

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN US FOREIGN POLICY

# American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks

The Open Door since the end of the  
Cold War

Bastiaan van Apeldoorn and  
Naná de Graaff



Anyone wanting to understand the fundamental drivers of U.S. grand strategy needs to read this superb, path-breaking book. Extending and deepening the “Open Door” approach to explaining American policy, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff make a compelling *Innenpolitik* argument. They have brought the role of social forces back into the discussion of the sources of grand strategy, and their argument is graphically supported by their use of Social Network Analysis to show the interconnections between policymakers and U.S. corporate and financial elites. *American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks* is a “must read” for serious students of U.S. grand strategy.

Christopher Layne, *University Distinguished Professor of International Affairs, Texas A&M University, USA*

In this bold and original work van Apeldoorn and de Graaff investigate the social sources of elite policy coordination and contestation over American grand strategy. These elites flit between the transnational corporate sector and top-ranking national policy positions, shaping and reinforcing policy networks on the way. Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff detail how corporate elites have actively sought to influence U.S. foreign economic policy, particularly through an Open Door strategy. This strategy has relied on elite networks to turn regulatory and trade barriers in East Asia, Europe, and North America into open doors for American capitalism. Using an astute combination of Social Network Analysis and prosopography, this fine study makes a serious advance in political economy and should be read all those interested in the nuts and bolts beneath the larger machinery of contemporary capitalism.

Leonard Seabrooke, *Professor of International Political Economy and Economic Sociology, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark*

Probing the social sources of American Grand Strategy with sophisticated network- and discourse-analytic methods, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff make a major contribution to our understanding of international relations, the policy-planning process and the role of corporate elites as embedded agents within state–society relations. Their critical political-economy analysis unpacks the origins and trajectory of the U.S.’s unique project of the global Open Door, deftly highlighting both change within continuity across three post-Cold War administrations. Accessible, meticulously researched and persuasive, this book sets a new standard for research in International Relations and global political economy.

William K. Carroll, *Professor of Sociology, University of Victoria, Canada*

This is an outstanding, ground-breaking study that puts elite studies back on the agenda. But it goes far further than rehashing C Wright Mills’s *The Power Elite* or William Domhoff’s *Who Rules America*. The study establishes the objective and subjective significance of elites in American society, politics and foreign policy, and then even more significantly, shows through key decisions taken by administrations from Clinton to Obama how elites set the agenda for post-Cold War American grand strategy. This is a remarkable book that will become required reading for political scientists, area studies and IR specialists.

Inderjeet Parmar, *Professor in International Politics, City University London*

Tracing the often small tactical divergences in various post-War U.S. administrations, this critical analysis roots U.S. international order-making to its broader Grand Strategy of rendering the global economy an “Open Door” to U.S. interests. In so doing it builds a nuanced theoretical understanding of the close inter-relationship between U.S. national security interests and the global political economy, and will become required reading for scholars in U.S. foreign policy and security studies.

Doug Stokes, *Professor of International Security at the University of Exeter, UK*

There is a sizeable literature on corporate interlocks and network analysis of links between business and private organizations, just as there exists an interminable flow of foreign policy analysis and advice in the form of book-length interventions, memoirs, or otherwise. This book breaks new ground by bridging the two lineages which at this level of detailed investigation has not been attempted so far. The authors have combined their remarkable talents and experience to offer the reader a treasure trove of detailed information on the many interconnections between the business and foreign policy-making arenas in the United States that casts new light on the continuities and shifts between successive administrations after the Cold War. By its theoretical depth, scholarly erudition, and extensive, fine-grained data analysis this will be a key reference work for many years to come.

Kees van der Pijl, *Professor emeritus, School of Global Studies,  
University of Sussex, UK*

# American Grand Strategy and Corporate Elite Networks

This book presents a novel analysis of how U.S. grand strategy has evolved from the end of the Cold War to the present, offering an integrated analysis of both continuity and change. The post-Cold War American grand strategy has continued to be oriented to securing an “open door” to U.S. capital around the globe. This book will show that the three different administrations that have been in office in the post-Cold War era have pursued this goal with varying means: from Clinton’s promotion of neoliberal globalization to Bush’s “War on Terror” and Obama’s search to maintain U.S. primacy in the face of a declining economy and a rising Asia.

In seeking to make sense of both these strong continuities and these significant variations the book takes as its point of departure the social sources of grand strategy (making), with the aim to relate state (public) power to social (private) power. While developing its own theoretical framework to make sense of the evolution of U.S. grand strategy, it offers a rich and rigorous empirical analysis based on extensive primary data that have been collected over the past years. It draws on a unique dataset that consists of extensive biographical data of 30 cabinet members and other senior foreign policy officials of each of the past three administrations of Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama.

This book is of great use to specialists in International Relations – within international political economy, international security, and foreign policy analysis, as well as students of U.S. politics.

**Bastiaan van Apeldoorn** is Associate Professor of International Relations at the Department of Political Science at VU University in Amsterdam.

**Naná de Graaff** is Assistant Professor in International Relations at the Department of Political Science, at VU University in Amsterdam.

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**To our children:  
Isabelle and Solenne  
Damian**

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Bastiaan van Apeldoorn  
Naná de Graaff  
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# Introduction

This book is about the evolution of American grand strategy in the post-Cold War era, and about the foreign policy elite that has been making this strategy. In contrast to most other approaches, we argue that it matters who the people that make up this elite are: what their social background is; which social networks they are part of; in which social context their agency is located. Only through an account of the *actual agents situated within their social context* can we come to a more comprehensive understanding of U.S. grand strategy. The core thesis of this study, then, is that in order to explain the evolution of American grand strategy we need to analyze its *social sources*, starting with the grand-strategy makers themselves and the networks of social relations in which they were and are embedded. Our key finding is that America's foreign policy elite from the Clinton to the Obama administration has been firmly embedded in America's corporate elite dominated by transnationally oriented capital. It is this continuity in the social sources of American grand strategy, we argue, that helps to explain much of the continuity in that grand strategy, even if we will also find important manifestations of intra-elite variation within that continuity.

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, American grand strategy has pursued a liberal expansionism ultimately aimed at the creation of a global hegemony premised upon open, “free” markets, to which global capital – and above all U.S. transnational capital – has full access.<sup>1</sup> Following the work of revisionist historians, in particular William Appleman Williams (Williams, 2007; 2009; see also LaFeber, 1998), we identify such a grand strategy and its underlying ideology as one of an “Open Door,” that is, an Open Door to U.S. capital. This book will argue that *the global Open Door has continued to define the ends of American grand strategy throughout the post-Cold War era*. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union offered an unexpected opportunity to create a truly global capitalist empire, that is, to create a U.S.-centered liberal world order of unprecedented geographical scope. Yet within this important underlying continuity of economic, not territorial, expansionism we also observe significant variation with regard to the *means* employed in the pursuit of the Open Door.

This book thus aims to describe and explain *both the continuities and the variations within/of American grand strategy* across and between the last three administrations – those of Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama. The central

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questions this book addresses are: (1) What explains the pursuit of a global Open Door grand strategy after the end of the Cold War? (2) How and why have the three (post-Cold War) administrations been seeking to achieve these strategic goals in (sometimes) different ways? Our core argument that a comprehensive answer to those questions must include an analysis of what we call the *social sources* of American grand strategy takes us beyond the focus of the realist tradition within International Relations (IR) theory on so-called systemic pressures, that is, the effects generated by the distribution of power within the international system. Instead, we examine what realists tend to identify as the “domestic sources” of foreign policy, but, seeking to offer a more integrated analysis, we do so from a particular vantage point, one that breaks much more radically with the state-centrism of realist IR, including neoclassical realism. Adopting a *critical political economy perspective* we argue not only that “the domestic” and the “international” are fundamentally intertwined through the *transnational* structures of global capitalism, but also that in analyzing the domestic sources of U.S. foreign policy we need to recognize the *capitalist* nature of American society, and how U.S. capitalism has expanded outward over the past century, and in the process has created, and continues to seek to maintain, a global capitalism.

As such, the point of departure for this study is the agency of U.S. policy-makers – or what we will call grand-strategy makers – themselves, because it is always through their actions that we can start to conceive of the state as an actor. But in keeping with the notion that societal processes are produced by the interplay of structure and agency, we maintain that it is crucial to put grand-strategy makers in their social context. In this book we will argue how this context for an important part is made up of the social relations in which these officials are embedded, in particular in what we will identify as *elite* networks dominated by America’s *corporate elite*. In this context, we will empirically demonstrate the inner connections that exist between the U.S. state, including its foreign policy executive, and America’s corporate elite. Yet, at the same time, U.S. grand-strategy makers respond in their agency to a changing global context, which constitutes another part of the structural context with which agency interacts.

We argue that the Open Door, as rooted in an expansionism of American capitalism, serves the interests of America’s corporate elite and that the close nexus that we find to exist between this corporate elite and the American state – in as much, as we will show, state officials are often recruited from that same elite – helps to explain the continuing Open Door orientation of American grand strategy. Yet we also recognize that within this overarching common outlook there are at times significant strategic and tactical disagreements among the members of America’s foreign policy elite, disagreements that may in part be seen as reflecting different shades of the same ideology. In addition, mediated by these sometimes diverging ideas – particularly with respect to the *means*, yet within a continuing consensus about the ultimate *ends*, of U.S. grand strategy – American grand-strategy makers also respond to the opportunities and constraints emanating from the changing global political economy and the United States’ (perceived) position within it.

Analyzing this interplay of agency and different elements of structural context we thus make a twofold claim regarding the evolution of American grand strategy since the end of the Cold War. On the one hand, this strategy has continued to be oriented to what we identify as its overarching aim throughout much of the twentieth century, that is, securing an “open door” to U.S. capital around the globe. On the other hand, the book will show that the three different post-Cold War administrations have pursued this goal with varying means: from Clinton’s emphasis on economic expansionism through multilateral trade deals and the global spread of neoliberal policies while policing globalization through the firepower of the U.S. Air Force, to Bush’s equally neoliberal policies but with an emphasis on the military instrument by launching a unilateralist war on terror, to Obama’s adjustment of that same war and a renewed global trade offensive to meet the challenges to the global Open Door in the wake of the global financial crisis.

Ties between American grand-strategy makers and America’s corporate elite take both a direct form in the sense that many U.S. policymakers formerly occupied top-level positions within the corporate community, and an indirect form through links with the world of think tanks, foundations, policy advocacy groups, etc. These so-called “policy planning bodies” not only play a key role in U.S. public policymaking but are also closely interlocked, as we will show, with America’s large corporations and big banks through their funding and their governance. Analyzing the social sources of American grand strategy from this perspective, the method we employ to map and visualize these corporate elite networks in which U.S. grand-strategy makers are embedded is *Social Network Analysis* (SNA). On the basis of qualitative research (e.g., process tracing, content analysis, and historical narrative) we will seek to trace the significance of these networks for the formation of grand strategy across the past three administrations.

In sum, this book aims to explain the continuities of American grand strategy – conceived in terms of a continuing commitment to the global Open Door, aimed at maintaining a U.S.-centered liberal world order in which U.S. capital has maximum freedom – as well as its variations pertaining to the means with which to achieve these objectives in terms of the agency of American grand-strategy makers as conditioned by their structural context.

As such this book contributes to the following debates and literatures. First, with our focus on *social sources* we seek to contribute to the ongoing debate, on the nature, direction, and driving forces of American grand strategy (for recent contributions, see Dueck, 2006; Layne, 2006a; Miller, 2010), and more generally the determinants of foreign policy. With regard to the latter we contribute to a long-standing debate regarding whether the sources of foreign policy lie, as (neo)realists call it, at the level of the system, or at the level of the unit (Waltz, 1979; Rosecrance and Stein, 1993; cf. Teschke, 2003; Wallerstein, 1979). In other words, whether we need to adopt an “outside-in” or an “inside-out” perspective, or whether we somehow need to combine these two, as for instance neoclassical realism seeks to do, bridging the world of *Innenpolitik* and that of the (global) system (e.g., Lobell *et al.*, 2009).

#### 4 Introduction

Seeking to offer a more integrated analysis in which domestic and international determinants are seen as connected through particular actors operating in both domestic and global contexts, we build upon and hope to contribute to a *critical political economy* perspective within International Political Economy (IPE) in which international and global politics are conceived as embedded within and internally related to transnational structures of global capitalism, and as such shaped by concomitant social forces (e.g., Cox, 1981, 1987, 2001; Gill, 1993; Overbeek, 1993; van Apeldoorn, 2004; van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010). As such we also seek to build upon a political economy literature that emphasizes the capitalist nature of the American empire and the geopolitical implications that this may have (Wood, 2003; Harvey, 2003; Callinicos, 2009; Panitch and Gindin, 2012; see also Anievsk, 2014). Yet, whereas much of the latter literature tends to emphasize the *structures* of global and American capitalism, we seek to offer a perspective that integrates structural and agential forces, or how *structure and agency interact over time*.

Second, conceiving these social sources in terms of elite networks dominated by America's corporate elite, we seek to contribute to the study of elites within public policy making and within global politics. In particular, we aim to add to a better understanding of how the power of elites is linked to the power of states, or how public power is connected to private power. As Inderjeet Parmar (2012: 4) notes, more than half a century after the appearance of C. Wright Mills' (2000) classic on the American power elite, "the study of elites ... has fallen by the wayside." Yet, there are hopeful signs that collective efforts are succeeding in reviving this important tradition both within (political) sociology and within political science.<sup>2</sup> While both sociologists and political scientists have mapped (transnational) corporate elites and networks of corporate power (e.g., Fennema, 1982; Sklair, 2001; Carroll, 2010; cf. van der Pijl, 1984), the study of the influence of corporate elites – sometimes seen as representing transnational capitalist classes – on *public policymaking* has been more limited, or focused specifically on European governance (e.g., van Apeldoorn, 2002, 2014a). In particular the study of the role of elites in (U.S.) foreign policymaking and in shaping the role of American global power has thus far been rather underdeveloped. Yet, it is here that several authors (see e.g., Parmar, 2012; van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2014; Parmar *et al.*, forthcoming) have recently sought to explicitly revive the older tradition in elite studies, while in part also drawing upon the aforementioned body of research on (transnational) corporate elite networks and capitalist class formation. It is the ambition of this book to further advance this research agenda by systematically mapping and examining post-Cold War networks of elite and class power in the case of the United States, and how this particular state–capital nexus has shaped U.S. grand strategy over the past two decades.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, our book contributes to the longstanding debate among historians regarding what has shaped the evolution of U.S. foreign policy from the late nineteenth century to the present. While our analysis here is inspired by the revisionist school of historians like Williams (2007, 2009) and Walter LaFeber (1998), our analysis of the post-Cold War era not only adds to that work by

examining more recent history, but also by analyzing – in contrast to the so-called Wisconsin School as well as an earlier important adaptation of this perspective within IR (Layne, 2006a) – significant variations of the Open Door strategy, and by seeking to explain those changes as well as the underlying continuities on the basis of an original analytical framework that will be substantiated by extensive primary research.

## The plan of this book

The first three chapters will provide the main building blocks of the overall argument of this study. [Chapter 1](#) will put our central research problem of explaining continuity and change in U.S. grand strategy in a theoretical context by outlining our main concepts and, after reviewing alternative approaches, developing our critical political economy framework. Specifically, we will introduce our “transformational model” that links the agency of grand-strategy makers to the structural context in which they find themselves – crucially mediated by ideas.

[Chapter 2](#) offers a historical perspective, making the case that American grand strategy since the end of the nineteenth century until the end of the Cold War has been marked by a high degree of continuation in terms of pursuing a global Open Door, a strategy that must be seen as related to the needs of expansionist U.S. capital and how these needs have been articulated politically and ideologically by dominant business and governmental elites. This chapter thus fulfills the purpose of substantiating our claim that the continuity we will also observe for the post-Cold War era is historically deeply rooted. Second, it will help to elucidate the nature of what we will identify as America’s Open Door imperialism and thus to identify the key elements of this continuity. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main ends and means of the Open Door, both as a strategy and in terms of an underlying worldview.

[Chapter 3](#) elucidates our dataset and the methodological approach of this study, and provides a comparative overview of the elite networks in which the selected close to 90 grand-strategy makers of all three post-Cold War administrations are embedded. It will do so by mapping their corporate affiliations (including only top-level positions such as board membership, founder, executive) and so-called policy planning ties (i.e., membership of think tanks and policy advocacy groups) and visualize these with the help of SNA. Our analysis of the thus rendered corporate and policy planning networks reveals on the one hand a strong nexus between (these) U.S. foreign policy officials and America’s corporate elite, in particular as representing transnationally oriented U.S. capital. On the other hand, important intra-elite differences are revealed; in particular as different administrations, next to a shared bipartisan network of policy planning bodies, are also part of distinctive policy planning networks in which competing interpretations of elite interests are advocated.

[Chapters 4–6](#) will analyze and seek to explain the evolution of U.S. grand strategy in the post-Cold War era under the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations by applying the explanatory model elaborated in [Chapter 1](#) and drawing

## 6 *Introduction*

upon the biographical and social network data presented in [Chapter 3](#), yet providing more in-depth and detailed social network analyses of the respective administrations and their distinctive (network) characteristics. The core argument, which is substantiated in each chapter through a detailed analysis and interpretation of relevant secondary sources, policy documents, speeches and other primary data, is that the grand strategy pursued by these three administrations each represent different variations of America's long-standing global Open Door strategy. With regard to the post-Cold War variations that the book analyzes within this overarching framework of the Open Door we observe a shift from a grand strategy of "neoliberal globalization" under Clinton ([Chapter 4](#)), to a "neoconservative" strategy of maintaining U.S. primacy through the War on Terror under Bush ([Chapter 5](#)), to Obama's attempt to hold on to the Open Door empire by continuing much of Bush's policies but also seeking to make some pragmatic adjustments in the face of growing challenges to American power, such as a rising China ([Chapter 6](#)).

The concluding chapter brings the various lines of our argument together and reflects upon the future of American grand strategy in light of the current challenges.

## Notes

- 1 To what extent such a hegemony is or ever has been a fully attained state of affairs or whether hegemony is always by definition incomplete, contested, and fragile, is less important for the purposes of this book than the fact that U.S. foreign-policy makers believe in the notion of American global hegemony, or what they normally call "global leadership," and act upon it.
- 2 For an overview of some of the collaborative work in which the present authors are also involved, see the website of the Elite Power Investigations Center (EPIC): <http://epic-elitepower.weebly.com>.
- 3 For earlier publications advancing this research agenda, see, among others, de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, 2011; van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2012, 2014. While in prior publications we have developed the same argument and approach, the current study presents a much more comprehensive analysis of the role of corporate elite networks in the continuity and change of American grand strategy, with not only a much more elaborate theorization, but also covering much more ground empirically, providing for the first time, with the analysis of hitherto unpublished data, a detailed analysis of the grand-strategy makers and their grand-strategy making of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations.

# 1 The social sources of American grand strategy

This chapter lays out the theoretical and analytical framework of this study. It starts with a review of the literature on the book’s central research problem, which is continuity and change of U.S. grand strategy, in particular since the end of the Cold War. After reviewing, in particular, neorealist, neoclassical realist, and some existing political economy accounts the chapter concludes that none of these established approaches can sufficiently account for the puzzle of both the strong continuities and the significant variations of U.S. grand strategy. The chapter then proceeds by outlining the meta-theoretical foundations of our alternative approach, which is rooted in critical political economy. Offering a perspective on the dialectical interplay of structure and agency over time the chapter explicates what we call our “transformational model” of U.S. grand strategy. In this model we link the agency of grand-strategy makers to their structural context, in particular the *global context*, and the (perceived) position of the U.S. within it, and what we identify as their *social position*. The latter refers to the *social networks* in which U.S. grand-strategy makers are located in terms of their (previously held) institutional, political and corporate affiliations. We will subsequently argue, within the context of our particular theorization of the U.S. state–capital nexus, that these *social networks* are centered around America’s *corporate elite*.

## The puzzle of continuity and change in U.S. grand strategy

Grand strategy can be seen as the “highest” level of foreign policy representing a comprehensive vision of the state’s critical “interests” and how best to promote and achieve them, and thus about the state’s role and position in the world (Layne, 2006a: 13). As such, grand strategy is about defining overarching and *long-term* goals and identifying the means to achieve those. Relating means to long-term ends implies not only short-term balancing of goals and limited resources and prioritization of foreign policy goals (Dueck, 2006: 10–11), but also necessitates long-term planning (Lobell, 2009: 61). Whether grand strategy as such is pursued (even unconsciously) by all states or just by the most dominant states or “great powers” in realist parlance may be disputed, but we maintain that the U.S. has been pursuing a grand strategy since the end of the nineteenth

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century, and even more unambiguously since 1940 (see also Layne, 2006a). As we shall detail in [Chapter 2](#), since that time American grand strategy has been an expansionist and “globalist” one, in which the grand strategic ends have been related to shaping not just its regional environment but that of the whole global system. In our view, and as will be elaborated below, this global system or what we may call *world order*, involves not just the inter-state system but also the global political economy, and as such a deeper social structure (Cox, 1987).

The key question that informs our study is how we can account for both continuity and variation of (American) grand strategy. With respect to the continuity we may say that, formulated at the “highest level” and oriented toward the long term, the overarching goals of grand strategy by definition are not subject to continuous change. In the shorter term, however, these ends may gain different emphases or colorations, or become framed within a different discourse, or combined with additional goals (including domestic ones). Yet, arguably more importantly, grand strategy may – and often does – vary in the short term when it comes to the *means* employed, and how those means are related to the ends. The means employed in the pursuit of grand strategy naturally involve the whole gamut of state craft, from the use of force to diplomacy, and from foreign economic policy to “soft power” (Nye, 2011). Deciding upon the mix of these means and how exactly to put them to use is then an important element of potential variation of grand strategy.

An important source of variation relates to the global context in which grand strategy is formulated, and how that context is interpreted. Assuming that conflict – if not necessarily only interstate or military conflict as realists would have it – is a perennial condition of global politics, grand strategy is always formulated in the “face of one or more potential opponents” (Dueck, 2006: 10). There will be other states or non-state actors and movements who, given their ideas and interests, will try to resist the state’s grand strategy. Indeed, if a grand strategy would be completely unopposed there arguably might be no need for grand strategy as such (*ibid.*). Grand strategy thus also involves the identification and discursive construction of both allies and (potential) adversaries and will include the design of strategies to deal with these allies and adversaries. Here, too, may we observe variation.<sup>1</sup>

In sum, grand strategies will generally have rather stable long-term ends, yet may vary over time both with regard to their short-term articulation with (limited) means, and with regard to the identification of others vis-à-vis or against whom the grand strategy is implemented. It is continuity and change of U.S. grand strategy defined in these terms that this book seeks to analyze and explain for the post-Cold War period. Below we review several alternative approaches to this puzzle before introducing our own.

### “Systemic” explanations

Change within U.S. grand strategy provoked renewed scholarly debate after 9/11 when George W. Bush had, in the eyes of many, dramatically shifted the

direction of U.S. foreign policy. Notably absent from this debate have been attempts to explain this real or alleged turn from the perspective of “systemic” International Relation theories that argue that international political outcomes can be explained in terms of the rational (utility-maximizing) behavior of states within an anarchic environment. By their own admission, however, systemic theorists are unable to explain shifts in U.S. grand strategy, or at least within the bounds of their own theoretical models (Lobell *et al.*, 2009: 1–3; see also Dueck, 2004a, Skidmore, 2005).

The most dominant systemic theory is still neorealism, which views anarchy as a self-help system exercising strong pressures on states to maintain or maximize their power as key to their “national security.” Both defensive and offensive varieties of neorealism (Layne, 2006a: 23) predict that assuming rational behavior the United States would pursue a grand strategy of “offshore balancing,” involving a minimization of overseas commitments (Layne, 1997, 2006a; Mearsheimer, 2001, 2011). Yet prominent neorealists, such as Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, argue that the United States in fact pursues an opposite (and thus “irrational”) strategy of what Layne (2006a) calls extra-regional hegemony, and have “united” with others (mainly conservatives and libertarians) “in our opposition to American empire” (Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy, 2010).<sup>2</sup> Thus offensive realist Mearsheimer (2011) qualified the U.S. grand strategy of the past 20 years as a “disastrous” policy of global hegemony – though distinguishing a less disastrous “liberal imperialism” from a more pernicious neoconservative variant, without offering an explanation of either. We may conclude that contemporary American grand strategy represents one of those “anomalies” that Mearsheimer admits his parsimonious theory has to allow for (Mearsheimer, 2001: 10). Such anomalies, then, have to be explained by ad hoc hypotheses such as alleged domestic factors like the “Israel Lobby” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007), which in fact fall outside the purview of realist theory in which only the distribution of power (*polarity*) explains which of the several strategies at their disposal (such as war or balancing) – states are likely to adopt in order to maximize their power Although having to admit then that in practice these “non-systemic factors” at times do play a role, incorporating the role of “domestic” or societal variables *theoretically* is beyond neorealism as it lacks any conceptualization of state–society relations (for a critique of realism in this respect see Rosenberg, 1994; also Teschke, 2003).

While (neo)liberals generally have less to say on U.S. grand strategy, those (neo)liberals who have contributed to the debate, and who are focusing on the systemic effects of globalization and interdependence, have for instance equally treated the “neoconservative moment” under Bush as an anomaly (e.g., Ikenberry, 2004). Lacking the theoretical tools to properly explain U.S. grand strategy, variations of which sometimes directly contradict their models, most (neo)realists and (neo)liberals in fact have been preoccupied with prescriptive analyses, engaging in normative debates on U.S. grand strategy (for recent contributions along those lines see Craig *et al.*, 2013). Within the realist tradition, but significantly deviating from neorealism, an important exception is formed by

*neoclassical* realism, which has turned out to be a much more productive avenue of research.

### ***Neoclassical realism and the role of ideas***

Seeking to go beyond the systemic approaches discussed above, *neoclassical* realism stands out as the most elaborate attempt within the literature to introduce so-called unit-level variables while also holding on to the importance of the international system (Rose, 1998; Rathbun, 2008; Lobell *et al.*, 2009). Neoclassical realism is realist in as much as it sticks to a state-centric conception of world politics in which the foreign policy behavior of states is conditioned to a significant degree by the purported systemic pressures emanating from anarchy. Yet it also significantly opens the black box by arguing that these systemic pressures – the distribution of power within the international system – combine with domestic (economic, political, and ideational) factors (Rose, 1998; Layne, 2006a: 8; Rathbun, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Although critics may rightly have pointed out that this strategy leads to ad hoc and post hoc adding of variables underlining the degenerative nature of the realist research program (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999; cf. Rathbun, 2008), neoclassical realism as applied by some does produce much richer and more convincing accounts of foreign policy than the ultra-parsimonious neorealism.

Neoclassical realism comes in different colors, varying in part with regard to the relative weight they accord to, respectively, systemic and domestic factors (for an overview and critique of some of these varieties see Onea, 2012). Some stay fairly close to systemic realism, continuing to give explanatory primacy to “external stimuli.” A case in point is Benjamin Miller, who seeks to explain variations in post-Cold War U.S. strategy in terms of how the variables “distribution of power” and “degree of external threat” act as “the selector” of pre-existing sets of ideas or ideal-typical grand strategies (Miller, 2010: 29). The problem with this variety of systemic theory is that it takes as given what needs to be explained in any comprehensive account of U.S. grand-strategy making. Thus Miller distinguishes four main U.S. grand strategies which according to him are present in the U.S. foreign policy community (Miller, 2010: 29), but fails to explains the origins of any of these four types.

Other neoclassical realist accounts of American grand strategy tend to take the domestic variables, and in particular the role of ideas, more seriously. As such they tend to move in the direction of more ideational theories like constructivism, or at least adding “constructivist” variables. A prominent example is the work of Colin Dueck, which seeks to explain both continuity and change in American grand strategy since Woodrow Wilson from within a neoclassical realist framework that attempts to bridge the gap between constructivism and realism (Dueck, 2006: 4, see also Dueck, 2004b; for a similar approach to U.S. grand strategy, see Monten, 2005). Whereas for Dueck, the constructivist variable is about “culture,” in the case of the U.S. liberal culture (see Dueck, 2006: ch. 2), his analysis remains realist in as much as “it is ultimately international

conditions that drive the process of both strategic adjustment and cultural change” (*ibid.*: 20).<sup>4</sup>

Even more problematic from our perspective is that in this way the domestic is reduced to ideational or cultural variables without any reference to a broader political context, including those of prevailing power structures, whether rooted in the economy or elsewhere. In this way the origins of the ideas themselves are left unexplained. Thus while, again, Dueck in our view not incorrectly claims that G.W. Bush’s strategy of “primacy” has to be explained in terms of the “[p]romotion and selection of particular [neoconservative] ideas … on the part of leading defense and foreign policy officials” (Dueck, 2004b: 535), his analysis (like that of Miller) fails to answer the question of why *certain* ideas rather than others were “promoted” and “selected.” While referring to the “recurring power of classical liberal ideas in U.S. grand strategy” (Dueck, 2006: 165), he fails to explain the apparent hegemony of this liberal culture since at least Wilson. That this, for instance, might have something to do with America’s liberal capitalist political economy and its concomitant hegemonic interests remains outside the purview of this analysis. Indeed, any notion of political economy remains conspicuously absent from Dueck’s, as well as most other neoclassical realist, accounts.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Open Door as a domestic source of American grand strategy***

One of the most lucid and penetrating accounts of U.S. grand strategy – written from a neoclassical perspective that, on the one hand, very much emphasizes the constructivist dimension of ideas and beliefs but, at the same time, is at least indirectly more attentive to political economy – is that of Christopher Layne (2006a). Layne draws inspiration from the same “Open Door” revisionist school of U.S. history that undergirds the interpretative framework of this book. Indeed, Layne compellingly argues how U.S. grand strategy since 1940 and up to the present period has been driven by a set of “economic and ideological concerns” that define U.S. national interests as lying first and foremost in creating a world “open to U.S. economic penetration” (Layne, 2006a: 30), and that explain America’s pursuit of “extra-regional” hegemony. This pursuit of global hegemony, and a concomitant perception that America faces potential threats to its national security around the globe, not only confounds, as we have seen, neorealist predictions, but is also puzzling in light of the fact that, as Layne maintains, the U.S. is in fact one of the most secure states (*ibid.*: 10). In this respect, and following the logic of neoclassical realism, Layne maintains that domestic variables become more important to the extent that, for geographical reasons, systemic pressures are significantly attenuated (*ibid.*: 10): “[s]ystemic factors constitute the permissive conditions for the U.S. expansion. Domestic factors – Open Door economic and ideological expansion – explain the motives underlying American grand strategy, *why* the United States has behaved as it has” (*ibid.*: 28).

Although sharing much of Layne’s characterization of the fundamental and unchanging overarching objectives of U.S. grand strategy, we maintain that in as

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much as his analysis ultimately remains wedded to a state-centric realist paradigm that, as indicated, lacks any framework for understanding state–society relations, Layne’s neoclassical realism remains unable to *explain* what it identifies as the driving forces of American grand strategy. Layne convincingly makes the case that the U.S. has sought global hegemony *because* of the Open Door worldview of its policymakers, but he does not explain *why* this view has become so dominant (or indeed, hegemonic). Although Layne refers to “economic interests” as the “catalyst” for U.S. hegemonic expansion since 1940 (Layne, 2006a: 33, also: 72–80; 95; 125–6; 196), nowhere throughout his historical narrative are these interests specified beyond observing (correctly) that U.S. policymakers “believed that America’s prosperity was tied to its access to export markets” (*ibid.*: 72, his emphasis).<sup>6</sup> Only at the very end of his book, Layne suggests that policymakers stayed the course of global hegemony “because that grand strategy has served the interests of the dominant elites that have formed the core of the U.S. foreign policy establishment since at least the 1930s” (*ibid.*: 200–1), and that at the core of this elite coalition we find “large capital-intensive corporations that looked to overseas markets and outward-looking investment banks” (*ibid.*). This conclusion, however, does not as such follow from Layne’s own analysis that does not explore the role of these (corporate) elites, and ultimately stays at the surface of the U.S. state and its “managers,” without probing deeper into U.S. state–society relations.

Ultimately, what Layne’s analysis tends to boil down to, and what it shares with other neoclassical foreign policy analysis, is that “domestic” and “ideational” variables are added, but primarily to explain deviations from the putative neorealist “optimal” policy. As Rathbun argues in defense of the approach, this way neoclassical realism must be seen as a “logical extension” of neorealism, one in which domestic politics and ideas explain those outcomes in which “states do not respond ideally to their structural situations” as their foreign policies are “distorted” by these “interfering” unit-level variables (Rathbun, 2008: 296). According to Rathbun, the realist logic still applies in as much as states are in the end punished for this foolish behavior (*ibid.*). Similarly, Taliaferro *et al.* (2009: 4) argue that “[o]ver the longer term, international political outcomes generally mirror the actual distribution of power among states” whereas in “shorter term” states’ policies are “rarely objectively efficient or predictable” on the basis of systemic theory (see also Dueck, 2006: 20). Taliaferro and his colleagues, however, do not indicate exactly why it is assumedly the case that over the longer term states are supposed to conform with the supposed objective laws of realism, nor how long the longer term is. In as much as, for instance, the liberal expansionism seeking extra-regional hegemony is a deviation from the rational (realist) norm, this “shorter term” is already lasting since 1940, and, as we shall argue in the next chapter, in many respects since the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Layne would probably disagree with Taliaferro *et al.* and argue that such deviations can last as long as circumstances allow, which in the case of geography (the fact that the United States lies between two oceans) can be rather long indeed. From our perspective, however, it is not only when alleged

“systemic pressures” are significantly mitigated that the “sparse world of neorealist theory” (Walt cited in Layne, 2006a: 10) cannot explain foreign policy outcomes. In our view foreign policy strategy is *always* mediated by social forces and, as we shall argue, these social forces are not necessarily to be conceived of as exclusively “domestic” but often are in fact transnationally oriented.

While thus sharing the notion that “domestic” determinants need to be taken into account, we argue that neoclassical realism fails to fully make sense of the so-called unit-level variables because it tends to abstract state from society and therefore lacks an adequate conceptualization of how state policies can be linked to ideas and to societal interests. In contrast to both neorealism and neoclassical realism, in which state power is narrowly conceived as the accumulated *material* capabilities of the “state-as-actor,” we adopt a critical political economy perspective that seeks to examine the *social* origins of that power as states are not ontologically prior to wider social relations. Below, we will review some analyses of American grand strategy that are rooted in (critical) political economy and in sociological approaches which seek to go beyond the analysis of state power as such. Indeed, as we shall see, although the literature on this is comparatively small, there have been several studies preceding this one that have sought to explore the link between (corporate) elite power and American foreign policy, thus picking up where Layne’s otherwise insightful analysis has left us. This will then take us to our own analytical framework informed by a theorization of what we will call the *social sources* of grand strategy formation.

### **The contribution from elite studies and class analysis**

Even within the approaches that do open the proverbial black box of the state, most studies do not go beyond ideas, or similar kinds of variables common within more “mid-level” and eclectic theories of foreign policy analysis, such as “bureaucratic politics,” in seeking to explain the sources of U.S. foreign policy. Moreover, mostly these latter approaches tend to restrict themselves to analyzing individual or group foreign policy decision-making rather than foreign policy at the level of grand strategy (see e.g., Hudson, 2007). This study will argue, however, that state power has to be seen in relation to *private* power rooted in society and prevalent unequal social relations. It is from such a perspective that we can see how indeed the making of U.S. grand strategy takes place within “state–private” elite networks. More particularly, how the interests and ideas of America’s corporate elite have been a key domestic source – though very much rooted within transnational economic structures – of American grand strategy. Indeed, as this book hopes to demonstrate, so-called “societal groups” (Hudson, 2005: 19) do play an important role in U.S. foreign policy formation, yet, some societal groups are much more important than others.

One study that has sought to assess empirically which societal groups have most influence on U.S. foreign policy has been conducted by political scientists Jacobs and Page (2005). In their statistical analysis of three decades of survey data they found that “internationally oriented business leaders” have persistent

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and by far the greatest influence on U.S. foreign policy, thus refuting the pluralist model that often underlies conventional foreign policy analysis. Specifically, they found that the preferences of the latter corresponded most closely with those of U.S. foreign-policy makers while, in contrast, labor exerted (statistically) significant but much weaker influence and the general public or public opinion appeared to have hardly any influence on U.S. foreign policy. While these striking findings are generally supportive of the core argument of this book, the main limitation of this research is that the statistical correlations do not as such reveal the causal mechanism through which this influence of business is exercised. For this, we argue, an analysis is needed of how state and capital are connected in the U.S. case, including the *social networks* through which the American state is connected to the *social structures* that underlie its power. This, of course, also involves analyzing the actual agency of the relevant actors – connected through these networks – in these processes. Here an important contribution has been made by studies on the role of (class) elites within U.S. foreign policy, a scholarly tradition which our study will further build upon and seek to contribute to. These studies – to be discussed below – are not so much concerned with directly explaining continuity and change in U.S. grand strategy as defined in this book, but have nevertheless paved the road to our subsequent analysis of continuity and variation in U.S. post-Cold War grand-strategy making.

### ***Power structure research and elites in U.S. foreign policy***

As indicated, the role of elites – corporate or otherwise – is surprisingly little studied within the field of U.S. foreign policy. The few exceptions to be discussed shortly are to a large extent inspired and informed by so-called *power-structure research* within the sociological analysis of elites as well as (neo-) Marxist and neo-Gramscian approaches to power. C. Wright Mills, writing in the 1950s, identified an American *power elite* made up of those (mostly) men controlling the large corporations, the military as well as the state (Mills, 2000). Later research has shown how the corporate community – made up of the chief executives and directors of large (multinational) corporations – as well as those governing important think tanks, together with the owners of corporate wealth, form the central component of this power elite (Domhoff, 1967, 2009; Schwartz, 1987; Mintz, 2002; see also Dye, 1986, 2014; Ferguson, 1995).

Scholars within this particular variety of elite studies have traced the influence of this (corporate) power elite upon public policymaking through a variety of channels and mechanisms (for an overview see Domhoff, 2009: ch. 7). One key institutional channel through which (corporate) elites' power influences U.S. (foreign) public policymaking is that of what G. William Domhoff (1967, 2007, 2009) and others (e.g., Dye, 2014: 142, fig. 7.1) have identified as the policy planning network – that is, the often strongly interconnected (through funding and people sitting upon their boards, etc.) think tanks, research institutes, foundations, and (business) advocacy groups that seek to set the political agenda,

develop and propagate key ideas, shape public and elite opinion, and thus plan and shape policymaking in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

While the general importance of these elite policy networks is well recognized in the power research literature (especially Domhoff, 1967, 2009; Burris, 2005, 2008), little systematic attention within this tradition has been paid to how corporate power or the corporate elite shapes American foreign policy or grand strategy. There is, however, some work within (neo-)Marxist and neo-Gramscian traditions that highlights the role of elite planning bodies with respect to U.S. foreign policy. A classical work, written from an instrumentalist Marxist perspective, is the study by Shoup and Minter (2004 [1977]) of one of the oldest and most central foreign policy think tanks, the Council on Foreign Relations, which they argued to be representing America's financial oligarchy and in turn having played a determining role in setting American foreign policy from the 1930s onwards (see especially [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#) of this book). Explicitly viewing class agency not simply in national terms but also as extending on a transnational plane through processes of *transnational class formation* Kees van der Pijl's earlier work also pays attention to the role of the close links between fractions of the elite of the American capitalist class on the one hand and imperialist strategies of the U.S. state on the other, especially within the realm of Atlantic relations and through the forging of transatlantic elite links (van der Pijl, 1984). Writing from a similar transnationalist perspective, and drawing upon Gramscian historical materialism, Stephen Gill (1990) has analyzed the role of a key transnational private planning body, the Trilateral Commission, whose U.S. membership is connected to the highest levels of U.S. government (see [Chapter 3](#)). Yet, neither Gill nor Van der Pijl provides a comprehensive analysis of the links between the capitalist class or elites and U.S. foreign policy.

Forming a notable exception to the general dearth of studies of elite power in relation to U.S. foreign policy, Inderjeet Parmar's research on the Council on Foreign Relations (Parmar, 2004) and the "big 3" foundations of American philanthropy (Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie – Parmar, 2012) shows how these organizations are not just rooted in American corporate capitalism but how the social background of successive generations of its leaders reveals close ties to America's largest international corporations, shaping their worldview. Renewing (power) elite studies through a Gramscian theoretical perspective, Parmar argues on the basis of extensive archival research that the leaders of these private elite bodies "were part of a historic bloc of private and state elites cohered by a long-term globalist hegemonic project" (Parmar, 2012: 31), and how these organizations have thus helped to shape the social and intellectual underpinnings of American globalism.<sup>8</sup>

What this body of critical literature shows is that the American state is embedded in elite (policy planning) networks dominated by corporate capital, and that these elite networks have played a role in shaping American foreign policy and in buttressing American global hegemony. These studies do not, however, analyze in depth the links between the policy-making elite conducting American grand strategy, on the one hand, and America's corporate elite on the

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other.<sup>9</sup> As such, then, these studies have a close affinity to but nevertheless a different focus and research problem than our study. Our point of departure is not so much the think tanks or policy planning bodies themselves, *as how American state managers responsible for formulating and implementing U.S. grand strategy are linked to those bodies as well to American corporate capital directly*. Subsequently we ask how these links may help to explain how these grand-strategy makers define the overall geopolitical interests and goals of the U.S. and how those interests can be best secured and those goals most effectively attained. This is hence not a study of the agency of the corporate or policy planning elite, but, reversing the perspective of much established literature on think tanks and the like, a study of the agency of policymakers – in this case, grand-strategy makers – and how this is influenced by their embeddedness in particular (corporate) elite networks, which we seek to map and analyze. Therefore, we now turn to the further elaboration of our analytical framework in terms of what we call the social sources of grand strategy.

### A critical political economy approach to grand strategy analysis<sup>10</sup>

As argued by van Apeldoorn *et al.* (2010: 215), critical political economy is concerned with the “co-constitution of production and power.” From within this perspective the state must be seen in relation to society and to the economy, and hence the social forces underpinning state power (Cox, 1987). Here we must first of all recognize the capitalist nature of contemporary (U.S.) society. Indeed, a key premise of the critical political economy approach adopted in this study is that the relations and practices that make up contemporary geopolitics are internally related to the relations and practices that constitute (global) capitalism (Rupert, 1993: 84; see also Rosenberg, 1994; Wood, 2003; van der Pijl, 2007). This, then, also means that we have to relate geopolitical strategies as pursued by states to the wider *social structures* and social forces to which the state and state power are internally related. Critical political economy, then, views power as rooted in the social organization of capitalist production and its attendant *structural* inequalities. Thus, whereas, for instance neoclassical realism tends to see “structures” only at what they see as “the systemic” level, that is in terms of the distribution of material capabilities between states, our perspective focuses upon the social structures inherent in American capitalism. Importantly, capitalism, as defined above, is at the same time *both national and transnational*, part of a global capitalism that to an important extent has been America’s own making and as such a testimony to the success of its grand strategy (Wood, 2003; Panitch and Gindin, 2012). As such, as will be elaborated below, our conception of social sources draws attention to how structures in fact connect “the domestic” and “the international.”

Whereas, as we have seen, in particular in the realist literature, capitalism, or more broadly “the political economy” appears to be a non-entity, our approach thus draws attention to how state strategy is embedded in capitalist social

relations. This recognition, however, is not to lead to replacing a state-centric perspective simply with an equally defective society-centric perspective (cf. Jessop, 1990). Seeking to go beyond this dichotomy, we would underline that we cannot and should not ignore states or state strategies. The sovereign state is still the primary institutional form in which politics is organized and through which legitimate power is exercised both internally and externally (and through which societal conflicts are mediated). Politically global capitalism remains divided into independent political units. From this perspective the core *problématique* of International Relations centers around the relationship between, on the one hand, a modern-states system in which politics is organized in the form of *sovereign territorial and judicial polities pursuing particular strategies* and engaging in horizontal (non-hierarchical) relations, and on the other hand a capitalism in part constituted as a global, transnational system of partly deterritorialized relations and practices.

Such a comprehensive perspective also requires a broader conceptualization of grand strategy than is usual in much realist literature, with its often axiomatic emphasis on “national security” as the overarching goal of any grand strategy, and with military power as by definition its principal instrument (e.g., Dueck, 2006: 8–11). For us, grand strategy refers to both a “geo-economic” and a (more narrowly) geopolitical strategy. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, from the liberal perspective of the Open Door worldview itself a set of mutually reinforcing relationships is posited between a globalist American foreign policy aimed at maintaining a U.S.-led global capitalism, domestic prosperity, and national security. From such a perspective, the lines between traditional policy areas, such as foreign policy and economic policy, are blurred. While in particular in the realist tradition defense and security policies are regarded as the most important form of foreign policy, we will pay equal attention to foreign economic policies, especially those aimed at opening foreign markets and managing the liberal capitalist world. Indeed, we will in particular argue how military power often serves liberal expansionist goals. At the same time we seek to transcend the often one-sided focus on “economic” policies and issues of much critical political economy literature, which, while relating “the economic” to “the political” by embedding it in wider social structures (of capitalism) often has a blind spot for the importance of military and security questions and policies in relation to precisely the expansion and reproduction of capitalist social relations (e.g., Panitch and Gindin, 2012). In sum, we need to, as said by Alexander Anievas (2014: 4), whose work constitutes a notable exception, abandon “the artificial dissociation between political economy and military-security interests so prevalent in IR.”

From this perspective our approach also allows us to better determine the substantive ends of grand strategy. As most writers on grand strategy are focused on military power as a means to maximize security, and as security maximization is taken for granted as the goal of any (rational) state, national security comes to be axiomatically defined as the overarching goal of any grand strategy (e.g., Lobell, 2009: 61). Yet, such thinking is premised on a continuing, and in our view

untenable, statism in which the state is seen as abstracted from rather than intimately linked to and bound up with society. It is the underlying social structure (e.g., capitalism), and its attendant social (class) relations that gives (social) content to the state (Cox, 1987; Teschke, 2003). From such a perspective, national security is often also a means serving at least equally important ends. Equally, it is from this perspective that we can better recognize how world order is constituted by more than a balance of power between sovereign states, but itself tends to be infused with a particular *social purpose* (Cox, 1987; Ruggie, 1982, see also van Apeldoorn, 2002: 11–13). In that regard, as we shall see, it has been for a long time and remains the explicit aim of U.S. grand strategy to infuse the world order with a liberal capitalist purpose, such that American expansionism has come to coincide with the expansionism of American capital. In order to understand both this underlying continuity in U.S. grand strategy, and significant variations within it, we need to analyze its social sources. Below we will elaborate an analytical framework and theoretical model for doing so.

### ***The U.S. state, grand-strategy makers, and their social context***

To see how the state is related to (capitalist) society we need to be aware how, following Bob Jessop, the state as a structure forms on the one hand an arena in which social forces pursue rival strategies and political projects, but, on the other hand is in turn structurally *selective*, i.e., the state tends to be more open to some social classes and groups than to others and tends to select or favor their strategies over others (Jessop, 1990: 26).<sup>11</sup> The powers of the state, then, do not inhere just in the state itself but in their realization depend “on the structural ties between the state and its encompassing political system, the strategic links among state managers and other political forces, and the complex web of inter-dependencies and social networks linking the state to its broader environment” (Jessop, 1990: 367).

Here we must recognize, in line with the findings of the earlier discussed literature on America’s power elite, the structurally determined openness of the U.S. political system to the “corporate community” and its interests, and hence the particular form of the U.S. state in which these interests are secured through their dominant influence over the so-called policy planning process. As Peter Gowan (2004: 3–4) maintained, the United States is in fact unique among advanced capitalist states with regard to the extent to which it is “a business democracy—a state with universal suffrage, which celebrates and accepts the worldview and values of only one class, the business class, and which gives the business class extraordinary sway over public policy formation.” This influence takes place through several channels such as shaping public and elite discourse and setting the policy agenda through the media and through more specialized reports and advice, as well as through regular personal contacts between state officials and key business associations and other forms of corporate lobbying (for an overview see Domhoff, 2009: ch. 7). The biggest trump card of America’s business class, however, is arguably the way personal ties between state

managers and the corporate community make for a particularly close nexus between the U.S. state and U.S. capital (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2012).

Although the United States, given its particular state form, is marked by a strong self-organizing civil society through which actors representing dominant social forces seek to engage in (foreign) policy *planning*, it is the executive of the state – the president and his advisers, cabinet members, foreign policy officials – that formally take the decisions but that are also to a large extent responsible for making the overall strategy, even if sometimes in close consultations with more informal advisers. As both Parmar (2004) and Panitch and Gindin (2012), from rather different perspectives, have argued, the U.S. state has at least since the New Deal era not been a weak state – simply an instrument in the hands of private organizations or a ruling class – but a strong state with the capacity both to formulate and implement a globalist imperial strategy.

In relating the state to social structure, then, we need to focus on those agents that actually make the state “act,” that is, the state managers who hold the offices of the state. Although for analytical purposes – recognizing that collectively binding decision-making in the name of a polity is involved here rather than merely (the sum of) the individual actions – we may speak of the state as “acting,” this is always dependent upon the human agency of those who act in the name of the state and enabled by the powers invested therein (see on this point Joseph, 2012: 35–6; cf. Jessop, 1990: 367). At the same time, state officials do not operate in a vacuum, independently from society. From our critical political economy perspective the point is precisely to examine how what state officials do is shaped by the social context in which they find themselves, thus to uncover how their (collective) agency is enabled and conditioned by certain structures as indicated above. Rather than reifying the state as a rational unitary actor, we need to recognize that “state activity is always the activity of particular individuals acting *within particular social contexts*” (Wight, 2004: 279, our emphasis).

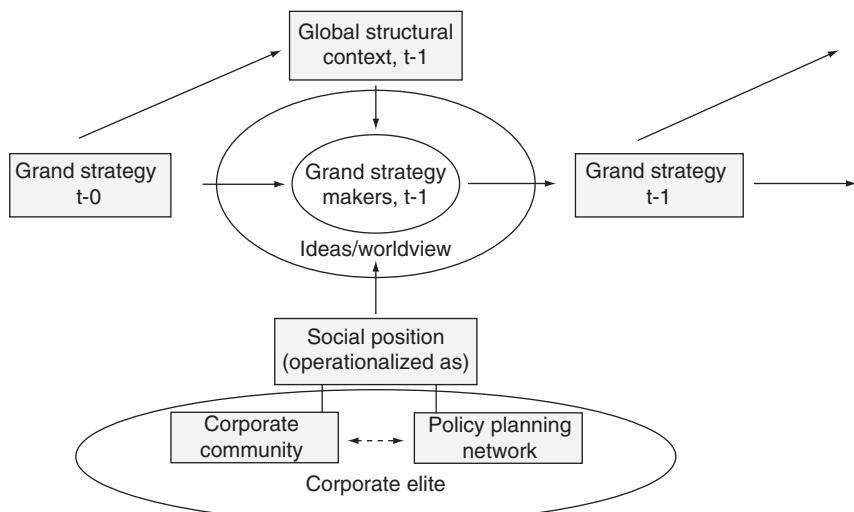
Underlying this theorization is a particular view of the relationship between structure and agency. Following Bhaskar (1979) and Archer (1995), we (1) see agents as operating within pre-existing social structures that form the (unacknowledged) conditions of their actions, and (2) see these agents as reproducing or transforming these structures over time. In order to link structure to agency we will understand structure as referring to (1) the *social position* an agent occupies, that is, within a set of social relations, and (2) the wider context in which she operates and to which her strategic action may be oriented (cf. Archer, 1995: 153; Bhaskar, 1979: 51).<sup>12</sup>

We can associate social position more narrowly with a particular role, such as a university professor or defense secretary – with powers, rights, duties, and normative expectations attached to that role – but in order to gain a deeper and fuller understanding we need to conceptualize it more broadly as the set of social structures that defines the situation in which an actor finds herself and that as such are internal to her specific actorness (on social position in this sense see Archer, 1995: 153; cf. Bhaskar, 1979: 51).<sup>13</sup> Social position may thus be seen as

making the actor into what she is, constituting her particular identity, and engendering a set of interests and ideas or worldview and shaping her practices accordingly, while, at the same time – following Archer (1995: 75) – individuals have an active and autonomous role in (re)shaping these social structures.<sup>14</sup> In addition, being positioned in a particular way means occupying a particular position within (often different but overlapping sets) of social power relations – defining the extent to which one is able to exercise power over others but also to what extent one is subject to either coercion or influence on the part of other actors. Defined thus, although not necessarily immutable, social position then is usually something more enduring.

The next structural dimension we can analytically distinguish refers to that context or external environment to which one's strategic conduct, given one's particular role as an actor, is oriented. Thus, for instance, for a capitalist this may be the particular market in which he competes (the nature and degree of competition he faces and hence the market power he has). For a state, or rather for state officials acting on behalf of it, this may refer both to the domestic and the global political environment, both of which inevitably include the legacies of previous policies.

We will now elaborate each of these different elements through which agency is linked to structure as applied to the case of U.S. grand strategy formation, that is, what we identify as the social position of agents, their external (global) context, as well as the preceding grand strategy. We argue that these elements both shape as well as are mediated by the ideas that grand-strategy makers hold. Together these different connections between structure and agency in U.S. grand-strategy making form what, borrowing from Bhaskar (1979: 46), we call our *transformational model*, as represented in Figure 1.1.<sup>15</sup>



*Figure 1.1* Structure and agency in the transformation of U.S. grand strategy.

### **Social position: the role of corporate elite networks**

With regard to the social position of grand-strategy makers, we can start by observing that as engendered by the structures of the state, the *role* of these state officials is indeed by definition to help to formulate the state's grand strategy, and hence to define and seek to promote the state's critical interests.<sup>16</sup> Yet to explain *why* officials define these interests the way they do we must, recognizing (*pace* neorealism) that national interests are political constructs serving a particular social purpose, examine empirically *how state managers are embedded within a wider field of social and political forces*.

Obviously, even when in office, government officials are subject to a host of (potential) influences from beyond government and within civil society. Also in foreign policy they may be subject to, for instance, corporate lobbying (Cox, 2012a) or that of special interest groups such as, according to Mearsheimer and Walt (2007), the notorious Israel lobby. Specific lobby or more narrow interest groups, however, while they may sometimes have an influence on particular foreign or defense policies (such as on the development of a new weapons system), are less likely to shape the formation of grand strategy, that is, the formulation of overarching foreign policy goals and a “road map” to achieve those goals.

Strategy formation requires the capacity to transcend narrow (sectoral) interests and, as indicated, involves long-term planning. So while state officials must be put into their social context, and hence must be seen as subject to numerous outside influences, our focus on social sources of grand strategy formation should not be taken to imply any instrumentalist conception of the state (cf. Shoup and Minter, 2004 [1977]). On the contrary, we very much emphasize the independent (in the sense of not directly controlled by others) agency of state officials.

At the same time, this independence should not be taken to mean that state managers operate in a (power) vacuum or that they are free agents – whose agency we cannot or do not need to explain this agency is apparently unconditioned *within* the structural limits imposed by capital as some Marxian scholars would have it.<sup>17</sup> Within the tradition emphasizing the “relative autonomy” of the state (see Block, 1987), the relativity of state autonomy should “above all” be understood in terms of the structural dependence of the capitalist state on successful capital accumulation (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 4). While this is certainly an important part of the explanation, and arguably in the case of the U.S. state, capital accumulation on a global scale, as Panitch and Gindin (2012) argue in their book on the political economy of American empire, is critical in this respect. Yet, we would maintain that the state's structural dependence on capital far from guarantees that the state pursues policies that secure the long-term interests of capital (or of the capitalist class). Ultimately, agency is crucial in articulating and propagating these long-term interests (van Apeldoorn, 2002, 2014b: 13). Therefore, there must be other causal mechanisms, involving relations between agents rather than the mere force of structures, that connect the interests

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and ideas of the capitalist class or other dominant social groups to state power. The missing link in structuralist accounts like that of Panitch and Gindin, we argue, lies in the *particular nature* of the U.S. state–capital nexus (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2013). The argument put forward in this book on the nature of the U.S. state–capital nexus is that it is less a matter of *mere* structural constraints imposed by capital, nor a matter of a capitalist class imposing its interests upon the state from the outside, as a situation in which *key foreign policy makers at the apex of the U.S. government themselves share an outlook in line with what is perceived to be the general interests of the leading segment of the U.S. capitalist class.*

The question that then needs to be addressed is why this is the case. The approach put forward here suggests that the answer must be sought in the social networks in which American policymakers are embedded. State officials do what they do, we hypothesize, because of how their ideas have been shaped by their social environment, by their prior socialization and by the social ties that make up what we here call “social position.” What we posit to be a key element in determining the social position of grand strategy makers is the degree and nature of their links with what we already identified as the dominant social force in U.S. society, that of the corporate capitalist class, or somewhat more narrowly, the corporate elite. Corporate elite power, however, must be seen as ultimately representing, at a higher level of abstraction, capitalist class power, and the corporate elite can be seen as representing a sub-set of the capitalist class (Fennema, 1982; Schwartz, 1987; Mintz, 2002; Carroll, 2010).<sup>18</sup> In contrast to more structuralist Marxian analysis of class, we would emphasize that in as much then as the power of corporate elites is taken as an expression of the power of capital (and of the capitalist class), this *power needs to be activated by concrete social actors* in order to have an effect, and also often needs to be actively defended against (potentially) opposing social forces with opposite interests. Hence the necessity to form and maintain cohesive elites capable of collective action (on the concept of elites more generally, and its various uses, see Bottomore, 1993).

We thus argue that *corporate elite power* (which we will further conceptualize and operationalize in Chapter 3) is in fact one important, but in the literature often overlooked, “domestic” source of American foreign policy, whereby we must analyze how this power resides in and is exercised through *elite networks that knit the corporate community and the American state tightly together*. It is also, we suggest, through these networks that corporate power exercises its most effective influence on foreign policy and grand strategy formation. Thus, while, for example, the role of Wall Street obviously weighs heavily in the formation of international financial policy (Cox, 2012b; cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012), these influences are in part transmitted, and more deeply entrenched, through the links that foreign-policy makers themselves have (had) with corporate capital. While such personal links do not obviate the need for corporate lobbying on specific issues, we propose here that *what we define as corporate elite networks loom large in forming the social position of U.S. grand-strategy makers and as*

*such play a significant role in shaping the latter's foreign policy outlook and worldview.*

To reiterate our earlier rejection of an instrumentalist approach, it is important to emphasize that while pointing to strong ties linking a capitalist class elite to the officials in control of the U.S. foreign policy state apparatus, these networks should not be regarded as representing a complete fusion of state and capital. Even if U.S. foreign policy has often brought direct tangible benefits to corporations with privileged access to Washington – from the United Fruit Company in Guatemala in the 1950s to more recently Bechtel and Halliburton in Iraq – it would be wrong to reduce U.S. grand strategy, or even individual policy decisions, to such narrow interests. Likewise, even if officials are directly recruited from the ranks of the corporate elite, they cannot be viewed as direct representatives of the corporations they previously led or even as agents of corporate capital in general. Once they assume office they also come to play a different role in which they no longer represent a corporation but the U.S. government, and are expected to take a more general and longer-term view regarding the geo-political interests of the American state (on this point see also McCormick, 2005: 16). But in doing so, we propose, their foreign policy beliefs and ideas are likely to be shaped to a very large extent by their social position as (former) members of the corporate elite.

In mapping and analyzing the ties of selected grand-strategy makers of the three post-Cold War administrations to the corporate elite we will further differentiate in [Chapter 3](#) between corporate affiliations (e.g., board memberships) and the so-called policy planning affiliations (e.g., a directorship or fellowship of a think tank). Indeed, it is, we suggest, within the network of the latter that often much of the grand-strategy formation or grand-strategy planning already takes place prior to their further formulation and implementation in office. Furthermore, we posit that both corporate affiliations and policy planning affiliations are to a large degree part of the same corporate elite network. While the former constitutes direct membership of the corporate elite, we hypothesize that the latter often involves a network strongly affiliated to that of the corporate elite, and could also be seen as part of the corporate elite more broadly conceived (in [Chapter 3](#) we will examine in detail to what extent this is also the case for the central policy planning bodies in our selection). At the same time, given that interests always have to be interpreted and are mediated by ideas – for instance relating to what the best means are to achieve given ends – there are bound to be intra-elite differences on the strategy to pursue, and these differences are likely to be visible within the policy planning network where different think tanks may on the one hand both contribute to and be reflective of a particular elite consensus, but on the other hand may also represent different shades of the same overarching ideology or worldview. We will now turn to the other two dimensions of structural context of grand strategy that we distinguish in our model, starting with the preceding grand strategy.

### **Preceding grand strategy**

With regard to the wider structural context in which grand-strategy makers operate as policymakers, and to which their strategies are oriented, we distinguish two closely interrelated aspects. First, as nothing is ever created *de novo* but always fashioned out of pre-existing materials for any (incoming) administration, the grand strategy of the preceding period forms a necessary starting point, and it is the agency of the new team of grand-strategy makers that will either *transform* or *reproduce* (or usually a combination of both) that pre-existing strategy (Bhaskar, 1979). The fact that it is up to a new team to either transform or reproduce an existing grand strategy does not of course mean that this reproduction and transformation only takes place right at the start of an administration and that the grand strategy then stays unchanged during the lifetime of that administration or presidency. Although we do take the latter as our unit of analysis, this does not imply, as will also become clear in [Chapters 4–6](#), that grand strategy does not also evolve during an administration. Indeed, due to a changing global context, often accompanied by a change in personnel, the limits and contradictions of (aspects of) a grand strategy pursued by a particular administration may already become apparent during that administration and lead to an adjustment. Yet because it is with the change of an administration that a new team of grand-strategy makers comes in, and because a president is arguably elected with a mandate to make his own imprint on foreign policy, we here take the change of administration as a logical starting point to examine continuity and change within American grand strategy. Indeed, it is, as we shall see, because a new team often interprets the changing global context differently and has its own specific grand-strategic ideas that an earlier adjustment of grand strategy under the previous administration becomes a much more marked shift under the next.

Preceding administrations will have formulated long-term and overarching goals, identified priorities, formulated policies to link those goals to concrete means, and they will have acted upon the thus formed grand strategy. Regarding the *ends* of American grand strategy, these indeed, as we shall argue in the next chapter, to a large extent rest upon deeply entrenched ideas, widely shared throughout the foreign policy establishment, and stretching back decades. They are thus part of a broader foreign policy ideology that is not likely to be subject to radical change unless it somehow has become completely delegitimized. A delegitimation regarding particular *means* is likely to occur more often, but then still needs to be acted upon. That is to say, any new set of grand-strategy makers will have to make the case – probably already made during the campaign and before in the relevant policy planning networks – that the means of grand strategy indeed have to change and, once in office, they will have to mobilize concrete resources of U.S. power to effectuate the change.

Beyond the ideational entrenchment of a particular preceding grand strategy, that strategy will also have been put in practice in ways that will not always be easily reversed, at least in the short term.<sup>19</sup> Wars may have been started, new

weapon systems developed, troops redeployed, new defense doctrines implemented, resources allocated, (foreign policy) bureaucracies transformed, alliances formed or disbanded, negotiations started, treaties signed, etc. The intended or unintended consequences of all of these policies form the legacy that any successor will have to cope with. Indeed, they can be seen as having in part contributed to the transformation of the global context, which is the overlapping second element that we here distinguish.

### ***Global context***

The second aspect of the (external) structural context, then, is the given global context confronting U.S. grand-strategy makers, and which they seek to transform on the basis of politically constructed American national interests, i.e., following a particular grand strategy. It is within this structural context that certain *contradictions and limits* inherent in the preceding grand strategy may have become manifest, thus necessitating a strategic adjustment in the eyes of current grand-strategy makers. The preceding grand strategy may have produced a backlash in terms of an erosion of international legitimacy, or depleted U.S. power resources because of what Paul Kennedy (1989) has called “imperial overstretch.” Contradictions inherent in the country’s current growth model may have erupted into a crisis threatening to destroy the economic foundation of U.S. power. Wars started may have weakened the position in a particular region or even globally. Of course, the other way around, preceding strategic conduct may also have bolstered U.S. hegemony, strengthened the competitiveness of its capital, or led to decisive military victories, and in this way have created new opportunities for subsequent grand-strategy makers. In other words, the structural element of what we here call the preceding grand strategy and that of the global context must be seen as interacting over time. Indeed, given the global dimensions of U.S. power, the global context is not just shaping U.S. grand strategy but is to a large degree also shaped by U.S. grand strategy; even if obviously not even an arguably global hegemon like the U.S. can control events and processes around the world. As Layne points out, but is quite obvious from even a cursory reading of the history of U.S. foreign policy, hegemony does not mean omnipotence (Layne, 2006b: 12; see also Ikenberry *et al.*, 2009).

The global context the U.S. is facing is both the product of the intended and unintended outcome of both its own past actions and underlying grand strategy *as well as* obviously the agency of other actors. These other actors – which can be both state and non-state, domestic and transnational – even if not (potential) great power rivals, are obviously not passive objects of American power, but purposeful subjects with the power to both facilitate and resist, frustrate and undermine U.S. strategy. So from the Soviet Union to currently China, and from the Vietnamese National Liberation Front to Al Qaeda, the United States faces contenders and opponents that shape the context for the United States as well (of course, even the closest allies do not always do America’s bidding, not even during the Cold War, e.g., Layne, 2006b). At the same time, while we should

grant them independent agency, the actions of some of these adversaries can also often be seen as, dialectically, the unintended outcome America's foreign policies. Indeed, as earlier described by, among others, Williams (2009) and LaFeber (1993), the dialectic of what in the next chapter we will identify as America's "non-territorial" expansionist foreign policy is that since the late nineteenth century has engendered, in its attempt to open up and thereby transform foreign societies and economies (uprooting local extant social structures and seeking to supplant them by liberal capitalist social relations and institutions), has – from the social revolutions in Latin America to the contemporary Islamist insurgencies – engendered revolutionary and anti-imperialist movements that the United States subsequently needed to suppress or defeat through often further (military) interventions "to maintain [or restore] social order and the rule of law necessary for the continuing existence of capitalist social relations" (Anievas, 2014: 126).

What, following this contradictory dynamic, Chalmers Johnson (2004), following the CIA, has called *blowback*, can sometimes take the form of particularly dramatic *events* such as, in the post-Cold War era, the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This, importantly, highlights that global context is in part shaped by *contingent events* (contingent even if the extant context may make some events more likely than others). At the same time it must be recognized that events are always interpreted and therefore "in fact politically and intersubjectively constituted" (Buzan and Hansen, 2009: 55). As Parmar (2005) has argued, with respect to foreign policy formation, some occurrences may be categorized as *catalyzing events* in the sense that they might enable a radical policy shift previously politically impossible (see [Chapter 5](#) on the case of 9/11). However, in order to have the desired catalyzing effect, a particular interpretation or social construction of these events is needed, a discourse that can legitimate subsequent policies both domestically and internationally.<sup>20</sup>

Global context, acting as a set of structures providing both constraints and opportunities for grand strategy, however, is of course more than a collection of – partly socially constructed – events. It is also constituted by particular international and transnational (power) structures that enable, but not determine, the production of certain events rather than others. In this sense, we here define global context broadly as comprising both the states system and the power relations within it, as well as the capitalist world economy and its social relations, constituting a global political economy in which given territorially defined independent political units, i.e., states, occupy a certain position. Such global context also refers to the favorite variable of realism – relative power. For us, however, as indicated, the power of the U.S. state is not just constituted by its material capabilities or by its ideological power resources, but must also always be seen in relation to the social power rooted in capitalist society. In this sense, the power of the American state is related to the power of its capital and capitalist class, not only within the U.S. "state–society complex" (Cox, 1987), but also within global capitalism (cf. Harvey, 2003; Wood, 2003; Callinicos, 2009; Panitch and Gindin, 2012). The international competitiveness of U.S.

transnational corporations (TNCs), for instance, is not just a power resource of the U.S. state, it is also part of the material foundation of the class power of this section of U.S. capital (cf. Starrs, 2013). American global hegemony (or capitalist hegemony more broadly), then, as Robert Cox wrote more than 30 years ago, can be conceived as “an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class” (Cox, 1983: 171; see also Cox, 1987: 7).

For other reasons too, our conception of global context as an explanatory factor of grand strategy formation must be distinguished from a neoclassical realist notion of “systemic pressures.” Our approach has a different understanding of the interaction between “the system” and what neoclassical realists identify as unit-level (or domestic) variables. Of course, relative power forms an important permissive condition (Layne, 2006a: 28; cf. Dueck, 2006: 18–20) for grand strategy. For instance, Luxembourg’s grand-strategy makers, in as far as it has any, will not be likely to ever entertain the ambition of global hegemony. Yet as Layne himself recognizes better than some other neoclassical realists (e.g., Miller, 2010; Onea, 2012), while the position of the United States in the states system since 1945 “gave the United States both the opportunity and the means to expand beyond the Western Hemisphere … structural factors do not tell us *why* the United States *chose* to do so (Layne, 2006a: 8). While Layne here, as we have seen, explains the latter in terms of Open Door beliefs, our approach goes beyond that in stressing that these motives cannot be reduced to policymakers’ *beliefs*, but that these beliefs themselves need to be explained in relation to – though not reduced to – underlying *social sources*. This brings us to a final core element of our model, the mediating role of ideas.

