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Source: *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Sep., 1986), pp. 263-277

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423824>

Accessed: 22/01/2009 09:39

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Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952*

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The article attempts to substantiate two related arguments. First, that the American expansion was really more striking than the Soviet one in the first years after the Second World War. While America's influence could be strongly felt in most corners of the world, the Soviet Union counted for little outside its border areas, however vast these border areas. The article looks briefly at the increased American role in Asia and Africa, but the emphasis is on the dramatic change in the American-Western European relationship. Second, if this American expansion created what we could call an American empire, this was to a large extent an empire by invitation. Unlike the Soviet Union, which frequently had to rely on force to further its interests, the United States possessed an arsenal of diverse instruments. In fact, the United States was often invited to play a more active role. The article goes into some detail on the nature of Western Europe's economic and military invitations to Washington. The author's tentative finding is that this invitational attitude of most Western European governments was often shared by public opinion in the countries concerned. The article also argues that this state of American empire only lasted approximately 30 years. In the 1970s, the US lead over other powers had declined both militarily and, particularly important, economically. The American-European relationship had to be redefined. Many European governments still invited the United States to play an active role, but these invitations were much more ambiguous now than in the first two decades after the world war. Finally, the author hypothesizes that the American decline was in part caused by the expenses involved in maintaining the American empire.

1. Introduction

'Traditionalist' historians have generally stressed the expansion of the Soviet Union after the Second World War. The Soviet Union did expand. It insisted on exercising near absolute control over Eastern Europe, it dominated North Korea, and it strengthened its position in Mongolia and later in Vietnam. The communists did win a momentous victory in China, but that was a victory won with little assistance from Moscow. As Mao Tse-tung himself said in 1958, with only slight exaggeration, 'The Chinese revolution won victory by acting contrary to Stalin's will' (Schram 1974, p. 102). The communist victory was also to prove a rather temporary blessing for the Soviets.

Thus, there was Soviet expansion after the war. But this article puts forward two suppositions. First, it will support the 'revisionist' argument that the American expan-

sion was really more striking than the Soviet one. Only the United States became a global power in the years we are dealing with here. While America's influence could be felt in most corners of the world, with only a few exceptions the Soviet Union counted for little outside its border areas, however vast these border areas. The American expansion went so deep and affected so many different parts of the world that it can be said to have resulted in an American empire.

Second, and here I differ from the revisionists, if we choose to call this an empire, it was to a large extent an empire by invitation. Unlike the Soviet Union, which frequently had to rely on force, the United States was generally encouraged to take a more active interest in the outside world. The American influence often went deeper than the Soviet exactly because Washington's forms of control were more in accordance with the will of the local populations than were Moscow's. Not only that, but under this American empire many of the countries that welcomed American influence

*This is a considerably revised and extended version of a paper previously published in *The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 1-21.

were also able to do considerably better, at least in longterm material terms, than was the United States itself.

2. *America's position of strength in 1945*

The United States came out of the Second World War by far the strongest power on earth. In constant 1958 prices the American gross national product had grown from \$209.4 billion in 1939 to 355.2 billion in 1945. That constituted approximately half of the world's goods and services. Steel production jumped from 53 million tons in 1939 to 80 million in 1945. Production in agriculture increased at a similar pace. With 6% of the world's population, the United States had 46% of the world's electric power, 48% of its radios, 54% of its telephones, and its businesses owned or controlled 59% of the world's total oil reserves. American automobile production was eight times that of France, Britain, and Germany combined. 'Only' 400,000 Americans had lost their lives because of the war.

The population of the Soviet Union is estimated to have been around 194 million in 1940. At the end of the war it numbered around 170 million. In 1945 the Soviet Union produced 10.6 million tons of steel, only half of what it produced in 1941. The Soviet Union built 65,000 cars compared to seven million in the United States. In 1945 agricultural production was only half of what it had been in 1940, which was not a very good year, if there ever are good years in Soviet agriculture.

On the military side, only the United States had the atomic bomb. In 1944 – at its highest – aircraft production reached 95,000. The US had a vast lead not only on the Soviet Union, but American production even surpassed that of Germany and Japan combined. The American navy was by far the biggest and most efficient in the world. In one field only could the Soviet Union compare with the United States. They both had roughly 12 million men under arms.¹

Britain was about to lose its Great Power status, to some extent because of the costs of

victory. War damage amounted to roughly £3 billion. Overseas assets of more than another £1 billion had been sold or lost and the income from foreign investment halved. In 1945 Britain was spending abroad more than £2000 million and was earning only about £350 million. The balance had to be acquired primarily from one source, the United States. Britain had a brilliant war record, but little else (Calvocoressi 1979, pp. 10-13).

Thus, in 1945 the United States had completed a triumphant war. Its technological revolution had really taken off, its rivals were exhausted economically, and it seemed that the US would more or less control world markets.

