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In the long span of American history, two moments stand out for their creative refashioning of the political order. The first comprises the framing, ratification, and amendment of the Federal Constitution from 1787 to 1790; the second, the creation of the system linking the United States with the advanced industrial democracies after the Second World War.

The first incarnation of the American system lasted from 1789 until 1861, when its tensions exploded in a great war that brought it to an end. The second incarnation still endures; indeed, we are now commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the institutions and programs - Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - most closely identified with it.

It may seem odd to consider these two political associations together, for there are crucial differences between them - in the character of their institutions, in the political loyalties held by the men and women within them, and in the equality (or inequality) of their members. But there are also remarkable affinities. Both creations aimed to establish something called "ordered liberty", substituting the rule of law for the "empire of force." Designed to find a *via media* between the anarchy of states and a consolidated empire (the two great poles along the spectrum of possibilities), both creations nevertheless sought to safeguard the two values with which each of these otherwise negative examples were closely identified: the liberty of states and the preservation of peace and order over an extended territory. This entailed the creation of a union or federative system of large extent that could preserve peace within its zone and ensure protection from aggression without. The golden grail of this search was an association that could combine the external force and order of a great empire with the internal freedoms of a small republic.

We are accustomed to thinking of the United States as a single political unit, and referring to it in the singular; before the Civil War, however, the United States were styled in the plural. This new order of the ages was far less centralized than historical imagination now allows. Provided with a general government by the Constitution, an institutional innovation which distinguished the United States from all previous federacies in world history, it nevertheless retained the purposes associated with the classic confederation. The powers delegated to the general government, as James Madison explained in Federalist No. 45, were "few and defined" and would be exercised "principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce." With standing military forces of very small size, military power was

concentrated in the militia of the states and hence was radically decentralized. With no common currency (something that the framers did not anticipate but which nevertheless occurred), the monetary affairs of the Union were often in a condition of anarchy. Until a fairly late period in its development, inter-sectional trade was very slight. "Now", as Henry Clay observed in 1820, "our connection is merely political. . . . There is scarcely any of that beneficial intercourse, the best basis of political connection, which consists in the exchange of the produce of our labor."

The "Union of different republics" was described in a bewildering variety of ways. It could be denounced as "a league with death and a covenant with hell" and as "a most unequal alliance by which the south has always been the loser and the north always the gainer." More typically it was praised as "the last bulwark of our hope" that stood frailly before surging tides of "disunion, anarchy, and civil war." It was, as Madison insisted, a thing *sui generis*, "so unexampled in its origin, so complex in its structure, and so peculiar in some of its features, that in describing it the political vocabulary does not furnish terms sufficiently distinctive and appropriate, without a detailed resort to the facts of the case."

A similar observation may be made of the post-World War II American system. It, too, acquired many names - "the American empire", "the Free World", "the West", an "empire by invitation." At the core of the post-World War II American system were NATO and the economic institutions associated with the Bretton Woods regime. The fifty-odd states that were ultimately brought into its bilateral and multilateral security communities included colonial powers and colonies, allies and enemies from the Second World War, democracies and dictatorships. Over time, however, democratic norms and liberal values took firm root within this second American system. This led observers to grope again for a name that would capture its peculiar character and specify its membership and boundaries. Plausible candidates for the most apt description have included "the pacific union of liberal democracies", the "zone of peace, wealth, and democracy", a "civic union" embracing the United States, Western Europe, and Japan whose members "increasingly appear to be separate regions of the same political system rather than distinct ones."<sup>(1)</sup>

Some observers give this community a restricted geographical scope, largely confining it to the nations of Western Europe and North America, while others speak more expansively of "the international community" or, yet more extravagantly, of "one world." As the current debates over NATO expansion, China policy, and the clash of civilizations attest, how big this community is or might become excites some of the most bitter controversies in the discussion of American foreign policy.

Though some have shared Woodrow Wilson's dream that the American system might become universal, it has never done so in fact. The American system since the Second

World War, like the one inaugurated by the Constitution, has been a system of states within a larger system of states. Our political vocabulary, with its stark antinomies between "domestic" and "foreign", or "nation" and "world", fails to capture the mixed character of the post-1789 and post-1947 systems, both of which existed in a sort of twilight between the world of the civil state and the world of international relations.