### ***The mediating role of ideas***

We have above discussed the three structural elements that we identify as conditioning the making of American grand strategy: social position, preceding grand strategy, and global context. But *how* structure conditions agency is always mediated by the ideas and beliefs that the agent holds (see Hay, 2002: 209–13). Ideas cannot be reduced to the social position an agent occupies, yet neither can they be understood as existing independently from that position, that is, from the social structure in which any ideational practice is embedded (van Apeldoorn, 2002: 19). We have already argued that – even if pre-existing ideas (e.g., ideological beliefs) must be seen as mediating the impact of any social structure – ideas and more broadly the worldview of grand-strategy makers is to a large extent shaped by what we identify as social position once the grand-strategy makes are actually in office. This is because social position here refers not only to one’s current social position within the state and the wider field of social and political forces, but also to *prior socialization within (corporate) elite networks*. Both what we have above identified as global context and the preceding grand strategy, however, condition the agency of grand-strategy makers in a way that is critically mediated by the ideas that are, in turn, to a large part shaped by the actors’ (prior) social position. Whether, for instance, a changing global context

is seen as creating new opportunities or rather engendering new threats, or whether particular power shifts within the global political economy are seen as necessitating strategic adjustment depends on the perception and therefore on the pre-existing causal and ideological beliefs of grand-strategy makers. Similarly, whether a preceding grand strategy is seen in a favorable or in a negative light and whether it is seen as suffering from particular limits that need to be transcended, an adjustment of the means or even a transformation of the ends, equally depends upon actors' ideas.

Drawing attention to the role of ideas does not mean that global context or preceding grand strategy as explanatory factors are wholly subjective, i.e., that they can be fully reduced to the actors' ideas. Indeed, the role of ideas is a mediating one, implying that there is a structural reality independent of an individual actor's ideas about that structure.<sup>21</sup> While, for instance, the global context always needs to be interpreted, the interpretation is in fact an inevitable filter between subject and object, and does not as such exclude the causal efficacy of the object(ive structures). Thus, to give an example, the collapse of the Soviet Union and how that changed the relative power position of the United States was not just a matter of perception – it has had real effects. Similarly, the current rise of China may be perceived and interpreted differently. Indeed, some may not even agree that China is rising or catching up with the United States (e.g., Beckley, 2011). Yet, the different perceptions and subsequent strategic debates do refer to, and are provoked by, something that takes place regardless of these rival interpretations from Washington (i.e., the phenomenal growth of the Chinese economy). Because the global structural context itself is indeterminate as regards what kind of strategy is (to be) adopted, its effects must always be seen in relation to prevailing ideas, which in turn we have to see in relation to – though not reducible to (as this position needs to be interpreted as well) – grand-strategy makers' social position. Following our perspective on the dialectical interplay of structure and agency over time we hence see grand strategy formation as a dynamic process that takes place through cycles of structural reproduction and transformation (cf. Archer, 1995).

### ***The social sources of the Open Door: the dominance of U.S. transnationally oriented capital***

On the basis of the above model the sources of continuity and change can be rooted in all three of our structural factors: social position, contradictions of the preceding grand strategy, and a changing global context. We here hypothesize that the continuities in grand strategy can be largely ascribed to the continuity in the social structures of U.S. capitalism and its relation to the U.S. state, and, on that basis, the continuity of the close personal nexus between the U.S. state and dominant U.S. capital, taking the form of strong ties between U.S. state managers and the American corporate elite.

In particular, as we hope to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, we need to understand this continuity in light of the continuing dominance of *transnationally*

*oriented capital* within the corporate elite. While the concept of “transnational capital” is above all associated with the contemporary era of globalization, the transnationalization of capital has a much longer history that is intimately bound up with the global rise of American capitalism. Although we may arguably call capital only “transnational” if within a single unit (i.e., a firm) a large part of its assets are located outside the home country and dispersed over many national jurisdictions (often with the value chain itself being broken up geographically), the modern large corporations which emerged first in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century were from the start seeking expansion abroad and making significant investments in Latin America and Asia in particular (Wilkins, 1970; LaFeber, 1998). More generally, then, we may understand the notion of transnationally oriented capital (cf. Macartney, 2011) as that part of capital that seeks to expand outside its domestic market in order to sustain profitability; transnational here thus refers to a strategy rather than necessarily an already fully achieved state of affairs. At the same time it is clear that America’s major firms nowadays – and in fact generally since the post-war era – belong in fact to not only the largest but also the most competitive TNCs in the world. As Sean Starrs (2013) has shown, U.S. TNCs in terms of profitability still dominate most sectors.<sup>22</sup>

Globalization notwithstanding, the nationality of TNCs does matter. So we deliberately speak of *U.S.* transnational capital. “Transnational” does not necessarily mean “global,” and certainly not that the “national” has been completely transcended, or is no longer a significant component of it (cf. Robinson, 2007). The U.S. state here should be seen as acting less on behalf of global capital as a whole – even if performing essential functions for the reproduction of global capitalism – but on behalf of U.S. transnational capital *in particular* (cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012).

Several arguments in favor of this interpretation can be advanced here. First, as just noted, U.S. transnational corporations and financial institutions still tend to be the most competitive in the world, they tend to win out in an open world economy where comparative advantage reigns (Starrs, 2013; see also Schwartz, 2010). Second, even to the extent that U.S. capital cannot outcompete its global competitors on purely economic grounds, the sheer economic, financial, political, and military power of the U.S. state can often make up for the difference. U.S. financial hegemony, as bound up with the reserve status of the dollar, for instance, not only benefits the U.S. state (facing less balance of payments and budgetary constraints than other states), but also offers lower transaction costs and more freedom to U.S. capital (Gowan, 1999a: 25; Mastanduno, 2009; see also [Chapter 2](#)). And when the U.S. uses its vast military superiority to open foreign markets it tends to be U.S. transnational corporations that profit the most. Indeed, as statistical research by Biglaiser and DeRouen Jr (2007) demonstrates, American FDI “follows the flag” – that is, in places where the U.S. has intervened militarily or otherwise deployed troops U.S. investment flows tend to subsequently rise – while such selection effects are not found for non-U.S. investors.

Third, we should note that what we call transnational capital – and certainly in the case of U.S. TNCs of which both ownership and management are still overwhelmingly predominantly American (that is, both their shareholders and their directors are usually U.S. citizens, more than the other way around – see Starrs, 2013) – is still also to an important extent *nationally* embedded politically. The latter, we argue, may in part be seen in terms of the close (personal) ties that exist between U.S. transnational capital and the U.S. state. In our study, then, we instead focus on a *distinctly American* corporate elite, even if this elite often controls transnationally operating firms.

To sum up, from within our perspective on the social sources of U.S. grand strategy, we propose to explain the continuity of that strategy in terms of the primacy of a corporate power elite dominated by U.S. transnationally oriented capital. It is because of this, we will argue, that not only since the end of the Cold War, but also in the century before, American grand strategy in effect reflects *variations* – variations that we will explain in terms of a changing global context as well as intra-elite differences that we in part relate to distinct policy planning networks – of the same theme, that is, of the global Open Door. In the next chapter we will analyze how this has evolved historically until the end of the Cold War, showing that this continuity is indeed deeply rooted.

## Notes

- 1 While the adversaries themselves may be identified in light of the overall grand strategic ends, grand-strategy makers may differ in their assessment of who or what constitutes the biggest (potential) threat *and* how to best deal with those threats (Lobell, 2009), e.g., through military coercion or through negotiations; through regime change or financial incentives, through confrontation or accommodation, etc.
- 2 While the strategy of global hegemony may seem to fit the predictions of offensive realism, the main proponent of that theory, Mearsheimer (2001: 114–28), stresses that such a strategy in the end is not feasible because of what he calls the “stopping power of water,” so that rational states settle for regional hegemony (that is, in the U.S. case limiting itself to the Western hemisphere). Other varieties of “offensive realism” are more of the neoclassical rather than the neorealist kind (cf. Layne, 2006a: 17–22), arguing that a strategy aiming at global hegemony cannot be explained in systemic terms alone but also has to be related to “domestic” sources. Indeed, we agree with Layne (2006a: 22, 191) that as the United States is one of the most secure states in the world one is hard pressed to argue how the logic of anarchy alone would explain such a strategy of extra-regional hegemony. But as we shall argue below, we here also need to go beyond Layne whose domestic explanation rather stays at the surface. Finally, we would add that even if some type of offensive liberalism would predict the same outcome that we observe in terms of striving for global hegemony, it cannot explain the social content and purpose of that hegemony – that is, what we, with others, see as the Open Door nature of U.S. global hegemony. This we can only make sense of if we relate the American state to American (capitalist) society.
- 3 There are, of course, also approaches to grand strategy that focus much more squarely on domestic factors, without necessarily combining them with “systemic variables,” i.e., approaches that fit more within the liberal “second-image reversed” tradition (Rosecrance and Stein, 1993). Yet overall these approaches are not that systematically elaborated theoretically nor consistently specifically focused on grand strategy rather

than foreign policy more generally. For those reasons we will not further discuss this scattered literature here.

- 4 The constructivist notion that the role of ideas and culture is of course not confined to national borders but is equally constitutive of politics at the international and global levels (see, e.g., Wendt, 1999) remains outside this neoclassical realist framework.
- 5 This is also the case with more explicitly constructivist analyses of U.S. grand strategy which, however, do not represent any systematic attempt to account for continuity and/or change, see e.g., Flibbert, 2006).
- 6 In fact, by time and again emphasizing that it was about a belief-system of U.S. policymakers, they *believed* it to be in the U.S. national interest (*ibid.*: 32, 72, 75, 92, 216). Layne inadvertently reduces these interests like a true constructivist to ideas that policy actors happen to have.
- 7 For alternative, pluralist approaches to the role of think tanks emphasizing the diversity of organizations and initiatives that compete within the policymaking arena, see e.g., Dahl (1961) and McGann and Weaver (2000). Abelson (2006), in addition, identifies what he calls institutional approaches which focus on, for instance, the historical evolution of think tanks, how they have developed from more traditional research institutes to policy advocacy organizations that market ideas, above all that of the free market.
- 8 Other recent contributions on elite power and U.S. global power and foreign policy that may be mentioned are: Parmar (2011) and Ledwidge (2011, 2012) on the racial dimension of U.S. foreign policy elites; Parmar (2008) on the neoconservative foreign policy establishment (see also de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, 2011); and Cox (2012b) on the role of corporate power in U.S. foreign policymaking. See further various contributions to a forthcoming Special Issue of *International Politics* (Parmar *et al.*, forthcoming).
- 9 Shoup and Minter (2004 [1977]) and especially Parmar (2004) do in some detail analyze particular episodes of U.S. foreign policy, but in terms of the private input based on a detailed case study of only one, albeit important and central, policy planning organization, the CFR. Parmar (2012), with respect to America's three key foundations (see above), similarly does not seek so much to explain continuity and change in U.S. grand strategy, as to analyze how they have enabled U.S. expansionism.
- 10 An earlier and much shorter version of this section and hence our theoretical perspective and analytical framework can be found in van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2014).
- 11 Here it must be added that strategic selectivity is in turn a product of "past political strategies and struggles" (Jessop, 1990: 261) and hence a reflection of a (past) social balance of power.
- 12 This understanding of the interplay of structure and agency over time as articulated by Bhaskar and Archer can be seen as part of a "Critical Realist" social ontology. Critical Realism as a philosophy of science (above all developed by Bhaskar) has been introduced into the discipline of International Relations by, among others, Patomäki and Wight (2000) and Joseph (2012), as well as (though in a much more idealist version that in our view sits uneasily with the emphasis on more material social practices in other Critical Realist work) Wendt (1999).
- 13 Indeed, for the purposes of this study we will assume that all of the grand-strategy makers selected broadly play the same general, functionally equivalent role, which is that of making and implementing U.S. grand strategy. Though of course in the narrative we will distinguish between more and less central policymakers within each administration, and although some functions themselves are obviously more important than others, our argument ultimately is more about the aggregate level where elite networks are argued to shape the overall foreign policy outlook and strategy of an administration.

## 14 As Archer frames it:

to state that some structures are pre-existent to determinate agents and activities has no ontological priority over emphasizing that the self-same agents are themselves prior to later structural elaboration [...] it is precisely because such elaboration is co-determined by the autonomous causal power of current agents, that society can develop in unpredictable ways.

(Ibid.: 75)

- 15 Bhaskar (1979: 46) calls his theorization of the relationship between structure and agency “the transformational model of the society–person connection.” Without wanting to claim to entirely do justice to Bhaskar’s model, we here seek to apply this approach, as well as Archer’s, to an understanding of how American grand strategy in the interplay of structure and agency is either transformed or reproduced.
- 16 Beyond this, the so-called *bureaucratic politics* approach in FPA (building upon Allison’s classic from 1971) stresses that officials occupying different positions within the executive tend to assume different roles and have divergent interests. Beyond the fact that empirically this approach has produced at best ambiguous results, it makes little sense to regard geopolitical strategy (rather than individual decisions) as the outcome of bureaucratic politics.
- 17 In fact, we in this respect, with reference to what is largely an intra-Marxist debate, reject both instrumentalist and structuralist conceptions of the state and suggest that we ought to move beyond what in many ways is a false dichotomy as presented in the famous Milliband–Poulantzas debate (see Jessop, 2008).
- 18 Here we may observe that corporations are owned and ultimately controlled by a tiny minority, or a property-owning capitalist class (Zeitlin, 1974). Thus a relevant statistic is that in the highly unequal U.S. economy, the top 1 percent of households own almost half of all financial wealth (Winters and Page, 2009: 736). Although we may call a polity in which wealth is so unevenly distributed an oligarchy rather than a democracy (*ibid.*), this tends to obscure the specific sources of this great personal wealth, which in capitalism derives from the ownership of the means of production, in particular through modern corporations. That is to say, this wealth and the power associated with it is actually accumulated and maintained largely through corporations (Scott, 1997). At the same time, contemporary top management of corporations such as corporate directors, who are usually taken as making up a corporate elite, are often first of all partial owners as well, with shares and share options providing an important part of their income. Second, through their managerial control they must equally be seen as part of the capitalist class, sharing not only the same (financial) interests, but also often the same worldview, cemented by elite networks and common patterns of socialization through which these different groups within the capitalist class indeed achieve a degree of cohesion and class consciousness (Scott, 1997; Domhoff, 2009; see also van Apeldoorn, 2002: 25–6).
- 19 Theoretically the point we are seeking to make here may arguably also be understood through the concept of *path dependency*, or the importance we need to attach to the mediation “by the contextual features of a given situation often inherited from the past” (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 941), as popularized by the so-called historical institutionalist school in political science. However, such ideas are of course much older and not the exclusive domain of historical institutionalism. Beyond the work of Bhaskar (1979) on structure and agency we may of course also be reminded of Marx’s aphorism: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (in Marx and Engels, 1978: 595).
- 20 It is arguably at the domestic level that the need for legitimization of foreign policies is in the first instance located (see on this, e.g., Krebs and Lobasz, 2007). Yet the

international legitimacy of its policies is also important for a global power like the U.S. that cares about its “soft power” (Nye, 2011, 2012), or maintaining hegemony in a Gramscian sense of resting also upon a measure of consent rather than mere coercion (Cox, 1983, 1987; Rupert, 1995). Yet we maintain that whereas this is important in terms of legitimization, and therefore can influence to what extent a particular intended policy is politically possible or not, rarely does domestic politics *beyond the elite networks within which a particular foreign policy consensus is formed* (and which are part of our model through grand-strategy makers’ social position) exercise an independent influence on grand strategy formation in terms of its overarching ends. Here we must indeed emphasize the independence of both the executive and the wider foreign policy establishment dominated by these elite networks from society at large. While public opinion, electoral pressures, or social movements may act as a brake on certain elite projects, we therefore (and to avoid unnecessary complexity) do not see them as directly shaping the formulation of grand strategy (as also indicated by the statistical research of Jacobs and Page, 2005) and hence do not identify it here as a separate structural dimension in our model. The same applies to the role of Congress, which may significantly affect (the implementation of) U.S. foreign policy (e.g., by not ratifying certain treaties or refusing to fund certain wars) but is normally not an actor formulating grand strategy.

- 21 We thus adopt a philosophically realist (not to be confused with IR realism) ontology in which reality is seen as mind-independent. See especially the critical realism of, among others, Bhaskar (1979; also Sayer, 2000).
- 22 U.S. TNCs also often own significant parts of non-U.S. TNCs, with American firms owning a total of “46% of all publicly listed shares of the top 500 corporations in the world” (Starrs, 2013: 824). What Starrs (*ibid.*) calls the U.S. investor class are also the ultimate owners of not only American TNCs but also of many non-U.S. firms, such that the share of American millionaires of the world’s total and the share of U.S. financial household wealth are, respectively, 42 and 41 percent (*ibid.*: 825).

## **2 Three waves of non-territorial expansionism**

### American grand strategy from the Civil War to the Cold War

This chapter will provide a historical perspective to our study by arguing that the American grand strategy aimed at an “open door” for U.S. capital has a history stretching back to the final quarter of the nineteenth century. As such this chapter will underline the historical continuity in U.S. grand strategy, and seek to understand the content and form of that continuity. While this chapter will describe this continuity until the end of the Cold War, our later chapters analyzing the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations will show that this continuity – in terms of the global Open Door – persists today. At the same time, the historical continuity that we describe in this chapter will help us to make sense of the variation within this continuity that we will observe with respect to the last three U.S. administrations.<sup>1</sup>

After a brief conceptual discussion on how to understand the nature of Open Door imperialism, we will present a historical narrative, identifying three “waves” of non-territorial expansionism. A first wave took place in the wake of the “long depression” from the 1870s to the 1890s and arguably reached its peak with the declaration of Wilson’s war aims in January 1918; a second wave formed after the Great Depression of the 1930s and culminated in the *Pax Americana* established during the Cold War; and a third developed in response to the economic crisis of 1970s, taking on a specifically neoliberal shape in its promotion of U.S.-centered globalization. The third wave has continued into, and reached new heights in, the post-Cold War era to be analyzed in [Chapters 4–6](#), but will in this historical chapter only be discussed until the Reagan era.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Capitalist expansionism and expansionist foreign policy**

The United States did not become the world’s leading power by accident (Bacevich, 2002); rather, America’s *rise to globalism* (Ambrose and Brinkley, 2010) – going through several phases from regional hegemony in the Americas to an emergent world power at the end of the nineteenth century to global hegemony since World War II (Layne, 2006a; Zakaria, 1998) – has been the result of conscious policy planning within private and state elite networks formulating a grand strategy aimed at the creation of a global, informal empire: a capitalist empire based upon market power and the extension of markets and the domination of

U.S. capital (Wood, 2003), but crucially backed up and enabled by the coercive power of the U.S. (territorial) state (cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012). While mediated by prevalent elite ideas, the planning and formulation of grand strategy has, however, been in part conditioned by recurrent crises of American capitalism and the (perceived) need to overcome these crises through ever widening and deepening economic expansionism, as will be elaborated below.

### ***Overaccumulation and imperial expansionism***

As David Harvey (1999; 2003) has argued, capitalism, as a system driven by the necessity of endless accumulation, is plagued by recurrent crises of overaccumulation in which accumulated capital, i.e., profits, can no longer be profitably reinvested, at least within the current spatial and temporal limits. Imperialism may then be the solution in as much as it constitutes what Harvey calls a *spatial fix* in which surplus capital becomes exported abroad to be absorbed by new investment opportunities created by the imperialist state. As Harvey (2003: 126) explains – though by referring to the example of British rather than U.S. nineteenth-century imperialism – this external solution is often preferred to attempts to revive capital accumulation internally through temporal solutions that would involve the role of the state and redistributive social reforms.<sup>3</sup>

As we will detail below, it was in the final quarter of the nineteenth century that among America's emerging corporate elite for the first time a consensus had formed that in order to overcome the depression of the time and sustain capital accumulation, foreign markets were needed to dispose of the United States' surplus of industrial goods and capital (LaFeber, 1998). This elite was, however, well aware that capital could not open and penetrate these markets by itself, but, in the words of one industrialist at the time, needed “an intelligent and spirited foreign policy” to “see to it” that these foreign markets were indeed opened (*ibid.*: 20). Hence what was called for was an active role of the state to enable economic expansionism, promoting U.S. capital's interests externally by opening and keeping open foreign markets for exports and investment (cf. van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2012: 473–6).

Following our theoretical approach as laid out in [Chapter 1](#) we argue the importance of agency in as much as structural crises alone cannot explain any particular grand strategy as these crises need to be *interpreted* by what we identify as grand-strategy planners and grand-strategy makers. On the basis of this interpretation, the problem is defined in a particular way, and particular solutions are formulated. A central premise of this book is that this process takes place in a context in which the American state is not only structurally dependent upon U.S. capital (in order to restore and sustain economic growth), but also as closely interwoven with the most transnationally oriented sections of American corporate capital through elite networks. While our own empirical research is limited to the post-Cold War era and hence we cannot present any systematic data for before, available evidence and secondary sources strongly suggest (as will be illustrated below), that this particular state–capital nexus in fact dates

from the late nineteenth century and has remained in place throughout the twentieth century.

### ***Non-territorial expansionism in a territorial world***

Shaped by this state–capital nexus, the U.S. state, as we will document below, has thus for over a century played a critical role in enabling capitalist expansion, consistently seeking to break down protective barriers, open foreign markets, and help to establish “free markets” and “freedom of enterprise” and their concomitant institutions in an ever-widening area. America’s expansionism in this respect has since the end of the nineteenth century been largely *non-territorial in as much as it has been driven by the expansion of American capitalism, and therefore by a quest for capitalist markets rather than territory*, that is, the creation of a non-territorial global space constituted by market relations and the flow of capital. As Neil Smith writes, “[t]he emerging American empire defined its power in the first place through the more abstract geography of the world market rather than through direct political control over territory” (Smith, 2003: 19). But, as Smith (*ibid.*) also stresses, America’s ruling classes could (of course) never fully realize their ambition to truly transcend geography or even territoriality. Beyond the point that geography remains inherent in capitalist accumulation (de Graaff, 2012; cf. Harvey, 2003), what is important in the context of the United States’ rise as a global power is that this took place in the context of a world divided into sovereign territorial spaces, and that territorial sovereignty to an extent has been the very foundation for American empire. In as much as this informal imperialism has been about the spread of capitalist freedom (though above all the freedom of U.S. capital) it must be noted that what van der Pijl (1993) has termed the “sovereignty of capital” has paradoxically gone hand in hand with, indeed arguably requires, the existence of multiple states as the freedom of capital is best ensured within “anarchy,” that is, if capital can freely move from one national jurisdiction to another. This, however, as Colás (2008) also points out, at the same time creates particular challenges for U.S. imperial rule as recognizing other states’ formal independence means that one cannot always simply lay down one’s laws there, and one always runs the risk that formally independent states seek real (democratic) autonomy.

Interventionism, ensuring that the right regimes remained in power and that the wrong ones were overthrown whether through overt or covert war or other coercive means of the state, has thus always been and still is today an indispensable aspect of the practice of American grand strategy. As Westad (2007: 386) recounts, when in the closing days of the Cold War the last Soviet leader Gorbachev proposed at one of their summits to then President Ronald Reagan that both would sign a memorandum affirming their belief in peaceful co-existence “as a universal principle,” and to renounce the use of military means to resolve disputes because “non-interference in internal affairs and freedom of socio-political choice must be recognized as the inalienable and mandatory standards of international relations” (Gorbachev as cited in Westad, 2007: 386), Reagan

refused to the astonishment of his Soviet counterpart. But, as Westad (*ibid.*) writes, “Gorbachev simply failed to understand that no American president could sign such an agreement without a basic reevaluation of his country’s whole approach to the Third World.” As this book will also testify, no such basic reevaluation has yet taken place. In sum, creating a non-territorial empire paradoxically did constantly involve, and still involves today, the application of the coercive power of the state – a territorial unit – to try to create, maintain, or restore control over actual places and territories (Maier, 2006: 110; see also Anievas, 2014: [ch. 4](#)), even while refraining from actual colonialism, and holding on to the notion (at times fiction) of national sovereignty.

### **From territorial expansionism to the first wave of Open Door imperialism**

Notwithstanding its professed anti-colonialism, the history of the United States is one of expansionism right from the first English settlements in the early seventeenth century (Williams, 2009; Stedman Jones, 1970; LaFeber, 1994, 1998; Heiss, 2002). During the first 250 years this expansionism was largely *territorial*: i.e., the (in)famous westward drive, fueled by the quest for land and new sources of wealth on the part of a rapidly growing population (Vandenbroucke, 2008), creating a particular type of settler colonialism and its mythology of the moving frontier. It is in this context that we must locate the origins of American *exceptionalism* – later to become a cornerstone of the Open Door worldview – the notion that the United States is somehow exceptional compared (and indeed superior) to other great powers in that it is not merely driven by (power) interests but equally by values and a higher morality. Closely related to this, and what from the start became a key element in the United States’ emergent national identity and outlook, is the idea that the United States has a “special and unique mission, assigned by a higher authority, to remake the world” (Heiss, 2002: 520, see also Williams, 2007 [1980], 2009: [ch. 2](#)).

Although expansionist from its foundation, the United States became only a fully fledged *capitalist* imperialist power in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century when “[u]nder the impact of the industrial revolution Americans began to search for markets not land” (LaFeber, 1998: 407) – marking a gradual shift towards primarily *non-territorial* expansionism, especially after the American Civil War was resolved in favor of the industrial capitalism of the North, whose victory “marked the transference of power from planters to industrialists and financiers” (LaFeber, 1998: 7; see also Stedman Jones, 1970). It was in this context that by the end of the nineteenth century “the free market had become a part of American foreign policy ideology,” and was seen as “a logical extension of the virtues of capitalism and universal liberty,” ideas deeply ingrained in American culture (Westad, 2007: 12).

It is here, then, that we find the social origins of what William Appleman Williams (2009) called the imperialism of the Open Door that manifested itself from the end of the nineteenth century onwards: an imperialism that from the

start was premised on the “firm conviction, even dogmatic belief, that America’s *domestic* well-being depends upon such sustained, ever increasing overseas economic expansion” (2009: 15). This notion became widely shared by America’s corporate and political elite in the post-Civil War period and beyond, even if for the corporate elite domestic prosperity in practice was above all equated with the profitability of U.S. corporations. Ideologically this imperialism was underpinned by the pre-existing myth of American exceptionalism, which became harnessed to promote and legitimate the emergent U.S. globalism aimed at the establishment of an informal empire.

The material basis of this new imperial drive was the United States’ rise to economic dominance and the superior competitiveness of American capital that followed its rapid industrialization, becoming the largest economy toward the end of the nineteenth century (Maddison, 2001: 261). The expansionism of American capital in search for “spatial fixes” to recurrent crises of overaccumulation, once consolidated, created vested interests – within the newly rising corporate capitalist class – in maintaining and possibly further expanding this new economic empire, which in the course of the twentieth century became increasingly global. With the critical help of the U.S. state, American capital thus came to open up and reshape societies of formally sovereign states around the world “in a pro-American mold” (Williams, 2009: 57). It was thus that what we view as the first wave of American non-territorial expansionism arose, to which we will turn below.

### ***The long depression and the turn to foreign markets***

As part of a global downturn often referred to as the “long depression,” the U.S. economy in the final quarter of the nineteenth century was marked by a series of depressions, in particular during the years 1873–78, 1882–86, and 1893–99. Paradoxically, this period in America’s economic history was both one of rapidly rising output and productivity as well as one of bouts of financial panic and years of deflation, with both profits and wages suffering as the U.S. home market increasingly did not suffice to absorb the vast quantities of goods produced by America’s competitive industry and agriculture (see e.g., McCormick, 1990: ch. 1; cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 6–7).<sup>4</sup>

It was within this context that the thesis of “generalized overproduction” gradually came to be widely perceived by leading intellectuals, journalists, policy-makers, and businessmen as the cause of the depression, while economic expansionism was increasingly propagated as its solution (McCormick, 1990: 26–39; LaFeber, 1998: ch. 2; 1993: 29). Indeed, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) – which came to be one of the country’s leading business organizations – was founded in direct response to the depression in the mid-1890s especially to promote U.S. exports as “our manufacturers have outgrown or are outgrowing the home market” and the “expansion of our foreign trade [is] the only promise of relief” (proceedings of the NAM, 1897, cited in McCormick, 1990: 36). It was thus that “with each panic and depression the American business community displayed a reintensified interest in foreign markets” (LaFeber, 1998: 19).

Through a wave of mergers at the turn of the century this business community began to transform as it became dominated by corporate giants that were internationally oriented and expansionist from the start and became important political players in their own right: “U.S. multinational corporations began to replace the farmers as players of the most important role in the nation’s foreign economic policy” (LaFeber, 1993: 28; see also Wilkins, 1970). In conjunction with the new industrial corporate elite rose a new financial elite centered in Wall Street, with emerging investment bankers financing the new manufacturing industries such as electricity, railroads, and steel – thus forming a power bloc of “finance capital.” It was this bloc that also formed the private side of what emerged as America’s new state–capital nexus that came to inform its grand-strategy making as an emergent great power. Thus, e.g., both the (Democratic) Cleveland administrations (1885–89 and 1893–97) and the (Republican) McKinley administration (1897–1901) had close links to J.P. Morgan, the most predominant Wall Street financier of the era (see Chernow, 1990).

It was thus within this new state–capital nexus, and the elite networks that constituted it, that a consensus view was formed among America’s business leaders and among its foreign policymakers that “foreign markets were necessary for the prosperity and tranquility of the United States” (LaFeber, 1998: 150). Prosperity because economic expansionism was seen as the only way to keep capital accumulation going and ensure growth and employment; tranquility because it was widely believed that if the depressionary conditions were not overcome this would endanger the whole capitalist social order as already widespread labor unrest and radicalism (McCormick, 1990: 22–25; Babson, 1999: ch. 1) would likely further escalate.

It was in the context of these intensifying social upheavals, raising the specter of class warfare upending the existing social and political order, that America’s ruling elite worried that failure to find new markets abroad would produce revolution at home (see LaFeber, 1998: esp. ch. II, 176–85; see also McCormick, 1999: ch. 1; Williams, 2009: 29). These fears combined with the older creed of American exceptionalism, which was both boosted by and took on a new form with the new expansionism:

Paradoxically the belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon gained popularity as the nation’s economy slid into an almost continual twenty-year depression marked by violent social outbreaks. Americans could justify disposing their glut of goods and capital with the argument that the United States, blessed with so many of God’s gifts, had the right to spread them around the world. In doing so, some writers candidly admitted that this was necessary also to save their own system from either anarchy or socialism.

(LaFeber, 1998: 99)

Non-territorial, economic expansionism then became the preferred solution to America’s social and economic problems generated by its rapid industrialization, one that was not so much structurally determined by economic imperatives as a

political choice on the part of an elite not willing to countenance any more progressive “internal” solutions (LaFeber, 1998: xxv). The “imperialist solution” came to be fully implemented, and turned into the guiding principle of American foreign policy in the 1890s, a crucial era in the history of the foreign policy of the United States in which America’s primarily non-territorial expansionism, after years of preparation, came to maturity and the U.S. emerged as one of the world’s great powers, overtaking the world’s hegemon, the UK, in terms of industrial output by the turn of the century (Kennedy, 1989: 259), and rapidly asserting its newfound power outside the Western hemisphere (*ibid.*: 317–18; see also Zakaria, 1998). This ascendancy became manifest in the context of “the worst economic crisis of overproduction and overinvestment … until the Great Depression” (Gaido, 2006: 78), one which made the ruling elite’s fears of the radicalizing masses most acute (McCormick, 1990: 24).

### ***From the Spanish–American War to the Open Door notes***

Following on from more tentative outward movements in the 1870s and 1880s, economic expansion in the mid-1890s became oriented primarily to Latin America and increasingly also to “the Far East,” especially China that at the time was, and continued to be in the early decades of the next century, regarded as “the great market that would absorb the surplus” (Williams, 2009: 43; McCormick, 1990, cf. Ninkovich, 1999: 34–42). In both cases, the elite of the American corporate capitalist class and their spokesmen played, next to the officials of the State Department, an important role in formulating these expansionist solutions to the economic and social problems generated by industrial capitalism (LaFeber, 1998: 186–96; 252–9). The depression of the 1890s had also sharpened the awareness among America’s political leaders of the need to dispose of its surplus of goods by opening foreign markets. Thus, President William McKinley, whose administration was critical in consolidating America’s quest for informal empire as well as in creating a powerful presidency to carry out that policy (see LaFeber, 1993: 132–6; Zakaria, 1998: 154–64), argued forcefully in favor of economic expansionism:

Most desirable from every standpoint of national interest and patriotism is the effort to extend our foreign commerce.... The Government by every proper constitutional means, should aid in making our ships familiar visitors at every commercial port of the world, thus *opening up new and valuable markets to the surplus products of the farm and the factory.*

(McKinley, 1897, our emphasis)

Both U.S. policymakers and the emergent corporate capitalist class understood early on that this expansion needed to be backed up, indeed could only be made possible, by the financial, diplomatic, and coercive powers of the U.S. state. Thus the aforementioned NAM after its founding demanded from government *inter alia* that it build an isthmian canal to open inter-oceanic trade

(which was eventually opened in 1914 in the form of the Panama canal); enhance the diplomatic service in order to better serve the needs of U.S. export-oriented capital, “and, in some instances, use the fleet to annex outlying bases to protect economic interests” (LaFeber, 1993: 41). The U.S. consular service was indeed subsequently reformed along these lines, thus better able to support U.S. commerce abroad (*ibid.*: 112; McCormick, 1990: 33). At the same time, growing commercial interests in Latin America and Asia led to calls for the creation of a battleship navy that could protect and advance these interests, with the U.S. by 1914 having the third largest navy in the world (Kennedy, 1989: 319).

The first wave of non-territorial expansionism reached its first climax with the Spanish–American war of 1898, which paradoxically resulted in the United States acquiring the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, while Cuba became a U.S. protectorate; Hawaii (the latter not a Spanish colony) was annexed in the same year. Even if – except in the case of Cuba – involving the creation of *formal* imperial rule, the taking of these territories did not constitute any bigger colonial project but was part and parcel of an *informal*, economic imperialism oriented to the opening up of Latin American and Asian markets, with the newly acquired islands serving as “strategic stepping stones to those very same market areas” (McCormick, 1990: 106; see also LaFeber, 1993, 1998; Zakaria, 1998: 154–64).

The overall policy orientation that had underpinned the American war with Spain – and which thus continued to inform U.S. grand strategy into the next century – subsequently became codified in the Open Door notes of 1899 and 1900 that laid out the principle that America’s “commercial rights” should not be undermined by any territorial partitioning of China, which thus should remain economically open to all parties. Given their industrial clout the United States knew that operating under these rules they could outcompete most of their competitors and conquer much of the Chinese market (LaFeber, 1994: 221–2). Both Secretary of State Hay, who drafted the famous notes, and the corporate community were clearly cognizant of this logic, with a representative of the latter arguing to Hay that “the Chinese market … rightfully belongs to us and that in free and untrammeled competition we can win it” (in McCormick, 1990: 129; see also LaFeber, 1993: 169–77). Notwithstanding the particular lure of the Chinese market, from the start the Open Door was conceived as a more general policy, that is one whose principles were to be extended to the whole world. As the *New York Times* editorialized at the time “the real policy of the Open Door is … that world trade should be free to all on equal terms … to promote not only the prosperity of the American people but of the world, and general peace,” thus making it into “the true mission that we have to carry out as a ‘world power’” (*New York Times*, 1899).

Carrying out this mission, U.S. geopolitical strategy became increasingly oriented to open markets to absorb not just America’s surplus of goods but also its surplus of capital in the years leading up to World War I (LaFeber, 1994: 236). While, notwithstanding the relative diplomatic success of the Open Door policy

vis-à-vis China (Zakaria, 1998: 162–3), the actual penetration of the Chinese market for long remained rather limited – and disappeared from sight after the communists had won the civil war. The driving forces behind the original policy remained in place, leading the United States to seek the continued opening of markets. As then Secretary of State Elihu Root – formerly personal attorney for J.P. Morgan and the nation’s top corporate lawyer and later to become president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and honorary president of the Council on Foreign Relations (see below) – argued in 1906: Since the U.S. possessed “surplus capital beyond the requirements of internal development” especially Latin American markets needed to be further opened up (LaFeber, 1994: 260). In a similar vein, the president Root was serving, ardent imperialist Theodore Roosevelt, maintained: “[w]e have now reached the point in the development of our interests where we are not only able to supply our own markets but to produce a constantly growing surplus for which we must find markets abroad” (Roosevelt, 1901). The latter’s corollary to the Monroe doctrine became the justification of an intensified interventionism in the Caribbean, which U.S. marines entered 20 times during 1898 and 1920 (LaFeber, 1994: 249), underlining the increasing use of military force as a principal instrument of America’s liberal grand strategy.

### *An Open Door world order? Wilson’s aborted globalism*

The imperialism of Open Door was subsequently brought onto a higher, more universal plane by Woodrow Wilson who, with his call to “make the world safe for democracy,” laid the groundwork for what has become a constant in America’s foreign policy discourse, and a core element of the underlying worldview, namely the articulation of universalistic ideals of freedom and democracy with the capitalist imperatives of economic expansionism (Smith, 2012: 116–17; see also Anievas, 2014: ch. 4). As Wilson stated in a speech in 1912: “Our industries have expanded to such a point that they will burst their jackets if they cannot find a free outlet to the markets of the world” (Wilson quoted in Diamond, 1943: 132; for an “idealist” interpretation of Wilsonianism, see Ninkovich, 1999). It is important to underline that Wilson’s liberal internationalism and the grand strategy that it inspired, as formulated in the famous 14 points, with its progressive and “idealist” elements of promulgating the principle of “national self-determination,” was in part a response to the Bolshevik revolution (van der Pijl, 1984: ch. 3; Ikenberry, 2001: 126; Anievas, 2014: ch. 4). Closing the economic door not only in Russia but also threatening to close the door elsewhere through exporting their revolution, the Bolsheviks were seen as threatening the very order upon which America had come to premise its expansionism. In addition to helping to spark his liberal idealist offensive, Wilson also sent 15,000 troops to intervene, together with other allies, on the side of the White Russians against the Bolsheviks (Stone and Kuznick, 2013: 29), while a domestic backlash took the form of the so-called (first) Red Scare in 1919–20, leading to a government clampdown on suspected radicals (Walker, 2009: 79–81).

Although it is true that the Wilsonian program of creating a U.S.-centered liberal world order – embodied in the new League of Nations – utterly failed, this did not lead to a full retreat from what had been a rising globalism. Although with his grand strategic choice to commit the United States to global collective security he clearly overplayed his hand domestically, most of Wilson's domestic opponents were no isolationists but simply were not ready to accept the kind of formal commitment to collective security as was incorporated into the Versailles Treaty (Dueck, 2006: 67–75; Ninkovitch, 1999: 72–7; Ikenberry, 2001: 148–55). This should be interpreted against the background of an international balance of power in which the United States was a leading great power but insufficiently powerful to establish itself as the world's leader the way Wilson envisaged (cf. Dueck, 2006: ch. 3). Contrary to the widespread myth about rampant U.S. isolationism during the interwar period, the Republican administrations – closely coordinating their policies with, in particular, Wall Street – in the 1920s and early 1930s consistently sought to impose a liberal order on the rest of the world, aiming to continue to facilitate the expansion of U.S. capital (LaFeber, 1994: ch. 11; Williams, 2009: ch. 4; cf. Dueck, 2006: 76–80). Even if this liberal world order was ultimately only established in the wake of the defeat of the axis powers, U.S. capital did continue to expand, with the 1920s and 1930s witnessing a “breakthrough for America as the center of the global economy, especially with regard to the Third World,” first of all in Latin America and in East Asia (Westad, 2007: 19).

Like many officials of the administrations before them, key grand-strategy makers of the time were often prominent members of America's corporate elite. Thus, within the Coolidge administration (1923–29), Vice President Charles Dawes – after which the U.S. plan regarding German reparations was named – had made his fortune as a co-owner of several gas companies and later as founder and president of a major bank, Central Trust Company or “Dawes Bank” (see Vickers, 2011), while Commerce Secretary and Coolidge's successor as president, Herbert Hoover, had amassed great wealth within the international mining business, co-founding a company that later became part of the giant Rio Tinto group (Nash, 1983).

The 1920s, then, witnessed the pursuit of a liberal internationalist grand strategy at a global level (Ninkovich, 1999: 79). However, this strategy simply failed to achieve its globalist ambitions as outside the Western Hemisphere the world was still multipolar (Layne, 2006a: 40). Furthermore, although pursuing an internationalist foreign policy the U.S. governing elite at the time was not always willing to back this up with a firm political commitment (Ninkovich, 1999: 204; see also Dueck, 2006: 79). The latter may in fact be interpreted as a sign that the initial wave of economic expansionism in response to the overaccumulation crises of the late nineteenth century was dissipating.

## The second wave: the Great Depression and the *Pax Americana*

The mid-1930s saw a rise of isolationist sentiment, primarily among the American public and within Congress. But while this thus hindered Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) in acting upon his internationalist orientation (Ninkovich, 1999: 107–10) it did not produce anything like an isolationist grand strategy or succeed in derailing America’s rising globalism. By the end of the 1930s, the ideas underpinning U.S. grand strategy saw a clear shift to a “neo-Wilsonian” consensus that not only formed the basis of American participation in World War II but also became the new normalcy throughout the Cold War (Ninkovich, 1999: ch. 5), informing a new American grand strategy aimed at establishing global hegemony. This time the strategy was successful in as much as the United States was now able to actually create the kind of U.S.-centered and “institutionalized” liberal world order in which global capital in general – and U.S. capital in particular – could thrive. This new round of widening America’s capitalist empire, what we here interpret as the second wave of non-territorial expansionism, must like the first one be seen as a *political* response to a severe crisis of overaccumulation – that is, the Great Depression.

The material and class basis for this new expansionism is to be found in what Kees van der Pijl (1984) calls the *New Deal synthesis*. This new growth model, organized around the new mass-producing industries, in the first instance involved a series of radical reforms which were ultimately aimed at saving the capitalist system through a strategy absorbing the surplus capital internally. Yet, in the course of the 1930s the New Deal was increasingly internationalized to the extent that it became oriented to exporting part of the surplus capital as well, and thus to seeking to re-create a liberal world economy (Ferguson, 1984). As a foreign policy, the New Deal, then, was premised, in FDR’s own words, on the idea that “[t]he full reward of America’s high productive capacity is only gained when our business men and our farmers can sell their surpluses abroad” (Roosevelt, 1935). This then, as before, constituted not only America’s exit strategy out of the crisis of the 1930s but once the depression years were over became even further entrenched, buttressed by the fear that another Great Depression – which American foreign policy officials believed would occur without access to foreign markets – would lead to a collapse of the American capitalist system itself (Williams, 2009: ch. 6). As the then Assistant Secretary of State (later to become Truman’s Secretary of State) Dean Acheson – whose “strong conservative streak” according to a contemporary biographer (Beisner, 2006: 97) was formed by his “practice of corporate law” when he was partner of the venerable Covington and Burling law firm (to which he later returned) – explained in a congressional testimony in 1944: the United States “cannot go through another [Great Depression] without having the most far-reaching consequences upon our economic and social system” (quoted in Williams, 2009: 235). Global open markets were the solution as “we cannot have full employment and prosperity in the United States without the foreign markets,” that is, unless, the United States

would completely change its “relations to property, human liberty, [and] law” (*ibid.*: 236), and accordingly become like the Soviet Union. It was thus that FDR’s grand-strategy makers came to see economic expansionism as once more an imperative for preserving the interests and values of the American capitalist class.

As before, America’s foreign policy officials formulating this renewed globalist strategy were embedded within and socialized by a corporate elite network at the core of which could be found an ascendant transnationally oriented segment of American capital. As shown by Ferguson (1984), the corporate power elite at the center of the New Deal coalition consisted “of capital-intensive industries, investment banks, and internationally oriented commercial banks,” a transnationally oriented power bloc, which at the time included firms like general Eastman Kodak, General Electric, Standard Oil, and Chase National Bank (the latter two both controlled by the Rockefeller family), and which defeated a coalition of more protectionist and labor-intensive industries that opposed both the internationalism of the New Deal and its concessions to organized labor (see also van der Pijl, 1984).

An important role here was also played by key elite bodies from within what became an emergent policy planning network closely interwoven with the state. Finding their origins at the end of World War I and in the early interwar period, the phenomenon of think tanks came to be an important aspect of America’s state–society complex (and more narrowly of its state–capital nexus), and came to play a critical role in the development of American global power and the strategy underpinning it throughout the twentieth century and beyond. Here, the aforementioned and quintessential Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) had developed out of the team of experts – called “The Inquiry” – formed by Wilson to advise him on what became the 14 points, and subsequently prepare American strategy at the Paris Peace Conference (Smith, 2003: ch. 5), with this group merging with the eponymous Council on Foreign Relations that had been founded by New York business leaders. As Smith (*ibid.*: 135) writes, The Inquiry was significant because “[f]or the first time, rather than simply responding to events, the government attempted to provide a systemic worldview ahead of time.”

As Parmar has shown, the CFR (Parmar, 2004: ch. 6), as well as the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations – later together with the Ford Foundations forming the “Big 3” of U.S. philanthropic institutions founded by then top leaders of the U.S. corporate elite – were critical in countering isolationist tendencies and promoting a “powerful domestic coalition for globalism” (Parmar, 2012: 67). The subsequent shift to an unequivocally globalist grand strategy that took place, as we shall see below, under FDR at the end of the 1930s culminated in American participation in World War II, a participation that had been in the making long before Pearl Harbor and involving, among others, the policy planning of the CFR (Parmar, 2004: ch. 5; Shoup and Minter, 2004 [1977]: ch. 4; Smith, 2003: 325–46).

**From World War II to the Cold War: the consolidation of the global Open Door**

With the internationalization of the New Deal, the rise of Germany and Japan as revisionist powers had increasingly come to be perceived as a grave threat to core American interests, and in particular came to be defined as a threat of closure, threatening the survival of the capitalist system itself as this was assumed to be able to survive only as an international system (Ninkovitch, 1999: 125). Indeed, as then Treasury secretary Fred Vinson put it just after the war (in 1946): “The capitalistic system is essentially an international system … if it cannot function internationally, it will break down completely” (quoted in LaFeber, 2006: 10). The fear was thus that liberal capitalism of the United States could not survive in a world dominated by opposing ideological systems – a fear that was usually expressed ideologically as a fear that “freedom,” “democracy,” or the “American way of life” could not survive in this way (see Ninkovich, 1999: 125). The subsequent defeat of Germany and Japan not only staved off this threat but, above all, with the United States emerging as the world’s preeminent power, enabled the United States to project its Open Door vision on a truly *global* scale, turning it into a global grand strategy that would come to inform U.S. foreign-policy making until the present day (Layne, 2006a). As Army Chief of Staff, and later Truman’s Secretary of State, George Marshall, put it in a wartime report on America’s war aims and post-war planning: “We are now concerned with the *peace of the entire world*” (Marshall, 1945: 118, our emphasis).

Concretely this implied that American post-war grand strategy was primarily aimed at establishing hegemony over what were deemed to be the strategically vital regions of Western Europe, the Persian Gulf, and East Asia (Layne, 2006a: 3). At the same time, what was perceived as vital tended to be ever widened to the extent that within, while also beyond, these regions even “minor challenges” came to be seen as problems that the United States could *not* afford to ignore as this would challenge its credibility as a global hegemon (Ninkovich, 1999: 183–4). As the secret national security report NSC-68 – the blueprint for America’s Cold War strategy – put it: “a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere” (Department of State, 1950).

What thus became a strategy of global hegemony involved the implementation of wartime plans for a new liberal world order centered around a number of U.S.-dominated international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank of the post-war Bretton Woods regime, as well as the United Nations, with the creation of the latter again receiving direct input from key leaders of the CFR (see Parmar, 2004: 122–5; Smith, 2003: 393–412). In addition, and increasingly important through successive rounds of trade liberalization, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) entered into force in 1948. While during the Cold War American grand strategy always exhibited a mix of multilateralism and unilateralism – which must be seen as complementary means rather than as fundamental opposites – the multilateral, but very much U.S.-centered, system of international regimes that was thus created under the

auspices of American hegemony came to constitute an essential dimension of the “American century.” The paradox of the extensive multilateralism of the postwar era was that it was made possible precisely because the United States could create much of those institutions and write its rules rather unilaterally.

At the same time the immediate post-war years led to the reinforcement of what is sometimes called the “national security state.” While America’s military ascendancy in part rested on its growing nuclear arsenal – with its initial monopoly on the atomic bomb, however, lasting only a few years – defense expenditures generally were maintained (especially from the Korean War onwards – see below) much above pre-war levels. In addition, a whole security complex was set up under Truman through the passage in 1947 of the National Security Act, which created not only the National Security Council as well as a single Department of Defense and a Joint Chiefs of Staff to better coordinate national security policies, but also the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), a “favoured instrument” of America’s globalist grand strategy after 1945 (Bacevich, 2010: 43).

With the onset of the Cold War American expansionism took on the appearance of containing the Soviet Union, and American exceptionalism was recast in an anti-communist mold. But, as well established by revisionist historical scholarship (see Layne, 2006a: ch. 3; Williams, 2009; cf. Leffler, 1984; for a recent incarnation of the orthodox account, see Gaddis, 2006; cf. Gaddis, 1982), it was capitalist expansionism that drove the United States outward and made post-war global hegemony into an imperative. Rather than viewing U.S. geopolitical strategy – which as we have seen in fact was already conceived *before* the start of the Cold War – as containing *Soviet* expansionism, the strategy was driven by *American* expansionism seeking to construct a global liberal order, to which the mere existence of the Soviet Union proved a stumbling block which therefore had to be defeated. The key policy document, NSC-68, was rather explicit about the fact that in its view containment and a more liberal internationalist policy to “develop a healthy international community” were two “subsidiary policies” of the same grand strategy “designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish” (Department of State, 1950).

Thus while the 1947 Truman Doctrine, which committed U.S. foreign policy to globalism for the next decades, was presented in terms of a global struggle against the new totalitarian evil, the Open Door worldview motivating it was emphasized by President Truman in a later speech in which he explained how freedom of worship and speech are related to freedom of enterprise and that it thus must be the policy of the United States to promote these globally as “[w]e must not go through the 1930s again” (Truman quoted in LaFeber, 2006: 62). Therefore states like Greece and Turkey should not be allowed to opt for policies of economic nationalism. It was the same kind of reasoning that also informed the decision to reconstruct Western Europe through the Marshall Plan, which laid the basis for the export of American surplus capital through the setting up of “Fordist” production plants across the Atlantic while also helping to secure U.S. hegemony (van der Pijl, 1984: ch. 6; see also Panitch and Gindin, 2012:

96–102). Here, growing U.S. FDI into Europe became a partial substitute for trade (*ibid.*: 104), while also the post-colonial world was to play a part in absorbing America’s surplus capital (see Smith, 2003: ch. 13).

Another pillar underpinning U.S. hegemony was its predominance in the by now strategic petroleum sector (replacing coal) for which the Marshall plan had also been instrumental (see Layne, 2006a; van der Pijl, 1984).<sup>5</sup> Although no longer a key supplier of oil (becoming a net-importer in 1948), the U.S. had secured access and control over the Middle Eastern oil reserves – at the expense of the former hegemonic power, the UK (see e.g., Stokes and Raphael, 2010; Layne, 2006a; Yergin, 1991). The twin pillars of this dominance were Iran and Saudi Arabia, of which the latter’s oil riches were recognized by the head of the State Department’s Division of Near Eastern Affairs as a “stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in human history” (quoted in Stokes and Raphael, 2010: 87). In both countries U.S.-friendly regimes were cemented in place with political, military, and economic support in exchange for cheap and uninterrupted supply of oil to international markets. The latter, then was less about guaranteeing the United States’ own access to oil (though obviously not unimportant) but more about keeping the oil flowing for global capitalism and, additionally, on the basis of this “service” being able to maintain its hegemonic position within the global political economy, and hence to keep the door open above all to its own transnationally oriented capital (*ibid.*; see also de Graaff, 2013).

While the Marshall Plan put the emphasis on economic aid as an instrument of non-territorial expansionism, in subsequent years the military dimension of American grand strategy came to the foreground. Elaborated first in NSC-68 and promoted among others by hardliners Paul Nitze, the principal author of NSC-68, and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, formerly respectively vice-president and president of leading Wall Street investment bank Dillon Read, the new military strategy was implemented under the impetus of the Korean War (Gaddis, 1982: 109). In a few years’ time, this led to the re-armament of Germany within the newly founded NATO and the quadrupling of the defense budget. In addition, the United States, while having lost its monopoly, sought to exploit (especially under Eisenhower) what was still a huge atomic superiority, and considered using the nuclear option in several confrontations with the Soviet Union throughout the 1950s.

Moreover, while within the capitalist core U.S. power rested on a large degree of consent, arguably underpinned by growing transatlantic corporate elite linkages (van der Pijl, 1984), more coercive strategies were often in the foreground vis-à-vis the periphery – an interventionism that became much more forceful for the first time during the Eisenhower administration (Westad, 2007: 128–30), and that has remained a constant of American grand strategy throughout the remainder of the Cold War and beyond. That is, the United States sought to force open the door to U.S. capital not only by promoting decolonization, but also, once the European powers had left, by using both its financial and its military muscle to bring to and keep in power the right regimes, that is, the ones welcoming and

protecting U.S. investment, or to topple the wrong ones (see, e.g., Kinzer, 2006). In spite of ideological commitments to “democracy,” several of the regimes thus “changed” in CIA-orchestrated coups during the Cold War era were in fact democratic, such as those of Mossadegh of Iran in 1953 and of Arbenz of Guatemala in 1954. In both cases the enemy to be defeated was less communism, but (even if many, including America’s then grand-strategy makers, failed to make the distinction) economic nationalism – itself to a large extent engendered by American capitalist expansionism – and hence the threat of closure to American capital in general, a threat which in the case of success might spread as other countries would emulate the model. In the case of Iran the threat was of course also bound up with the U.S. interest in being able to keep control over access to oil reserves in the Persian Gulf, which thus necessitated restoring the pro-United States regime of the Shah and reversing Mossadegh’s nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (Yergin, 1991; Bamberg, 1994; Stokes and Raphael, 2010; Kinzer, 2003, 2006).

In explaining this continuing commitment to American capitalist expansionism during the Cold War we should again take into account the social background of the main grand-strategy makers involved, many of whom also in this era were heavily connected to the corporate world. The clearest illustration here is probably John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower’s Secretary of State and one of the dominating cold warriors, who before this appointment had made a long career as the sole managing partner of prestigious corporate law firm Sullivan & Cromwell, advising “the biggest multinational corporations of the time” – albeit with the occasional stint in government service in between (Kinzer, 2006: 113). The architect of the abovementioned coups (in collaboration with his brother Allen at the CIA), Dulles displayed a worldview reflecting his corporate past in which ardent anti-communism and a commitment to promote American business around the globe were two sides of the same coin (*ibid.*: 111–17).

#### ***Toward the end of the second wave: crisis and continuity in American grand strategy***

Founded upon America’s huge economic and productive power, as expressed by the competitiveness of its multinationals; upon its financial power, as buttressed by the reserve status of the dollar and by the Bretton Woods regime through which the new open world economy was to be managed; and upon its military power, including its atomic superiority, the second expansionist wave crested in the early 1960s as the Kennedy administration undertook various economic and trade initiatives as part of Washington’s new liberal “offensive” (van der Pijl, 1984: 195ff.), but also brought the Cold War to new dangerous heights. Like in the past, these policies were pursued by men closely linked to, indeed recruited from the ranks of U.S. transnational capital, such as Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon, formerly Chairman of (once more) Dillon Read, and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who when appointed had just become President of Ford after a number of top-level management positions in the automobile giant.

In the years following, the second wave gradually dissipated, especially when the United States, under Johnson, went deeper into the quagmire of Vietnam. The Vietnam War is sometimes seen as an example of occasional irrationality in U.S. foreign policy but in fact it made sense from a perspective aimed at maintaining U.S. global hegemony in service of the Open Door (Layne, 2006a: 129; cf. Ninkovich, 1999: ch. 7). Vietnam was less valuable in and of itself, more because of its location in the strategically important region of Southeast Asia, important especially – as recognized early on by the CFR (Shoup and Minter, 2004 [1977]: ch. 6) – because of its role in supplying raw materials to Japan, in turn a key pillar of American hegemony in the whole of Asia (McCormick, 1995: 115–16; see also Layne, 2006a: 128–9). In this context the American foreign policy elite feared that if Vietnam was lost, the virus of (anti-capitalist) national autonomy would spread, with other countries also adopting policies of (economic) closure thus threatening economic openness in the entire region. If the United States would allow this challenge to go unchecked, this would again undermine U.S. credibility and thus encourage others to go down the path of economic nationalism, or worse, revolution, as well. The fear, as Westad (2007: 180) argues, was not unfounded – and hence there was definitely a kernel of truth in the so-called domino theory – in as much as Vietnam had become a “benchmark for what other Communist parties could hope to achieve domestically.” Although the increasingly costly war was in the end lost with regard to Vietnam itself – a humiliating defeat that did do some damage to U.S. hegemony – the hopes of communists and other leftists elsewhere in the region were effectively crushed, thus stopping the feared contagion. As such, then, the loss of Vietnam did not lead to significant change of course regarding American interventionism in the Third World, but rather helped to undermine the policies of *détente* vis-à-vis the Soviet Union (Westad, 2007: 202), as pursued by Nixon.

The Nixon administration represented a transition between the second and the third wave, to be introduced below. U.S. foreign policy under Nixon is often characterized in the literature as “realist,” which could be seen as a response to how the debacle of Vietnam – in spite of arguably achieving its most basic war aim – in conjunction with a decline of U.S. global economic power, with rising competition from Western European and Japan, appeared to challenge American hegemony. This led to a somewhat defensive posture – the Nixon doctrine – which asked allies to increase their share of defending the West (LaFeber, 2006: 276), and in the periphery sought to rely more on “regional policemen” (Westad, 2007: 197). This so-called realism, however, clearly stayed within the bounds of American liberal globalism.

Both Nixon and – even more so – his national security adviser, later secretary of state, Henry Kissinger (*ibid.*: 196), who had made his career under the patronage of the CFR and in particular Nelson Rockefeller (Shoup and Minter, 2004 [1977]: 41, 89), remained committed to American globalism. As Walker (2009: 168) concludes: “[t]he objective of the second Nixon administration was not retreat from hegemony but rather the restoration of America’s global stature” (cf. van der Pijl, 1984: 254–8), among others through the opening to China. It is

also in this light that we have to see Nixon's unilateral decision to basically end the Bretton Woods monetary regime as it no longer served American interests, a decision which laid the basis for what according to Peter Gowan (1999a: see also Panitch and Gindin, 2012) evolved into the Dollar-Wall Street Regime that renewed American financial hegemony as financial globalization was unleashed by the growth of (euro)currency markets and the elimination of capital controls.<sup>6</sup>

In the Third World, notwithstanding its intention to reduce the number of direct interventions (Westad, 2007: 197), the attempt at defending the Open Door meant that in some areas the use of force was stepped up rather than moderated. Next to the escalation of the Vietnam war, and the invasion of Cambodia, the 1973 Chilean coup can be seen as illustrative of this kind of interventionism. According to Kissinger, in a secret memorandum, the 1970 election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile "poses for us one of the most serious challenges ever faced in this hemisphere" because of "the precedent value" of "[t]he example of a successful elected Marxist government" (Kissinger, 1970). In other words, precisely the fact that it was a *democratic* regime made it so dangerous. Indeed, as recently released recordings of the secret Nixon tapes reveal, when Allende in the summer of 1971 nationalized the Chilean copper mines and thereby also expropriated several American investments, it did not take long for Nixon to come to the conclusion that the socialist leader had to be given "the hook" – that is, had to be (somehow) removed (Nixontapes.org, 2010: 59). In line with a by now familiar liberal imperial logic, Nixon and his hardline advisers were less concerned about the loss of the copper mines themselves, than how the expropriations – which had been a growing trend in Third World countries throughout the preceding decade (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 134) – would set a precedent for other Latin American countries if left unpunished. The plan was thus conceived to make an example out of Allende, to make, in the words of Nixon, "helluva case out of him" (Nixontapes.org, 2010: 59).<sup>7</sup>

When the 1973 oil crisis hit, with South Vietnam lost, U.S. deficits rising and Atlantic unity weakening, the second expansionist wave had come to an end. Yet the context of the world economic crisis in which this happened, and the deep recessions that hit the United States, also formed the context in which a new wave set in that lasted until after the end of the Cold War. What below we will interpret as the third wave of U.S. non-territorial expansionism thus consisted of two phases, one that set in at the end of the 1970s and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and a second one that made it roll across the former Iron Curtain in the post-Cold War era. We will describe the first phase below and offer a more comprehensive analysis of the second phase in [Chapters 4–6](#).

### **The third wave: the 1970s crisis and U.S.-centered neoliberal globalization**

The world economic crisis of the 1970s, first manifested in the sharp recession of 1973–75, can be seen as one of the more severe crises of overaccumulation of the twentieth century, the repercussions of which some have traced to the current

economic and financial crisis (McNally, 2009). What came to be the dominant response to this crisis on the part of state and corporate elites – seeking to advance the long-term interests of the capitalist class – took the form of what has been identified as a neoliberal project, aimed at widening and deepening markets on a global scale (for an early overview, see Overbeek, 1993). This then came to be known as globalization. Although we can see neoliberalism as in part transnationally constituted, reflecting processes of transnational class formation (van der Pijl, 1998; van Apeldoorn, 2004; cf. Robinson, 2004), we must recognize how the U.S. state and its liberal expansionist geopolitical strategy was still at the heart of this project. In fact, neoliberal globalization, though it cannot be reduced to it, would not have taken place if it had not been for the way the U.S. came to promote this process and manage it to the benefit of global capital, *above all* of American origin (Panitch and Gindin, 2012; van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2012). It was thus that a new content was given to the long-standing imperialism of the Open Door. In the interpretation of David Harvey this constituted a “new imperialism” in which the United States sought to solve its crisis of overaccumulation that had become manifest in the 1970s in part by forcefully exporting this surplus capital to the periphery through “the forcing open of markets throughout the world by institutional pressures exercised through the IMF and the WTO, and backed up by the power of the United States” (Harvey, 2003: 181).

This third wave of non-territorial expansionism was at first still strongly associated with the Cold War, or rather its resurgence in the second half of the 1970s, after a brief and largely unsuccessful détente, and escalating into the Second Cold War under Ronald Reagan. While the Carter administration started out with the claim to seek to move beyond Cold War rivalry and to promote “human rights,” it soon appeared that Carter’s national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and his team were viewing human rights as the perfect ideological stick to with which to beat the Soviets (Ninkovitch, 1999: 249; Walker, 2009: 184). At the same time, in what has been a constant in U.S. foreign policy since, human rights concerns did not prevent Carter from pursuing a pro-China policy consolidating Nixon’s earlier “opening,” and even supporting the genocidal Pol Pot regime backed by Beijing (LaFeber, 2006: 308). In any case, the largely symbolic human rights policy was soon overtaken by an intensifying arms race, a doubling of defense expenditures, and the announcement of the Carter Doctrine proclaiming the control of the oil reserves in the Persian Gulf, a red line no one could cross. The new militant approach was reinforced by external events such as the Soviet 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, but must also be seen as internally driven, above all as a response to the recessionary conditions which in the 1970s combined with high rates of inflation and a slowing down of world trade. It was in this context that pressures grew especially from the right, and most prominently from the (reinvented) Committee on the Present Danger, then led by Paul Nitze, to reassert American strength and pursue a much more hawkish foreign policy.

The Carter administration was filled with members of the Trilateral Commission (TC), a private planning body founded in 1973 by David Rockefeller and

Brzezinski that sought to bolster a U.S.-centered liberal world order by strengthening both Atlantic and U.S.–Japanese relations (Peterzell, 1977; Gill, 1990; see also the next chapter). The TC was important in socializing foreign policy novice Carter – who had been recruited to the TC and groomed by Rockefeller and Brzezinski when he was still governor of Georgia – and in helping to ensure that the globalist outlook was reproduced under his administration (Stone and Kuznick, 2013: 401–3). The Carter years, however, above all marked a time of transition between the post-war era that in terms of socioeconomic regulation and growth model was premised on the class compromise that had originated in the New Deal and the mass production regime of “Fordist” industry, and the new, more radical and finance-led “free market” approach of the neoliberal era.

It was of course with the election of Reagan that both the neoliberal offensive and the renewed Cold War – the two being sides of the same coin – received a crucial boost. The international dimension of Reagan’s neoliberal economic program was aimed at “sustain[ing] the drive toward more open markets,” which, as Reagan explained in the midst of what was an even deeper recession than that of the early 1970s, implied a foreign policy committed to the expansion of free trade and U.S.-dominated free markets: “[w]e seek to plug the holes in the boat of free markets and free trade and get it moving again,” adding the warning that “no one should mistake our determination to use our full power and influence to prevent others from destroying the boat and sinking us all” (Reagan, 1982). Reagan’s grand-strategy makers hailed both directly from the corporate elite, such as Secretary of State George Schultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who were, respectively, former president and vice-president of leading large multinational Bechtel, as well as from circles of self-described “neo-conservatives,” often linked to think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation (Himmelstein, 1990: 150–1), such as Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who later, as we shall see in Chapter 5, became a key figure in the making of the neoconservative shift in American grand strategy under G.W. Bush.

Influenced by these early neoconservatives (Westad, 2007: 338, 344–5), the Third World became the arena in which the Reagan administration sought to fight the intensified Cold War, seeking to defeat the “evil empire” through increased military interventionism (*ibid.*: ch. 9). This was done along the lines of the (in)famous distinction made by Jeane Kirkpatrick (1979), before she became Reagan’s UN ambassador, between (right-wing) “authoritarian” regimes, pursuing pro-market and pro-American policies that deserved U.S. support, and the “totalitarian” (left-wing) regimes that needed to be opposed by all means. Accordingly, Reagan pursued a strategy of mostly covert warfare – though overt in, for instance, the invasion of tiny Grenada – in order to confront the perceived Third World challenge to U.S. hegemony, especially in Central America – with the most devastating consequences for the local population (Westad, 2007: 339–48). More negative longer-term consequences for the United States itself were engendered by its support, through Pakistan, of the most radical Islamist elements of the Afghan Mujahidin fighting the Soviets (Kinzer, 2006: 268–71).

Next to the military and the CIA, more than its predecessors, the Reagan administration also set out to use “economic warfare against its enemies through hitting at their trade, currency and credit (Westad, 2007: 359). For this purpose the neoconservative foreign-policy makers of the Reagan administration came to perceive the IMF and the World Bank as prime instruments of U.S. power, but not before they were completely reoriented away from the remnants of Keynesianism and toward “monetarism and market ideology” between 1981 and 1983 (*ibid.*). Thus “structural adjustment” became another key mechanism through which peripheral societies were subjected to the discipline of global capital *and* subordinated to American hegemony. Moreover, the so-called Volcker shock (the interest rate hike by the new Chairman of the Federal Reserve) enabled a new offensive against the Global South by precipitating a debt crisis – even if unintended – (McNally, 2009: 33–7; Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 214–16) through which the South was subordinated to U.S.-centered finance through the operations of the U.S. treasury and the IMF (Soederberg, 2004). The Soviet Union finally was also to be defeated by stepping up the arms race, forcing the adversary “to bear the brunt of its economic shortcomings,” as Reagan’s national security adviser put it (Ninkovich, 1999: 260).

After the unexpected end of the Cold War – more due to Gorbachev’s voluntary retreat from empire than due to Reagan’s anti-Soviet hardline – the presidency of George H.W. Bush, a Texas oil millionaire from an upper-class background who had been Reagan’s vice-president, represented an “*interregnum*” in which U.S. foreign policy was arguably more confused than following any clear post-Cold War grand strategy. While staying the course with regard to maintaining the U.S.-centered liberal capitalist world economy – its National Security Strategy paper highlighting the goals of ensuring “access to foreign markets” and promoting “an open and expanding international economic system with minimal distortions to trade and investment” (White House, 1990: 2) – a new strategic concept to guide foreign policy, now that the main enemy had been defeated, still needed to be developed. Although demonstrating that he was not a “wimp” by invading Panama – and taking out erstwhile CIA-asset Noriega (Kinzer, 2006: 245; Walker, 2009: 216–18) – early in his term, Bush was much less decisive in dealing with Gorbachev’s attempt to end the Cold War and with the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union (LaFeber, 1994: 752; see also White House, 1989). Central to the making of Bush’s foreign policy was his close friend, Secretary of State James Baker, a “well-off scion of an old-money … Houston family” (LaFeber, 2006: 351). While often deemed to be “realist” – in spite of the idealist overtones of the president’s proclamation of a “new world order,” which above all expressed the hope that the United States, with the Soviet Union down and out, could now fully dominate global multilateral institutions, including the Security Council – the Bush–Baker foreign policy above all represented continuity, while it was seeking to manage the adjustment to the new era of unipolarity and thus going into the post-Cold War phase of the third wave of U.S. expansionism. Within this then fitted the Gulf War, in which by reversing the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq (another erstwhile

“security asset” of the United States; Walker, 2009: 186, 216–23), America once more demonstrated the strategic value it attached to Middle Eastern oil and successfully preserved U.S. credibility and hence the regional *Pax Americana*, of which Israel on the one hand and Egypt and Saudi Arabia on the other remained the solid pillars into the post-Cold War era.

## **The ends and means of Open Door imperialism**

The weight of historical evidence as presented in this chapter clearly shows that U.S. hegemony has from the end of the nineteenth century expanded outwards to move from regional to global hegemony, that this expansion is inextricably bound up with the expansion of U.S. capital and a concomitant promotion of a liberal capitalist world order. It is this global Open Door that marks the continuity of American grand strategy as it has evolved over the twentieth century. Since a grand strategy consists of an articulation of means and ends, we will now by way of conclusion first discuss these ends, on the basis of a brief summary of the above account, and then examine the various means that the U.S. state has at its disposal to pursue these goals. The latter, we will argue, accounts for some limited but significant variation of American grand strategy in the post-Cold War period, yet within the parameters set by the Open Door.