As Paul Kennedy has argued, a similar description would also fit Britain after the triumphs of the Napoleonic wars (Kennedy 1982, p. 6). Yet, in some ways, the Pax Americana after 1945 was more pronounced than the Pax Britannica of the 19th century. In 1950 no country had a GNP even one-third the size of that of the United States. In 1830 both Russia and France in fact had GNPs larger than that of Britain (Russett 1985, p. 212). While Britain had pulled away from the European Congress system of the post-Napoleonic period, the United States was generally able to set up a world order of its own.

3. *The new American ideology*

In 1822 British Foreign Secretary George Canning wrote his famous words 'Things are getting back to a wholesome state again. Every nation for itself and God for us all'. In 1945 God seemed to be on the American side and practically every nation looked to America, at least for economic assistance.

Washington would have its doubts and there would be vacillation in its policies. Remnants of isolationism could certainly still be found. Yet, the surprising element was the rapidity of the change from isolationism to what is often called internationalism. America took it upon itself to create the world anew. America would protect the

world against the evil schemes of the traditional powers. America would not speak only, or even primarily, for itself, but for justice and democracy everywhere.

Politically, most Americans thought world peace best protected through a world organization. So the United States created the United Nations. Economically, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were not really meant to promote American objectives, but world economic progress and even peace. Militarily, there was no threat to anyone in a strong United States. As President Harry Truman stated about the atomic bomb in his Navy Day address on October 27, 1945, 'The possession in our hands of this new power of destruction we regard as a sacred trust. Because of our love of peace, the thoughtful people of the world know that trust will not be violated, that it will be faithfully executed'.

Franz Schurman is probably right when he argues that what took place in American foreign policy after the Second World War was a merger of the old internationalism and the nationalism which had formed such a strong part of the isolationist tradition (Schurman 1974, pp. 46-68). The isolationists had wanted to protect the uniqueness of America from the rest of the world. Now the United States had become so strong that it could not only remain uncontaminated by the evils of the Old World, but could also spread the American gospel to the rest of the world.

America was pure and America was powerful. Non-Americans were not always so sure about the purity. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill put it most succinctly in January 1945 when, tired by Secretary of State Edward Stettinius's sermons against power politics, he responded, 'Is having a Navy twice as strong as any other power "power politics"? Is having an overwhelming Air Force, with bases all over the world, "power politics"? Is having all the gold in the world buried in a cavern "power pol-

itics"? If not, what is "power politics"? (Thorne 1978, p. 515).

4. *America's global role*

The term 'isolationism' as applied to the period up to the Second World War may easily give the wrong impression of American policies. Yet, there is no doubt that the American role expanded tremendously during and after the war. This development was in fact least striking in the economic field. In absolute figures there was a continued strong increase in US foreign trade and investments, but compared to earlier periods and to the gross national product, the foreign trade of the years 1945-1950 did not come out on the high side. Furthermore, both in trade and investments the Western Hemisphere was still more important to the United States than was Western Europe (US Department of Commerce 1975, pp. 871, 884, 887, 903, 905).

Developments were much more striking in the military field. In 1938 the United States had a defense budget of almost exactly 1 billion dollars. America had no military alliances and no US troops were stationed on territory it did not control. After the war the defense budget would stabilize around \$12 billion. Alliances would be concluded and bases established in the most different corners of the world (Ambrose 1980, p. 13; Lundestad 1980, pp. 23-24).

And yet, as John Lewis Gaddis has argued, the big explosion would come only after 1950. The defense budget then quadrupled in the course of three years to more than \$50 billion. Numerous new treaties and alliances were signed, primarily in Asia. By 1955 the United States had about 450 bases in thirty-six countries (Gaddis 1974).

In geographic terms the post-war expansion was not really that noticeable in Latin America, because this had traditionally been Washington's back yard. The American position even in the Pacific had been strong before the war, but now it was considerably expanded. The Japanese Mandated Islands were put under American con-

trol, with only the thinnest of concessions to the suzerainty of the United Nations. Japan itself was to be ruled by American authorities. American influence in South Korea remained strong despite the US forces being pulled back in 1948; in the Philippines independence did not really affect this country's ties with the United States that much.

The Second World War had indicated that both Australia and New Zealand would now look to the United States. In 1951 this understanding was formalized through the ANZUS pact. Britain was excluded from taking part, rather pointedly demonstrating the decline of Britain also in this part of the world (Thorne 1978, pp. 687-88).

The American role was increasing in other parts of the Pacific and Asia as well, although the expansion was generally less striking here. As to China, Truman remarked to his Cabinet in August 1946 that 'For the first time we now have a voice in China and for the first time we will be in a position to carry out the (Open Door-GL) policy of 1898'. America gave far more assistance to its side in the Chinese civil war than the Soviet Union did to its. It is another matter that not even three billion dollars could keep Chiang Kai-Shek afloat (Pater-son 1981, p. 23).