Equally unhelpful is the distinction drawn by political scientists between "the unit level" and "the systemic level", for these associations are not only systems of states within a larger system of states but units made up of other units. Confronted with associations that are both units and systems (and which, being both, are not exactly either one), we are like Pufendorf puzzling over the irregular constructions of Central Europe, wondering how a unum could be made out of such a pluribus. Neither "anarchy" on the one side nor "empire" on the other - the one with its image of hostility and unconditional rivalry, the other with its connotations of rule and dominance - expresses the character and logic of these associations. Nevertheless, one of the ways in which these two federative systems are alike is that throughout their respective histories they were described in both ways - by some as an overbearing imperium that exercised despotic sway over the political space in which it operated, and by others as an empty shell ever tending toward dissolution and collapse.

### Not a Departure, A Return

There is no theme more common in writings on twentieth-century American foreign policy than that of fundamental transformations. As the conventional rendering has it, in the late 1940s and early 1950s a nation that for over a century took counsel from Washington's warnings against foreign alliances contracted an enduring case of pactomania. A nation once insular and isolationist became cosmopolitan and interventionist. A nation that once enjoyed a condition of "free security", surrounded by its oceanic moats and protected by the British navy, became highly conscious of - even obsessed by - mortal threats to its security. And a nation that once made a fetish of unilateral methods suddenly saw itself as the leader of multilateral coalitions and partnerships.

Most observers have looked approvingly on these "radical changes", insisting that they were a necessary adjustment to new circumstances; some have bemoaned them as entailing the passage from republic to empire. But either way, the fact of radical discontinuity is seldom questioned. Questioned it should be, however, for the characteristic ideas of twentieth-century American internationalism may more persuasively be seen as a return to, rather than a departure from, historic traditions - a sort of grand unfolding, in different circumstances and on a larger geographical scale, of aspirations that were central to the American experiment from 1776 onwards.

The first assumption that must be cast aside is the idea that eighteenth and nineteenth-century Americans had no experience of the security dilemmas that were second nature to Europeans after the emergence in the 1500s and 1600s of the modern state system. "The anguishing dilemmas of security. that tormented European nations", writes Henry Kissinger, summarizing this widely held view, "did not touch America for nearly 150 years."(2) The truth is otherwise: Both of the central elements in the early American credo - the "union" and "independence" of Washington's Farewell Address - responded directly to those anguishing dilemmas.

Given the ambitions of Britain, France, and Spain in North America, the desire to remain separate and distinct from the European system of alliances was just that - a desire and not an accomplished fact for at least half a century after 1776. But the view expressed by Kissinger is misleading for an even more basic reason. The great American fear from 1776 to 1861 was not so much that America would become ruinously entangled in the European system as that European precedents and practices would take firm root within America - that America, in other words, would become the European system. The desire of America's early leaders to escape that fate was the most important factor in the American Founding.

Ironically, however, the founders were not entirely successful in making that escape. For several generations after 1789, the country was haunted by an imagined sequence of events that would lead from disunion and secession to inter-sectional rivalry, war, and despotism. Though all Americans wished to escape this downward spiral, their public debates and private letters were filled with warnings that they were just a step away from falling into it. The whole dynamic of American politics from 1789 to 1861 lay in the occurrence, about every ten years, of a monumental sectional crisis that would be averted only through an unexpected turn of events or an inspired act of statesmanship. Because disunion was widely understood to be a virtual synonym for war, the threat of force was not banished from the system. The beast still sat there, with a grin on its face, insinuating itself into the rivalries of the sections. Far from being indifferent to the security problems that have drawn the anxious attention of internationalists in the twentieth century, Americans were obsessed by them from the critical period just before the making of the Constitution until the Civil War. They did not enjoy the alternative of withdrawing from "the state system" because they were squarely in the middle of one.

The true American security problem, then, lay not so much in the ambition of foreign powers as in the rivalries among the sections themselves, as different in their interests and character, noted Pierce Butler in 1787, as Russia and Turkey. A wide range of observers in both America and Europe believed that the "natural" course of events would entail the splintering of the Union and the emergence of a system of regional confederacies, and it was the deeply rooted character of this belief that explains why

the making of the Constitution and the perpetuation of the Union was so often regarded as a miracle. Under these circumstances, security was anything but free.

The more perfect union that established the conditions for American security was not the product of nature but of art. It had a fragile, artificial, and experimental character - features strikingly conveyed by Rufus Choate, a nationalist and a Whig, in 1850:

While our State governments must exist almost of necessity, and with no effort from within or without, the UNION of the States is a totally different creation - more delicate, more artificial, more recent, far more truly a mere production of the reason and the will - standing in far more need of an ever-surrounding care, to preserve and repair it.

