The World is Changing; but are People Noticing?

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I. Appreciating the extent of the change

Who can influence foreign policy

In a rapidly changing world, where events in one country increasingly affect those of another, even when far away, foreign policy is rapidly taking the form of decisions made on the hoof and on the basis of scant reliable information. The geographical scale of the problem and the rapidity of change are thus no longer allowing its makers to be proactive and creative, but making them, mostly, reactive as one crisis erupts after the other. For instance, the days when Russia had a foreign policy — to reach the warm waters of the Aegean, be it under the pretext of protecting the Orthodox Church, later pan-Slavism and, even later, Communism— that remained in its vision unchanged for nearly three centuries, have gone. The same can be said of Great Britain where once (and for two centuries) keeping the road to India dictated its attitude towards Gibraltar, Malta, Crete, Cyprus, the Suez Canal (i.e. Egypt) and Aden. The absence of a rationally formulated foreign policy is also made more difficult by the fact that those who make it

—professional politicians— not only lack the time to reflect and set for themselves long-term objectives, but also tend to make their decisions with one eye constantly on opinion polls, as they ponder how these will affect their popularity in their own country. This is particularly true if the foreign policy issue has an emotive appeal at home.

The above persons *make* foreign policy; others can, at best, help *shape* it. Nowadays there is an army of think tanks, 'independent' consultants, institutes of international relations, all of whom aspire to an influencing role. Unlike the previous group, they certainly have the time to think, as well as the freedom to choose their subject of study; but are their thoughts truly independent? Who funds them (or whose ideology they share) often determines the advice they give. These are matters that place a big question mark over the work of many American 'think tanks'.

Even when opinions are expressed by truly independent academic thinkers, these views can suffer from the fact that they have not emerged from the purifying ordeal of real politics which obliges those who pontificate to express themselves with caution, paying due regard to the kind of pressures which powerful states can exert on those who dare to criticise them. Such pressures are exerted not just on small countries (such as Greece) but also on medium world players such as France and Germany. The decision to invade Iraq gave some idea of what these countries had to endure for the privilege of remaining faithful to their views.

Clearly, both of the above groups —'professionals' and 'thinkers'— have their strengths and weaknesses and it would be preferable that they combined their efforts. Yet they can rarely do so *effectively*, since whenever a merger of talents takes place, the 'flaws' of the first group submerge the 'strong' points of the second. In practice, this

means that the politician reins in the thinker. On the whole, this writer thinks that this is how it should be; for at the end of the day, political responsibility cannot be attached to unofficial thinkers or hidden advisers, however learned they may be. Yet one must also criticise any decision making which is shaped by the latest opinion polls, although politics is, par excellence, 'the art of the possible' placed within the wider aims and possibilities of the country concerned. Yet one must also regret deeply that in this complex setting there seems to be little room to introduce new, often lateral, thinking.

So how can a thinker, who seeks no preferment or other benefit, contribute, albeit from the sidelines, to the advancement of the common weal?

First and foremost, by remaining independent in his thought and analysis and by not being indebted to any interest group or party. Secondly, by expressing his thoughts publicly, so that politicians and the electorate can reflect on them. Thirdly, by expressing his views fairly but frankly, at times even just formulating what (most?) people think but dare not express in public. In short, such 'thinkers' should not be afraid even to 'shock' with their views if this forces others into thinking even the unthinkable. That these views may end up being proven wrong or rejected (even if right) is neither here nor there. For what our times lack most, next to the leisure needed for reflection and not just absorption of the ever-growing volume of information, is *the ability to think differently* and the courage to speak one's mind. Here, then, are some thoughts by one who has followed international relations from the angle of many countries and, though personally not involved in politics, has had politics in his blood for many generations.