### ***The Open Door worldview and the ends of American grand strategy***

Promoting and facilitating the expansion of U.S. capital, and, at least since 1945, seeking to create and maintain a U.S.-dominated liberal world order in which this expansion can flourish – and viewing this as critical to the United States’ “national interest” – is the essence of the Open Door as a worldview and as a grand strategy. The axiomatic belief that American prosperity is fundamentally dependent upon economic expansionism and access to foreign markets (Williams, 2009: 15), was, as we have seen, partly rooted in the experience of repeated depressions, in particular those at the end of the nineteenth century and in the 1930s. The American corporate elite and the U.S. grand-strategy makers closely tied to that elite, saw in economic expansionism the preferred strategy to both find new outlets for surplus goods and capital as well as to quell the specter of socialism raised by the social unrest generated by the repeated crises. While the first wave of expansionism above all consolidated U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere, further opening up Latin American markets after the defeat of Spain, it was already oriented to markets farther away, creating outposts in Asia, and an ultimately failed attempt to reach into the whole of China.

The second wave witnessed America’s definitive rise to globalism in the wake of the defeat of the axis powers and America’s emergence as the undisputed leader of the capitalist world, involving what Panitch and Gindin (2012) have called the making of a global capitalism, and a concomitant liberal world order resting upon institutions set up and maintained by the United States and following U.S. rules, and serving the interests of a dominant

American transnational capital. The third wave equally set in after a severe downturn and overaccumulation crisis that plagued the United States as well as the whole world economy, taking the form of a new Cold War offensive, waged in the Global South through military interventionism but also by making use of American financial power and through the transformation of the Bretton Woods institutions into instruments of neoliberal discipline. Neoliberalism here can be viewed as representing a radicalization of the Open Door, seeking not only to expand market relations geographically, but also deepen them to reach into parts of society hitherto relatively shielded from market forces.

It has thus been that the United States since the nineteenth century has pursued a grand strategy premised on a worldview in which economic expansionism and the expansion of liberal (capitalist) institutions and “values” is (discursively) linked to U.S. national security (Williams, 2007, 2009; Layne, 2006a; see also Walker, 2009). As Layne writes: “[t]he U.S. thus has a vested interest in having other countries be run by the ‘right’ kind of government, that is, those that eschew mercantilistic or autarkic economic policies and embrace the incorporation … into an open-American-dominated international economy” (Layne, 2006a: 34). Conversely, any state, or non-state actor for that matter, that in this respect threatens “closure” and thus limit U.S. capitalist expansion, is regarded as a threat to American security (*ibid.*; Williams, 2009).

It is from within this same discursive nexus of liberal expansionism and (national) security that the Open Door ideology also has come to include political liberalism in terms of promoting a liberal ideology (“values”) and concomitant institutions aimed at individual rights and freedoms as closely linked with capitalist freedoms, or what Layne (2006a: 30) has called the “political Open Door” (see also Williams, 2007; Walker, 2009). At times this has included the element of so-called *democracy promotion* (*ibid.*; see also Dueck, 2006; Monten, 2005; Smith, 2012; cf. Chomsky, 2006). For the first time occupying a central place in presidential rhetoric under Wilson, then, taking somewhat of a backseat during the Cold War, this aspect of the Open Door worldview made, as we shall see, a comeback in the post-war era under Clinton and Bush.

What is important to underline here, however, is that for U.S. grand-strategy makers democracy means not any kind of democracy but U.S.-style liberal democracy, i.e., as “inextricably connected with individualism, private property, and a capitalist economy” (Williams, 2009: 9). “Democracy promotion” is thus defined in such a way that it is fully compatible with, and indeed promotes U.S. notions of economic freedom, making the political Open Door subservient to the economic Open Door. And in the case of any conflict between economic and political liberalism or capitalist free markets and democracy, the United States, as the historical record demonstrates, has never shown much restraint in either supporting the most brutal dictatorships – as long as they offered the right kind of stability – or opposing real democratic advancement and in toppling democratically elected regimes. The point is that by linking democracy to free markets it has served the goal of U.S. capitalist expansionism, and has ideologically helped to enable it by functioning as a legitimating discourse.

The same legitimating purpose can be ascribed to the earlier discussed notion of U.S. *exceptionalism*, though this must not be seen as a mere rhetorical device cynically employed to hide true interests, but also as deeply ingrained in U.S. popular culture and common sense (Rupert, 2011), as well as internalized by many American grand-strategy makers and within the foreign policy elite more widely (Williams, 2007). Related to the ideology of exceptionalism, and similarly deeply entrenched, though above all as a direct product of America's expansionist foreign policy, is what Williams has called the tendency to "externalize evil," a tendency which of course reached new heights during the Cold War but which we have also observed both before and since. As Williams (2009: 15) argued, the flip-side of the belief that America's prosperity is dependent upon the outside world is that that same world also tends to be blamed for any "lack of the good life" (see also Williams, 2007; Walker, 2009). In addition, although the United States as the hegemonic power creating and maintaining a liberal world order and a U.S.-centered global capitalism has had and still has genuine enemies, an expansionist power as the United States is also dependent upon the perception of external threats in order to justify its expansionism, and the coercive apparatuses set up to pursue that expansionism. There is thus an interest to inflate and conjure threats, as well as to present genuine threats to the global Open Door as threats to U.S. national security.

In sum, the ends of America's globalist grand strategy consist above all of economic expansionism, including the spread of liberal market-creating and market-supporting institutions – at times accompanied by a discourse of "democracy promotion" – to facilitate and consolidate such expansionism. The ideology of exceptionalism and the notion of the "externalization of evil" must be regarded as key elements of the Open Door's worldview within which its overarching ends are framed, and in which the pursuit of those ends are legitimated.

### ***The means of American grand strategy***

What, then, are the principal means at the disposal of the U.S. state in the pursuit of the Open Door? We may conceptualize this as involving various combinations of non-coercive and coercive forms of power, keeping in mind that, following Gramsci (1971), hegemony is constituted by a mixture of consent and coercion. While consent based on ideological and cultural power is something many states – especially great powers and their ruling elites – strive for, this goal is often difficult to translate in terms of a concrete grand strategy. States do (sometimes) consciously pursue concrete policies to enhance and exercise what nowadays is often called their soft power (Nye, 2011). Certainly, the United States has done so, both during and after the Cold War, through various discursive and symbolic practices carried out by state agents (speeches, public diplomacy, etc.). But the process by which hegemony is actually (re-)produced is a complex and subtle one and moreover to a large degree involves private actors (often consciously in the case of foundations and other policy planning bodies – see Parmar, 2012).

Moving into the realm of “hard power” and hence to the means and resources that are more directly controlled by the state, we may begin by observing with Ellen Wood that as the first truly capitalist empire, the United States “can exercise its rule by economic means, by manipulating the market” (Wood, 2003: 12). While in part this economic rule is to an extent simply an expression of the power of U.S. capital and its transnational expansion and domination, what Wood calls manipulation crucially involves the state. Here the means involves, as we have seen, the whole gamut of statecraft, including diplomacy, foreign economic policies, and more traditional defense and security policies. With regard to economic or at least non-military means, beyond maintaining bilateral relations around the world, the United States since World War II also makes use of multilateral institutions or more broadly international and transnational regimes that it itself has largely created and subsequently endowed with the necessary capacities – not so much in order to itself comply with its rules and norms but rather to make others do so (Skidmore, 2011). Here, during but even more after the original Bretton Woods regime, the “*concentration of U.S. power through the dollar*” (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 147) was key to a broader U.S. financial hegemony and reflected in and enabled by the central role occupied by the U.S. state in the (multilateral) management of global monetary and financial relations (see also Gowan, 1999a; Seabrooke, 2001).

While, through these regimes and institutions, also helping to create and maintain a global capitalism to the benefit of transnationally oriented (global) capital and concomitant capitalist elites around the world (Panitch and Gindin, 2012), U.S. transnational capital, from Bretton Woods to the current era, has above all drawn specific advantages from the U.S. state’s hegemonic position within this institutional architecture (Norrlöf, 2010). In the apt phrase of Mastanduno (2009), the United States can be seen as both a “system maker and a privilege taker.” While multilateralism is often viewed in opposition to unilateralism as mutually exclusive policy modes, in the case of the United States, as indicated, these strategies are often mixed across policy areas and depend upon circumstances. Even if over time U.S. grand strategy has shown some variation in terms of relative emphasis on multilateral versus unilateral means, the United States, as Skidmore (2011), has argued, has never fully embraced multilateralism in as much as that entails both investing in the setting up and maintenance of – as well as complying with – the rules of multilateral institutions. The United States has been much better at the former than at the latter (*ibid.*). Conversely, even the most “unilateralist” administrations (such as that of G.W. Bush, to be discussed in Chapter 5) never even contemplated abandoning those institutions – such as the IMF or WTO – that were and are instrumental to maintaining a U.S.-dominated liberal world order.

Beyond market-based dominance and foreign economic policy, an important, indeed indispensable means throughout the history of American non-territorial expansionism – and especially after the first wave – has been the possession and use of military force. As Andrew Bacevich (2010: 13) writes: “[a]bove all, the exercise of global leadership … obliges the United States to maintain military

capabilities staggeringly in excess of those required for self-defense.” Since 1945 this military supremacy has been used “to maintain a *global military presence*, to configure its forces for *global power projection*, and to counter existing or anticipated threats by relying on a policy of *global interventionism*” (*ibid.*: 14). With regard to the first two elements, the United States has continued to bolster its military superiority not only throughout the Cold War but also since, and in 2013 spent close to 40 percent of the world total defense budget (Perlo-Freeman *et al.*, 2013). The Pentagon has moreover created a worldwide empire of over 700 military bases (Johnson, 2004; Bacevich, 2010: 25), underlining that America’s non-territorial, market-based empire still also relies on having hundreds of territorial footholds around the globe. Seeking to project its military power globally next to these bases and a global navy possessing 12 aircraft carriers – that is, more than the rest of the world combined – the Pentagon has divided the entire globe into different command areas, or what it also calls “areas of responsibilities” (on this see Bacevich, 2002: ch. 7).

With regard to global interventionism we have already argued, and in the preceding history seen several examples of, how this has been used to topple regimes threatening economic closure and to set up those prepared to keep the door to U.S. capital open.<sup>8</sup> More generally, as Clinton’s Secretary of Defense William Cohen once explained, through military power “we are able to shape the environment in ways that are advantageous to us and that are stabilizing to the areas where we are forward deployed, thereby helping to promote investment and prosperity” (Cohen cited in Bacevich, 2002: 128). Furthermore, it is America’s overwhelming military superiority that allows it to enjoy “command of the commons” (Posen, 2003), that is, the control of the international seas, airspace, and outer space. This is not just a military foundation for America’s global hegemony but specifically also of the liberal content of that hegemony. As the Pentagon itself stresses, these global commons are critical in as much as they allow “for the high-speed, high volume exchange of people, ideas, goods, information and capital … critical to the global economy” (Department of Defense, 2011a: 9). Finally, the sheer possession of this huge global military machine and its capability to project power around the globe is how it helps to back-up the U.S.-centered liberal world order and its institutions as just discussed. Here, the hegemonic position of the dollar must, for instance, be seen as in part related to American military power.<sup>9</sup>

Although all of these means have been important throughout the history of U.S. grand strategy, and are still important today, there have been shifts in the relative weight of these different means; their precise mix and their more specific use. Thus, while the worldview of the Open Door provides the overall ideological framework of U.S. capitalist imperialism since the turn of the last century, the concrete grand strategy pursued also shows variation within this overarching framework. In **Chapters 4–6** we will analyze and seek to explain these variations since the end of the Cold War – in which the third wave of U.S. non-territorial expansionism has continued in an altered global context – by comparing the grand strategies of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations.

However, we will first, in the next chapter, present a detailed overview of what we regard as an important source of both the continuity and aspects of the variation of U.S. post-Cold War grand strategy, that is, the social networks within which the grand-strategy makers of these three administrations have been embedded.

## Notes

- 1 Such variations can of course also be observed for the earlier period narrated in this chapter. However, while at times hinting at such variations over time, this chapter, for the sake of brevity and as its purpose is largely to come to a better understanding of the continuity that still informs contemporary American grand strategy, will by and large abstract from these variations.
- 2 The periodization adopted here partly resembles that of Neil Smith, who identifies “three formative moments” in the creation of America’s global empire: at the end of the nineteenth century, after 1940, and at the end of the twentieth century, into Bush’s “global war on terror” (Smith, 2003: 5–6).
- 3 Although, as we shall see, American expansionism has at times been combined with domestic reforms that, while leaving the basic social structure intact, did help to alleviate economic and attendant social pressures *in addition* to the export of surplus goods and capital, thus preserving the capitalist system.
- 4 In their book on American empire, Panitch and Gindin explicitly reject the Open Door interpretation of American imperialism, specifically disputing the notion that overaccumulation has been a driving force of U.S. expansionism. Referring to the origins of American empire in the 1890s they claim that “American capitalists invested abroad through the ensuing decades not because of lack of opportunities at home, but to take advantage of additional opportunities” (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 6–7). In our view overaccumulation, however, does not mean that no capital can be profitably reinvested at home – unless one would assume a complete breakdown of capital accumulation – but that there is substantial “surplus capital” for which this is the case (obviously affecting some capitalists more than others). In this sense it is always about “additional opportunities” (though for firms these opportunities might have been quite key to their long-term success). The crucial point, however, is indeed that the vast and underdeveloped U.S. home market did offer sufficient opportunities *in principle* but successful accumulation was oftentimes blocked in as much as workers’ income did not rise sufficiently to allow for the valorization of these investments (McCormick, 1990 [1967]: 22). The reason for this was that economic expansionism was preferred over its internal development through redistributive reforms.
- 5 Oil was the single largest item in the dollar budgets of most European countries; in fact it was estimated that in 1948, 20 percent of Marshall aid over the next few years would be spent on oil and oil equipment (Yergin, 1991: 424).
- 6 Another way in which the United States ensured the dollar’s status as the world’s reserve currency was the so-called “petrodollar recycling system” which entailed a tacit commitment of Saudi Arabia to denominate oil in dollars in return for military protection and a highly secret Saudi-American deal to let the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency buy U.S. government bonds at a cheaper rate and without competitive bidding (see e.g., Spiro, 1999), thus ensuring a “recycling” of petrodollars.
- 7 Allende thus became the “guy we can kick. You know, you [Nixon to his Treasury Secretary Connolly] always said, ‘Let’s find somebody in this world we can kick.’ ‘So, Nixon’s conclusion was therefore that in spite of legal niceties some [kicking] action had to be undertaken: ‘We sure as hell can do something about expropriation. Don’t you agree, Henry [Kissinger]?’” Should we just simply lie back and let them expropriate

things around the world? Screw ‘em’” (Nixontapes.org, 2010: 45). The actual coup in the end took place on September 11, 1973. Next to CIA-led covert activities, the Ford Foundation, though no supporter of the coup, played a significant role in nurturing Chilean neoliberal intellectuals that were ready to take over the economic management of the country after the coup (see Parmar, 2012: ch. 7).

- 8 For good accounts of the history of U.S. interventionism, see Kinzer, 2006; Westad, 2007, and Chomsky, 2006.
- 9 We thus disagree, for instance, with Panitch and Gindin (2012: vii), who in their recent book on American empire argue that the Treasury and the Federal Reserve have been much more important in the making of that empire than the CIA and the Pentagon. But in our view the power of the Treasury and the Fed would be significantly weakened if no longer backed up by a military supremacy unprecedented in modern history and still “beyond challenge” (a position of preeminence that U.S. grand strategy explicitly seeks to maintain).

### **3 America's post-Cold War grand-strategy makers and corporate elite networks**

Having outlined our historical perspective, underlying the continuity of American grand strategy in terms of the Open Door, in this chapter we will first provide a further conceptualization of the main dimensions that in our view help to explain this continuity – that is, the social position of U.S. grand-strategy makers in terms of their corporate and policy planning affiliations. Second, we will elucidate our dataset and describe the methods employed to analyze the data: a combination of biographical mapping and Social Network Analysis. The chapter will then discuss our main findings regarding the selected post-Cold War grand-strategy makers, their career paths within U.S. government, their corporate affiliations, and their links to policy planning networks.

Analyzing the pre-administration career patterns of our selected officials, we observe that a majority of our grand-strategy makers have held top-level positions within the corporate community across a diversity of sectors, and often have moved back and forth between government and the private sector. Our findings regarding the policy planning networks reveal a core network of policy planning bodies to which key officials from all three administrations are connected. Providing a profile of the think tanks and other policy planning bodies in this core network, we will argue that the ideological orientation of these bodies all fall within the mainstream of Open Door globalism, which is unsurprising to the extent that, as we shall find, they are both funded by U.S. transnational capital and directed by members of the corporate elite. The tight nexus between U.S. foreign policy officials and these think tanks thus, we argue, helps us to account for the Open Door worldview underpinning U.S. post-Cold War grand strategy.

#### **The role of corporate elite networks in grand strategy formation**

Following the framework as laid out in [Chapter 1](#), we will here further define what we mean by corporate elite networks that we see as shaping U.S. grand-strategy formation. A corporate elite may be defined as comprising “the men and (the few) women who are in a position to exercise major influence over the decisions and policies of ... large corporations” (Useem, 1984: 41; cf. Fennema,

1982: 32; Heemskerk, 2007: 79). Then leading scholar on corporate elites, Michael Useem, argued that three “types of position” would allow “relatively direct, formal opportunities for such influence”: significant ownership of a corporation’s equity, membership on its board of directors, and the position of top manager of that company (which may or may not be on the board) (Useem, 1984: 42). In a further broadening Useem also added those with kinship or friendship ties with people in any of these positions or “those attorneys and other professionals who control external resources valued by large corporations, such as technical expertise and legal expertise” (*ibid.*). Given the central position of the modern corporation in contemporary capitalism and how the power of corporations is closely associated with capitalist class power (Scott, 1997), we may then conceptualize a corporate elite in this broader sense as *a social group consisting of individuals occupying an elite position within society in virtue of their position within the corporate community*.

In mapping and analyzing the ties of selected grand-strategy makers of the three post-Cold War administrations to the corporate elite, we will further, as noted in [Chapter 1](#), differentiate between two dimensions that have been identified in the literature as key channels of corporate elite power (Domhoff, 2009; Dye, 2014; Burris, 2008): corporate affiliations (e.g., corporate board memberships) and the so-called policy planning affiliations. With regard to the latter, our starting point is not, as common in much of the literature on corporate elite formation, the way corporations and the people that run them are interconnected through, for instance, interlocking directorships (e.g., Useem, 1984; Carroll, 2010); rather, we start from the top foreign-policy makers and how, through their (prior) corporate ties, they are embedded in corporate elite networks. The fact that so many appointees are, as we shall see, recruited from the corporate elite, can be seen as an important channel of corporate elite power, or what Domhoff calls the “power of appointment” (Domhoff, 2009: 184).

The other channel through which we propose intra-elite values and interests are shaped and transmitted to policymaking is through the activities of think tanks, foundations, advocacy groups, and other policy planning bodies located in civil society. Although of course American civil society is populated by myriad organizations representing a plurality of interests, including organized labor and (I)NGOs advocating particular “principled issues” (environment, human rights; cf. Sikkink, 1993), it is well documented by several empirical studies how the policy planning network overall – and certainly within the policy areas key to business interests – contains a cohesive core that is dominated by the corporate community (see, among others, Domhoff, 1967, 2009; Shoup and Minter, 2004 [1977]; Burris, 1992; Parmar, 2004, 2012). This chapter will show that in the case of the policy planning networks that we identified and mapped for each of the three administrations, there is indeed a very tight nexus with the corporate elite. Although we here focus on U.S. foreign-policy making, or more particularly grand strategy formation, there is also a substantial body of literature documenting the role of *transnational*, but equally corporate-dominated, private planning bodies in creating a transnational elite

consensus underpinning American hegemony and, more broadly, the unity of “the West” (van der Pijl, 1984, 1998; Carroll, 2010; Gill, 1990). Indeed, some of these key transnational bodies appear to occupy a central place in our networks.

As an important infrastructure of corporate elite power, policy planning networks fulfill two important integrated functions. First, it is within these bodies that at certain levels divergent elite interests, views, and ideological predispositions are arbitrated and welded into a more coherent and integrated set of ideas. Second – whether representing a wider elite consensus or narrower ideological viewpoints – these bodies seek to disseminate their ideas throughout civil society and shape public policy. The non-profit and (formally) non-partisan nature of these organizations is fundamental to the exercise of corporate elite power in as much as these think tanks usually transcend the level of narrow corporate lobbying and, as we shall discuss further below, formulate and propagate more general (corporate) elite interests at the level of ideas and (policy) discourse production. Yet, they present these interests as within the *general public interest*, and thus seek to make them hegemonic in a Gramscian sense (Gill, 1990; Parmar, 2004, 2012; see also van Apeldoorn, 2002).

Our point of departure for this research is, however, as indicated, not so much the think tanks themselves but the American state managers responsible for formulating and implementing U.S. grand strategy. We are interested in how their linkages to think tanks may help to account for the way in which they define the overall geopolitical interests and goals of the United States and can be most effectively attained. This is hence not a study of the agency of the corporate elite through, for instance, the policy planning network shaping public policy, but a study of the agency of policymakers – in this case grand-strategy makers – and how this agency is *influenced* by their embeddedness in particular (corporate) elite networks. From this perspective we will empirically map the extent and exact topography of the policy planning affiliations of our selected top-level American foreign-policy officials of each of the last three post-Cold War administrations (Clinton, Bush, Obama). Let us first, however, elaborate our data collection methods and put these in the context of related (Social Network Analysis) studies.

### Analyzing social networks of grand-strategy makers: data and method

We collected biographical data on 87 key cabinet-ranking officials and senior advisers involved in the making of U.S. grand strategy, 30 (with some overlaps between Clinton and Obama) from each of the three post-Cold War administrations – i.e., of Clinton, Bush, and Obama – in the starting year of each administration (1993, 2001, and 2009). We have selected those key cabinet members that we view to be involved in U.S. foreign-policy making broadly understood, that is all policies – including, crucially, foreign economic policy – through which the United States exercises its global power. The selected officials are: the president and the vice president; the secretaries and deputy secretaries of state,

defense, and the treasury; the attorney general; the secretary of commerce; the U.S. trade representative; the chief of staff of the White House and his two deputies; the (three) senior advisers to the president;<sup>1</sup> the national security adviser; the director of the CIA; the director of the National Economic Council; the ambassador to the UN; the director of the Office of Management and Budget; and the chair, as well as two members of the Council of Economic Advisors.

In addition to these 25 grand-strategy makers for each administration, we have selected five influential policymakers at crucial positions below cabinet-level rank within that particular administration, sometimes even at informal or temporary positions. The reason for this is that within each administration there may be particular positions, often even created for the occasion, prompted by the changing global political and economic context and the perceived required foreign-policy responses. For the Bush administration, for instance, examples are Zalmay Khalilzad, who was at first counselor to the secretary of defense, and after the U.S. November 2001 invasion in Afghanistan was appointed special presidential envoy for Afghanistan; and Richard Perle, a very influential figure behind the scenes, who, however, did not hold a formal position other than being a member of the advisory Defense Policy Board. For the Obama administration, a selected equivalent in terms of foreign policy is the late Richard Holbrooke, special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also Paul Volcker who was appointed chair of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board (see the [appendix](#) for an overview of all the selected grand-strategy makers per administration and their most important affiliations).

Precisely because agency matters, we are well aware that not every grand-strategy maker has the same degree of influence, even within the same position. Although secretary of state is obviously a key position throughout history, there have been more and less effective secretaries of state, some who had close and some who had less close access to the president and influence on his decisions. And sometimes informal advisers, who do not hold high office, can be more influential. Our analysis is also not to imply that grand strategy always rests on a firm consensus across the whole of the administration, or across our 30 selected officials. Obviously there might also be and indeed have been important instances of dissent. Thus some of the grand-strategy makers included in our network analysis might in fact have opposed elements of the grand strategy adopted. Where appropriate we will in the process-tracing that follows in the following chapters describe such internal dissent and tensions and how they were eventually overcome, in the sense that one particular set of grand strategic ideas prevailed over alternatives that were, in the end, effectively sidelined. The point with respect to our model, as presented in [Chapter 1](#), is that the *aggregate* social position of these 30 actors tells us something about the worldview and ideas that have informed the grand-strategy making of that administration. At the *disaggregate* level we will also relate different positions within an administration to, for instance, different policy planning affiliations.

Moreover, we have only selected those officials appointed to these particular positions at the start of the first term of each post-Cold War president. The shifts

in personnel and position of the grand-strategy makers that take place during the administration, especially with the start of a second term, are hence not incorporated in our network analyses. We do, however, incorporate these shifts to some extent in our more descriptive analyses of the evolution of the distinctive grand strategies of each presidency in Chapters 4–6.

From the extensive biographical data mapping that we performed of each individual (which includes most disclosed biographical information from demographic data to all kinds of professional and private engagements) we focus in the present analysis on three types of affiliations: corporate affiliations, policy planning affiliations, and state affiliations. With regard to the corporate affiliations of the grand-strategy makers, we included all formal top-level positions within a company: executive, (founding) owner/partner, non-executive board, and advisory board positions.<sup>2</sup> For the analysis of the policy planning affiliations of the grand-strategy makers, we included all types of formal membership, for instance as director, trustee, or fellow.<sup>3</sup> Both for the corporate affiliations and for policy planning membership we distinguished between those positions occupied at some time in the period *until and including* the year in which a person entered the respective administration, and those *after* (until and including the year 2013).

Finally, with respect to the data on state affiliations of our selected grand-strategy makers, we focus in the comparative analysis of the current chapter on positions held at the federal state level, both previous to and after the position that served as our selection criterion. This then excludes a whole range of political positions and activities, from governorships, to political lobbying, campaigning, etc. Clearly, such political career paths – in particular in cases of prominent positions such as governor or senator – must be seen as also shaping the individual grand-strategy makers' experience, ideas, and opportunities, but in the present study our primary interest is in grand-strategy making that takes place at the highest state level – the federal government – to which we therefore restrict our focus.

We collected our data from hundreds of online sources, including U.S. government websites; websites of the individuals' affiliations (e.g., company, university, and think tank websites); annual reports of affiliated companies and policy planning bodies; *Businessweek*; *Forbes*; *Who's Who*; newspaper archives via *Lexis Nexis*; and books via *Google Books*. By combining information from many different sources we have been able to find many more affiliations and with more details (such as time indications) than one would find in any single bibliographical source, including the often used *Who's Who*. Each affiliation was double checked and verified with a formal source (i.e., reported with an existing organization, corporation, government bureau, institute, or likewise). Although we cannot claim that our data are complete in the sense that we may still have missed a few important affiliations (especially affiliations of much longer ago, such as certain Clinton officials), we believe we have compiled the most exhaustive and accurate database to date regarding the policy planning network, state, and corporate affiliations of these close to 90 policymakers.

## **Method**

In order to systematically analyze the thus collected extensive biographical data on our selected grand-strategy makers, we employ Social Network Analysis (SNA). As we discussed in Chapter 1, our study builds further upon a long – originally sociological – tradition of what is called power structure research (Domhoff, 2007). It has been common to use what Breiger (1974) has called “membership network analysis” and content analysis to uncover these power structures. Since SNA as a method and technique – including graph theory, matrix algebra, and with related software programs such as UCINET – came into practice in the early 1990s (for an overview see Scott, 1991a), SNA (techniques) have been increasingly applied in these elite and class power studies. The work of Burris (1992, 2005, 2008) and others (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff, 2014; de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, 2011) provides such SNA-based investigations in the study of American power structures, and the interlocks between the corporate world, policy planning, and the policymaking elite.

Another major line of research has systematically mapped the transnational corporate elite power structures that have emerged in the past decades of neoliberal globalization employing SNA (Carroll, 2010; Carroll and Carson, 2003; Burris and Staples, 2012), and investigated the (trans)formation of European corporate elite networks (Carroll *et al.*, 2010; Heemskerk, 2011, 2013). More recently, SNA has been used in pioneering work on the emerging economies’ corporate elites and their integration into Western corporate elite networks (de Graaff, 2011, 2012, 2014; Cardenas, 2014). More broadly applied, SNA has been a rapidly growing field of interest in the social sciences discipline, including in political science, economics, and history (see Buch-Hansen, 2014).

The essence of SNA is that it looks at the relations between actors instead of comparing their individual attributes (for an extensive recent guide to SNA, see Scott and Carrington, 2011; see also Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Scott, 1991a). In that sense it provides a powerful tool to map, visualize, and describe – identifying properties such as centrality of actors or density – social structure and social relations, rather than mere collections of individuals, which is particularly helpful in the analysis of elite power structures in modern capitalist societies.

In addition to the visualization and analysis of social structure, SNA also provides basic measures that are indicators for social power and influence (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2009), with indicators such as “centrality” which indicates the potential influence or power of a particular person or organization due to its central position in a network, for instance the number of incoming and/or outgoing ties inhabited (called “degree centrality” in SNA parlance). It should be noted, however, that these are indicators of *potential* influence and power; actual power and the way it is exercised ultimately depends on the *nature* of the node, the *kind* of tie, and so on. The extent to which actual measures of social power can be derived from SNA is therefore debated (Mizruchi, 1996; Pettigrew, 1992; Cronin, 2011).

In our analysis, we apply SNA mostly as a descriptive device to visualize our mappings of the power structures that we argue underpin U.S. grand-strategy makers and making, in order to, as Carroll has eloquently put it: “gain a more systematic representation of the actual elite structures that both enable agency and channelize it, to some extent, along pre-constituted pathways” (Carroll, 2010: 11). But whereas network analysis thus helps to visualize and reveal patterns in the social relations and social networks in which actors are embedded – and which forms the context of their agency – a qualitative interpretation of the meaning of these patterned relations is still needed after these patterns have become visible.

SNA is also especially well-suited for an analysis of social structure informed by a critical realist perspective (e.g., Bhaskar, 1979; Archer, 1995; Sayer, 2000), although rarely applied as such (see Buch-Hansen, 2014). This meta-theoretical perspective (which also underlies our conceptualization of the structure–agency relationship as outlined in [Chapter 1](#)) views social reality as stratified, that is, as containing multiple interrelated layers of social structure, some of which are directly observable and some of which are not (Buch-Hansen and Nielsen, 2005). SNA not only enables a visualization of these social structures, it also allows for an analysis of *how individual and collective agency is embedded in and at the same time constructs social structure*, thus capturing the interplay of agency and structure that forms an essential point of departure for critical realism (Buch-Hansen, 2014).

In addition to SNA we will, especially in the subsequent chapters of the book, conduct qualitative research to show how the patterns we find in the social networks of our selected grand-strategy makers help shape their worldview and ideas, and how these are subsequently translated into actual grand-strategy making. Employing content analysis, process tracing, and what Stephen Walt has called “detailed historical narrative” (Walt cited in Layne, 2006a: 209, n.37), our qualitative analyses are based on primary sources such as official policy documents and reports (such as the National Security Strategies),<sup>4</sup> (declassified) memos; speeches of grand-strategy-makers (especially the president); published interviews, news sources, and documentaries, as well as an extensive body of secondary sources and literature.

To actually show how the social network structures shape policymaking has been largely underexplored in social network research (see also Burris, 2008). We do this in the current study by analyzing the network structures in combination with the historical development and the actual content of foreign policy, or more broadly grand strategy, taking as the connecting link the actual grand-strategy makers. If we find congruence and overlap between these actors in the policy planning domain, the corporate world and government, as well as congruence between the ideas that they are part of shaping and formulating within these domains, we argue that their membership in these various elite domains – that is, what we have called social position – helps to explain the grand strategy they are partly authors of (see also our model in [Chapter 1](#)).

The evidence presented in this chapter will show the structural pattern of close linkages between the corporate community and the U.S. state in the

post-Cold War era. These extensive linkages to the corporate community are first of all established directly through the affiliations (and corporate interlocks) of the grand-strategy makers. Second, and more indirectly, these ties exist via the policy planning networks to which the grand-strategy makers are linked. In turn – as will be shown – these policy planning networks are intimately connected to and heavily funded by the corporate community, and as such part of a corporate elite network more broadly conceived. Before presenting our main findings regarding these structural patterns we will, however, give a brief overview of the governmental careers (at the level of federal government) of our selected grand-strategy makers. We expect, in line with earlier claims (McCormick, 1995: 12–16), a substantial number of our selected grand-strategy makers to be so-called “in-and-outers,” switching from their political appointments to corporate board positions, or the other way around, and often after a number of years in government (or in the corporate world), back again. The governmental careers thus provide to some extent the mirror image of the corporate career paths of our grand-strategy makers, and together these patterns reveal, as we shall discuss, an ongoing “revolving door” which helps to account for both continuity between administrations and a congruence between grand strategic ideas as held by these officials and a worldview rooted in corporate elite interests.

### **Governmental career paths of post-Cold War grand-strategy makers**

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the aggregate number of grand-strategy makers with previous or succeeding federal state positions, defined as senior positions within the federal administration.<sup>5</sup> The matrix also shows the extent of overlap with other administrations. For a more detailed overview of all functions and exact time indications per administration and grand-strategy maker, refer to the appendix.

Figure 3.1 gives a similar overview in the form of a two-mode network, excluding the grand-strategy makers with no preceding or subsequent federal state affiliations. Two-mode networks map both the actors and the organizations they are affiliated with and thus contain *a duality of persons and groups* (Domhoff, 2009: 6): interpersonal relations (through common organizational affiliations) and inter-organizational relations (through the person’s memberships).

The first column of Table 3.1 gives the total number of our selected grand-strategy makers that have had such federal state positions in administrations other than the administration for which they were originally selected for this study. The rest of the table shows the distribution of those grand-strategy makers across the various administrations, going back as far as the Johnson presidency (except for the cells in bold which give the number of grand-strategy makers affiliated to their primary administration, which naturally is 30, and in the case of Bush 29 – see note 1).

From these aggregate numbers we can tell that the number of grand-strategy makers with previous or later federal positions within a U.S. administration is

*Table 3.1* State affiliations of grand-strategy makers across administrations

<i>Grand-strategy makers with positions in other administrations</i>	<i>Obama (2009–present)</i>	<i>Bush (2001–09)</i>	<i>Clinton (1993–2001)</i>	<i>Bush (1989–93)</i>	<i>Reagan (1981–89)</i>	<i>Carter (1977–81)</i>	<i>Ford (1974–77)</i>	<i>Nixon (1969–74)</i>	<i>Johnson (1963–69)</i>
Clinton	12	4	1	<b>30</b>	1	1	7	0	1
Bush	22	0	<b>29</b>	2	13	11	2	3	5
Obama	17	<b>30</b>	1	16	1	1	2	1	0

Sources: data collection by authors.

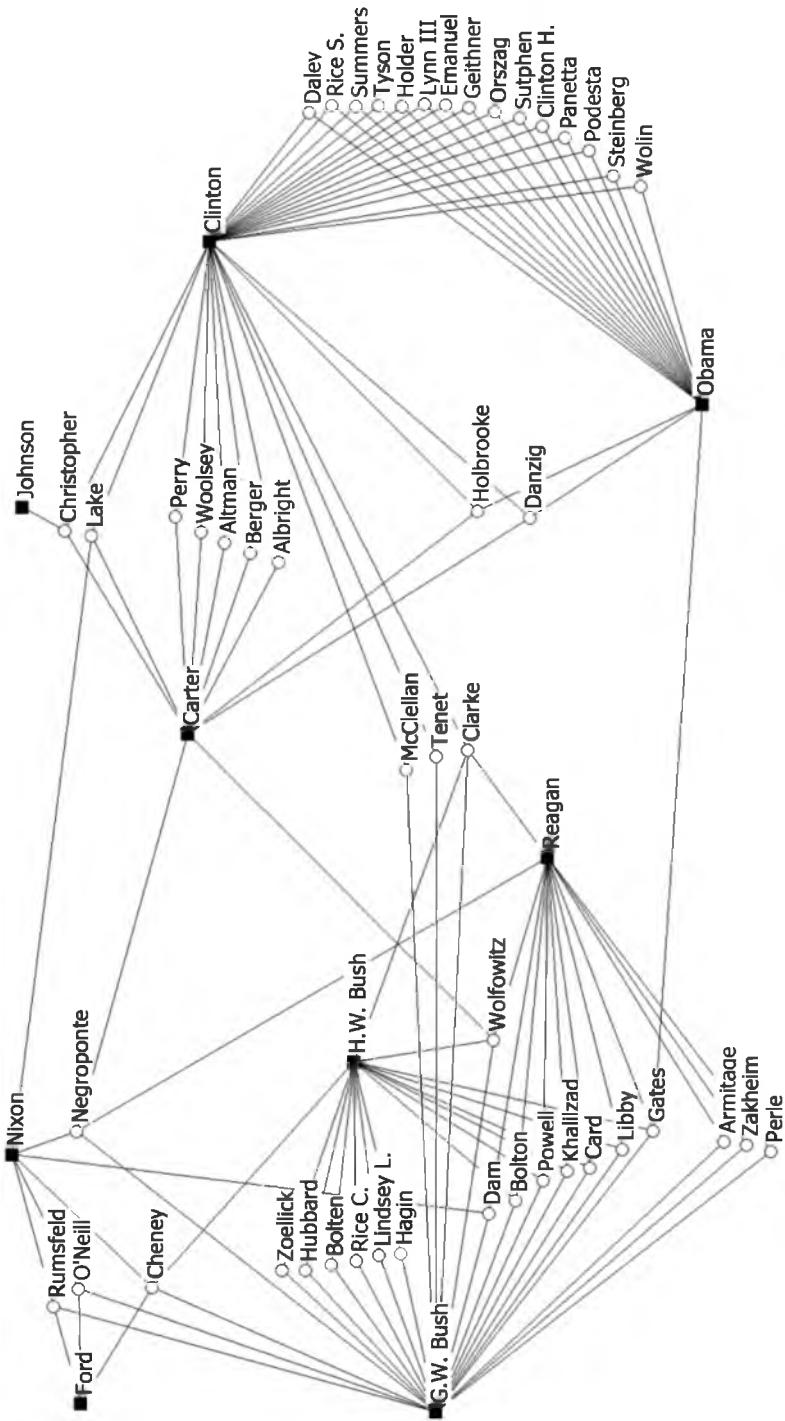


Figure 3.1 Grand-strategy makers' affiliations across administrations (sources: data collection by authors).

clearly highest in the case of Bush, where 22 out of 29 have had such (primarily) former affiliations, with 13 of G.W. Bush's core foreign-policy team also having served in his father's presidency, and as many as 11 of them having served under Reagan. This is in sharp contrast with the Clinton grand-strategy makers, of whom only 12 had former or later experience at federal administration level, undoubtedly in part due to the 12-year period between the Clinton administration and the last Democratic administration (Carter). This overview also highlights the large number of Obama grand-strategy makers (more than half) with previous positions in the Clinton administration.

Apart from the salient continuity in terms of personnel between both the democratic administrations of Clinton and Obama, and the Republican administrations of Bush 41, Bush 43, and Reagan, there are also quite a few bipartisan career paths among these top officials. One notable example is Robert Gates, who started out as secretary of defense under Bush and continued that role in the Obama team, and as CIA director served under the Republican administrations of H.W. Bush and Reagan (as CIA deputy director). Bush's deputy defense secretary and outspoken "neocon" Paul Wolfowitz was deputy assistant secretary of defense under Carter. We may further also note that the Clinton and Bush 43 administrations are linked through three grand-strategy makers. In other words, the continuity is not just between administrations of the same political color but also, though for obvious reasons to a lesser extent, across the party divide.

The individual governmental careers of many of these key foreign policy officials will be investigated in more depth in [Chapters 4–6](#) in the context of the grand-strategy analysis of each of these post-Cold War presidencies. What the overview above conveys most generally is that, in spite of some significant variation, many of our selected key grand-strategy makers held one or more political offices at the federal state level prior to their service in the respective administration. Yet, as will be shown shortly, these commitments have not prevented them from building substantial corporate careers as well, with many of them occupying a multitude of high-level corporate board or executive positions in major transnational corporations (TNCs) in between their governmental stints.

## **Corporate affiliations of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations**

Our findings – see [Table 3.2](#) for an overview – show that, first of all, a very high percentage of our selected grand-strategy makers have/had top-level corporate affiliations, that is, as executive, director, senior adviser, or, e.g., partner in a law firm.<sup>6</sup> If we only look at the officials that had such affiliations before entering the respective administration – which we argue must be seen as important in shaping their particular outlook – the percentages are 60 percent of the selected grand-strategy makers of Clinton, and more than 70 percent in the case of the Bush and Obama administrations. Our data also show that of those grand-strategy makers with corporate affiliations, the vast majority return to high-level positions within the corporate community after leaving government – and sometimes again return

*Table 3.2* Corporate linkers and corporate affiliations per administration

	<i>Clinton</i>	<i>Bush</i>	<i>Obama</i>
Total	25 (197)	27 (157)	23 (126)
Before	18 (48)	21 (87)	23 (111)
After	22 (149)	21 (70)	7 (15)
Revolving door (before and after)	15	15	7

Sources: data collection by authors.

Note

The numbers refer to the number of grand-strategy makers in each administration (out of a total of 30) that held corporate affiliations either before or after serving in that administration or both (revolving door). The numbers in parentheses refer to the total number of affiliations held by these grand-strategy makers.

to government years later. A significant portion of the key grand-strategy makers of the post-Cold War era are thus indeed in-and-outers, moving through the revolving door from government to the corporate community, and then back to government, and so forth.

Of the 30 grand-strategy makers in each administration, a total of 25 had corporate affiliations before and/or after their position in the Clinton government, establishing a total of 197 corporate affiliations. In the case of G.W. Bush, this pertains to 27 grand-strategy makers,<sup>7</sup> adding up to a total of 157 corporate affiliations; of Obama's 30 grand-strategy makers 23 had corporate affiliations, totaling 126. As to the revolving door, almost half of the grand-strategy makers were such in-and-outers in the case of Clinton and Bush. The fact that in Obama's case these numbers are lower obviously has to do with the fact that many of them were still in office at the time of writing. Although we only take positions prior to office as being influential to the grand strategy, the positions held after being in office should not be seen as irrelevant. In fact, given the persistent revolving door pattern found, a large number of these grand-strategy makers seem to be not only closely linked to the corporate elite, but must be considered to be to a large extent themselves part of this elite.

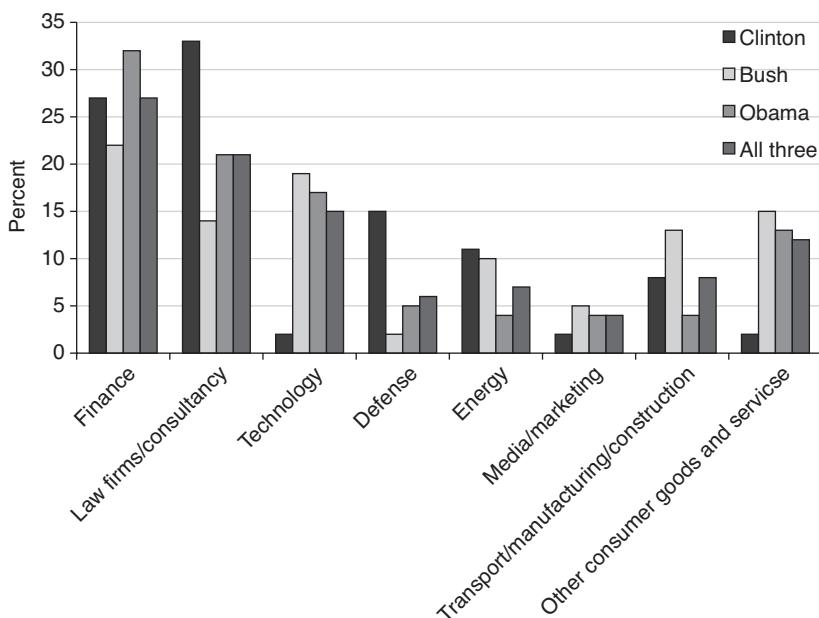
#### *A sectoral analysis: a broad-based representation of the corporate elite*

The corporate affiliations held before serving the respective administration were categorized into broad sectors.<sup>8</sup> Sectoral differences are important insofar as the corporate community is not a homogeneous whole. Potentially important dividing lines here are between nationally oriented and transnationally oriented capital, and between financial capital (banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions) and non-financial capital (industry and services). These distinctions partly overlap in as much as financial capital is generally very transnationally oriented, and both financial capital and (large-scale) industrial transnational capital tend to have an ideological outlook that in recent decades is

closely associated with neoliberalism (van Apeldoorn, 2002: 27–30). Together, these transnational “fractions” of capital can be seen as making up the core of the U.S. corporate community, that is, those sections of U.S. capital that historically have had a dominant position within the U.S. political economy, and have, as was discussed in [Chapter 2](#), in conformity with their interests consistently propagated an internationalist foreign policy aimed at the opening up and penetration of foreign markets. [Figure 3.2](#) shows the distribution of major sectors for each administration in percentages, calculated over the total number of corporate affiliations (thus including all the, often multiple, ties per grand-strategy maker).

Two main conclusions can be drawn from our sectoral analysis. The first is that we find a relative dominance of the financial sector (which includes insurance) and law firms/consultancy sector in all three administrations (except in the case of Bush where the law and consultancy sector is significantly lower than the other two). A second important finding from the data is that notwithstanding the relative dominance of these two sectors, there is still a diversity of sectors, with all major industries represented – indicating a broad social base in terms of the links between the grand-strategy making core of U.S. government and U.S. capital. If the two best represented sectors are taken together, this still leaves almost 50 percent distributed among the remaining sectors (and in the case of Bush even more).

Noteworthy in this respect is also that contrary to what one would expect on the basis of some popular (and also academically widely iterated) perceptions,



[Figure 3.2](#) Sectoral distribution of corporate affiliations in Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations (sources: data collection by authors).

neither the defense sector (cf. Hossein-zadeh, 2006) nor the energy (read, oil) sector for that matter figures more prominently in terms of direct corporate affiliations in the network of the Bush administration than in the others. In fact, in the case of defense this sector is only marginally represented in the case of Bush, whereas in the preceding Clinton administration (which was generally less belligerent) the defense sector is, with technology, the third best represented sector at 15 percent (see Chapters 4 and 5 for further detailed analysis and background in this respect). While this might be seen as counterintuitive, in our view this underlines that grand-strategy makers with prior corporate affiliations must not be seen as in any way directly “representing” the corporations that they previously directed, nor their “sectoral” interests, as we theorized in Chapter 1. What our data thus show is that when it comes to the social position of U.S. grand-strategy makers, the links to America’s corporate community are much broader than a capture by special sectoral interests, including the defense industry. Which is not to say that particular sectoral interests have other channels through which they (try to) influence (foreign) policymaking, such as through campaign finance and lobbying.

Our argument and investigation, however, is not so much about these direct strategies of corporate interest promotion, but about the ways in which the social ties of the people (actors) in charge of formulating and executing foreign policy, i.e., grand-strategy makers, are indirectly shaping their policymaking, by coloring their worldview and thus perceived interests, ideas, and values. It is thus rather the more general *cross-sectoral* interests of the corporate elite that we must see as coming to the fore in what is in fact a broad-based network. In this respect, what is significant and reinforces the argument of an embeddedness in the corporate elite as a whole is that most of our grand-strategy makers in fact have ties to more than one sector, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters.

### ***The dominance of transnationally oriented capital***

While we find the overall composition of the corporate background of these grand-strategy makers to be broad and diverse in terms of sectors, we do find the corporate ties dominated by, overwhelmingly U.S., transnationally oriented capital. As an important proxy of firms’ transnational orientation – also much used in research on transnational corporate networks – we have counted the number of *Fortune 500* (F500) notations among our corporate ties, noting that this ranking includes only America’s 500 largest corporations (and thus excludes firms that can still be considered big TNCs yet not in the top 500). For the present analysis we coded all the previous corporate connections of the grand-strategy makers according to whether the connected firms had an F500 notation in the year of measurement (i.e., 1993, 2001, 2009) or previously (“*Fortune, 500 1995–2005*,” 2015).<sup>9</sup> We found that a relatively high proportion of the connected corporations have a F500 notation: 35 percent for Clinton and Obama, and 43 percent for Bush.

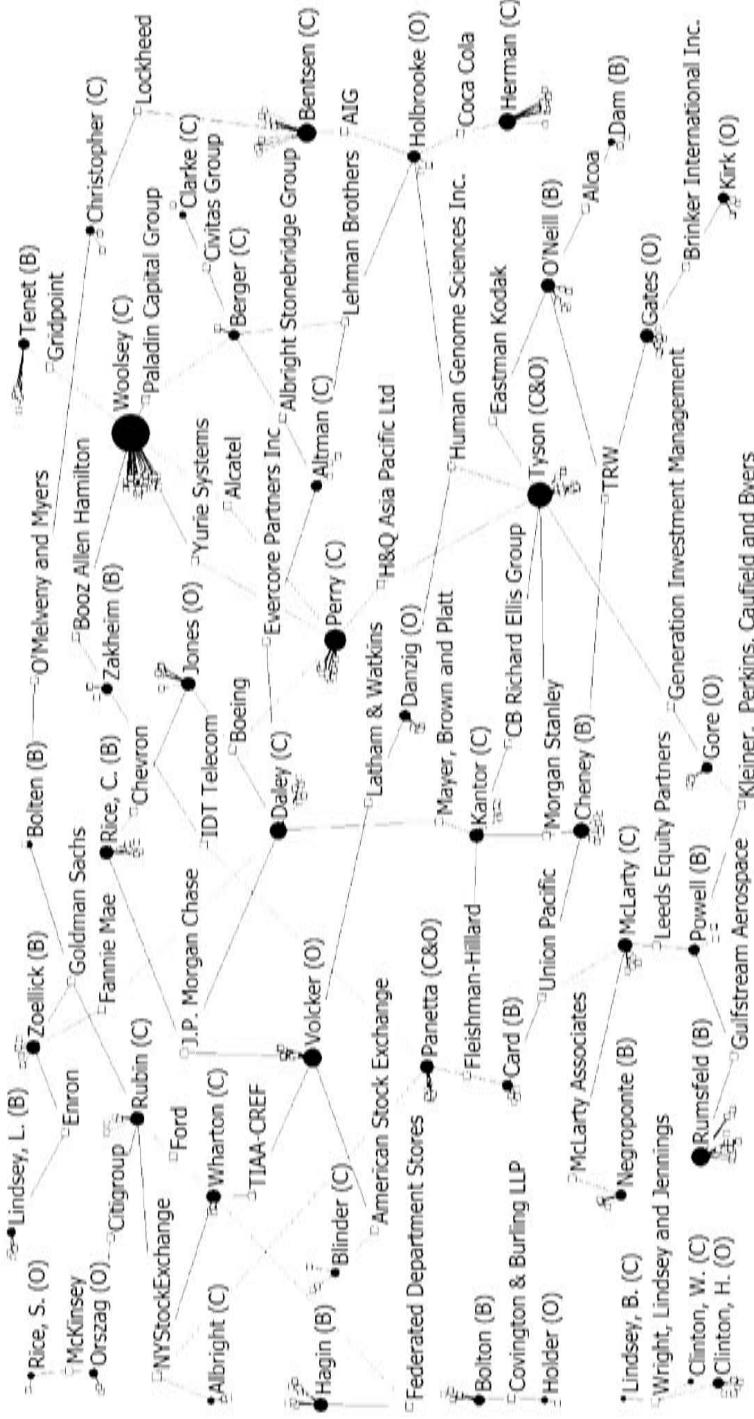
The fact that the financial sector predominates among the corporate links of all three administrations can be taken as further indication of an overall

transnational orientation of the corporate elite interests in our network, as financial capital is by definition more transnationally mobile than productive capital, and also smaller (non-F500) U.S. financial firms are firmly integrated into global circuits of capital. With regard to the other strongly represented sector (the largest among the corporate affiliations of the selected Clinton officials, and the third and second sector in the case of Bush and Obama), we must note that in this category we find many large corporate law firms and big consultancy firms. While not being F500 notated firms themselves, major TNCs are among their most important clients, and they hence have a clear orientation toward the interests of transnational capital. McKinsey & Company, to which several of our grand-strategy makers have been affiliated, for instance, mentions in its company profile that about two-thirds of their clients are F1000 listed firms (see Hoovers, 2015), and ranks as the number two best consultancy firm in the United States, according to the renowned so-called “Vault ranking” (Forbes, 2015). Similarly, amongst the law firms with which at least two grand-strategy makers were affiliated, Latham & Watkins, Covington & Burling, and O’Melveny & Meyers are ranked, respectively, at numbers 10, 12, and 25 among the most prestigious law firms in the United States (*ibid.*).

In [Chapter 1](#) we theorized the relation between global capital and *U.S.* transnational capital, arguing that even if global capital as a whole may benefit from America’s Open Door grand strategy, interests of *U.S.* transnational capital tend to be served first and foremost (cf. Robinson, 2007). Our findings show that a substantial number of the corporate connections of our grand-strategy makers are in fact with *U.S.* TNCs or *U.S.* firms selling their services to TNCs. Among our affiliated corporations only a handful are non-*U.S.* domiciled. Although this in itself does not say anything about whether global capitalists are not also served by *U.S.* grand strategy, it does show that we are here dealing with *American* rather than a global corporate elite (though this American corporate elite very much owns and controls a substantial part of global, transnational, production and finance – see Starrs, 2013).

### ***The core of the network: the Fortune 500 and big linkers***

In order to gain a more detailed sense of the corporations involved, and of the individuals affiliated with those corporations, [Figure 3.3](#) maps those companies to which at least two of our selected post-Cold War grand-strategy makers were affiliated at some point in their career, either before or after their respective administration position. This sociogram thus shows a network of post-Cold War grand-strategy makers and the companies for which they have worked at some – or several – point(s) alongside their political career. It reveals a set of companies that are *recurrently* connected to different grand-strategy makers of the post-Cold War period. The fact that such a mapping generates an extensive and closely linked network of a total of 46 companies that are more or less evenly linked to grand-strategy makers of all three post-Cold War administrations indicates that indeed there is a capital(ist) core that is closely and continuously



*Figure 3.3* Companies and post-Cold War grand-strategy makers across administrations (sources: data collection by authors).

Note  
Number of corporations connected to ≥2 grand strategy makers is 46, 26 out of which have a F500/F1000/G500 notation (60 percent).

connected to the upper echelon of U.S. grand-strategy makers, i.e., what we have called a U.S. capital-state nexus (see [Chapter 1](#)).

The round nodes in this network are the grand-strategy makers (with the letters C, B, O indicating their primary administration); the squared nodes are companies. Although only the so-called “connecting” companies (i.e., those with several or recurring ties to grand-strategy makers) are labeled in this figure, it does illustrate the – at times considerable – extent of other corporate affiliations that most of these grand-strategy makers have, which are shown but not labeled. Similarly, degree (i.e., number of incoming/outgoing ties of either persons or organizations) is expressed by size, thus it can easily be assessed which grand-strategy makers are the “big corporate linkers” here.<sup>10</sup>

What this analysis, in addition, demonstrates is the prominence of transnational capital in the U.S. state–capital nexus. As much as 57 percent of these recurrently connecting companies are F500 notated companies; indeed this network includes major U.S. TNCs such as Alcoa, Boeing, Coca Cola, Chevron, Ford, defense giant Lockheed, as well as global financial institutions such as AIG, Citigroup, Fannie Mae, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, and J.P. Morgan Chase, many of whom had to be bailed out by the U.S. Treasury and Fed during the financial crisis. Although these central companies can be labeled as transnational capital, they are in fact all U.S.-based TNCs except one (LGS Innovations, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Alcatel-Lucent, a Global 500 firm domiciled in France).

In sum, our analysis shows that a large majority of grand-strategy makers in all three administrations have had many high-level positions with often large transnational corporations from a diversity of sectors, though with a relative dominance of (transnational) finance. As indicated, our argument in this respect is that this does shape their particular worldview and how they tend to construct the interests of the United States, especially because these affiliations in many cases display a revolving door pattern, indicating that the actors concerned are not just closely tied to but actually *themselves members of the corporate elite*.

The embeddedness of grand-strategy makers in corporate elite networks does not just relate to their direct corporate affiliations, but also their manifold affiliations to an elite policy planning network, that we will show to be closely interlocked with the corporate world, and that is both reflective of as well as helping to construct the same globalist and Open Door outlook that informs American grand strategy to the benefit of U.S. transnational capital.

### **The shared policy planning network**

[Table 3.3](#) shows the total number of grand-strategy makers who before and/or after held one or several policy planning network affiliations in, respectively, the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations.

We find that the overwhelming majority of our grand-strategy makers have (had) affiliations to the policy planning network prior to their appointment, with 26 and 25 respectively in the case of Clinton and Obama, and 22 of our selected

**Table 3.3** Policy planning linkers and policy planning affiliations per administration

	<i>Clinton</i>	<i>Bush</i>	<i>Obama</i>
Total	26 (209)	22 (211)	25 (162)
Before	23 (70)	21 (131)	25 (133)
After	24 (139)	21 (80)	15 (29)
Revolving door (before and after)	21	20	15

Sources: data collection by authors.

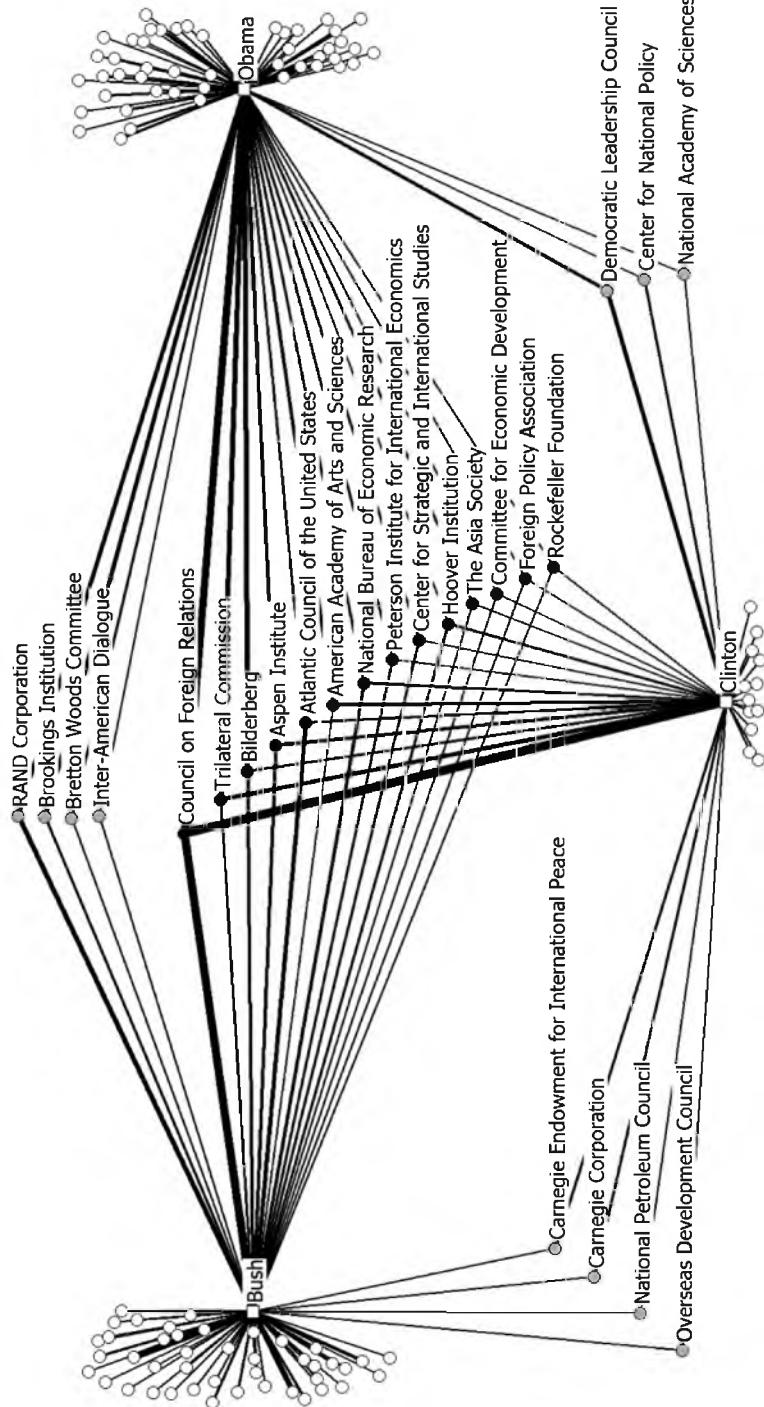
Note

The numbers refer to the number of grand-strategy makers in each administration (out of a total of 30) that held policy planning affiliations either before or after serving in that administration, or both (revolving door). The numbers in parentheses refer to the total number of affiliations held by these grand-strategy makers. Of course, because of the time element these numbers are considerably higher for Clinton, while for Obama the totals “after” are as of yet lower.

officials of the Bush administration, holding respectively 209, 211, and 162 ties to a total of a little more than 300 policy planning bodies. Moreover, around two-thirds of them (as of 2013, naturally still fewer for Obama) rejoin the policy planning network after their stint in government. Indeed, one of the crucial functions of think tanks in America that CFR President Richard N. Haass identifies – in addition to their primary function to generate “new thinking” that affects the way U.S. decision-makers perceive and respond to the world” (Haass, in McGann, 2007: 91) – is that they “help presidents and cabinet secretaries fill these [executive branch] positions” (*ibid.*: 92). In other words, the people that make up the network of elite think tanks are often not just *grand-strategy planners*, but also later become *grand-strategy makers*, being in a position of power from which they can actually implement their ideas. Or, as Joseph Nye, who, among other things, is chair of the North-American Group of the Trilateral Commission and co-chair of the Aspen Strategy Group (see below), once explained: the “most powerful way [to influence public policy] is when you develop ideas with people who then actually go in and have their hands on the lever or you get your own hands on the lever and the ideas are directly related to power” (Conversations with History, 1998).

In [Figure 3.4](#) we present a two-mode network of the policy planning affiliations of all three administrations’ grand-strategy makers. For this analysis only the affiliations that the selected grand-strategy makers had with policy planning institutes *before* assuming their government position were included. The results were clustered per administration in order to make the graph readable, which implies that the individual actors (grand-strategy makers) in this figure are represented by the lines (ties) between the administrations (circles) and the policy planning institutes (squares). The number of actors connected to a particular policy planning body is expressed through “tie strength” – a thicker line thus means that more grand-strategy makers are affiliated with this particular policy-planning institute.

What is revealed in this sociogram is a core network of policy planning bodies to which grand-strategy makers of all three administrations have been,



*Figure 3.4* Shared policy planning networks: Clinton, Bush, Obama (sources: data collection by authors).

Note

The number of ( $\geq 3$ ) ties per policy planning body are as follows: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) (12); Project for the New American Century (PNAC) (10); RAND Corporation (7); American Enterprise Institute (AEI) (7); Atlantic Council of the U.S. (ACUS) (5); Center for Security Policy (4); National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (4); Bilderberg (4); Aspen Institute (4); American Academy of Diplomacy (3); Defense Policy Board (3); Trilateral Commission (3); Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) (3).

and perhaps still are, connected. It also shows that each administration has distinctive networks to which only the grand-strategy makers of the respective administrations have been (and sometimes still are) affiliated; they are not labeled in [Figure 3.4](#), but will be identified and discussed in later chapters. Especially the policy planning institutes that connect all three administrations can be regarded as forming an extensive and solid common source of policy advice and policy planning shared between the different administrations, constituting an enduring platform for the forging of common interests and bridging partisan and (other) ideological divides. It also illustrates that, notwithstanding the wide diversity of an estimated total of 1,984 U.S. think tanks (McGann, 2014: 19) – a high number that is supposed to indicate the “permeable, decentralized and pluralistic nature of the American political culture” (McGann, 2007: 2) – it is only a very small selection of these think tanks that are “winning” this “war of ideas” (*ibid.*), and actually make up the core of the foreign policy establishment. In other words, there might be a plurality of diverse types of think tanks, but only a few actually occupy a central position within an elite network – that is, a position from which they can shape U.S. foreign policy.

### ***The core network: profiling the mainstream of the Open Door***

The core network that we have found can be taken to be among the most important think tanks of the United States, given their (often extensive) and *recurrent* ties to all three post-Cold War administrations’ top foreign-policy makers. [Table 3.4](#) provides the exact numbers of affiliated grand-strategy makers with the core policy planning bodies across the three administrations.

As the sociogram in [Figure 3.4](#) shows, there is substantive overlap in terms of policy planning network affiliations between the three administrations, with many bodies linking two, or in many cases all three, administrations. Indeed, we find the CFR, the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Group, the Aspen Institute, and the Atlantic Council all extensively linked to all three administrations. Strong affiliations shared by Bush and Obama are, for example, the Brookings Institution, RAND Corporation, and the Bretton Woods Committee, whereas Obama and Clinton share multiple affiliations with, principally, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). Bush and Clinton also share a few policy planning affiliations, such as with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Carnegie Corporation.

Below we will provide a brief profile of all centrally connected policy planning bodies that connect at least three grand-strategy makers from either three different administration or from two crossing the party divide (Bush–Obama and Clinton–Bush), leaving the discussion of the one important think tank (the DLC) connecting the Clinton and Obama administrations to [Chapters 4](#) and [6](#). The latter also applies to all non-shared policy planning institutions (the unlabeled white nodes in [Figure 3.4](#), affiliated to only one administration).

*Table 3.4* Shared policy planning bodies: total affiliated grand-strategy makers

<i>Core Policy Planning Institutes</i>	<i>Number of grand-strategy makers</i>	<i>Core Policy Planning Institutes</i>	<i>Number of grand-strategy makers</i>
Council on Foreign Relations	35	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	4
Trilateral Commission	15	The Asia Society	4
Bilderberg	14	Committee for Economic Development	3
RAND Corporation	12	Foreign Policy Association	3
Aspen Institute	12	Center for National Policy	3
Democratic Leadership Council	9	Carnegie Corporation	3
Atlantic Council of the United States	9	Bretton Woods Committee	3
American Academy of Arts and Sciences	9	Rockefeller Foundation	3
National Bureau of Economic Research	9	Inter-American Dialogue	2
Brookings Institution	8	National Academy of Sciences	2
Peterson Institute for International Economics	5	National Petroleum Council	2
Center for Strategic and International Studies	5	Overseas Development Council	2
Hoover Institution	4		

Sources: data collection by authors.

*The Council on Foreign Relations*

The by far most central think tank in our selection, with 35 of our grand-strategy makers having had prior affiliations to it (with yet more connected after their government service) is the CFR, which has been at the heart of U.S. foreign policy establishment since the 1920s. Among our officials with prior ties to the CFR we find President Clinton and his later Treasury secretary Robert Rubin (who is now co-chairman of the CFR); Bush's vice president, Cheney (as director) and his (later) secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice; and Obama's Treasury secretary Timothy Geithner, who was a senior fellow at the CFR. As noted in [Chapter 2](#), the CFR, founded in 1921, was especially influential in the creation of a more globalist consensus during the inter-war debate, definitively moving the United States away from isolationism and toward expansionism and ultimately the creation of a U.S. liberal world order or *Pax Americana*, with the men and few women of the Council also playing a critical role in the post-war planning that this involved (Shoup and Minter, 2004; Parmar, 2004). Key here was its War and Peace Studies project, which current president Richard N. Haass identifies as a "historical juncture" presenting an "exceptional opportunity to inject new thinking into the foreign policy area" (Haass, in McGann, 2007: 91).

Today, the New York-based CFR has about 4,900 members (who must be U.S. citizens) as well 200 corporate members (global TNCs that have joined under its Corporate Program), while around 70 full-time and adjunct fellows make up the core of the actual think tank (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015).<sup>11</sup> As a think tank it produces many dozens of reports, books, and other publications annually, next to publishing its flagship journal *Foreign Affairs*. The fact that CFR's membership base is relatively broad, including basically any one that somewhat belongs to the U.S. foreign policy establishment, underlines its nature as a prestigious powerhouse within the U.S. foreign policy planning network (see note 11). At the same time, while very influential, the CFR can arguably be less seen as an autonomous actor of its own than some of the smaller and more homogeneous think tanks. As such it is more of a platform representing a variety of foreign policy views, ranging from neoconservative to liberal and libertarian, and refraining as an institution from advocating viewpoints of an overtly ideological character. In terms of its overall policy orientation, the CFR can be seen as a central, bipartisan planning body representing the mainstream of Open Door globalism (indeed, in that sense, its apparent ideological heterogeneity must be seen as representing what are still *intra*-elite differences). In the words of its current president, the CFR is particularly adept at taking a convening and non-partisan role, offering policymakers a venue in which to build consensus, which he identifies to be one of the core contributions of think tanks (Haass, in McGann, 2007: 92–3). In spite of its central position, the CFR employed close to 200 research staff (much less than, for instance, Brookings, NBER, and RAND – see below) and had an annual budget of \$31.3 million in 2005 (McGann, 2007: 23, 153).

### The Trilateral Commission and the Bilderberg Group

The next most centrally linked institutions are two quintessential *transnational* planning bodies (van der Pijl, 1984, 1998; Gill, 1990), the *Trilateral Commission* and *Bilderberg Group* (with respectively 15 and 14 ties each to all three administrations – see [Table 3.4](#)). The Trilateral Commission was founded in the early 1970s – with, as noted in [Chapter 2](#), the key role played by the current patriarch of the Rockefeller dynasty (grandson of John D. Rockefeller) and chairman of Chase Manhattan, David Rockefeller – in order to counter the centrifugal forces in the world and a perceived U.S. hegemonic decline, and to better integrate rising economic competitors Europe and Japan into a global order which would remain centered around the United States (Shoup and Minter, 2004: 167–272). Thus, in order to revitalize the liberal world order, Rockefeller, as well as Carter’s later national security adviser Brzezinski (and other men involved – many of whom knew each other from the Bilderberg Conference), deemed it essential to strengthen not only the transatlantic bond, but also the ties with economically rapidly rising Japan, the elites of which had hitherto been little integrated into Western transnational policy planning networks (Gill, 1990: 132–42).<sup>12</sup> While the Trilateral Commission, which increasingly adopted a neo-liberal outlook from the 1980s onwards (*ibid.*: 98–111), was thus arguably crucial in cementing the Open Door interests at a time of intensified economic competition in the world economy, the platform must also today be regarded as vital, given that so many of our selected post-Cold War grand-strategy makers – including for instance Clinton, Cheney, and Geithner – are connected to it, both before and also after their time in government.