After some years of vacillation, in 1948 the United States intervened rather decisively on the side of Indonesia against Holland. From 1950 Washington came to meet the costs of a war in Indo-China which a declining France could no longer afford. Even in India, where the United States on the whole showed great deference to Britain, America's attitude had to be taken into account (Hess 1971, pp. 157-59, 178-87).

In the Middle East American oil companies had been operating before the war in Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, and, most important, in Saudi Arabia. Now, as Aaron Daniel Miller has argued, 'Although the Americans had no desire to destroy British influence on the peninsula or in the gulf, in Saudi Arabia they sought nothing less than a reversal of traditional roles. No longer would the

United States be content to remain Britain's junior partner, but it would now demand primacy in the economic sphere and at least an equal voice in political matters which might affect the fate of the (ARAMCO-GL) concession' (Miller 1980, p. 205). In Iran the United States quite rapidly took over the British role in opposing Soviet expansion. The American stand there in 1945-46 was to signal what would follow later in other parts of the world. When the British abandoned Palestine in 1948, the Americans again moved in to take over the British role, first in Israel and later in the moderate Arab countries as well.

In North Africa, as elsewhere, American interests expanded after the war. The United States continued to operate its base in Morocco and nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia came to look to America for support, although he would be disappointed after the expectations Franklin D. Roosevelt had created during the war (Gal-lagher 1963, pp. 101, 117, 236-39).

South of the Sahara, Liberia had long been under considerable American influence, but in this part of the world the United States played a more limited role than almost anywhere else.

5. Western Europe's position

Western Europe, however, was what really counted. Latin America would be bitterly disappointed by Washington's lack of interest (Hilton 1981).

In North Africa, in India, in Indo-China Washington would soft-pedal its skepticism to colonial rule, not to disturb relations with the European big powers. With regard to China the Republicans were right in accusing the Truman Administration of not being willing to do there what it did in Europe. But the fact of the matter was that not even the Republican right wing was willing to do in China what it favored in Europe (Pater-son 1981, pp. 33-37).

In Eastern Europe, Washington tried to play an active role. Yet, again and again the Americans were to run up against the fact

that the Western half of Europe counted for more than the Eastern. The Truman Doctrine did not apply even to all of Europe. In the spring of 1947 the Nagy government in Budapest, which had resulted from free elections in the fall of 1945, was still struggling to survive against Soviet pressure. With quite limited support from the United States, Nagy would soon fall. Repeatedly Washington entered into agreements or undertook actions which actually strengthened the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe. Thus, when the last of the countries in Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia, 'fell' in February 1948, this was an event which many policy makers in Washington had predicted. The Prague coup was in part the result of the Marshall Plan. But, again, nothing could be done about it. Western Europe was simply too important for that (Lundestad 1975, pp. 75-106, 178-80, 405-08).

The American influence in Western Europe was rapidly growing in the years after 1945, militarily, politically, economically, and culturally. In many ways the last aspect was the most important, although it will not be dealt with here.

Militarily, the events of the two world wars had shown that the United States would intervene to prevent Western Europe from falling under the control of a hostile power. The same could happen again, alliance or no alliance. The American monopoly on the atomic bomb also gave the Western Europeans some protection before the creation of NATO (Lundestad 1980, pp. 15-17).

The American forces in Germany would provide the trip-wire in this context. Before NATO the United States had military bases on Greenland, the Azores, in Britain, and a civilian facility in Iceland.

Still NATO of course greatly strengthened the American role. The outbreak of the Korean war provided an equally important stimulus. Military assistance skyrocketed, the American troop commitment was increased, and a joint military apparatus and joint defense plans established under American leadership.

Politically and economically, the American influence varied from country to country, as had Britain's influence on its dominions and colonies. Washington's role was the strongest in the US zone in Germany. There General Lucius Clay and the army leadership, with support from Washington, first modified local plans for socialization in Hesse, and then maneuvered to prevent British and local schemes for the socialization of the coal mines in North Rhine-Westphalia in the Bizone. In a similar way Clay was able to limit labor-management code-termination in the American zone and in the Bizone (Gimbel 1968, pp. 117-20, 126-28, 155-58, 170-71, 233-34).

In Greece the Americans dominated the administration to such an extent that Americans actually wrote both the Greek application for aid and the thank-you notes in connection with the Truman Doctrine. Under the Marshall Plan the national bureaucracies in Greece and Turkey broke down to such an extent that Americans were closely involved in running the two countries (Wittner 1982, pp. 73-74, 100-01, 121-28, 171-91; Arkes 1972, pp. 293-94).

In semi-occupied Italy the State Department and Ambassador James Dunn in particular actively encouraged the non-communists to break with the communists and undoubtedly contributed to the latter being thrown out of the government in May 1947. In more normal France the American role was more restrained when the Ramadier government threw out its communists at about the same time. After the communists were out, Washington worked actively, through overt as well as covert activities, to isolate them as well as leftist socialists. On the other side of the coin, the Americans tried to strengthen the political center, including social democratic forces in the political parties and in the labor unions (Miller 1983; Lundestad 1980, pp. 117-18).