Not seeing the obvious

Little studied in our times are the consequences of the fact that the American sun rose within a relatively short period of time. A country of adventurous, kind, generous, God-loving and hardworking but 'provincial' (in the earlier days and by comparison with European standards) people was, effectively, catapulted into the role of superpower only after the Second World War and into the role of sole world power after the end of the Cold War. Institutional maturity, experience, and understanding had to be acquired in a space of time which was not only short but during which the geographical range of America's responsibilities expanded uncontrollably. What we now see, shocking as this statement may seem to some, is the result: the sun beginning to set without having gone through high noon.

To be sure, the sunset we are witnessing is slow; but it is neither idyllic nor comforting as sunsets usually are. Unlike the Middle Eastern kingdoms of Antiquity, China, the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, or British Empires, the trajectory of American power has, in historical terms, been short and the decline largely self-made. Russia's re-emergence on the international scene, largely because of its newly acquired energy wealth, is one new development which is already cutting short the American hegemony; and those who believe in the idea of power checking power will welcome this development. Another is the quicker-than-expected growth of China and India. A third is the fact that in economic terms, China, India, Brazil, the Middle East, and even Africa, are now developing an increasing trade and sophisticated financial transactions among themselves, by-passing American and European economic centres.

All these factors are shortening the period of American hegemony. But the Americans' own *hubris* has also contributed to their own decline. Theirs has been the *hubris* that comes with uncontrolled power, the worship of financial greed, the choice of uninspiring leaders to lead them, the unquestioning belief that technological power is all that is needed for success, and the undervaluing of the indomitable power of the human mind and spirit. That is why a determined mujahadin can be as potent as a laser-guided missile.

Thus, the conviction that has dominated American thinking from the days of the Kosovo War to Iraq was (and remains) that all that matters is the ability to shoot enemies from high-flying airplanes, out of reach of their own primitive weapons. That such a way of warfare, worse still, such a way of solving world conflicts does not work has been abundantly proved since President Bush (prematurely) celebrated on one of his aircraft carriers the end of the war in Iraq. Admiring as I do the wisdom of the Ancient Greeks, I cannot help thinking that this is a perfect example of Herodotus' notion that Hubris brings Nemesis. But then Herodotus may not be widely studied in Texas among politicians and businessmen (even though Ms Rice's thesis was, I am told, largely based on Thucydides).

In the USA we have seen this philosophy of 'aggression' repeatedly manifested in other areas of public life besides warfare. From about the 1980's onwards, in the idolisation of economic greed, the urge for fast personal profit (at the expense of enterprise growth), the development of an uncoordinated secret service activity and a creeping conservatism in its legal values have all marked America. As a jurist, I cannot but regret most the decline of America's humanism in its law and legal institutions, all in

the name of military supremacy which in turn is, in essence, being used to assist American economic supremacy grow deep roots abroad, especially in the Middle East.

The decline of the American predictive power

As indicated, one casualty of the above mentality has been the decline of the American predictive power. In my youth, the mere mentioning of the words CIA or British Intelligence would inspire awe in the mind of listeners, who, especially in the Mediterranean world, are known for being both intelligent and gullible. Yet reflect for a moment before perpetuating this old image in our times.

Did the USA predict the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia in the early eighties? The fall of the Berlin war in the late eighties? The invasion of Kuwait at about the same time? The disaster of the Twin Towers in New York in the 21st century? Of course, both the American and British secret services may have discovered and foiled other attacks since September 11th, which we do not know but for which we must be grateful. But such successes must not allow us to forget or underestimate a series of recent, major, lapses. It will help not one iota to argue that some individual agencies did get some hints of what might happen on September 11th while others did not, since all failed to act. Nor is it a badge of honour that the American national security services —note the plural— have in recent years spent most of their money acquiring expensive gadgets but also spent much of their time fighting each other rather than the outside enemy. Nor, finally, does it do real credit to the Americans to realise that they placed too much confidence on the advice (erroneous it turned out) of refugee Iraqi politicians whose views were sought and

relied upon by the ruling political and intelligence elites in Washington. Most recently, the American predictive power was shown to be manifestly non-existent given how they believed and proclaimed that the American troops liberating Baghdad would be greeted by the invaded Iraqis with open arms and waving flags. If all this is even partly true —and, in my view, it is entirely true— how and why should other people, in the Middle East or elsewhere, believe what the Americans tell them now? American credibility is at a very low ebb.

