Britain and France countered with appeasement. Kagan interprets the appeasement as a consequence of weakness and lack of capacity. This weakness was even more marked after WWII when the European powers did not have the capacity to retain their colonies in Africa and Asia, and they were dependent on US presence on their own continent.

Therefore, it is not surprising that weakness prevailed after the end of the Cold War. The Balkan wars showed that Europe could not manage its own conflicts and that there was a capability gap compared with the USA. During the 1990s the Europeans became aware of the problems, but despite this, the division of labour still resulted in the Americans cooking the dinner and the Europeans taking care of the dishes. According to Kagan, this all has its natural roots in the Cold War.

However, Europeans have been reluctant to increase their strategic capabilities. During the 1990s most countries cut their defence budgets, while economic growth was relatively limited. In contrast, the USA adopted a more active policy after the Cold War. This started already in the late 1980s with the intervention in Panama and, later, the first Iraq war and operations in Somalia and Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo. Kagan underscores that this trend has lived through both a Democrat and Republican in the White House.

Differences in capabilities give rise to differences in psychological approach to conflicts. The biggest problem in US-European relations after the Cold War has been the variance in threat assessments. One example is the Bush administration's focus on rogue states, while the EU concentrates on weak and failed states.

Kagan even suggests that weakness can lead to a denial of significant risks. Many of the rogue states that attract US attention are also threats to European states. Europeans tend to see "challenges" where Americans see "threats". This explains why there cannot be a common strategic culture, and why there is a tendency to disagree about the means in the war against terrorism.

One of Kagan's major points is that the liberal order in Europe is possible thanks to the USA. The fact that Germany could be integrated into the democratic order with

Western Europe was ultimately because the country was crushed under American leadership. Germany had to be destroyed in order to unite Europe in the form of the EU. It was the Americans who created the setting for European integration. Without American presence on the continent after WWII integration would never have come about. In other words: paradise is not possible without power.

Kagan argues that the USA will still be a strong and dominant power. He therefore sees the period after the end of the Cold War as the start of a long period of American hegemony. The policy developed by George W. Bush after 9/11 2001 is not something new. And since the country is likely to continue to be a strong power, its strategic culture will remain separate from the European.

Robert Kagan writes in a realist tradition. The power perspective (its efficiency, morality and desirability) is at the core of his theory. In the relationship between power and psychology, he argues that the USA will be a dominant and active power in the system. Europe is likely to be weak and passive. Thus, he predicts an American policy coloured by the beginning of a long American hegemony.

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A summary of the four scholars is shown below:

	Nye (1990)	Huntington (1993-2002)	Kupchan (2002)	Kagan (2002-2003)
Tradition	Liberalism	Realism	Realism	Realism
Perspective	Power Diffusion	Culture	History	Psychology
The system	Polyarchy	Civilizations	Multipolar	Unipolar
Position of USA	Leading	Declining	Great Power	Hegemon
Position of Europe	Dependent	Declining	Great Power	Weak power
Policy	International leadership	Western co-ordination	New internationalism	American hegemony

The labels and the categories can hardly be described as controversial. However, at least two conclusions could be questioned. One is the categorisation of Kagan's system as "unipolar". In fact, since *Paradise and Power* only describes parts of the international system, much of that system has been induced from the text as a whole. In the context of *Paradise and Power*, "unipolar" means that no power will be capable of challenging the USA. This makes his description of the situation as hegemony understandable.