US economic assistance was normally given with several strings attached. The French had to agree to promote trade with the rest of the world and to discourage the

setting up of regional trading blocs. The loan agreement with Britain of December 1945 contained even stronger clauses meant to promote freer trade. The Attlee government had to make the pound convertible with the dollar and in principle to agree to remove restrictions that discriminated against imports from the United States (Lundestad 1980, pp. 112-15).

The strings attached to the Marshall Plan further limited Europe's freedom of action. Trade within Western Europe had to be liberalized; trade with Eastern Europe curtailed; American investments encouraged. The establishment of the counterpart funds represented an instrument with great potential for intervention, since the various countries could only draw upon these funds with the consent of the United States. Equally important were the indirect effects of the Marshall Plan. Policies had to be conducted with an eye on what might be the reaction in Washington. Thus, even the British cabinet feared that 'increased investment in the social services might influence Congress in their appropriations from Marshall Aid' (Brett, Gilliat & Pople 1982, p. 138; Milward 1984).

6. *Motives behind US expansion*

Many motives can be found for the American expansion after the Second World War. Most traditionalists have referred to America's and Western Europe's needs for security and protection of democracy; most revisionists have instead pointed to America's capitalism with its requirements for exports, imports, and investments. Post-revisionists have been more eclectic in their approaches and have thrown in an assortment of additional factors ranging from bureaucratic politics in the US to the seemingly natural fact that the US, as any other Great Power in history, was bound to expand more or less regardless of its political or economic system. The debate on this point very much resembles the debate on the origins of British imperialism in the 19th century.

I count myself among the post-revisionists

and in this context I just take it for granted that the United States had important strategic, political and economic motives of its own for taking on such a comprehensive world role. This article, however, focuses on the reactions of local governments and populations to the American expansion.

The revisionist view of the United States thrusting itself into the affairs of other countries can undoubtedly be supported by examples from several parts of the world. Vietnam was to prove the prime illustration of massive intervention with a rather limited local popular basis. Yet, the basic pattern in the early post-war years, particularly in Western Europe, was a different one. The rule was that the United States was invited in.

Even outside of Europe, leaders in Iran, in Saudi Arabia, in Egypt, in India, in Australia and New Zealand were all looking to the United States. Their motives might vary: the need for economic assistance; a desire to employ America as a counterweight to the Soviet Union, to Britain, or to some other power; or admiration for what the United States stood for.

6.1 *Western Europe's economic invitation*

In this article, the focus is on Western Europe. The Europeans even more strongly than most others attempted to influence the Americans in the direction of taking greater, not lesser, interest in their affairs.

Britain offers the best example in this respect. Although London underestimated Britain's fall from Great Power status, the Attlee, as the Churchill, government clearly favored both financial assistance from America and a strong US military presence in Europe. In line with this, Whitehall expressed disappointment when Lend-Lease was abruptly curtailed; hoped for a credit substantially larger than the \$3.75 billion it received; wished to continue wartime cooperation in atomic energy and the existence of at least some of the combined Anglo-American boards, particularly the Combined Chiefs of Staff; wanted the United

States to carry a larger share of the expenses in the German Bizonia. Robert Hathaway has shown that many forms of military and intelligence cooperation actually did continue between the United States and Britain after the war. The British would have preferred such cooperation to have been undertaken openly, but that was deemed politically impossible in Washington (Hathaway 1981).

With regard to the desire for economic assistance, the situation was much the same in most European countries. There was a desperate need for economic assistance, and there was really only one major source, the United States. In the period from July 1945 through June 1947 Western Europe in fact on a yearly average received a larger amount of assistance than it did through the Marshall Plan. And then the more than \$3 billion which the Western Europeans received in humanitarian aid from the United States is not taken into account. Britain's share alone was \$4.4 billion. France received 1.9 billion, Italy 330 million and the Be-Ne-Lux countries 430 million. In this period Eastern Europe only got \$546 million. The Eastern Europeans tried to get much more, but their main stumbling block was Washington's unwillingness to grant such assistance to countries dominated by the Soviet Union (US Department of State 1947, pp. 30-32).

The Europeans also played an important role in shaping the Marshall Plan. The crucial person here was British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. Although Washington was skeptical of working through the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and of having the Soviets participate, Washington left much of the initiative for the followup to Marshall's Harvard speech on June 5, 1947, to the British and the French. In the ensuing British-French-Soviet conference in Paris, Bevin dominated the scene. The Russian attempt to substitute a bilateral approach for the multilateral one favored by Washington was rejected. The ECE was to be bypassed. The Russians were to be left

out. After less than a week the meeting broke down in disagreement. The British Foreign Secretary received unexpectedly firm support from his French counterpart Georges Bidault, considering the complicated domestic scene in Paris (Lundestad 1975, pp. 402-04).