Military power or impotence

'Who cares about all this?' many of my American friends have told me when I mention the above concerns about their country. 'At the end of the day, we have such military and technological superiority that we can crush anyone and any country we wish or feel that it acts too much as a bothersome thorn in our side.' 'Shock and Awe' was based on such a belief; and as a term it was well selected since it was meant to embody what American military might could do. In reality, it was a damp squid. For it showed once again that big issues in human history can rarely (if ever) be solved *only* through war.

A disgraced Donald Rumsfeld no doubt has had enough time by now to reflect on all this. Yet it is unlikely that he (and his likes) will ever learn the lesson. For he was a politician playing General who overruled his advisers and thought that he could not only defeat Saddam's army *but also pacify Iraq* with the troops originally assigned to the task using supreme technology. These kinds of generals rarely understand that, in the end, it is negotiated settlements that end crises and not naked military might. Moreover, they

cannot even conceive settlements which leave no one side as a total winner or total loser. In accordance with what was said, they want ‘everything’. And they do not even have the humility ever to accept that they have erred.

Yet the insistence on the outdated dogma that military might can solve all problems has now led the Americans to do the reverse of what they did at the beginning of the war, i.e. pump in even more troops in the belief that this ‘surge’ would, at least, help facilitate their orderly withdrawal (though they did not put it in that way). However, forty years earlier the same approach in Viet Nam failed to help General Westmoreland or his country. It is unlikely to fare better now for General Petraeus. The end will be the same however it is presented by the American propaganda machine: a retreat; perhaps not with helicopters flying out of Baghdad’s rooftops, but probably, one carried out by huge planes ferrying out brave soldiers who were asked to execute an ill-conceived project. Thus, apart from President Bush, I am aware of no senior politician or general (including Americans) who, in private if not in public, do not accept that the war in Iraq *is already lost* — at huge, it must be added, economic and human cost. One quotation will do, not to reinforce my point of view, for I genuinely believe it to be correct, but to explain why I am willing to express it in such certain terms. This is what general Sanchez, the man who ran until recently the military show for the Americans, has said about it: ‘The best one can do is contemplate defeat for there is no doubt that America is living through a nightmare which seems to have no end.’ I respectfully not only agree but predict much worse to come as the attention now switches to Afghanistan, Pakistan and, above all, Iran. Yet the *hubris* continues among official circles; and the friends of America are forced into submissive silence or obsequious obedience. To this I add one comment only,

since it is linked to one of my central themes: why do people of authority speak only after they have retired? Maybe the reasons are linked to their professional career and a reluctance to give it up in order to speak freely. I do not know the answer, but I do regret the result.

The decline in human rights

In my youth, America was held out to be the model democracy. To be sure, they still treated black people horribly and women unequally; but they held free elections, enjoyed a free press, made it possible for a peanut farmer and an actor to become Heads of Sate and, in the sixties, they also had a constitutional court which produced a series of admirable liberty-enhancing decisions that have influenced constitutional courts in many other countries since then. Yet, now, America is the country of the executive privilege, the country of Guantanamo, the country of the extraordinary rendition, the country which uses its own legislation to spy on its citizens on a massive scale, the country that practices torture within its own borders. It is also the country which has taken the notion of pre-emptive war to such dangerous limits —outstretching all notions of 'just war'— that I, for one, would not be surprised if they crowned their recent series of errors by bombing Iran and plunging the world and its economy into an even deeper chaos.

This is not the America I was taught to believe in *and still love*; this is most certainly not the America many Americans want to see (and having worked in that country for twenty seven years I have acquired many American friends who would countersign everything I say here). But it is what we have; and I wonder how much of it

will change when a new President assumes office in about fifteen months time. My guess —and I shall return to this below— is very little, at least as far as foreign policy is concerned. Greeks, ever the optimists, may think otherwise.

