US and British Foreign Policy from One Regime Change to Another
Written by Stephen Chan

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It is a favourite prophetic image for many Christian sects with an apocalyptic vision – in which the international systems of man are finally destroyed by the rock of Heaven, which then fills the earth with its magnificence and durable holiness. There is almost an exact parallel between this vision and that of ISIS – the Christian version being articulated most visually in the book of Daniel (2:31-35). There, the Babylonian king dreams of a great statue, made from various metals, the head being made of the most valuable metal and the torso becoming progressively less valuable until, finally, the feet are an uneasy amalgam of iron and clay. It is these feet with their clay fault-lines that the rock of Heaven strikes, and the entire history of human empires and world orders collapses into dust. The prophet Daniel interprets the dream for the king, but his interpretation is taken further forwards by the apocalyptic sects of today. Not all are agreed as to the identity of the feet, but one view suggests that the golden head is the Babylonian world order; the silver chest represents the Persian world order; the bronze loins the Greek world order; the iron legs the Roman; and the weak mixture that makes up the feet the Anglo-American world order. It is a peculiarly Judeo-Christian and Western-centric historical line – with no mention of a Mongol world order, an Islamic world order, a Chinese empire, a Russian empire or an Ottoman empire. And there is a long gap between the fall of Rome and the advent of the British empire and Britain's different forms of relationship with the US – beginning as colonial master and ending in the present day as dependent courtier. Even so, the image of an uneasy alliance – iron and clay – an unsteady one, reflects a contemporary reality. And it is not just ISIS that imagines it could be the rock of Heaven; China and a resurgent Russia may have occasional inclinations to be such a rock. The European Union (EU) probably already feels that it, and not Britain, constitutes the clay seeking to bind itself to the US.

In many ways, the US was a long work in creation. Its revolution of 1776 only allowed for a Presidency of the sort with which we are now familiar in 1789; and it was only in that year that a Bill of Rights was adopted or, rather, 12 of 39 proposed rights. In 1992, there was still one of the original rights outstanding. This was to do with congressional apportionment – a means of determining the size of the House of Representatives. Voting in what now declares itself the epitome of democracy was likewise far from universal, with various portions of the population excluded from the franchise right up to the 1960s. The original 'democracy' was suffrage for white adult males. It was not universal even within this group, as a small number of residual property requirements persisted until 1850, and some such requirements lingered until 1966. Black people had to wait until 1870 and the civil war that followed. Women had to wait till 1920, and native Americans until 1924. The inhabitants of the District of Columbia could not vote in Presidential elections until 1961. Apart from the franchise, full political rights in many parts of the US were denied black people until the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and race remains a great divider in the country today. The McCarthy anti-Communist witch-hunts of the 1950s denied civil liberties to many white people too.

If domestic politics were slow in their development of the received image of the US, foreign policy was also a slow act

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of creation. Despite its declaration of independence, the fledgling US still had to navigate diplomatic obstacles placed in its path by Britain. Many European powers were reluctant to grant recognition. France, because of its antipathy to Britain, but also because French officers such as Lafayette served alongside the US anti-colonial forces, granted recognition in 1777. This was followed by a formal military alliance in 1778. But, with echoes of Queen Elizabeth I, who had been faced with huge diplomatic and political antagonism from Catholic Spain, and who then received the Moroccan ambassador at her court, it was Morocco who became the first state after France to offer recognition in 1778. The offer came with a literal price. In effect, it was an extortion. If the US paid Morocco a certain sum, Morocco would both recognise the US and ensure its corsairs and pirates did not attack US shipping.

The relationship between a formal state and pirate fleets, willing to sell their services to a parent state, was then common. The Chinese emperor engaged pirate admirals as mercenary officers to defeat the Dutch in Formosa (today's Taiwan), and probably to keep the kingdom of Okinawa a Chinese as opposed to Japanese vassal. Andrew Jackson himself employed the military help of pirate captain Jean Lafitte in the defence of New Orleans in the renewed hostilities with the British in 1812.