Whereas the states were "natural" and were "a single and uncompounded substance", the Union was "an artificial aggregation of such particles", "a community miscellaneous and widely scattered", "a system of bodies advancing slowly through a resisting medium."(3)

The American-led multilateral alliance system after World War II may be fairly described in similar terms; observers were acutely conscious of its fragility, and of its need for "an ever-surrounding care, to preserve and repair it." Indeed, if the dynamics of early American history cannot be understood without reference to the fear of a raging state system emerging in the New World, it is equally the case that twentieth-century American internationalism cannot be fully understood without seeing it against the background of the earlier American experience with federal union. A wide range of assumptions, fears, and hopes that were characteristic of American reflection on their federal union entered again into the thinking of Americans when they considered the purposes of U.S. foreign policy in the twentieth century. Often unconsciously, we have been duplicating the thought experiments of our forebears, seeking a set of relationships with friends and allies that would do for regional or world order in the twentieth century what federal union did for the American states and sections in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

When Americans came to the realization in the twentieth century that North America could no longer be a world unto itself, they searched for associations and partners that would "domesticate" or "constitutionalize" the anarchy of the state system. That search has entailed great variety in the associations envisaged: the community of English-speaking peoples, a universal association for collective security, a Western hemisphere community, an Atlantic Community, a Great Power concert, a federal state binding the Atlantic democracies or the world, the United Nations - all had their successive advocates before 1945. There was, however, something dream-like and insubstantial about most of these visions. While sometimes inspiring, they usually ran

aground on the rocks of experience. Just as it took Americans over three decades in the years before 1787 to find a suitable middle way between the competing specters of anarchy and despotism, it took a comparable length of time - from, roughly, 1914 to 1949 - to discover the lineaments of that resolution in the twentieth century. The security and economic system whose golden anniversary we are now commemorating was the product of that discovery, though at the moment of creation in the late 1940s no one could be certain which elements in the makeshift response would prove enduring.

In a celebrated phrase, Frederick Jackson Turner once called the United States "a federation of sections" and a "union of potential nations." The significance of the section in American history, Turner persuasively observed, "is that it is the faint image of a European nation and that we need to reexamine our history in the light of this fact."<sup>(4)</sup> I will be suggesting in this essay that the significance of the post-World War II multilateral alliance system is that it is the faint image of the American union, and that we need to re-examine our diplomatic traditions and contemporary purposes in the light of that fact.

### The Federal Principle and American Internationalism

That there should exist these similarities should not appear too surprising, once it is understood that the fundamental problem to which both early American constitutionalism and twentieth-century internationalism were responding was substantially the same: How to avoid the perils of - how, hence, to reform the bases of - the Westphalian system. The basic questions, inevitably, were very similar: Will democracies maintain peaceful relations, or are they subject to the same predatory impulses and systemic pressures that lead other states to war? Will ties associated with commerce promote pacific relations among states, or will such entanglements lead to increased friction and promote conflict? Can two distinct conceptions of liberty - that of individual human rights and of the "liberty of states" - be reconciled when they conflict? Can republican states successfully cooperate in the absence of a common government?

The similarity in the political speculation of these two otherwise very different ages also suggests why it is mistaken to view early American statecraft as wholly or even primarily "unilateralist", as is invariably affirmed in the standard histories of American diplomacy. It is certainly true that Americans were determined to avoid entangling alliances with European states. The principal reason for this determination, however, was that they had made the most entangling of alliances among themselves, and they well understood that involvement in the European system might launch them on a path that would lead to the dissolution of the Union.

To make that Union work, Americans articulated a great many of the ideas that have informed the theory and practice of international cooperation since World War II (which have gone under the largely synonymous terms of multilateralism and internationalism). Traits common to both systems include: 1) the peculiar importance attached to "good faith" or credibility; 2) the affirmation of the norms of codetermination and concurrent majority; 3) the acceptance of the need for "reciprocal concession" and "diffuse reciprocity"; 4) the belief that "all for one and one for all" must be the basis of their security doctrine, because of the conviction that if they did not hang together they would be doomed to hang separately; 5) the emphasis placed on what Madison called "the vital principle" of the equality of states; and 6) the insight that the reduction or elimination of trade barriers within the union would provide a firm basis for the prosperity of all its members.