Not saying what others see and believe

What brings all of the above together? The fact that not all of us are prepared to 'stare the changing world in the face' and then force those who 'govern' us draw the necessary conclusions. Yet we need to do that, since the Americans have their fingers in other pies as well, e.g. FYROM, which they can use to exert pressure on those who prove to be too independently-minded. Kosovo, Montenegro, Cyprus are other soft spots. Even more intractable is the problem of Iran; and what the Americans do there may —in fact, I am sure that it will— affect us all in many ways. Perhaps not seeing and not saying what we see lies at the root of the problem. And if we do not see and speak our minds, we shall continue to be their lackeys and not their friends as we must.

This is the lesson we learn from a famous Hans Christian Andersen story. For, it will be remembered, in that story it was the little boy who said that 'the King was undressed' while parading in the streets. Grown-ups saw the same scene but said nothing. Was it conformism? Was it massive hypnosis? Was it fear to speak? Was it self-interest served by keeping quiet? Whatever it was, the fact is that grown-ups did not speak and, in our case, the knowledgeable political actors still do not speak either. Nor do they act, but tiptoe in the corridors of power. Yet what the Hans Christian Andersen kid saw, they all saw, but they simply chose to remain silent.

How many of the things I have stated above are still not seen by most? Neither politician nor ordinary citizen should fail to see some of America's modern excesses. But do they speak? Of course not. Do they cry out that the US President may be about to lead us into another disaster? I have little doubt that no Foreign Minister would dare be as outspoken as I am, not because they do not see what I am describing but because of the fear of how this would go down with the American authorities, and the trouble which this might then stir up for them.

It is this pragmatic realisation that makes politicians important players and reduces thinkers to being backstage voices crying in the desert. Unfortunately, however, it is this attitude that also helps perpetuate the image of American power since no one has the guts to challenge it openly and declare it unacceptable to the extent that it tries to shape another country's behaviour.

In the long run such submission to the real or perceived power of the USA will wane. This change will come quicker when we realise that the USA, despite its technology and endless wealth, has weakened more than most people are yet ready to accept in public. But bold politicians should from now on be pursuing *parallel* (not alternative) links with other mega-powers if they realise that the dynamics of international politics are changing rapidly. The most perceptive ones, in our country as well, are already doing it and names need not be mentioned.

II. Tackling the New Reality

To see clearly requires dispersing the mist created by dead myths

The little boy who shouted that 'the King was undressed' did so because he had an uncluttered mind that did not obscure his sight nor impede his speech. Most of us, often the more senior we are the more we suffer from opaque sight and an over-cautious mind. Experience, prudence, bias, self-interest make us see things the way we want them to be or the way they were in our youth but are not any longer. Thucydides said it a long time ago in Pericles' 'Funeral Oration': 'decision is the fruit of ignorance, hesitation of reflection.' So we must start by destroying those myths which obscure both our vision and our judgment. Here are some, which, I think, should have been slaughtered a long time ago. Then we should move from inaction to action. The times we live in are dangerous; nothing less will do.

US foreign policy will change in the Middle East with the (possible) change of a President?

I honestly doubt that it will, except in cosmetic terms and in the form of token concessions. I wish I could predict otherwise, but the reality of power politics and lobby pressures, and how both operate in shaping American foreign policy, convinces me that our American friends are not really ready to tackle the Palestinian problem in a substantive manner, securing the geographical identity of Israel but also recognising in a tangible way decades of Arab grievances and the need to address them. This, in my view, includes addressing the international status of Jerusalem. But we must learn to think the

unthinkable if we do not wish to continue with the current state of warfare in different parts of the Middle East, which is costing so much life and such an economic drain on American finances. Solving the latter headache by increasing the deficit is a temporary answer that merely shifts the unbearable debt on future generations of Americans.