The *Bilderberg Group* is another transnational platform that, as detailed in a recent study by Richardson *et al.* (2011), has been key in creating a transnational elite consensus. Given the secrecy surrounding the Bilderberg meetings or conference, and the lack of any public recordings or proceedings, it is hard to assess the content of this consensus, but looking at the relative dominance of American participants at these meetings – to illustrate: in 2012 33 percent were Americans, 49 percent were European, and 18 percent were participants from other countries or members of international organizations<sup>13</sup> – it seems not far-fetched to assume that American or at least transatlantic interests play an important role in shaping this consensus, which thus feeds into liberal U.S.-centered global governance.

### The RAND Corporation

A significant number of ties (12 in total) from both Bush and Obama officials is also found with the *RAND Corporation*, a major policy institute and “government contractor” (Abelson, 2006: 18) focused on national security and defense (technology). The RAND Corporation, established in 1945, originally stemmed from the need in the then War Department to connect military planning to research and development. Today it devotes about 60 percent of its time to conducting research directly for (mostly the) government or for the private sector,

that is – as described by its long-time president and CEO, since 1989, James Thomson: research that the client pays for and will be used “to make a decision that will change policy or practice” (in McGann, 2007: 131). The rest of the time is devoted to initiating research independently and trying to influence policy-makers and the public debate. Of all the planning bodies in our selection, RAND has the largest research staff (a total of 1,100) and in 2005 an annual revenue of \$215 million (*ibid.*: 23, 166).

### *The Aspen Institute and the Aspen Strategy Group*

Another influential and central policy planning body connecting all three administrations (with a total of 12 grand-strategy makers) is the *Aspen Institute*, founded in 1950, with an annual budget of nearly \$70 million, and with perhaps the most extensive base of corporate sponsors (see below). The Aspen Institute has a broader remit than the CFR, as it is also concerned with domestic policies and puts much emphasis on its role in fostering new global elites through its young-leadership programs (Aspen Institute, 2015). Headquartered in Colorado, the very globally oriented Aspen Institute has branches all over the world, from Tokyo to Berlin. Currently, the Aspen Institute has about 20 policy programs, the most prominent of which is the Aspen Strategy Group (ASG). The ASG comprises a group of national security and foreign policy experts focused on providing an input for American grand strategy and indeed most of our 12 connected grand-strategy makers are or have been affiliated with the ASG. Combining free market ideology with national security strategies, the ASG is thus another appropriate platform for the shaping and dissemination of Open Door grand strategic ideas.

### *The Atlantic Council*

The *Atlantic Council*, formed in 1961 and connecting nine of our top policy-makers, is less well known, yet, as Small (1998: 2–3) writes in one of the few studies of the Atlantic Council: “its directors included – and still include – virtually all former secretaries of state and scores of prominent diplomats and industrial leaders,” which, according to him, is partly due to its preference and practice to operate behind the scenes. Next to former top diplomats the leadership also attracts future cabinet ministers, such as in the past Chuck Hagel, who was president of the Atlantic Council before he became defense secretary under Obama and, from our selection, Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell, who were both (honorary) directors before serving as, respectively, national security adviser and secretary of state under Bush 43. The Atlantic Council’s work is aimed in particular at fostering and maintaining strong transatlantic ties, cementing the transatlantic alliance and forming an important source of American foreign policy elite ideas that help to set the agenda of this alliance, underlining the importance of NATO as an instrument of U.S. grand strategy (also since the end of the Cold War, see further in [Chapter 4](#)).

### *The Brookings Institution*

The *Brookings Institution*, which is connected to eight grand-strategy makers of both Bush and Obama, is also one of the “founding fathers” of the American think tank world, established in 1916 and ranked the world’s number one think tank by mainstream think tank expert McGann (2014). While often described as more liberal and left-of-center (Abelson, 2006: 63) its president, Talbott, likes to distinguish the institute “from avowedly liberal (or as they sometimes call themselves ‘progressive’) organizations, as well as equally forthright conservative ones” (Talbott, in McGann, 2007: 83) and instead is committed to what he calls the “premise of open-ended, fact-based research” (*ibid.*) and “not to end up in any particular place on the political spectrum” (*ibid.*: 84). Yet, it is under the cover of this non-partisanship and neutrality that Brookings in the area of foreign policy plays a critical role in reproducing a globalist consensus, favorable to reproducing the Open Door as the key objective of American grand strategy. As Talbott – arguing that the mission of Brookings in the past 90 years has been the “hope to have a constructive impact on the way America governs itself and provides international leadership” – sums up, Brookings scholars have been instrumental in: the birth of the UN and the Marshall Plan in the 1940s and, more recently, “in the wake of 9/11 led the search for more efficient ways of organizing the US government to defend the homeland” (*ibid.*: 82).

### *The Center for Strategic and International Studies*

The *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS), another of our central think tanks connecting four of our senior officials from all three administrations, is ranked America’s number one think tank on defense and national security by McGann (2014). The CSIS defines its task as “to provide strategic insights and bipartisan policy solutions to help decision makers chart a course toward a better world,” and views itself since its founding in 1962 as “dedicated to finding ways to sustain American prominence and prosperity as a force for good in the world” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015), the latter clearly marking the imprint of Open Door U.S. exceptionalism.

### *The Peterson Institute for International Economics*

The *Peterson Institute for International Economics* (PIIE), connected to five grand-strategy makers, was originally the Institute for International Economics but later re-baptized in recognition of its main financier, the billionaire Peter Peterson, former secretary of commerce, and co-founder of private equity giant Blackstone. According to its founding director, C. Fred Bergsten (former Treasury official and leading Trilateral Commission member), the PIIE was created because America’s structural integration into the world economy was deepening, making the U.S. “more dependent on the global economy and less able to dictate its course,” hence the need for a think tank devoted to international economic

issues, which did not exist at the time (Bergsten, 2006: 7–8). George Schulz, then president of Bechtel, had responded that “the only thing wrong with the idea was that it should have come ten years earlier” and that “it will be too successful and the government will want you to do its work for it” (*ibid*). PIIE has a neoliberal orientation and has, according to its website, provided “part of the intellectual foundation” for many of the major trade initiatives of the past decades such the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and other trade liberalization initiatives (Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2015).

### *The Hoover Institution*

The *Hoover Institution* – which is connected to the core network through four grand-strategy makers, some of which took part in both the Clinton and Obama administrations (such as former CEA chair and later special adviser, Laura Tyson) – was set up in 1919 by Herbert Hoover, later thirty-first president of the United States. Its main goals are still guided by Hoover’s ideology of representative government with limited (federal) government intrusion, private enterprise “from which springs initiative and ingenuity” as the base of social and economic systems, peace, personal freedom and safeguards of the American system (Hoover Institution, 2014). While often labeled “conservative” (e.g., McGann, 2007: 25), its director prefers the term “classically liberal,” emphasizing individual freedom economically, politically, and socially (Raisian, in McGann, 2007: 103).

### *Carnegie and Rockefeller*

The *Carnegie Corporation* and the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* – linked to, respectively, three and four of our grand-strategy makers – share their origins as creations of the industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, and are together seen by Parmar (2012) as forming one of the “Big 3” American philanthropic foundations that have been pivotal within what he views as the state–private elite networks through which U.S. globalism has been shaped in the twentieth century. While the Carnegie Corporation uses its corporate wealth for targeted grants funding, e.g., research and policy studies (totaling \$1,108.3 million between 2002 and 2012 – Carnegie Corporation, 2015), the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – funded in part by the Corporation – is more of a think tank proper and can be regarded as America’s oldest foreign affairs think tank, firmly within the mainstream of the Open Door.

The *Rockefeller Foundation*, together with the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, the other of the three traditional powerhouses of philanthro-capitalism (Parmar, 2012: 265), with in 2013 more than \$4 billion of assets under its management (Rockefeller Foundation, 2013), is also connected to all three administrations, with one grand-strategy maker each. Founded by oil and industrial magnate John D. Rockefeller Sr. in 1910 (and governed by members of the Rockefeller family until this day), the Rockefeller Foundation,

like Carnegie, provides a core function in sustaining the policy planning network by means of its substantive funding opportunities and activities. The *Asia Society* (with three ties in our network), was established by another Rockefeller (John D. III) in the 1950s, and for a long time was forced to adopt a rather apolitical profile because of the anti-China sentiment in the U.S. during the Cold War. Today, it is a global center (with branches in both the U.S. and in Asia) dedicated to providing broad education and dissemination of knowledge about the Asian region, and to fostering U.S.–Asian relations, which arguably are becoming of increasing grand strategic importance given the current geo-economic context (see in particular [Chapter 6](#)).

*Foreign Policy Association, Committee for Economic Development, and the Bretton Woods Committee*

The *Foreign Policy Association* is an old institution, founded in 1918 in explicit support of Wilson's 14 points and, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation, "educating public opinion from a liberal-internationalist perspective" (Parmar, 2012: 83), has since then had the specific aim "to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding, and informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy and global issues" (Foreign Policy Association, 2015). The *Committee for Economic Development* (CED) is an organization that since its founding in 1942 has been an important voice of big business (its corporate support includes a long list of U.S. F500 companies), which as such is "proud of its reputation as a group of business and education leaders committed to improving the growth and productivity of the U.S. economy, a freer global trading system, and greater opportunity for all Americans" (Committee for Economic Development, 2015). Although originally supportive of Keynesianism and the kind of organized capitalism that also became dominant in the United States in the wake of the New Deal, its policy orientation shifted toward neoliberalism from the 1970s onwards (Kotz, 2015: 72–3). The *Bretton Woods Committee*, an affiliation shared between the Obama and the Bush administrations, was established in the early 1980s by the then U.S. secretary and deputy secretary of Treasury, which has as its goal to promote the activities of (American-dominated global) financial institutions – the so-called "Bretton Woods institutions," i.e., the IMF, World Bank – and to create public awareness about the alleged positive contributions of these institutions which, of course, have been crucial in underpinning America's hegemonic (financial) position in the global political economy and still form the key institutional infrastructure to maintain that position, especially in light of possible contenders such as the BRICs.

The above has shown how the grand-strategy makers of the three latest post-Cold War administrations have established strongly overlapping networks of policy-planning bodies, an extensive core that we maintain accounts for much of the continuity in terms of what we have identified as the Open Door worldview. The strong interlocks with the corporate community that we will discuss below lends further support to this conclusion.

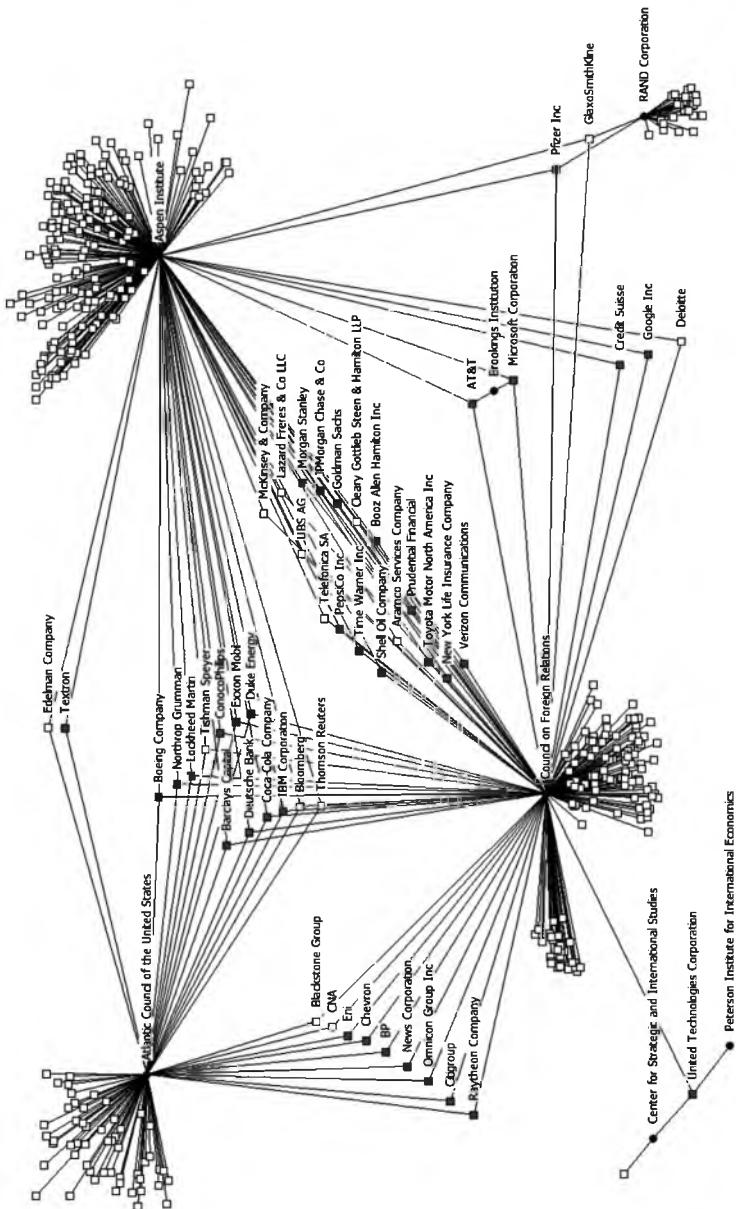
### ***Corporate elites and the policy planning network: funding and personal interlocks***

Building further on the scholarly tradition of power structure research, we will now investigate the connections between the policy planning bodies that are central to our selection of grand-strategy makers (see above) and the corporate community. We do this in two ways. First, by a mapping of the corporate funding of (a selection of) these policy planning institutes. Here it should be noted that with limited data availability – as some policy-planning bodies disclose none or only partial and not very specific funding information on the sources of their funding (such as the Brookings Institution and the Center for Strategic and International Studies) – we can only provide a partial picture, but one that – especially as it concerns the most central think tanks in our network – will be insightful enough. Our primary data sources were the annual reports and websites of the policy planning institutes themselves, combined with databases such as the Bridge Project (Conservative Transparency, 2015). As a second important manifestation of corporate involvement, we will examine the extent of corporate interlocks of the current directors and trustees of this central policy planning network. Our argument here is – analogous to our general argument regarding the grand-strategy makers – that membership of the corporate elite colors the worldview and perceived interests of these actors, hence this will also influence the way they will govern the policymaking institutes that they are affiliated with.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 3.5 shows the corporate funders of Aspen, CFR, RAND, and the Atlantic Council, which are the four most extensively and centrally connected (i.e., to all three administrations) national policy planning bodies (and for which we have complete data). The CSIS, PIIE, and Brookings are included here as well, but unfortunately only partially disclose their sources of funding. For the sake of comprehension and readability, this graph only provides the labels of companies that fund at least two policy planning institutes; in other words, it shows the “inner circle” of corporate funders (cf. Useem, 1984).<sup>15</sup>

A first observation that can be made is the dominance of transnational capital within this inner circle: of the 49 major corporations, 33 had an F500 notation or a G500 notation, and two had a F1000 notation; together that is more than 70 percent. Second, we find a rather evenly dispersed and diverse representation of different sectors within each of the bigger “clusters” of companies: finance, energy, defense, media, entertainment, and technology.

Third, the network reveals that while Aspen, CFR, and the Atlantic Council share many corporate funders, RAND corporation has only two shared corporate funders with Aspen and the CFR. This might have to do with a more explicitly defense-oriented character of RAND, which might therefore attract a particular type of funder. It also probably relates to the fact that, as Abelson documents, RAND receives the majority of its more than \$200 million annual budget from Pentagon contracts, and thus while being one of the most well-resourced think tanks in terms of its total budget, it relies less on private funding (see Abelson,



*Figure 3.5* Corporate funders of core policy planning bodies (sources: data collection by authors).

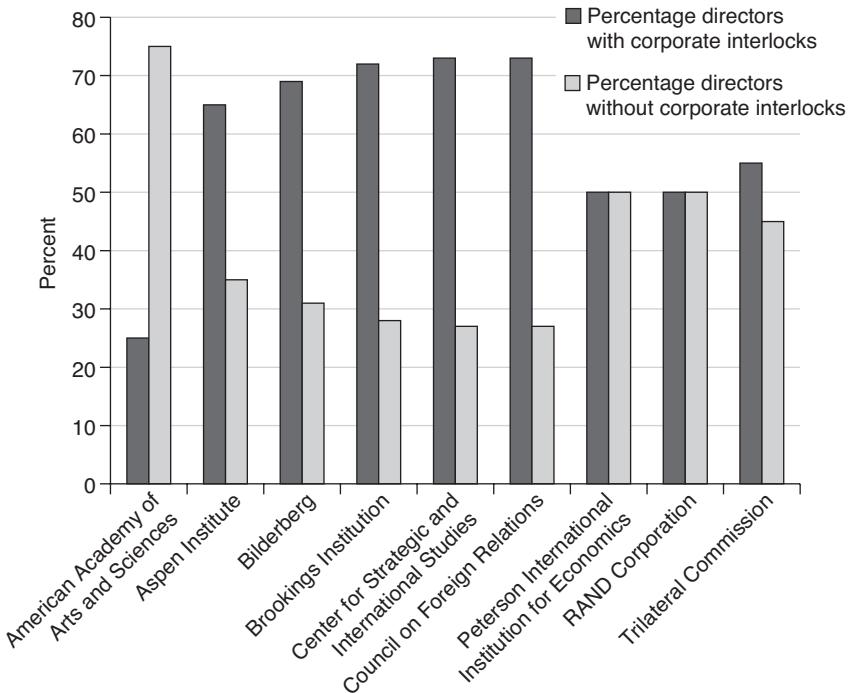
Note  
Gray nodes are F500/G500/F1000 notated firms.

2006: 75). Looking at the identities of these firms, we find a collection of the icons of transnationally oriented corporate America, representing both financial and non-financial capital, with ExxonMobil, Coca-Cola Company, IBM, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Time Warner, Google, Booz Allen, McKinsey, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, to name a few. The fact that we also find non-U.S. domiciled TNCs here, such as Shell, BP, Deutsche Bank, ENI, Telefonica SA, and Credit Suisse, indicates the presence of transatlantic – and globally oriented capital – interests, embedded in the U.S. foreign policy planning network that we have identified here. We also find many of the same firms here that we have earlier seen to be recurrently connected to America's top grand-strategy makers over the past decades (see [Figure 3.3](#)).

While we cannot – on the basis of these aggregate data – claim any direct causality between the interests of these corporations and the policy advice and ideas convened in these policy planning bodies, it is unlikely to be the case that the funding these firms provide is not motivated by clear interests. As Ferguson (1995: 355) has argued in his study of America's money-driven political system, in "politics you get what you pay for." According to Ferguson, with empirical support drawn from several historical case studies, "blocs of major investors" – through, among other means, campaign contributions – "coalesce to advance candidates representing their interests" (*ibid.*: 27) and thus dominate the U.S. system of party competition. In other words the investment (of supporting particular candidates) is a rational one because large corporations and wealthy individuals know that it generally pays off. A similar pay-off can be expected from corporations funding think tanks and the like. Although more detailed empirical research would be needed to substantiate this claim (which falls outside the scope of this book), the ideological profiles of our central policy planning bodies as provided above, and the more detailed analyses following in the next chapters of how grand-strategy planners within our network of state officials helped to reproduce an Open Door imperialism congruent with the long-term interests of U.S. transnational capital, do strongly point to the causal significance of corporate funding of think tanks.

Furthermore, the nexus between the policy planning world and the corporate community also takes a direct personal form, through corporate interlocks of the directors and/or trustees of these policy planning institutes.<sup>16</sup> [Figure 3.6](#) shows the total number of directors or trustees with and without a corporate affiliation for a selection of the most extensively connected policy planning bodies (expressed in percentages in order to compensate for the varying size of the boards).

We see that with the exception of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (which is unsurprising given its more explicit academic profile) all of these central policy planning bodies had at least half of their boards composed of directors or trustees with simultaneous corporate interlocks. In the case of Aspen, CFR, Brookings, CSIS, and Bilderberg, the share of directors or trustees with corporate membership even ranges around 70 percent. Combined, more than half of the directors and trustees governing the policy planning institutes that have



*Figure 3.6* Corporate interlocks of core policy planning bodies' directors (sources: data collection by authors).

been central to the last three post-Cold War administrations are thus closely affiliated with the corporate community through their simultaneous corporate board memberships. These directors connect to a total of 318 different companies (see [Table 3.5](#) for the most closely connected firms). In other words, we find that a substantial number of these directors are – as is the case for the grand-strategy makers themselves – *part of the corporate elite while directing the policy planning process*.<sup>17</sup>

Next, we will see how these corporate interlocks of the policy planning directors are configured ([Figure 3.7](#)). For this overview all the (current) corporate affiliations of each individual director have been clustered per policy planning institute. In this two-mode network the ties (lines) between companies and policy planning bodies represent the people (directors) connecting them, and the tie strength indicates the number of directors linking the firm to that particular policy planning institute through such an “interlocking directorate” (i.e., one or more persons holding simultaneous board memberships in the respective organizations). In [Figure 3.7](#), as earlier, only the companies that connect at least two different policy planning institutes have been labeled, in order to make the graph readable.

**Table 3.5** Selection of  $\geq 2$  linked corporations

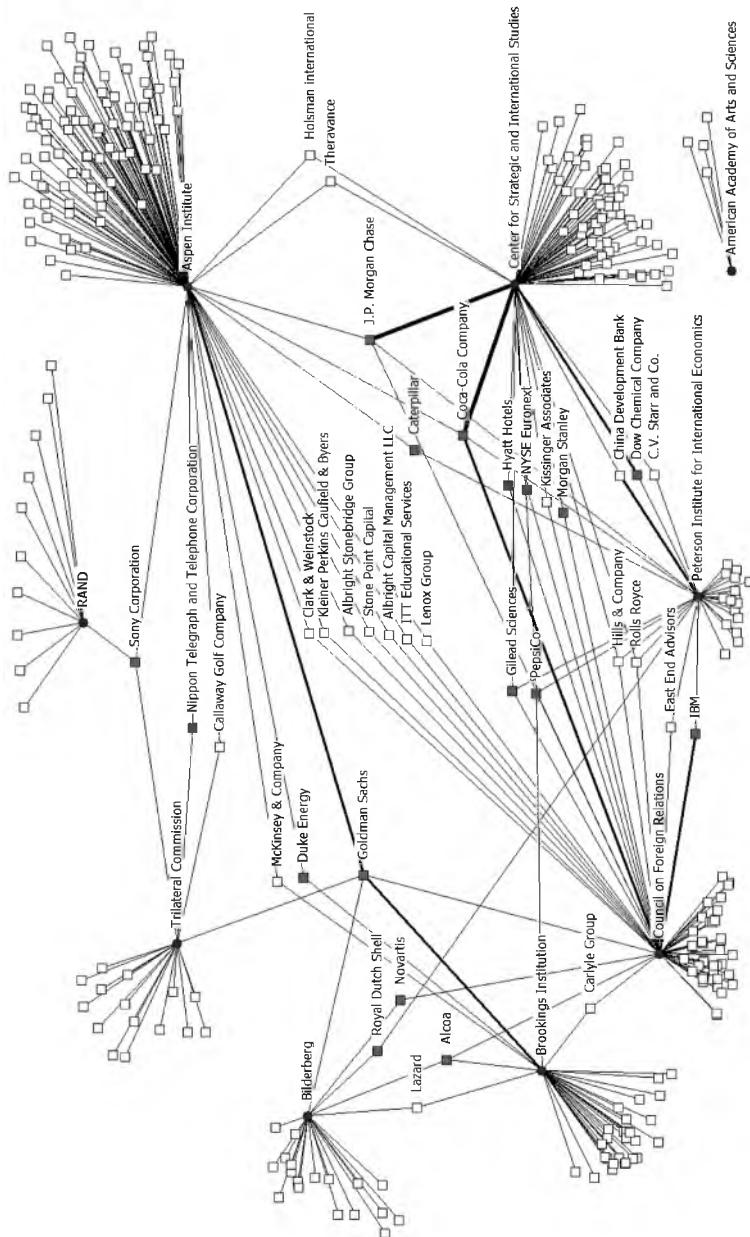
Firms	No. affiliated PP-Directors	F500/G500*/F1000**
Goldman Sachs	7	80
PepsiCo	4	41
J.P. Morgan Chase	4	16
Coca-Cola Company	3	95
Dow Chemical Company	3	47
IBM	3	19
Sony Corporation	3	87*
Royal Dutch Shell	2	1*
Blackstone Group	2	657**
Morgan Stanley	2	68
McKinsey & Company	2	—
Novartis	2	157*
United Airlines	2	76
NYSE Euronext	2	519**
China Development Bank	2	—
Alcoa	2	115
Caterpillar	2	46
Callaway Golf Company	2	—
Hyatt Hotels	2	600**
Kissinger Associates	2	—
Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers	2	—

Sources: data collection by authors.

What does appear from the network presented in [Figure 3.7](#) is again a substantial presence of transnationally oriented capital: 17 out of the 38 companies have a F500, F1000, or G500 notation (those nodes are colored gray in the graph). Also, it is interesting to see that all these central policy planning institutes are connected through one or several interlocking directorates, while again RAND only has one connection (to Aspen and the Trilateral Commission), and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has none.

A more precise indication of the extent of interlocking and of the presence of transnationally oriented capital can be found when looking more closely at the companies that are linked by two or more directors. As [Table 3.5](#) shows, we here find a selection of major American TNCs such as Coca-Cola Company, IBM, and Alcoa, but again also non-American TNCs such as Shell and Sony, as well as financial giants such as Goldman Sachs (with the most (seven) affiliated directors by far) and J.P. Morgan Chase. Many of these companies, as we have seen, were also central in the corporate elite networks of the grand-strategy makers themselves.

Within this selection of the most extensively connected companies to the central policy planning bodies, we also get a clearer picture of the dominance of transnational capital – both U.S. and non-U.S. Almost all of these companies had a F500/F1000 notation in 2012, and more than half of them within the respective top 100 (three of them belonged to the G500). Moreover, we find a



*Figure 3.7* Corporate affiliations of core policy planning bodies' directors (sources: data collection by authors).

selection of major corporate law firms which, as discussed earlier, most often provide their services to transnational capital. Finally, it is worth mentioning that we find the China Development Bank among these companies. While being just one example, this might be an indication of how the U.S. corporate and policy planning elite is starting to reach out to Chinese transnational capital and it could be expected that we will find more such examples in the future (see also de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, forthcoming).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have further conceptualized and operationalized the role of corporate elites in U.S. grand-strategy making, elaborated our dataset and data collection, and described the methods employed in this study, with a particular focus on Social Network Analysis. We have found that in spite of the often extensive governmental career paths, the majority of our selected grand-strategy makers built impressive corporate careers as well. The mapping of those corporate affiliations revealed that a total of 75 grand-strategy makers out of our full selection (i.e., 87 percent) had corporate affiliations to a wide variety of sectors – but with finance and law and consultancy and overall transnationally oriented capital predominating. Moreover, about half of them returned to the corporate community after their service in government.

Our analysis of the network of policy planning affiliations showed a core network of think tanks and planning bodies – such as the CFR, the Aspen Institute, and the Trilateral Commission – that connect all three administrations. All of these, we have argued, can be seen as promulgating ideas and advocating policies that largely fall within the mainstream of the Open Door ideology – an elite consensus that also must be interpreted in light of the fact that both at the level of governance and in terms of their funding these leading foreign policy think tanks are strongly linked to the same transnationally oriented segment of U.S. capital (and of the same F500 firms) that we have found in our analysis of the corporate affiliations. Indeed, our findings with regard to both the corporate and policy planning affiliations – and the revolving door between them and the federal government – indicate how U.S. key grand-strategy makers are not only closely linked to the corporate elite through all kinds of (in)direct ties but are in fact *an integral part of the corporate elite* – as we have defined it in this study.

The fact that so many of the key people involved in formulating American grand strategy have been actively working for the interests of U.S. transnational capital prior to their governmental appointment must be seen, we contend, as important in explaining the particular content of the grand strategy, the main goals of which are well attuned to the promotion and maintenance of the interests of U.S. transnationally oriented capital. To reiterate, we do not claim or believe that grand-strategy makers while in office are actively pursuing narrow business interests (although there are cases in which this does happen), but that their corporate elite membership – often extending after their governmental service – and with that the more general interests of U.S. transnational capital,

must be seen to color their worldview and concomitant values, beliefs, and interests, and thus also the grand strategy they envisage.<sup>18</sup> It is this claim that we will seek to substantiate with regard to the grand-strategy makers of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations, respectively, by analyzing their actual grand-strategy making and analyzing the content of the grand strategy thus produced.

Next to the strong continuities across the administrations, our analysis of the policy planning networks also shows that alongside the important common core, all three administrations are also connected to their own distinctive selection of policy planning bodies. In the following chapters we will analyze how, following our model outlined in [Chapter 1](#), the varying policy planning ties of each administration can – in conjunction with an analysis of the changing global context and mediated by the legacies of the preceding grand strategy – help us to account for the variation in grand strategy between Clinton, Bush, and Obama. While the preceding grand strategy initially has to be taken as a given by any incoming administration, the policy planning affiliations give us an indication of how different groups of actors – which are all part of similarly configured corporate networks – have differently interpreted a changing structural context. We argue that these differences must be regarded as *intra*-elite differences in as much as these distinctive policy planning bodies are still – through the same set of grand-strategy makers – connected to the corporate elite-dominated networks analyzed in this chapter. Moreover, as we shall see in several prominent instances, the think tanks that are only tied to one administration are generally also closely interlocked with the corporate community.

In sum, it is now time to analyze the continuity and variation in American grand strategy during the three post-Cold War presidencies by applying our model as developed in [Chapter 1](#), informed by our perspective on the historical continuity of U.S. grand strategy and its underlying worldview as outlined in [Chapter 2](#), and drawing upon the dataset (Social Network Analysis) presented in this chapter.

## Notes

- 1 In the case of the Bush administration, the third senior adviser was not appointed at the time (2001) and has thus been left out since we have aimed to keep the comparison between the three different administrations as congruent as possible. This then means that for Bush we have selected a total of 29 rather than 30 grand-strategy makers.
- 2 In fact most of the found corporate affiliations were at this level. We have excluded more ad-hoc affiliations such as when a person was hired for a consultancy for a particular corporation once or twice or is mentioned to have had more informal relations. We also did not include ownership data, which – although very interesting – would require a systematic enquiry into the shareholdings of the grand-strategy makers and indicate a different kind of corporate influence.
- 3 Incidental or more indirect affiliations such as ad-hoc events or participation were not included. The only exception in this respect was made for the Bilderberg Group, in which case we did include participants, since arguably, it is precisely the participation in the annual meeting of Bilderberg that constitutes the core of its policymaking influence.

- 4 The National Security Strategies are regarded key foreign policy documents of the respective administrations, since arguably the National Security Strategies are the most comprehensive public statements of U.S. grand strategy.
- 5 Federal state positions are here defined as including all high-level positions (appointed by the president) within the federal administration at cabinet and sub-cabinet level, down to level IV in the so-called U.S. Executive Schedule, which include positions such as assistant secretary and deputy undersecretary. Further included are all White House advisers/officials within comparable pay scales (within, for instance, the National Security Council). We have furthermore also included CIA directors (though appointed by the president part of the federal executive but not of the administration) because we have also included this position in our selection of 25 core grand-strategy makers.
- 6 Although we consulted many different sources – see the methods section – it is still likely that we missed several of them. These figures are thus probably an underestimation, especially the further one goes back in time (i.e., for the Clinton administration). In addition, note that if someone held several positions consecutively *within* the same company and/or a subsidiary, we have counted these as one corporate affiliation only.
- 7 In the case of Bush actually out of 29, rather than 30, see note 1.
- 8 The exact categories are: Financial (banks, insurance, real estate, diversified); Law firms, Consultancy and Lobbyists; Technology (information technology, telecommunication, electronics); Defense (including aerospace companies with a significant defense division); Energy (extractive industries/natural resources); Media and Marketing; Transportation, Manufacturing, and Construction; and Other Consumer Goods & Services (pharmaceuticals, food, retail, and miscellaneous). Any categorization implies a violation of the complexities of social empirical reality, and sometimes it was impossible to fit companies into one appropriate category, in particular given that many of these firms are transnational giants specializing in a broad range of products and services. Just as an example, some technology firms clearly produce defense-related products and services, but categorizing these as defense firms would not be appropriate, which is why in these cases we have opted to code them as technology firms even if their application is wider and also involves other sectors (such as defense).
- 9 In a few cases we took the F1000 notation, since these have been included in these listings since 2008, and for a few corporations, which are essentially global in orientation, we used the G500 notation.
- 10 One note of caution with respect to the interpretation of this network, however, is that the links do not necessarily mean that there is a direct connection between the actors, since it could very well be that the affiliations took place at different points in time. Thus, although the ties that are connecting the firms through individuals might sometimes be indications of so-called “interlocking directorates,” this is not necessarily the case.
- 11 Obviously, the large membership of the CFR in part explains why it is the most central think tank in our network. On the other hand it must be pointed out that almost half (at least 16) of the affiliated were not mere ordinary members but directors or (senior) fellows of the CFR.
- 12 A follow-up study to Gill’s on the workings and impact of the Trilateral commission, its position within the U.S. elite establishment, and how it is coping with the new emerging contenders, in particular China, would in that sense fill an important gap in the current state of the art.
- 13 Calculated from Bilderberg participant list 2012.
- 14 Here we thus applied the same data collection method as described earlier (see method subsection).
- 15 Useem defined as the “inner circle” those directors that serve at two or more large corporate boards (1984: 64).

- 16 It should be noted that we have here only included self-reported corporate affiliations on the respective policy planning institute website, which is an underestimation of the actual number of corporate affiliations and might be biased toward more prominent affiliations such as executive function, while non-executive functions might be under-reported. Also we only included current corporate affiliations. Although inclusion of past corporate affiliations would have increased the numbers substantially, current corporate affiliations are a more direct indication of corporate elite membership and of a concomitant diffusion and coalescing of corporate elite interests and worldview.
- 17 The fact that the American Academy does not conform to this pattern is not unexpected, given its more explicit academic profile.
- 18 In other words, we maintain that should we have found that a considerable share of the grand-strategy makers would have been connected to, for instance, small businesses, farmers, or actively involved in the protection of environmental preservation or labor right organizations, this would, in our view, certainly have implied a different effect on content of the grand strategy devised by these people.

## 4 American grand strategy after the Cold War

### Clinton’s grand-strategy makers and neoliberal globalization

Having mapped and analyzed the (corporate) elite networks in which the grand-strategy makers of the three post-Cold War administrations have been embedded in the preceding chapter, we pick up our narrative from [Chapter 2](#) by examining how the first post-Cold War president and his team sought to make use of the opportunity that was offered by the collapse of the Soviet Union to prolong and indeed intensify the third, neoliberal, wave of non-territorial expansionism that had already set in following the 1970s recessions under Reagan. Steeped into the Wilsonian tradition of liberal internationalism of not only the Democratic Party but also more broadly American twentieth-century foreign policy (see [Chapter 2](#)), and influenced by those forces within the (Democratic) foreign policy establishment that favored both a hawkish and assertive foreign policy as well as an unequivocal commitment to opening and deepening global markets, Clinton, this chapter will argue, embarked upon what we will call a grand strategy of neoliberal globalization in which the global Open Door was not only defended but indeed expanded into former enemy territory.

In terms of means, this renewed and intensified round of expansionism – seeking to, in the words of Clinton’s grand-strategy makers “enlarge the community of market economies” involved a mix of instruments of multilateral governance and, increasingly, the unilateral use of force. In line with our theoretical framework as elaborated in [Chapter 1](#), we will explain this particular variety of America’s liberal (non-territorial) expansionism by analyzing both the continuity in elite networks in shaping grand-strategy makers’ worldview as well as the variation in this respect with regard to specific policy planning bodies and concomitant ideas that we can link to the Clinton administration, on the one hand, and analyzing the changing global context, as interpreted by the leading grand-strategy planners and grand-strategy makers, on the other.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, we will zoom in on the (prior) state, corporate, and policy planning affiliations of Clinton’s selected 30 grand-strategy makers and analyze in detail how these ties both resemble and deviate from the general patterns as observed in the previous chapter. We will provide a profile both of the respective networks as well as of key grand-strategy makers. The second section will elaborate the global context within and toward which the Clinton administration came to formulate its grand strategy at the time

Clinton entered the White House. Here we will emphasize how the end of the Cold War above all offered an opportunity for unprecedented expansionism. The third section will show how the ideology and foreign policy discourse underpinning this grand strategy reproduced the long-standing Open Door worldview, but with a particular (neoliberal) twist involving an all-out embrace of and push for a U.S.-centered globalization. This, then, became the new mission for the new unipole. The fourth section will identify and analyze, set within an ongoing changing context, the main elements of the evolving grand strategy of neoliberal globalization.

## **Clinton's grand-strategy makers**

Zooming in on the Clinton administration within the data presented and analyzed in the preceding chapter, we will now provide a profile of President Clinton and his grand-strategy makers and their social networks. We will first take a closer look at the president and the vice president, and subsequently map and analyze ties to previous administrations, the corporate world, and the policy planning world, respectively.

### ***President Clinton***

Although William J. ("Bill") Clinton (b. 1946) was of a modest (lower-middle class) family background, with his stepfather running the parts department of his brother's car dealership (Warshaw, 2005: 184; Halberstam, 2003: 104), he managed to move upward by winning a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University, an important instrument of elite recruitment and socialization (Schaeper and Schaeper, 2010; within our selection of 30 Clinton officials there were three other Rhodes scholars: Reich, Stephanopoulos, and Woolsey). After Oxford, Clinton returned to the United States to attend Yale Law School, one of the so-called Ivy League elite law schools, and in 1978 became governor of Arkansas. When he lost the election in 1980 he came to work, first as an attorney and then also as a member counsel for Wright, Lindsey and Jennings, a growing Arkansas law firm which served America's largest corporations such as AT&T, Ford and General Electric (Morris, 1996: 268). One of the firm's senior partners, Bruce Lindsey, would later become one of Clinton's senior advisers in the White House (and is included within our selection). Being primarily interested in a political career, Clinton mainly used the office to regain the governorship (*ibid.*: 269), which he did in 1982, becoming the country's longest serving governor until he ran for president (Warshaw, 2005: 81).

Although governor of only a small state, Clinton, before he became a candidate for the White House, had gained some prominence in the Democratic Party as one of the leading so-called New Democrats. This group within the Democratic Party – whose members centered around the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), of which Clinton became chair in 1990 – promoted a centrist, pro-big business orientation of the party, moving it away from a more leftist

liberalism. The DLC, founded in 1985, also played a key role in recruiting and launching Bill Clinton as a presidential candidate (From, 2013 see also Baer, 2000: 161–5).<sup>1</sup> During the primaries it was through the DLC that Clinton secured critical financial backing from Wall Street (Baer, 2000: 195).

Next to moving the Democratic Party to the right on economic issues, the DLC also played an active role in promoting American globalism, seeking, after having been out of power since the not so successful Carter presidency and in the wake of the Vietnam legacy, to “pull the Democratic Party back toward a more assertive foreign policy” (Mann, 2012: 27). In this vein, Clinton, like other New Democrats, went against a majority of his party by supporting the 1991 Gulf War (Halberstam, 2003: 107). Making up to an extent for his own inexperience in foreign policy, Clinton, like that other Southern governor (Carter), was partly exposed to and socialized within global (but U.S. dominated) elite circles through his membership of the Trilateral Commission (TC), and as an attendee of the Bilderberg conference.

Another co-founder of the DLC was Clinton’s vice president, Al Gore, who had had a long career in politics; first, since 1976 as U.S. congressman, and then, from 1985, as U.S. senator. The son of a former senator (also from Tennessee), Harvard graduate Gore specialized, among others, in the areas of arms control and defense, and became a leading member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Senator Gore was known to be one of the most hawkish members of the Democratic Party, who during his time in Congress had consistently opposed defense cuts, supported the Reagan’s administration’s aid to the contras, as well as the invasion of Grenada and the 1986 bombing of Libya, and belonged to the minority of Democratic senators who voted for the Gulf War (Harvey, 2011: 47; see also Halberstam, 2003: 158).

### ***Governmental career paths***

With the election of Clinton the Democrats returned to the White House after 12 years. As we can read from [Figure 4.1](#), seven of our 30 selected grand-strategy makers had also served in the Carter administration. Most prominent among these were Clinton’s UN ambassador and later secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and Obama’s first secretary of state, Warren Christopher. Albright served as congressional liaison on his National Security Council, while Christopher was deputy secretary of state under Carter.

There are a few connections with Republican administrations as well, among which is Clinton’s national security adviser, Anthony Lake, who served on Nixon’s National Security Council (as well as on Carter’s) but resigned over the latter’s expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia (Halberstam, 2003: 184–5). Having served in two previous administrations (even if not at a very high level), and before as a foreign service officer in Vietnam, Lake can in fact be seen as one of the more experienced members of Clinton’s 1993 team, according to one observer “one of the few surviving Democratic gurus in the world of foreign policy” (*ibid.*: 20). Richard Clarke, who was special adviser to

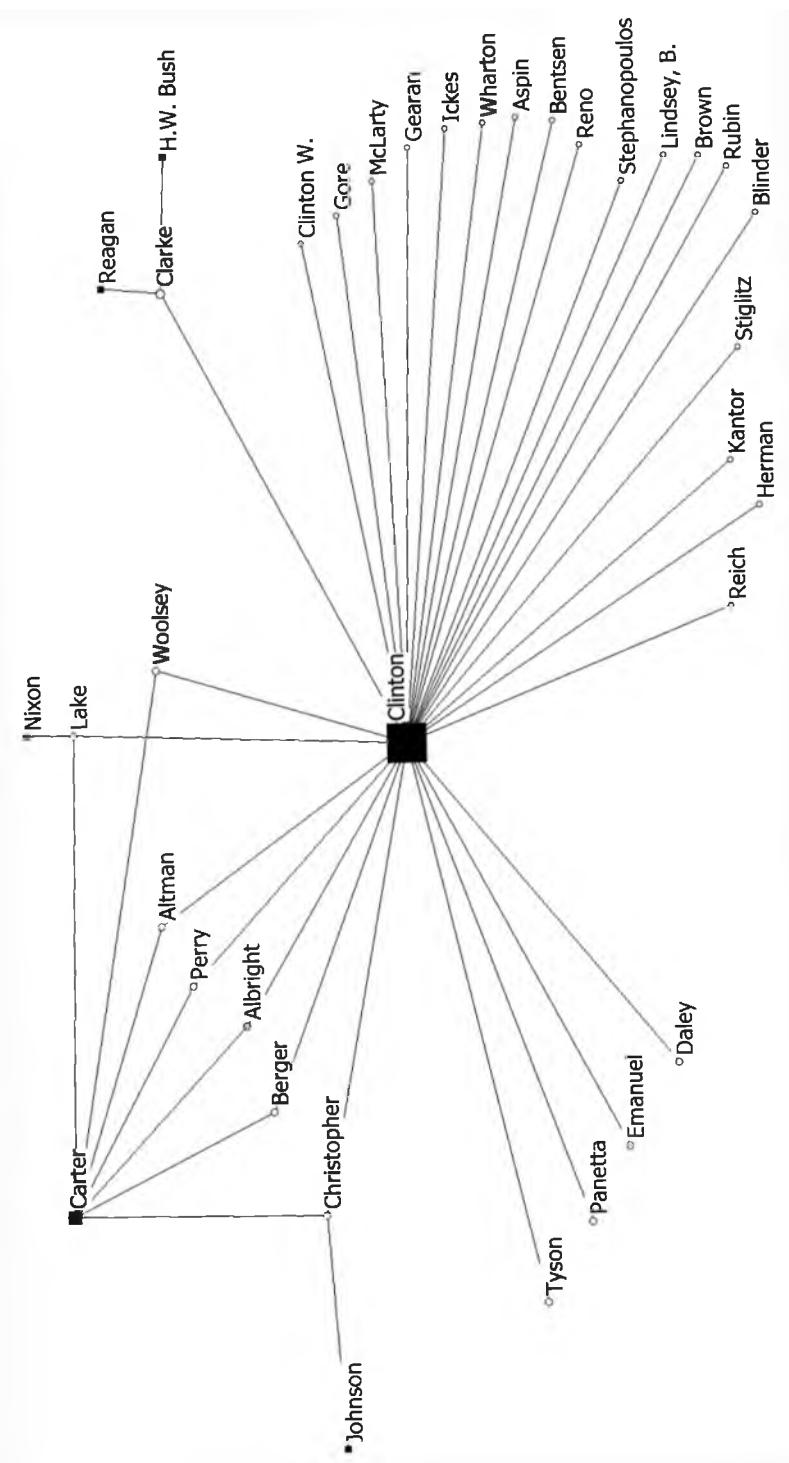


Figure 4.1 Career paths in previous U.S. administrations: Clinton (sources: data collection by authors).

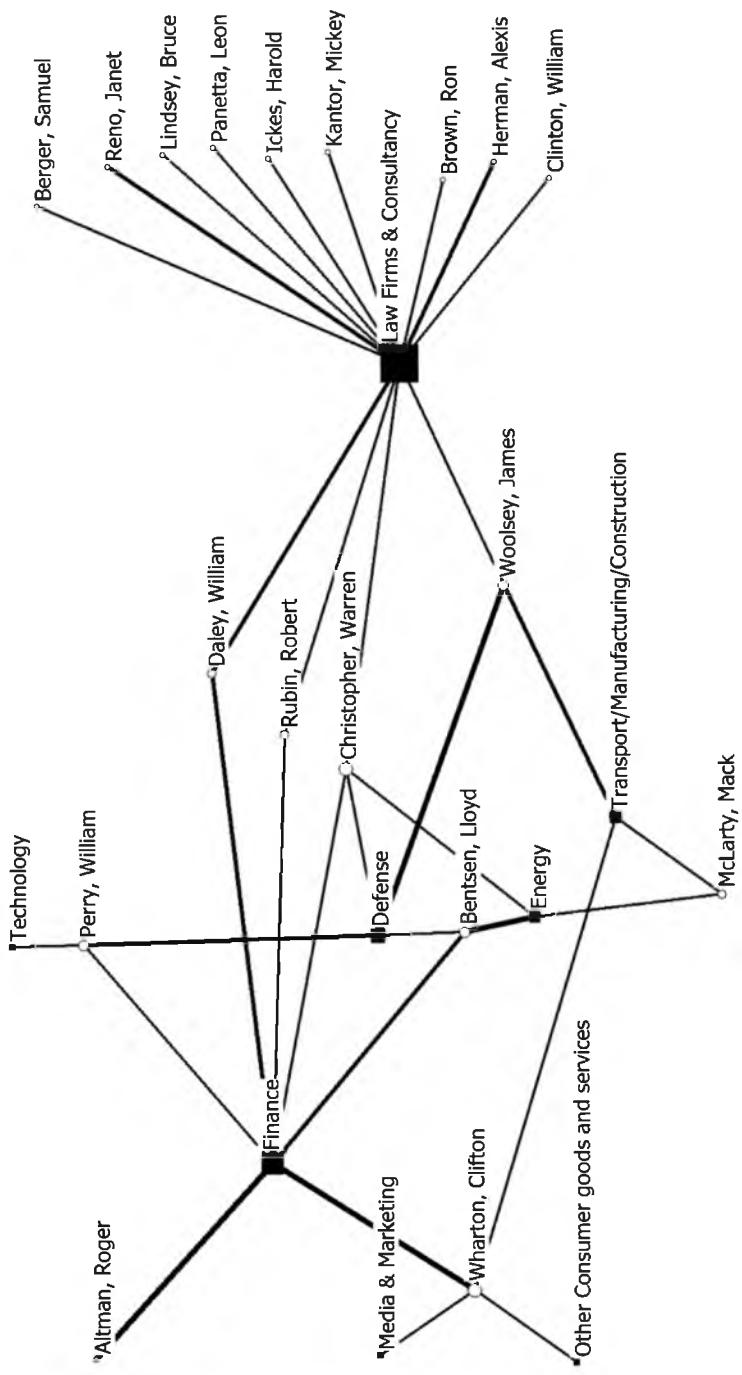
Clinton and his counter-terrorism adviser on the National Security Council from 1993 onwards, had a similar role during the G.W. Bush administration (not shown here since we only show prior affiliations), and served as assistant secretary of state under Bush 41.

After this brief sketch of Clinton's grand-strategy makers' governmental career paths we move through the revolving door to look at their corporate careers.

### ***The corporate network***

As we have seen in the previous chapter, over half of our selection of Clinton's grand-strategy makers had prior corporate positions, a grand total of 48, representing all sectors as identified by us (see also [Figure 4.2](#)). Yet, as in the Obama administration, but more pronounced, there is a clear dominance of ties with law and consultancy firms (with 16 out of the total of 48 affiliations), and, to a lesser extent, of finance (13 ties), with defense coming in third with seven ties. Within the law/consultancy sector, we mostly find ties to big (corporate) law firms (a total of 14, with the remaining two consultancy firms set up by Alexis Herman). An example here is Christopher, who was a partner at the leading international L.A. law firm O'Melveny & Myers, and also sat on the board of directors of major corporations including Lockheed, and with these ties (four in total) is one of the bigger corporate linkers – in terms of *prior* affiliations – within the Clinton network. As we can see in [Figures 4.2](#) and [4.3](#), the biggest corporate linkers (each with six prior links) among the selected grand-strategy makers are, however, Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton, and CIA Director James Woolsey. The latter was a so-called neoconservative Democrat and was in part chosen for that reason, “to broaden his [Clinton's] team politically,” but his tenure (until 1995) was not a very successful one as he did not fit well into the team (Halberstam, 2003: 191). Woolsey would later become a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board under G.W. Bush (see further in [Chapter 5](#)).

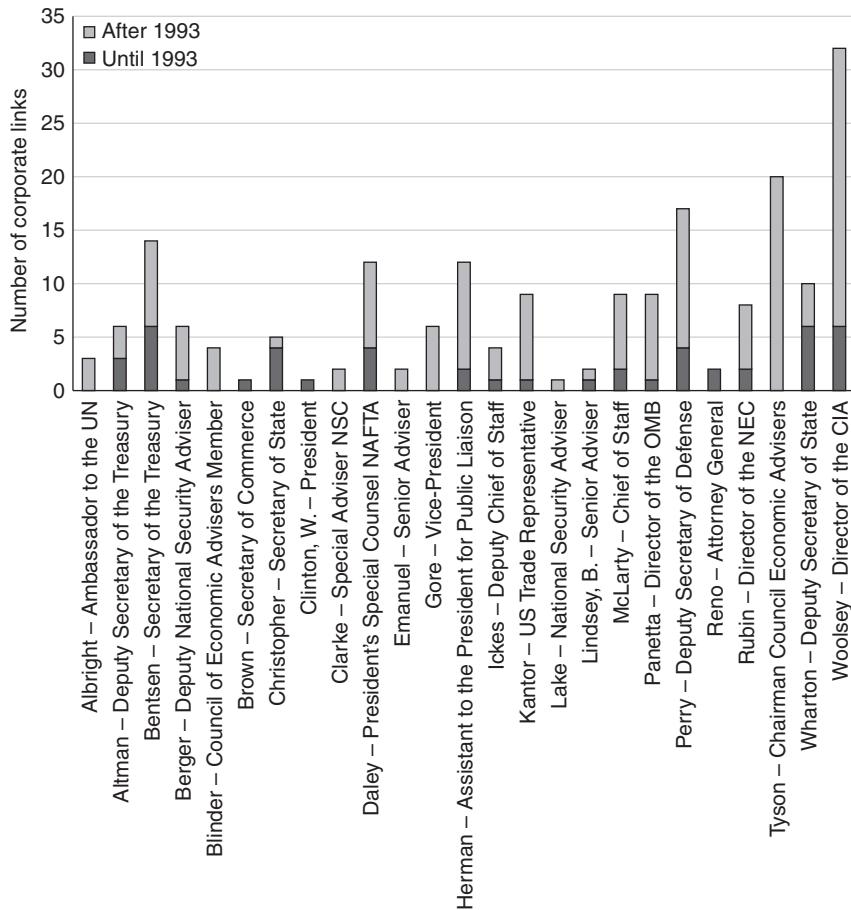
As founder and president of a major insurance company (Lincoln Liberty Life), Bentsen was above all linked to the other prominent sector, finance, although he also had several directorships within the energy sector as well as one within defense, linking three sectors. Bentsen's deputy, Roger Altman, also hailed from the financial sector, having been vice president of Blackstone Group (and before that partner of Lehman Brothers). Although not a big corporate linker in terms of number of ties within Clinton's economic team, we must especially mention Bentsen's successor at the Treasury, Robert Rubin, whom Clinton appointed as director of the newly created National Economic Council (NEC), which was intended as a counterpart to the National Security Council, and indicative of the new post-Cold War focus on economic policy and “geo-economics” next to geopolitics. Rubin was a leading Wall Street investment banker as senior partner and co-chairman of the most powerful investment bank, Goldman Sachs. As Michael Hirsch (2010: 3) has argued, Wall Street had given Rubin both his



*Figure 4.2* Sectoral clustering of corporate affiliations: Clinton (sources: data collection by authors).

Note

Totals per sector: law firms/consultancy (16), finance (13), defense (7), energy (5), transport/manufacturing/construction (4), technology (1), media/marketing (1), other consumer goods and services (1).



*Figure 4.3* The revolving door of Clinton's grand-strategy makers (sources: data collection by authors).

fortune and his worldview. Serving until 1999, first as NEC director and then from 1995 as Treasury secretary, Rubin became one of the most dominating figures of the Clinton administration, and the central player within the realm of economic policymaking, including foreign economic policy (Dumbrell, 2009: 54; Warshaw, 2005: 284–5; Cohan, 2012), so much so that “Rubinomics” became a common term to describe the Clinton administration’s economic philosophy (Hirsch, 2010: ch. 4). We may conclude, then, that the most important positions within Clinton’s economic team were occupied by members of the corporate elite. The same applies to key positions within foreign policy and national security.

Other notable cross-sectoral linkers (each with ties to three or four different sectors) are the aforementioned Christopher, Wharton, and Woolsey. Woolsey

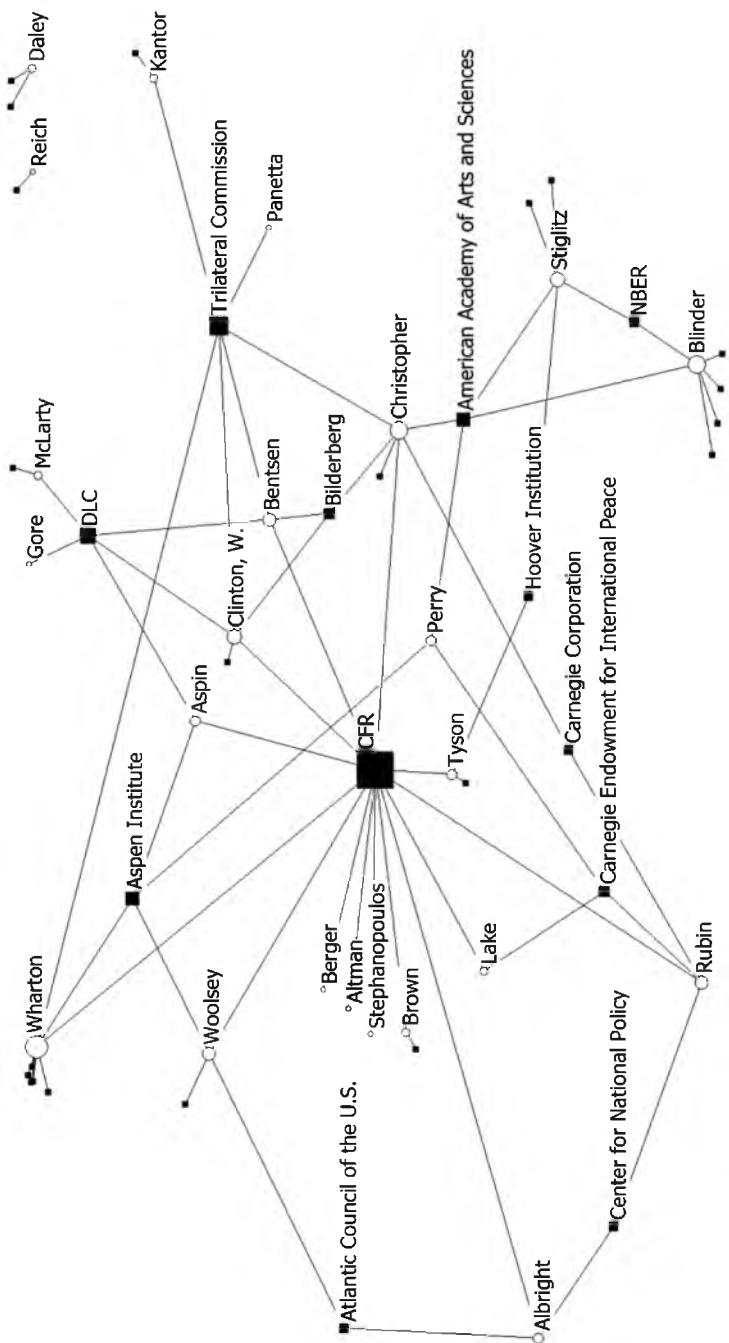
here is the big linker to the defense sector, with directorships of, among others, British Aerospace (one of the few non-U.S. capital ties), DynCorp, and Martin Marietta. Another defense linker (with ties to technology and finance as well) is Perry, who was founder and president of electronics company ESL and was also executive at investment bank Hambrecht and Quist. As we have seen, Perry was not the only former business executive within Clinton's 1993 team. Indeed, while among the selected officials of the Clinton administration we have found fewer corporate ties in total (compared to the two later administrations) what is striking is the high number of corporate linkers who formerly were either CEO or another top executive or chairman. Other prominent examples here are the aforementioned Altman, Rubin, Bentsen, and Wharton, while we may also mention Clinton's chief of staff, Thomas F. ("Mack") McLarty, who before his appointment was CEO of the Fortune 500 gas company Arkla. As such, not only were a considerable number of Clinton's grand-strategy makers recruited from the corporate elite, many of them had been leading members of the business community.

As in all three administrations (see also [Chapter 3](#)), the predominance of transnationally oriented capital is also clear in the Clinton network with, as noted in the previous chapter, 35 percent of all the affiliated corporations having an F500 notation and with also among the remainder certainly not only the many financial corporations but also most of the affiliated law and consultancy firms may be seen as belonging to U.S. transnational capital.

In addition, as [Figure 4.3](#) shows, many of Clinton's grand-strategy makers returned to the private sector after leaving office to further develop their corporate careers. Indeed, the revolving door phenomenon within the Clinton network is very extensive, with a total of 149 corporate ties after the administration, as we have seen in the preceding chapter. Top linkers here are Woolsey, with a staggering 26 corporate affiliations after stepping down as CIA director; Perry; William Daley, who was Clinton's special counsel on the North American Free Trade Association, and Obama's second chief of staff; and Alexis Herman, Assistant to the president and later labor secretary – each with eight or more corporate ties after serving in the Clinton administration. Finally, we must here also mention Clinton's Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, who in 1995 succeeded Rubin as Director of the NEC. Tyson was formerly an economics professor at the University of California, had no corporate positions prior to her appointment, but after leaving the White House was able to collect a total of 20 directorships and other top-level corporate positions (see also [Chapter 6](#)).

### ***The policy planning network***

[Figure 4.4](#) shows the network of policy planning bodies (represented by the squares) linked to Clinton's selected grand-strategy makers (represented by the circles) prior to (and in some cases during) their appointment. Although the policy planning network is less dense than that of the two subsequent administrations that we analyzed, the network is well integrated with only two isolates



*Figure 4.4* Policy planning network: Clinton (sources: data collection by authors).

Note  
The >3 number of ties per policy planning body are as follows: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) (14), Trilateral Commission (6), Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) (5), American Academy of Arts and Sciences (4), Aspen Institute (4), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (3), Bilderberg (3).

(i.e., nodes that fall outside of a main component or cluster, in this case Reich and Daley, in the upper right hand of the graph). As noted in the previous chapter, a total of 23 out of our 30 grand-strategy makers within the Clinton network had prior ties to one or multiple policy planning bodies.

Among the most central grand-strategy makers (each having five or more ties) in the network of think tanks, foundations, and other policy planning institutions we find the aforementioned Wharton and Christopher (both of the State Department), as well as two of the three-member Council on Economic Advisors (CEA), Alan Blinder and Joseph Stiglitz.<sup>2</sup> The latter two, were, however, not connected to the most central (foreign policy) think tanks and rather to less important institutions – at least with regard to the foreign policy planning process, related to the economics profession such as the National Bureau of Economic Research.<sup>3</sup> Stiglitz was the most prominent dissident within the economic team of Clinton, opposing what he saw as the market fundamentalism of Bentsen, and especially of Rubin and the latter's deputy and Clinton's third Treasury secretary, Lawrence ("Larry") Summers (a critique that would become more radical after he had left both the Clinton administration and his subsequent post as chief economist of the World Bank, see Stiglitz, 2003). Yet while Stiglitz later took over as chair of the CEA from Tyson and remained in the Clinton White House until 1997, his influence on the administration's (foreign) economic policies was limited; with his resistance to neoliberal orthodoxy he was clearly in the minority camp (Warshaw, 2005: 304; Hirsch, 2010: chs. 5–6).

Significant actors among the big linkers within the policy planning network of the Clinton administration of 1993 are Christopher – who was an early member of the influential TC; director and vice chairman of the most venerable and central of foreign policy think tanks, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR); trustee of the Carnegie Corporation, and a Bilderberg participant – as well as notably President Clinton himself, linked to the same central elite policy planning bodies (TC, CFR, and Bilderberg). In terms of the revolving door within the policy-planning world, Figure 4.5 illustrates that many of Clinton's grand-strategy makers came to garner numerous positions in think tanks and other policy planning bodies after leaving the administration (with UN ambassador and later secretary of state, Madeline Albright, and Laura Tyson becoming very big linkers with 15 and 17 ties).

As in the two other administrations, the most central policy planning body in the prior network is the CFR, with 14 ties, which next to the links already mentioned also includes, among others, Rubin, Bentsen, Albright, and national security adviser Lake. The latter led a CFR project bringing together various elite experts (and edited a subsequent book) on how to restore the consensus around and legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy after the Vietnam War (Lake, 1976), with Lake expressing the worry that "a Vietnam analogy" would "amend or replace the Munich analogy" and tempt Americans to "avoid foreign wars ... by staying out of them" (Lake cited in Bacevich, 2010: 133). According to LaFeber (1994: 769) Lake became Clinton's "idea man, the conceptualizer, [and] among [his] closest advisers," at least in the first term.

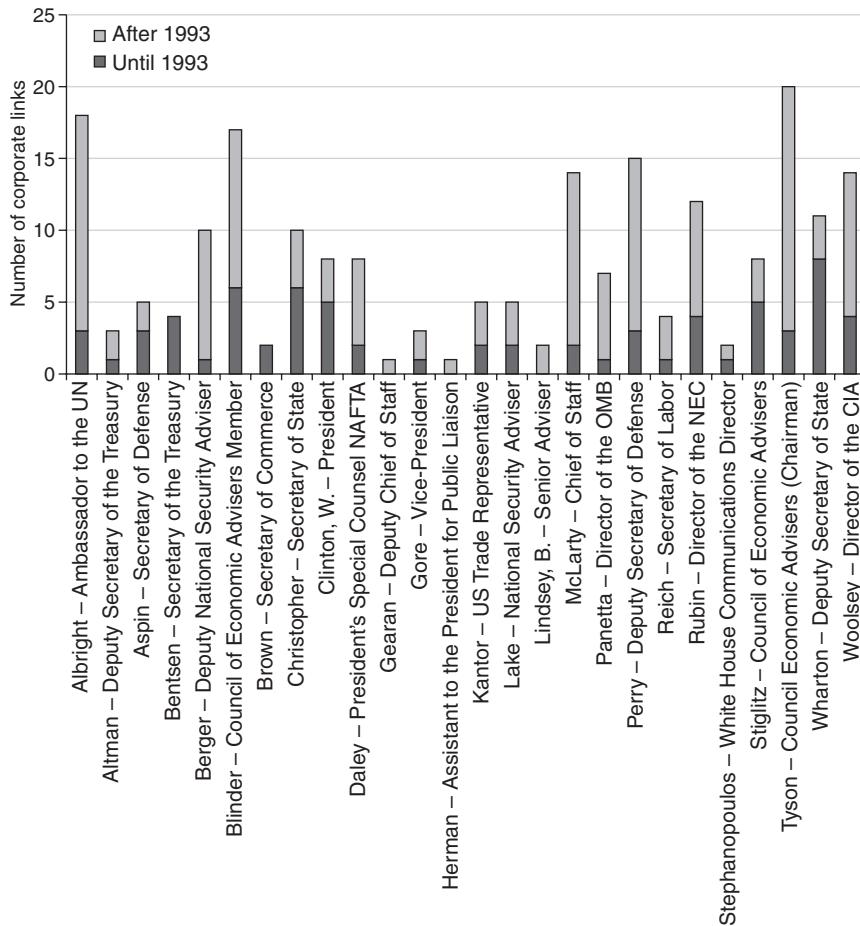


Figure 4.5 Policy planning revolving door: Clinton (sources: data collection by authors).

In terms of frequency of ties, the CFR is followed by the TC, with six affiliated grand-strategy makers: next to Clinton, Christopher, and Wharton, Treasury Secretary Bentsen, Clinton's director of the Office of Management and Budget, Leon Panetta, and then U.S. trade representative and former corporate lawyer Mickey Kantor (who would later become Clinton's commerce secretary). As noted in Chapter 3, the economic policy ideas propagated by the TC were, from the early 1980s, onwards increasingly in line with what would become the new neoliberal orthodoxy that the TC network thus helped to shape and consolidate transnationally (Gill, 1990).

Another central and bipartisan think tank that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, also connects the Bush and the Obama administrations, is the Aspen Institute, linking to four of our selected grand-strategy makers, including

William Perry, whom Clinton appointed as deputy secretary of defense but who succeeded his boss, Aspin, a year later when the latter resigned. Perry co-chaired the Aspen Strategy Group, which, as we have noted, is a prominent “policy program” within Aspen and can be regarded as its in-house foreign policy and national security think tank that seeks to provide an input for American grand strategy formation.

### *The New Democrats network and a new ideology*

In terms of policy planning bodies that are more specific to the Clinton administration, the already mentioned DLC, with five affiliated grand-strategy makers (among which was the president himself), must be regarded as pivotal within Clinton’s policy planning network. Pivotal both for the role it played in moving the Democratic Party to the right in both economic and foreign policy, and hence helping to set the agenda of the Clinton presidency in this respect, and because of the importance of the actors it links within the network, above all the president and the vice president, as well as Clinton’s chief of staff McLarty (who joined the DLC together with Clinton – Hirsch, 2010: 85), Treasury Secretary Bentsen and Secretary of Defense Aspin. As indicated, the DLC and its associated network of New Democrats was instrumental in adapting the Democratic Party to the perceived exigencies of the time by turning, as Baer (2000) formulated it in his study of the DLC, “New Dealers” into “neoliberals” (see also Dreyfuss, 2001; Waddan, 2002). This, in the words of one former DLC member, “transition from one ideology to another” had been financially enabled by representatives of the elite of American corporate capital, with the 1990 list of donors including AT&T, Philip Morris, and hedge fund manager Michael Steinhardt, and the much longer list from 2000 including Fortune 500 firms like Chevron, DuPont, Enron, IBM, Microsoft, Texaco, as well as Koch Industries led by the ultra-conservative Koch brothers (Dreyfuss, 2001). Representatives of the latter firm also sat on DLC’s board of trustees together with other corporate elite members (*ibid.*).

As its in-house think tank, the DLC created, with a large part of the initial funding again coming from hedge fund manager Steinhardt, the formally independent Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) in 1989 (Baer, 2000: 136–7). While the DLC has been defunct since 2011, the PPI exists up till today, still headed by its founding president, Will Marshall. As a later member of, among others, the neoconservative-dominated Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, Marshall clearly belongs to the most hawkish faction of the Democratic Party. As the policy arm of the DLC, the PPI has from its founding published many reports espousing both neoliberal economic reforms, and an interventionist and militarist foreign policy. A collection of its initial policy ideas, *Mandate for Change* (Marshall and Schram, 1993), came out just after Clinton’s election (and was endorsed by the president-elect), and bears, as Abelson (2006: 38) also notes, “a striking resemblance” to several of the Clinton’s administration’s later policies. Indeed, once in the White House, Clinton continued to personally receive policy recommendations (see e.g., Galston, 1994; see also Baer, 2000: chs. 7–9).

To conclude this section, prior to their service in the Clinton administration, a large majority of selected officials had (often multiple) ties to key policy planning bodies, both bipartisan and centrist bodies such as the CFR and the TC, but with also important connections to a clearly partisan body, the DLC. The former are, as we have noted in the previous chapter, clearly within the mainstream of American globalism, with the TC and other think tanks in the network increasingly favoring a neoliberal reinterpretation of the Open Door. In this reinterpretation, as we shall argue below, opening the door to capital increasingly meant breaking down regulated capitalism, and pushing for more unrestrained freedom for transnational capital and market-based rule. The DLC, meanwhile, was, as we have seen, instrumental in transforming the leadership of the Democratic Party into neoliberals, while moving it also to the right in the area of foreign policy. In the sections below we will see how this ideological profile of Clinton's policy planning network also helps to explain how the Clinton administration came to pursue a grand strategy of neoliberal globalization as what were before grand-strategy planners turned into grand-strategy makers. First, we will show how Clinton and his policymakers, informed by their worldview and ideas, came to interpret the new post-Cold War global context as an opportunity for further expansionism.