Under the Marshall Plan the Europeans first requested \$28 billion from the United States. This was far more than Washington was willing to give. The Truman Administration cut this down to 17 billion and Congress in turn appropriated approximately 14 billion. Only Moscow's opposition prevented Finland, Czechoslovakia, Poland and even other Eastern European countries from taking part. Washington's own attitude blocked Spanish participation. So, at least on the economic side, there can be no doubt that the Europeans were most interested in involving the United States closely in Europe's affairs (Lundestad 1975, pp. 379-408).

6.2 *Western Europe's military invitation*

The same was true in most European countries even on the military side. After the ending of the London meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in December 1947, Bevin presented his thoughts on military cooperation to Secretary of State Marshall. The British wanted to set up an arrangement for regional military cooperation in Western Europe. It was also obvious that they wanted to commit the Americans as closely as possible to this arrangement.²

Bevin and the British were not the only ones who tried to involve the United States quite closely in the defense problems of Western Europe. At this early stage, Belgian Prime and Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak even went so far as to argue that any defense arrangements which did not include the United States were without practical value. The Dutch favored the same line.

The United States did not take any clear-cut position on these European urgings of closer involvement. Washington would undoubtedly be sympathetic to any European

defense effort, but how far it would go in supporting it was to be determined at a later stage. Differences could be found within the Truman Administration and there was always the question of how Congress and public opinion would react to increasing the US commitment to Europe even before the European Recovery Program had been passed by Congress.

Nevertheless, the British, with general support from the Be-Ne-Lux countries, pressed on. On January 27 Bevin argued that 'The treaties that are being proposed cannot be fully effective nor be relied upon when a crisis arises unless there is assurance of American support for the defense of Western Europe. The plain truth is that Western Europe cannot yet stand on its own feet without assurance of support'.³

On February 6 the pressure was further stepped up. The State Department was informed of Bevin's opinion that a vicious circle was being created. The United States would not define its position as to participation before an arrangement had been worked out in Western Europe. The British in turn argued that an arrangement could not be worked out at all without American participation since the Western Europeans would then see little point in such plans.

The French were somewhat divided between an Atlantic and a European approach to defense, but under either model it was absolutely essential that the American contribution be stepped up. The French never tired of pressing their need for immediate military assistance from the United States. On March 4 'Atlanticist' Foreign Minister Bidault asked the Americans 'to strengthen in the political field, and as soon as possible in the military one, the collaboration between the old and the new worlds, both so jointly responsible for the preservation of the only valuable civilization' (Elgey 1965, p. 382).

The European pressure on the United States was building up. This perspective of Europe pulling upon the United States, in-

stead of the other way around, should not be taken too far. Washington could not be, and was not, forced into anything against its will. Important groups in the American capital, for many different reasons, favored a strong military role in Western Europe. The point here is that at least the Europeans clearly speeded up the clarification process on the American side.

Finally, on March 12 Washington informed London that 'We are prepared to proceed at once in the joint discussions on the establishment of an Atlantic security system' (FRUS, 1948:3, p. 48). The coup in Czechoslovakia, Soviet pressure upon Finland, General Clay's famous warning of March 5 about Soviet intentions in Germany, the uneasy situation in Italy, and, perhaps most important, the rumors that the Soviets might come to propose a pact on the Soviet-Finnish model even with Norway constituted the international background to this change of position in Washington.

Despite the change in policy in Washington and despite the substantial results reached in the so-called Pentagon negotiations between the United States, Canada, and Britain in March, differences remained between Washington and several of the European capitals.

On March 17 Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg concluded the Brussels Treaty which established the Western Union. On the American side, while National Security Council (NSC) documents 9 of April 13 and 9/1 of April 23 on the position of the United States with respect to support for the Western Union and a North Atlantic military arrangement had stressed the objective of a defense agreement for the whole North Atlantic area, NSC 9/2 of May 11 put the accent on inducing additional European countries to join the Western Union. There were many reasons for this partial reversal on the American side to an earlier position. Within the State Department, Policy Planning Chief George Kennan and Counselor Charles

Bohlen favored the so-called 'dumbbell' concept where the United States and Canada cooperated closely on one side of the Atlantic and the Europeans on the other. Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Arthur Vandenberg also wanted to emphasize the responsibility of the Europeans to defend themselves. The military were somewhat ambiguous on integrating the US too closely with Western Europe.

In the end, as we know, the United States agreed to take part in a North Atlantic defense organization on an equal basis with the Western Europeans and the Canadians. Those in Washington who had long favored this solution won out. The key person and in many ways the main architect of NATO was the Director of the Office of European Affairs John Hickerson.

In this context of who pressed upon whom, it was important that the pressure of Britain and Canada for full American participation had to undermine the position of those in Washington who favored looser arrangements. The French and now even the Belgians had come to stress the need for maximum military coordination with and assistance from the United States. The treaty question could then wait. In September they too fell into line when they realized that a treaty could be concluded rather quickly and that arms and military coordination would depend on their assent to the treaty.