In the light of the above, I think it is in intellectual terms difficult to deny that Israel has, in recent times, become a contributory source of instability in the Middle East. It goes without saying that, while a section of the Palestinian and Middle Eastern community denies Israel the right to exist, it is not only adopting an unacceptable posture but one which also serves to fuel the reciprocal extreme reaction from Israel. This has been particularly evident since the late Prime Minister Sharon came to power, setting aside the more moderate position of the assassinated Prime Minister Rabin and the current President Peres. To put it differently, it takes two to have a quarrel; and Israel's tendency to have easy recourse to its military technology to interfere with sovereign rights of neighboring states does not help either its own cause or that of world peace. Despite the fact that Israel suffered a bloody nose after its (fairly) recent venture into southern Lebanon, there are few signs that it has changed its tune; the recent granting to it of a further US$ 30 billion military aid might suggest that neither has America.

One incident that worries me as a lawyer is Israel's pre-emptive strike on Iraq over twenty years ago. I say this because it set a dangerous precedent of altering (and not just violating) the rules of international law. This is stressed here above all other incidents for it is not, alas, unlikely that Israel, alone or with the USA combining in different ways, might attempt something similar but infinitely more worrisome in Iran in the near future. Such bellicose sentiments *seem* to be spreading even among some in Europe. Even more

worrying but supportive of this author's thesis is the fact that Mrs. Hillary Clinton was recently reported in *The Times* of 16 October 2007 to be adopting a more hawkish note on Iran. 'All options,' she declared, 'must remain on the table'; and this is the precise expression used by President Bush when he refused to rule out the possibility of military intervention.

Can such a use of force be entirely excluded? It is futile to speculate since the ultimate decision rests on others who, to me at least, are unpredictable. But look at the situation in North Korea. A few years ago, that looked like an imminent crisis point and now, after careful diplomacy, appears to be on the way to finding an answer. And could not the same be said of the position advocated by Hans Blix before the Iraq war began? He was right in saying that there were no weapons of mass destruction; he might have also been right in implying that a few more months of patient diplomacy might have avoided what we now have, which, in my view, is infinitely more dangerous.

Military intervention can clearly not take the form of another invasion; America is much weaker than most commentators can even imagine even to consider such a possibility. Yet in accordance with its belief that technology is what counts, it has undoubtedly been considering selective bombing of Iranian nuclear sights. What may be yet undecided is (a) how many it will choose to destroy and (b) whether it will try to do this with conventional or limited nuclear weapons.

This writer believes that if such bombing took place it would only temporarily set back Iranian efforts to enrich uranium. By contrast, it could lead to the closing of the Strait of Hormuz; it would result in huge anti-American demonstrations across Europe (and the world?), and it would strengthen not weaken the anti-West feelings in the

Islamic world. Personally, I would go even further and suggest that many might begin considering such action as justifying a legal complaint against the American leadership for crimes against humanity (even if in practice it would not be easy to pursue). But let us control our imagination and hope that none of this occurs. Instead, let us mention two recent developments which reinforce my concern that Hillary Clinton's foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel and the Middle East would not be substantially different from that of President Bush.

First, the French left-wing newspaper *Libération* was recently quoted as stating —a point I have heard from elsewhere as well— that the only Ambassador Mrs. Clinton is willing to receive 'immediately' is the Israeli Ambassador. Then came a long account in *The Times* of London which reported recent statements by Mrs. Clinton of a distinctly bellicose tone. Combined, news of this kind must surely support the obvious conclusion: the dependency of Mrs. Clinton on the Israeli lobby in the USA. If what I say is credible, does it augur well for a change in foreign policy?

. Let us pursue this point somewhat further. Few may have noticed that a few weeks ago Israeli bombers attacked military targets in Syria. Even fewer probably read that these were guarded by Iranian-made anti-aircraft missiles which did not work. Presumably, they are of the same kind that guard Iranian nuclear testing sites. Was there a failure due to technical reasons? Or was this success due to the higher and better Israeli (i.e. American) technology? Or, finally, were the Iranian/Syrian missile sites neutralised in advance by secret commando forces? Any of these suppositions can, bearing in mind how the Iraqi conflict and the earlier bombing of Iraqi installations took place, justify the

further supposition that such expeditions are ‘trial runs’ for something bigger and more dangerous envisaged for the future.