### **The global context: the end of the Cold War as an opportunity for expansionism**

As indicated in [Chapter 2](#), the end of the Cold War caught the Bush 41 administration by surprise. Remaining somewhat stuck in a Cold War mode, and hence displaying considerable skepticism toward Moscow's declared intentions (National Security Council, 1989), grand-strategy makers at the time felt the need to regain the diplomatic initiative after Gorbachev had unfolded his post-Cold War vision for European and global security, effectively signaling a voluntary retreat from empire (Layne, 2000: 61–2; Westad, 2005: ch. 10). However, as Layne (2000: 62), writes: “[t]he Bush administration proved better at diagnosing the problem than fixing it,” and the policy response remained “unimaginative.” At the same time, it was clear from the outset to both Bush's grand-strategy makers and the wider foreign policy establishment that U.S. grand strategy was not to change in any fundamental way, despite the radical change in the global geopolitical environment due to the disintegration of the Soviet bloc. Confounding expectations of neo-realist theory, the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity then did not lead to a major shift in American grand strategy (Layne, 2000; 2006a: 105–16; cf. Waltz, 1979; cf. Mastanduno, 1997) – which at least regarding its overarching aims remained marked by a strong continuity and a renewed commitment to American expansionism. It was up to the Clinton administration to formulate the foreign policy vision and strategy for this new round of expansionism.

### **From containment to enlargement**

That American grand strategy did not change course after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union does not mean that the major change in global context wrought by these events had no effect whatsoever. First, it mattered because a strategy that ostensibly was pursued to contain the Soviet Union, justifying for instance America's active (including military) presence in and power projection over Western Europe and elsewhere, now needed a different legitimization. If indeed, American globalism had only been a reluctant response to Soviet expansionism as in common U.S. elite mythology (Bacevich, 2002: ch. 1), then why would the United States not retreat from Western Europe and dismantle NATO as some neorealists (e.g., Mearsheimer, 2001: 384–92) continued to predict? Such a shift in grand strategy, however, was not even contemplated by American grand-strategy makers (Layne, 2000). A new rationale thus had to be found. Indeed, the incoming Clinton administration was quite aware of the need to legitimate a continuing globalist and interventionist foreign policy now that the Soviet Union was gone, and, as Miles (2013: 34–7) argues, the “specter of isolationism” genuinely haunted Clinton foreign policy officials in the first years of the administration. Thus, in a key speech in the first year of the new administration, national security adviser Lake (1993) warned that:

with the end of the Cold War, there is no longer a consensus among the American people around why, and even whether our nation should remain actively engaged in the world. Geography and history always have made Americans wary of foreign entanglements. Now economic anxiety fans that wariness.

Hence, given the ongoing “imperative of our international engagement,” there was once more a need to “push back” against isolationism and “communicate anew why that engagement is essential” (*ibid.*; see also e.g., Aspen Strategy Group, 1991: 30–1; Marshall, 1993: 290–5).

Second, far from providing an incentive for any kind of retreat from globalism giving up on its hegemonic role in Europe and other key areas, the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the Soviet Union and concomitant resurgence of liberalism for the United States provided a unique opportunity – and was perceived as such by leading Clinton officials such as Christopher (1995) and Lake (1993, 1994) – to further expand and truly globalize the Open Door empire, extending it into the areas formerly controlled by its erstwhile rival. There was broad recognition that so-called liberal market democracies and hence the ideas that the United States had always claimed to promote, were in the ascendency, and that indeed, America’s longstanding mission, as conceived within its exceptionalist ideology (see [Chapter 2](#)), could now finally be fully fulfilled.

In the view of PPI president Marshall, writing on the eve of the Clinton presidency, the “security windfall” of the “sudden death of Soviet communism”

offered the most “benign prospects abroad” for the United States since 1918, and offered a “historic opportunity to reinforce and consolidate the spread of democracy” that had begun since the 1970s (Marshall, 1993: 289, 298). Or, as Lake formulated it in 1993: “America’s core concepts – democracy and market economics – are more broadly accepted than ever,” which is why there was now a “moment of immense democratic and entrepreneurial opportunity” to further expand these values (Lake, 1993) and, with “the emergence of newly independent states in eastern Europe,” to “enlarge dramatically the family of nations now committed to the pursuit of democratic institutions, the expansion of free markets … and the promotion of collective security” (Lake, 1994: 45). In sum, the structural change of the end of the Cold War was thus an opportunity to move from “containment to enlargement” (Lake, 1993), or as Clinton himself explained before the UN: “[d]uring the cold war we sought to contain a threat to the survival of free institutions. Now we seek to enlarge the circle of nations that live under those free institutions” (Clinton, 1993a).

The opportunity for enlargement was not only made possible by the collapse of Soviet communism, but also because, as Lake argued, of the “salient fact” of “our new era,” that America was now the “dominant power,” with “the world’s strongest military, its largest economy and its most dynamic multiethnic society” (Lake, 1993). Hence, “[a]round the world, America’s power, authority and example provide unparalleled opportunities to lead” (Lake, 1993). In other words, America’s unrivaled relative power enabled the new round of expansionism. The optimism, and indeed the sense of a triumphant America, were reinforced by the 1991 Gulf War, in which, in the words of Clinton’s later (deputy) secretary of defense, writing in a study of the Aspen Strategy Group that he co-chaired at the time, America’s “revolutionary advance in military capability” (including regarding so-called “precision-bombing”) contributed to an unprecedented “thousand to one” ratio in relative losses (Perry, 1992: 242). This easy and “clean” victory – that is, on the U.S. side – was widely perceived, if not, as then President Bush had claimed, having “kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all,” then at least having offered considerable relief from it (Bacevich, 2002: 58–9).

Notwithstanding the general sense of optimism and opportunity, instability and civil war in relatively strategic areas such as the Horn of Africa and the Balkans indicated that the new post-Cold War world order was not necessarily a more stable one, but on the contrary saw the rise of new conflicts. In other words, new threats were perceived that could equally legitimate America’s continuing global “engagement.” As Marshall (1993: 293) stressed in his 1992 essay on what kind of foreign policy the new president should be pursuing, “the post-Cold War world remains a dangerous place,” referring in particular to “ethnic cleansing” as well as to the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The former, ethnic conflict, was in fact defined by Lake (1993) as a dominant feature of the era – and formed a new type of security challenge for a power that continued to aspire to be the world’s global hegemon and policeman.

### **Economic decline and economic expansionism**

While in the security realm the victory over the Soviet Union and hence the (temporary) end to great power rivalry had created a great sense of optimism and opportunity, the state of the American economy and its global position was initially a source of worry within the American elite, including in policy planning circles around what came to be Clinton's team of grand-strategy makers.

Although the second half of the 1980s saw the beginning of a long boom, which eventually was to turn into a financial bubble, and a restoration of corporate profits from the crisis of the 1970s and early 1980s at the expense of wage income (Brenner, 2000), the years 1990–91 interrupted this new growth period with what proved to be a short but sharp recession. It was in this context that there were elite worries, as expressed by the aforementioned PPI study, for instance, about “the chronic neglect of the economic and social foundations of American power,” constituting the “gravest threat to U.S. security” (Marshall, 1993: 300). Specifically, PPI Vice President Robert J. Shapiro and Doug Ross (who would both later join the Clinton administration) observed that the United States faced “a genuine, long-term economic crisis” given its lagging “productivity gains, net investment and overall growth” (Shapiro and Ross, 1993: 1). The decline was relative to the perceived economic rise of the European Community and, above all, of Japan, whose rise – at least until the early 1990s when it entered into its long “lost decade” – vexed the U.S. foreign policy elite and had to be “managed” as the Aspen Strategy Group (1991: 21) put it in a report on American strategy for the 1990s.

Nevertheless, the recession was not just a source of elite anxiety, but arguably even more so was equally seen as offering an opportunity to push for further neoliberal reform at home as well as economic expansionism abroad (From and Marshall, 1993: xvi). Rather than leading to any calls for protectionism, the recession was another reason for leading policy planners within Clinton's network to call for a further opening of markets, etc. (see also Shapiro and Ross, 1993; Hammonds, 1993). Once more, then, economic expansionism was perceived as an exit strategy from an economic crisis, what in [Chapter 2](#) we identified with Harvey (1999) as a “spatial fix.” It was in this context, as we shall see in the next section, that globalization became the organizing concept for Clinton's grand strategy.

### **The Open Door worldview under Clinton: expansionism under the banner of globalization**

As we have seen, after the end of the Cold War officials of the new Clinton administration reaffirmed their commitment to (maintaining) global hegemony as a primary strategic goal. The legitimization of this goal was again informed by a discourse of American exceptionalism (see [Chapter 2](#)) in which U.S. leadership was seen as a moral imperative because, in the words of Secretary of State Christopher (1995), “[t]he simple fact is that if we do not lead, no one else will.”

His successor, Madeleine Albright, in the context of defending the use of force, famously later used even grander terms to express the same sentiment: “if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future” (Albright, 1998). While the words of Albright are often cited, Clinton also referred to U.S. leadership as indispensable many times before, such as in this 1996 speech: “we must ... make sure America remains the indispensable nation, not only for ourselves but for what we believe in and for all the people of the world. That is our burden. That is our opportunity” (Clinton, 1996a). The United States is thus “called upon to lead – to organize the forces of freedom and progress” (White House, 1998: 1).

Beyond this continuing commitment to U.S. global “leadership,” the foreign policy discourse of the Clinton administration also clearly reveals the substance of this global hegemony – to wit, the content is one in which the ideology of liberal, non-territorial expansionism is once more reproduced. More than that, and arguably the most significant change in grand strategy represented by Clinton, the Open Door was now not “just” the underlying ultimate purpose of U.S. grand strategy, but became even more *explicitly* – at the level of rhetoric as well as practice – its primary focus. As LaFeber (2002: 543; see also Dumbrell, 2002, 2009: 54–61; cf. Brinkley, 1997) has argued, the real *Clinton doctrine* boiled down to “his policies to batter down barriers to U.S. trade and especially investment.” Thus Clinton’s National Security Strategy (NSS) of 1995 defined “promoting prosperity at home” as one of its “primary objectives” and in archetypical terms argued that this was to depend upon: “[a] vigorous and integrated economic policy designed to stimulate global environmentally sound economic growth and free trade and to press for open and equal U.S. access to foreign markets” (White House, 1995: 7).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, reproducing a dogma of U.S. foreign policy identified by Williams (2009 [1959]: 15) decades ago, Clinton argued that “[w]e are building prosperity at home by opening markets abroad” (Clinton, 1996a).

This, then, was the essence of Clinton’s grand strategy as a *globalization offensive*.<sup>5</sup> No U.S. president before or after Clinton extolled the virtues of globalization the way he did (LaFeber, 2002; Bacevich, 2002: ch. 2; Dumbrell, 2002, 2009: ch. 3), with reference to the term in presidential speeches increasing – in tune with the times – in frequency over the course of his presidency. Globalization for Clinton and his grand-strategy makers meant what we here call *neoliberal* globalization, that is, the worldwide expansion and deepening of markets, above all opening them up to U.S. capital, including financial capital, and with less institutional and regulatory constraints than during the postwar era. As such, the slogan of globalization was at the heart of its neoliberal version of the Open Door worldview that positively animated the administration’s grand strategy, even while also serving as a legitimating device. Within this ideology, the opposite of globalization is economic protectionism, which is to be rejected. In fact, this rejection is hardly a choice according to Clinton, arguing against protectionism or any other alternatives to neoliberal marketization – globalization must be seen as “inexorable” (e.g., Clinton, 1999a):

Protectionism is simply not an option because globalization is irreversible. If we try to close up our economy, we will only hurt ourselves. We have too much to gain from opening markets, and besides, we know we can *out-work and out-compete anyone*.

(Clinton, 1997a; emphasis added)

While, as is common in such a globalization discourse (Watson and Hay, 2003), on the one hand presenting globalization as an external force – “the central reality of our time” (Clinton, 2000b) – Clinton’s grand-strategy makers on the other hand were well aware that globalization was at the same time a reality very much shaped by the United States, and which they explicitly sought to shape through their grand strategy. It was through the pro-active policies of the United States that globalization and its benefits for mankind were actually to be realized (Clinton, 1999a). The ambition here was nothing less than, as Clinton put it in his 2000 State of the Union address, “to be at the center of every vital global network” (Clinton, 2000b).

### ***“Democratic enlargement”: promoting “market democracies”***

The notion of “democracy promotion,” long since part of U.S. foreign policy ideology, gained a renewed emphasis under Clinton within what his national security adviser Lake called the administration’s “pragmatic neo-Wilsonian” vision (Friedman, 1993; see further Brinkley, 1997; Dueck, 2006: ch. 5; Smith, 2012: 325–6, 350). Indeed, as noted, “democratic enlargement,” a concept developed inside the National Security Council (Brinkley, 1997; Dumbrell, 2009: 42) led by Lake, initially became the new catchphrase, the successor to Kennan’s containment, for Clinton’s post-Cold War grand strategy (first stated as such in Clinton’s first NSS – see White House, 1994). The intellectual road to democratic enlargement had already been paved in Clinton’s affiliated policy network, especially within the PPI from 1990 onwards (Baer, 2000: 171), with Will Marshall having made the proposal that “support for democracy and free markets replace anti-communism as the conceptual basis for U.S. security policy in the 1990s” (Marshall, 1993: 291), and calling for the creation of a “*pax democratica*” (*ibid.*: 290). Indeed, what in academic International Relations (IR) has become known as the “democratic peace theory,” or the notion, in the words of Clinton, that “the habits of democracy are the habits of peace” (Clinton, 1993a; see also e.g., Lake, 1993; White House, 1995: 2), looms large here. As Parmar (2012: ch. 8) has shown, this neo-Kantian idea – which gave a new impulse and scientific credibility to what since long had been an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy ideology – was developed in the 1980s and subsequently inserted into grand strategic planning of the Clinton administration through research and networks that were funded by the corporate philanthropy of, among others, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation.

In a familiar move, the drive to expand the zone of liberal democracies, particularly, as we shall see, beyond the former Iron Curtain, was thus explicitly

linked to national security as well as to the economic Open Door, with the end of the Cold War seen as the opportunity to weld them together on a global scale (Lake, 1994). Thus, in a typical discursive move next to “prosperity at home” the NSS of 1995 identified “enhancing our security” and “promoting democracy” as the two other primary foreign policy objectives, and argued that all three goals are inextricably linked in as much as:

Secure nations are more likely to support free trade and maintain democratic structures. Nations with growing economies and strong trade ties are more likely to feel secure and to work toward freedom. And democratic states are less likely to threaten our interests and more likely to cooperate with the U.S. to meet security threats and promote free trade.

(White House, 1995: i)

As argued in [Chapter 2](#), democracy promotion for the United States means, above all, promoting democracies compatible with U.S. liberal capitalist interests, that is, especially those who welcome (U.S.) investment and combine political freedom with the freedom of markets and enterprise (again above all of U.S. transnational capital). The ideological linkage between “democracy and free markets” (White House, 1998) is in fact particularly strong in the grand-strategic discourse of the Clinton administration, with White House policy documents almost consistently using the adjective *market* before democracies, and referring to the “core” of its strategy of democracy promotion as “to help democracy *and markets* expand and survive” (White House, 1995: 23; our emphasis). Democratic enlargement – “enlarging the community of free market democracies” (White House, 1995: 7) – must in this sense be a classic fusion of the economic and the political Open Door (Layne, 2006a).

### ***“Rogue states”: the enemies of neoliberal globalization***

The flipside of democratic enlargement was the confrontation with those states not willing to be incorporated into the “enlarged community of market democracies.” What came to be called *rogue states* – a term whose origins as a prominent U.S. foreign policy concept lie in the 1980s and in the Reagan administration’s so-called concern with “state-sponsored terrorism” (Litwak, 2000: 53–6; Miles, 2013: 13–18; cf. Chomsky, 2003b) – were thus identified as the enemies of U.S.-led neoliberal globalization and came to substitute for the Soviet Union as the external threat to “U.S. security.” Thus President Clinton (1995a), in a speech before the UN, called “the reckless aggression of rogue states” one of the major dangers facing the whole international community in the post-Cold War era. Rogue states – also called “outlaw” or “backlash states” by Lake in an article that really laid out for the first time what has been called Clinton’s rogue state doctrine (Miles, 2013: [ch. 3](#)) – were defined as “states that not only choose to remain outside the family [of market democracies] but also assault its basic values” (Lake, 1994: 45). The states thus identified were Cuba,

North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Libya (how the United States dealt with some of these states in practice will be discussed in the next section).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, reproducing a long-term tradition in American foreign policy discourse, the “active engagement” with the world that Lake and other grand-strategy makers of the Clinton administration sought to continue went hand-in-hand with the perception of dangers lurking around the globe. Thus, “the unfreezing of history which the end of the cold war has wrought” was seen by Clinton and his grand-strategy makers as generating “destabilizing consequences” (Clinton, 1994a) and witnessing the rise of new threats, once more legitimating America’s continuing commitment to global hegemony. As Clinton put it in a major speech on national security in 1994: “for all the promise of our time, we are not free from peril. Fascism and communism may be dead or discredited, but the forces of destruction live on” (Clinton, 1996b). One of the new dangers that was identified, and which was linked to the threat of rogue states, was the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (e.g., White House, 1995: 1, 13–15; also Lake, 1994), and later, as the flipside of the “new world” of globalization (Clinton, 1996b), terrorists forming an “unholy axis [with] drug traffickers, and organized international criminals,” and together with “outlaw nations” constituting the “predators of the 21st century” (Clinton, 1998a).

In sum, democratic enlargement and the concern with rogue states together reflected a strategy that was aimed simultaneously at promoting neoliberal globalization by expanding the “circle of democracies and markets” (Lake, 1993), and seeking to stabilize the areas yet outside it by containing the forces opposing globalization’s “inexorable logic.” It is now time to elaborate the main elements of this grand strategy and how it evolved over time within a changing global context.

### **A grand strategy of neoliberal globalization: financial markets, free trade, and airstrikes**

Below we distinguish the following three main elements of the American grand strategy as made and pursued by the Clinton administration, representing a variety of Open Door imperialism. The first element is the promotion of the economic Open Door through policies fostering the relative deterritorialized logic of market expansion (cf. Harvey, 2003). This took place by both adopting market liberalization policies at home, including the “deregulation” of financial markets (which by itself fostered the global expansion of U.S. capital), and promoting the same expansion and deepening of markets worldwide through a broad offensive aimed at removing international barriers to trade and investment for U.S. transnational capital.

The second element is formed by what boils down to the more territorial and geopolitical dimension of the first, while discursively mixed in with the concept of “democracy promotion.” Specifically, this involved a strategy that was aimed at enlargement into the area formerly under Soviet control while seeking to maintain stability and with that the Open Door in Western Europe, a policy that

increasingly came to be bound up with the strategic goal of NATO expansion. As we shall argue, it is also within this context that we have to understand Clinton's Balkan interventions.

Finally, next to Serbia, there were also a host of other (rogue) state and non-state actors resisting America's drive for neoliberal globalization and "democratic enlargement" of its liberal empire. These new enemies were increasingly dealt with, oftentimes by invoking "humanitarian concerns" by the use of military force, though "restricted" primarily to airstrikes. We identify this particular use of force as the third distinctive element of American grand strategy under Clinton.

### ***Expanding and deepening markets: seeking to maximize the freedom of U.S. transnational capital***

While Clinton had pursued a somewhat populist campaign – emphasizing the "fight for the middle class" while noting that "our government has been rigged in favor of the rich and special interests" (Clinton campaign, 1992; see also Woodward, 1994), Clinton was, as noted earlier, more of a "centrist," pro-business "New Democrat," who, together with European counterparts such as Tony Blair, later associated himself – as did the organization, the DLC, that had helped him to win the presidency, with the Third Way (Clinton, 2000a; see also Baer, 2000: 258–62, Béland *et al.*, 2002). Presenting itself politically, as Clinton (1995b) phrased it in a speech before the DLC, as going beyond both liberalism and conservatism, Clinton's third way above all boiled down to a policy program of neoliberal restructuring in which, as it was formulated in the aforementioned DLC study by two later Clinton officials, a "progressive strategy" was to be based on "enterprise economics" involving, among others: "fiscal and monetary discipline"; "a new strategy to enhance competition and liberate markets"; and "a new strategic commitment to open world trade" (Shapiro and Ross, 1993: 2–3).

In line with the neoliberal project (see [Chapter 2](#)), Clinton's marketization policies were not just aimed at opening markets for U.S. transnational capital, but also the liberalization of markets beyond trade and production and into the world of stocks, bonds, currencies, and complex derivatives, further undoing the Bretton Woods regime in which at least relatively speaking finance was the "servant" rather than the "master" of the real economy (Helleiner, 1994; cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 10).

### ***A financial markets strategy***

According to Woodward, the administration's economic agenda, supported by Federal Reserve Chairman Greenspan, quickly boiled down to what within the White House itself was called a "financial markets strategy," which involved reassuring the financial and in particular the bonds markets by above all drastically cutting the deficit, in the hope that this austerity would pay off by lowering long-term interest rates (Woodward, 1994: 88, 138, 264, 337; Hirsch, 2010:

90–1). The architects of this strategy were those men in the administration who all had strong ties to the U.S. financial sector. A key role in engineering this strategy was played by Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen – a key corporate linker who had made his fortune as founder of an insurance company. Bentsen’s deputy, Roger Altman, as well as the chair of the newly created National Economic Council and later Treasury secretary, Robert Rubin, both as we have seen former (and future) prominent “Wall Streeters,” were equally staunch advocates of the financial markets strategy.<sup>7</sup> Another “deficit hawk” who was critical in narrowing Clinton’s economic policy focus (Woodward, 1994: 118, 124–6; Warshaw, 2005: 252), was Clinton’s budget director and later (from 1994) chief of staff, Leon Panetta (see Panetta, 1993).<sup>8</sup>

Financial markets were not only to be reassured, but were also to be liberated from their New Deal-era regulatory shackles. This had already started under Reagan but only really took off under Clinton, and culminated in the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act of 1999, which repealed the famous Glass–Steagall Act of the 1930s that had separated investment from commercial banking (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 267; Hirsch, 2010: 189; see also Brenner, 2000).<sup>9</sup> The final version of the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act passed U.S. Congress just after Rubin, who had been a chief promoter of the bill (Morgenson and Rosner, 2011: 107–8), stepped down as Treasury secretary and had joined the board of Citigroup – a firm that emerged out of a merger that was legalized by repeal of Glass–Steagall. Rubin was succeeded by his deputy Larry Summers, a Harvard economist who, like his mentor Rubin, strongly favored financial market liberalization. Both men were also critical in blocking attempts to regulate the rapidly expanding so-called “over the counter” derivatives market (Panitch and Gindin, 2009: 70–1; Hirsch, 2010: 1–19).

While arguably serving the “special interests” of a particular sector, and while the particular kind of revolving door between regulators and the regulated that we witnessed in the case of Rubin only appears to confirm this, the financial liberalization drive reflected by these regulatory changes may also be seen as reflecting a more general financialization trend. This trend, as indicated, entailed that the interests of “industrial” large firms were increasingly overlapping with those of financial capital – for instance through the former’s need to access global pools of finance to fund their globalization strategies (van Apeldoorn, 2013: 193; on the financialization of American capitalism see, e.g., Brenner, 2000). As such, then, the neoliberalism of the Clinton administration can be seen as reflecting the broader, general interests of an American corporate elite increasingly dominated by not only transnationally oriented but increasingly financialized capital.

Obviously, given the centrality of the United States in the capitalist global economy, the regulatory changes implemented by Clinton’s economic team had huge international repercussions (the full significance of which only became clear much later, with the global fallout of the financial crisis of 2008). Beyond global effects of domestic (de)regulation, the international dimension of the “financial market strategy” was less about reassuring global financial markets as

about promoting their expansion, managing them, and reinforcing the centrality of U.S. capital (Wall Street) in the global financial system. Specifically, in the words of Panitch and Gindin (2012: 248–54), the United States in the 1990s promoted the deepening of financial globalization centered around an expansion of U.S. financial capital by fulfilling both the roles of “firefighter in chief” – managing the dozens of financial crises in less developed countries to ensure their continued dependence on U.S.-dominated global finance – and that of “chief financial architect,” among others by operating through the G-7, the group of advanced capitalist countries that increasingly became a vehicle for America’s global geo-economic strategy (*ibid.*: 277–83; see also Gowan, 1999a; Soederberg, 2004).

The 1997 Asian financial crisis during Clinton’s second term, in particular, created a major challenge for the stability of the system. At the same time it provided, as did similar crises, an important opportunity to further open the region to U.S. and global capital (Konings, 2008: 66; see also Gowan, 1999a: [ch. 6](#); cf. Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 280). This deepened a process that had preceded and indeed arguably caused the Asian financial crisis as the Clinton administration under the leadership of Rubin and Summers for years had been pushing for South Korea and other East and Southeast Asian countries to open up their capital markets (Hirsch, 2010: 112–19).

In this context, and in relation to the Global South more generally, the U.S. state continued to use the IMF and the World Bank as instruments of neoliberal discipline (a policy that had started under Reagan, see [Chapter 2](#)), forcing and keeping these countries open to global and in particular U.S. transnational capital (Gowan, 1999a: 84–7; Felder, 2008). Maintaining the hegemony of the dollar within the international monetary system was another key instrument through which the Clinton administration maintained and exercised its financial hegemony and managed to impose its policy preferences on other capitalist states (Gowan, 1999a: 91–5; see Spiro, 1999 on the role of petrodollar recycling in this regard).

#### *Opening foreign markets: Clinton’s free trade agenda*

The aim of opening markets to U.S. capital was, of course, not restricted to finance but also involved the traditional goal of opening up to U.S. trade and even more so to U.S. investment. Both of these forms of market opening became key foci of Clinton’s grand strategy, continuing and accelerating the U.S.-led “postwar trajectory towards the liberalization of trade laws” (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 224). In line with the earlier policy recommendations of the PPI (and hence of Clinton’s own DLC), which identified the further opening of global markets and the elevation of trade as a key foreign policy goal as the heart of what should be the future president’s (global) strategy (From and Marshall, 1993; Shapiro and Ross, 1993; Hammonds, 1993; Marshall, 1993), Clinton in his first (unofficial) State of the Union address declared that “[s]tanding as we are on the edge of a new century, we know that economic growth depends as

never before on opening up new markets overseas and expanding the volume of world trade” (Clinton, 1993b).

The free trade and investment agenda of the Clinton administration first came to focus on the “free trade agreement” between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. While the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) had already been signed by Bush 41 toward the end of his presidency, its ratification was not yet a done deal when Clinton came to office, especially because the Clinton administration itself (following from Clinton’s earlier campaign promise) insisted on “side agreements” on labor and the environment that were intended to placate certain domestic constituencies (such as the unions) but were in the end much more symbolic than substantive (MacArthur, 2001: 184–6; Cameron and Tomlin, 2000: 201–4).

A key advocate of NAFTA and of free trade generally was again Bentsen (Conley, 2012: 26; Woodward, 2004: 326; MacArthur, 2001: 258), who had laid out his (and Clinton’s) international agenda in a 1993 report of the TC. The strategy was to center on promoting “market access as serious barriers remain, [and] we must do our utmost to remove them” (Bentsen, 1993). Next to Bentsen, U.S. trade representative and former corporate law firm partner and fellow former TC member, Mickey Kantor, was another important actor with respect to both NAFTA and the global trade agenda generally (for an overview of Clinton’s early priorities in this respect, see Kantor’s speech before the TC – Kantor, 1993). Another central player was “NAFTA Czar” and Clinton’s later secretary of commerce, Daley, who for his temporary public service was on leave as a partner of one of the world’s largest corporate law firms (Mayer, Brown, and Platt), and who was previously also president and CEO of the Amalgamated Bank of Chicago (on the role of both Kantor and Daley, see MacArthur, 2001).<sup>10</sup> Within the White House, Clinton’s then chief of staff and former Fortune 500 CEO McLarty was also instrumental in keeping NAFTA high on the agenda and ensuring its successful passage through Congress (Woodward, 2004: 137). After stepping down as chief of staff, McLarty continued to work in the White House as special envoy to the Americas, in which role McLarty maintained intensive contacts with the influential Council of the Americas (of which he later became a director), a policy planning body founded by David Rockefeller and oriented to promote the Open Door in Latin America. According to Rockefeller (2002: 437), McLarty was “our liaison in the White House.”

It is important to stress that NAFTA was, despite its name, not just or even primarily about trade as such, but about opening up Mexico for U.S. FDI by removing regulatory barriers, banning the discrimination against foreign (U.S.) corporations, enhancing the protection of (foreign) investors’ property rights (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 227), and more generally promoting a neoliberal restructuring of the Mexican political economy that would deepen its subordination to American capitalism (see also Wise, 1998). As Larry Summers, then Treasury undersecretary for international affairs, argued later

[NAFTA] resulted in a profound change in the internal political dynamics in Mexico in favor of the progressive forces that believed in the market and friendship with the United States as opposed to the forces that believed more in socialism and opposition to the United States.

(Summers cited in Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 229)

The removal of non-tariff barriers (that is, all kinds of domestic regulation hindering the freedom of capital), and the bolstering of (the protection of) property rights and hence the development of the appropriate politico-legal regime were also the key goals of many of the hundreds (Dumbrell, 2009: 48) of bilateral free trade agreements as well so-called Bilateral Investment Treaties that were concluded by the Clinton administration, opening foreign markets for the investment of American TNCs.

Beyond NAFTA, America's market opening strategy under Clinton was oriented in particular toward the so-called emerging markets. Early on, Clinton's (economic) grand-strategy makers – *inter alia* undersecretary of commerce for international trade and previously a managing director of Lehman Brothers and top manager at Blackstone Group, Jeffrey Garten (see Garten, 1996) – focused on what were called the 10 Big Emerging Markets (Department of Commerce, 1994).<sup>11</sup> Four (China, India, Indonesia, and South Korea) of these ten markets were in Asia, a key emerging growth center. Three were in what was already an integral part of the United States' economic orbit but in which economic penetration was to be deepened (Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil), while the other two were Turkey and the new post-communist market of Poland.

In spite of this focus on emerging markets, Clinton's free trade and investment strategy was ultimately global in scope and sought to complete and institutionalize the post-war move toward freer trade. It was hence that the Clinton administration pushed for a successful completion of the Uruguay GATT round, which was to establish the WTO, and lobbied hard and successfully for its ratification by Congress (Dumbrell, 2009: 54), a deal, as Clinton argued, that would benefit the United States as it required "all trading nations to play by the same rules," and "since the United States has the most productive and competitive economy in the world" (Clinton, 1994b). Like NAFTA, the WTO from the start was about more than free trade but oriented to the liberalization of investment as well. It was also in the context of the WTO that the Clinton administration's policy to integrate China into the global trading system and indeed into global liberal capitalism came most clearly to the fore.

#### *The economic Open Door in East Asia: "engaging China" with an "insurance policy"*

Since the end of the Cold War, America's grand strategic interest in China was no longer focused on using China in a global balance of power game against other great powers. Rather, China, now that Deng Xiaoping had opened China's market from 1979 onwards, came to be perceived as a trading partner and a

target for American FDI, while also increasingly seen as a (rising) great power in its own right, potentially challenging U.S. hegemony in East Asia. It was this dual nature of China's growing significance that has also shaped U.S. grand strategy vis-à-vis China since the Clinton administration (for some patterns of continuity in U.S.-Chinese relations see Cohen, 2010). For the Clinton administration the strategy came down to one of what was called "engagement" (White House, 1995: 29; Department of Defense, 1995; Nye, 1995), that is, a strategy aimed at further "integrating China into the market-based world economic system" (White House, 1999: 38), but with an "insurance policy,"<sup>12</sup> that is a "hedge" against the chance that China would not be (willing to be) integrated into the U.S.-dominated liberal world order, or the so-called "international system of rules and norms" (White House, 1998: 43).

While there was pressure outside the Clinton administration to contain China,<sup>13</sup> this was deemed to be an irrational policy as it would forfeit the reasonable chance of China actually "becoming a responsible great power in the region" (Nye, 1995: 94; see also White House, 1998: 43). With regard to the region as a whole, Joseph Nye, formerly as well as currently member of, among others, the Aspen Strategy Group and the TC, and at the time assistant secretary of defense for international and security affairs, American national interest dictated "deep engagement in the [East Asian] region," an engagement that involved a continuing commitment to regional allies (first and foremost Japan); fostering the development of multilateral regional institutions (such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum) "to complement American alliance leadership," and maintaining (despite the end of the Cold War) a very substantial "forward-based troop presence" (Nye, 1995: 90, 95; see also Department of Defense, 1995). According to a Pentagon report written under the direction of Nye, a principal reason for the latter was the fact that it "discourage[s] the emergence of a regional hegemon" (Department of Defense, 1995: 23). It furthermore "guarantees the security of sea lanes vital to the flow of Middle East oil," and generally fosters "stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region" (*ibid.*: 7). The growing prosperity of the region was seen as underpinned by America's commitment to upholding the "international political order" in the region (Nye, 1995: 9), while also seen as serving the goal of U.S. "prosperity" with "trade and investment opportunities offered by the dynamic Asian economies," with a Pentagon report noting that exports to the region had grown at twice the rate of those to the European community (Department of Defense, 1995: 6). Indeed, maintaining America's large troop presence in Asia also helped to "ensure that trade flows freely in and out of the region" (Nye, 1995: 95).

In sum, Clinton's liberal engagement strategy vis-à-vis China, and East Asia generally, was about maintaining U.S. liberal hegemony in the region. Clinton's China strategy, in particular, was increasingly aimed at deepening the trade and investment ties with China, and "opening China's highly protected market through elimination of trade barriers" (White House, 1999: 38). Underlining the global ambition of Clinton's trade and investment agenda, it was thus that China's wish to join the WTO was met with a very positive response from the

Clinton administration (and was subsequently realized under Bush 43). While Clinton had campaigned against George H.W. Bush's "coddling" of the "butchers of Beijing," in what has become a familiar pattern human rights were quickly moved far down on the agenda in U.S.-China relations once Clinton was in office (Bacevich, 2002: 91; LaFeber, 2006: 379; Cohen, 2010: 249–62), and his administration started to negotiate the extension of "permanent normal trade relations" to China, a key and necessary step toward China's eventual admission to the WTO. The latter agreement, which passed the Senate in 2000, was strongly supported by leading U.S. transnational corporations (LaFeber, 2006: 380).

While there was a serious confrontation over Taiwan in 1995–96, with Clinton sending an aircraft carrier into the Taiwan Strait (Cohen, 2010: 254–7), overall the Clinton administration had reason to believe at the end of the second term that engagement was indeed working and in this way the Open Door in Asia was secured. From North American (NAFTA) to East Asia and to the global level (WTO), Clinton's global market opening strategy was thus a success from the perspective of the American corporate elite (dominated by the interests of transnational capital), with which, as we have seen, the Clinton administration was so closely interwoven.

#### *Clinton's instrumentalist multilateralism*

The creation of the WTO as a significant institutionalization of neoliberal globalization and the creation of another multilateral framework, next to for instance the IMF and the World Bank, that would reflect U.S. preferences, also indicates how the institutions of *global governance* (which as a concept rose to academic prominence during the same era) constituted an important means of American grand strategy under Clinton. However, this should not be taken to indicate, as is sometimes done, a strong multilateralist orientation of the Clinton administration. To reiterate a point made in Chapter 2, the dichotomy between unilateralism and multilateralism is, while arguably analytically useful, empirically false in the sense that U.S. grand strategy has always exhibited a mix of both, whereby the commitment to multilateral institutions above all came in the form of investing in international regimes in as much as the United States was able to use those regimes to make other states follow U.S. rules, rather than binding itself to those rules (see also Skidmore, 2011; cf. e.g., Ikenberry, 1998/99). Indeed, Lake emphasized how he saw multilateral institutions as mere possible instruments of U.S. power: "only one overriding factor can determine whether the U.S. should act multilaterally or unilaterally, and that is America's interests.... The simple question in each instance is this: what works best?" (Lake, 1993; for a similar point see Christopher, 1995). Moreover, as several analysts have argued (Dumbrell, 2002: 49, 53; Skidmore, 2005), during Clinton's second term, unilateralist tendencies were increasingly coming to the fore, especially with regard to the use of military force.

***The Open Door in wider Europe: “democratic enlargement” and NATO expansion***

The second key component of Clinton’s grand strategy, what we see as America’s eastward drive into the territories formerly controlled by the Soviet Union while maintaining hegemony over Western Europe, is fully in line with the global offensive of market expansion (*inter alia* through bilateral and multi-lateral free trade agreements) as just analyzed, but is more regionally focused, and reminds us of the fact (as discussed in [Chapter 2](#)) that despite its non-territorial aspirations, American grand strategy has long since ultimately involved opening the door to specific territories and hence expanding the territory of which the U.S. state and U.S. capital can exercise a measure of control.

What Lake’s National Security Council had dubbed a strategy of “democratic enlargement” was aimed to fulfill the promise of a true globalization of the Open Door, but, *given* the perceived “vital” security interest in “European stability” (White House, 1995: 25), was above all focused on post-Cold War Europe. According to a 1993 Presidential Review Directive, the aim here was to ensure that the “political vacuum” that had opened up in Central and Eastern Europe would be “filled by values, economic practices and systems of governance compatible with, not hostile to, fundamental Western interests,” hence American policy should be directed to extending “Western values eastward” and consolidating “a market-oriented and democratic zone in the center of Europe” (National Security Council, 1993). Democratic enlargement was in fact as much about supporting the “*economic* transition in Central and Eastern Europe” and hence promoting “market reforms” (White House, 1995: 28; our emphasis) as about democratization as such. As the 1995 NSS formulated the logic behind the economic Open Door: “[t]he short-term difficulties of taking Central and Eastern Europe into Western economic institutions will be more than rewarded if they succeed and if they are customers for America’s and Western Europe’s goods and services tomorrow” (White House, 1995: 27). Here, with the help of both the IMF and the World Bank, the Western strategy as led by the United States to effectuate this “economic transition” in Central and Eastern Europe became one of promoting radical neoliberal restructuring, including a privatization program or what came to be known as “shock therapy” (see, e.g., Gowan, 1999a: ch. 9).

*Incorporating Russia?*

In the administration’s effort to “see freedom take hold where that will help us most” and pushing for “democratic and market reforms,” the Clinton administration singled out Russia as “a key state” (White House, 1995: 23). Involving a close partnership with “reformist” Russian president Boris Yeltsin (Dumbrell, 2009: 100–1), supporting what was believed to be Russia’s nascent but fragile “market democracy” became a key priority of U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy (*ibid.*; Smith, 2012: 325). “Democratic enlargement” policy vis-à-vis Russia, too, however, boiled down first and foremost to the promotion of a fire-sale of

Russia's state assets, which not only created a Russian oligarchy but also opened up (even if in the end less than was hoped for) Russia to foreign investment, with U.S. capital becoming the biggest investor in the 1990s (LaFeber, 2006: 392).

U.S. officials central to America's push for Russian privatization were Larry Summers, the "economics point-man at the Treasury department" (Dumbrell, 2009: 101), and his boss, Bentsen (see for his early case for supporting "Russia's democratic and economic reforms," Bentsen, 1993), as well as his later successor Rubin, while economic adviser Stiglitz opposed the policy in vain (Hirsch, 2010: 132–4). Summers, Gore, and others on the Clinton team were also instrumental in securing several IMF loans to Russia in the early and mid 1990s (Dumbrell, 2009: 104; Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 243). According to Summers, the reforms the IMF demanded as a condition for the loans were not "arbitrary" but a "reflection of the immutable laws of economics," which prescribed that what Summers called the "three -ations – privatization, stabilization and liberalization ... must be completed as soon as possible" (Summers cited in Mann, 2013: 201–2). The Clinton's administration's active involvement in administering shock therapy to Russia's ailing post-Soviet economy was through the institutionalization of Russo-American relations through the so-called Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, launched in 1993, involving the U.S. vice president and the Russian prime minister, and which "profoundly implicated Washington in the Moscow power struggles between market reformers, nationalists and security-oriented figures" (Dumbrell, 2009: 101).

One new area of contention between the two former superpowers was the Caspian Sea region, where the United States and Russia competed for access to the region's huge oil and gas reserves. Here, the Clinton administration devoted considerable strategic effort to, in its own words, make it "a priority to work with the countries of the region to develop multiple pipeline ventures that will ensure access to the oil" (White House, 1998: 32), specifically supporting the pursuit of U.S. oil majors Exxon and Chevron of lucrative contracts with post-Soviet states (LaFeber, 2006: 389–91), but also to generally to continue to fulfill America's hegemonic role with regard to oil. While the White House and the Kremlin under Yeltsin continued to maintain friendly relations, these relations were toward the end of the Clinton presidency also increasingly strained because of the drive for NATO expansion and even more so because of the Kosovo war, to be discussed below.

In fact, even before the Kosovo war, according to leading Russia scholar Stephen Cohen, beneath the outer appearance of partnership with Yeltsin's Russia, "[t]he real U.S. policy was different—a relentless, winner-take-all exploitation of Russia's post-1991 weakness," consisting of the following elements: "[a] growing military encirclement of Russia, on and near its borders, by U.S. and NATO bases"; "[a] tacit (and closely related) U.S. denial that Russia has any legitimate security concerns outside its own territory, even in ethnically akin or contiguous former Soviet republics such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia," and "[e]ven more, a presumption that Russia does not have full sovereignty within its own borders, as expressed by constant U.S. interventions in Moscow's

internal affairs since 1992” taking the form of a “crusade” under the Clinton administration (Cohen, 2011: ch. 7).

*Maintaining and expanding U.S. European hegemony: reviving and enlarging NATO*

In what Russia’s leadership perceived as an encirclement, an important step was the first round of NATO enlargement that took place under the Clinton administration in 1999, with the three former Warsaw Pact members, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joining the alliance (after former East Germany had already been incorporated in 1990), and which had become an important focus of Clinton’s grand strategy since the first term. To an extent NATO expansion can be viewed as a response to the growing failure of U.S. policy to transform Russia into a liberal market democracy, to make it, in the words of America’s then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Shalikashvili, “more like us” (cited in Goldgeier, 1999: 76).<sup>14</sup> Increasingly, in this context, Clinton’s grand strategy in the region boiled down to a push eastward that deliberately excluded Russia from the post-Cold War security order (Gowan, 1999a: 295).

Although Gorbachev had consented to German reunification within NATO on the Western promise that NATO would not expand further eastward (Callinicos, 2009: 190; Stone and Kuznick, 2013: 470–1), American grand-strategy planners and grand-strategy makers clearly never felt bound by this promise and saw NATO expansion as one of those great opportunities offered by the end of the Cold War, an idea that had also been promoted by the PPI (Smith, 2012: 365), which, as we have seen, was closely linked to the administration, and not least the president and the vice president, through its parent organization, the DLC, with as many as five of Clinton’s key grand-strategy makers affiliated, including the president himself.

In this kind of thinking, NATO remained crucial in as much as Europe remained of preeminent geostrategic importance for American global hegemony. Carter’s former national security adviser, and still a preeminent member of the (Democratic) foreign policy establishment, Brzezinski, elaborated this line of geopolitical reasoning some years later by arguing that the European Union (EU) is “the Eurasian bridgehead for American power and the potential springboard for the democratic global system’s expansion into Eurasia” (Brzezinski, 1997: 74). Indeed, in this respect, the geopolitical push eastward was not to stop at the borders of the three countries incorporated in 1999. As Gowan (1999a: 301) suggests, Ukraine was the “more important prize” here, with the Clinton administration aiding Ukraine financially as well bringing it closer to NATO as a way to “help to secure Ukraine firmly in the heart of a new, undivided, democratic Europe” (Clinton, 1997b; see also White House, 1995: 5, 23; 1998: 33, 38–40).

It was thus that the United States came to support the enlargement of the EU (Gowan, 1999a: 299–301), and to an extent also its deepening as represented by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, favoring especially the neoliberal restructuring of the European political economy (van Apeldoorn, 2002; see also van der Pijl,

2006: ch.8; Cafruny and Ryner, 2007). Of course, the deepening of the European project was only to be encouraged to the extent that it would not involve a weakening of NATO (e.g., White House, 1995: 26–7). The assertion of any degree of European foreign policy independence was effectively countered (Layne, 2006a: 113–16). More than support for EU enlargement and European unification along neoliberal lines, the push for the expansion of what some IR realists had mistaken for a Cold War relic, NATO, became central to the Clinton’s geopolitical strategy in the Eurasian region.

Right after the end of the Cold War, the Aspen Strategy Group, in a report co-authored by Clinton’s later defense secretary, Perry, already wrote that it was the United States that had to continue to play the “dominant role” in European security because it is the only power that can “simultaneously guard against the revival of a Soviet threat … and provide the necessary reassurance that Germany will not disrupt the European balance now or a decade hence” (Aspen Strategy Group, 1991: 21). The Clinton administration became convinced that NATO would be the key instrument in achieving these objectives. Among Clinton’s grand-strategy makers, the biggest proponents of NATO expansion were Lake, responsible for developing the concept of “democratic enlargement” as the successor to containment, as well as Albright, Gore, and Richard Holbrooke (not in our selection, but see [Chapter 6](#)), first in his capacity as U.S. ambassador to Germany and later in 1994 as assistant secretary of state for European affairs (Goldgeier, 1999: [ch. 3](#)). Lake laid out the rationale for NATO expansion as follows in 1996: “NATO can do for Europe’s East what it did 50 years ago for Europe’s West: prevent a return to local rivalries, strengthen democracy … and provide the conditions in which market economies can flourish” (Lake cited in Dumbrell, 2009: 125). Indeed, NATO expansion in this respect was seen as not only instrumental to expanding the economic and the political Open Door eastward, but also maintaining it in Western Europe, as the latter would be threatened by instability in the East. As Clinton warned in this context “[a] gray zone of insecurity must not re-emerge in Europe” (Clinton, 1996a). In this respect, Clinton’s NSS of 1995 (White House, 1995: 26) explained that: “NATO has always been far more than a transitory response to a temporary threat. It has been a guarantor of European democracy and a force for European stability.” More specifically, NATO expansion was aimed at “help[ing to] assure that no part of Europe will revert to a zone of great power competition or a sphere of influence” (*ibid.*: 27; see also Albright, 1997a).

In other words, NATO was still, as in the early Cold War phrase, about “keeping the Russians out, the Germans down” – that is, a strategy of “double containment” (LaFeber, 2006: 384) vis-à-vis these (potential) “other great powers” – and “the Americans in,” firmly entrenching U.S. hegemony in the region.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, as Layne has concluded: “post-cold war NATO was the instrument through which the United States perpetuated its hegemonic role in Europe” (Layne, 2006a: 113; see also Layne, 2000; Gowan, 1999a: ch. 12). The continuing commitment to hegemony over Europe is also why the Clinton administration remained committed to keeping around 100,000 troops stationed in Europe (White House, 1998: 37).

### *The Balkan Wars*

Not only was NATO's membership to be expanded, also the scope of its mission was to expand beyond the alliance's borders. With respect to this new "out of area" role, the 1995 intervention in the Bosnian civil war by bombing Serbian forces in order to force a peace settlement under NATO leadership was going to be "the first major test of the new NATO" (Clinton, 1996a).<sup>16</sup> Another test was passed in the form of bombing Serbia proper over the separatist province of Kosovo in the spring of 1999. More generally, these military interventions were, like NATO expansion itself, intended to stabilize Europe and to reaffirm America's role as the region's hegemon. These were thus, as Layne (2006a: 129–31; see also Layne, 2000; Gowan, 1999b) has forcefully argued, interrelated policy objectives in as much as both the perpetuation and expansion of NATO as well as the Balkans interventions were driven by a commitment to Open Door hegemony, while these interventions were also seen as necessary to bolster the expanding alliance.

An initial reluctance to intervene in the Bosnian civil war (especially on the part of the Pentagon – see Daalder, 2000; Halberstam, 2003) waned as the administration grew increasingly worried that the growing atrocities in the former Yugoslavia tarnished the U.S. image and undermined its credibility as the "indispensable" leader – so that something (more) needed "to be done" – if diplomacy failed force would have to be used (Daalder, 2000: 107; Dumbrell, 2009: 86). What was ultimately at stake was America's position as the world's hegemonic power. When then deputy NSA Berger suggested to Clinton in an early principals meeting on Bosnia in February 1993 (the minutes of which have been recently declassified), was that one could also consider "another possible approach.... We could say this is a European problem and they should take responsibility for enforcing a settlement." Clinton interrupted by objecting that "[w]e can not do that without giving up our whole position in the world" (Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia, 1993). Preserving America's position was also bound up with maintaining the legitimacy of NATO. As Clinton (1994a) stated: "[w]hat is at stake is not just the safety of the people in Sarajevo ... but the credibility of the alliance itself," an argument also forcefully made within the White House by Albright and Lake (Daalder, 2000: 24), as well as by Perry (Halberstam, 2003: 326–7).

Reinforcing these arguments was the fear that if not contained, the instability in the Balkans might spread to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (Layne, 2006a: 130) and endanger the whole project of, as Clinton put it, "integrat[ing] the former Communist states into our fabric of liberal democracy, economic prosperity, and military cooperation" (Clinton, 1994a). Ultimately this would also threaten "other democracies" (*ibid.*), and thereby the Open Door throughout Europe. It was indeed no coincidence that the architect of the "democratic enlargement" policy, Anthony Lake, became the central policy entrepreneur with respect to the administration's Bosnia policy, and with Gore and especially UN ambassador Albright among the most forceful advocates of

military intervention (see Daalder, 2000; esp. 166–7; 171–2; see also Halberstam, 2003: 196–7; Dumbrell, 2009: 84). Indeed, Albright favored “NATO action” in order to “impose a settlement” right from the start (Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia, 1993).

The same set of motives – that is, the desire to maintain U.S. hegemony over Europe and preserve NATO and its credibility as an instrument of U.S. power over Europe – played again a major role in the decision to go to war with Serbia over the alleged humanitarian issue of the fate of the Kosovar Albanians in the increasingly violent clashes between the guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serbian security forces. As several authors (see especially Layne, 1999; Gowan, 1999b; Bacevich, 2002: 181–97; van der Pijl, 2006: 272–87; Cafruny, 2003, 2009) have compellingly argued, what turned out to be a 78-day NATO air campaign against Serbia had, however, less to do with a concern with the Kosovars per se and more with American hegemonic interests.<sup>17</sup> Again, U.S. hegemony and the project of reviving and legitimating an expanding NATO must be viewed as closely interlinked here. As, by that time, Secretary of State Albright clarified shortly before the war, since “there is no natural boundary to violence in Southern Europe,” the “[r]egional conflict” that would ensue without NATO being prepared to intervene militarily “would undermine NATO’s credibility as the guarantor of peace and stability in Europe” (Albright, 1999).

Not only was the Kosovo war about preserving U.S. hegemony, it was specifically about maintaining the Open Door in Europe (see also Bacevich, 2002: 196; Layne, 2006a: 130–1). In making the case for the Kosovo war, Clinton in one speech quite directly referred to these interests:

[I]f our country is going to be prosperous and secure, we need a Europe that is safe, secure, free, united, a good partner with us for trading – they’re wealthy enough to buy our products – and someone who will share the burdens of taking care of the problems of the world. We’re working hard to have that kind of Europe. I supported the union of the European countries, economically, the union of Germany. I supported very strongly the expansion of NATO.... And if we’re going to have a strong economic relationship that includes our ability to sell around the world, Europe has got to be a key.... Now, that’s what this Kosovo thing is all about.

(Clinton 1999b)

With NATO airstrikes in the end forcing the capitulation of Serbian president Milošević, the United States had demonstrated the utility and effectiveness of the post-Cold War U.S.-led NATO over any independent European efforts, reinforcing the Atlanticist forces in Europe, and in Germany in particular (van der Pijl, 2006: ch. 8). The Kosovo war furthermore served the purpose of putting the nail in the coffin of “state socialism” and generally economic nationalism in Serbia, thus opening the door to Western capital in the former Yugoslavia (Cafruny, 2009: 68; cf. Gowan, 1999b: 259: see also van der Pijl, 2006: 405).

Finally, NATO expansion and the related Balkan interventions must also be understood against the background of the geopolitical significance of South-eastern Europe. Stability in, and U.S. hegemony over, this region as well as Central and Eastern Europe arguably also helped, following the aforementioned geostrategic thinking of Brzezinski (1997), to extend U.S. influence into the Central Asian region, and in particular – in the context of planned pipelines – into the oil-rich Caspian Sea basin (via the Black Sea) (see Stokes and Raphael, 2010). This, then, points to how within the *globalism* of the Open Door, and hence within the vision underpinning American grand strategy, the major regions of the world are all interconnected, and how America's "core interests" actually extend far into the periphery. It is to Clinton's use of force beyond Europe that we will now turn in discussing the final distinctive element of his grand strategy.

### ***Confronting the enemies of neoliberal globalization in the periphery: interpreting Clinton's use of force***

The Kosovo war represented the most extensive use of force under the Clinton administration and was at the same time representative for how this crucial means of U.S. global power was employed within Clinton's grand strategy. We will now discuss this third and final element of what here we have interpreted as Clinton's variety of the global Open Door. The following three aspects of Clinton's use of force can be distinguished. The first is, despite the emphasis on global trade and investment, the increasing militarization of U.S. foreign policy under Clinton (Bacevich, 2002: esp. chs 6–7; Dumbrell, 2002: 142–3), which peaked with the Kosovo war. The increasing emphasis on the use of force arguably reflects the rising awareness of Clinton's grand-strategy makers in the second half of the 1990s that the (neoliberal) Open Door could not just expand through trade agreements and letting the forces of the global market do their "beneficial" work, but that its expansion needed to be bolstered by America's military might. Or as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (1999) wrote on the eve of the bombing of Serbia: "[T]he hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist – McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15." This insight was shared by those within the Democratic Leadership Council and its in-house think tank, the PPI, who, as we have seen, represented the hawkish wing of the Democratic Party. In this context, Will Marshall had warned that, "ironically," now that the Soviet enemy had been defeated, the danger was not so much the continued growth of the military-industrial complex, but rather losing "key parts of that complex." Saving those parts was to be a key task for the new president (Marshall, 1993: 312).

Although under Clinton the post-Cold War downward trend in defense expenditure, that had set in during the later Reagan years, initially continued – even if the cuts were much less of a peace dividend than some had expected, underlining the continuity in this respect in spite of the collapse of the Soviet Union – this decline was reversed after Clinton's fifth year in office (Korb *et al.*, 2011). In 1999 Clinton announced another \$112 billion defense budget increase

(to be spread out over the next six years) (Dumbrell, 2009: 142), and justified this reversal by arguing that while the logic of globalization is “inexorable,” “[w]e cannot wish into being the world we seek” (Clinton, 1999a). Hence the continuing need for a very large military underwriting global capitalism. While the possession of this giant coercive apparatus is in itself, as we argued in [Chapter 2](#), important in backing up American economic expansionism, implementing a globalist grand strategy also requires its actual regular use.

Although the more bellicose orientation of Clinton’s second term is often attributed to Albright, this disposition was more general within the Clinton administration. Nor was, *pace* its multilateralist image (cf. Skidmore, 2005), the Clinton administration in no way prepared to make its use of force conditional upon even limited international support, let alone be constrained by the UN Security Council or the UN Charter (White House, 1999: 19–20), a principle demonstrated by the Kosovo war. Specifically, then Defense Secretary Cohen (1997: 8) clarified in his quadrennial defense review in 1997 that the “unilateral use of force” was warranted to defend vital interests such as “preventing the coalition of a hostile regional coalition or hegemon” (i.e., an explicit commitment to preserving U.S. global hegemony or primacy that was even more explicitly also at the heart of the leaked 1992 Defense Policy Guidance report from the Pentagon – see [Chapter 5](#)), as well as “uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources.”

A second aspect of Clinton’s use of force is that although, following Albright’s line, his presidency was marked by an “unprecedented level of military activism” (Bacevich, 2002: 141), his use of the military was largely limited to airstrikes, seeking to avoid the offensive use of ground troops (even if this was considered an option during the Kosovo war). Although the Gulf War supposedly had eliminated the Vietnam syndrome, the fear for U.S. casualties continued to shape America’s preference for *precision* bombing its enemies from high above the ground or with cruise missiles, employing, in the words of Bacevich (2002: 149), “these weapons routinely whenever it wished to coerce, cajole, or punish adversaries who violated the norms putatively governing the open world or to counter the impression that the United States lacked determination and resolve.” While the emphasis put on minimizing the risks to American lives has led some to the view that Clinton’s use of force was characterized by a reluctance and a lack of decisiveness (Dueck, 2006: 137–45; see also Dumbrell, 2002: 52; Halberstam, 2003; cf. Walker, 2009: 231), this reluctance was more restricted to the use of ground forces than to the use of force as such. Still, it remains a fact that Clinton’s application of military power was restrained in as much as it was “not to be unleashed [but] doled out in precisely measured increments” (Bacevich, 2002: 49). Arguably, it is a kind of coercive power that fits well in the post-Cold War era in which there was no longer a major geopolitical competitor but still a large and indeed expanding capitalist empire to police, with miscreants of various types to be held in check.

A third aspect of the use of force under Clinton is that it was often done in the name of “humanitarian” concerns, reflecting a broader rise of a Western

post-Cold War discourse (as produced by policymakers such as Clinton and then British Prime Minister Blair, as well as by academics increasingly focusing on these issues) on human rights and the associated concept of “armed humanitarianism” (Jackson, 1993) or “liberal interventionism” (Jamison, 2011; see also van der Pijl, 2006: ch. 11; Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris, 2008). With the communist enemy defeated and terrorist networks not yet sufficiently visible to the American public to qualify as the new enemy, the unrivaled power of the United States in the Clinton era could, as we have seen, expand into new areas, but also needed a new legitimization. While the concept of rogue states partly served this purpose, a broader appeal had to be made as well. It was in this context that “the humanitarian agenda” (Lake, 1993) became part of the foreign policy “vision” that Clinton’s grand-strategy makers were seeking to formulate now that the Cold War was won. The Clinton administration saw “humanitarian activities” as a complement to the “efforts to promote democracy and human rights” and aimed at “broadening the community of free-market democracies” (White House, 1998: 35). The administration’s humanitarian programs thus included “activities and efforts intended to bolster market economies” (*ibid.*). In sum, the humanitarian agenda was an integral part of U.S. liberal expansionism. Although the humanitarian agenda was thus broader than just the use of military power (cf. White House, 1998: 5), it did become part of the legitimating discourse surrounding the Clinton’s administration’s use of force. Indeed, “humanitarian interests” were, after “vital” and “important” national interests, identified as a “third category” of possible reasons to use force (e.g., White House, 1995: 12).

A legitimization on humanitarian grounds was of course also prominent in the cases of both the Bosnia intervention and the Kosovo war. The first “humanitarian war” that Clinton had to deal with, however, was inherited from Bush 41 and concerned the UN-authorized but U.S.-led “Operation Restore Hope” in Somalia.<sup>18</sup> After Clinton took over, what had started out as a mission to provide humanitarian relief by intervening between the warring factions (itself in part a legacy of the Cold War interventions in the country) turned into a broader “nation-building project” in which the United States went after the leading warlord (Halberstam, 2003: 257–8; LaFeber, 2006: 375). However, when forces of that same warlord brought a U.S. Blackhawk helicopter down in October 1993 and later dragged the dead body of an American soldier through the streets of Mogadishu it was quickly done with the administration’s appetite to continue this intervention, and Clinton started withdrawing U.S. forces in the months after. While Somalia was part of the strategically located Horn of Africa, the interests were not deemed to be sufficiently important, even from an expansive Open Door globalism, to bear the now increasing political costs of this operation. Indeed, the Somalia debacle was probably one of the reasons, beyond the legacy of Vietnam and a general unwillingness to risk many U.S. casualties, that in subsequent years Clinton and his advisers were loath to wage ground wars (Bacevich, 2002: 146–7; Dumbrell, 2009: 67).

### Confronting the “rogues” and Middle East hegemony

Beyond the cloak of humanitarian intervention, the use of force against enemies of neoliberal globalization by the Clinton administration was focused on two enemies – seen as closely related in the administration’s discourse – who would take center stage in the next administration: radical Islamic terrorist networks and, above all, Iraq. In the perspective of the Clinton administration, Iraq was in the same category as Iran, that of “rogue states” – accused of sponsoring terrorism and developing WMDs – potentially threatening the *Pax Americana* in the crucial region of the Middle East (e.g., White House, 1998: 52–3). In order to meet this threat, a strategy of “dual containment” (Lake, 1994; White House, 1995: 30; see also Fayazmanesh, 2008) was being pursued, premised on the “basic strategic principle” (with the help of friendly states such as Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia) of “a favorable balance of power, one that will protect critical American interests in the security of our friends and in the free flow of oil at stable prices” (Lake, 1994: 48). Indeed, the aforementioned “vital” American interest of unimpeded access to “energy supplies, and strategic resources,” must be seen as key here, keeping in mind, as pointed out in Chapter 2, that the control of the “global oil spigot” in the Middle East for the United States has not only to do with its own access to the oil, but as much with its control of global capitalism (Harvey, 2003: 19) and its role as guarantor of the global Open Door (see also Stokes and Raphael, 2010).

The policy of dual containment involved making the two rogue regimes “understand” that there is a price to pay for their recalcitrant commitment to remain on the wrong side of history” (Lake, 1994: 55). In the case of Iran, an enemy of the United States since the toppling of the U.S.-backed Shah in 1979, this meant seeking to change “the behavior of the Iranian government” (White House, 1998: 52), but without, given what were deemed to be prohibitive costs of such an action, seeking to topple the regime (Lake, 1994: 50). Indeed, during Clinton’s second term, when Iran’s government was led by reformist President Khatemi, the administration declared itself to be open to diplomatic dialogue (White House, 1998: 53; Dumbrell, 2009: 159), and in part responding to pressures of its own oil industry, mitigated the sanctions against Iran (Fayazmanesh, 2008: 85–94).

The greater worry, and increasingly so during Clinton’s second term, however, concerned Iraq, which Clinton in 1998 called “a rogue state with weapons of mass destruction, ready to use them or provide them to terrorists, drug traffickers, or organized criminals” (Clinton, 1998a). As Vivek Chibber (2008: 29–43), has argued, it became clear toward the end of the 1990s that the previously imposed sanctions regime against Iraq was not working from the perspective of the United States. It had led to the estimated death of more than half a million Iraqi children (Crosette, 1995) – a price that Albright notoriously called “worth it” – but Saddam Hussein was still in place and still in control of huge oil reserves that in the context of a relatively tight market threatened to give the Iraqi regime a leverage that the United States was not willing to countenance

(Chibber, 2008: 31; see further in Chapter 5).<sup>19</sup> Hence, with Albright citing the United States' "vital national interest in the security of the region's oil supplies" as a key reason for its policy toward Iraq (Albright, 1997b), the pressures for regime change – as an alternative to the sanction regime – grew. In October 1998, Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act. Regime change was now an official U.S. policy objective, though the change was supposed to take place through financial and covert support for domestic opposition groups seeking to overthrow Saddam, not through outright war.

Nevertheless, after already tens of thousands of sorties had been carried out by the U.S. and British air forces in the context of the no-fly zones that had been imposed upon Northern and Southern Iraq, a bigger military intervention, Operation Desert Fox (following an earlier cruise missile strike in 1996), consisting of a four day campaign of intensive bombing and cruise missile attacks, was launched in December 1998. Justifying the short war by referring to Iraq's alleged WMD program as "a clear and present danger to the stability of the Persian Gulf" (Clinton, 1998b), the Clinton administration had given its strongest signal yet that it was willing to use *unilateral* force – against fierce opposition by both Russia and China – to punish the Baathist regime, officially for not complying with UN weapons inspections, and "degrade" its forces (Bacevich, 2002: 151). Ultimately this was part of a "long-term plan to get rid of Saddam" as it was formulated in a declassified memo of the National Security Council (National Security Council, 1998).<sup>20</sup> Yet, the bombing did not produce regime change, nor was this probably the intended outcome (Bacevich, 2002: 151; Dumbrell, 2009: 156–7) as that objective was indeed long term. In the end, Clinton and his team remained one step removed from taking the already emerging rationality of how to deal with this particular thorn in the side of America to its logical conclusion. That was to be left to the neoconservative grand-strategy makers that came to occupy the White House a few years later, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Rogue states were partly thus identified because of their alleged links with terrorist groups (Clinton, 1996b). The attention to terrorism as a major national security threat was limited at first but grew in the course of the 1990s, and more and more came to fill the post-Cold War "threat deficit" as Barry Buzan (2006: 1101) has called it. Indeed, according to Clinton's counter-terrorism czar Richard Clarke, the Clinton administration – in particular the president himself, Lake, and of course Clarke – did early on identify formulating a response to "terrorism" as a major priority in shaping the post-Cold War order (Clarke, 2004: 90).

While "terrorism" has proven to be a useful label in the past to struggle against enemies (within a Cold War context) in both Latin America and in the Middle East (especially under Reagan), it gained a different dimension in the 1990s with the rise of a violent Islamic resistance to Western and U.S. imperialism. This, then, was the "blowback" (Johnson, 2004) that was partly produced by America's support for the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation (stuffing that country with arms and helping the Taliban into power, see Kinzer, 2006: ch. 12, Gardner, 2008: 55–61; see also the next chapter),

combined with its ongoing policy of maintaining hegemonic control over the Middle East.

When in 1996 a truck bomb killed 19 Americans in a military complex in Saudi Arabia, Clinton declared that: “terrorism is the enemy of our generation, and we must prevail” because the alternative would be to give up America’s position as the leader and guarantor of the liberal world order: “America will remain a target because we are uniquely present in the world, because we act to advance peace and democracy, because we have taken a tougher stand against terrorism, and because we are the most open society on Earth” (Clinton, 1996b). Osama bin Laden first came into American public focus when in August 1998 two groups affiliated to him carried out simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, to which Clinton responded by ordering cruise missile strikes on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan (the latter against an alleged chemical weapons factory that turned out to make only medicine for a large part of Sudan’s population – Bacevich, 2002: 111).<sup>21</sup> Clinton (1998c) warned that “our battle against terrorism” was not ending with these strikes, and that America should prepare for “a long, ongoing struggle between freedom and fanaticism, between the rule of law and terrorism.” It was of course during the presidency of Clinton’s successor that this new struggle between good and evil, under the influence of neoconservative ideas, would be taken to its extremes. It is to this that we will turn in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how under Clinton the imperialism of the Open Door was once more reproduced, informed by a neoliberal ideology that had been in the ascendency since the 1980s and shaped by the new post-Cold War context that witnessed the demise of the Soviet Union and the apparent triumph of “American values.” Clinton’s grand strategy thus represented a particular variety of the global Open Door marked by a greater than ever unrestrained push for global marketization, opening up not just markets for trade and productive investment but also capital markets, thus liberating finance on a global scale. Seeking to make maximal use of the opportunity offered by America’s Cold War victory, Clinton’s *neoliberal globalization offensive* was geared both to expanding the Open Door into new areas and maintaining and consolidating it in areas where it had already been established in the post-war era, but where it was deemed to be threatened by new sources of post-Cold War instability, most notably in Europe. As such, Clinton’s grand strategy combined the use of trade and investment treaties and of the multilateral institutions of “global governance, resting on a degree of transnational (though Washington-centered) consensus, as well as the established instruments of U.S. financial (and dollar) hegemony, with a renewal of NATO as an instrument of U.S. hegemony in a post-Cold War context. This was accompanied by the increasingly regular use of force – even if restricted to airstrikes – against the enemies of neoliberal globalization, whether “rogue states” or suspected terrorist networks.

In sum, continuing and intensifying the wave of expansionism that had already set in following the crisis of the 1970s, Clinton's neoliberal globalization strategy revealed both a continuity in ends – having its origins in the nineteenth century – and a limited variation in means. The continuity in ends was paralleled, and to a considerable degree explained, by the continuity in the social sources of American grand strategy under Clinton, in particular the large degree of embeddedness within corporate elite networks. Not only were a considerable number of key grand-strategy makers former CEOs – e.g., Bentsen, Rubin, McLarty, and Perry – directly recruited from the corporate elite, many were also closely tied to the world of (corporate-funded) elite think tanks and transnational planning bodies, such as the CFR and the TC. Within Clinton's policy planning network we at the same time observe some distinctive features, that in combination with the changing global context and the (perceived) opportunities and threats emanating from it, help us to account for Clinton's grand strategy. Here we have observed how especially the Democratic Leadership Council has been instrumental in moving the Democratic Party that came to power under Clinton toward the so-called center, and hence to embrace many of the new "pro-business," neoliberal ideas that became increasingly dominant in the 1990s, as well as an activist and interventionist foreign policy committed to enlarging the American empire within a neoliberal mold.

When Clinton left the White House to make way for his Republican successor, his neoliberal globalization offensive appeared to be generally a success. Sandy Berger, who had moved up to Lake's post of national security adviser, in 2000 even boasted that Clinton's grand-strategy makers had "completed the first peacetime expansion of our global reach since the days of Theodore Roosevelt" (Berger, 2000: 23). Certainly, American transnational capital could be content with the fact that Clinton had vigorously promoted its interests by tearing down the barriers to trade and investment around the globe, among others through the creation of NAFTA and the WTO, both of which were celebrated as major foreign policy successes by the Clinton administration (White House, 1998: 34).

U.S.-led neoliberal globalization, which was both the context and to an important degree the outcome of Clinton's grand strategy, was also a success in as much as U.S. economic and financial power was enlarged, and the competitiveness of both U.S. manufacturing and financial capital enhanced (see Schwartz, 2010), in turn forming the foundation for continued U.S. expansionism.