To insist on the family resemblance between the ideas articulated in these two epochs - and hence to draw a parallel between early American federalism and twentieth-century American internationalism - admittedly takes us onto hazardous linguistic terrain, for each of these terms (like all the other "isms" in the political vocabulary) have borne a wide variety of meanings. It is not unusual - indeed, it is altogether characteristic - for political concepts to undergo an astonishing revolution in signification, in which they come to mean precisely the opposite of what they once did. This has happened, of course, to "liberalism" and "conservatism." It has also occurred to federal union and its various cognates (federation, federalism, federative system). If this comparison is to be sustained it needs to be borne in mind that what the statesmen of the late eighteenth century understood "federal" to mean is very different from the understandings prevailing today. The consolidation and centralization that have taken place in all federal states, together with the formalization of the concept by scholars (who now distinguish it sharply from a confederal arrangement), take us into a conceptual universe different from that which the framers inhabited.

At the heart of the federal principle, as traditionally conceived, lies the idea of a covenant or foedus (the etymological root of federal). As Rufus Davis has suggested, the covenant, together with the "synonymous ideas of promise, commitment, undertaking, or obligating, vowing and plighting one's word", implies two other things besides keeping faith: "it involves the idea of cooperation, reciprocity, mutuality"; and it "betokens the need for some measure of predictability, expectation, constancy, and reliability in human relations."<sup>5</sup> These three concepts - commitment, reciprocity, predictability - are closely associated with contemporary ideas of international cooperation, and they were endlessly elaborated in debates over the nature and character of federal union from 1787 to 1861. Yet no one would think of ascribing primacy to these values in characterizing the relationship that now exists in our

system between the national government and the states. So, too, the sense in which the Constitution might be described as federal in its foundations - that is, as a compact among the people of the states - has been altogether lost, and it would be far more accurate, despite a few recent Supreme Court protestations to the contrary, to describe the United States today as a unitary state organized on the principle of devolution, with the states enjoying no more autonomy than the national government thinks it expedient to bestow upon them. The cumulative result of the Civil War, the New Deal, and the Great Society has worked a revolution in our constitutional structure. Though there is still a division of powers between the general government and the states that may institutionally be described as a variant of "federalism", the federal values that once informed this institutional structure have been virtually obliterated in our polity. But those values have not disappeared. On the contrary, they have migrated to and now inform our key relationships within the democratic alliance.

The attraction of the federal principle is that it promises a way of simultaneously reaffirming both individuality and commonality in the relationship among political groups. For this reason it may be thought of as "an exercise in the difficult art of separation", as proposing devices "to cope with the problem of how distinct communities can live a common life together without ceasing to be distinct communities", as a "coming together to stay apart."<sup>(6)</sup> Such ideas were basic to early American federalism. It was, for example, one of the central arguments of those who advocated the ratification of the Constitution that the rights and separate identities of the states would be far more secure under the proposed system than under any other practicable alternative. American internationalists have often appealed to the same basic proposition, holding that the national interest as well as the ideals that define us as a people could only be advanced within a framework that ensured security and prosperity to all peoples within the family of democratic nations.

### The Partition of Cares

The similarities between the federal principle and the internationalist idea entitle us to say that they are not two separate traditions of thought but are rather distinct though intermingled currents within the same tradition. They each play variations on the idea that there exists a kind of ascending or descending scale of human needs, communities, identities, and loyalties for which appropriate institutional expression must be found. There is a passage in Jefferson that well illustrates the character of this task. Writing at a time when his distrust of centralization had risen again to a high pitch, Jefferson held that It is not by the consolidation, or concentration of powers, but by their distribution, that good government is effected. Were not this great country already divided into States, that division must be made, that each might do for itself what concerns itself directly, and what it can so much better do than a distant authority. Every State is again divided into counties, each to take care of what lies

within its local bounds; each county again into townships or wards, to manage minuter details; and every ward into farms, to be governed each by its individual proprietor. Were we directed from Washington when to sow, and when to reap, we should soon want bread. It is by this partition of cares, descending in gradation from general to particular, that the mass of human affairs may be best managed, for the good and prosperity of all.

In this perfect explication of what has become familiar as the principle of "subsidiarity", Jefferson was writing as an individualist, a localist, a federalist, and a sectionalist; his intent was to deny to the general government powers that went a scintilla beyond those granted by the constitutional compact. But he was also, in his own estimation, writing as a nationalist; it was his firm conviction that the union could only survive if the powers of the general government were sharply circumscribed - that the clock would break if the spring were wound too tightly. Jefferson's great adversary, Alexander Hamilton, had the opposite fear - that of dissolution. He was pessimistic that the Constitution of 1787 would be sufficiently strong to countervail the deeper and more natural loyalties to locality, state, and section that would exist under the projected system.