For the remainder of the 1700s, however, the US – while slowly receiving diplomatic recognitions – was paying ransoms or negotiating ransoms with North African states to restrain their pirate fleets. Finally, by 1800, it all became too much when the Tripolitan government (in what is now Libya) raised its asking price. Very much as a precaution against what were called the 'Barbary pirates' of Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli and Tunis, the US had begun building six frigates in 1794. It was the birth of the US navy. In 1800 it blockaded Tripoli. By this time Tripoli had declared war against the US and, in 1802, Morocco followed suit. In 1803, the US sent forces that landed in Tripoli, the first such military incursion by the US on the other side of the Atlantic and, in 1805, the US finalised plans for regime change in Tripoli and an army of US marines and mercenaries landed near the city. Last minute diplomacy averted regime change – but a new stage had been set, in which US forces and military technology entered the wider world.

But that wider world for the most part was the American land mass in the 1800s, as the US increased its geographical size by either war or economic agreements with other states. A lot of this concerned Latin America – and the international image of the 'brash yankee' was born. In fact the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 deliberately warned off European powers from interventionist foreign policies in Latin America. The region was now a US zone of security, and effectively a sphere of influence. The first century of US diplomacy was to do with expansion and consolidation in terms of land. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase (from France) doubled the size of the US (Louisiana having different borders then); Spain ceded Florida in 1819; Texas was annexed in 1845, and the role of US militias – of the sort involving Davy Crocket at the Alamo – was a feature of an occupation and seizure; the end of the war with Mexico in 1848 brought California, Arizona and New Mexico into the US; Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867; it annexed Hawaii in 1898; and victory in the war with Spain in 1898 brought vast influence over the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Guantanamo Bay came under US jurisdiction in 1903.

The US was not averse to using unofficial militias. Blackwater had predecessors. Theodore Roosevelt's 'Rough Riders', in the days before he became President, storming across Cuba in 1898, were reported in the US as heroic and swashbuckling. It certainly made Roosevelt's reputation as a man of action. It is fair to say that the US took quite some time to settle into being a Westphalian state, observing the limits of action against other Westphalian states. One might think that this sense of elbowing around the American region would have died away in the 20th century, especially with the election of the idealistic and cerebral Woodrow Wilson. This was not the case. In the years leading up to 1918 there were US troops in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Wilson made an unsuccessful effort to intervene in Mexico in 1913. He famously said, "I am going to teach the South American Republics to elect good men."[1] The sense of a combined regional hegemony and a superior sense of democratic values – even when they were undemocratically imposed – was a feature of both US self-regard and its regard for the external world. When, as noted in the last chapter, after World War I and the peace negotiations in which Wilson participated, he described his (immense) contribution in the words, "at last the world knows America as the saviour of the world," an idealism and a conceit had entered international relations.

That contribution, as we noted in the previous chapter, inspired the foundation of the academic discipline, International Relations. But Wilson had also led the US into World War I, becoming the tipping point that finally

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defeated Germany. *The New York Times* of 3 April 1917 carried a banner headline, "President calls for War Declaration, Stronger Navy, New Army of 500,000 Men, Full Co-operation with Germany's Foes". His idealism was accompanied by a sense of power and its projection. This was not only in Latin America and in the European war, but the vocation of power was cynically reluctant to recognise the rights of struggling emergent states – and China, though huge and heir to a vast history, was having great difficulty, precisely because of the weight of its heritage, in emerging into the modern world. US troops participated in the suppression of the Chinese Boxer Uprising in the early 1900s. In 1917 the US, under the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, recognised Japan's claim to special interests in China – which was a way of recognising the reality of Japan's expansionism in China and its developing strategy of client governments. In the years after Wilson, under Franklin Roosevelt, the US was more sympathetic to China as Japan expanded dramatically into Chinese territory and committed atrocities – but war against Japan awaited the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour by the Japanese air-force and the sinking of a huge number of largely defenceless US warships. It was in fact World War II that saw the US finally achieve the apotheosis of its earlier posturings and conceits and become a world superpower.

