

When everything that the US has done to create and support a global world order is being challenged, both here and abroad, it may benefit us to review exactly what we accomplished. Knowing this might help us restore it after the next election.

Political scientist Michael Mandelbaum published a book in 2005: The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World\222s Government in the 21st Century. Mandelbaum claims that the US has functioned as a de facto world government from which everyone benefits. Even our most sullen allies and enemies, in private and in their actions, all have recognized and depended upon America\222s hegemony, until today.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, questions were raised about why we should maintain an expensive Pacific fleet; there were those who thought that it was time to mothball that institution. When Congress recognized how our presence in the Pacific provided a stability and peace that would have otherwise been absent, there was bipartisan support for funding. Imagine the naval arms race that would rage among countries with long historic hostility to each other. But thanks to us, those east-Asian countries, most of them dirt poor, have thrived and become substantial contributors to the world economy and enjoy a growing middle class.

The same can be said of Europe, which has enjoyed more than a half-century of economic growth and socialist largesse under the security of the American umbrella\227the costs borne by the American public. Would this be so if those countries had been compelled to defend themselves against historically hostile neighbors? Despite the public disdain for the United States, people do (or should) know the role we play in their safety and economies.

Even in the Muslim world, which is viscerally hostile to the United States, the worst and most authoritarian leaders send their families to the United States and their children to our schools. The words are one thing\227their actions quite another.

Governance. Mendelbaum provides a brief history of the institutions of government: empire, what government does, the role of society, and the role of consensus.

International Security. He assesses our role in international security\227including how we provide reassurance, our role in nuclear nonproliferation, terrorism and preventive war, humanitarian intervention, and state-building (one of our less successful, but well-intentioned endeavors).

Global Economy. Overseeing the global economy is one of our most important functions, with involvement in enforcement, oil, money, trade, and consumption.

International Legitimacy. There would not be any valid international legitimacy without the umbrella of the US. We face resentment and criticism, yet we continue to provide leadership and bear the costs of having a world in which there is the appearance of legitimacy.

A World Without America. There is no doubt that were we not today\222s hegemon, the world would be a much more dangerous place. Institutions such as the UN and the European Union cannot\227or do not\227have force to fall back on when talk no longer has an effect. The world may resent us, but without us, most of the gains enjoyed by the developed world would not have been possible. As for the lesser developed world, there has been a surprising reduction in global poverty, to which we have contributed. However, because we do not provide security everywhere, we can see the consequences when our power is absent. Nobody intervened in the genocide in Rwanda and no one was willing to step up to forcibly stop the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Nobody would have intervened in the genocide in Yugoslavia\227a situation in Europe\222s very orbit\227until the US ended it and contributed to the rebuilding of those countries, which are once more flourishing.

Gratitude is not an emotion that most nation-states cherish. However, let\222s end the pretense that the power of the United States is obnoxious. There is no model in world history in which an imperial power did as much good and took as little in return. For a resolutely anti-aristocratic country, the United States shows laudable noblesse oblige, and if we heed our better angels, we must repair Trump\222s damage.

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