

Seminar in US Foreign Policy  
(USFP)  
American Empire, American Primacy  
in World Affairs

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# Future Challenges to USFP

## Where Do We Go From Here?

- Disagreements about the goals and strategies of American foreign policy for 21<sup>st</sup> century
- An ever changing foreign policy agenda
  - Cold War => Post CW => Bush Doctrine => Obama Doctrine?
- Unilateral versus Multilateral FP approaches\*
  - \* Keep in mind how each is different?
  - Examples of this in practice to consider?

# Long US History of FP as “Special” Monroe Doctrine (1823)

“The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America.... we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”

# Beyond Division: The Recurring Frames of USFP Rhetoric

- A. American Exceptionalism: Are we different from all the other countries?
  1. “City on a Hill” as an image: New England as a Puritan model to Christianity (1630)
  2. Washington’s Farewell Address: Avoid entanglement with the corrupt Old World
  3. Monroe Doctrine: Different systems
  4. Used by both sides of the political aisle to support or oppose expansion

# The Failure of Idealism & Liberalism: Wilson's Fourteen Points Speech

“What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life...”

- Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points:
  - “I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at....
  - II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas....
  - III. The removal....of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations....
  - IV. .... national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety....
  - XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under ....mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”

# Let's Summarize USFP & its Rhetoric

1. America is exceptional: Light unto the world
2. America is not aggressive: Slow to anger
3. America is selfless: Seeks only the best for others
4. America is...what? Well, are we?

How do we approach our FP? Is the US operating in an era of Primacy & Empire?

# Unilateralism vs. Multilateralism

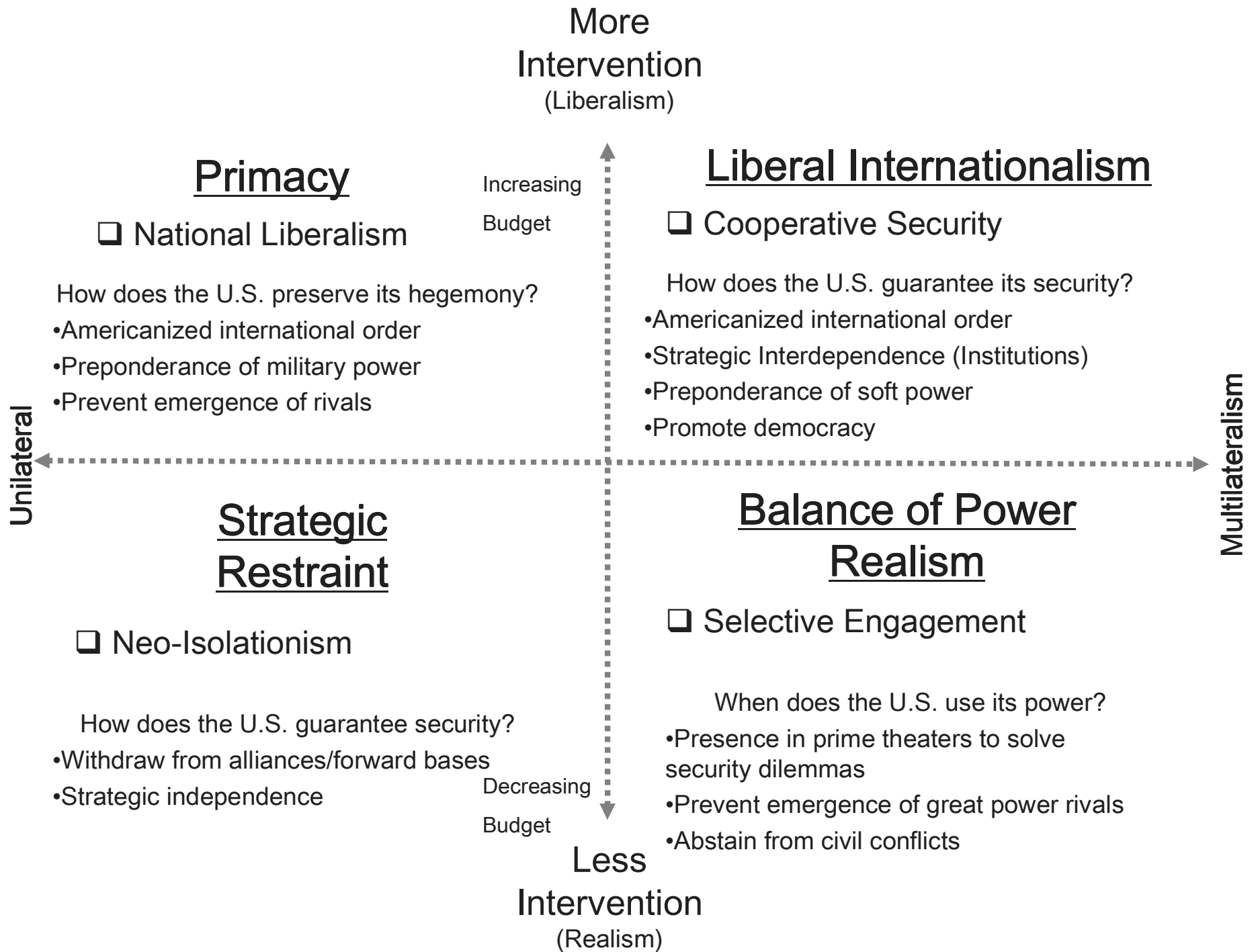
## Unilateralism:

The tendency of the US to act alone in foreign affairs without consulting other countries.

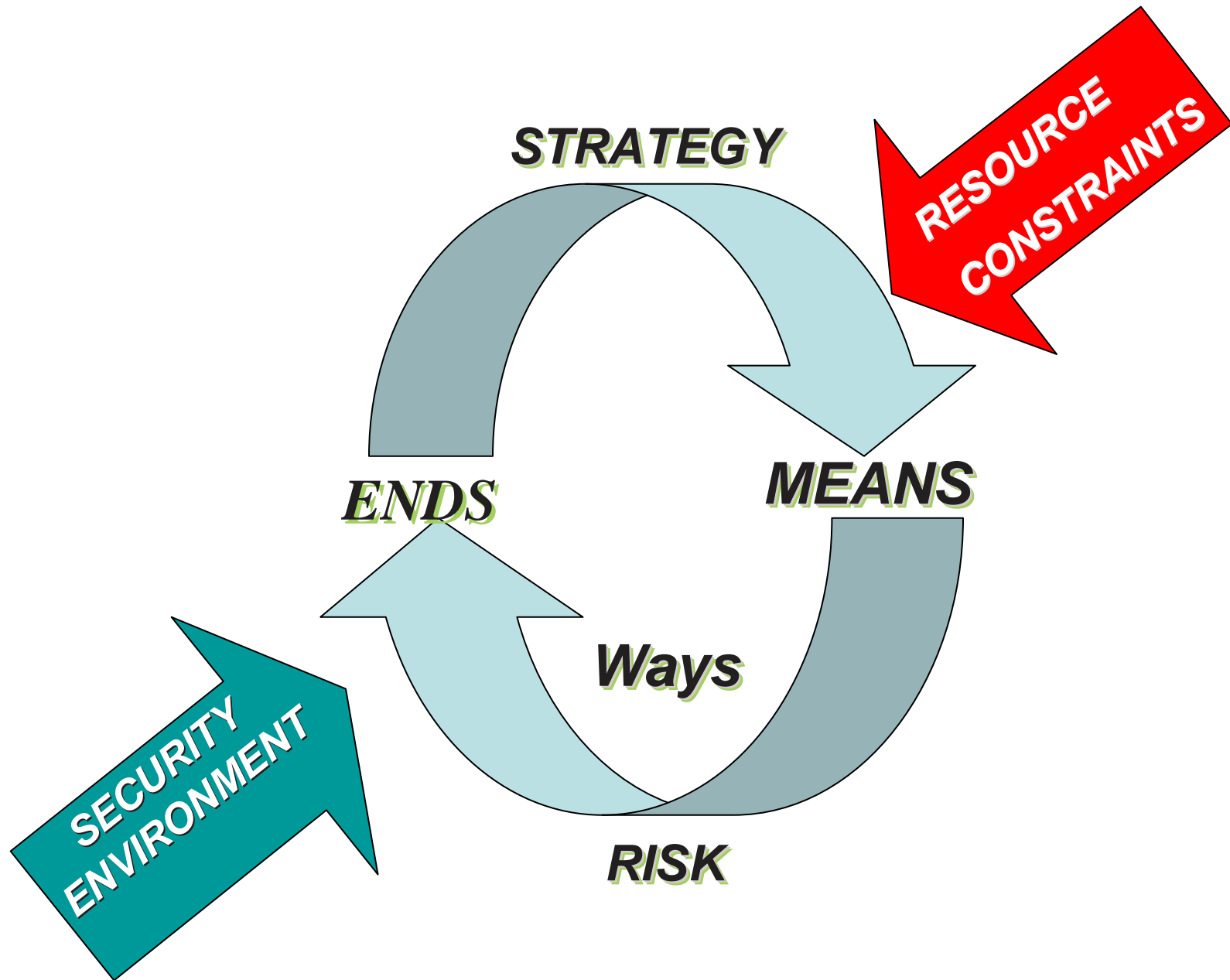
## Multilateralism:

Three or more Nations cooperate together to solve some common foreign policy problem

Particular approach selected will depend on the major FP problems the US will face during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century







# Identifying Ends of Grand Strategy

- Enduring National Interests
  - Ensure the security of the state and its people
  - Establish a stable and secure region
- Democratic National Interests
  - Promote the prosperity of the people
  - Encourage human security
  - Advance democratic institutions
- Product of Nat'l Decision-makers' Interests
  - Examples might include guarantees of environmental security
  - Democracy promotion
  - Establish free trade zones

# Intensity of Interests - Degrees

- “Vital”
  - If unfulfilled, will have immediate consequences for core interests
- “Important”
  - If unfulfilled, will result in damage that will eventually affect core national interests
- “Peripheral”
  - If unfilled, will result in damage that is unlikely to affect core national interests

# Potential Problems in US Foreign Policy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## The US faces complex problems in:

- Nuclear proliferation (North Korea & Iran)
- Military interventions (The Middle East & exiting Iraq)
- Economic policy (Trade imbalance w/China & ME Oil prices)
- Globalization (Global interdependence & domestic impact)
- “Inter-mestic” issues (Foreign Policy impact at home)
- Human rights (American ideals vs. US National interests)
- Homeland Security (Balancing security with liberties)
- The unknown threat (Future “9/11s”?)
- So where is US power today?

# US Power Today

(Paul Kennedy) “Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing. I have returned to all of the comparative defense spending and military personnel statistics over the past 500 years that I compiled in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and no other nation comes close. The Pax Britannica was run on the cheap, Britain's army was much smaller than European armies, and even the Royal Navy was equal only to the next two navies—right now all the other navies in the world combined could not dent American maritime supremacy.

Charlemagne's empire was merely Western European in its reach. The Roman empire stretched farther afield, but there was another great empire in Persia, and a larger one in China. There is, therefore, no comparison.”

The U. S. Position in the current World order is best understood as one of *primacy*. The United States is not a global hegemon, because it cannot physically control the entire globe and thus cannot compel other states to do whatever it wants... Nonetheless, the United States is also something more than “first among equals” ...If *primacy* is defined as being “first in order, importance or authority” or holding “first or chief place”, then it is an apt description of America's current position.” (Stephen M. Walt)

“Great Powers, as the words suggest, are the most influential states in the international system at any one time” (Martin Griffiths, Terry O’ Callaghan)

“We proposing the following definitional criteria for a three-tiered scheme: *superpowers* and the *great powers* at the system level, and *regional powers* at the regional level” –From Buzan, Barry

*Superpowers* – The criteria for superpower status are demanding that they require broad- spectrum capabilities exercised across the whole international system. Superpowers must possess first- class military – political capabilities (as measured by the standards of the day), and the economies to support such capabilities...