Germany and Italy declared war on the US shortly after Pearl Harbour, so the US became a full-scale belligerent in World War II. But, even before then, Roosevelt had enunciated his Four Freedoms – from want and fear, and of freedom of speech and religion – and brought them to the Anglo-American summit near Newfoundland where the Atlantic Charter was signed, a document of freedoms and idealism which became the normative purpose for fighting the war. The US became a leading player in that war, and took its place as one of the major powers in summits of allied leaders in Casablanca, Moscow, Cairo, Tehran, Bretton Woods, Yalta and Potsdam, which both plotted the course of war and, essentially the disposition and division of the world afterwards. The San Francisco conference, shortly after Germany's surrender, established the United Nations – with its Security Council, and thus its capacity to conduct diplomacy by concert, while the greater congress of member states occupied the General Assembly.

Above all, however, the war ended with the US possessing nuclear weapons. It had acquired, and deployed over Nagasaki and Hiroshima, what remains the ultimate military power a state can exercise in the pursuit of its interests.

In addition, after the war, through the Marshall Plan, the US used its economic might to rebuild Western Europe. This was as much to have a developed bulwark against communism as a concern for Europe in itself. But it also allowed the US immense leverage on the trans-Atlantic trade that followed, and gave markets to US industries which had grown immensely during the war; the race to produce armaments and machinery had doubled US industrial production and the economy had roared forward as a result. The US largesse did not extend to the rebuilding of the Soviet Union, whose immense sacrifices during World War II remained under-appreciated for a very long time. But it must have seemed to the Soviets that an immense machinery of confrontation was being built on its doorstep. It was itself struggling to rebuild, and to achieve some form of equivalence with the US in terms of nuclear weaponry. The Cold War that began almost as soon as World War II ended might perhaps have been avoided, or been less chill, if some sort of inclusiveness had been extended to the Soviet Union. Instead, the blockade of Berlin by the Soviets, and the airlift of relief by the West, 1948-9, offered a glimpse of a future in which confrontations over nuclear missiles in Cuba became perhaps inevitable. NATO was formed in 1949. The Cold War rapidly became hot, not directly against the Soviet Union, but against its communist partner, China, and its allies. Conflict in Korea and then Vietnam embroiled the US in ground warfare that cost it many young men who came of age in the post-World War II generation.

And Latin America never went away from the long list of US global concerns. It, like the Middle East and North Africa, where US foreign policy and efforts at diplomacy and regime change began, remained a site of intervention. As mentioned earlier, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 preceded the Cuban missile crisis. As late as 1983, the US invaded Grenada and effected regime change there, even though Maurice Bishop's government of the tiny Caribbean state, while rhetorically left-wing, was in no position at all to threaten the US.

The new Barbary pirates after the Cold War

The demise of communism after 1989, despite philosophical rhetoric of the 'end of history' and the victory of democratic liberalism, nevertheless left the world's now sole-superpower with both a foreign policy and military

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planning apparatus geared towards confrontation with an enemy. Being alone and on top did not suit a US with developed traditions, practices and forms of operational readiness that required a threat or a competitor. To an extent, foreign policy had to begin the discovery of threats, or the elevation of those that had taken second place behind the Soviets. And it had to accord the new threats the same kind of organisational attributes as the old one. 'Repertoire' responses were in fact reinforced in the absence of desirable threats, and little real imagination went into the contemplation of threats that were unorthodox or that could not be met by the repertoire.