Although the differences between the United States and the Europeans kept being narrowed, they never disappeared entirely in the negotiations leading up to NATO. Washington continued to insist that the Europeans do as much as possible to defend themselves. The Europeans on the other hand wanted to make the American guarantees for assistance in case of an attack as automatic as possible. All through February 1949 the State Department kept mediating between the Europeans, with the French probably being the most insistent now, and Congress which disliked anything that

smacked of automatic involvement. In the end Article 5 of the treaty simply declared that in case of an attack each of the parties will take 'such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area'.

It is true that Norway, Denmark, and Iceland would have preferred their military ties with the Atlantic pact to have been more limited than they actually became. But they represented a minority of countries on this question. On the other extreme, Spain, Greece, and Turkey wanted to join NATO, but were not permitted to. And the sum of requests for military assistance from practically all the Western European countries far surpassed what the United States could deliver in the foreseeable future.

In fact, the pressure for closer American involvement in European military affairs did not end with the setting up of NATO. Thus, at the first session of the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in September 1949 the question of NATO's further organization was discussed. A Defense Committee, a Military Committee, and a Standing Group composed of one representative each of the United States, Britain, and France were established. Five Regional Planning Groups were also created. Crucial in this context was pressure from practically all the European nations to have the United States as a member of their particular group. This was the case within the Western Europe group consisting of the Brussels treaty countries, as well as within the Northern Europe group of Denmark, Norway, and Britain and the Southern Europe group of France, Italy, and Britain. The result was that the United States became a full member of the North Atlantic Ocean Regional Planning Group and the Canada-United States Regional Planning Group and only a 'consulting member' of the other three. As the report of the Council states with regard to the Northern, Western, and Southern European groups, 'The United States had been

requested and has agreed to participate actively in the defense planning as appropriate' (FRUS, 1949:4, pp. 329-37; Kaplan & Tamnes in Riste 1985).

This set-up was to a large extent continued after the outbreak of the Korean war, but the definition of what was the 'appropriate' degree of involvement was certainly changed. Again, pressure from the European side was not important in the sense that it forced Washington to do anything against its will, but in that it helped shape developments in Washington.

Now the Europeans worked hard to establish an integrated force in Europe commanded by an American. The Europeans were also unanimous in their preference for General Eisenhower, who was then appointed. Four additional US divisions were sent to Europe and American military assistance to Europe greatly increased. The Korean war had made it necessary to tie the United States even more closely to Europe.

The Europeans in return had to agree to German rearmament, which, particularly to the French, was a difficult concession. They also agreed to increase their forces and defense budgets considerably. But here we come to one of the elements that has continued to trouble the alliance: once the Americans had increased their commitment to NATO, this provided little inducement for the Europeans to do their part. The American objective of increasing Europe's own defense effort therefore met only with partial success (Wells in Riste 1985; Osgood 1962).

7. The state of public opinion

Thus, the pressure from European governments was undoubtedly in the direction of more, not less American attention to Europe. The question should be raised about the extent to which the governments represented their peoples on this point.

It is difficult to give one clear answer. The situation varied from country to country and polls are not available for all of them, entirely satisfactory polls probably hardly for

any of them. The comments made here must therefore be rather tentative. In dictatorships such as Spain and Portugal, in civil war-plagued Greece, and in Turkey as well it was difficult to talk about public opinion. The growing American support to all of these countries, from 1950-51 including Spain, clearly showed that Washington was not afraid of cooperating with undemocratic forces. Conversely, the popular basis of the Czechoslovak government did not prevent the Truman administration from breaking with it in the fall of 1946 (Lundestad 1975, pp. 167-80). Increasingly anti-communism counted more than democratic sympathies, although a combination of both was naturally to be preferred. In Western Europe, different from so many other parts of the world, Washington could have both at the same time.

I have concentrated on Britain, France and Germany. To start off with Britain, the Attlee government received the support of strong majorities for its America policies. In January 1946, 70% thought Britain should accept a loan from America. 17% said no. In April 1948 63% favored the government's attitude toward the US while 19% disapproved of it. In July 1947, 22% had stated that the United States wanted to dominate the world, but this declined to 14% in July 1948 and to 4% in August 1950. (The corresponding percentages for the Soviet Union were 78, 70 and 63). It is a different matter that the British, not surprisingly, did not want the United States to run British affairs and that strong minorities disliked certain aspects of America's foreign policy. The basic feeling was that the two countries should act together, but that Britain should remain independent (Gallup 1977, Great Britain, pp. 125, 161-62, 174, 179, 226, 239, 241-42, 269).

The picture was more ambiguous in France, although there too the sympathy for the United States prevailed. In July 1945 the United States was only favored 43 to 41% over the Soviet Union in reply to the question of what country would have the greatest

influence after the war. Yet, the US was picked by 47% as against 23% for the Soviet Union when it came to whom they would *prefer* to see in this influential position. The doubt as to who would dominate lingered on until the spring of 1947, but there was less doubt about popular preferences. Majorities supported the American loan of 1946, French participation in the Marshall Plan, and the joining of the Atlantic pact, although the number of uncommitted/uninformed persons was frequently quite high (Gallup 1977, France, pp. 27, 51, 55, 77, 88, 92-93, 113, 114, 119, 126, 133, 137-38, 139, 145, 147).