The history of federal union involved the continual interplay between Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian proclivities. America invariably found herself torn between centripetal and centrifugal forces. The great American historians of the nineteenth century - George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, Henry Adams - all recurred to this story line, finding in American history "an intensely dramatic journey along a narrow path of moderation" between anarchy and despotism, or complete decentralization and total centralization.(7)

A very similar tension has characterized the history of the post-World War II American system. The fear, so often expressed over the last fifty years, that the alliance would splinter is very Hamiltonian, as are the programs and institutions that were seen as crucial in arresting the centrifugal forces inherent in confederacies: the grand financial settlement of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the standing military forces effectively integrated with those of other nations, the commercial interdependence encouraged with Europe and Japan, and the reliance on the power and discretion of the American executive. But the Jeffersonian idea of an "empire of liberty" also informed the institutions and practices of the post-World War II system.

That republics might voluntarily cooperate with one another in pursuit of common objectives, that such a union might be held together through sentiment rather than the sword, that the federating republics might jointly resolve to respect common principles like the equality of states, and hold steadfast to a common veneration of free government - all these ideas are distinctly Jeffersonian. In both epochs, these

primordial American concerns were in fundamental tension, yet each was necessary and vital to balance the other.

As Jefferson's remarks attest, the problem of matching institutions to communities involves more than simply reconciling general interests and particular identities, in the way envisaged by the dualistic frameworks of internationalism and federalism. Recognition must also be accorded to a range of other values, including those embodied in individual freedom and in the dense loyalties and "little platoons" of civil society. The Founders, in keeping with the enlightened political speculation of their age, understood that their problem was to create the political and legal framework that would best correspond with this ascending scale of human needs and loyalties. It is our problem today. The return to mixed loyalties and identities that is a distinguishing feature of the contemporary period makes the political thought of their pre-nationalist age strikingly relevant to our post-nationalist era, much more so than the political thought of the intervening age of hypernationalism from the 1860s to the 1940s. The kind of nationalism to which we are called by writers like Michael Lind, who is hostile to both federalism and internationalism, is a wholly inadequate response to the task of finding the appropriate partition of cares: the nationalist sun that such writers worship extinguishes the light from all the other stars in the sky.

To grasp the essentials of this task is not to resolve it; its character is one of surpassing complexity. There is, however, considerable evidence that the existing partition of cares is seriously disordered. Daniel Bell's prescient observation that "the national state has become too small for the big problems in life, and too big for the small problems"(8) nicely summarizes the heart of the difficulty: that, on the one hand, the national government - indeed, government generally - has taken on so many different functions and penetrated so many areas of life that it often appears as an alien and unresponsive Leviathan; and, on the other, that there exists a range of problems in security, commerce, finance, and the environment - the same areas of jurisdiction, with the exception of the last, granted to the federal government in 1787 - that the American government cannot satisfactorily address without the effective cooperation of other nation-states.

### Structural Crisis

The various theses advanced here invite us to reconsider in basic ways the historic evolution of American statecraft. If the American confrontation with the Westphalian system is not a late arriving phenomenon of the twentieth century but central to the American experiment from the beginning; if security was never "free" but was dearly purchased by a Constitution that was "no more than a profoundly wise agreement to differ"(9); and if the ideas commonly associated with twentieth-century multilateralism and internationalism are closely akin to the norms and

purposes promoted by federal union - then the way is clear for redrawing the historic map of American statecraft. In this revised picture, internationalism appears not so much as a departure from historic traditions as a resumption of them, though with a different set of institutions and on a wider geographical scale.

There are, indeed, crucial institutional differences between the constitutional partnership of free nations established after the Second World War and the union of different republics established in 1787. Of these differences, the most obvious is that the Constitution provided a common government for the members of the Union, whereas the post-World War II system rested on an institutional base that is best described as "confederal." That institutional contrast, in turn, points to the interesting fact that the institutions that have distinguished the postwar system and that have worked reasonably well - the alphabet soup of NATO, IMF, IBRD, OECD, GATT, WTO, OAS, et al. - suffer from the same defects that, according to the framers of the Constitution, doomed all such confederal arrangements to dissolution. Even after a common government was established in 1787, many observers, including Tocqueville, found it difficult to believe "in the duration of a government whose task is to hold together forty different peoples spread over a surface equal to the half of Europe, to avoid rivalries, ambitions and struggles among them, and to unite the action of their independent ways for the accomplishment of the same plans."

For essentially the same reasons, observers as disparate as Clarence Streit and Hans Morgenthau argued during the Cold War that the Western alliance would dissolve or succumb to external aggression unless it moved toward more centralized institutions.