The US did not have long to wait for the appearance of an underwhelming Iraq and its invasion of Kuwait. By 'underwhelming' I mean that Iraq posed no possible threat to the US, and even Kuwait's petroleum resources were unlikely to be sold to many other people – the US, in any case, being able to shift to other suppliers with a minimum of disruption. A genuine case existed for the defence of a state within the Westphalian system – even though Kuwait was an artefact of the division of the Middle East plotted by the British and French after World War I; it could just as well have been part of Iraq. But the invasion disturbed the regional balance of power – not as it has been often expressed, between Sunni and Shi'a nations, but within the Sunni nations themselves. Saudi Arabia did not take kindly to an expansion of Iraqi territory, income and capacity. The interesting thing is that neither did Iraq's ideological bed-fellow, Syria. Both Iraq and Syria had been led into the modern post-war world by the secular Ba'ath party. They had characteristics in common, which included national development goals that were technological, areligious and, within dictatorial systems of government, inclined towards the modern development of women. Yet Syria came to the side of the great coalition that assembled, under US leadership, to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Here, the foreign policies of the regional Arab states were uniformly cognisant of

1. The fact that their own statehoods and borders were recent and, in the case of Syria and its war with Israel, not fully secure. There was therefore a genuine Westphalian impulse at work.
2. The US was now a world hegemon, but even a hegemon needed conspicuously visible and willing allies, but the fragility of alliances and partnerships was revealed in the case of Iraq from 1980 to 1988. In the 1980s Iraq was encouraged by the US, and financed by both the US and Saudi Arabia, to wage war on revolutionary Iran. Having used Iraq then, its services and its leadership could be jettisoned later. The new hegemon could be fickle if its rules of operation were transgressed, and those rules saw the need for state behaviour and diplomacy along Westphalian lines – at least in those areas where the US did not itself deploy non-Westphalian interventions.
3. Finally, there might be financial rewards in the venture. Armies could be restocked and equipment upgraded in a joint operation of the size contemplated in Kuwait.

How the US felt about such considerations is not fully clear. However, it was a considerable diplomatic feat to put together the extensive militarised coalition that assembled against Iraq. It was the first, and last, time the US managed something like this. The later war in Afghanistan involved NATO forces as allies, and others who had always been in the Western camp. The Syrians and other Arab states were conspicuously absent in Gulf War II that set about not the defence of a Westphalian state but regime change within a recognised member of the Westphalian system – something that even a major Western power, France, found difficult to support.

Why the change from the Westphalian restraint of the US under George Bush in Gulf War I, 1990 – where he conspicuously ordered coalition forces not to advance on Baghdad and withdraw to liberated Kuwait – to Gulf War II in 2003, little over a decade later, with the determination of George W. Bush and the British prime Minister, Tony Blair, to advance with shock and awe on Baghdad? Tony Blair's approach, as we shall discuss later, was couched in a desire to be seen as one with the world's hegemonic power – an offset to Britain's otherwise diminished world position; but the mood in the US, highly supportive of military interventionism, especially against a 'proven' enemy from Gulf War I, did benefit from a huge discursive shift within the US. In a way, the US is a real case example for the Copenhagen School's approach to the discursive foundations of foreign policy formulation. Samuel Huntington's lecture of 1992, his *Foreign Affairs* article based on the lecture,[2] and his 1996 book based on the article, *The Clash of Civilizations*,[3] had a tremendously evocative and provocative effect on US debate. The contention that the world was once again divided, that the division was antagonistic, and that US foreign policy should be protective of itself, and that this protection should effectively be against an internationalised Islamic fundamentalism were all read into the book, and certainly featured in the debate it generated. When, in September 2001, the Twin Towers were

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attacked in New York, the US once more had a military enemy. It had a state from which it emanated, and that was Afghanistan – even though the organisation that perpetrated the attack, Al Qaeda, was simultaneously a trans-state and non-state entity. US and NATO forces invaded Afghanistan before 2001 was out and easily seized the capital city, Kabul.