Robert Reich (2009 [2007]: 106), who was one of the more socio-economically progressive but ultimately largely silenced voices in the Clinton administration, wrote many years later "[t]he Clinton administration ... was one of the most pro-business administrations in American history.... Business never had it so good. Corporate profits exploded, the stock market surged, CEO compensation went into the stratosphere." It is not that no one warned against the possible consequences of the neoliberal growth model promoted under Clinton, in particular regarding the free rein that was given to financial capital. In 1999 for instance, Congressman John Dingell, the son of one of the authors of the Glass–Steagall Act, argued against its repeal, that was then passed in the House,

by declaring that “[w]hat we are creating now is a group of institutions which are too big to fail,” adding the prescient warning that “[t]ax payers are going to be called upon to cure the failures we are creating tonight, and it is going to cost a lot of money . . . [j]ust be prepared for those events” (Dingell cited in Hirsch, 2010: 183). Of course, no one was prepared when the crisis did come as no one was listening to these warnings at the time, least of all the corporate elite economic advisers of President Clinton. In another early warning sign, the massive “anti-globalization” demonstrations at the WTO Seattle summit indicated that the popular consent with the global neoliberalism promoted by the Clinton administration was increasingly reaching its limits as transnational resistance and contestation was growing. But the full manifestations of these underlying contradictions of Clinton’s strategy would only become manifest at the end of the presidency of his successor, who continued to pursue the same neoliberal policies in most respects.

In other respects, however, the contradictions or at least the limits of Clinton’s grand strategy did begin to show in the final years of the administration. Indeed, as we have noted, the increasing resort to the use of force and the overall militarization of American grand strategy in the second term indicated that in the eyes of Clinton and his team the benefits of globalization could not be spread by market means alone nor through trade treaties and global institutions, but also necessitated the use of America’s more than ever supreme military power against those who resisted joining the family of “market democracies.” While the Kosovo war had effectively halted the “rogue state” of Serbia and the Yugoslavian war had ended, another rogue regime, that of Saddam Hussein, was still in place in spite of the official commitment to regime change. America’s future hegemony in the Middle East seemed far from assured. With respect to America’s relations with other (emerging) great powers, the future was uncertain. Although the incorporation of China into the WTO was nearing completion, it remained unclear to what extent the strategy of liberal engagement would prove a durable success. The incorporation of Russia and its transformation into a liberal market democracy had in the meantime become a clear failure, and a successfully revived and enlarged NATO had entrenched U.S. hegemony but at the expense of antagonizing what some had hoped could have been a partner in the new globalized world order. In the meantime, Clinton was also confronted with a new non-state adversary and opponent to (neo)liberal American expansionism – namely Islamic terrorism. It was in this context that the emphasis shifted from consent to coercion, a shift that was completed and radicalized by the administration of the son of Clinton’s predecessor. How and why this exactly happened, and how we can trace the origins of the new variety of the Open Door to the grand-strategy makers’ social positions and elite networks, will be the subject of the next chapter.

## Notes

- 1 As DLC founder Al From explained, “even if having the philosophy, and the governing agenda in hand, we still stood to be disappointed in the 1992 elections as we were in 1988 if we didn’t have a candidate espousing the DLC philosophy as the nominee,” and, as “a leader among governors in calling for welfare reform” and showing that he “understood the importance of the private economy.” From then found this candidate in Clinton (From, 2013).
- 2 In terms of both his corporate (see above) and his policy planning affiliations, Wharton can be seen as a key representative of the corporate elite, and a notable example of its recruitment into government service. Wharton, however, was not very successful as deputy secretary of state and was forced to resign within a year (Halberstam, 2003). What this shows, as indicated in the previous chapter, is that we must always be careful in interpreting the SNA data as the biggest linkers are not always the most significant actors.
- 3 Binder was, however, also affiliated with the historically important Committee for Economic Development, which is both business-led and solidly pro-free market.
- 4 The reference to “environmental soundness” is not as such part of the Open Door but did constitute one, though by far not central, element of Clinton’s foreign policy. Championed above all by Vice President Gore (though he would only turn into the kind of advocate he is now known for after leaving office), U.S. environmental policy came to focus on climate change. In spite of its rhetorical commitments, the Clinton administration did not submit the 1997 Kyoto Protocol for ratification to the Senate on the grounds that developing countries first had to agree to do more (White House, 1998: 14).
- 5 We have borrowed the term “globalization offensive” from van der Pijl (2006: ch. 8).
- 6 As Miles (2013: 29) argues, the inclusion of Cuba, clearly not threatening U.S. national security in any way, clearly showed that the only “real test of whether a nation should be a rogue or not was if policymakers in Washington said it was.”
- 7 Beyond returning to Wall Street, both men after government service also came to occupy key positions within the policy planning elite, with Rubin among others becoming co-chairman of the CFR in 2007, and Altman a Steering Committee member of Bilderberg. Beyond focusing on the budget deficit, the multi-millionaire investment banker Rubin in particular objected to a policy rhetoric, let alone an actual policy, that would target the wealthy (Woodward, 2004: 137, 240, 334).
- 8 Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors Laura Tyson, as well as economic adviser Stiglitz and Labor Secretary Robert Reich – all three academic economists (though Tyson as we have seen would later join the ranks of the corporate elite) – were somewhat concerned about the negative effects on growth that the spending cuts would have in the short term, but ultimately demurred (Woodward, 1994: 126–7; 151; 274–5; Dumbrell, 2009: 48; see also Hirsch, 2010). Beyond tactical differences such as this one, Tyson did not question the general policy orientation of the administration she advised, while – as noted before – Stiglitz and Reich were increasingly critical of key aspects of the overall strategy.
- 9 The act had been actively lobbied for by Wall Street and in the Senate was sponsored by members with close ties to the financial sector, especially Gramm, who had Wall Street as his biggest campaign donor and after leaving the Senate in 2002 landed a top job at Swiss-based financial giant UBS Warburg (Krugman, 2012: 86).
- 10 In yet another typical example of the revolving door, Daley would return to the corporate sector after stepping down as secretary of commerce, before becoming Obama’s chief of staff in 2011. A third important official involved was Rahm Emanuel (MacArthur, 2001), who later worked in Wall Street as well as joining the board of directors of Freddie Mac, and in 2009 became Obama’s first chief of staff.
- 11 The biographical information on Garten, who is not in our selection, is taken from <http://mba.yale.edu/faculty/profiles/garten.shtml>.

- 12 This is how Joseph Nye, who was assistant secretary in the Pentagon during the Clinton administration, called it during a Roundtable the authors of this book organized on the “Asia Pivot” at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association in Toronto, March 27, 2014.
- 13 Again, according to Joseph Nye in 2014, see above.
- 14 Gowan (1999a: 303–4) suggests that had this policy of opening up and incorporating Russia been more successful, the “Russia first” strategy favored by some in Washington would have been followed and NATO expansion been postponed.
- 15 The phrase to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down originally derives from NATO’s first secretary-general, Lord Ismay, who formulated this as NATO’s objectives in 1949.
- 16 Gowan (1999b: 277) argues that the policy here was informed precisely by the U.S. desire to show the “ineffectiveness of the EU by sabotaging EU peace efforts.” After that the way was cleared to demonstrate that only NATO, under U.S. leadership, could do the job.
- 17 Indeed, even if humanitarian motives did play a role, the Kosovo war was counterproductive in as much as it produced the humanitarian catastrophe that the Clinton administration claimed it wanted to prevent; the alleged massive and violent ethnic cleansing only took place after the NATO bombing started, while the latter also produced a huge refugee problem (Layne, 1999: 10–12; Chomsky, 2006: 96–7).
- 18 Another “humanitarian intervention” occurred when U.S. troops landed on Haiti to depose the junta and restore democratically elected leader Aristide to power. The U.S. invasion did not turn into a shooting war because Haiti’s military leaders at the last minute decided to step down. The Haiti case shows that while reluctant to use ground forces, the Clinton administration certainly was prepared to use them when perceived important national interests necessitated it (White House, 1995: 12). In this case, stability in America’s own backyard and the challenge to its power and prestige in the region as early actions by the Haitian junta (especially not allowing an American warship with 200 soldiers as part of a UN-led “nation-building” effort to dock in Port-au-Prince) had made the United States look “impotent, its mighty military driven away from a banana republic by a pip-squeak dictator” (Halberstam, 2003: 273). According to Chomsky (2006: 153–4), the leftist Aristide (whom the United States had earlier opposed) was allowed to return as the island’s leader but only under the condition that he would implement the neoliberal policies of his earlier rightwing and U.S.-backed elections opponent.
- 19 Albright made the quoted remarks in a television interview after the interviewer had confronted her with the report that more children had died than in Hiroshima as the result of the sanctions: “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it” (for a clip of the interview see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbIX1CP9qr4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbIX1CP9qr4)). As Bacevich (2010: 143) notes: “at least those children had died in a worthy cause.” It arguably does put the “humanitarian concerns” of the same Albright regarding the plight of the Kosovars in perspective.
- 20 The sentence was part of a set of talking points prepared for President Clinton’s planned phone call with Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, to make the case for military action against Iraq, more than one month before Operation Desert Fox.
- 21 In October 2000 another terrorist attack, this time on a U.S. Navy destroyer (the USS *Cole*) harbored in Aden, Yemen was also linked to bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network.

## 5 American grand strategy after September 11

### Bush's grand-strategy makers and the neoconservative shift

More than any other post-Cold War presidency, that of George W. Bush has been associated with a radical shift in grand strategy and, undeniably, some far-reaching changes did take place, in particular after the 9/11 attacks. The Bush administration responded to these unexpected attacks with a muscular blend of pre-emptive resolve, unilateralist readiness, and a forceful and militarist variety of “democracy promotion” aimed at regime change, cloaked in a *neoconservative*, Manichean discourse, stressing the need for the United States to remain the world’s unrivaled leader. The Bush administration is also widely known for its intimate involvement of a group of neoconservative grand-strategy makers who were able – due to their concentration in the White House and Pentagon, a susceptible president, and the “window of opportunity” offered by the 9/11 attacks – to wield great influence on the grand strategy that developed after September 11, 2001.

In spite of this neoconservative imprint, we argue that important continuities mark U.S. grand strategy after 9/11. First, as we will describe in more detail below, neoconservative ideas build further upon a hawkish tradition among mainly Republican and conservative strategists that had developed since the 1970s. Second, while witnessing a significant shift regarding the *means* employed, in terms of its overall *ends* this foreign policy had in fact much in common with the liberal internationalism and the liberal interventionism of the Clinton administration as described in the previous chapter, reproducing once more the imperialism of the Open Door.

The chapter is structured as follows: in the next section we will provide a profile of Bush's grand-strategy team and analyze their social positions. The second section will then describe the global context inherited by the Bush administration, with its perceived threats and opportunities, partly engendered by the preceding grand strategy. The third section analyzes the resulting, what – in spite of the controversies surrounding the term (e.g., Hurst, 2005) – we have called, *neoconservative* grand strategy, which of course first crystallized in full after the attacks of 9/11. The fourth section focuses on how the neoconservative grand strategy was implemented and further developed during the course of the two terms of President Bush. Here we will analyze the global War on Terror, and the accompanying wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as an economic policy that

pursued an unabated neoliberal course with a fierce – at times violent – advocacy of open markets, as well as a continuing liberalization of the financial sector, eventually leading to the onset of the Great Recession. Concluding, we will reflect upon the continuity and change of American grand strategy during the Bush administration and preview the limits and contradictions it encountered.

## **Bush's grand-strategy makers**

Below we will first take a closer look at the president and the vice president, to then elaborate their and other grand-strategy makers' links to previous administrations, the corporate community, and the policy planning network.

### ***President George W. Bush***

In contrast to his Democratic predecessor, George W. Bush (1946), America's forty-third president, came from an upper-class background, born into a family that had roots tied to 15 American presidents and the British royal family. In his own words he had "never lived around poor people," and hence did not really "know what they think" (Suskind, 2004b: unnumbered pages). G.W. Bush's grandfather was a Republican senator who had refused his father's inheritance and instead made a fortune of his own by investing in corporate giants such as the Union Banking Corporation, Prudential, and Pan Am (Baker, 2013: 20). The elder George (H.W.), the forty-first U.S. president, had moved with his family from the East Coast to Texas in 1948 to tap into the blossoming oil industry – working for Dresser Industries, an oil service company that later merged with Halliburton – but then switched from a business to a political career.

While far from a high-flyer, the younger George (W.), did eventually manage to obtain a B.A. in history at Yale, where he actively participated in the fraternity Delta Kappa and also became a member of the secretive student society Skull and Bones (*ibid.*: 23–4). After subsequently earning an MBA from Harvard Business School, he returned to Texas with the intention to join his father in the oil industry and, with the support of his father's network, managed to build a corporate career. While initially with little success,<sup>1</sup> he proved a competent and engaged owner of a Texan baseball team, which moreover became an important vehicle to launch his political career (Suskind, 2004b). With the help of Karl Rove, who had been personal assistant to his father, and another trusted adviser, Karen Hughes – and with the deep pockets of, for instance, Enron's CEO and Bush family friend Kenneth Lay (later convicted for conspiracy and fraud) – Bush was elected governor of Texas in 1995, and was successfully re-elected in 1999.

It was again under the guidance of campaign strategists Karl Rove and Karen Hughes that Bush made a bid for the presidency in 2000. As part of his preparation for his candidacy the inexperienced Bush followed an intensive tutorial on foreign policy by a group called the Vulcans (Mann, 2004: x), which was put together by what would become Bush's main campaign foreign policy adviser,

Condoleezza Rice – a former adviser on Soviet and Eastern Europe Affairs on the National Security Council of the elder Bush. This foreign policy team, whose name was to convey a sense of power, toughness, resilience, and durability (*ibid.*), further consisted of leading neoconservatives such as Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Dov Zakheim, and Scooter Libby, as well as more traditional Republicans such as Richard Armitage and Robert Zoellick.

### ***Vice President Richard B. Cheney***

As testified in many accounts (e.g., Baker, 2013; Suskind, 2004a), Richard B. (Dick) Cheney played an exceptionally influential role in the Bush 43 administration. But while it has often been suggested that Cheney commanded the presidency, more detailed accounts of the historical record thus far appear to indicate that Cheney was not simply the “puppeteer” of Bush, but rather was “empowered” by him (Baker, 2013: 3–7; cf. Suskind, 2004a). According to Woodward: “Cheney was a forceful, persistent advocate, but the president decided” (Woodward, 2004: 430). Nonetheless, the two had an exceptionally close relationship, and particularly in his first term Bush relied heavily on Cheney, who was invited to all the meetings and decisions and would always stay behind to give his advice in a one-to-one meeting (Baker, 2013: 6).

Cheney, a seasoned American strategist and corporate heavyweight – who during the Clinton years as CEO of Halliburton from 1995 to 2000 made a fortune and more than doubled the company’s value to \$11.9 billion (Gardner, 2008: 120–2) – had been in and out of government since the early 1970s. Lacking the elite – prep school, Ivy League – background of the president, Cheney, coming from a simple working-class New Deal Democrat family in Nebraska, started his political career when he was offered a Congressional fellowship (Mann, 2004: 10). This also marked the beginning of his decades-long relationship with Donald Rumsfeld, who became G.W. Bush’s defense secretary. Rumsfeld appointed Cheney under Nixon when the former was running the Office of Economic Opportunity, overseeing the war on poverty, and again hired him as deputy chief of staff under President Ford. Later, as a U.S. congressman, Cheney became a staunch supporter of Reagan’s anti-communism, and a defender of a strong and decisive executive, a “muscular presidential authority” (Baker, 2013: 34–5). As secretary of defense under Bush 41, Cheney was a key advocate of the (first) Gulf War (*ibid.*: 42).

While not a neoconservative himself, Cheney played a leading role in composing the team of grand-strategy makers of the new president Bush (see Halper and Clarke, 2004: 113–21; Mann, 2004; Baker, 2013; Dorrien, 2004a: ch.4), for which he drew heavily on the aforementioned Vulcans. In this capacity he later turned out to have been of decisive influence on the direction that U.S. grand strategy was about to take. But before analyzing the grand strategy developed by these foreign-policy makers, we will first review the rather strong overlap of the Bush team with previous U.S. administrations.

### **Career paths in previous administrations**

In general the selected Bush grand-strategy makers reveal extensive career paths in federal government service, with a particularly strong affiliation with both the elderly Bush administration and the Reagan administration. Only seven of these grand-strategy makers had no former position in federal government (see also [Chapter 3, Table 3.1](#)), among which are Bush himself and his aforementioned key advisers, Rove and Hughes.

[Figure 5.1](#) maps the affiliations (i.e., federal government positions) of Bush's grand-strategy makers with previous administrations, clustered per administration (the black nodes). As can be seen in this figure, 13 of G.W. Bush's grand-strategy makers had also served in his father's administration. In addition to Cheney (who has links to altogether four Republican administrations) and Rice (the younger Bush's national security adviser and later secretary of state), also Robert Zoellick, who became G.W. Bush's trade representative, and subsequently deputy secretary of state, and Joshua Bolten, the younger Bush's deputy chief of staff and later chief of staff. Moreover, many of those "Bush veterans" had an even longer Republican career, showing in particular a substantial overlap with the Reagan administration, where more than one-third of Bush grand-strategy makers had served. Among them are self-identified "Neo-Reaganites" such as Perle, Wolfowitz, and Libby, as well as John Bolton (defense undersecretary under G.W. Bush and later UN ambassador), and Zalmay Khalilzad, who after 9/11 became U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, had been deputy undersecretary for policy planning under H.W. Bush, and in the Reagan administration was instrumental in advising how to support the mujahedeen in Afghanistan as the State Department's special adviser on Afghanistan to undersecretary of state.

Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board (2001–03) and outspoken Jewish neoconservative, who came to play an influential role in the build up to the Iraq War (see Wedel, 2009; Weisman, 2007), had been Reagan's assistant secretary of defense for global strategic affairs. Paul Wolfowitz, former Cold War hardliner, had made his entree to politics in the 1970s as an aide to Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, a Democrat who had been inspirational to many neo-conservatives (e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004: 56; Mann, 2004). He later became director of policy planning of the State Department under Reagan, and undersecretary of defense for Bush 41. During the Cold War Wolfowitz had been a member of the Committee on Present Danger (CPD; see [Chapter 2](#)), and an adviser of the affiliated so-called Team B, which together played a role in dismantling détente. During the Reagan years, Wolfowitz was heavily pre-occupied with the security of Israel and a strong advocate of the removal of Saddam Hussein, even at the time that the official policy still was to support the regime against Iran. The later-disgraced Lewis "Scoop" Libby (see e.g., Baker, 2013: 2–10), who also became a leading figure in the preparations for regime change in Iraq, combined three positions that "probably never before were held by a single person" (Woodward, 2004: 48): chief of staff and national security adviser to

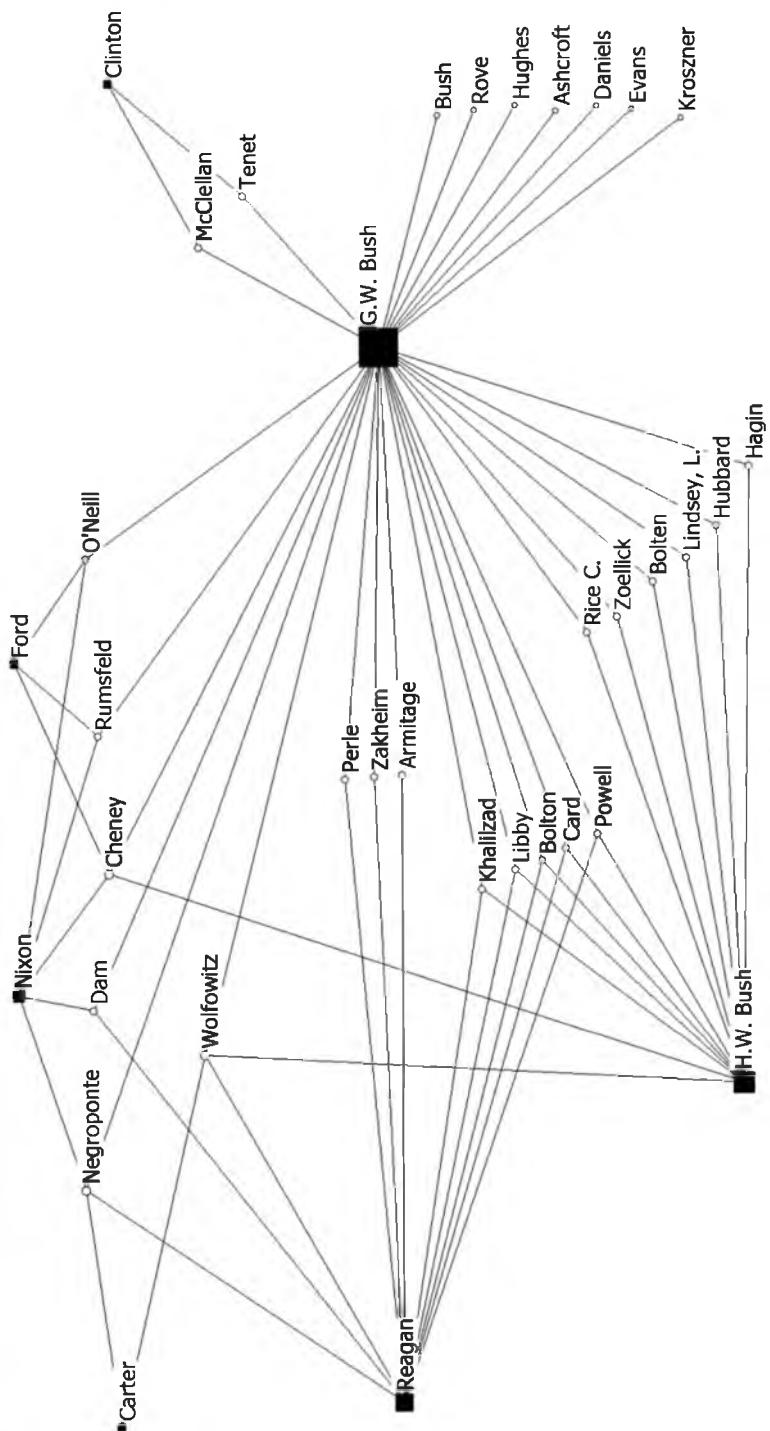


Figure 5.1 Career paths in previous U.S. administrations: Bush (sources: data collection by authors).

Cheney as well as assistant to President Bush. Serving under Wolfowitz earlier, Libby had been deputy undersecretary of defense under the elderly Bush, and a director at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs under Reagan. Dov Zakheim, appointed under secretary of defense under G.W. Bush, was also a key foreign policy adviser during his presidential campaign as part of the Vulcans. In addition, he held several posts in the Pentagon during Reagan's term, such as deputy undersecretary of defense for planning and resources.

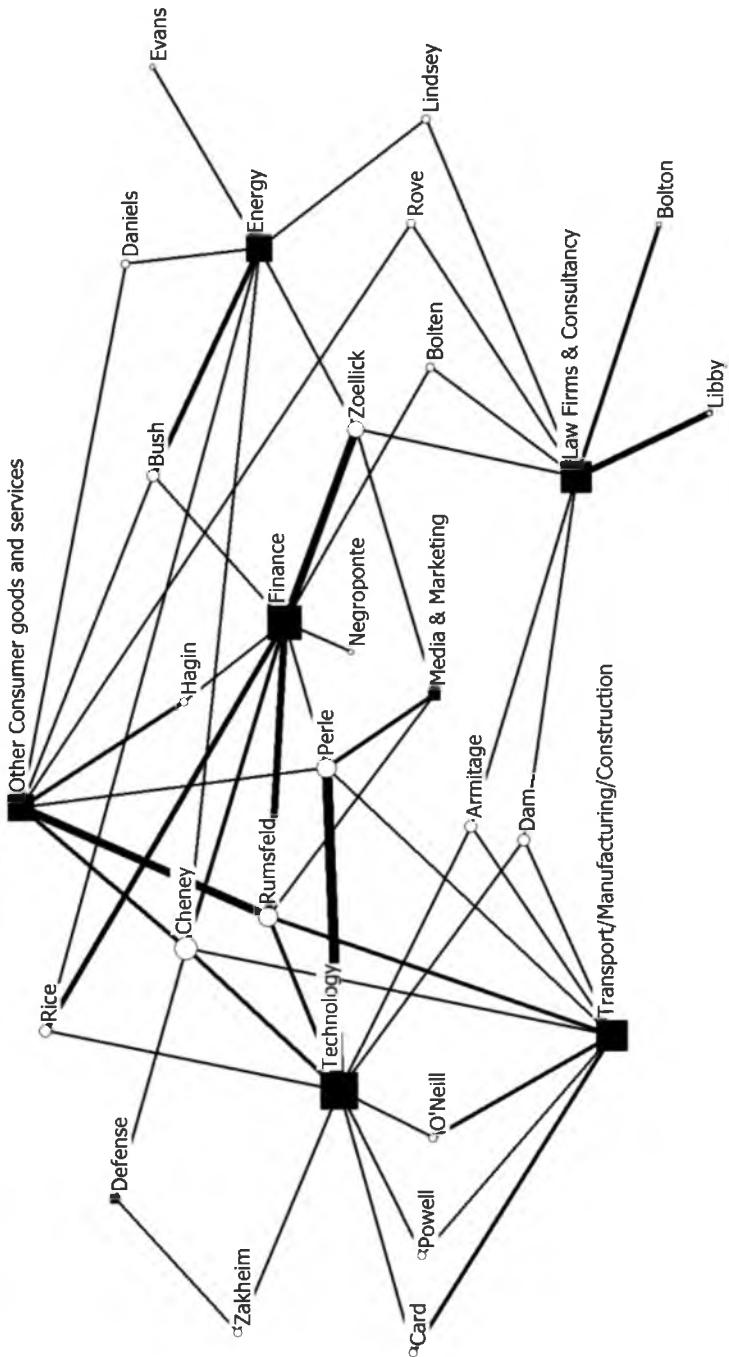
Of the former Reagan officials who came to adopt a more moderate stance during the Bush 43 administration, often opposing the more hawkish ideas, we may mention Colin Powell, George W. Bush's secretary of state – and earlier Reagan's national security adviser as well as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff under H.W. Bush – and his deputy and close collaborator Richard Armitage, who had served under Reagan as assistant secretary of defense for international security.

### ***The corporate network***

The extensive political careers of the majority of Bush's grand-strategy makers did not prevent many of them from having substantial corporate careers as well. Building further upon the aggregate findings presented in [Chapter 3, Figure 5.2](#) shows how 21 individual key grand-strategy makers – with a total of 87 prior corporate affiliations – are connected to a diversity of sectors.

The size of the nodes expresses the number of ties, whereas tie strength expresses the number of affiliations of a grand-strategy maker to a particular sector. This is why in this graph the technology sector appears to be best connected (largest); it has most individuals connected to it. In terms of number of actual affiliations, it is the financial sector that is largest (which, as we have seen in [Chapter 3](#), is also the case in the Obama administration, whereas it is the second-largest in the Clinton administration), followed by technology, other consumer goods and services, and law firms and consultancy. Many of the selected grand-strategy makers are tied to more than one sector, with, for instance, Rumsfeld linked to four sectors and Cheney, the biggest cross-sectoral linker, tied to six out of our eight sectors.

An interesting finding with regard to the sectoral distribution is that – in contrast with common perceptions of a “capture” of the Bush administration by the defense industry and/or the oil industry (e.g., Hossein-zadeh, 2006) – these particular industries are not over-represented in terms of such personal corporate board linkages. Of course, especially executive positions in a certain sector will give a particular expertise and thus perspective on policies regarding that industry. An example here would be how the experience of Cheney at the head of oil service major Halliburton is said to have influenced his views on the role of energy in U.S. grand strategy (Gardner, 2008: 122). Our focus and interest is, however, not on the representation of such “narrower” corporate interests, but rather on how extensive corporate involvement of the grand-strategy makers – which in most cases is revealed to be rather *cross-sectional* – influences their



*Figure 5.2* Sectoral clustering of corporate affiliations: Bush (sources: data collection by authors).

Note

Totals per sector: finance (19), technology (17), other consumer goods and services (17), law firms/consultancy (13), transport/manufacturing/construction (11), energy (9), media/marketing (4), defense (2).

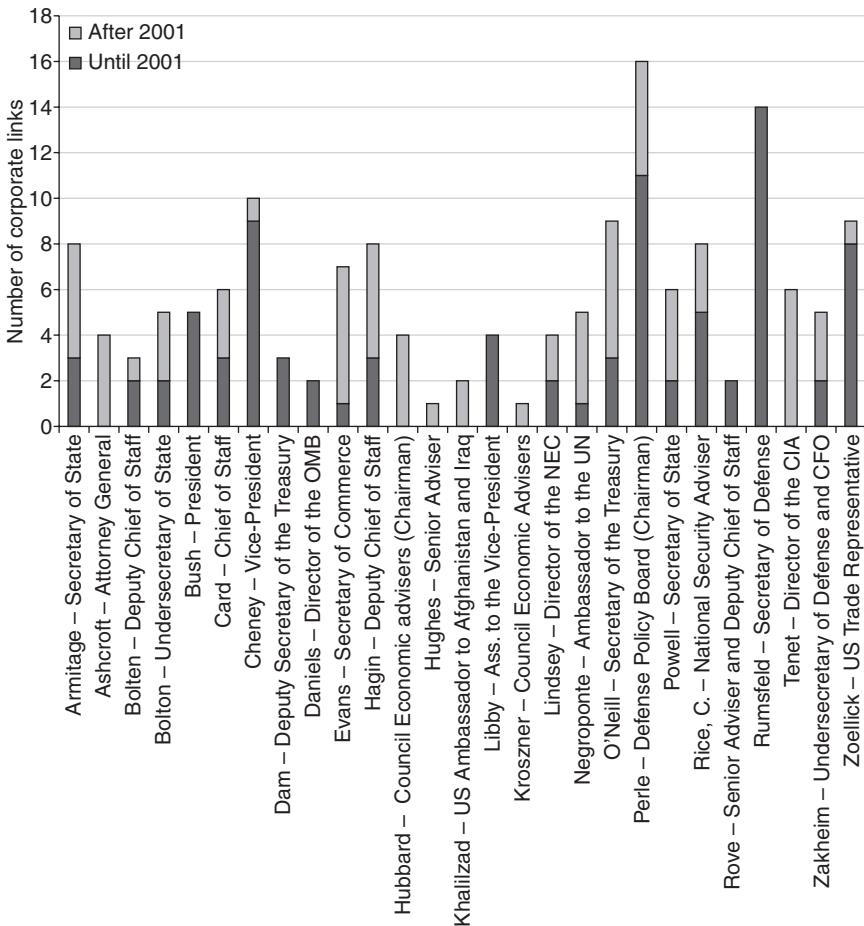
broader worldview, and via that the grand strategy they are part of shaping. The overall pattern here is one in which financial capital and transnationally oriented capital more generally predominate, given that 44 percent of these are Fortune 500 (F500) notated firms (see also [Chapter 3](#) on this matter).

The by far biggest corporate linker is Rumsfeld, who held a total of 14 affiliations before his appointment as secretary of defense by G.W. Bush (collected after his prior functions in the Nixon and Ford administrations), of which nine were F500 firms.<sup>2</sup> Just as Cheney, Rumsfeld, next to several directorships (among which are Gulfstream Aerospace and Swiss engineering giant ABB), also occupied the very top position of a company. After having been chief executive of pharmaceutical giant G.D. Searle in the 1980s, he subsequently became CEO and chairman of General Instrument Corporation and chairman of Gilead Sciences. Another example of a former top executive in the Bush team is his first Treasury secretary, and friend of Cheney, Paul O'Neill – who had been chairman and CEO of aluminum giant Alcoa for ten years prior to his appointment, and before that – a similar period – vice president and president of International Paper Company, the world's largest pulp and paper firm.

Next to Rumsfeld, other big cross-sectoral corporate linkers in the Bush administration are Rumsfeld's former protégé, Cheney, with nine corporate affiliations, many of them F500 notated – among which, apart from Halliburton, are defense firm TRW Inc. (since 2002 part of Northrop-Grumman and one of the firms to be involved in the later highly contested Department of Defense's Ballistic Missile Defense Program), investment bank Morgan Stanley, and railway giant Union Pacific – as well as Richard Perle, with as many as 11 directorships, who from 1995 to 2004 served as director, CEO, and co-chair of media firm Hollinger International and Hollinger Digital Inc.<sup>3</sup>

Yet another corporate big linker is Robert Zoellick (U.S. trade representative 2001–05). Among his eight prior corporate affiliations we find Fannie Mae – where he was CEO, (executive) vice president and assistant to the chairman – and Goldman Sachs, where he was managing director and chairman of the board of international advisers until he was appointed to the administration. Zoellick was also director of the by now infamous and bankrupt energy firm Enron (see [Chapter 4](#)) – an affiliation that he shared with Lawrence Lindsey, director of the National Economic Council (NEC). Among those grand-strategy makers with at least five prior corporate affiliations we furthermore find the president himself, who's corporate career has been described earlier, and his close Vulcan-adviser Condoleezza Rice, who was director at several F500 major firms such as Chevron, Hewlett Packard, and Transamerica Corporation.

Many of these grand-strategy makers, in a by now familiar pattern, returned to the corporate world after their service in the administration. [Figure 5.3](#) demonstrates 15 out of the 27 corporate linkers that were such “in-and-outers,” also identifying some grand-strategy makers that entered the corporate world first after their governmental service, such as longtime CIA director George Tenet; John Ashcroft, attorney general, who was key supporter of the heavily criticized USA Patriot Act and played an influential role in the contested treatment of



*Figure 5.3* The revolving door of Bush’s grand-strategy makers (sources: data collection by authors).

detainees in the War on Terror (the so-called “Torture Memos” – NPR, 2008) and later became director in the private military firm Academi (formerly widely known as Blackwater); and Khalilzad, a key player in the regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, as we will see, who afterwards started his own consultancy firm and was also director at a Middle Eastern oil company (see also note 15).

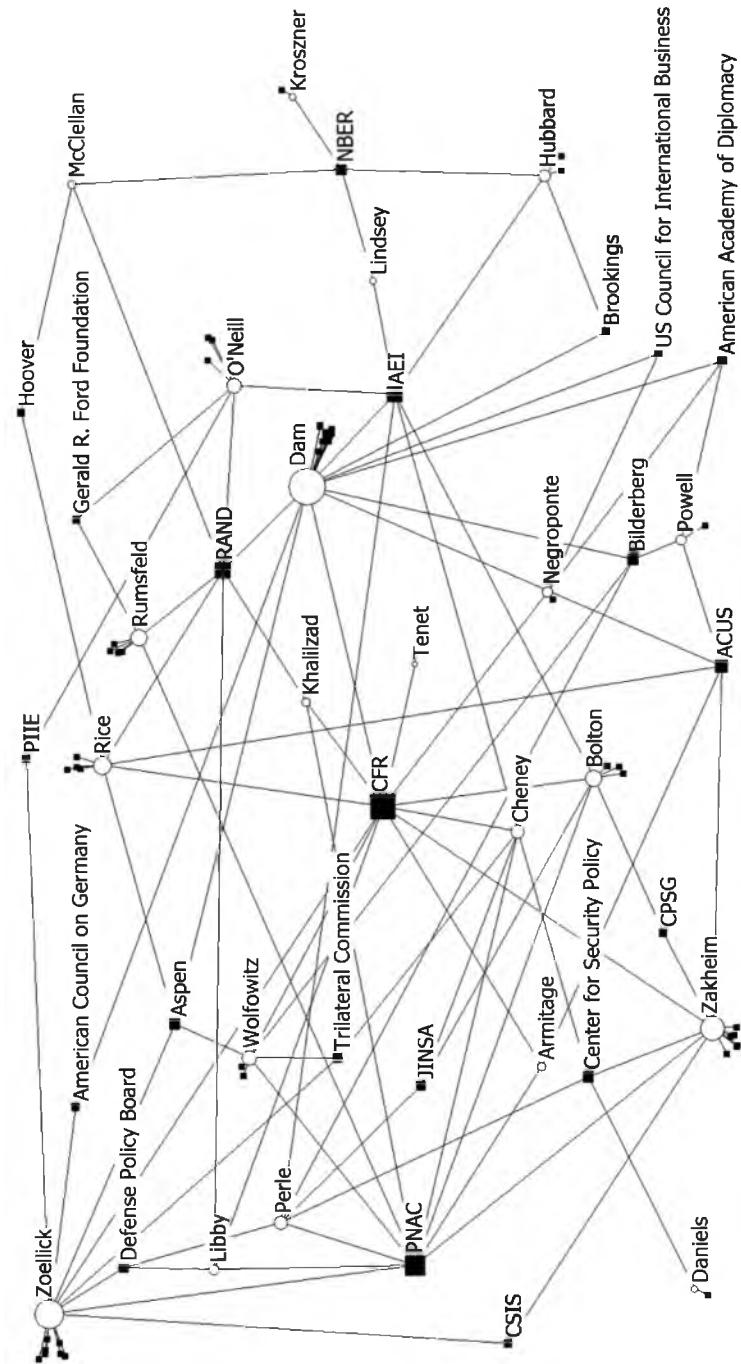
While this broad corporate elite base in our view shapes these grand-strategy makers’ worldview, the following section will show that many of these key people were also deeply embedded in a policy planning network in which their ideas and views on grand strategy were developed, molded, and disseminated.

### **The policy planning network**

The two-mode network in [Figure 5.4](#) depicts Bush's grand-strategy makers and the policy planning bodies to which they were affiliated prior to entering the administration. First of all, it should be noted that this mapping generated an entirely connected network, an "inner circle" (see [Chapter 3](#); Useem, 1984) of think tanks to which these top government officials are thus affiliated. In addition, many of them have policy planning affiliations that are not shared with the others in this selection; these are the black nodes without labels in [Figure 5.4](#).

[Figure 5.5](#), in addition, shows the total number of policy planning affiliations per grand-strategy maker both until and also after administration, thereby revealing a revolving door pattern similar to that with the corporate world. In fact, apart from Daniels, Bush's director of the Office of Management and Budget (2001–03) and Evans, secretary of commerce during Bush's first term, all the grand-strategy makers with links to the policy planning network actually returned to or renewed their affiliations with the policy planning world after serving in government. A few big linkers stand out here, in particular Kenneth Dam, who had a staggering 20 affiliations before his short government appointment as deputy secretary of treasury (2001–03) – among which were core bodies such as RAND, Bilderberg (as steering group member), the Aspen Strategy Group, Brookings, and the Atlantic Council, as well as the neoconservative AEI (see below). Dam, a former corporate lawyer, had been on Alcoa's board together with Greenspan when Paul O'Neill was in charge, and while the three closely collaborated in the first Bush years, O'Neill often opposed the line taken by the Bush administration, and when he resigned after two years Dam followed not long thereafter (Suskind, 2004a). Another big linker here is Dov Zakheim, former CEO of a subsidiary of System Planning Corporation, a high-tech firm with a strong defense component, appointed undersecretary of defense and chief financial officer by Bush, with 12 policy planning affiliations before and five after. Zakheim – as one of the Vulcans – was active not only in outspoken neo-conservative advocacy platforms as PNAC and the CPSG (see below), but also as adjunct senior fellow at the very central CFR and affiliated with the CSIS. Finally, aforementioned Robert Zoellick, another PNAC affiliate who came to play a key role vis-à-vis China as U.S. trade representative and later became deputy secretary of state and president of the World Bank (until 2012). Zoellick had a total of 15 prior affiliations at many core think tanks, among which were CEO and president of CSIS, director at the CFR, and member of the Trilateral Commission and the Aspen Strategy Group.

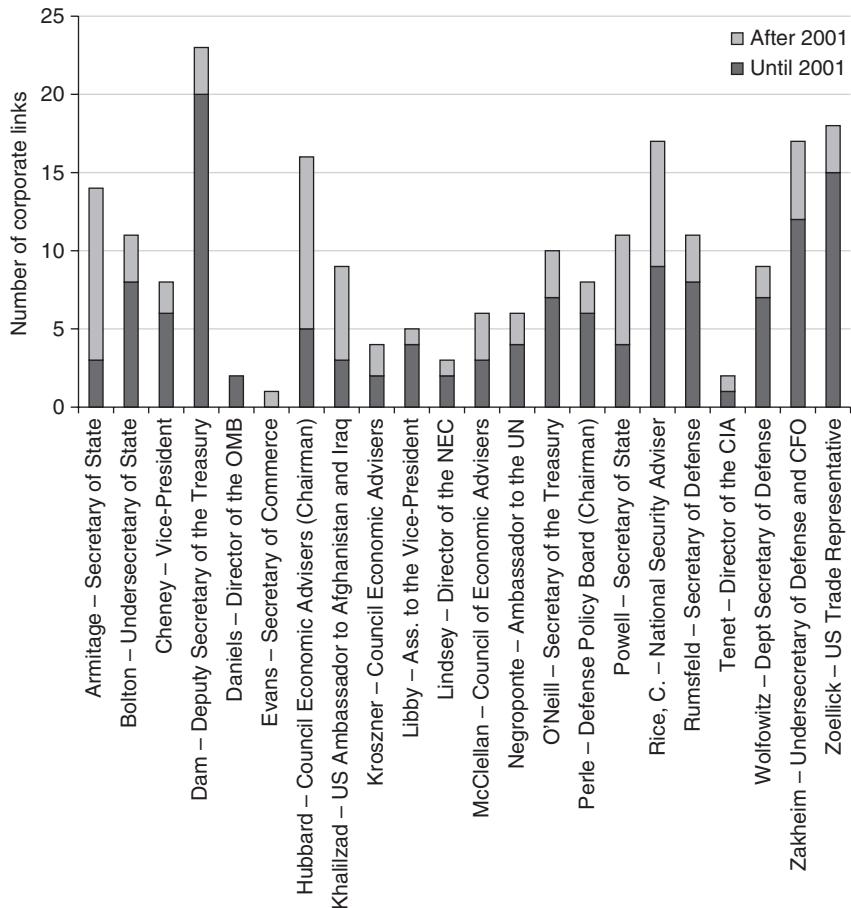
In the "inner circle" of policy planning bodies, we find a strong connectedness to the core policy planning bodies described in [Chapter 3](#), such as the encompassing CFR (with 12 connections) and RAND – to which comparatively many of Bush's grand-strategy makers are connected (seven in total). In particular, Rumsfeld (as chairman of the board in the 1980s and in the mid 1990s) and Khalilzad (as longtime director of RAND's Project Air Force and founder of its Center for Middle Eastern Studies) were extensively connected to RAND,



*Figure 5.4* Policy planning network: Bush (sources: data collection by authors).

Note

The number of ( $>3$ ) ties per policy-planning body are as follows: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) (12), Project for the New American Century (PNAC) (110), RAND Corporation (7), American Enterprise Institute (AEI) (7), Atlantic Council of the U.S. (ACUS) (5), Center for Security Policy (4), National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (4), Bilderberg (4), Aspen Institute (4), American Academy of Diplomacy (3), Defense Policy Board (3), Trilateral Commission (3), Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) (3).



*Figure 5.5* The policy planning revolving door: Bush (sources: data collection by authors).

America's oldest military industrial think tank, in fact created by "an embryonic military service – the air force," which had cultivated many military strategists, originally to cope with the Cold War military context (Samaan, 2012: 3) and encourage strategists to "think the unthinkable" (Cooper, 2011: 131). Condoleezza Rice was also RAND director for many years, as well as relative outsiders to these inner-circle Vulcans such as the aforementioned Paul O'Neill. Moreover, RAND was home to Albert Wohlstetter, the conservative nuclear strategist who is said to have had much influence on neoconservative thinking (Mann, 2003: 29), in particular that of Perle, Wolfowitz, and Khalilzad (Cooper, 2011: 130–3). In addition, core neoliberal oriented policy planning venues such as the Aspen Institute (4) are well connected – with all affiliations with the

foreign policy oriented Aspen Strategy Group – and Bilderberg (4), the annual conferences of which were attended by both hardline neocons such as Perle and Wolfowitz, as well as moderates like Powell, and, finally, the TC, with the latter less central than in the two Democratic administrations, but nevertheless connecting key officials such as Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Zoellick.

Second, the network stands out for its high connectedness to several policy planning bodies with a clear neoconservative orientation, giving it a stronger distinctive profile than the policy planning networks of Clinton and Obama. Most notably among these bodies – to be elaborated below – are the Project for New American Century (PNAC) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), but also the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), the Center for Security Policy (CSP), and the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf (CPSG). While we are aware of the controversy surrounding the designation and definition of neoconservatism (e.g., Hurst, 2005), we do stick to this term. We want to stress, though, that our argument is not that the Bush administration was entirely captured by neoconservative ideas, but rather that they aligned very well with the more hawkish U.S. foreign policy makers of whom many came to concentrate around G.W. Bush, in part due to Cheney who largely assembled the foreign policy team – and who was such a conservative hardliner himself, yet not a neocon. Given the considerable presence of policy planning bodies associated with this contested school of thought in the “inner circle” of policy planning bodies connected to our grand-strategy makers, we will below outline a broad profile of the hence generated “neoconservative network.”

### ***The neoconservative network***

Early neoconservative thinking originated from New York intellectual circles rooted in Trotskyist anti-Soviet ideas in the 1960s. Key thinkers such as Irving Kristol were originally focused on an anti-welfare state critique of Johnson’s Great Society programs (e.g., Väisse, 2010; Parmar, 2008, 2009; Stelzer, 2004; Guelke, 2005), but increasingly, from the 1970s onwards, foreign policy became another key concern, expressed among others through the magazine *Commentary* (Stelzer, 2004: 18–19). The growing political and foreign policy influence of the neoconservatives has been associated with the rise of right-wing think tanks (Halper and Clarke, 2004: 47–8; see also McGann, 2007). One of the first was the aforementioned re-established CPD, which in the 1970s brought together so-called “Cold Warriors” such as (from our selection) Richard Perle, demanding a hardline anti-Soviet and militaristic foreign policy against the global threat of communism (see Sanders, 1983).

The most durable platform for neoconservatives, however, came to be the *American Enterprise Institute* (AEI), to which indeed seven of our selected policymakers have had close ties prior to entering the administration, but also returned to after serving their turn in government, such as Cheney, Bolton, Perle, Lindsey, and Bush’s chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Glenn

Hubbard. At an AEI meeting Bush himself expressed his gratitude toward the institution for providing him with so many of his senior officials: “I admire AEI a lot; I’m sure you know that. After all, I have been consistently borrowing some of your best people. More than 20 AEI scholars have worked in my administration” (Bush, 2007). The AEI grew out of the *American Enterprise Association* (AEA) founded in 1938 by a number of leading big business executives, with the mission to promote a “greater public knowledge and understanding of the social and economic advantages accruing to the American people through the maintenance of the system of free, competitive enterprise” (American Enterprise Institute, 2015). According to the AEI, this is essentially still its mission today (*ibid.*). The board of trustees of the AEI is composed of top representatives of U.S. transnational and financial capital, firmly linked to a corporate elite network of major corporate TNCs, such as computer giant Dell Inc., the Carlyle Group, the industrial International Paper Company, private equity firm Friedman Fleischer and Lowe, and globally branded Molson Coors Brewing Company (*ibid.*). Major donors of AEI are philanthrocapitalist foundations such as Smith Richardson (which also supports more mainstream think tanks such as the CFR and Brookings), and the more outspoken conservative Bradley and Scaife foundations, but also major U.S. TNCs such as Exxon Mobile (Conservative Transparency, 2015). While the original focus of the AEI was on economic policies, foreign and defense policy became an important plank of the institute with – in Open Door fashion – a focus on “how political and economic freedom – as well as American interests – are best promoted around the world” (*ibid.*).

It was in one of the wings of the AEI that the *Project for A New American Century* (PNAC) was housed, established in 1997 by William Kristol (Irving Kristol’s son), founder and editor of the neoconservative flagship journal *The Weekly Standard*. The PNAC, while not nearly as durable and institutionalized a think tank as the AEI and with only a small budget, nevertheless became a focal point for neoconservative grand-strategy planners around the turn of the millennium, in which many of their ideas and ambitions crystallized. Ten of our grand strategy makers have been affiliated with the PNAC (by contributing to its advocacy letters and/or key publications). The PNAC’s founding charter – among which signatories we find Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Libby, and Khalilzad – advanced a set of “guiding principles” for an American foreign and defense policy that had gone “adrift” and that had to return to what the PNAC itself coined a “Neo-Reaganite” agenda of “military strength and moral clarity” (PNAC, 1997). It urged America to embrace its “cause of American leadership” and “shape a new century favorable to American principles” (*ibid.*). PNAC signatories also advocated their views on U.S. foreign policy through letters to the president; one of the most well-known, to be elaborated below, is the January 1998 letter to Clinton on the removal of Saddam Hussein (PNAC 1998), which was signed by seven of our grand-strategy makers, among whom are PNAC founders Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Khalilzad, but also Perle, Zoellick, John Bolton (undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs), and Richard Armitage (deputy secretary of state).

Another important nexus in the network is formed by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) and the CSP (Vest, 2002; see also Halper and Clarke, 2004: 59). The JINSA, which had three of our grand-strategy makers on its advisory board – Cheney, Perle, and Boston – was founded in 1976 and is an influential platform for a hawkish foreign policy in particular related to Israel and the Middle East. According to its own mandate, JINSA: “advocates a strong U.S. military, a robust national security policy, and a strong U.S. security relationship with Israel and other like-minded democracies” (JINSA, 2015). Indeed, JINSA can be viewed as part of the so-called “Israel lobby,” and this Israel link must be seen as ideologically important within neoconservatism in as much as this movement can be considered, according to Mearsheimer and Walt (2007: 132) “a microcosm of the larger pro-Israel movement,” with also other neoconservative think tanks such as AEI advocating unconditional support for Israel and a hardline against Middle Eastern “rogue states” such as Iraq and Iran. A key figure in the nexus with the CSP is once more Richard Perle, while another important linker between these platforms is Douglas Feith, who was to become one of the leading figures in the Bush administration in the run-up to the war in Iraq (Wedel, 2009). A final platform to be mentioned here is the CPSG, in which Bolton and Zakheim were active members, and which in 1998 produced an advocacy statement similar to the PNAC to overthrow Hussein; this was signed by seven of our grand-strategy makers (Armitage, Bolton, Khalilzad, Perle, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Zakheim).

The next section will elaborate on the neoconservative worldview that thus became increasingly pronounced and vocally formulated – and for which the policy planning network described above provided the crucial tissue – in response to the perceived threats and opportunities emerging in the global context, caused in part by Clinton’s strategy of neoliberal globalization. This “grand strategy route” (see de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, 2011) is completed when the actors (i.e., grand-strategy makers) active in these networks bring their ideas to the administration and contribute to their implementation into actual foreign policy.

### **The neoconservative response to a “squandered decade”: global context and discourse**

As the twentieth century came to a close the contradictions and limits of Clinton’s neoliberal globalization strategy and the wider political project from which it emanated became increasingly manifest and social forces around the world increasingly came to resist and challenge both neoliberalism and U.S. power buttressing it. The limits of the preceding grand-strategy in relation to the perceived new global challenges that the neoconservative grand-strategy makers viewed as most pertinent were, however, primarily located in the realm of foreign and defense policy.

### ***Neoconservative grand strategy in the making***

A clear preview of the perceived challenges in the global context, that later would form the basis of the grand-strategy under G.W. Bush, was already provided early in the 1990s in the so-called Defense Policy Guidance (DPG), calling for “concerted efforts to preserve American global military supremacy and to thwart the emergence of a rival superpower in Europe, Asia or the former Soviet Union” (Gellman, 1992). Four of the Bush 43 grand-strategy makers were involved in producing this key report, that after being leaked to the press provoked so much controversy that it was quickly shelved: Secretary of Defense Cheney, as supervisor, his deputy Wolfowitz, Libby (Cheney’s chief of staff), and, finally, Khalilzad (at the time deputy undersecretary for policy planning).

Whereas the proposal according to Gellman (who published the memo) in fact expressed much continuity with American policy since World War II (Frontline PBS 2003b), the stressing of U.S. preeminence and the opening up of the possibility of unilateral action at the time seemed too sensitive (Frontline PBS 2003c).<sup>4</sup> As leading neoconservative intellectual and PNAC founder William Kristol later commented on the DPG, apparently attributing its content to Wolfowitz (Frontline PBS 2003a):

Wolfowitz [in 1992] was ahead of his time, beginning to try to think through the post-Cold War era. Wolfowitz saw very clearly that the fundamental choice was American leadership or increasing chaos and danger.... I think Wolfowitz is now vindicated by history, but it took a long time to get vindicated.... And it really wasn't until 9/11 that Wolfowitz's paper [the DPG], which by that time was nine years old, I think, came to be seen as perhaps prophetic.

Our analysis of Clinton’s grand strategy in the preceding chapter casts some doubt on this neoconservative critique in as much as we have seen that Clinton’s grand-strategy makers were also very much committed to maintaining the “indispensable” leadership of the United States and indeed made use of the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to further expand America’s power. Yet, in the neo-conservative view the United States was – and would be able to remain – the world’s unipole (see, for instance, Krauthammer, 2002), and according to that view Clinton was not making full and proper use of America’s unrivaled and unprecedented power to shape the world into America’s own image. As the closer analysis of the ideas of the neoconservative grand strategy planners within the network of policy planning bodies indicates, ultimately the disagreement with Clinton thus concerned less the overall *ends* and more the *means* of American grand strategy.

What was distinctively neoconservative about the grand strategic ideas thus advanced – and the interpretation of the global context on that basis – are the unapologetic embrace of U.S. primacy and leadership, if necessary unilaterally imposed, and the emphasis on the use of force – urging substantial investments in military power – to maintain that global leadership (see, for instance, Stelzer,

2004; Ryan, 2010a). Neoconservative grand-strategy planners furthermore had a preference for technologically advanced weaponry (see e.g., Rumsfeld, 2002b; PNAC, 2000; Ryan, 2010a), and were generally pre-occupied with Iraq as the center of potential destabilization in the Middle East, and – equally – convinced of the importance of Israel as a crucial American ally in the region, to be protected at any expense (e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004).

All of this was cloaked in strong moral terms, which can be traced to the philosophical foundations of neoconservatism. One key source of inspiration was the work of Leo Strauss (see, for instance, Hirst, 2013; Halper and Clarke, 2004; Mann, 2003; Pangle, 1989), whose thinking was grounded in a highly moralistic worldview in which, according to him, the excellent work of the “ancients” is undermined and corrupted by the “moderns” and by liberalism (Guelke, 2005: 100; also Hirst, 2013). Though his influence has been contested (e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004: 64–7), typically Straussian themes such as the framing of strategic enemies in terms of evil and tyranny; rejection of cultural relativism and a concomitant belief in superiority of American values; and the use of deception in intelligence as a strategic tool, came to shape much of the neoconservative foreign policy outlook (*ibid.*; see also Mann, 2003; Guelke, 2005; Hirst, 2013). Another impact of Strauss on the neoconservatives was the network that emanated from him, and the University of Chicago where he used to teach. Among the names connected to this “Straussian network” that at the time started their ascension toward Washington’s power firmament we find Wolfowitz, Perle, Cheney, and Libby (see Halper and Clarke, 2004: 67). A less contested influential strategic thinker was the aforementioned RAND intellectual Alfred Wohlstetter (e.g., Cooper, 2011: 130–3).

### ***Back to the future: towards a neo-Reaganite foreign policy?***

An example of how neoconservatives thought the global context was misinterpreted by Clinton was offered by the PNAC volume *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Defense and Foreign Policy*, which called for a foreign policy of “benevolent global hegemony” to counter growing threats to American peace in the post-Cold War order (Kagan and Kristol, 2000: vii). In fact, the book was built on Kristol and Kagan’s *Foreign Affairs* article “Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy” (1996), which had sparked considerable controversy in the United States and abroad, because it advocated against the reigning “tepid consensus” of “unshouldering the vast responsibilities the United States acquired at the end of the Second World War and for concentrating its energies at home” and “the adaptation of a more limited definition of the national interest, with a commensurate reduction in overseas involvement and defense spending” (Kristol and Kagan, 1996: 18)

The volume starts from the assumption that “the world has indeed become a more perilous place after the squandered decade of the 1990s and that the ‘present danger’ lies in America’s hesitancy in maintaining its global hegemony against the many emerging challenges” (Kagan and Kristol, 2000: viii). Featuring leading

future Bush officials and advisors such as Wolfowitz and Perle, the volume identifies various “Mounting Threats,” in particular the two major contenders are China, “fast emerging as the greatest threat to American interests” (*ibid.*) and Russia “moving toward a new realism in their foreign policy … that offers both dangers and opportunities for the United States” (*ibid.*), as well as the “rogue states,” especially Iraq, with Perle warning that Hussein, if not removed from power, would “soon acquire weapons of mass destruction and fundamentally alter the strategic balance in the Middle East” (*ibid.*). While these “rogue” states were preferably dealt with by regime change, this of course could not apply to a challenger such as China, and although there was widespread agreement among neoconservatives and hawks that China represented the biggest challenge to the unipolar global order (Ryan, 2010a: 157), there was less consensus on how to confront this challenge (*ibid.*). In any case, after 9/11 the focal point came to be fighting the global War on Terror, in which China and Russia for some time proved to be useful allies.

In this neoconservative vision of a muscular and decisive U.S. foreign policy “conservative internationalism” involves “a strong commitment to vigorous American global leadership, American power, and the advancement of *American* democratic and free-market principles abroad” (Kagan and Kristol, 2000: viii, emphasis added). Thus the enlargement strategy set in by Clinton was to be continued, but with more emphasis on coercion and military means.

The need for a stronger military was also forcefully advocated by the aforementioned Foreign Affairs piece, arguing that Americans do not realize that the “dominant strategic and ideological position the United States now enjoys is the product of foreign policies and defense strategies that are no longer being pursued” (Kristol and Kagan, 1996: 22). American military power would have to be unassailable for any opponent: “[t]he more Washington is able to make clear that it is futile to compete with American power … the less chance there is that countries like China or Iran will entertain ambitions of upsetting the present world order” (*ibid.*: 26). A world order, the authors explain, that is “shaped to suit American interests and principles” (*ibid.*: 28) and should thus be defended – as in their view was the aim of and justification for the first Gulf War. Furthermore, they put forwards an imperative of *moral clarity*, which in their view means “actively promoting American principles of governance abroad – democracy, free markets, respect for liberty” (*ibid.*: 27).

Another PNAC report, *Rebuilding Americas Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, also published in, 2000 and intended as “a roadmap for the nation’s immediate and future defense plans” (PNAC, 2000: iii), in fact claims to build further upon the shelved DPG 1992 draft (*ibid.*: ii), expecting that “the report might have a more receptive audience now than in recent years” (*ibid.*: iii). As the report states: “[t]he missions for Americas forces have not diminished as much as shifted. The threats may not be as great, but there are more of them” (*ibid.*: 3). The required *transformation of U.S. armed forces*, which according to the report should include “more aggressive experimentation with new technologies and exploit the emerging revolution in military

affairs,” is prophetically stated to likely become “a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor” (*ibid.*: 50–1).

A key threat constructed by the neoconservative discourse was, of course, Iraq and the regime of Saddam Hussein (see also Flibbert, 2006), which according to prominent PNAC signatories in the aforementioned letter to Clinton was developing into “a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War” (PNAC, 1998), which is why they urged to have him removed. The aforementioned PNAC report (*Rebuilding America’s Defenses*) identifies an even grander strategy toward Iraq and the Middle East region, stating: “the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein” (2000: 14), and frequently highlights the new “axis of evil” – i.e., North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Syria – though not labeled as such. Although, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Clinton did in fact harden his stance toward Iraq and showed a greater preparedness to use force (later in 1998), and while regime change in Iraq was increasingly seen as an inevitability to both the Democrat and the Republican side of the foreign policy establishment (Chibber, 2008), this continued to fall far short of the kind of unilateral preventive war advocated by the neoconservatives.

### ***Contradictions of neoliberalism***

While most of the threats and opportunities in the global context upon which the neoconservatives focused were in the domain of foreign and defense policy, the underlying contradictions engendered by the neoliberal growth strategy also started to become manifest during the late 1990s. First internationally, with the 1997 Asian financial crisis (see [Chapter 4](#)), and then also domestically, with the dotcom crash of 2000 and the subsequent recession of 2001. While Clinton’s famous remark “it’s the economy, stupid” might have seemed to pay off – with a budget deficit turned into a budget surplus at the end of his presidency, and a boom lasting from 1995 to 2000 commonly ascribed to a productivity growth miracle (e.g., Stiglitz, 2002) – the roots of the slowdown by the turn of the millennium shift can be, as forcefully argued by Brenner (2004), traced back to the mid 1990s. The boom, as well as the unparalleled liberalization and expansion of finance – described in the previous chapter – were to a large extent facilitated by what Brenner dubs “stock-market Keynesianism,” that is, the loose-money regime of Alan Greenspan whereby “the Federal Reserve replaced the increase in the public deficit that was so indispensable to U.S. economic growth during the 1980s, with an increase in the private deficit during the second half of the 1990s” (Brenner, 2004: 61). Hence, the ensuing private debt bubble could be expected to burst, the first warning signs of which appeared with the downturn starting in 2000. This led to a deepening crisis continuing throughout the following decade of the American manufacturing sector, exports, and investment, as well as uninterrupted growth of private sector debt, household consumption, imports, and asset prices, and further contributing to expansion of the financial sector (*ibid.*: 60).

The neoconservative response to these unfolding contradictions, however, was not to break with the doctrine of market freedom, but rather, on the contrary, to stay an unabated neoliberal course abroad as well as at home, including a program of unparalleled tax cuts. But as David Harvey (1982: 82) has compellingly argued, by embracing the neoliberal agenda of “corporate power, private enterprise, and the restoration of [capitalist] class power,” neoconservatives emphasized the need for social *order* as a response to the chaos that the unrestrained pursuit of individual interests also tends to produce (next to the creation of much private wealth), while its “concern for an overweening morality” can be seen as “the necessary social glue to keep the body politic secure in the face of external and internal dangers. Thus, in this spirit, Kristol and Kagan wrote in their 1996 article that conservatives in the United States have “built their agenda on two pillars of Reaganism: relimiting government to curtail the most intrusive and counterproductive aspects of the modern welfare state, and reversing the widespread collapse of morals and standards in American society” (p. 31). While seeking to further dismantle the welfare state, at the same time, the coercive power of the state was to be applied both domestically and internationally to compensate for the loss of consent and to confront the new enemies, the “external evil” of America’s (neoliberal) empire head on.

It was in response to these rising contradictions engendered by the changing global context, and obviously crystallized fully after the “window of opportunity” offered by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, that a new grand strategy – partly shaped by that event – came to be pursued by the administration of George W. Bush (2001–09).

### **The Open Door worldview under Bush: the neoconservative shift**

Whereas both Clinton and his successor pursued a grand strategy aimed at consolidating and preserving U.S. primacy after emerging victoriously from the Cold War, and whereas in both cases the underlying social purpose of that primacy was to expand and maintain a liberal world order in which U.S. transnational capital could move freely, the emphasis under Bush shifted from promoting the “benign” logic of globalization to a more openly bellicose stance to both defend America’s (perceived) unipolar position in light of the above challenges and to make use of it in seeking to “remake” the world by force. In this section, we will show how this foreign policy agenda – that had been long in the making within neoconservative policy planning circles – nonetheless had many core elements, such as “U.S. primacy,” “democracy promotion,” and the “externalization of evil,” that while having a distinctive neoconservative imprint at the same time entailed a vigorous re-affirmation of the Open Door.

***The unilateralist turn: pre-emptive strikes in defense of U.S. primacy***

While global hegemony has been a longstanding goal of U.S. grand strategy, maintaining U.S. primacy “beyond challenge” (White House, 2002: 29), as fiercely advocated by neoconservative strategists, became an explicit commitment of the Bush administration (*ibid.*: 1).<sup>5</sup> As Bush argued during his address accepting the presidential nomination in 2000:

Little more than a decade ago, the Cold War thawed.... But instead of seizing this moment, the Clinton/Gore administration has squandered it. We have seen a steady erosion of American power and an unsteady exercise of American influence.... The world needs America's strength and leadership.

(Bush, 2000a)

The quotation above indicates that under Bush, too, as under his predecessors (including Clinton, whom he criticizes), the commitment to U.S. global leadership, and the exceptionalist discourse underpinning and legitimating it, is once more reproduced. In this discourse U.S hegemony is benevolent, a force for the good that the world needs as “[t]he cause we serve is right, because it is the cause of all mankind” (Bush, 2004). And with it an indispensable leadership because: “[t]he only alternative to American leadership is a dramatically more dangerous and anxious world. Yet we also choose to lead because it is a privilege to serve the values that gave us birth” (Bush, 2006a).

More than under Clinton, Bush’s exceptionalism was – especially after 9/11 – expressed in a starkly Manichean language of good and evil, reflecting the neo-conservative thought embedded, as we have seen, in a significant part of Bush’s policy planning network. As Bush explicated during his (in)famous West Point speech:

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree.... We are in a conflict between good and evil. And America will call evil by its name.... By confronting evil and lawless regimes we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it.

(Bush, 2002a)

Much discussed in this respect has been the Bush administration’s embrace of a more blatant unilateralism in defense of U.S. primacy (see, for instance, Skidmore, 2005, 2011; Monten, 2007). Condoleezza Rice (2000: 62), who was one of Bush’s early foreign policy advisors, argued in a *Foreign Affairs* campaign piece that Republican foreign policy would “proceed from the firm ground of the national interest, not from the interests of an illusory international community” to which she claimed the Clinton administration was so attached. Rice argued that what was needed instead was true leadership premised on the notion that “the United States has a special role in the world and should not adhere to every international convention and agreement that someone thinks to propose” (*ibid.*: 48–9).

But in spite of the harsh critique leveled at Clinton (of course in part campaign rhetoric), the focus on unilateralism legitimized by U.S. exceptionalism and its “special role” in fact was only accelerating and deepening a trend that started under Clinton’s second term. As Skidmore argues, the difference between Clinton and Bush in this respect was not so much one of kind, but rather of tone, emphasis, and degree (2005: 224). Although various previous U.S. presidencies have displayed at least latent unilateralist tendencies from time to time, it was the explicit outspokenness and eagerness of the Bush administration that stood out. As Stokes (2005: 231) has aptly put it, the “unilateralist iron fist” was taken out of the “multilateral velvet gloves.”

The “iron fist” to maintain U.S. primacy from the perspective of the neoconservative variety of the Open Door also meant boosting America’s military power, again in line with the policy ideas advocated within the PNAC, the AEI, and other neoconservative think tanks, as we saw in the previous section. President Bush formulated it as follows:

We will build our defenses beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge.... The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world, by history and by choice.

(Bush, 2001a)

Next, America’s military power should not just be deployed defensively, but also offensively. Thus a key element of the Bush doctrine that was announced after 9/11 was America’s right to strike pre-emptively against its new perceived enemies, especially terrorist networks. As the NSS 2002 asserts: “as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed” (White House, 2002: unnumbered page). Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, in a speech on the requirements for a twenty-first-century transformation of the military, explicated:

defending the U.S. requires prevention, self-defense and sometimes preemption.... Defending against terrorism and other emerging 21st century threats may well require that we take the war to the enemy. The best, and in some cases, the only defense, is a good offense.

(Rumsfeld, 2002a)

To be sure, pre-emptive, or more accurately, preventive war (a clear and gross violation of international law) (Chomsky, 2003a), was not an invention of the Bush 43 administration. Especially within its “own” hemisphere, the United States has throughout the twentieth century carried out many military interventions unprovoked by any attack or imminent threat to itself. What was new, however, was the way the right to strike pre-emptively was made explicit and elevated to a new foreign policy doctrine (White House, 2002: 5, 15–16), namely to be: “defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders” (*ibid.*: 6).

### **The political and economic Open Door: Bush's freedom agenda**

What we have called the political and economic Open Door has been discursively presented by the Bush administration as integrated into one single global “freedom agenda.” Whereas American expansionism under Clinton was pursued under the banner of “democratic enlargement,” here the concept is even more expansive, that is promoting, “freedom” and “liberty” around the world, but with “democracy promotion” as still a key element in the discourse. Or as the NSS 2002 formulated it: “We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, *development, free markets, and free trade* to every corner of the world” (White House, 2002: unnumbered page). In classic Open Door vein, political freedom and economic freedom are thus equated, while at the same time both are linked to U.S. national and global security and the need for U.S. power, since “free markets and free trade are key priorities of our national security strategy” (*ibid.*: 22–3). Bush, in his second inaugural address, puts it as follows, “[t]he survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world” (Bush, 2005a).<sup>6</sup>

Although for more than a century the United States has applied military force in the name of “democracy” (Kinzer, 2006), under Bush this gained a new emphasis, such that “democracy promotion” through coerced regime change became a central plank of the neoconservative grand strategy (Ryan, 2010b). As Jonathan Monten (2005: 141) argues, this fit with the “vindicationist tradition” of U.S. democracy promotion, which views “Americans as an elect people, more immediate to God than others, chosen to redeem an otherwise unregenerate world” (*ibid.*: 127). And while this thus in fact expresses a persistent continuity in U.S. foreign policy, it is the vehemence and explicitness, as well as the emphasis on military means, that distinguishes the neoconservative approach. In his book on the history of the American “mission” of democracy promotion, Tony Smith (2012: 360) in this regards writes about “an ideologically charged resolve unprecedented in the country’s history.” The following quotation from Bush’s speech at the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks illustrates this ideological bent well:

Our country is strong, and our cause is even larger than our country. Ours is the cause of human dignity, freedom guided by conscience and guarded by peace. This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind.... That hope still lights our way.

(Bush, 2002c)

Democracy promotion thus becomes a struggle of good versus evil; the NSS of 2002 opening with the grand claim that “[t]he great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with ... a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and ... a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise” (White House, 2002: unnumbered page). The zeal with which democracy promotion was linked to (forced) regime change and American power projection is a characteristic of the neoconservative

variety of the Open Door strategy. In a conversation with Woodward, when asked whether his policy in this regard could not seem “dangerously paternalistic” to people in other countries, Bush had said:

I believe the United States is the beacon for freedom in the world. And I believe we have a responsibility to promote freedom that is as solemn as the responsibility to protect the American people.... I would hope we wouldn't have to do that militarily, but we have a duty.