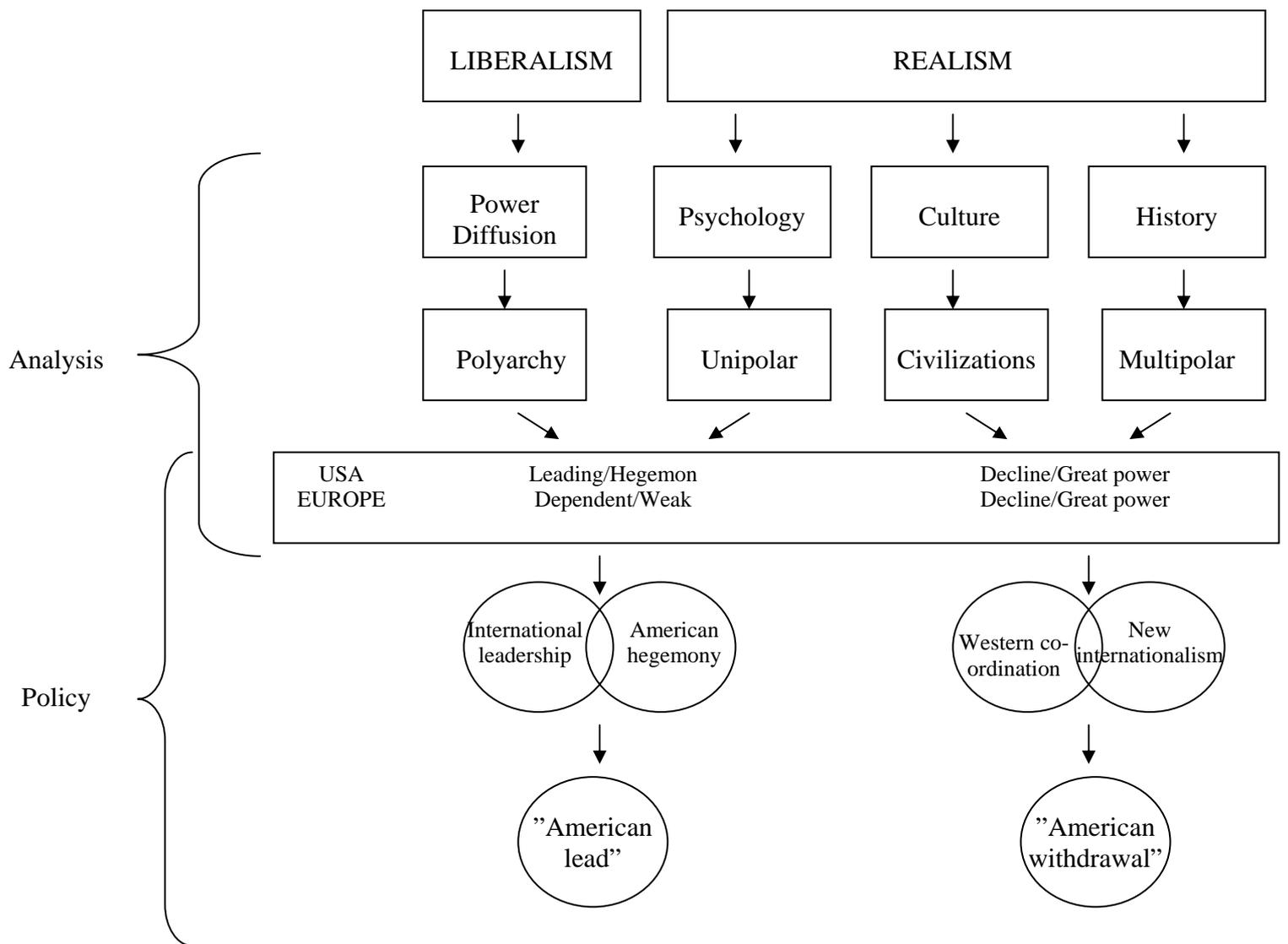
The other question mark regards Kupchan's description of the system. One could argue that "tripolar" would be a better description, since he thinks USA, Europe and Southeast Asia will become the new major powers. This interpretation is of course

possible. However, this could be misleading, because the term “tripolar” could be too associated with Henry Kissinger and his “triangulation”¹⁸, and because Kupchan does not reserve any great power role in Asia for China alone. The term “multipolar”, in this context, could then be described as “a system with more than two poles”.