The crafting of a diabolical image of the new enemies – the Taliban as repressive and joyless; Al Qaeda as sinister and sneaky as well as internationally subversive; and Iraq as being led by a genocidal dictator with weapons of mass destruction and obvious mass outreach with those weapons – proceeded apace. They were the new Barbary Pirates of the new millennium: extortionate, treacherous, threatening and very different. Insofar as such images also entered public discourse – and President George W. Bush ensured they were part of official discourse with his 'axis of evil' speech – they may have helped configure foreign policy, if even in a crude sense, but did nothing for the sophistication of that policy. This of course is the essential difficulty of the Copenhagen School – not that discourse does not form, but what kind of thing it helps to form with what kind of discourse is also something very much at stake. We shall see, when it comes to US foreign policy towards the Middle East, it has helped to form something far from helpful to the safety of the region and the wider world.

The US has always been pivotal to the Middle East. Woodrow Wilson did not object to the Balfour Declaration that proposed the division of Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian one; but the US did object to the Anglo-French-Israeli effort to seize the Suez Canal in 1956 after Egypt nationalised it, and effectively forced the invading armies to withdraw. It was Henry Kissinger who sought to establish a balance of power between Egypt and Israel in the wake of their hostilities, and did this by liberal military aid to both – but more so in the case of Israel. The balance of power would be, in this way, always slightly tilted in Israel's favour. For a long time, Israel and Egypt were the two largest recipients of US military aid – but, by 2010, the disbursal of such aid favoured firstly Iraq (with $6.5 billion), then Afghanistan ($5.6 billion), with Israel third ($2.75 billion) and Egypt fourth ($1.75 billion). Pakistan was fifth ($1.6 billion). This was about a third of the total foreign aid budget of about $40 billion. It has done little to ensure the Iraqi armed forces can stand before ISIS, the Afghanistani armed forces can stand in the face of a resurgent Taliban, or the Pakistani armed forces can overcome their own version of the Taliban. It has certainly ensured that Israel holds all military advantages in the ongoing struggle against Palestinian aspirations for statehood. But financing proxies may never have been enough, and one of the great vexed questions of US foreign policy under the Obama administration has been how much to wind down, or wind up, direct US military involvement in theatres such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Diplomacy and the Chinese dragon

Napoleon spoke of China as a sleeping giant, and that the world should beware its awakening. The world spent a long time trying to keep the dragon asleep or restrained. What the Chinese call an era of unequal treaties and humiliation was forced upon the country by the Western powers and Japan. It was Japan in particular that forcibly occupied Manchuria and later swept by force of arms into other parts of China, leading up to and within World War II. The divided Chinese governments and armies for the most part could not stand against the technologically driven Japanese forces with their modern arms, better generalship, and military ruthlessness. The US provided some help and outreach to Mao's communist armies, but by far the bulk of US assistance went to Chiang Kai Shek's nationalist forces. When they were defeated in 1949, and forced to retreat to Taiwan, the victorious communist regime was diplomatically ostracised by the US and deprived of its seat on the UN Security Council. That went to the rump nationalist government on Taiwan, and Taiwan was itself guarded by the US 7th fleet. Diplomatically and militarily, China and the US were in a state of confrontation. That became bloody as the two powers supported North and South Korea in the war of the early 1950s, and did so with their armed forces and without much quarter asked or given.

It was Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon who, anxious not only to exit the Vietnam war, but to do so without disadvantage in the Cold War against the Soviet Union – where every defeat could be seen as a humiliation – devised a *rapprochement* with China in 1971-2. This would strengthen China in its own quarrel with the Soviet Union, which had led the two former communist allies to a bitter ideological and political rivalry, and would give a sense of orderly and calculated behaviour in Asia, rather than an unscripted retreat from a war where the US had bombed

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North Vietnam with massive airpower, but had still not defeated its will to attack the south and unify the country.

Although the Vietnam war wound down only with huge militarised manoeuvres and actions, the *rapprochement* with China was, in a way, US diplomacy at its most sophisticated: not dictated by values or ideology, and not predicated on military power or economic purchase in the direction of China. It was an alliance of convenience that, with one stroke, added pressure upon the Soviet Union in its quarrel with a China no longer having to worry about a US threat, and stabilised the Asian theatre with a China who would feel more secure from no longer being in diplomatic isolation; and behave, Kissinger calculated, more responsibly – and it did. It also brought China, finally given its seat on the Security Council, into the world concert of great powers – where it would be obliged, even at the level of great states, to obey certain Westphalian conventions rather than continue a default into antagonism.