Empires, more than nation- states, are the principal actors in the history of world events. Much of what we call history consists of the deeds of the 50 to 70 empires that once ruled multiple peoples across large chunks of the globe. Officially, there are no empires now, only 190- plus nation- states. Yet the ghosts of empires past continue to stalk the Earth.

# Is the US an Empire Today?

“Empire is the rule exercised by one nation over others both to regulate their external behavior and to ensure minimally acceptable forms of internal behavior within the subordinate states. Merely powerful states do the former, but not the latter.” - Stephen P. Rosen

AN EMPIRE is a multinational or multiethnic state that extends its influence through formal and informal control of other polities.

The Indian writer Nirad Chaudhuri put it well: "There is no empire without a conglomeration of linguistically, racially, and culturally different nationalities and the hegemony of one of them over the rest. The heterogeneity and the domination are of the very essence of imperial relations. An empire is hierarchical. There may be in it, and has been, full or partial freedom for individuals or groups to rise from one level to another; but this has not modified the stepped and stratified structure of the organization." - Eliot A. Cohen

Americans, in short, don't "do" empire; they do "leadership" instead, or, in more academic parlance, "hegemony."

According to S. Ryan Johansson, the word "hegemony" was used originally to describe the relationship of Athens to the other Greek city-states that joined it in an alliance against the Persian Empire. "Hegemony" in this case "mean[t] that [Athens] organized and directed their combined efforts without securing permanent political power over the other[s]."

By contrast, according to the "world-system theory" of Immanuel Wallerstein, "hegemony" means more than mere leadership but less than outright empire. A hegemonic power is "a state ... able to impose its set of rules on the interstate system, and thereby create temporarily a new political order." The hegemon also offers "certain extra advantages for enterprises located within it or protected by it, advantages not accorded by the 'market' but obtained through political pressure."



The exercise of coercive power becomes:

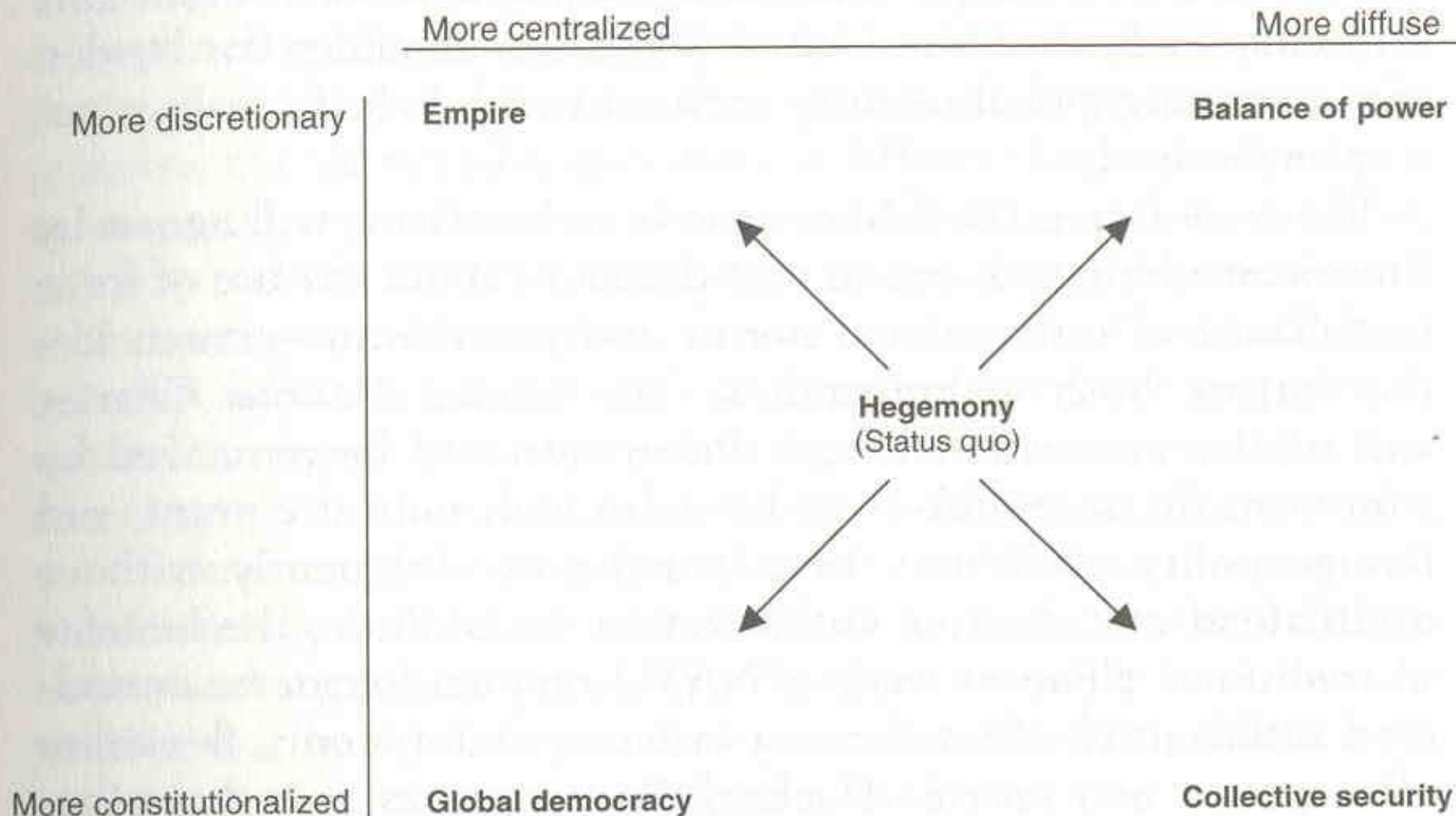


Figure 1.1 Coercive power and global orders

# US Empire: Hegemon or Not?

Yet another, narrower definition is offered by Geoffrey Pigman:

Pigman describes a hegemon's principal function as underwriting a liberal international trading system that is beneficial to the hegemon but, paradoxically, even more beneficial to its potential rivals.

Pigman traces this now widely used definition of the word back to the economic historian Charles Kindleberger's seminal work on the interwar economy, which describes a kind of "hegemonic interregnum."

After 1918, Kindleberger suggested, the United Kingdom was too weakened by war to remain an effective hegemon, but the United States was still too inhibited by protectionism and isolationism to take over the role.

This idea, which became known, somewhat inelegantly, as "hegemonic stability theory," was later applied to the post-1945 period by authors such as Arthur Stein, Susan Strange, Henry Nau, and Joseph Nye.

# The US: Filling the Void?

- “By virtually any measure, the United States enjoys an asymmetry of power unseen since the emergence of the modern states system. Some leading powers in the past had gained an advantage in one dimension or another – for example, in 1850 Great Britain controlled about 70 percent of Europe’s Wealth, while the number two power, France, controlled only 16 percent – but the United States is the only Great Power in modern history to establish a clear lead in virtually every important dimension of power...

# Challenges of the Post–Cold War Era

- Major debate continues:
  - What should the US role be in the post-Cold War era?
- Disagreements over Goals & Strategies & Change:
  - Terror strike of 9/11/2001 changed everything
  - Debate now centers on strategy to prevent 2nd attack
  - Preventive War & pre-emptive strikes (Bush Doctrine)
    - (Containment strategy no longer viable option)- why?
    - Soviet Union no longer exists & suicide bombers can't be logically deterred
  - Homeland Security & Defense at what expense?
    - What's at stake: Cost in \$\$\$ & Freedoms

# USFP Primacy: Cultural & Ideological Impacts

- Another key advantage for the United States is its ability to shape the preferences of others – to make them want what America wants – through the inherent attractiveness of U. S. culture, ideology and institutions.
- The “soft power” is remains hard to define or measure, but there is a little doubt that the United States casts a long cultural and ideological shadow over the rest of the world.
- English as a “lingua franca”
- American University system as a potent mechanism for socializing foreign elites
- Other social avenues (media, computers, social networks, etc.) which serve as a mechanism of spreading ideas & impacts.