(Woodward, 2004: 88–9)

In that regard, the neoconservative grand strategy is said to be “Wilsonian” in its ambition to remake the world in America’s democratic image, the difference being that this goal according to neoconservatives could not be achieved by relying on the persuasive powers of multilateral institutions such as the League of Nations (Stelzer, 2004: 10; also Guelke, 2005). As neoconservative Max Boot argues: “neocons are not ‘soft Wilsonians’ like former President Carter, but ‘hard Wilsonians’ who place their faith not in pieces of paper but in power, specifically U.S. power” (in Stelzer, 2004: 10). In other words, what we have witnessed under G.W. Bush is, as Smith (2012: 359) points out, a *militarization* of liberal internationalism.

### ***Externalization of evil: the new enemy discourse***

A final element of the worldview underpinning Bush’s grand strategy is the way in which the externalization of evil is reformulated and sharpened, in fact framed as an “axis of evil.” This, of course, only emerged in full after 9/11, discursively articulated and legitimated by the concept of the *global War on Terror*, yet – as we have seen – had been advocated in neoconservative circles predating Bush’s election. Kristol and Kagan, in their earlier discussed plea for a neo-Reaganite agenda, argued that conservatives should uphold the core elements of Western tradition both at home and abroad, since “[t]he alternative is to leave monsters on the loose, ravaging and pillaging to their hearts’ content, as Americans stand by and watch” (1996: 31). While at the time of that writing (mid 1990s) these “monsters” did perhaps not have a well-defined shape, the vacuum left by the dissipating of the communist “monster” would – as we know now – soon be filled with the “monsters” of Islamic terrorists, bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and any leader, network, or regime inimical to the U.S. interests and power. Thus President Bush just a little more than a week after the attacks of 9/11 framed the new enemy as follows:

These terrorists kill not merely to end lives but to disrupt and end a way of life.... They stand against us, because we stand in their way.... They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.

(Bush, 2001c)

In that sense the War on Terror is also seen as a “struggle of ideas and . . . an area where America must excel” (White House, 2002: 31), even though it is stressed to be not only America’s fight: “What is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight” (Bush, 2001c). States that refuse to join this fight are moreover categorically placed into the enemy camp: “[e]very nation, in every region, now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime” (Bush, 2001c). Indeed, the global War on Terror as it took shape enabled the construction of a new and ubiquitous enemy of “global reach” (White House, 2002: 5), and turned the War on Terror into a “global enterprise of uncertain duration” (*ibid.*: unnumbered page; cf. Buzan, 2006).

### **A neoconservative grand strategy: the War on Terror, regime change, and unyielding neoliberalism**

Informed by the worldview and ideas elaborated above, the neoconservative grand strategy pursued under Bush can be identified as consisting of the following elements. First, an explicit commitment to maintaining U.S. primacy, above all military supremacy, and an emphasis on coercion and unilateralist means – including preventive war – to achieve this goal. Second, the War on Terror as a discursive banner under which preventive war has been subsequently waged, ultimately in defense of U.S. hegemony. And finally, a continuation of neoliberal policies, including further trade liberalization and liberalization of financial markets. In the exceptional case of the Bush administration this grand strategy, however, took shape in full first after 9/11, i.e., about nine months after his inauguration, which is why we start with an account of this first, somewhat undetermined, period.

#### ***Waiting for the “next Pearl Harbor”: the Bush administration prior to 9/11***

Although Bush during his campaign made at least one speech that was amply praised by *Weekly Standard* editors Kristol and Kagan (Ryan, 2010a: 165–6) – making clear that what he called “[a] distinctly American internationalism” was only “realist” in its means but still very expansionist, and liberal internationalist, in its goals (Bush, 1999) – in general pre-9/11 Bush was reluctant to put the expansive neoconservative agenda into practice and disappointed many neoconservative supporters (e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004; Wolfson, 2004; Hurst, 2005; Nye, 2003; Dueck, 2006). The priorities outlined in his first address before Congress were in the first instance domestic with an “active but limited” role for government, “engaged but not overbearing” (Bush, 2001b) and key campaign advisor Rice, while in favor of increased investment in the U.S. military (Rice, 2000: 51), cautioned against an “overly broad definition of America’s national interest.”

Particularly disappointing to the neocon hawks was that not even the fiercely advocated increase of the defense budget materialized, with Kristol and Kagan lamenting that if “Bush would not soon reverse course, he would go down in history as the president who squandered America’s pre-eminence” (Dorrien, 2004b: unnumbered pages). Generally, Bush’s first year’s foreign policy team was largely split between two competing camps: on the one hand the neo-Reaganites headed by Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Libby guided by the belief that American power should be used to *change* the world; and on the other the more pragmatist and “realist” policymakers at the State Department, headed by Powell (see, e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004; Woodward, 2002, 2004; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). As neoconservative commentator Kristol summarized, “I think that you could make the case that on September 10, 2001 it’s not clear that George W. Bush is in any fundamental way going in our direction on foreign policy” (Frontline PBS, 2003a).

However, 9/11 indeed offered the new “Pearl Harbor” that the neoconservatives had been waiting for. As Parmar (2005: 2) has argued, like Pearl Harbor did in 1941, 9/11 functioned as a *catalyzing event*. In the words of Bush in one of his most famous speeches just days after the attacks: “in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment” (Bush, 2001c). This mission, as we have seen, had been long in the making through the networks we have described above. What is also worth noting in this context is that within the narrative constructed by the Bush administration, the United States was presented as the blameless victim (Krebs and Lobasz, 2007; also Bacevich, 2002; Parmar, 2005). The notion that the events of September 11 themselves can be regarded as the ultimate “blowback” (Johnson, 2004) – caused by years of U.S. policies in the Middle East and the wider Arab world (Walt, 2006) – was of course completely outside the politically acceptable discourse at the time. As Bush (2001d) claimed shortly after: “[w]e did not seek this conflict, but we will win it.”

The first reaction of President Bush to Vice President Cheney on the phone, after the news had reached him that two airplanes had been flown into the World Trade Center of New York City and another one was on its way to the Pentagon was: “We’re at war” (Woodward, 2002: 17). In the turmoil that reigned in the days after the attacks of 9/11, it seems that neoconservatives in and outside government have done everything within their power to fill that statement with their preferred content (see, e.g., Halper and Clarke, 2004: 129–31; Woodward, 2002; Dorrien, 2004a: ch. 4). On September 20, 2001, in a letter to President Bush, the PNAC – to which, as we have seen, as many as ten of our grand-strategy makers had been affiliated prior to entering Bush’s foreign policy team – endorsed the framing of the War on Terror as “a broad and sustained campaign” against the “terrorist organizations and those who harbor and support them,” in which capturing Osama bin Laden was seen as a “key goal, but by no means the only goal.” In fact, the “necessary steps” constituting the “minimum necessary” included: a determined effort to *remove Saddam Hussein from power* “even if evidence does not directly link Iraq to the attack”; targeting *Hezbollah, Iran and Syria*; full support for *Israel*; and – of course – a large *increase in the U.S.*

*defense budget* (PNAC, 2001). This blueprint of the “War on Terror” drafted by the PNAC less than ten days after the 9/11 attacks has, as we shall see below, subsequently been implemented to a striking degree.

Indeed, what prior to 9/11, in the eyes of many (also within the administration), had looked as a rather unrealistic and a far too extreme foreign policy agenda apparently had been transformed into a comprehensive paradigm for U.S. foreign policy within the course of a week. As Bush stated:

[i]n a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade in the history of liberty, that we've been called to a unique role in human events. Rarely has the world faced a choice more clear or consequential.

(Bush, 2002b)

The global War on Terror as it took shape in the tumultuous developments in the first post-9/11 weeks not only came to include much of the neoconservatives’ long-favored goals, it arguably represented a truly “grand” strategy, fit for America’s unrivaled global leadership in a post-Cold War order.

### *The global War on Terror: a grand strategic concept*

A first choice that should be highlighted is the decision to frame the fight against terrorism as a “war,” and moreover, a war “of global reach”: “the enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism” (White House, 2002: 5). This makes “the enemy” indistinct and comprehensive; it could be anything, anywhere: “[t]he struggle against global terrorism is different from any other war in our history. It will be fought on many fronts against a particularly elusive enemy over an extended period of time” (White House, 2002: 5; for a further analysis of this discourse see also Dunmire, 2007). As Bush had warned in September 2001: “Our war on terror begins with Al Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated” (Bush, 2001c).

Part of this discursive strategy – and what has been seen as distinctive in the Bush doctrine (e.g., Gerecht, 2004) – is to not only make the terrorists responsible and punishable for their acts, but also “those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them” (see, e.g., Schonberg, 2006). Such a reframing enables the United States – and other states for that matter – to regard any regimes or state that they might perceive (rightly or wrongly) as hostile to their interests as legitimate targets of the War on Terror (Renshon and Suedfeld, 2007). Though it must also be pointed out that, above all, it was Arabs that were constructed as enemies in the post-9/11 context (Merskin, 2004). Moreover, such an “omnipresent” enemy requires an “omnipotent” United States that can project its military power around the globe (White House, 2002: 6). This is what arguably made the War on Terror such a powerful and strategically useful concept. In fact, this particular framing of the threat and the enemy might be interpreted as an answer to the changed international (security) system with the end of the Cold War (see also

White House, 2002: 13). Arguably, this reframing of the security environment helped to legitimize U.S. global interventionism in the same way that the concept of “containment” of the communist evil legitimized U.S. extra-regional activity within the bipolar Cold War world order (see also Buzan, 2006; Dunmire, 2009).

### *Ensuring U.S. military supremacy*

The effective redefinition of the U.S. security environment, as analyzed above, politically enabled a further militarization of U.S. foreign policy, with the U.S. defense budget at the end of Bush’s presidency having increased by a staggering 71 percent in constant dollars (nominally from close to US\$300 billion in 2000 to almost US\$700 billion in 2009), exceeding in real terms the spending levels during the height of the Cold War (Perlo-Freeman *et al.*, 2009: 184). Next to this enormous rise in defense spending, to “reaffirm the essential role of American military strength” (White House, 2002: 29) and “to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States” (*ibid.*: 30), what was needed were “bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia” (*ibid.*: 29), and a complete overhaul of all major national security institutions, i.e., “reform of the U.S. military,” which was envisaged to encompass “every level of government and the cooperation of the public and the private sector” (White House, 2002: 6).

Key elements of this transformation identified in the NSS were: innovation within the armed forces, transformation of the management of the Department of Defense, and a “widening of the range of military options available to the President to discourage aggression or any form of coercion against the United States or its allies” (White House, 2002: 30). An important aspect was the establishment of a new Department of Homeland Security, and a transformation of intelligence capabilities, such as strengthening the authority of the Defense Intelligence Agency director, the highest ranking military intelligence officer, as well as development of new methods of data collection. The latter – under the highly secretive so-called President’s Surveillance Program – encompassed a collection of intelligence activities of unprecedented scope (authorized by the president), the full extent of which started dawning on the general public first in 2013 when the *Guardian* published the top-secret report on this program, code-named “Stellarwind” (*Guardian*, 2013). Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had been an ardent advocate of a transformation of the military (Rumsfeld, 2002b) throughout his career, with a particular fascination for the potentials of high technology to improve military combat, and he was determined to achieve as much as possible in that regard during his term under Bush (e.g., Suskind, 2004a; Woodward, 2002, 2004). The new military strategy furthermore also emphasized new forms of international and military cooperation, such as ad hoc “coalitions of the willing” (see on this last point also Krahmann, 2005), i.e., “coalitions – as broad as practicable – of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favors freedom” (White House, 2002: 25).

### *Opening the door to U.S. capital*

Finally, the concept of the War on Terror enabled a coercive geopolitical strategy that continued to be aimed at the opening of previously closed areas to U.S. capital by removing any protective barriers. In the case of Iraq this indeed implied the removal of a whole regime standing in the way of a U.S.-dominated world (cf. Chibber, 2008) – which could be presented as in the general interest of “ultimately fighting for our democratic values and way of life” (White House, 2002: 31). The ambition, then, was to impose these values – bound up with a U.S. notion of democracy in which political freedom is inextricably bound up with “freedom of enterprise” – in those parts of the world where these values did not yet prevail, in particular the Muslim world. As the conservative historian Gaddis argues, it is in particular this aspect that made the Bush strategy a truly grand strategy, a revolutionary strategy according to him, that had the potential to provide the basis for a new world order (Gaddis, 2002: 54). The objective of regime change in Iraq arguably lay at the heart of that strategic aim. That is: “[a] plan for transforming the entire Muslim Middle East: for bringing it, once and for all, into the modern world [sic]” (Gaddis, 2002: 55; cf. Hassan, 2008). We would emphasize that here “modernization” above all means what Harvey (2003) calls “accumulation by dispossession,” through a program of market-opening reforms such as “pro-growth legal and regulatory policies to encourage business investment, innovation, and entrepreneurial activity”; “strong financial systems that allow capital to be put to its most efficient use”; “sound fiscal policies to support business activity”; and “free trade that provides new avenues for growth” (White House, 2002: 17). The dubious success with which this gamut of neoliberal policies has been implemented in post-invasion Afghanistan and Iraq will be part of our analysis below.

### *Regime change from Afghanistan to Iraq: the long war*

As is extensively documented by now (e.g., Woodward, 2004; Suskind, 2004a, 2006; Halper and Clarke, 2004; Wedel, 2009; Dorrien, 2004a; Mann, 2004; Gardner, 2008), many of Bush’s key foreign-policy makers were in favor of taking on Iraq alongside Afghanistan as a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As testified by a later declassified memo of Rumsfeld from November 2, 2001 – which lists several options, justifications, and possible strategies for an Iraq invasion, with notes such as “How start?,” “Focus on WMD,” “Coalition – who do we want in?,” and “Influence campaign … when begin?” – the Iraq option was actively debated by the national security team in the period just after 9/11 (National Security Archive, 2013a). In fact Rumsfeld and others had been pondering and preparing a forced regime change in Iraq for much longer (see e.g., Suskind, 2004a; Woodward, 2004). But even if Bush was receptive to the idea of removing Hussein – startling his counter-terrorism advisor Richard Clarke (2004: 32) by urging him the day after the attacks “to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he’s linked in any way” – Bush

decided to focus first on Afghanistan. Four days after the WTC attacks he told Condoleezza Rice “we won’t do Iraq now … but eventually we’ll have to return to that question” (Kinzer, 2006: 289.). Indeed, what is underlined here is that regime change in Iraq was already on the agenda from the very start, and that 9/11 was going to be used to construct the case for war against the regime that had been a thorn in America’s side since the first Gulf War and with it the broader aim of regional transformation – and hence U.S. expansion – in the Middle East and beyond.

The global War on Terror, then, started with Operation Enduring Freedom, that is, the overthrow of the Taliban regime that had “harbored” Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network. This implied “hunting down” the “terrorists” (Gilmore, 2001) that in fact had been nurtured by the United States during the Soviet occupation, with al-Qaeda being a direct offspring of the Mujahedeen that had been so lavishly supported with aid and arms by the CIA via the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (Kinzer, 2006: 266–7) – according to Bush’s second defense secretary, Robert Gates (2014: 200) “a stark reminder … of our limited ability to look into the future and foresee unintended consequences of our actions.”<sup>7</sup> After the USSR had left Afghanistan, the United States lost interest in the war-wrecked country, but in the second half of the 1990s the Clinton administration maintained good relations with the newly ruling fundamentalist Taliban, notwithstanding the obvious oppressive nature of the regime as well as their known links to bin Laden. This pragmatic cooperation with the Taliban was partly born out of corporate and geo-economic interests, as for instance related to a major \$2 billion gas pipeline that American oil exploration major Unocal had been planning to build from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India, crossing Afghanistan. The pipeline would not just be a major deal for Unocal, but also serve broader Open Door interests, as expressed by Robin Raphael, assistant secretary of state under Clinton, who claimed it would “facilitate U.S. business interests” (in Kinzer, 2006: 27; Coll, 2004). From this perspective it was clear that there was thus need for a government that was (1) friendly to the United States; and (2) would be capable of stabilizing the country, otherwise “economic opportunities here will be missed” (in Kinzer, 2006: 27). After the 1998 al-Qaeda embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam, endorsed by the Taliban, the negotiations were, however, abrogated and it became clear to Washington that the Taliban was not going to be a reliable partner (Coll, 2004).

Combining an American air war with a ground war fought by the proxies of the Northern Alliance and an assortment of willing warlords (Kinzer, 2006: 277), the first phase of the War on Terror ended when the Taliban regime fell in December 2001. But this was only the beginning. As Bush had announced just a month earlier:

We are at the beginning of our efforts in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan is only the beginning of our efforts in the world. No group or nation should mistake Americans’ intentions: Where terrorist groups exist of global reach,

the United States and our friends and allies will seek it out [*sic*], and we will destroy it.

(Bush, 2001e)

In Afghanistan itself, a NATO-led force was installed to train Afghan security and police forces and to fight insurgent Taliban forces that were regaining influence in southern and eastern Afghanistan alongside al-Qaeda forces and a variety of local warlords, with the conflict spilling over into bordering Pakistan and causing thousands of victims, many of them civilians (Conetta, 2002; Steele, 2002), and making for a war that still has not ended (six years after Bush left office). Moreover, the “real enemy” and culprit, Osama bin Laden, had been given ample room to escape via the network of underground tunnels and caves (Tora Bora) – the heritage of the aforementioned generous CIA funding during the 1980s – to neighboring Pakistan.

Fitting within a pattern of regime change driven by Open Door motives (Kinzer, 2006; Layne, 2006a; see also [Chapter 2](#)), Hamid Karzai – an initially U.S.-friendly politician that had been a contractor to the CIA when it supported the Mujahedeen – was chosen to head first the interim administration and then to become elected president in 2004. Next to him, as “viceroy” (Cooper, 2009), running “the country together” (Kinzer, 2006: 310) the U.S. placed Zalmay Khalilzad, one of our selected grand-strategy makers, first as special presidential envoy for Afghanistan, and over 2003–05 as ambassador. Khalilzad, born and raised in Afghanistan and with a long career in Republican governments stretching back to the Reagan administration, had been mentored by Albert Wohlstetter, the conservative nuclear strategist who is said to have had much influence on neoconservative thinking (Mann, 2003: 29). Well embedded in the elite networks described before – as a PNAC signatory, RAND director, and core contributor to the DPG of 1992 – Khalilzad had worked as a consultant for Unocal when they were still negotiating the abovementioned Afghanistan–Pakistan–India pipeline with the Taliban. He played a key role in the early years of the occupation of Afghanistan – as he did subsequently in Iraq – overseeing the drafting of the new constitution.

#### *Building the case for regime change in Iraq*

While few people close to Bush seemed to have openly opposed the war in Iraq,<sup>8</sup> the criticisms that were voiced were simply ignored, such as Bush 41’s national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft (2002), who wrote a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed titled “Don’t Attack Saddam,” of which Cheney later wrote in his memoirs that it “reflected a pre-9/11 mind-set” (2011: 388). Such criticisms were widely shared outside the United States though, and many world leaders suggested the UN Security Council to pass a resolution demanding new weapon inspections in Iraq. The Bush administration, in the words of Cheney, responded that: “there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction . . . amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us,” hence

allowing weapon inspectors back in would “provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow back in his box” (Cheney, 2002).

Meanwhile, the team surrounding Bush was working fervently to produce intelligence to disprove the official data of UN weapon inspectors and creating the impression of a WMD presence in Iraq, culminating in Powell’s infamous address to the Security Council on February 5, 2003.<sup>9</sup> All of this has been well documented in a range of excellent studies (e.g., Wedel, 2009; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Halper and Clarke, 2004; Woodward, 2004; Suskind, 2004a, 2006) and there is no need to rehearse this in any detail here, but worth recounting is the critical involvement of some key neoconservative policy advisers, such as Richard Perle (who Wedel (2009) documents to be a key networker); Libby, a protégé of Wolfowitz and one of the key authors of the 1992 DPG, who as Woodward (2004: 48) observed: “was a power center unto himself, and accordingly, a force multiplier for Cheney’s agenda and views”<sup>10</sup>; and Ahmed Chalabi, who was heading the later discredited Iraqi National Congress (INC) – part of an anti-Saddam group that had been instrumental in the creation of the 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act. Chalabi – who maintained close ties with the JINSA – was championed by the neoconservatives to become Iraq’s future leader, the “George Washington of Iraq” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 251), an ambition that he himself also entertained, but which openly failed (see below). Finally, a key figure in this context that is not part of our selected grand-strategy makers is Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy under Bush (2001–05) and JINSA board member who had close ties to Perle (Wedel, 2009). Feith – among other ad-hoc platforms – supervised the Office of Special Plans (OSP), which was created to find evidence that could be used to sell the war against Iraq, above all to investigate possible links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda (Wedel, 2009: 179–80; Ritchie and Rogers, 2006: 126–30; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007).

The OSP – along with the Pentagon’s Near East and South Asia bureau – became a focal point in the neoconservative network committed to regime change in Iraq, and also worked closely with the DPB, headed by Perle and staffed by other neocons such as Woolsey and Libby. The OSP relied heavily on the INC and other Iraqi exiles for their intelligence (Wedel, 2009: 181).<sup>11</sup> Via these and other channels, such as the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group (Ritchie and Rogers, 2006: 126–30) a small selection of mostly neoconservative war planners thus largely sidelined formal channels such as the CIA and the State Department and instead reached out to the inner circle of decision-makers surrounding the president, such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz, and to the public through media outlets such as *Fox News Network* and *Weekly Standard* with what by now is widely confirmed to have been manipulated intelligence and a carefully crafted discourse on the Iraq threat as part of the threat of global terrorism that the United States was fighting since 9/11 (Wedel, 2009; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Woodward, 2004; Suskind, 2004a, 2006; Halper and Clarke, 2004), a legitimating discourse that also succeeded in getting much of the Congressional Democratic opposition on board (Krebs and Lobasz, 2007).

*Operation Iraqi freedom: the Open Door in Iraq*

While in response to UN Security Council resolution 1441, Saddam Hussein had agreed to new inspections, Bush and his close advisers had made up their minds long before – as the CIA director said, it was a “slam-dunk case” (Kinzer, 2006: 269) – and on March 20, 2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom started with an air campaign followed by a full-scale invasion by U.S. and some UK forces, and (political) support from a number of other allies. This happened months before the inspectors had finished their work and in defiance of global political opinion and fierce opposition from France and Germany, that is, what Rumsfeld called “Old Europe.” Unlike Kosovo, then, which was also a violation of the UN Charter but was carried out as a NATO operation, the invasion of Iraq split NATO and took place in face of the opposition of almost the entire Security Council. The war thus constitutes the most consequential case of Bush’s heightened unilateralism, reinforcing a trend that had already begun in Clinton’s second term, as we saw in the last chapter.<sup>12</sup>

While Bush had announced the war with the words: “[o]ur Nation enters this conflict reluctantly. Yet our purpose is sure … this will not be a campaign of half measures, and we will accept no outcome but victory” (Bush, 2003a), the war, causing hundreds of thousands of deaths, quickly – after the easy victory over the Iraqi army – descended into a chaotic, drawn-out, and bloody occupation that triggered a nationalist insurgency as well as a Sunni–Shiite civil war and ultimately left (under Obama) the country behind in a state of violent instability and provided fertile ground for new terrorist groups.

The obvious miscalculation and mismanagement of the occupation was arguably another sign of the ideological drive behind the war on the part of Bush’s neoconservative advisors, who consistently ignored warnings and advice such as that of the State Department (see National Security Archive, 2013b), which in an extensive report anticipated many of the problems that later beset Iraq (Halper and Clarke, 2004: 224–5). Ignoring this advice, Paul Bremer, the administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), who effectively ruled the country in the first years (Bremer, 2006), instead followed the advice of Feith, Chalabi, and the INC by decreeing, in consultation with Wolfowitz and backed up by Rumsfeld, “the De-Baathification of Iraqi Society” (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003a). Bremer himself in his memoirs likened this policy with the de-Nazification principles in post-war Germany (Bremer, 2006: 42). He also ordered the “dissolution” of the national army, police, security, and intelligence forces, thus creating a power vacuum which contributed to the looting and sabotage that paralyzed the Iraqi infrastructure, created mass-unemployment, and alienated crucial segments of Iraqi society that would have been essential for rebuilding the country (Halper and Clarke, 2004: 224–5).

Although the political Open Door was nominally created with the organization of Iraqi elections in 2005, the explosion of sectarian violence and surging anti-Americanism – fueled by the earlier Abu Ghraib torture scandal, with torture later turning out to be an official policy of the Bush administration<sup>13</sup> – did

little to provide the hoped-for stability, let alone a peaceful democracy. But, then, in the case of Iraq, “democracy promotion” became only a legitimization of the war after it became official what everyone already knew, that the WMDs were not there (Chomsky, 2006). Now, after Bush had announced the “mission accomplished” on aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* already in May 2003 (Bush, 2003b), it was stated that “the victory will come when the terrorists and Saddamists can no longer threaten Iraq’s democracy” (Bush, 2005c). Whether “democracy promotion” was genuinely believed in or not (see Ryan, 2010b),<sup>14</sup> it was only implemented with partial success in post-Saddam Iraq, with also the so-called surge (expansion of U.S. troops to over 160,000 in 2007) unable to pacify the country.

Arguably more successful – in spite of the continuing violence and the lack of a supporting political framework – and ultimately more important to Bush’s grand strategy (Stokes, 2009) was the economic Open Door in Iraq. Six months into the occupation, Bremer, a former corporate executive and director (among others managing director of Kissinger Associates and director of European TNC, Akzo Nobel), as well as former head of counter-terrorism in the State Department, issued several orders leading to a complete liberalization of Iraq’s state-owned enterprises, the introduction of a flat tax (a long-time dream of neoliberals), the near full elimination of trade barriers, and the complete opening up of the Iraqi economy to foreign investment. The latter took place through Order 39, which stipulated that foreign investors could take full ownership of Iraqi businesses, fully repatriate their profits, and had to be granted the same rights as national companies (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003b).

From 2005 onwards “[t]he transition from a non-transparent centrally planned economy to a market economy characterized by sustainable economic growth through the establishment of a dynamic private sector” (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2003a) was further helped along by Khalilzad as he left Afghanistan to become ambassador to Iraq, playing a key role in the politico-economic transformation of Iraq (Bremer, 2006) – including, again, the drafting and implementation of the country’s new constitution, which further entrenched the neoliberal character of the new socioeconomic regime.<sup>15</sup> The same is true of the 2008 *Status of Forces Agreement*, which emphasized continued efforts to further integrate Iraq into global capitalism and concomitant institutions (Strategic Framework Agreement, 2008). An important designated partner here was the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), an independent U.S. government agency that under the slogan of “U.S. business as a force for good” mobilizes “private capital to help solve critical development challenges and in doing so, advances U.S. foreign policy” (OPIC, 2015).<sup>16</sup>

Iraq was thus “open for business” as Bremer had declared in 2004, and, indeed, confirming the general pattern of U.S. FDI “following the flag” (as mentioned in Chapter 1), it was above all U.S. investment that flowed into the new market (Biglaiser and DeRouen Jr, 2007). According to the Center for Public Integrity, funding to U.S. contractors in both Iraq and Afghanistan between 2002 and 2003 totaled respectively \$5.7 and \$2.7 billion, with the largest beneficiaries

being, among others, Kellogg, Brown and Root (a subsidiary of Halliburton), Bechtel, and the Science Application International Corporation, a government contractor of which Robert Gates had been a director (Center for Public Integrity, 2003).<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps ironically, it was with regard to the oil sector that Iraq, sitting on top of one of the world's largest proven reserves of crude oil at the time, proved to be much more resistant to the opening up by U.S.-led transnational capital than initially anticipated. International oil companies (IOCs) that did not have access during the Hussein regime obviously were very keen to get into that oil bonanza with a new regime in place (Muttitt, 2012: 5, Bignell, 2011.).<sup>18</sup> But the anticipated privatization and access for American and Western IOCs – as well as the projected quick rehabilitation of the oil fields supposedly yielding enormous revenues to pay for the post-war reconstruction – did not proceed as smoothly as expected. While Wolfowitz had optimistically told Congress on March 27, 2003: “we are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon.... It doesn't have to be the U.S. taxpayer money” (Halper and Clarke, 2004: 222–3), they met fierce political and popular opposition – in particular from the very strong Oil Workers Union – culminating in the blocking of a new foreign-investor-friendly oil law by nationalist and conservative forces (see Muttitt, 2012). Notwithstanding this setback for foreign (oil) investment interests, the Iraqi government – advised by the U.S. lawyers and advisers from the State Department (Kramer, 2008) – negotiated a set of contracts with a selection of major foreign oil companies, from which the latter would largely benefit (Cafruny and Lehmann, 2012: 13–14).<sup>19</sup>

The mixed success of the opening up of the Iraqi oil industry underlines that grand-strategic intentions do not always materialize; indeed the success of the Open Door is not guaranteed. Yet, we must also emphasize that the key driving forces behind the war in our view were not so much specific corporate interests or narrow oil interests, but related to a broader project of regional transformation from the perspective of maintaining and re-affirming U.S. global hegemony. As President Bush formulated it a few weeks before the onset of the war to an AEI crowd:

A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region, by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions. America's interests in security, and America's belief in liberty, both lead in the same direction: to a free and peaceful Iraq. [Applause.] ... A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.

(Bush, 2003c)

Establishing a U.S.-friendly liberal democracy with open markets and underpinned by U.S. bases (see Stokes, 2009) in the strategic heart of the Middle East was the broader aim of Iraqi regime change, and this would have a domino effect, from which in turn U.S. firms and other TNCs would benefit.

Within this broader aim of region transformation, oil did of course play a crucial role in as much as it was oil that made and still makes the Middle East such a strategic region over which the United States must exercise hegemony in order to sustain its global primacy, and in as much as it was because of oil that Saddam Hussein's Iraq in particular was a key strategic asset that could not be left in the hands of a regime hostile to U.S. interests (Chibber, 2008; see also Harvey, 2003; Stokes, 2009; Cafruny and Lehmann, 2012). As forcefully argued by Chibber (2008), with the sanctions becoming ever more untenable, both politically – for instance losing European support – and because of their adverse effect, somehow removing Saddam from power became an increasingly rational option from the perspective of America's foreign policy elite. The alternative – leaving him in place – would have seriously undermined U.S. power. First, it would have sent the signal that the United States was incapable of “containing” Iraq. Second, Saddam Hussein would get much too powerful in the region, precisely because supply conditions in the early twenty-first century threatened to make him “the swing producer in the global [oil] market.” That would give the Iraqi regime the same leverage as the Saudis, but whereas the latter “were an American protectorate, Hussein would almost certainly position himself as a regional rival” (*ibid.*: 31). In addition, if Saddam would be removed Iraq might become a key U.S. regional ally – and supplier of oil – and as such an alternative to the troublesome protectorate of Saudi Arabia (Kaplan and Kristol, 2003: 95–9).<sup>20</sup>

Although the Iraq War can thus be seen as a war for Open Door hegemony – and even though the case for regime change from the 1990s was increasingly persuading Democrats as well (see [Chapter 4](#)) – it was still a distinctively neo-conservative war. It is at least implausible that given the early advocacy of regime change by neoconservative grand-strategy planners in the 1990s, and the strong role of, in particular, neoconservative advisers and policymakers in the Bush administration in making the case for, planning, and executing the war on terror, the Iraq War would have taken place at the time and in the (unilateralist) manner in which it did (cf. Harvey, 2011). Or as Chibber (2008: 42) has put it: while “[t]here was in fact a quite deep elite consensus on the desirability of military action,” a consensus that was bipartisan, “[t]he neo-cons were still absolutely central to the actual push for war.” Our analysis above has shown how this “push” was constructed and enacted by a network of key foreign policy planners and makers and became an integral part of the overarching American grand strategy after 9/11.

#### *Beyond Iraq: confronting rogues and other contenders of the Open Door*

Besides Afghanistan and Iraq, the much contested “Axis of Evil” – which Karl Rove, the president's senior adviser and political strategist thought to be a “signature phrase” (Woodward, 2004: 90) – included additional “rogue states” to be confronted, primarily Iran and North Korea. Neoconservatives such as David

Frum – a speechwriter for Bush who had originally invented the term “axis of hatred” (*ibid.*) – and Richard Perle, had a longer list in mind, together writing that: “both regimes [Iran and North Korea] present intolerable threats to American security. We must move boldly against them both *and against all other sponsors of terrorism as well: Syria, Libya and Saudi Arabia*” (Frum and Perle, 2003: 83; emphasis added). It was Iran, however, that became the next primary target of the Bush administration. Neoconservative flagship journals such as *The Weekly Standard* and *Commentary* featured regular op-ed pieces discussing the pros and cons of bombing Iran (Gerecht, 2006; also Luttwak, 2006; McInerny, 2006). Neoconservative hardliner, PNAC signatory, and resident fellow at the AEI, Reuel Marc Gerecht, in 2004, warned with strong wording that: “if the Bush administration opts for a variation of the realist approach [i.e., the path of least resistance and least action] … it will gut what is left of its post-9/11 ‘axis of evil’ doctrine” (Gerecht, 2004: unnumbered pages).

But in the context of the continued military efforts required to counter the escalating spiral of violence in Iraq and the ongoing fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the tide of public opinion and of much foreign policy elite opinion was turning against the way the United States was fighting the War on Terror. The political climate became less favorable for yet another regime change in the Middle East. While this military option has been at several times actively considered inside the administration (Cirincione, 2006; Gates, 2014: 190–3), Bush, in the end – disappointing his hawkish advisers – went relatively “soft on Iran” (cf. Gerecht, 2004). That meant stepping up the pressure regarding the claim that Iran was developing its nuclear program, by flying drones launched from Iraq to collect intelligence on Iran’s nuclear program (Linzer, 2005), and putting diplomatic pressure on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In 2006 the United States–Iran nuclear conflict escalated, with the United States demanding a decision by the UN Security Council for “special inspections” by the UN nuclear team (Traynor, 2006), the passing of the *Iran Freedom and Support Act* which provided substantial funding for the Iranian opposition, and by extending existing U.S. sanctions allowing the administration to target them against “entities that aid the Iranian regime’s development of nuclear weapons” (Bush, 2006c). But while in May 2007 the options of either directly taking military action against Iran or signaling support for Israel for doing so were again on the table, in the account of the “realist” Robert Gates, who in the meantime had replaced hardliner Rumsfeld as defense secretary (see below), it quickly turned out that Cheney was the only one left in Bush’s national security team who was decisively in favor of such a course of action, while Gates himself was adamantly opposed (Gates, 2014: 182–3, 190–3). Others, like Rice, and most importantly Bush himself, in the end sided with Gates and not with the increasingly isolated vice president. All of this is a further indication of a shift in Bush’s second term, related to the increasingly apparent limits of the neoconservative strategy, while also made possible by changes in some of the key personnel, toward a somewhat more moderate foreign policy. In this context, then,

the enthusiasm for a foreign policy devoted to “free” people living in “rogue states” had clearly waned.

Another (re)emerging contender – of course – was Russia. This former Cold War enemy had regained strength after a weakened decade in the 1990s, with rising energy prices boosting its economic clout and the assertive and nationalist President Putin reclaiming a prominent place on the stage of world politics – after the incorporation of Russia into the U.S.-dominated liberal system (Clinton’s project of enlargement as described in the previous chapter) had largely failed. As Condoleezza Rice put it during Bush’s first campaign: “Moscow is determined to assert itself in the world and often does so in ways that are at once haphazard and threatening to American interests” (Rice, 2000: 57). Neoconservatives were similarly concerned about Russia, seen as one of the major contenders of the United States, but since regime change was not an option in this case, they advocated a tough line, using U.S. power for the “neocontainment” of Russia (see Goldgeier and McFaul, 2003).

A key strategic instrument here was of course NATO expansion, with a second round taking place in 2004, incorporating another seven Central and Eastern European countries – including the three former Soviet Baltic republics – into the alliance. The process, that had started under Clinton, of seeking to integrate the countries of Russia’s former “sphere of influence,” in particular Ukraine and Georgia, into America’s Open Door empire, thus continued.<sup>21</sup> Ukraine, already conceived as an important “prize” by the Clinton administration, as we saw in the previous chapter, became an object of geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the United States after the pro-Western “orange revolution.” The latter was strongly supported by the Bush administration and indeed enabled by a U.S. campaign involving U.S. diplomats, consultants, and American funding of local pro-democracy youth groups (Traynor, 2004). The Ukrainian color revolution further accelerated the neoliberalization of Ukraine’s political economy (Yurchenko, 2012), and of course anticipated the more far-reaching regime change of 2014 (see the next chapter). In Georgia, after its color revolution – called “a beacon of liberty for this region and the world” by Bush (2005b) when visiting Tbilisi – actual war broke out when in 2008 Russian forces invaded Georgia over the conflict of the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Although, with respect to the latter, Washington’s response was arguably not as muscular as Karl Rove and Condoleezza Rice later claimed they had been (e.g., Rice, 2014), the United States did make its support of Georgia very clear by air-lifting Georgian combat troops from Iraq, as well as using NATO warships stationed in the Black Sea to ship humanitarian aid. Robert Kagan (2010), one of the key intellectuals of the neoconservative movement, saw in these events “the return of history,” and a vindication of the neoconservative belief that morality had to be backed up by (hard) power in order for the cause of freedom to advance.

Another – arguably more offensive – line of “neocontainment” was the unilateral retreat from the ABM treaty (see also note 12). Not only did this free the United States from the constraints on their missile defense development

(as ardently promoted by Rumsfeld and others – see Rumsfeld *et al.*, 1998) but also in 2007 led to proposals for placement of an anti-ballistic missile defense system in Poland (and a radar station in the Czech Republic) – which, of course, put the U.S.–Russian relationship under pressure and had Putin likening the situation to the Cuban missile crisis (Traynor, 2007).

Nonetheless, and in spite of the sometimes inflamed rhetoric, the relations with Russia were generally not openly hostile and cooperation in both the security and economic domain proceeded, such as the shared interest in Russian membership of the WTO, the mutual agreement for nuclear weapons reduction in 2002 (the so-called “Moscow Treaty”) and the establishment of the NATO–Russia Council, providing Russia a seat at the table regarding issues such as terrorism. As formulated in the NSS 2006 the United States “seeks to work closely with Russia on strategic issues of common interest and to manage issues on which we have differing interests” (White House, 2006: 36). With respect to the latter, it was marked that “we will work to try to persuade the Russian Government to move forward and not backward, along freedom’s path” (*ibid.*) – and although Russia opposed the invasion of Iraq they did not veto the Security Council decision for weapons inspections and were a coalition partner in the War on Terror, which of course also fit the Russian interests in their own “war on terror” in Chechnya.

More generally, in light of the growing international (and domestic) resistance building up toward the hawkish and muscular approach in foreign policy, President Bush, after his re-election in 2004, toned down both his rhetoric and his unilateral ambitions. In an attempt to attenuate international resistance and restore legitimacy he spoke much more humbly to the UN General Assembly, on June 19, 2006, where he even recognized the democratically elected Hamas government, stating that: “Freedom by its nature cannot be imposed. It must be chosen” (Bush, 2006d). He also firmly reorganized his foreign policy team, the so-called “White House shake up” which implied that in total 12 cabinet-level officials resigned, among them: Powell and Ashcroft (already in November 2004), hard-liner Rumsfeld, who was replaced by Robert Gates in 2006, when Chief of Staff Andrew Card also resigned, as did John Bolton, who had taken a particularly hawkish course as U.S. ambassador to the UN since 2005, and Libby, who had to resign in 2007 due to his involvement in the so-called “Plame affair” for which he was indicted and later convicted (Baker, 2013: 1–10). Even key advisor Karl Rove left the administration in 2007. In general, Bush’s second term focused more on the economic dimension of foreign policy, to which we will turn next.

### ***Foreign economic policy: an agenda of global neoliberalization***

While much attention has been devoted – also in this chapter – to the military coercive elements of the neoconservative Open Door variety, the economic dimension of Bush’s grand strategy was characterized by its unwavering commitment to neoliberalism, providing in this respect for much continuity with the Clinton era. It was from this perspective that the 2002 NSS invoked the goals of

“political and economic freedom” with a view to “ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade” and to “expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy” (White House, 2002: 1–2). Here the opening of societies above all means to “open [them] to commerce and investment” (*ibid.*: 22). Compared to Clinton though – notwithstanding that the latter’s policies served the ultra-wealthy very well – Bush’s economic policies were more unashamedly in favor of the corporate rich, with unprecedented tax cuts, primarily benefiting millionaires and billionaires, a redistribution from bottom to top that Bush defended with the line “[t]he people of America have been overcharged, and on their behalf, I am here asking for a refund” (Bush, 2000a).

### *Expanding the web of free trade*

A key aspect of the neoliberal agenda was a continued push for expanding free trade globally, though strongly centered around U.S. interests and power. Thus, keeping American transnational capital globally competitive was one of the key themes in Bush’s State of the Union in 2006, that is to: “build the prosperity of our country by strengthening our economic leadership in the world” (Bush, 2006a). This, Bush emphasized, did not imply a return to “old temptations” such as an escape to protectionism or having government taking “a larger role in directing the economy, centralizing more power in Washington, and increasing taxes,” but rather meant: “[k]eeping America competitive requires to open more markets for all that Americans make and growth.... With open markets and a level playing field, no one can outproduce or outcompete the American worker” (Bush, 2006a). That this conveniently neglected the protectionist measures taken by the Bush administration, such as the steel tariffs of 8–30 percent that he imposed on imported steel in order to support steel-producing states of the so-called Rust Belt, illustrates the double agenda sometimes underpinning the U.S. push for global free trade.

Although with regard to the areas of defense and national security (and also regarding other non-economic issues such as human rights) the Bush administration had, as we have seen, an explicit unilateralist orientation, with regard to foreign economic policy it attached much value to multilateral institutions such as the WTO (White House, 2006: 25–7), which it sought to lead in the direction of even more trade and investment liberalization. Yet the WTO – Clinton’s proud achievement – had virtually come to a standstill after the anti-globalization protests at the 1999 Seattle Summit. More important, the new Doha Round, intended to bring the global multilateral free trade agenda back to life, stalled over disputes between the developed and underdeveloped states (Chorev, 2009). Subsequently, the Bush administration, faced with these limits to neoliberal globalization (see the preceding chapter), that it also could not overcome, focused on advancing bilateral and regional trade deals instead (*ibid.*).

A key initiative in widening the free trade web was the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), basically an enlargement of NAFTA

that had already started under Clinton and was to be completed by 2005. Divisions between the developed nations led by the United States – seeking to expand trade in services and increased intellectual property rights – and the developing nations (headed by Brazil), that demanded an end to agricultural subsidies of the developed states – again turned out to be unbridgeable and in 2005 the negotiations ran aground.<sup>22</sup> These developments were indicative of a broader rift and global (geo)political backlash to the American neoliberal globalization agenda as pushed forward under Bush, in which dissenters such as Chavez became disturbers of the regional *Pax Americana*.

After the failure of the FTAA, the United States instead, with more success, focused its attention on bilateral deals with Latin American countries, as well as the regional Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), considerably expanding U.S. exports to this region. Another region where the United States tried to deepen its involvement was the Asia-Pacific region (where it only had two free trade agreements, compared to a total of 17 in the world), by signing the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with ASEAN in 2006, and in 2008 started negotiations to become part of what would evolve into the much contested Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement that Obama currently seeks to complete (Swaine, 2011: 202–3).

#### *Incorporating China into the Open Door world order*

A central element of the expanding Open Door was the integration of rising contender China. A crucial step in this process had been the endorsement of permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China in 1999, and subsequently, its entry to the WTO, in 2001. While this process thus had already started during the Clinton administration, the final agreement was reached in June 2001 under Bush, who had already in his election campaign clearly spoken out in favor of China's WTO accession, stating it to be “among the most serious decisions our government will make this year” (Bush, 2000b). The three main reasons given for his support – “freedom, security and economics” (*ibid.*) – highlight how China's WTO accession fitted with Bush's freedom agenda: “Trade with China will promote freedom.... Once a measure of economic freedom is permitted, a measure of political freedom will follow” (*ibid.*). But it was also very much in line with neoconservative thinking. Neoconservative intellectuals, on the one hand, did see China as “the most serious long term challenge to the unipolar global order” (Kagan, cited in Ryan, 2010a: 157), with the *Weekly Standard* from its inception in 1995 to 2000 producing three times as many editorials on China as on Iraq (*ibid.*: 157–9). But on the other hand they recognized that regime change was not an option and hence the cause of freedom had to be advanced in a different way (*ibid.*). Thus Frum and Perle in their grand strategy volume entitled *An End to Evil* argued that: “[i]f any one policy can drag China toward greater liberty, it is free trade, with its diffusion of wealth and power beyond the control of the government [*sic*]” (2003: 219). According to these authors the United States should signal to China that they wanted a “sustainable,

friendly relationship” but only under the conditions that “the Chinese respect American values and American interests in the world and in the region” (*ibid.*; emphasis added).

Regarding the latter point – i.e., American values and interests in the region – Bush had earlier warned that “China will have no doubts about our power and purpose in the region” (Bush, 2000b). Ultimately, China’s accession to the WTO, as Swaine puts it, was to “not only benefit the U.S. economy but also would deepen Beijing’s commitment to the norms of the global economic system” (Swaine, 2011: 193). Further underlining that China’s further integration into global capitalism had to take place as much as possible on U.S. terms, the conditions for accession imposed upon China were much harsher than for other developing countries (e.g., Branstetter and Lardy, 2008: 655; Hufbauer and Rosen, 2000: 3, 9). Indeed, as former U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky described, these conditions far exceeded any WTO member (Branstetter and Lardy, 2008: 657). Finally, as Bush (2000b) had made clear, China’s WTO accession implied the opening up of China’s market to U.S. capital: “trade with China serves the economic interests of America... The doors will open to providers of U.S. services – the import-export trade, banking, insurance, telecommunications, accounting, computers, motion pictures and more.”

China was meanwhile not only making “pathbreaking commitments in its accession to the WTO to open up its service sector to foreign investment and competition” (Branstetter and Lardy, 2008: 657), but also largely followed the rules as set out by the WTO (e.g., McNally, 2012), and in that sense lived up to its role as the “responsible stakeholder” that U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick had urged it to become (Zoellick, 2005; also White House, 2006: 41). Nonetheless tensions in the Sino-U.S. economic relations started to mount during Bush’s second term in the context of a weakening U.S. economy and a rapidly rising trade deficit with China triggering U.S. accusations of a manipulation of the Chinese currency, while the prospect of a possible (military) clash over Taiwan also appeared to rise (Cohen, 2010: 272–80; Liew, 2010). Another major issue of concern was China’s global quest for energy in an era of exponentially rising oil prices and a generally tight oil market. As expressed by Robert Zoellick (2005): “China is acting as if it can somehow “lock up” energy supplies around the world.” And while, according to Zoellick, this “mercantilist strategy” was not the right path to achieving energy security, it moreover would lead to “partnerships with regimes that hurt China’s reputation and lead others to question its intentions” (*ibid.*).

These partly misplaced concerns – which moreover neglects the fact that over 80 percent of China’s energy imports are shipped via the Malacca Strait and waters, which are dominated by the U.S. Navy – led, among other things, to the blocking by Congress of a take-over of Unocal by a Chinese state-owned firm. This fitted a pattern in which liberal interventionist and neoconservative members of the foreign policy planning network continued to see Chinese authoritarian “state capitalism,” like that of Russia as a growing threat to the U.S.-led liberal world order, with Robert Kagan (also senior fellow at

Brookings) writing in 2006 that: “[u]nfortunately, al-Qaeda may not be the only challenge liberalism faces today, or even the greatest,” suggesting that illiberal great powers Russia and China constituted this threat instead (Kagan, 2006).

Still, containment of China was not considered an option. Instead, as under Clinton, the policy of liberal engagement was pursued, seeking to integrate China under U.S. terms, “hedging” this bet by maintaining military supremacy, and clearly signaling to China American readiness to project its military power, if needed, in the East Asian region. In the spirit of engagement, the United States–China Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) (see, Drezner, 2007) was established in 2006, and headed on the U.S. side by Treasury secretary Henry Paulson (2006–09), a former Goldman Sachs CEO who during his 32-year career at the investment bank giant had visited China more than 70 times and, according to the promotion on the cover of his book *Dealing with China*: “[as] head of Goldman Sachs had a pivotal role in opening up China to private enterprise” (Paulson, 2015). The SED was used by U.S. foreign-policy makers – Wall Street tycoon Paulson first – to seek to “accelerate the pace of China’s currency reform; expand market access for financial and nonfinancial services (beyond Beijing’s WTO accession commitments); take steps to boost China’s domestic consumption; improve the business climate in China; and address high-priority U.S. trade issues such as … [among others] IPR protection” (Swaine, 2011: 198–9). Most of this was done with considerable success on the part of the United States (*ibid.*: 200), that is, until the financial crisis broke out, when the roles were suddenly somewhat revised and Paulson was “lectured” by Vice Premier Wang Qishan, that Washington would need to “take all necessary measures to stabilize its economy and the financial market to ensure the security of China’s assets and investments in the U.S.” (Powell, 2008: unnumbered pages).

## Conclusion

We have shown in this chapter how the Bush grand strategy, on the one hand, reverberated the familiar Open Door elements, such as American exceptionalism, the externalization of evil, and the further opening of foreign markets in the name of human freedom. On the other hand, these elements were colored and reformulated by neoconservative ideas – as epitomized by the global War on Terror. This neoconservative rearticulation – which as we have shown can be directly linked to a network of individuals and policy planning bodies – had been long in the making and held at its core the emphasis on a more coercive and unapologetic defense of U.S. primacy to be maintained in a unipolar order; or the “New American Century,” as had been proclaimed by the neoconservatives united in the PNAC. In spite of this distinctive emphasis, the further expansion of “free” markets and “democracies” (the two seen as one) remained a major overarching goal of American grand strategy, and the Bush administration also continued much of the Clintonite neoliberal agenda, both nationally (see Wedel, 2009) and internationally. We have argued that this continuation of the neoliberal strategy must be seen in light of the close nexus that we observed between

the (foreign-)policy makers of the Bush administration and U.S. transnationally oriented capital, with most of Bush's key grand-strategy makers having had multiple top-level affiliations with America's largest (F500-notated) TNCs.

Where Bush went beyond Clinton was in the use of the coercive power of the state in a particularly militaristic and more unilateral way. This involved an ideological zeal to confront the new "enemies" of America's (neo)liberal empire and maintain America's primacy. Although none of these elements thus were entirely new, it was the particular emphasis they gained in the neoconservative geopolitical strategy, and the way they were discursively articulated, and legitimated, by the concept of the War on Terror, that constituted the distinctiveness of this strategy. While in terms of global context, the neoconservative expansionist strategy was enabled by the enormous relative (economic, financial, and above all military) power of the United States since the end of the Cold War, it was the event of 9/11 that offered Bush's neoconservative advisers a window of opportunity to implement the radical program that had been planned previously in the network of think tanks like the AEI and the JNSA, and platforms like the PNAC and the CSPG.

Although the aim of this strategy was to bolster U.S. power worldwide and make it beyond challenge by any state or non-state contender, it arguably had the opposite effect of undermining the capacity of the United States to successfully project its global power, and accelerating what in the view of some academic observers is America's inevitable hegemonic decline (Arrighi, 2005a, 2005b; see also Layne, 2012). Moreover, as we shall see in the next chapter, many in the foreign policy planning elite concluded that the United States had lost influence under Bush's "in your face" unilateralism. Indeed, in spite of the "softer" tone and approach of Bush's second term – partially again putting on the "multilateral gloves" over its "unilateral fist" (Stokes, 2005), the neoconservative project by the end of Bush's presidency had become largely discredited, especially because of the way the "liberation" of Iraq appeared to have turned into a quagmire that kept on costing U.S. lives (let alone the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives) as well as being a financial drain with the tally (together with the Afghanistan war) running to over US\$3 trillion (Stiglitz and Bilmes, 2008).

While *nominally* democratic and, more importantly, U.S.-friendly regimes had been installed in Afghanistan and Iraq; and their markets – certainly that of Iraq – had been effectively opened, even if, for instance, the latter's oil industry turned out to be more resistant than anticipated; the envisaged "domino effect" of regional transformation failed to materialize. Quite the contrary, resistance within many parts of the Arab world hardened as a result of the ongoing global War on Terror, and while al-Qaeda's strength was diminished in Afghanistan, the Iraq War had given it a new important base, while also growing elsewhere, from Pakistan to Yemen. In the meantime Iraq is now run by a Shiite-dominated government that maintains close ties with Iran, whose position in the region has generally strengthened, while the Shiite–Sunni rivalry in the Middle East has been only deepening since the Iraq War (Layne, 2009: 18–19). Even if the Iraq War can be seen as Stokes (2009) has put it as a "rational war gamble" with the

aim to “transnationalize the Iraqi economy” (*ibid.*: 108) and enhance U.S. hegemony, the grand strategic ambitions that underpinned the neoconservative project toward the end of the Bush administration can be regarded to have largely failed, as the gamble thus far has not paid off (*ibid.*; see also Chibber, 2008; cf. Cafruny and Lehmann, 2012).

The rather dramatic loss of legitimacy of America’s global power is one of the indications of how the grand strategy of the Bush administration had back-fired. Whereas the Clinton administration could still boast that the acceptance and spread of “American values” had never been so deep or wide, international polls half-way through the Bush presidency indicated an opposite trend. Going beyond a rejection of U.S. foreign policy in the wake of e.g., the Iraq War and the Abu Ghraib prison scandal: “[p]olls taken in many nations suggest that anti-Bush administration sentiment, which developed between 2002 and 2004, has mutated and strengthened into a broader anti-Americanism” (Kurlantzick, 2005: 419). Even in allied states the United States was increasingly seen as having lost its attraction, at times rather seen as a threat to world peace (Kurlantzick, 2005; see also Walt, 2006: ch. 2). The percentage of the public holding favorable views of the United States in key allies like Britain, France, and Germany dropped from, respectively, 83, 62, and 78 percent in 2000 to 51, 39, and 30 percent in the case of Germany in 2007 (Pew Research Center, 2013: 10).

What all of this underlines is that grand strategy not only *intentionally* shapes the global context in which subsequent grand-strategy making takes place, but also through *unintended consequences*, that then also feeds back into the process of grand-strategy formation as theorized in [Chapter 1](#), as we shall also see in the next chapter. This also of course applies to the biggest financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression, which started to unfold with the subprime mortgage crisis and subsequent credit freeze in the course of 2007, only to fully erupt right at the end of the Bush presidency. Of course, this crisis was not just the consequence of George W. Bush’s continuing neoliberal policies, but just as much as that of his predecessors, especially Clinton, whose administration, as we have seen, was critical in the further financialization of U.S. and global capitalism. The contradictions and limits of the neoliberal growth model to which the neoconservatives had remained committed, thus finally began to show, in a way that also affected America’s corporations and could no longer be ignored, with the crisis further weakening U.S. power and discrediting its global policies (Layne, 2012).

While the underlying developments leading to the financial crisis thus had a much earlier origin, Bush’s (foreign) economic policy was characterized by a particularly vicious blend of unprecedented tax cuts, and – in combination with the explosion of defense spending – a ballooning budget deficit and national debt (\$2.3 trillion between 2001 and 2006 – Kogan and Fiedler, 2006). Adding to this mix – and in the context of widening income inequalities – a rapidly rising household debt (as private credit allowed workers with stagnating incomes to keep on consuming) built up to a financial house of cards that was about to collapse at some point. Bush’s third Treasury secretary, Hank Paulson, who – after the interregnum of O’Neill and after him John Snow who were both former

corporate executives but did not hail from Wall Street – completed the “Treasury’s reversion to the Goldman Sachs view of the world … as if Rubin had never left” (Hirsch, 2010: 226), did not see the crisis coming that he himself, as Goldman Sachs CEO, had helped to make (*ibid.*). In his final year at the Treasury, after having continued the policy of leaving the growing financial derivatives market unchecked by regulation, he subsequently had his hands full with managing the crisis – with President Bush keeping a very low profile in this matter – though it was ultimately up to Obama and his Treasury secretary to further clean up the mess (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: ch. 12). Indeed, restoring the health of America’s financial sector and of its economic prowess, as well as restoring the project of Open Door imperialism in the wake of the Iraq War and the ongoing long war more generally, came to be the task that Obama set for himself when he took over from Bush in January 2009. It is to his grand strategy that we will now turn in the final chapter of this book.

## Notes

- 1 His directorship by Caterair was offered to him as a gesture by an old friend on the grounds that this “guy is … kind of down on his luck a bit … needs some board positions” but ended rather unsuccessfully (Suskind, 2004b).
- 2 One of them, ABB AB, is Global Fortune (500) listed.
- 3 In this exceptional case these corporate affiliations thus overlap with his role as chairman of the DPB, an official advisory board of the Pentagon but not a function within the administration.
- 4 Cheney subsequently produced a revised and sanitized version, the “1993 Regional Defense Strategy” (see Tyler, 1992 for a comparison).
- 5 On the notion of primacy as the key goal of American grand strategy under Bush, see e.g., Walt (2006: ch. 1); Dueck (2006: 152–62); Monten (2007). Although the explicit commitment to primacy, and the emphasis on unilateralist means to defend it, is an important aspect of what we interpret as the neoconservative shift, the goal of primacy is not new nor unique to the Bush presidency. Moreover, we stress here that primacy is ultimately only one component of Bush’s grand strategy and that we need to see it in relation to the Open Door as the social purpose of U.S. global hegemony.
- 6 In that sense, Hassan has compellingly argued that ideologically Bush’s freedom agenda is informed by a combination of “hegemonic stability theory, the democratic peace theory, neoliberal economics, and the modernization thesis” (2008: 270).
- 7 Gates had these reflections when, as Bush’s defense secretary, he visited Afghanistan near the Pakistani border, and was reminded of the time when he, as CIA deputy director, “had been on the Pakistani side of the border … and doing business with some of the very people we were fighting now” (2014: 200).
- 8 Powell, for instance, who told other officials he considered the Iraq project “lunacy,” never was as direct about it toward the president (Kinzer, 2006: 290); see on Powell’s muted dissent also Woodward (2004).
- 9 Of the speech to the Security Council where he presented the purported evidence of Saddam’s possession of WMD and his intention to use them, Powell himself later regretted “that a lot of it turned out to be wrong” (Powell, 2012).
- 10 Libby, for instance, provided the input of Powell’s UN speech on WMD in Iraq, of which Richard Armitage, Powell’s closest ally in the administration, “was appalled at what he considered overreaching and hyperbole. Libby was drawing only the worst conclusions from fragments and silky threads” (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007: 251).

- 11 An indication of the intimate involvement of Chalabi's INC is the generous funding they received from the State Department, estimated at US\$32.5 million (General Accounting Office, 2004: 16).
- 12 Other obvious expressions of Bush's first term's blatant unilateralism (see for a more extensive list Skidmore, 2005) were the withdrawal of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty with Russia – established with the former Soviet Union in 1972 – of course enabling further development of the missile defense system that Rumsfeld and others had been advocating since at least the end of the 1990s (see for the report of this so called "Rumsfeld Commission," Rumsfeld *et al.*, 1998), as well as the staunch opposition toward the International Criminal Court (ICC) established at The Hague in 2001. Apart from refusing to ratify the ICC, the Bush administration also (re)enacted the American Service Members Protection Act in 2002, which authorized the use of military force to liberate any American or citizen of a U.S.-allied country being held by the court (dubbed the "Hague invasion clause"), and actively pressured other states to not cooperate with the ICC, at least guaranteeing American citizens immunity from the Court's jurisdiction. To this end the United States concluded around 100 so-called Article 98 Bilateral Immunity Agreements (BIA) with other countries (Schiff, 2008: 174), and cut-off military and economic aid to those countries unwilling to conclude BIAs.
- 13 Although the horrific pictures of American soldiers torturing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners sent shockwaves around the world, the Abu Ghraib fallout did not prevent the Bush administration from authorizing, with legal aid from attorney general Ashcroft, torture on what has turned out to be a systematic scale, especially in the case of the "illegal combatants" held in Guantanamo Bay, of which Cheney in 2005 said to CNN: "[t]hey're living in the tropics. They're well fed. They've got everything they could possibly want" (CNN, 2005).
- 14 Despite the predominant media and academic narrative of the commitment of the Bush administration to "democracy" in the Middle East, the reality was and is very different. The first task of the occupation was to prevent any kind of democratic process in the immediate post-war period that could develop outside of the auspices of U.S. control and to this end U.S. military commanders "ordered a halt to local elections and self-rule in provincial cities and towns across Iraq" in 2003 and chose "instead to install their own handpicked mayors and administrators, many of whom are former Iraqi military leaders" (Booth and Chandrasekaran, 2003; Stokes, 2009: 108).
- 15 Khalilzad later, in 2007, became ambassador to the UN – helping to finalize the so-called International Compact with Iraq and also advocating the harder line and sanctions toward Iran. In 2009 Khalilzad founded Gryphon Partners, a private global consultancy firm which has as many of its clients U.S. firms investing in the Middle East.
- 16 Another aim mentioned in the agreement is to expand bilateral trade through the United States–Iraq Business Dialogue, established in 2006 to "facilitate private sector business growth in Iraq and to strengthen trade and investment ties between Iraq and the United States" (United States–Iraq Business Dialogue, 2008: unnumbered page).
- 17 Yet another telling indicator of the aim to insert U.S. transnational capital interests is that an American investment bank, JP Morgan, was contracted to run a consortium of 13 banks from 13 countries to constitute the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) (Center for Public Integrity, 2003); the TBI was a government-owned but commercially operating bank, chaired by a nephew of Chalabi and grew to become the largest bank in Iraq.
- 18 As early as November 2002, three major IOCs had reportedly been discussing with Chalabi's INC – at the time expected to be part of the new regime – about their future prospects (Muttil, 2012: 5; Bignell, 2011). In addition, Douglas Feith had put up an Energy Infrastructure Planning Group (EIPG) to plan for the post-Saddam Iraqi oil industry, in particular the transition period directly after the occupation, for which Halliburton subsidiary KBR was contracted to be in charge (Muttil, 2012: 32).

- 19 Apart from oil service companies such as KBR (Halliburton) and Bechtel (see above), a main beneficiary in this regard was Exxon Mobil, obtaining the largest share in West Qurna, one of Iraq's biggest oil fields, as well as six oil blocks in the Kurdish region (Cafruny and Lehmann, 2012: 13–14). At the same time, in a joint venture with BP, Chinese state-owned oil major China National Petroleum Corporation gained exploitation rights of the giant Rumaila field, which was considered of great commercial and strategic value.
- 20 The overarching aim of regional transformation, and within it, the importance of Iraqi oil, does however not preclude other motives suggested in the literature (e.g., Kinzer 2006: 293), such as that Iraq was taken as a testing ground for Rumsfeld's theories on how Americans could win wars with fewer soldiers and more technology (Rumsfeld, 2002b; Kinzer, 2006: 293), or the so-called “Israel lobby,” as most forcefully argued by Mearsheimer and Walt (2007).
- 21 Even if, because of European (especially German) opposition, NATO accession of these last two countries was postponed.
- 22 Headed by Venezuela, the opposing countries of Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Dominica, and Nicaragua instead entered the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas initiated by Hugo Chavez, a vocal opponent of the United States, who characterized the FTAA as an “annexation plan.”

## **6 American grand strategy after the global financial crisis**

### **Obama’s grand-strategy makers and imperial restoration**

While the limits to the neoconservative grand strategy became increasingly apparent during Bush’s second term, it was in the context of the financial crisis that erupted at the end of the Bush presidency coming on the heels of what many perceived as the Iraq debacle, and a resulting general sense of weakening of U.S. power relative to rising powers such as China, that Obama’s call for “change we can believe in” became so resonant not only with regard to domestic but also to foreign policy. However, rather than representing any fundamental change, the Obama administration set out to readjust U.S. grand strategy in terms of its means while remaining fully committed to its longstanding ends – upholding the *exceptionalist* claim to global hegemony, with the stated aim of U.S. military power underwriting “global security” and supporting the opening of markets around the globe, and – protestations to the contrary notwithstanding – expanding the *War on Terror* on several fronts, even if adjusting its focus and means. At the same time, seeking to restore and preserve American global “leadership for the coming decades,” Obama not only focused on restoring the economic foundations of American power in the wake of the global financial crisis, but also “rebalanced” American grand strategy to Asia in recognition of the global power shift taking place and the potential threat emanating from China to the Open Door. As such, what came to be called the “Asia pivot” became a central element of what we here identify as Obama’s strategy of “imperial restoration.”

In keeping with the structure of the two preceding chapters, we will now first present an overview of a selection of Obama’s grand-strategy makers and the corporate and policy planning elite networks in which they are embedded, before moving on to analyzing the changing global context around the time that Obama and his team came to power, and how this context was interpreted within affiliated policy planning bodies. We will then in the third section substantiate our claim that under Obama once more the Open Door worldview has been reproduced, and then in the final section analyze how, on the basis of this worldview and in the evolving global context, Obama’s grand-strategy makers, shaped in their agency by the (corporate) elite network of which a majority of them are part, pursued a grand strategy that while containing some new elements represents yet another variety of America’s Open Door imperialism.

## **Obama's grand-strategy makers**

As we have done with the previous two administrations, we will now provide a profile of Obama and his selected grand-strategy makers and the social networks in which they were embedded prior to entering the Obama administration in 2009. We will again start by looking first at the president and vice president, and then move on to review the links to previous administrations, the corporate community, and the policy planning network.

### ***President Obama***

Of course, being the first successful Afro-American contender for the presidency, Barack Obama (b. 1961) himself did represent historical change in as much as Obama only partially, from his mother's side, fitted the profile of an American ruling elite that has historically been and to a large extent still is White Anglo-Saxon and usually Protestant. With a Kenyan father with an Islamic family background, the cosmopolitan Obama, riding a wave of discontent with the Bush years and the backlash from Iraq, could present himself as the anti-Bush and a new and friendlier face of American power (Ledwidge, 2011; Parmar, 2011: 154). Nor was his social background particularly elitist, though certainly not working class either. Barack Obama Sr. was an economist working for the Kenyan government who came to the University of Hawaii on a government scholarship, and his mother was employed by the Ford Foundation when working in Indonesia (on a project directed by the father of what was to become Obama's first Treasury secretary, Geither – Mann, 2012: 175). Exceptionally for someone from a non-upper-class background, Obama did graduate from one of the country's ten wealthiest private schools (Domhoff, 2009: 11), and later graduated from Harvard Law School, one of the main centers of elite education.

After having thus been socialized within elite circles, Obama worked as an associate civil rights attorney and for 12 years taught constitutional law as a part-time (senior) lecturer at the University of Chicago, but above all started working for a career in politics. In 1996, Obama was elected Illinois state senator and became a U.S. senator in 2004. As Obama himself wrote in his second book, *The Audacity of Hope* (his early political manifesto), making a political career and thus having to solicit members of the corporate elite to finance one's campaign further socialized him within the apex of the U.S. class structure:

Increasingly I found myself spending time with people of means – law firm partners and investment bankers, hedge fund managers and venture capitalists ... [who] reflected, almost uniformly the perspectives of their class.... I know that as a consequence of my fund-raising I became more like the wealthy donors I met, in the very particular sense that I spent more and more time above the fray.

(Obama, 2006: 113)

Although Obama in his book indicated worry about how this changed him, removing him from the “99 percent” for which he entered politics, he thus not only admits that it did alter him, but also writes that even prior to his mingling with the corporate elite he already had a “worldview” that “corresponded in many ways” to theirs: “I had gone to the same schools, after all, had read the same books, and worried about my kids in the same ways” (*ibid.*: 114). Indeed, Obama’s economic views – as revealed prior to his presidency – can be seen as clearly pro-market in the Clinton “new democrat” tradition (on Obama’s economic views see, e.g., Peck, 2010: ch. 6), and Obama early on was advised by leading neoliberals from the Clinton era, especially his Treasury secretary, Rubin (Obama, 2006: 174–6; Brookings Institution, 2006: 9; see also Kuttner, 2010: 4–7, 10–11).

As *vice president* Obama chose Joseph (“Joe”) Biden, former longstanding chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Biden, picked by Obama in part because of his status as a Washington insider and his foreign policy credentials, was seen as neither on the left nor on the right of the Democratic Party and in terms of foreign policy views has alternated between more dovish (e.g., regarding Vietnam) and more hawkish positions (Mann, 2012: 97). At the time he was one of the staunchest proponents within U.S. Congress of military action in Bosnia and Kosovo (Halberstam, 2003: 480), and (like so many other Democratic senators) in 2002 voted for the authorization of the use of force against Iraq. Although starting out as a lawyer and founder of his own law firm, Biden quickly embarked upon a long political career, representing Delaware for 36 years in the U.S. Senate.

### ***Continuity with previous administrations***

In terms of previous service in the U.S. government, of the 30 a striking total of 16 previously had positions in the Clinton administration, with two of them having served in the Carter administration, while one stayed on from the G.W. Bush administration (see [Figure 6.1](#)). Prominent members of Obama’s 2009 administration who also played notable roles in the Clinton administration are, among others, Lawrence (“Larry”) Summers, Timothy Geithner, Leon Panetta, Rahm Emanuel, and Hillary Clinton. The first two together formed the heart of Obama’s economic team in the first term as, respectively, Obama’s director of the National Economic Council (NEC) and his Treasury secretary. Summers and Geithner had both served as Treasury undersecretary for international affairs under Clinton, both, though in particular Summers as we have seen in [Chapter 4](#), are regarded as among the key architects of the liberalization of the financial sector in the Clinton years.