In the light of the above, is it realistic to claim, as Mrs. Clinton did in the same statement, that ‘American leadership is wanting, but it is still wanted’? This is a clever wordplay, albeit one certainly suggesting the hand of some clever speechwriter. The reality however is very different; and America runs the risk of believing again in the same idea that encouraged it to intervene in Iraq: that it is wanted. While American music, fast food, and Hollywood culture are indeed wanted, political ideas imposed by this country are disliked by more and more countries in the world, including many which, before the Bush era, would have been considered loyal friends and admirers.

Withdrawal of the USA from Iraq will cause an even greater disaster

President Bush spread this view recently when, unconvincingly, he compared what happened to Cambodia and Laos after the American defeat in Viet Nam with what would happen if they left Iraq in an unplanned and urgent manner.

The last three years have been spent on altering the official position on three arguments which once served the Americans and the British with the excuse for interfering in Iraq. The first was that Iraq had no weapons of mass distraction after all, thus demolishing the first justification for the invasion of that country. The second was to deny that September 11th was, after all, linked to Iraq. That marked the end of the second excuse for the Iraq war. Regime change has remained as the third justification but it so limp from the point of view of international law that few take it seriously. So with all

reasons for the war discredited, the only thing left to a discredited President is to claim that if his troops leave without finishing their job 'millions of innocent people would die as Iraq falls apart.' For present purposes, the American concern for innocent deaths can be left aside without further comment; but what about the second part of the argument, the one, incidentally, that led the much wiser father Bush to stop killing the retreating troops of the defeated Saddam in order not to encourage the disintegration of the country? Would Iraq disintegrate or neighboring countries invade it in order to plunder it? Te first reaction should be: the invaders should have thought of this earlier? But we said that forward planning is deficient, so let us address the point of what do we do now to avoid such further deterioration.

Recruiting the help of an old foe

That is where Russia comes into the picture; but again this has not been allowed from the outset since the American financial interests, especially the American petrol companies, were anxious from the start to keep Russia out of the picture. We are back to the theme of greed for that is what it is when one reflects that Exxon alone made in one quarter last year 12 billion dollar profits!

The exclusion of Russia was from the beginning flawed, just as it was a mistake for America not to take into account the objections expressed at the time when the war began by France and Germany. But in those days they could ignore Russia; indeed Americans taunted it and humiliated it on every conceivable occasion, not foreseeing —another prediction error— that it was bound to come back under Mr. Putin's tough

leadership. But now the picture has changed and, if anything, they need Russia more. Alas, American-Russian relations have reached their nadir.

I discussed this recently in an article in *The Guardian* and argued there that the more active involvement of Russia (and Europe) along with the USA could help control if not somewhat calm Iran's posturing (provided they had not bombed it in the meantime!) and also help preserve the continued integrity of Iraq by preventing any Turkish attempt to destabilise the Kurdish north. Of course, things might not work out in the way I am predicting; but any alternative approach, which Mr. Blair may try in his official capacity as representative of the big powers, is, in my view, even more likely to founder, since American financial interests and American Jewish pressure will inhibit his undoubted negotiating talents and restrain his correct instinct to try and find a just (and not just cosmetic) solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which includes creating an internationally acceptable status for Jerusalem. My own guess is that this cannot come to an end until the ambitions of *all* extremists are restrained and a negotiated compromise is achieved. Russia could add to this pressure. Mr. Putin's recent visit to Teheran reinforces this conviction; and those who choose to ignore this reality, will act at their peril.