We can note, in the table above, that there is a top down logic, which is hardly evident at all in the side-to-side dimension. Is what we see a marked transformation of realism? There could be room for different interpretations within a tradition, but it could prove devoid of meaning if too many arrows point in different directions. The Cold War stereotype debate between idealists/pluralists/Wilsonians versus neo-realists/strategic realists/classical realists is not evident. As we can see, leading scholars from the same tradition come to fundamentally different conclusions when it comes to the analysis of the position of the USA and Europe.

The analysis of the positions is vital, since it forms a bridge between the basic conceptions of the international system (tradition and perspective) and political activity (policy). If we display this bridge and link it with the other two components, so that it is structured by the assessments closest to each other, we get the following picture:

¹⁸ Consult Kissinger, Henry (1994) *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster), p. 703-732, for a closer discussion.



Nye comes to the conclusion that the USA will lead within the system, since it is the only country superior in hard and soft power. Kagan concludes that the USA will take the leading role within a hegemony, due to its outstanding power status. They both regard Europe as weaker and dependent.

Hence, there exists an interesting similarity in the policy dimension. A fundamental parallel concerns the central position of the USA in the international system. Remember the name of Nye's book – America is *bound* to lead. Within the framework of this study, this means the completion of a full circle: the common ground between the liberal scholar and the rock hard (supposedly) Neo Con.

Huntington and Kupchan share many fundamental conceptions about international politics in general. Even if there is a marked difference in the description of the international system (civilizations versus regional blocs) they both come closer on the Policy Bridge. This may seem surprising, but "decline" and "great power" actually remind one a great deal of the similarities in the labels "half empty"/"half full". They share the position that USA and Europe will be one of several centres in the system – even if they do not agree why this will be.

Thus, the preferred policies have many similarities. Since both believe that the USA does not qualify as a superior power, they both argue for strategic restraint or a policy co-ordinated with friends, in order to defend American interests. The major difference exists in the perception of Europe – Huntington makes it a part of the West, whereas Kupchan makes it a competitor of the USA.

It is then possible to create two major policy dimensions with reference to the four American scholars we studied. One could be labelled “American lead”, because it is based on the conviction that the USA has a special and noticeable place in the international system. The other could be named “American withdrawal”, since it stems from the conclusion that the USA will not have a special power position in the international system.

There are, of course, different preferences regarding the tools available for the implementation of foreign policy. They definitely give a distinct character to the scholars under study. However, it is nevertheless possible to argue that there is a greater difference in principle between the dimensions “American lead” and “American withdrawal”. This could in fact be the basis for further studies, grounded on the assumption that the formative debate on the international system after the Cold War can actually shake the traditional positions within established traditions such as realism and liberalism.

A further development could perceive the creation of theories of the international system as historical events. This means that international relations theory could be studied historically, and that the use of concepts like civilizations and polyarchy represents intellectual history in the making. Consequently, the relationship between concept and context comes to the centre of the stage. This could provide further possibilities to compare theoretical changes in the discipline over time.

Other studies have indicated that the concept ‘international system’ became a part of the International Relations discipline after WWII, with the aim of creating a more distinct identity. Thus, the American scholars associated with the establishment of the discipline in the US – such as Kaplan, Singer and Waltz – were also preoccupied with the concept. This process went hand in hand with the political situation of the Cold War, as well as a development of a more “scientific” approach.¹⁹

An interesting hypothesis could be that the end of the Cold War could present scope for a major change of the entire research field on International Relations, making it a “meta-discipline, colonizing the macro-side of the other social sciences.”²⁰ In this study we see several traces of this: Huntington draws upon the concept of civilization associated with historians and anthropologists, Nye, Kupchan and Kagan all use history in their theory. These are indications that the concept of an international system has left the “scientific” sphere.

¹⁹ Buzan & Little (2000), p. 25-27. They conclude that: “There is little doubt that the status of American IR as an independent discipline was fostered by the onset of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as a superpower.”

²⁰ Buzan & Little (2000), p. 28.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to make any deeper study of the scholars in a context. But the major point is of course that such studies can contribute with knowledge of how the theories on the international system can be understood in a time of major change in international politics, and that this could be a part of a genealogy. Such studies could be the initiation of a research field in its own right.

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