The prophets of dissolution have not been borne out. The obituaries have been premature at best, utterly wrong at worst. The system did not dissolve during the Cold War but managed instead to rise repeatedly, like a bull market, over a wall of worry. Nor has it fallen apart after the end of that conflict, though it had been the Soviet threat at the end of World War II that brought it into being. It has, on the contrary, expanded its membership and functions, as may be observed in the prospective admission of new members to NATO, in the strengthening and larger membership of the GATT and WTO, and in the readiness of the OAS to guarantee democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

The role of American power in all of this has obviously been crucial, and indeed the federal analogy suggests a way of conceiving American leadership that best expresses its inner logic and function, which is to pursue the cooperative policies in security, trade, and finance normally associated with federative systems while also acting to arrest the "natural" tendency of confederations to fall apart. American power and leadership is to the post-World War II system what a common government was to the

political system established by the Constitution - the crucial element, once missing, that made it workable.

The importance of American leadership since 1947 points to another vital difference between the two systems: to wit, that the United States dominated the creation of the post-World War II system in a way that no state or section dominated the American union in 1787. The constitutional compact of 1787, whether conceived as a covenant among the people, the states, or the sections (it was, in fact, all three) was essentially one among equals, whereas in the 1940s a primal inequality marked the creation of the postwar multilateral alliance system, founded when America bestrode the world like a colossus. Over time, however, this difference between the two systems became less pronounced. By the time of the "great war of sections", a marked inequality had grown up between the North and the South, and indeed this phenomenon of unequal growth constituted one of the leading causes of the war.

The post-World War II system has also been afflicted by the phenomenon of unequal growth, but in the opposite direction: stark inequality among the core nations of the democratic alliance has given way to a greater equality. The fears of the 1980s that Europe and Japan would grow faster than the United States have proved unfounded, it is true, thus confirming Joseph Nye's observation that the unequal growth of the three decades after 1945 was primarily due to the "World War II effect." But it is also true that the burden-sharing problems to which the initial prolonged period of unequal growth gave rise have never been addressed to the satisfaction of the American public. The great question that uneven growth posed for America's federal system was whether a consensual union could be sustained in the face of growing inequality; the great question that uneven growth has posed for the post-World War II system is whether cooperation can be sustained in the face of growing equality.

The need for American hegemony to counteract the defects inherent in all confederations, together with the weakening of American hegemony entailed by unequal growth, points to a permanent structural crisis within the alliance of liberal democracies. The federal analogy is illuminating not only because it highlights the features of this structural problem, but also because it suggests ways in which it may be mitigated, if not exactly overcome. That this malady may prove fatal is undoubtedly true; that it must end with the dissolution of the system is unduly pessimistic. Whether it does or does not must rest, in the end, on the quality of our leadership.

One danger is that of American unilateralism, which stands in the same relation to the democratic alliance (and poses the same danger) as sectionalism did to the American union. The proclivity toward unilateralism is exacerbated by the "fragmentation and hubris" of which James Schlesinger recently warned in these pages. If it persists, it is

a habit that will surely destroy the postwar system over time. Palpably absurd - and contrary to the basic presuppositions of American constitutionalism - is the idea that American power, unlike that of any other state, needs neither check nor balance. To act in a federal spirit - by respecting, in particular, the values of codetermination and consent - would help provide that check, and would be of considerable assistance in counteracting the distracted arrogance that Schlesinger has diagnosed. The pre-eminent position of the United States rests upon the belief that the exercise of American power is harnessed to the general purposes of the federation of free nations. If that belief is not well founded, the United States becomes just another imperial power, doomed to elicit the same hostility and countervailing alliances that imperial powers have always provoked in the past.

It is also true, conversely, that the prospects of the system rest upon the willingness of our partners to share its burdens fairly. As the market of first resort, the lender of last resort, and the ultimate backstop against large-scale aggression, the United States bore the largest share of the burdens associated with the running of the system during the Cold War. That the American people should wish to shed some of those burdens is understandable, for they believe, not unreasonably, that "this heavy headed revel East and West/Has made us traduced and taxed of other nations." Unilateral dictation by the United States and free-riding by allies are the two great vices that have fed on each other in the past and that, if recklessly indulged, would form a cancer on the system in the future. Like other forms of vice, both propensities are encouraged strongly by nature: the peculiar structure of this fifty year-old system constitutes a standing invitation to act in a way that would destroy it over time. All the more reason, therefore, for the friends of the democratic alliance to stand resolutely against both proclivities-on the maxim, as Katharine Hepburn told Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, that "Human nature, Mr. Allnutt, is what we're put into this world to rise above."