In Germany much criticism could be found of various aspects of the occupation, but at least in the American zone the sympathy for the United States was much stronger than for the other occupying powers. In October 1947 63% trusted the US to treat Germany fairly, 45% placed such trust in Britain, 4% in France, and 0% in the Soviet Union. The support for the Marshall Plan was pronounced and the same was true for the creation of a government for the three Western zones. The German population sustained America's actions, but the United States did not pursue the policies it did primarily for the sake of public opinion. The relationship is best expressed by the editors of the OMGUS Survey, 'The existence of a population that was receptive to reorientation...enhanced the Allies' opportunity to help shape German history' (Merritt & Merritt 1970, pp. 9-29, 43-58, 180-81).

In comparative polls from August 1947 and February 1948, no country showed such skepticism toward the United States as did Norway. In February, 23% thought the US would go to war to achieve its goals and not only to defend itself against attack. (37% responded that the Soviet Union would do so.) This was higher than in France (20%), Holland (16), Italy (16), Sweden (13), Canada (13), Brazil (9) and the United States itself (5) and reflected a definite feeling of distance to both of the Great Powers (Alstad 1969, pp. 89-90). Yet, only two months later

61% thought Norway should join a Western bloc (the US role in this bloc was not clear), 2% favored an Eastern bloc, while 37% thought Norway ought to remain uncommitted. A majority also sustained the decision to join NATO, at least after it had been made by the Gerhardsen Labor government (Alstad 1969, pp. 90-91, 93-95).

Thus little indicates that the European political leaders did not receive the tacit or even stronger support of their peoples when they brought their countries into closer economic, political and military cooperation with the United States.

8. *What happened to the American Empire?*

Finally, it could be asked what happened to this American empire established in the first years after the Second World War. This is certainly a much too comprehensive and complicated question to even attempt to answer in any detail here. I shall only offer a few most tentative remarks.

Empires apparently lead shorter and shorter lives. The Roman lasted around 500 years, the British roughly three hundred, and the American empire, shall we say, around thirty years. In the 1970s several developments took place which, it can be argued, have resulted in the collapse of the American empire⁴.

The nuclear strength of the Soviet Union came to rival that of the United States and now at last the Soviets too played a role in the most distant corners of the world. The war in Vietnam ended in withdrawal and defeat. On the Asian mainland the American-led alliances broke down and SEATO and CENTO disappeared. Parts of the Bretton Woods system collapsed. The drastic measures taken by the Nixon administration in August 1971 showed the seriousness of America's economic problems, but did not in any way solve them. In the 1960s the United States was having difficulties with its balance of payments, in the 1970s with its balance of trade — for the first time since 1883 — and in the mid 1980s the US in fact

became a net debtor country. Everywhere from Vietnam to southern Africa and Iran, Washington was discovering that all kinds of local forces were no longer amenable to American influence, if they ever had been. Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Chile and Nicaragua illustrated Washington's problem even in its traditional backyard. Ronald Reagan resurrected much of the old imperial rhetoric, but little of the reality of empire. It was gone, probably forever.

The American influence was slipping in Europe too. The old continent got back on its feet. American economic assistance to Western Europe gradually ceased in the course of the 1950s. In the 1960s the same happened with the military assistance. From the time Britain joined the European Community in 1973, this European group, however loose, surpassed the United States in population and equalled it in the size of its production.

In the first years after the war Britain, traditionally the most American-oriented among the European countries, had been the leader among the Europeans. From the late 1950s de Gaulle's France challenged the supremacy of the 'Anglo-Saxons'. In the late 1960s West Germany, long the economic leader of Western Europe, developed a foreign policy profile of its own. No longer did Bonn rely completely on Washington. In 1962 the Kennedy administration was able to stop a comprehensive German gas agreement with the Soviet Union. Twenty years later Reagan failed in his attempt to do the same with a similar European deal with the Soviets. The Europeans were moving towards greater unity, first on economic and trade questions, but very slowly also on political matters. In the 1970s the American attitude to European integration became quite lukewarm, as a reflection of the fact that the premise which had underlain the earlier support for integration — that the United States and Western Europe had coinciding interests on all important questions — could no longer be taken for granted.

The United States was still the acknowl-

edged leader of the Western world. The Europeans were still quite dependent on the US, particularly in the strategic field. Culturally the American influence was perhaps as strong as ever. US economic production was still almost twice as large as that of the Soviet Union.

Yet, although leadership persisted, hegemony was gone.⁵ The end of the American empire was both illustrated and explained by the decline in America's power. Developments in the economic field could be most easily quantified, although the numbers that follow should be seen more as demonstrating trends than as measuring exact percentages. The British slipped from having had approximately half of the world's manufacturing production around 1850 to 32% in 1870 and only 15% in 1910 (Kennedy 1982, p. 6). The American decline was similarly marked. From having produced nearly half of the world's gross national product in 1945, the United States was down to 35% in 1969 (Pinder 1976, p. 343). Now the percentage is around 22.