But, if the US could deal well with such a case – and it must be said the Chinese reciprocated Kissinger's sophistication with their own – the same could not always be said of US foreign policy and diplomacy in the Middle East, particularly where they concerned belligerent non-state actors. We shall follow that in later chapters. For now, the relationship between Britain and the US deserves some comment.

The tail that wants the dog to wag it

As the Cold War began, Britain helped the US and other Western allies to run the Soviet blockade of West Berlin – airlifting vital supplies to the population in 1948-9. It also fought alongside the US in the Korean war of 1950-3. But the other British efforts, outside its US partnership, were not always glorious or successful. The creation of Israel, with a British mandate until independence, 1945-8, was marked by violence and terrorism and UN complaints that the British were not cooperative in the transition period. The Malayan emergency, 1948-60, with British forces embroiled in jungle warfare against communist insurgents, was 'successful' but led to accusations of heavy-handedness and atrocity. Most of all, as noted earlier, the intervention in Suez in 1956, and the chastisement from the US, led to a withdrawal with the British tail firmly between its legs. It all led to the period, 1964-8, and the British withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore – what was called the cessation of international power projection 'east of Suez'. Britain became a North Atlantic state, increasingly concerned with Europe and how to manage an asymmetrical relationship with the much more powerful US.

The British were the instigators in persuading the US, through the CIA, to help overthrow the Iranian government for the sake of their oil interests in 1953, but otherwise – Suez aside – undertook no really significant foreign policy interventions – except fishery disputes with Iceland (the 'cod wars') – until 1979, when the independence of Zimbabwe was finally negotiated after years of hesitation and indecision; and 1982, when war broke out with Argentina over the Falkland Islands. Although hailed, in Britain, as a great military triumph, the war had been a near-run thing. If more of the Argentinian French-made Exocet missiles had exploded when they hit their targets, sufficient ships in the British fleet may have been sunk for the cost to have become too great – forcing a British withdrawal. Otherwise, the 1980s were characterised by British reluctance to join a sanctions campaign against Apartheid South Africa; and quarrels with Libya, especially when a Pan Am flight exploded over Scotland in 1988 – with the finger of suspicion pointing at Libya. But outside Northern Ireland, against the IRA insurrection there, no British military intervention occurred until the 1990s when suddenly, as part of multilateral efforts, Britain was called upon to play armed and belligerent roles. These were Gulf War I, as part of the coalition against Iraq in 1991; and as part of the NATO bombing campaign in the Yugoslav war over Kosovo and Belgrade in 1999.

Britain was part of the 2001 military intervention in Afghanistan after 9/11 – but its only solo military effort in this period was to defend Freetown in Sierra Leone against rebel assault in 2000, and subsequently drive the rebel forces towards defeat. Everything else was as part of joint operations and all of these bore the leadership imprint of the US – especially in Gulf War II, when Britain allied itself closely with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. 46 000 British soldiers were eventually involved. The public reaction against such involvement, and the casualties involved – especially when it became clearer that Iraq might, after all, have possessed no 'weapons of mass destruction' able to reach Western shores – has meant that in the subsequent campaigns in Libya, Iraq and Syria involved only warplanes. Indeed, all the participating Western forces were reluctant to be drawn into ground combat.