### Larger than Nation, Smaller than World

One of the curious aspects of the rhetoric surrounding U.S. foreign policy is the tendency of many observers to pose a false choice between isolationism and universalism. Too often our alternative is conceived as one between "the atom and the cosmos", as Walter Lippmann complained in the early 1950s, and we are asked to choose between a narrow version of American nationalism - the "America First, Second, and Third" of Patrick Buchanan - and a universalism that embraces all mankind within its reformist aspirations. The analogy with federal union encourages a way of thinking that occupies a middle ground between these extremes. It recognizes that the United States is a vital part of a community larger than itself, but one that does not embrace the entire world. It enables us to distinguish between encouraging democracy in the Western Hemisphere or in Central Europe and

simultaneously drawing back from an indiscriminate policy of democratic enlargement in areas like much of Asia and Africa, where the political consensus for such a policy does not exist. It enables us to distinguish between the construction of a security community in Europe - part of the civic union to which we belong - and the commitment to a universalistic doctrine of collective security that would oblige us to intervene anywhere and everywhere. It lights up a path equidistant from the isolationist and the imperial temptations, rejecting the simple-minded notion that we must choose between these equally disagreeable alternatives.

To understand our position in this way does not resolve the baffling questions associated with specifying exactly the membership, boundaries, and purposes of this larger community of freedom. Trying to understand this question in the 1950s, the distinguished historian Hans Kohn observed that The frontiers of modern Western civilization and of the Atlantic Community are geographically undetermined. One can as well say that no nation qua nation belongs to it and that all people potentially can join it. Italy under Mussolini, Germany under Hitler, Russia under Lenin did not belong, and did not wish to belong, to the Western community of individual liberty. Today Germany and Italy belong, and tomorrow Russia may belong.(10)

Kohn's understanding of this community's potential for expansion neglected the factors of strategic importance, economic weight, historical encumbrance, and political affinity that have made the trilateral relationship linking Europe, America, and Japan so central to our understanding of this community's core membership. He also exaggerated the ease with which any people can join it. At the same time, it does seem too narrow to limit it, as Samuel P. Huntington has done, to those nation-states whose historic roots lie in Western civilization. If we recall that one of the purposes associated with federative systems is not to submerge everything in a bland homogeneity but rather to affirm both individuality and commonality - to come together in order to stay apart - the civilizational differences that separate a Turkey or Japan from the West should not constitute insuperable obstacles to effective cooperation.

Surely, too, we should recognize that there is scope for different types of membership within the system. It should be possible, in any event, to recognize that this larger community is transcivilizational and has outgrown its origin in Western civilization without passing over to the universal pretensions that Huntington rightly condemns as "misguided, arrogant, false, and dangerous."(11)

The federal analogy holds a lesson here as well, for a recurring theme in early America was that too great or rapid an expansion of the empire of liberty would prepare the ground for its dissolution. It did so in 1763 as well as in 1848, with the experience and outcome of the two great wars of territorial expansion that ended on

those dates bearing a close relationship to the wars of secession that followed. The analogy is merely suggestive, for it is virtually impossible to imagine the circumstances under which the nations of the democratic alliance would fight one another today, and equally difficult to imagine that this federation of free nations might be preserved through force. Nevertheless, that centrifugal forces may be introduced into this system by too rapid or extensive an expansion is a danger, as James Monroe observed in 1822, that needs to be "looked at with profound attention, as one of a very serious character."

Despite these tensions, excellent reasons remain for placing the health, strength, and preservation of the community of free peoples at the center of American foreign policy. Such an association, to imagine its basic lineaments, would seek to achieve the benefits of federal union without sacrificing independence or sovereignty. It would have the strength of a great empire but allow for the internal autonomy and free development of its member nations. It would register the voices of the nations within this great federacy through a system in which representation is sometimes "virtual" and not "actual." It would somehow find a way to be fair in burdens exacted, without a coercive apparatus to make it so. And it would take as its fundamental object and justification the preservation of free institutions while nevertheless relying (like that earlier federative system in American history) on example rather than coercive crusading in seeking the extension of such institutions. That is a tall order for American leadership, and it must not be supposed that our leaders have invariably taken to heart the norms and purposes suggested by the federal analogy. But it is a worthy aspiration that best corresponds with the deepest interests and historic purposes of the United States.