During both the Pax Britannica and the Pax Americana many countries' economies grew faster than that of the 'hegemon' itself. In fact in its period of imperial greatness, America's economic growth slipped behind that of almost every major Western power. In 1950 Canada, France, West Germany, Italy and Japan had economies corresponding to respectively 6, 11, 11, 6, and 7% of the US gross national product. In 1975 these percentages had increased to 10, 16, 19, 9 and 23. Only that old imperial power, Britain, experienced slower growth than the United States. (The British GNP constituted 14% of the US GNP in 1950; in 1975 this had fallen to 12). (US Department of Commerce 1978, p. 908).

So, there no longer was an American empire. Was that because fewer invitations were issued? That was part of the explanation too. Fewer invitations were issued since the Europeans could do so much more on their own. And Washington did not have the strength or the interest to respond as favor-

ably to European invitations as it had in the past.

The entire American-Western European relationship had to be redefined. The Europeans insisted that they be heard to a much greater extent than had been the case in the first two decades after the Second World War. The Americans argued that since the Europeans had become so affluent and demanded more influence, they should also be willing to shoulder greater responsibilities.

Yet, in some fields Western Europe was still quite dependent on the United States. In military, particularly nuclear, matters the American role, although reduced even here, remained supreme. In fact many European governments would again and again invite Washington to try to square the circle of deterring the Russians without frightening the local European populations. Most countries continued to be quite favorable to American economic investments, so much so that these increased from \$1.7 billion in 1957 to more than 24 billion in 1970 and more than 100 billion in 1984 (Grosser 1980, p. 222; World Almanac 1986, p. 101).

An interesting phenomenon, which had been noticeable early on, kept growing ever stronger: the Europeans generally did not mind American assistance at all, but they certainly wanted fewer and fewer strings attached. Once the United States had become involved in a country, the benefits of the American presence were taken for granted by many. Then, if not earlier, cries about American interference would be heard loud and clear.

As Michael Howard has argued with regard to recent American-European military differences, a significant element behind these differences is even 'the degree to which we Europeans have abandoned the primary responsibility for our defense to the United States; have come to take the deterrence provided by others for granted; and now assume that the dangers against which we once demanded reassurance only now exist in the fevered imagination of our pro-

ductors' (Howard 1982/83, p. 319). The changes could be quite rapid, as seen for instance in the reactions of several European governments and parties to the problems posed by the modernization of Soviet intermediate range nuclear weapons in the late 1970s and 1980s.

One final hypothesis: it appears quite likely that part of the American decline was due to the expenses involved in maintaining the American empire. Thus, defense expenditures swallowed enormous resources, resources which in other countries could be used for more productive purposes. American yearly defense costs vastly outran those of European countries even on a per capita basis. American research and development was skewed. Even at the low point of the 1970s the United States devoted 28% of its total R&D money to defense compared to Germany's 7 and Japan's 4% (Kennedy 1982, p. 6). Military and economic assistance was expensive. When these benefits were ended, cooperation with the United States often weakened. Unilateral trade benefits stimulated growth among America's economic competitors. Few countries had been as firmly controlled by the US as occupied West Germany and Japan. Few countries benefited as much economically from being parts of the American empire. With America's economic problems in the 1970s, the American-sponsored liberal world trading order came under pressure. Quarrels erupted with Western Europe and Japan over steel and farm exports, exchange and interest rates, reciprocity in trade, etc.

The American experience resembled that of the British. Empire certainly had its advantages, but it could not be had on the cheap. And is not the Soviet Union, in its much more rigidly controlled empire, experiencing the same thing? China left the fold long ago. The time is over when the Eastern European countries could be exploited to Soviet economic advantage. Now they are being subsidized in several ways. Castro's victory in Cuba has also proved rather costly in economic terms.

9. Conclusion

Thus, American expansion was one of the most striking phenomena of the post-war period; this expansion can be said to have created an American empire equal in scope to any the world had seen before. Yet, this was to a large extent an empire by invitation and it turned out that many of those who issued the invitations prospered more in material terms under the new order than did the United States itself.

NOTES

1. The figures in the preceding paragraphs have been taken from US Department of Commerce (1975, pp. 228, 464); Paterson (1973, pp. 11-12); Paterson (1979, pp. 15-16, 72, 84, 152); Ulam (1971, pp. 4-6).
2. This account of the events in 1947-49 is based on Lundestad (1980); Reid (1977); and Wiebes & Zee-man (1983).
3. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, (1974) 1948, vol. 3, p. 14.
4. These final pages are generally based on the relevant chapters in Lundestad (1985).
5. For some interesting contributions in the 'hegemony' debate, see Russett (1985); Keohane (1984); Gilpin (1981).

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