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But the alacrity with which British Prime Minister Tony Blair came to the side of US President George W. Bush over the Iraq issue bears some comment. It was not impulsive or desperate. In a real sense, Blair acted according to Churchill's post-war diagnosis that the UK faced three concentric circles that marked its future: closeness to the US; closeness to Europe; and closeness to the Commonwealth. Churchill understood that the weakened UK had no real choice but to commit itself to a trans-Atlantic alliance with the US. At the same time, the US was building a new Europe with redevelopment finance on a grand scale. The reality was not in fact that there were three circles, but that they were concentric circles. How you handled the overlaps, and how much of each overlap you allowed at any one moment in time, was key. Where Blair seemed to act rashly was his readiness to move only with the US, ignoring for instance the concerns of France as a major European partner. Even so, Blair's commitment to the notion that any UK projection of power in international politics could only work if it was in concert with the power of the US, could seem slavish – or it could seem a rational calculation on the possibilities of a concert of two. One way or another, the UK saw a 'special relationship' with the US as key to its future in the globe. It was a special relationship with a manifestly stronger and more powerful state. Allying oneself with its power also meant an adherence to its interests – or at least declaring a commonality of interests, which is what the UK did over the Iraq issue.

The fallout from siding so readily with the US over the invasion of Iraq has been such that any future UK adherence to US power projection of this sort seems unlikely. The UK has had to act with both the US and the EU over Russian expansionism into Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea; it has had to negotiate with Europe over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the US; it has had to watch as China announced huge investments in the UK, but even greater ones in Europe, but clearly seeing each as interconnected with the other. There is no longer a semblance of an autonomous foreign policy – and the much vaunted 'Rolls Royce' machine of the Foreign Office and its diplomatic prowess now seeks to eke out influence rather than power.

Two meditations

One

As we shall see in the chapters to come, the US sense of being a sole hegemonic power, a lone superpower, is under challenge – even as it patiently and indulgently pulls along the UK and allows it to think of the relationship as special. It may be that the day is dawning when the US itself will seek membership of a genuine multilateralism – of which it is not automatically the leader or the most powerful member. As Russia sets about its resurgence, as China grows into the world's strongest economic force, and as it fields an array of trading and financial institutions in all parts of the world – both of which will be discussed in later chapters – the US may have set about its own quest for Trans-Atlantic or Trans-Pacific Trade and Investment regimes a little later in the day than was wise. The Kissinger-led *rapprochement* with China, among other things, gave China space and the sense of security in which to grow. How swiftly it grew surprised many.

Two

The UK, most visibly and lacking in subtlety under Prime Minister Blair, worked assiduously at asserting a special relationship with the US and did so by being highly supportive of controversial US foreign policy initiatives – such as the invasion of Iraq. Two things were at work here. The first was a determination, almost a desperation, to appear to be able to project power as a state – even if under another's more powerful cloak.

The second was the historical British imagination of its international interests – which was required to be maintained by the projection of power – insofar as that was possible. This imagination was based on a memory of its interests, as they seemed to be before the withdrawal east of Suez, and before the debacle of the invasion of the Suez Canal zone itself in 1956. In this sense, the English School of International Relations amasses much credence – that a view of the international is historically formed, almost determined, and this impacts upon foreign policy formulation and diplomatic practice, even if the posture that results seems absurd.

The US has indulged this British conceit, but in the Babylonian king's dream the rock of Heaven strikes the feet of the statue because they were made of materials that never genuinely bonded together. Power ebbs and flows – and

flows away.

Notes

[1] Statement of 1913. See Paul Horgan, *Great River: the Rio Grande in North American History* , Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1984, p 913.

[2] Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993.

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* , New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

About the author:

Stephen Chan OBE was Foundation Dean of Law and Social Sciences at SOAS University of London, where he remains as Professor of World Politics. He has occupied many named chairs around the world, most recently the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Chair of Academic Excellence at Bir Zeit University in 2015, and the George Soros Chair of Public Policy at the Central European University in 2016. He was the 2010 International Studies Association Eminent Scholar in Global Development. As an international civil servant he helped pioneer modern electoral observation in Zimbabwe in 1980, worked in many post-conflict zones – where 'post' was a largely fictional if politic appellation – and continues to be seconded to many diplomatic initiatives around the world today. He is the author of *Meditations on Diplomacy: Comparative Cases in Diplomatic Practice and Foreign Policy* (2017).