It must be admitted, however, that there is something unnatural about the durability of such an association. The end of the Cold War, by depriving the Western alliance of the threat that initially brought it into existence, has weakened its cohesion. The political loyalties of the peoples that comprise it still run largely to their nation-states or to local and regional attachments within them. So, too, a realistic view must acknowledge that democratic states have in the past displayed a fatal tendency toward disunited action and *saive qui peut*. Indeed, celebrants of the "democratic peace" often fail to recognize the extent to which the founders of the two creations understood that democracy was a necessary but not a sufficient condition of peace, and that successful cooperation among such polities had to be regarded not as a law of political behavior but as a hard-won achievement - a defiance of history rather than a working out of its immutable laws.

The democratic alliance also lacks a common government to give efficacy to its actions. This is not, one hastens to add, a cause for regret. Bringing the Atlantic democracies together in a common government, as was proposed by the Atlantic

Unionists in the late 1940s, would inevitably have driven them further apart had such an initiative been taken by the American government. The experience of centralization in America, as in nearly all other federal states, has taught a sobering lesson in this regard. But to think of the Atlantic relationship or the broader relationship among the democracies in federal terms does not lead irresistibly to the conclusion that a common government is necessary or desirable. A theme no less closely associated with the federal tradition is that central institutions must be limited in their powers and in the scope of their control. Recently, advocates for a single currency in Europe may well have stepped across an admittedly hazy line - one that separates the kind of centralization that contributes to greater unity from the kind that spawns, through its excesses, even greater disunity. A common government linking the democratic alliance would certainly do so. The larger point nevertheless remains: To accept that a common government is neither possible nor desirable still leaves us with the divisive forces inherent in confederacies, and must reinforce the doubts about the future durability of this civic union.

These disintegrative forces, then, are real enough. If there is a remedy for them it is likely to be found not in a grand institutional overhaul but in a deeper appreciation of the norms and purposes that hold this community together. It consists of the recognition that, with unity, the security and prosperity of this democratic community can be assured, and that with disunity all bets are off. It requires us to stifle the sectional jealousies and asperities that perpetually arise in free countries, recognizing that the security and prosperity of our allies are good for us, as ours are good for them, rather than engaging in a fierce geo-economic competition that would beggar all of us together. Finally, it means condemning the arrogant unilateralism that sometimes issues from Washington, on the understanding that this community cannot survive unless it is rooted in consent.

Here, too, we may take a leaf from the book of federal union. Throughout the period from the American Revolution to the Civil War, the great antinomies of political life - rise or decline, prosperity or wretchedness, peace or war - were in the common opinion not merely bound up with, but subordinate to, the fate of the Union. This was the prism through which every interest was refracted, the oracle to consult if one wished to know the future. That we should look with a comparable understanding on the union of free states today is a proposition I commend to the reader.

At the time of the creation of the democratic alliance, Sir Alfred Zimmern observed to an American audience that For as far ahead as political thought can see, the United States will occupy a preponderant position in the world, and the people of the United States, who might have set the crown of world empire on their brows, have decided to share their power in a constitutional partnership of free nations. Thus free nations everywhere are called, at a moment in world history corresponding to the moment of

1787 in your own constitutional annals, to a task of political construction.(12) This is a fine calling that is as appropriate a purpose for the next fifty years as it was for the last. Let us hope that American diplomacy will merit so generous a judgment in the future.

1 See Michael Doyle, "An International Liberal Community", in Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, *Rethinking America's Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), pp. 307-33; Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Real World Order: Zones of Peace, Zones of Turmoil* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1993), p. 3; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, "The Logic of the West", *World Policy Journal* (Winter 1993/94), pp. 17-25. See also Deudney's insightful essay on "The Philadelphian System", *International Organization* (Spring 1995), pp. 191-228, his apt term for the American "states-union" from 1787 to 1861.

2 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 20.

3 Speech of November 26, 1850 in Samuel Gilman Brown, ed., *The Works of Rufus Choate* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1862), vol. II, pp. 314-15.

4 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of Sections in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932), p. 50.

5 Rufus S. Davis, *The Federal Principle: A Journey Through Time in Quest of a Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 38, 3, 215-16.

6 Samuel V. LaSelva, *The Moral Foundations of Canadian Federalism* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 40, 46.

7 Richard C. Vitzthun, *The American Compromise* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974).

8 Daniel Bell, "The Future World Disorder", *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1977), p. 132.

9 Rep. Henry Meigs (Dem.-NY), January 26, 1820, *Debates and Proceedings in Congress*, 16th Congress, 1st session, p. 926.

10 Hans Kohn, *Reflections on Modern History: The Historian and Human Responsibility* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 305.

11 Samuel P. Huntington, "The West and the World", *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1996), pp. 28-46.

12 "How Can Europe Unite?", Vital Speeches, XVII, 677-80 (September 1, 1951).

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