A solution will never come through military means but through talking

A solution is only found and lasts if a settlement is reached in which no party wins and no party loses. It means slowly restraining unrestrained power and influence; it means realising that the political regimes in the Middle East must be allowed to emerge naturally, organically, and not be imposed from the top down (or maintained despite their

manifest corruptness) as the Americans have said and done. It means appreciating the fact that democracy may work in different forms and, initially, in countries which have not experienced it throughout the history, it may only have to work in a restricted way. It also means that we must ourselves show respect for human rights before we can demand from others to do the same.

Such talking must obviously include Iran. It must cover the whole spectrum of festering problems. It must not be based on preconditions and threats. And it must strive for some kind of reconciliation on a live-and-let-live basis. This may sound as too much or as too platitudinous. But what we had up to now was always circumscribed by demands from both sides which were too extreme and unrealisable. Everything must be put on the table, for otherwise we will go on as we have been doing for decades now, and the status quo CANNOT continue forever. Apart from the continuing suffering no country can afford —economically and psychologically— to stay on the existing stressful and dangerous path. For no country can stomach the prediction recently made by General Dannatt, Chief of Staff of the British Armed Forces, when he suggested that the public must be prepared for the present state of affairs to continue for a further twenty five years. No wonder that he also argued that he was worried whether the public could tolerate such a state of affairs.

So, I suspect, people will *have to* move towards the comprehensive discussion of the problems that divide them when they have had enough. The only question is how much more suffering must be endured before we reach the moment of compromises. The need for men and women with vision has never been greater.

Concluding remarks

We cannot solve a problem before we begin to see it clearly. This means often demolishing preconceptions and myths which obscure our vision. This is not an easy task, for if it is difficult to create myths it is almost impossible to destroy them. But the situation in the world, the Middle East, and further East, is not getting better but more confused, more unstable, more worrying. If the last four to six years have proved something, it is that American leadership, on its own, is not reliable, notwithstanding the many qualities of its people and the achievements of its technology.

Difficult decisions are needed. Professionals who make these decisions must not make them on the basis of their perceived popularity but on the basis of conviction. This conviction must be formed on the basis of digesting the significance of the points made above. They must be based on the conviction that alliances are founded on common interests and mutual respect, not on dependency. They must never ignore the manifold advantages and meritorious attributes of America and its people; but they must also factor in, as contemporary Greek foreign policy is doing more and more, the fact that the world is again becoming bipolar or even multi-polar, and our foreign policy must exploit this change. Building closer links with other great powers is thus in our interest and it should *not* be seen as a slant to older friends.

The key difficulties to all these problems remain two.

The first is that America believes that its presence or intervention —Mrs. Clinton called it 'leadership'— is still wanted. I wish presidential advisers did a better job in informing the American leadership of the serious erosion of its image and popularity. Of

course, in private, some of this may be reaching actual and future Presidents and they may be ignoring it in the belief that they must act now and establish an undisputed hegemony in the world before the other powers alluded to in this article can stop its ambitions in a decisive manner. This is a subtle if undisclosed reason for acting; but it is not a sufficient reason for believing that unilateral action can succeed. Such beliefs lead us back to advocating the real involvement of other major powers.

This leads us to the second difficulty. The Americans cannot extricate themselves or us from the massive new problems which began by world terrorism and were subsequently aggravated by American foreign policy. The active participation of others (such as Russia) is needed, but the Americans are, clearly, unlikely to 'buy' this option… yet. It seems that they will need more set-backs —in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan or elsewhere in the Middle East— before they are forced to realise that they cannot do things on their own or even with the cosmetic support of Britain or the (nowadays) apparently more willing France. In the meantime, those who like Americans and admire America, even when they disagree deeply with some of its important policy decisions must try to help it understand the difficulties which it will face in the years to come as it ceases to be the sole mega power it now is.

Until this fog on the international scene lifts, smaller countries would be well advised to cultivate all major players. For political uncertainty can resemble economic uncertainty: when the going is bad it is best not to put all of one's eggs in one basket. I have the feeling and hope that Greece is moving in that direction.