Obama’s first *chief of staff*, Emanuel, had been one of Clinton’s senior advisors until 1998, after which he made substantial money in the financial sector as managing director of the investment bank Wasserstein Perella, before returning to politics as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was part of the president’s inner circle of advisers (Woodward,

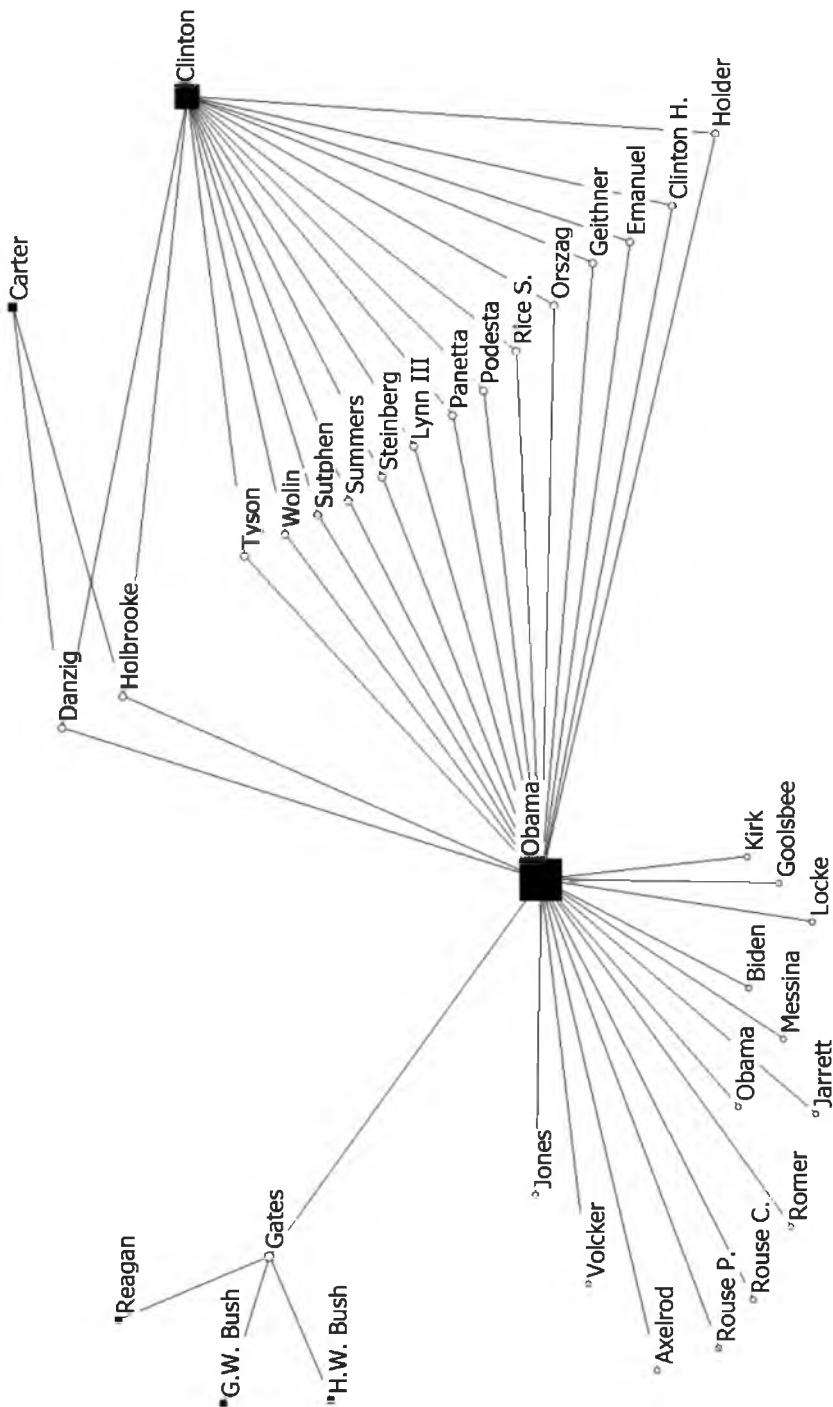


Figure 6.1 Career paths in previous U.S. administrations: Obama (sources: data collection by authors).

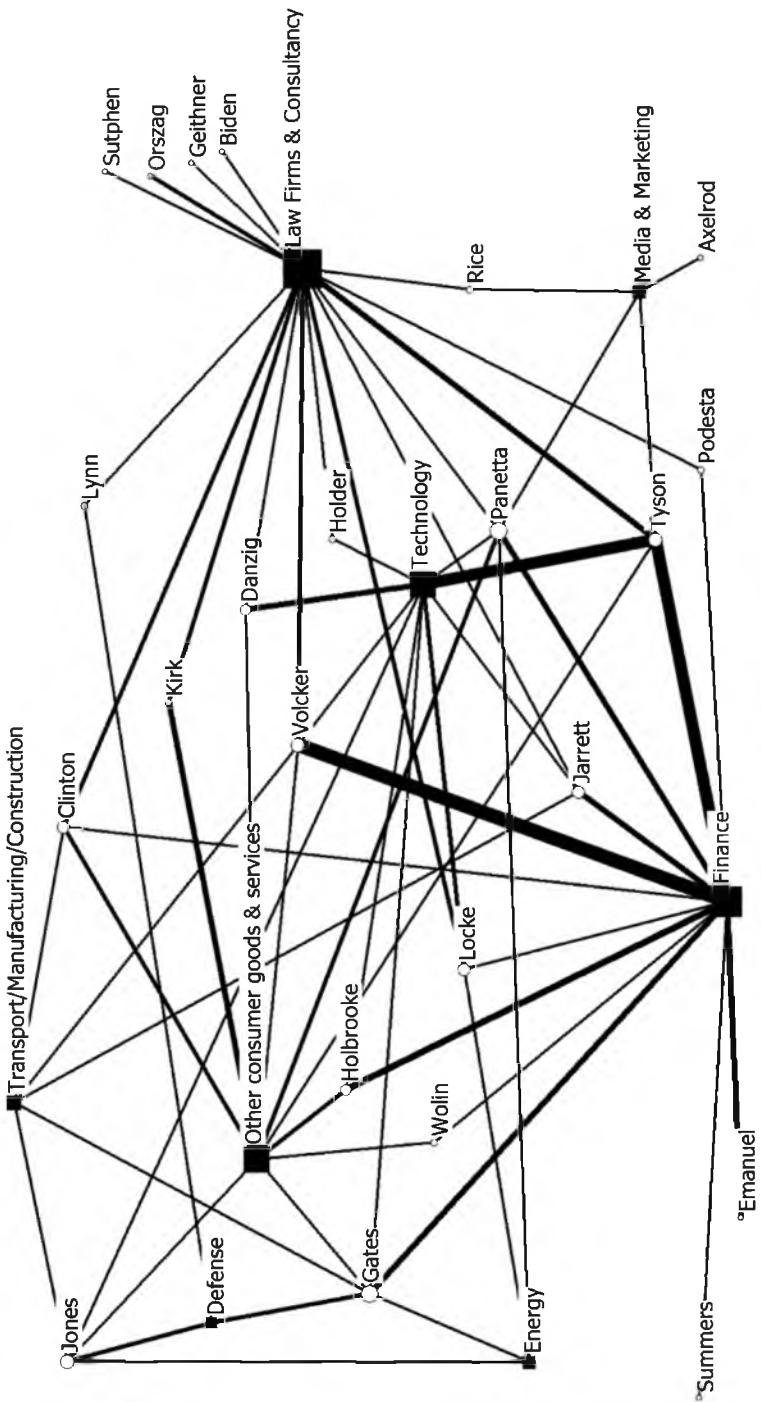
1994; Mann, 2012: 43). Obama's first secretary of defense, Robert Gates, provides the highest ranking personal continuity with the G.W. Bush administration (having been the latter's chief of the Pentagon since 2006). Having also served as (deputy) CIA director during the Reagan and H.W. Bush administrations, Gates here forms the big bipartisan linker in terms of administrations.

### ***The corporate network***

As noted in [Chapter 3](#), more than two-thirds of Obama's selected grand-strategy makers had prior top-level corporate affiliations, representing a diversity of major sectors, and with the bigger corporate linkers linking two or more sectors (see [Figure 6.2](#)). Close to one-third of the total of 111 prior corporate ties are with the financial sector, linking key Obama officials (of the first term) such as Clinton, Gates, Panetta, Summers, and Emanuel. About one-fifth of the affiliations are with law and consultancy firms, where we find both former corporate lawyers such as Clinton and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk (who was partner at the top-ranked corporate law firm Vinson & Elkins), as well as former (top) consultants such as U.N. ambassador Susan Rice, who was managing director at the strategic analysis firm Intellibridge and formerly worked for McKinsey.<sup>1</sup> Next to the 35 percent of Fortune 500 (F500) notations among the affiliated companies – noted in [Chapter 3](#) – the predominance of the financial sector as well as the fact that most firms in the law and consultancy sector often serve large transnational corporations further testifies to the transnationally oriented nature of the capital represented.

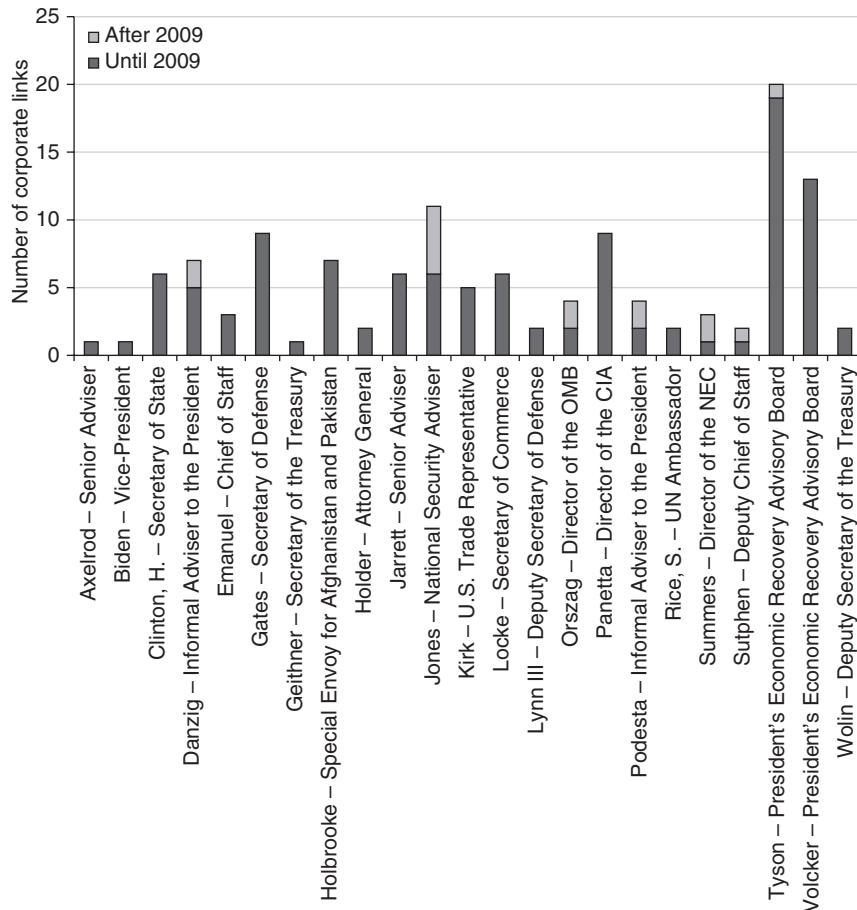
As can be read from [Figures 6.2](#) and [6.3](#), big corporate linkers are our hand-picked informal and other advisers, Paul Volcker and Laura Tyson, who in 2009 respectively became chair and a prominent member of the by now defunct President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board (PERAB), which Obama created to underline his administration's priority of restoring economic growth in the wake of the crisis. Volcker was of course the chairman of the Fed during the Reagan years, but also, among his 13 former positions, a former Chase Manhattan vice president (in the 1960s) and later director of *inter alia* Deutsche Bank and insurance giant Prudential. Tyson, Clinton's first chair of the Council of Economic Advisors and later NEC director, became, as noted in [Chapter 4](#), a big corporate linker – but equally, as we shall see below, a big policy planning linker – after leaving the administration with 19 corporate affiliations (including directorships at firms like AT&T, Eastman Kodak, and Morgan Stanley). Tyson and, especially, Volcker were important advisers during the campaign and in the case of Volcker to some extent during the first years, but in the end did not play such a central role in Obama's economic policymaking.

Three other big corporate linkers are Robert Gates, with nine prior top corporate affiliations, and Clinton administration veterans Richard Holbrooke, special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and CIA director (and Bill Clinton's former chief of staff), Leon Panetta, with nine and seven connections, respectively. Gates and Panetta here are the biggest linkers among the “regular” 25 officials



*Figure 6.2* Sectoral clustering of corporate affiliations: Obama (sources: data collection by authors).

Note  
Totals per sector: finance (36), law firms/consultancy (23), technology (19), other consumer goods and services (15), transport/manufacturing/construction (5), defense (5), media/marketing (4), energy (4).



*Figure 6.3* The revolving door of Obama's grand-strategy makers (sources: data collection by authors).

(thus excluding the five additional advisers), with the former having had five directorships of F500/F1000 corporations, among which are defense giant Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) and global restaurant business Brinker International. Another important linker to the corporate community is Hillary Clinton, with six directorships. Like her husband, Hillary Clinton previously had a career as a corporate lawyer, only a longer and much more successful one (as Bill Clinton went into politics early on). Through her corporate work she also came to join the boards of F500 companies WalMart and TBCY and of the North American division of French multinational Lafarge. Like Clinton – but unlike Jones who in spite of his formally central position as security advisor was relatively isolated and not that effective within the Obama

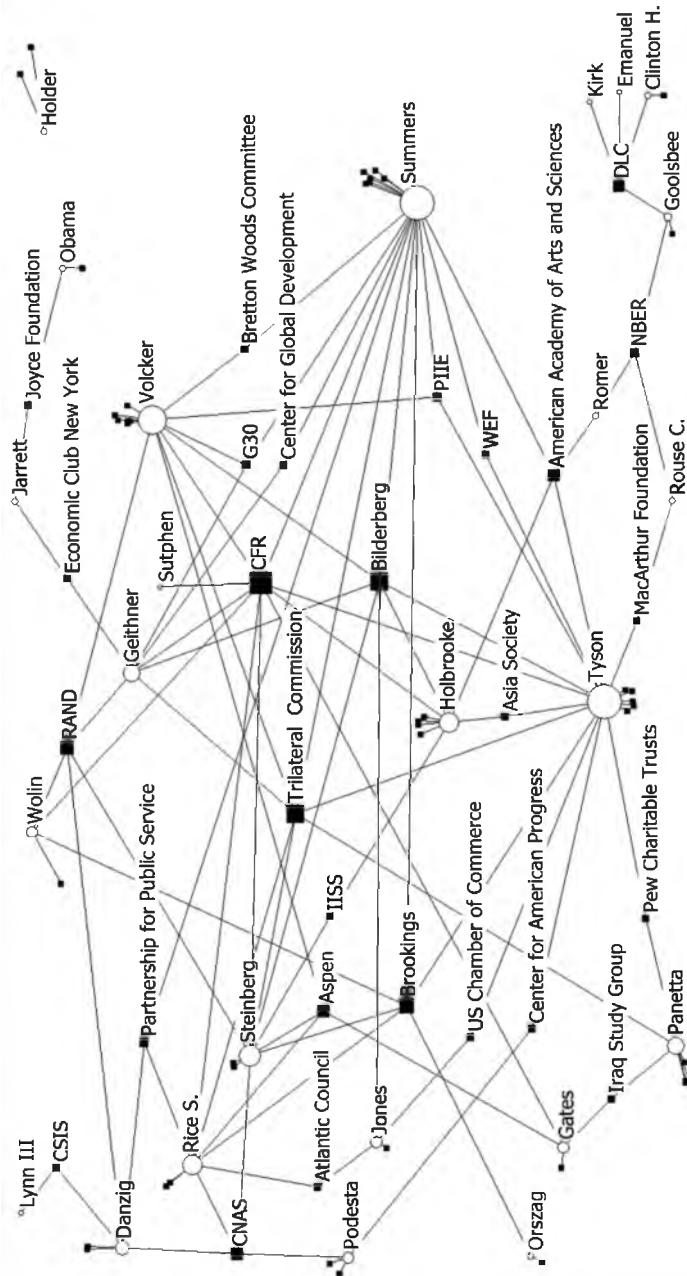
administration (Mann, 2012: 212, 224–225) – Panetta, as he also later succeeded Gates as defense secretary, was a pivotal figure in Obama’s first term. We may furthermore mention (with each having at least five prior positions) Obama’s national security advisor, General James Jones; trade representative, Ron Kirk; secretary of commerce and later Obama’s ambassador to China, Gary Locke; and senior adviser (responsible for liaison with the corporate community), and said to be Obama’s closest confidant (see e.g., Becker, 2012), Valerie Jarrett. With Gates, Clinton, Jones, and Panetta all key positions within Obama’s “national security team” were thus occupied by members of the corporate elite.

In sum, as in the previous two post-Cold War administrations, the grand-strategy makers of Obama have been once more recruited from America’s corporate elite network, in particular as centered around U.S. transnationally oriented capital, which has always been the main beneficiary of and important social force behind American globalism.

### ***The policy planning network***

Figure 6.4 shows Obama’s policy planning network, with round nodes showing the grand-strategy makers and the squared nodes the connected policy planning bodies (with in both cases the size indicating the number of ties, that is, degree centrality). As noted in Chapter 3, a total of 25 of Obama’s 30 selected grand-strategy makers have one or more prior policy planning affiliations. The four biggest linkers within the policy planning network – each having ten or more ties – are the already mentioned Tyson (17 connections), Summers (17), Volcker (14), and Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg (10). Other big linkers (with between five and ten links) are Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke, UN Ambassador (and later national security advisor) Susan Rice, Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner (another example of the revolving door within policy planning as he was a senior fellow of the CFR in 2001 and became a “distinguished fellow” of the Council after stepping down at the end of Obama’s first term), the aforementioned Panetta, and former navy secretary under Clinton, Richard Danzig, who was the principal adviser on defense policy in Obama’s campaign team (Mann, 2012: 10) and later became a member of the Defense Policy Board.

Like in the Clinton and Bush networks, the most central policy planning body (with ten of our selected grand-strategy makers affiliated) is again the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), while other key shared organizations, that is, the Trilateral Commission (TC) (seven ties) and Bilderberg (seven) and Brookings (six), also figure prominently in Obama’s network. The transnational elitist TC connects both key members of Obama’s 2009 economic team (Summers, Geithner, Volcker, and Tyson) as well as key members in the area of foreign and security policy proper (Panetta, Rice, and Steinberg). Five out of seven of the former TC members were also Bilderberg attendees. Another key think tank, also prominently part of the Bush administration’s network, is RAND (five ties), underlining how also the Obama administration is clearly networked with



*Figure 6.4* Policy planning network: Obama (sources: data collection by authors).

Nota

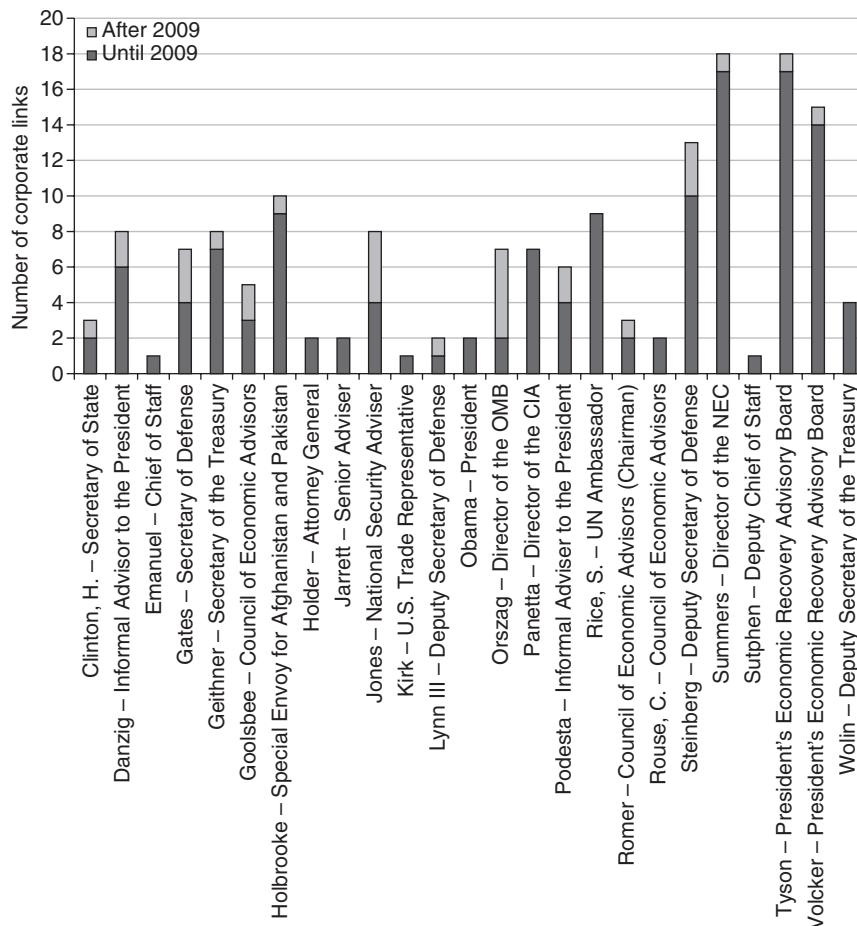
Note  
The number of (>3) ties per policy planning body are as follows: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) (10), Trilateral Commission (7), Bilderberg (7), Brookings Institution (6), RAND Corporation (5), Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) (4), Center for a New American Security (CNAS) (4), Aspen Institute (4), American Academy for Arts and Sciences (4), Petersen Institute for International Economics (PIIE) (3), Partnership for Public Service (3), G30 (3), National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) (3).

defense-oriented policy planning bodies. In sum, the embeddedness within the core of the foreign policy planning elite is at least as firm as with its predecessors.

The bipartisan but nevertheless slightly more Democrat-leaning Brookings Institution, connecting among others Summers, Steinberg, and Rice (who was a senior fellow of Brookings for seven years before entering Obama's cabinet), is (unlike with the previous two administrations) extensively connected to the Obama team, and can be seen as an important source of some of the policy ideas of Obama, especially in the area of (foreign) economic policy. Key in this respect has been the so-called Hamilton Project, launched within Brookings in 2006 by Clinton's former Treasury secretary, Rubin, and subsequently led by several Rubin protégés who then later came to serve in the Obama administration (Kuttner, 2010: 4, 9). One of Hamilton's founding directors was Obama's OMB director, Peter Orszag, while Summers and Tyson were also affiliated.<sup>2</sup> The Hamilton Project can best be described as advocating a new kind of Third Way neoliberalism (reviving that of Clinton – see [Chapter 4](#)), in the context of an economy characterized by growing inequality. The latter increasingly also worried a part of America's (corporate) elite because of how it might harm social and political stability and because of the protectionist backlash it might create. Seeking to pre-empt such a backlash, the economic policy planners of the Hamilton project are committed to address or mitigate the problem of growing inequality within a broadly pro-market neoliberal framework. As Jamie Peck, who sees the Hamilton Project as critical in defining the philosophical underpinnings of "Obamanomics," argues, the project has displayed an "unwavering commitment to fiscal discipline and free trade, market-oriented approaches, and to strategies for tackling inequalities that are detached from new entitlements" (Peck, 2010: 240). As such, the Hamilton Project was endorsed at its founding (and subsequently actively supported) by then Senator Obama as a way to move beyond "outdated policies and tired ideologies" (Brookings Institution, 2006: 8, 9; Daniel, 2006).

The Aspen Institute (with four ties), and within it the influential Aspen Strategy Group (ASG) also must be mentioned here, as it links some of the more central of Obama's grand-strategy makers, in particular Gates, Rice, and Steinberg. The latter was within Aspen also a member of an informal group of Democrats – the so-called "Trout Fishers" – who knew each other from the Clinton administration, and also included among others Anthony Blinken, who came to serve as Vice President's Biden's security adviser and now serves as deputy secretary of state; Kurt Campbell, who became assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs; and Ivo Daalder, appointed by Obama as ambassador to NATO (Mann, 2012: 57).

[Figure 6.5](#) gives an overview of the number of ties until and after government service (the latter category of course not being very extensive yet, given that many of them are still in government), but it does illustrate the distribution of the many policy planning ties among our selected grand-strategy makers.



*Figure 6.5* The policy planning network revolving door: Obama (sources: data collection by authors).

#### *Obama's network of new "progressive" think tanks*

Next to these bipartisan policy planning bodies three important think tanks within the Obama network can be singled out that are more closely (though not exclusively) tied to the Democratic Party. Two of these, the Center for a New American Security and the Center for American Progress, are seen as particularly close to the Obama administration, even if within our selection the latter link is more related to the quality than the quantity of the ties.

The Center for American Progress (CAP), dubbed by the New York Times “a virtual external policy arm of the Obama administration” (Lipton, 2013) was founded by Clinton’s final chief of staff, and co-chair of the Obama–Biden

transition project, John Podesta. As an informal adviser (in which capacity he has been included in our selection) of president Obama, Podesta has maintained close relations to the White House since 2009 (paying at least a 130 visits since 2009 – Lipton, 2013), and at the end of 2013 was appointed as one of Obama's formal senior advisors. With initial funding from several "liberal" billionaires (among whom is George Soros – Mann, 2012: 354, n. 7), as well as big corporations such as defense giant Northrop Grumman and global pharmaceuticals company Eli Lilly (Lipton, 2013), the CAP was intended to be a "progressive" counter-weight to established (neo-)conservative think tanks such as the AEI and the Heritage Foundation (Dreazen, 2008; Mann, 2012: 50). Mainly focusing on domestic (economic) policy, the CAP's ideological profile, like that of Hamilton, clearly fits within a kind of reinvented Third Way neoliberalism. Indeed, the CAP maintains ties with leading Third Way think tanks abroad, especially the British (and Blairite) Policy Network. Underlining his administration's close ties to the CAP, Obama in a 2013 speech before the Center, declared "I could not be more grateful to CAP not only for giving me a lot of good policy ideas, but also giving me a lot of staff" (referring in particular to Podesta, as well as to his then chief of staff and former deputy national security adviser, Denis McDonough – Obama, 2013a).

Podesta was also involved in setting up, in 2007, the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), a planning body with a more exclusive defense policy focus and a more hawkish profile than the CAP (Mann, 2012: 49–50). CNAS, within our selection next to Podesta, connects also to Obama's campaign foreign policy adviser, Danzig, and top foreign policy officials Rice and Steinberg, while from the start also having some prominent Republicans on its board (Dreazen, 2008). CNAS today is still led by co-founders Kurt Campbell and Michèle Flournoy, who both worked in the Pentagon under Clinton and who both later joined the Obama administration (Flournoy as undersecretary of defense for policy). Like most policy planning bodies in our selection, CNAS is funded by dozens of corporations. Among the biggest funders of CNAS – donating more than a US\$100,000 in 2014 alone – we find defense giants such as Boeing and Northrop Grumman, but also the F500 financial services and insurance corporation Prudential Financial as well as foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation. In the category of funders who donated between US\$50,000 and US\$100,000 we find many more leading U.S. TNCs, above all in the defense sector, such as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and SAIC (of which Robert Gates was a director), but also Exxon Mobil, Goldman Sachs, and Google, as well as – therewith also underlining the close links with the U.S. state – the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Navy (Center for a New American Security, 2015a). Lockheed Martin is moreover represented at the board of directors, as is Goldman Sachs and the Department of Defense. Among the board of advisors we find a virtual who's who from America's corporate elite (with affiliations to, among others, Ford, Boeing, and JP Morgan) and foreign policy establishment, including affiliations to other elitist think tanks such as Brookings and RAND (Center for a New America Security, 2015b).

Linked to CNAS was the Phoenix Initiative, a group of Democratic foreign policy experts (often former Clinton administration officials) concerned with devising a strategy of how the global hegemon could arise from its purported ashes. The initiative was founded in 2005 by, among others, Susan Rice, as well as several other future Obama officials, among whom were Blinken, Campbell, Daalder, and Lael Brainard, who came to serve as Obama's undersecretary for international affairs at the Treasury Department, and finally, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was appointed by Hillary Clinton as her director of policy planning. While Rice left the group in 2007 to join the Obama campaign as one of its main foreign policy advisers, the others went on, publishing a major report with CNAS in 2008 (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008), and with seven out of ten of the report's authors later joining the Obama administration. Finally, we can observe that Obama's policy planning network also ties together four administration officials – Clinton, Emanuel, Kirk, and economic advisor Chicago economist Goolsbee – through their prior ties to the now defunct Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which was, as we have seen in [Chapter 4](#), instrumental in moving the Democratic Party to the neoliberal right, a transformation that had been fully completed and consolidated once Obama came into power.

We can now conclude that Obama's grand-strategy makers are as firmly embedded within a similar corporate elite network as the previous two administrations, with not only many prior direct corporate ties but with also a myriad of connections to America's elitist (foreign) policy think tanks, funded and directed by often the same corporations and their directors. The ideological profile of Obama's policy planning network can be argued to clearly fit within the mainstream of (neo)liberal globalism, with not only the ubiquitous CFR and the more liberal-leaning Brookings Institution, but with also the very globalist TC and Bilderberg being very well represented. Globalism in the post-Cold War era also means an embrace of neoliberal globalization, as for instance is made clear by the policy ideas espoused by one of the economic policy think tanks closely linked to the Obama team, the Hamilton Project within Brookings, as well as the Center for American Progress. Meanwhile, Obama's policy planning network also has a distinct hawkish and militaristic orientation in the area of security and defense policies, as for instance represented by the heavily defense-industry (but also Wall Street) funded CNAS.

These ties help in part to account for the worldview and ideas underpinning Obama's evolving grand strategy as the grand-strategy planners from within the network became Obama's grand-strategy makers and, *interpreting the changing global context sought to readjust the grand strategy inherited from Bush*. A strategy of which, as we shall see, they were very critical (and not just for electoral, partisan reasons). The critique was, however, as we shall see below, once more limited to disagreement about *means* and tactics, and not about the commitment to American global leadership in defense of a U.S.-centered liberal world order. And even regarding the means, there would be more continuity than often suggested.

## The global context: eroding legitimacy, power shifts, and the financial crisis

While, as argued in the previous chapter, some adjustment of U.S. grand strategy had already taken place during Bush's second term, the incoming administration that took over from Bush 43 realized that continuing American primacy could no longer be taken for granted and saw itself confronted by challenges emanating from two sets of interrelated contradictions. The first is that the neoconservative policies appeared to have produced the opposite of what they set out to achieve, that is, the preservation of U.S. power and influence, which now seemed to be on the wane. Indeed, at least according to many grand-strategy planners within the elite network that came to be affiliated with the new Obama administration, what came to be perceived as a crisis of American leadership was less attributed to any structural power shift within the global political economy – even if the rise of other powers and in particular China was recognized – as to the unintended consequences of some of Bush's policies, and therefore reversible. The second contradiction must be seen as inhering in the neoliberal growth model that Bush continued from Clinton, and which became fully manifest shortly before the election of Obama with the global but U.S.-made financial crisis.

### ***The crisis of U.S. global leadership***

The deliberate choice for a more coercive and more *openly* unilateralist strategy – that is, the Bush administration's *explicit* disregard of multilateral institutions and of international law – and above all the invasion of Iraq under the pretext of a non-existent WMD program, had created new forms of resentment against U.S. primacy, undermining America's global legitimacy and "soft power" (Nye, 2004, 2012; Walt, 2006; Kurlantzick, 2005; Pew Research Center, 2013: 8–18) and encouraging other powers to become more assertive and deliberately seeking a more multipolar world (Walt, 2006), and had reinforced the terrorist backlash (Berger and Reynolds, 2005). Moreover, the financial costs of two unwinnable wars started by Bush continued to drain American resources at a time the United States was hit by the most severe post-war economic crisis (see further below).

The notion that the United States had lost much of its international standing due to the mistaken policies of Bush 43, and that something had to be done to reverse this, became widely shared in America's foreign policy planning elite in the later Bush years, not the least within those circles from which Obama would recruit his foreign policy team. Thus, already in 2003 a group of Democrats that included CNAS founders and later Obama officials Campbell and Flounoy, and Brainard, in a report published by the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) – the think tank closely linked to the DLC – advocated a "progressive internationalist" foreign policy as an alternative to Bush's "go-it-alone policy, which has alienated our natural allies and overstretched our resources" (Asmus, 2003: 19; see also Daalder and Lindsey, 2005), even though this particular group of Democratic foreign policy experts as well as a majority of Democrats in Congress

including Hillary Clinton, had supported the major driver of this diplomatic and financial backlash, the invasion of Iraq (as is well known, Obama himself had opposed the war as a “dumb war” – see Obama, 2006: 293).

Nevertheless, also among the initial supporters of the Iraq War, within what would become Obama’s policy planning network, there was a strong consensus that, at least with the benefit of hindsight, the war had been badly executed and “post-war planning” a complete failure. In this respect, “[t]he Iraq experience,” as Kurt Campbell, then director of the Aspen Strategy Group, wrote just before Obama’s election, has created a new consensus “among policy experts around modest aspirations for what the vital organs of the American government can actually accomplish in many, if not most, international situations,” undermining the exceptional confidence of the neoconservatives regarding the use of American (especially military) power (Campbell, 2009: 21).

In this vein, a bipartisan commission launched in 2006 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) – connected to the Obama team through Danzig and Deputy Defense Secretary Lynn, and chaired by CSIS trustees Joseph Nye (assistant secretary of defense under Clinton), and Richard Armitage (deputy secretary of state under Bush, and belonging to the more “moderate” camp around Powell) – concluded in a report in 2007 that: “America’s image and influence are in decline around the world. To maintain a leading role in global affairs, the United States must move from eliciting fear and anger to inspiring optimism and hope” (CSIS Commission on Smart Power, 2007: 1; see also *ibid.*: 17–26). A report of an international commission affiliated to the Brookings Institution, and whose U.S. advisory members included former top officials from the Clinton administration Madeleine Albright and Sandy Berger, as well as Obama adviser John Podesta, similarly emphasized the need to restore American power along these lines (Stedman *et al.*, 2008: 13–14). Also, within Obama’s “distinctive” policy network, the 2008 report by the Phoenix Initiative argued that “[t]he next president of the United States must forge a new national security strategy in a world marked by enormous tumult and change at a time when America’s international standing and strategic position are at an historic nadir” (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 9; see also Asmus *et al.*, 2003).

Even if, in a move signaling a clear break with neoconservative *discourse*, the future grand-strategy makers of the Phoenix Initiative emphasized the importance of recognizing both the “scope and the limits of American power” (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 14), the goal of the new strategy, as Rice made clear in her preface, was to “reclaim the mantle of global leadership” (*ibid.*: 3). Indeed, two other Democratic grand strategy planners, Nina Hachigian, a former senior analyst at RAND who subsequently became a senior fellow at the CAP and in 2014 was appointed by Obama as ambassador to ASEAN, and Obama’s first deputy chief of staff for policy, Mona Sutphen (within our selection), in 2008 wrote that if the United States would “renew” itself, America’s position as the world’s sole superpower leading the liberal world order would also continue into a “next American century” (Hachigian and Sutphen, 2008; see also Obama, 2007b).

Ultimately, the goal then would be to restore rather than abandon America's global hegemony; restore, if possible, a degree of international legitimacy in support of this hegemonic role; and devise a renewed grand strategy that could continue to rest upon a strong (bipartisan) elite consensus. It is, for instance, also in this light that we need to interpret another key contribution to the post-Bush grand strategy debate that was made by the so-called Princeton Project on National Security (PPNS), a group connected to the Obama administration through its co-director, Anne-Marie Slaughter. The PPNS – which was funded by the Ford Foundation and David M. Rubinstein, the co-founder of the private equity firm The Carlyle Group – in its final report offered a blueprint for a “new national security agenda” (PPNS, 2006) that while critical of some of Bush’s policy choices ultimately articulated above all what Parmar (2009) has identified as a “foreign policy fusion” of liberal interventionism, conservative nationalism and neo-conservatism – all emphatically rejecting isolationism and embracing an imperial globalism committed to “the spread of liberal democracy” (PPNS, 2006: 6) that indeed presaged much continuity under the next president. The challenge, however, was to hold on this globalist program in the face of adverse global power shifts.

#### *Holding on to global hegemony in the face of rising powers*

According to Hachigian and Supthen, U.S. hegemony could be prolonged even in the face of the rise of other great powers such as India and China and established powers such as Russia and Japan, because none of these powers are an ideological adversary and indeed to varying degrees have “bought into the current liberal world order” even if demanding a bigger voice (Hachigian and Supthen, 2008: 154). Therefore, wanting “what America wants” (*ibid.*: 10), these other great powers should be partners in a “strategic collaboration” with the United States in meeting common, transnational threats and challenges, with the United States seeking to “leverage the strength of [these] pivotal powers to shore up the liberal world order” (*ibid.*: ch. 7, p. 234). While such liberal optimism represented one stream of thinking of how the United States should respond to “the rise of the rest” (Zakaria, 2008), other grand-strategy planners were more worried about what Hachigian and Sutphen (2008: 14) saw as the more remote, “long-term possibility” – for which according to the same grand strategists the United States should nevertheless prepare, also militarily – of one of these powers becoming “a capable, aggressive challenger to U.S. vital interests.” More generally, the very fact that the center of gravity of the global economy seemed to be shifting away from the United States has created elite anxiety about America’s capacity to hold on to primacy.<sup>3</sup> The dilemma confronting the United States here arguably points to a deeper contradiction inherent in American non-territorial expansionism itself, a contradiction that has been heightened in its neoliberal phase. On the one hand, the (neoliberal) globalization promoted and led by the United States has served and continues to serve the needs of an expansionist American capital. Globalization furthermore offers the opportunity of

integrating these states into the liberal world order, and making them commit to rules of the game basically devised by the United States and more broadly “the West” since 1945. On the other hand, the same globalization process can be seen as having allowed other economies to rise and develop to the extent that they may now emerge as rival centers of accumulation (Harvey, 2003; see also Arrighi, 2005a, 2005b) as well as potential geopolitical contenders.

In the final Bush years and anticipating the change of power in the White House, the aforementioned grand-strategy planners both identified a broader power shift as part of the new global context to which the U.S. (strategy) had to adapt, and singled out the rise of China and East Asia as one of the most challenging dimensions of that power shift. Thus the aforementioned Phoenix group argued that the United States is now confronted by a world in which “power is diffusing, not only within but also among and beyond states,” a power diffusion of which “recent U.S. foreign policy” has failed to take sufficient account (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 10, 12).<sup>4</sup> Within this context, Obama’s future grand-strategy makers of the Phoenix Initiative identified “East Asia” as a key “strategic priority” (*ibid.*: 6). Here, “America should recognize that, because of internal developments that are beyond U.S. control, [China’s] rise may in fact threaten American interests” (*ibid.*: 30). Similarly, the bipartisan report by Armitage and Nye saw a world in which the United States had lost influence and China’s (soft) power was rising: “[W]ith Washington preoccupied in the Middle East, China has deftly stepped into the vacuum left by the United States” (CSIS Commission on Smart Power, 2007). These power shifts were seen as potentially being reinforced by America’s home-made financial crisis, further hampering America’s global leadership, a risk that was identified in a 2009 Aspen Strategy Group volume (Burns and Price, 2009).

### ***The financial crisis as a threat to the foundation of American globalism***

As we have seen, under Bush the United States continued on the path that would bring it to the great credit crash of 2008 (Konings, 2010), which was another key aspect of the domestic and global context in which Obama’s (future) grand-strategy makers found themselves. After being elected, less than two months after the giant investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, Obama was confronted with not only a near financial meltdown and the largest economic contraction since the Great Depression, but also with record and rapidly growing budget deficits (next to a continuing trade deficit), and a rising national debt that in the eyes of some called into question the long-term sustainability of American power, especially since nearly half of U.S. public debt is externally financed, with in particular the Chinese buying massive quantities of U.S. treasury bills (cf. Drezner, 2009).

The crisis, which soon enveloped the globe but was “made in the USA” (Brainard, 2008a: 2), was regarded as potentially eroding the economic foundation of U.S. global power as well as undercutting its influence in as much as it

had delegitimized Washington's foreign economic policy of promoting U.S.-centered marketization. Thus, with regard to the former, the 2008 Phoenix report published with CNAS noted how “[t]he United States cannot lead abroad, strategically or otherwise, without rebuilding our strength at home.... Its global role must rest on the solid domestic foundations of a strong economy” (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 14). Illustrative of the latter point, a report published in October 2008 by the Brookings Institution, and edited by future Treasury undersecretary Brainard (2008b), laments that U.S. leadership has been undermined because, as a chapter on restoring financial stability notes, the crisis means that “[t]he rest of the world will no longer be as enthusiastic about adopting the free market principles that have guided U.S. financial development” (Prasad, 2008: 4). Nowhere in this report, however, nor as we shall see in the Obama administration, is it considered that those principles themselves might actually be in need of revision. Thus Brainard deplores that because of the crisis “it will be many years before U.S. policymakers will be able to make the case for the full liberalization of capital flows in emerging markets” (Brainard, 2008a: 2). Similarly, the CAP, while in a report of December 2008 calling for a “Global [New] Deal,” including reforms to “expand labor’s share of national income” (Samans, 2008: 3), continued to see this as balancing, not lessening, the commitment to policies of (market) liberalization (*ibid.*: 2).

In sum, the context in which the incoming Obama administration found itself was one in which the neoconservative hubris about what the United States could achieve by seizing the “unipolar moment” had been bitten by the realities of its unsuccessful (or at best partially successful) wars, and the blowback from the Bush doctrine in the context of an ongoing rise of newly emerging powers, and of a credit-led boom that had turned into an unprecedented bust. The grand-strategy planners of the Obama-affiliated network of think tanks and policy institutes interpreted this context as necessitating an adjustment of U.S. grand strategy in terms of its means employed, and correcting some of Bush’s mistakes rather than any forsaking of its overarching ends, that is, they continued to be committed to the global Open Door. Although maybe not so much an opportunity for further expansion, the new challenges that were perceived to emanate from the context as described above were – as we shall see next – seen to be met with the purpose of renewing and maintaining U.S. liberal globalism.

### **The Open Door worldview under Obama: renewing American leadership**

Obama’s foreign policy has been labeled by several commentators as “pragmatic” (Indyk *et al.*, 2012; Ignatius, 2013), a characteristic arguably summed up by Obama’s own (off the record but widely reported) words that his foreign policy is above all guided by the principle “don’t do stupid shit” (Rothkopf, 2014). While pragmatic may be an apt adjective, without a noun it fails to highlight the ideological criteria by which actions are deemed stupid or smart. In other words, while Obama’s foreign policy indeed does not seem to be informed

by an easily identifiable specific ideological current such as neoconservatism, if pragmatism is about “doing what works best” the question is still what is made to work and for whom. Here, as we shall argue below, to the extent that Obama’s grand strategy is defined by pragmatism, it is a pragmatic Open Door imperialism.<sup>5</sup>

While the Obama administration better recognizes the limits of U.S. power in a world that appears to be shifting toward multipolarity, neither in terms of the underlying worldview nor in actual foreign policy practice, as we shall see, has American grand strategy under Obama thus far shown any retreat or reversal of a globalism that has been firmly entrenched since World War II. Indeed, throughout Obama’s election campaign and into the first years of his presidency, Obama’s foreign policy discourse centered around the notion of a *renewal/rebuilding/restoration* of American global leadership (e.g., Obama, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2008: 107–48, 2009a; White House, 2010). The idea of renewing or restoring rather than simply maintaining U.S. leadership was of course in part a response to the perceived damage done to U.S. leadership by the Bush presidency – in the words of Obama himself “because our leaders have been distracted, our resources overstretched, and our alliances frayed” (Obama, 2008b). While such a notion was electorally expedient, it was also in line with what we have analyzed above in terms of how the global context was interpreted within the policy planning network affiliated to the core foreign policy team of the Obama administration.

What this then boils down to is that also under Obama the ideology of American exceptionalism – the notion, in the words of Obama, that the United States is “unlike the great powers of old” who sought “world domination” (Obama, 2009c) – has been once more reproduced and indeed renewed, while avoiding the more brazen and explicit unilateralism through which the notion of American global leadership was expressed under Bush. Indeed, it can be argued that the Obama administration has “couched the desire to maintain primacy in the language of leadership and partnership rather than that of hegemony” (Bouchet, 2013: 43). In a 2009 press conference Obama summed up this view succinctly by declaring that while he believed in American exceptionalism, he saw “no contradiction between believing that America has a continued extraordinary role in leading the world towards peace and prosperity, and recognizing that that leadership … depends on our ability to create partnerships, because … we can’t solve these problems alone” (Obama, 2009b). In part responding to domestic (media) critics clamoring for (yet) more military interventionism, Obama reaffirmed in a major foreign policy speech in 2014 that “I believe in American exceptionalism with every fiber of my being” (Obama, 2014a), declaring that “when a typhoon hits the Philippines or schoolgirls are kidnapped in Nigeria or masked men occupy a building in Ukraine, it is America that the world looks to for help,” adding, recycling a Clintonite phrase, that the United States “is and remains the one indispensable nation,” and that this “will be true for the century to come” (*ibid.*) Through this rhetoric, then, the commitment of the U.S. state to a globalist foreign policy is publicly reaffirmed and legitimated.<sup>6</sup>

So the hegemonic ambition under Obama remains a global one: “to shape an international order that promotes a just peace” (White House, 2010: 5), and to protect this order from all kinds of global challenges. Peace then here still means a *Pax Americana*, a liberal world order premised on U.S.-dominated global capitalism backed up and enforced by America’s overwhelming military superiority. As Obama’s National Security Strategy from 2010 unequivocally stated: “there should be no doubt: the United States of America will continue to underwrite global security” (White House, 2010: 1). Similarly, while less “the globalization president” than Clinton was, Obama too has continued to reproduce a globalization discourse in which globalization is once more presented as both “unstoppable” (Obama, 2011a) and desirable, and hence to be promoted: “[n]ot only is it impossible to turn back the tide of globalization … efforts to do so can make the U.S. worse off. Rather than fear the future, we must embrace it” (Obama, 2008a: 255).

Along the same ideological lines, the (global) market is not only regarded as the “most powerful force in history for creating opportunity and prosperity” (Obama, 2010a), but the purported nexus between prosperity as based on “open markets” and national security is once more axiomatic. Thus, Obama’s 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) begins by observing that in “a world in which our prosperity is inextricably linked to global prosperity, our security can be directly challenged by developments across an ocean” (White House, 2010: 2) and from this once more argues that the closely tied goals of security and prosperity are best served by global open markets. In this vein, “[a] strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity” is identified as an “enduring” “American interest” (White House, 2010: 7). While also placing emphasis on what are seen as the “transnational threats” engendered by globalization, the NSS also explicitly acknowledges not only that the U.S. state has been critical in promoting and enabling globalization, but also views the United States as best placed to benefit from it: “[b]ecause for all of its dangers, globalization is in part a product of American leadership and the ingenuity of the American people. We are uniquely suited to seize its promise” (White House, 2010: 5). The United States under President Obama thus remained committed to “opening markets around the globe” (*ibid.*: 32).

### ***Reframing democracy promotion***

Obama has been seen by some as paying less attention to “democracy promotion” than his two predecessors. While to some extent such a “correction” vis-à-vis G.W. Bush in particular has indeed taken place, the Wilsonian, political dimension of the Open Door worldview certainly has not disappeared under Obama (Patterson, 2011; Bouchet, 2013), even if the rhetoric has been more “toned-down” (Bouchet, 2013: 32). Under Obama, too, the ideology of democracy promotion remains firmly entrenched, and continues to be seen as linked to the expansion of capitalist markets. As Obama explained in 2014:

America's support for democracy and human rights goes beyond idealism; it is a matter of national security. Democracies are our closest friends and are far less likely to go to war. Economies based on free and open markets perform better and become markets for our goods.

(Obama, 2014a; for an earlier statement see White House, 2010: 37)

In other words, the promotion of democracy and of “free markets” are once more presented as a single policy objective, while “democratic peace theory” (reproducing the discourse that emerged in the 1990s under Clinton – see Chapter 4) continues to legitimate U.S. expansionism with reference to how the extension of liberal democracy serves national security. The latter notion was for instance earlier also reaffirmed in the strategy report of the Phoenix group (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 18–19), and even more strongly in the final report of the Princeton project (PPNS, 2006).

Nevertheless, one difference with the previous administration is that the professed belief in “democratization” by military force that was part of the neoconservative discourse with which the Bush administration justified its policies appears to have been abandoned. As Obama himself wrote before becoming a presidential candidate: “when we seek to impose democracy with the barrel of a gun … we are setting ourselves up for failure” (Obama, 2006: 317).

### *Renewing the “global War on Terror” discourse*

Providing another continuity with the past, and certainly with his immediate predecessor, the foreign policy discourse of Obama and his grand-strategy also identifies several enemies of liberal openness. While the discourse here is less Manichean than it was under Bush, Obama on occasion has not refrained from dividing the world into good and evil as well (e.g., Obama, 2007b). Most notably, and to the surprise of some, he declared in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech that “evil does exist in the world” in what could be read as a lengthy defense of the concept of just war and its expansion to cover war on vaguely defined “humanitarian grounds” (Obama, 2009d).

The Obama administration made it clear from the outset that renewing American leadership implied renewing and thus continuing – even if making it less central within the overall grand strategy – the (global) War on Terror. While sometimes identifying terrorism as one of several *transnational* security threats of the twenty-first century, including pandemic diseases and climate change (Obama, 2006: 306; see also White House, 2010: 13, 14, 18, 40), the focus clearly has been on “the terrorists [who] are at war with the U.S.” and constitute “a new enemy” (Obama, 2008a: 114), as they are, as Obama put it in his 2006 book, “intent on repelling or disrupting the forces of globalization” (Obama, 2006: 306).

While thus also here providing more continuity with Bush than some had expected (see Bentley and Holland, 2014), Obama did change the discourse in two ways in response to the perceived policy failures of his predecessor. First,

the term War on Terror itself was abandoned. Second, and relatedly, the Obama administration sought to explicitly break with the (neoconservative) tendency under Bush to subsume much of its grand strategy under the banner of the War on Terror, and hence identify most, if not all, of its adversaries as terrorists or at least linked to them (such as notoriously the regime of Saddam Hussein). Before some of them became officials in the new administration, grand-strategy planners warned against using “the blanket designation of a ‘global war on terror’,” and called for a more differentiated approach (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 21). As it was formulated in the NSS, instead of waging “a global war against a tactic – terrorism or a religion – Islam. We are at war with a specific network, al-Qa’ida” (White House, 2010). Arguing that not Iraq but Afghanistan and Pakistan (or “AfPak”) constitute “the central front in our enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism” (Obama 2009a: see also Obama, 2008a: 114–15), terrorism as an enemy thus became more circumscribed while at the same time it was emphasized how the War on Terror would endure. Nor would it be any less global than under G.W. Bush. Indeed, as in the past, the enemies of the Open Door appear to be almost by definition “global” even if linked to specific actors or states: “[b]ecause this enemy operates globally, it must be confronted globally” (Obama, 2007a; see White House, 2010: 19).

### **A grand strategy of imperial restoration: maintaining the Open Door from the Asia Pivot to the drone wars**

As has been argued above, in the years leading up to Obama’s presidency, grand strategy planners within what became Obama’s elite policy planning network saw themselves confronted with a new global context in which U.S. primacy was no longer as self-evident and beyond challenge as it had appeared in the early Bush years, and in which, in their interpretation, the United States had actually lost influence due to the counterproductive nature of part of Bush’s rhetoric and actual policies. Thus, once several of these grand-strategy planners had become part of Obama’s team of grand-strategy makers, they did see the necessity to readjust Bush’s grand strategy, repairing some of his perceived mistakes, while holding on to the Open Door and its strategic requirement of global hegemony and, moreover, continuing (even if repackaging) some his most controversial post-9/11 policies. Within the changing global context this boiled down to a grand strategy of imperial restoration. Or as Obama in a recent interview, and in the context of his recent (thus far) successful “engagement” with former “rogue states” summed up his doctrine when prompted by interviewer Thomas Friedman: “[t]he doctrine is: We will engage, but we preserve all our capabilities” (Friedman, 2015).

Below we identify the following four key elements of Obama’s grand strategy. First, an attempt to restore America’s perceived loss of “soft power.” Second, and more substantively, an attempt to restore the American economy and recover from the 2008–09 deep recession while sustaining long-term growth, both as an end itself and as a foundation for “national security.” Third, a

geographical reorientation, attempting to shift attention away from the wider Middle East and toward (East) Asia. It should be emphasized that the second and third elements are closely related in as much as what came to be known as the Asia Pivot is an attempt to restore U.S. pre-eminence in the Asia-Pacific vis-à-vis a rising China, while a successful long-term growth strategy is seen as foundational for American power. Indeed, both elements can be seen as key to the United States' attempt to preserve the U.S.-centered liberal world order. Finally, the fourth element of Obama's variety of Open Door imperialism we here distinguish pertains to his administration's policies with regard to the use of force as a key means of advancing and defending its ends. Here, the grand strategy as pursued under Obama reflects a renewed, after the Iraq debacle, preference for global warfare that seeks to maximize the projection of U.S. military power while restricting the use of American ground forces – a policy that crystallized in particular in the new drone wars. We will now analyze each of these four elements in turn.

### *Seeking to restore America's "soft power"*

According to Joseph Nye – the academic cum former senior government official who developed the concept of soft power and a big linker in the U.S. foreign policy planning network (for instance as co-chair of both the central ASG and the TC) – restoring America's soft power was a central task the new administration successfully set out to perform by developing a “new narrative about America's role in the world” (Nye, 2012: 97; see also Mann, 2012: 150). Obama did so especially in his first year through a number of key speeches – such as on nuclear disarmament in Prague (Obama, 2009e) and most notably – with a view to repairing relations with the Muslim world – in Cairo, in which Obama declared “to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world” (Obama, 2009f). Hillary Clinton equally set out to readjust the balance between “hard power” and “soft power” by adopting Nye's more recent catchphrase of “smart power” (Nye, 2011: 22–3), which had been previously promoted by the aforementioned CSIS Commission on Smart Power (2007), whose work according to Nye himself “helped popularize the concept of smart power” (Nye, 2009: 161).

Beyond seeking to reverse some of Bush's more blatant human rights violations (or at least declaring this intention), the Obama administration has also adopted a more positive rhetoric vis-à-vis other aspects of international law and with respect to international organizations, especially the UN (as in an important early address to the General Assembly – Obama, 2009g). Following ideas that had also figured prominently in the aforementioned foreign policy planning network – that is, to where possible avoid a “go it alone” strategy that undermines American legitimacy, and instead practice a “norms-based internationalism through treaties, alliances, and multilateral organizations” (CSIS Commission on Smart Power, 2007: 13, 27) and to make “international cooperation as the centerpiece of a strategy to restore America's global leadership” (Stedman

*et al.*, 2008: 12) – Obama set out to replace Bush’s unabashed unilateralism with at least a rhetorical commitment to multilateralism. Thus Obama’s 2010 NSS called for a focus on “strengthening international institutions and galvanizing the collective action that can serve common interests” (White House, 2010: 3), with the strategy document taking the alleged multilateralism of U.S. foreign policy in the post-war era as the model to emulate in this “world of transnational challenges” (*ibid.*: 12–13).

As in other areas where a fundamental break with the policies of his predecessor were suggested both during the campaign and afterwards, the practice of Obama’s grand strategy also here did not match his lofty rhetoric. As Skidmore (2012: 44; cf. Homolar, 2012) sums up his argument about the continuity that Obama’s foreign policy represents in this respect: “[w]hile international institutions no longer face open American hostility, the Obama administration has moved neither to revamp the crumbling institutional infrastructure of global order nor to commit the United States to binding international agreements.” Even if under Obama the shift toward multilateralism was more rhetorical than substantive, in line with a longstanding practice in U.S. foreign policy (see Chapters 2, 4, and 5), also for the Obama administration some multilateral institutions remain very useful in the pursuit of the global Open Door, especially institutions of global economic governance such as the WTO, World Bank, and IMF, with the latter, along with the new G-20 (see below), arguably being (re-)valued especially in the context of the global financial crisis. It was the latter crisis in the end, more than the damage to U.S. soft power, that pointed to the biggest challenge to American global power.

### ***Seeking to restore economic growth within the bounds of neoliberalism***

Although the link between “prosperity” and “security” has always been at the heart of the Open Door, this became reaffirmed in the context of the financial crash of 2008 and the ensuing “great recession,” with the Obama White House in 2010 arguing that the goal of economic recovery must be a central element of its national security strategy: “the center of our efforts is a commitment to renew our economy, which serves as the wellspring of American power” (White House, 2010: 2). Yet, Obama’s NSS – as well as subsequent policies – did not contain many new ideas in this respect, ideas that could have been the basis for a new growth model replacing that of neoliberalism premised on marketization and finance-led growth.

One of the few relatively new ideas (compared to Bush) and that previously had been advocated within the affiliated policy planning network (e.g., Center for American Progress, 2008: 2, 4; McKibbin *et al.*, 2008) was that of a “green” recovery based on investments in clean energy (White House, 2010: 10, 28, 30). Relatedly, fighting climate change did become somewhat of a foreign policy priority for Obama (Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 236–41), but success thus far has been limited despite a renewed effort driven by former CAP founder Podesta

(Eilperin, 2014). For Obama's grand-strategy makers, promoting a transition to a low-carbon economy is closely linked to enhancing energy security through reducing America's dependence on foreign oil, which, as the Phoenix group of grand-strategy planners formulated it, would "allow the United States to wean its budget and foreign policy off dependence on authoritarian regimes, particularly in the Middle East, as quickly as possible" (Slaughter *et al.*, 2008: 27). But of course, even if the United States (largely thanks to the so-called shale revolution) becomes less dependent on the Middle East for its own energy security, Middle Eastern oil, as we have argued earlier, will remain of strategic value to the United States because of its role within the global capitalist economy and of the continuing dependence on it of both allies and (potential) contenders. This is why the United States will not be able to or want – as events analyzed below also testify – to extricate itself from the Middle East. Beyond, however, a renewed focus on energy security in connection to climate change, Obama's recovery strategy has been defined above all by a recalibration – and therefore essentially a continuation of – neoliberalism.

### *The continuing primacy of neoliberal globalization*

During his 2008 campaign Obama chastised his predecessor for having "abandoned the principle of broad-based growth" (Obama, 2008a: 34–5), a theme that came straight from the Hamilton Project (see e.g., Altman *et al.*, 2008: 2, 4) and remained prominent in Obama's discourse during his presidency. Thus his 2012 State of the Union called for an economy in which "everyone gets a fair shot" rather than an economy "weakened by outsourcing, bad debt and phony financial profits" (Obama, 2012a). Beyond rhetoric, Obama's economic policy strategy here arguably reflected genuine worries on the economic, social, and potential political costs of America's extreme and growing inequality, worries that, as indicated before, are more widely shared by part of America's elite – seeking to address this issue in a way that would pre-empt rather than involve radical (redistributive) reform.

Thus, while Obama has argued that forces of globalization have "shaken the faith of the American people in the institutions of business and government" as "[they] see a widening chasm of wealth and opportunity in this country" (Obama, 2011a), the solution presented for this domestic social crisis is not any retreat from globalization, an abandoning of the pursuit of openness abroad in favor of redistribution at home, but rather, as then senator Obama stressed in a speech he held at the launch of the Hamilton Project (Brookings Institution, 2006: 9), promoting "investment" to make people better adapt to the requirements of globalization (see also Obama, 2013a). The commitment to global open markets – with minimum barriers to trade and investment and maximum freedom for transnational capital – thus remains intact. Generally, more than seeking to "rebalance" the economy, the Obama administration's main economic priority in the first years was to ensure that confidence was restored in America's financial markets.

*Financial markets: restoring confidence*

While since 2008 there had naturally been calls in many quarters to restore financial stability, within elite think tanks that came to be linked to the Obama administration no proposals were put forward that would break with the kind of financialization that had caused the instability in the first place. Neither have such proposals subsequently been forthcoming from Obama's economic team. The heart of this team was made up by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and NEC Director Larry Summers – men who as we have seen had in part been responsible for promoting the financialization of both the United States and the global economy when they were officials in the Clinton administration, and who proved to be reluctant to change their earlier convictions. Beyond their shared experience as architects of the “deregulation agenda” of the 1990s, Geithner and Summers were also closely connected to America’s financial elite. As chair of the Federal Reserve of New York (officially a corporation with commercial banks as shareholders, though not counting among our corporate affiliations) until 2009, Geithner maintained close ties with the Wall Street banks he regulated, especially with the giant (and later to be bailed out) Citigroup, the CEO of which, Sandy Weill, sat on the board of directors of the New York Fed, and a prominent director of which was Geithner’s former boss and mentor, Rubin. Summers, in between his service in the two Democratic administrations (and after a stint as Harvard president), made substantial money and close friends in Wall Street as managing director of hedge fund D.E. Shaw (Story, 2009). In addition both were extensively networked within the policy planning community, in particular through bodies well known for their advocacy of domestic and global market-based, neoliberal reforms (including the liberalization of finance), such as the Brookings Institution, the Bretton Woods Committee, the business-led Committee for Economic Development (see Chapter 3 on these organizations), and the Group of Thirty (G-30), a private club that has played an influential role in global financial governance (Tsingou, 2014).

As documented by Suskind (2011), Summers and Geithner were above all guided by the principle of “first, do no harm” (*ibid.*: 200–2, 417), that is, their primary concern was to restore and maintain the confidence of the financial sector (both in the market and in the government’s policies), which was seen as key to a restoration of the sector’s profitability, and with that, it was believed, of the health of the economy (cf. Swedberg, 2013). The market was not to be distorted, and the class interests of Wall Street’s financial elite not to be touched (see also Panitch, 2012). As such they stuck to a policy line that had already been developed by them and others during the Clinton administration, and which had continued under Bush. Following this line, the bail-out and guarantee program TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) inherited from Bush and his last Treasury secretary (and former Goldman Sachs CEO), Paulson, was continued. More radical measures – such as nationalization – were discussed but in the end always taken off the table with the argument that they would undermine the confidence of market actors (Suskind, 2011; Panitch and Konings, 2009).

Instead, interventions in the financial markets were to be “temporary, based on market principles, and minimally intrusive” (Summers, 2009).

While some of Obama’s advisers, notably former Fed chair Volcker, had taken more distance from the views and interests of the financial corporate community (even though Volcker, now in his eighties, had been part of the community himself), and favored a more far-reaching re-regulation of finance, the Geithner-Summers approach largely prevailed.<sup>7</sup> Thus the so-called Volcker rule which in its original formulation would have forced a separation of commercial and investment banking (almost) akin to Glass–Steagall, as well as the Dodd–Frank Act, the financial reform package of which it came to be part, was subsequently significantly watered down, not just because of Wall Street lobbying in Congress, but also because of a lack of support from the White House and the Treasury (see Suskind, 2011: 349–50, 431; Hager, 2012: 88–90; Panitch, 2012: 146–7).

Unlike in the past, where the American state, and in particular the Treasury, had to manage financial crises originating elsewhere, the crisis this time of course had its epicenter in the United States itself and subsequently the response to the crisis was also more domestically oriented. This does not mean, however, that the Obama administration did not recognize the importance of multilateral coordination to reconstitute confidence in the financial system at the global level. Here, in line with its self-appointed task of global leadership in seeking to keep running and keep open the capitalist world economy, the Obama administration still sought an active and leading role in forums like the finance ministers of the G-7 and the heads of state and government of the G-8, as well as through the more recently launched G-20 summits (the first of which had been held at the end of the Bush presidency). In fact, in the context of the global economic crisis and in recognition of the emergence of new economic powers outside the OECD area, the latter forum was designated also by the Obama administration as “the premier forum for international economic cooperation” (White House, 2010: 4), and indeed it has been Obama’s support for the G-20, as well as his administration’s diplomatic leadership during the September 2009 summit held in Pittsburgh, that has helped to consolidate the G-20 in its new role in global economic governance (Cooper and Thakur, 2013: 76, 79; see also Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 31).

The success of the coordination through the G-20 has been mixed. On the one hand the two 2009 summits that took place at the height of the crisis were hampered by conflicting views on the causes and remedies of the crisis (Cooper and Thakur, 2013: 76). On the other hand, from the U.S. perspective of maintaining a U.S.-dominated global capitalism, the G-20 has been instrumental in as much as it has confirmed – in spite of the crisis – “a consensus … about strengthening rather than challenging the international regulatory regime that had fostered the development of global finance” (Panitch and Gindin, 2012: 302). In sum, at the international level, too, the efforts led by the United States and Obama’s economic policymakers have been oriented to restoring the confidence in the existing (financialized) system. The aim thus has been to preserve the neoliberal nature of global capitalism. This also transpires from Obama’s trade and investment policy, the traditional heart of the Open Door.

*Obama's new trade agenda*

Although certainly during the first two years economic policymaking rather focused on containing the financial crisis, the trade agenda became increasingly prominent toward the end of the first term and into the second (Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 59; McGregor, 2013). In fact, one other key plank of Obama's recovery strategy was the goal of doubling exports (within five years), and in classic Open Door vein: "to seek new markets aggressively" (Obama, 2010b; see also National Export Initiative, 2010). As under previous administrations Obama's global free trade agenda is not just about the promotion of exports – indeed, the goal of doubling exports by 2015 has proven to be elusive (Lange, 2013) – but as much about further liberalization of cross-border investment, further opening foreign markets for American FDI rather than (merely) for American goods.

While successfully steering both the U.S. and the world economy away from a protectionist response to the crisis in the first years of the Obama presidency (Cowhey, 2013), the subsequent more pro-active trade policy was perceived to receive a further boost with some personnel changes in the second term. While both U.S. Trade Representative Kirk and Commerce Secretary Locke, of the original 2009 Obama team, were both, as we have seen, important linkers in that team's corporate elite network, they were replaced by people with arguably even more impressive corporate (as well as policy planning network) ties. The key post of trade representative was filled by Michael Froman, a Rubin protégé who had worked for the former Treasury secretary as his chief of staff during the Clinton administration and then followed him to Citigroup as managing director (and was also the person to introduce Obama to Rubin – Kuttner, 2010: 4, 10), while billionaire heiress to the Hyatt hotel empire and high-profile business executive and investor as well as Obama fundraiser Penny Pritzker became the new head of commerce. Both appointments were loudly welcomed by the corporate community (Calmes, 2013).<sup>8</sup>

In spite of trade being moved to the heart of its second term agenda, the Obama administration has thus far proven to be unable to revive the moribund Doha round, arguably pointing to the growing limits of U.S. power in what certainly in economic terms is an increasingly multipolar world order in which the established (the United States and the EU) and the so-called rising powers often have divergent interests. Instead, leading a global trend (Gantz, 2013), the Obama administration has focused its efforts on *regional* trade agreements, particularly in Asia and in Europe. With regard to the latter region, the Obama administration did launch a major trade and investment initiative with the EU, the so-called Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). While having shifted its focus to Asia, Europe remains a key strategic region, and in this respect the Obama administration views the proposed trade deal as a way to revitalize a transatlantic partnership that in recent years has been troubled by continuing disagreements over issues ranging across NATO allies' level of defense spending, climate change, and U.S. worries about the eurozone crisis and how it might endanger U.S. recovery (Nielsen, 2013), while at the same time

ensuring that that partnership would remain firmly anchored in a commitment to economic openness (Biden, 2014).

Indeed, the TTIP would not only further liberalize transatlantic trade but would mark a huge step toward the constitution of the Atlantic area as a free space for transnational capital, removing many non-tariff barriers to trade and strengthening transnational freedom of investment and the rights of foreign investors, in particular through the proposed “investor–state dispute settlement” clause expanding TNCs’ ability to sue governments before *private* international tribunals in case of alleged infringement of their property rights due to domestic (labor, health, environmental) regulation (see for an analysis Cross, 2013). While the negotiations are at the time of writing far from concluded and are hindered by growing political opposition on both sides of the Atlantic (Politi and Donnan, 2014; Donnan, 2014), Washington’s push for this initiative underscores how the commitment to the global Open Door remains at the heart of U.S. grand strategy and of the United States’ relations with Europe.

The same applies to U.S. trade policy with respect to the increasingly important Asian region, building upon the attempts by the Bush administration, where U.S.-led trade liberalization received an important impetus with the ratification at the end of 2011 of a free trade agreement with South Korea, and would receive an even bigger boost once the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would come into being. The TPP – the secret negotiations on which are more advanced than those on TTIP but at the time of writing still ongoing – would liberalize trade but also remove regulatory obstacles to investment and enhance foreign investors’ rights between 12 Pacific states.<sup>9</sup> According to Obama, the TPP serves as “a model not only for the Asia-Pacific, but for future trade agreements. It addresses a whole range of issues not covered by past agreements, including market regulations and how we can make them more compatible” (Obama, 2011b). Together the TTIP and TPP (covering nearly two-thirds of the world economy) form, in the words of one informed observer, “the most ambitious U.S. trade agenda since Nafta and the Uruguay round in the 1990s” (Luce, 2013a).

In response to the stagnation of global trade talks within the WTO, another, more recent, initiative led by the United States, and a key component of Obama’s trade strategy, is the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), that the United States, the EU, and other mainly OECD countries have been starting to negotiate outside the WTO framework and that would involve a radical global liberalization of services, including financial services. Indeed, according to one critic, a leaked draft text of TiSA on financial services (published by WikiLeaks) shows that the 50 countries involved intend

to lock in and extend their current levels of financial deregulation and liberalization; lose the right to require data to be held onshore; face pressure to authorize potentially toxic insurance products; and risk a legal challenge if they adopt measures to prevent or respond to another crisis.

(Kelsey, 2014)

TiSA has been a Western initiative, but China has been seeking to join as well, raising suspicions in Washington and other Western capitals since, as one official quoted in the *Financial Times* put it, “TiSA has always been envisioned as a group of the like-minded.... But the question is: ‘Is China like-minded?’” (Donnan, 2013). What of course is expressed here is a worry that even if China is becoming more and more integrated into the hitherto U.S.-centered liberal world order, it might seek to change that order from within and challenge U.S. global hegemony. It is thus that we will now turn to how the United States seeks to deal with (potential) geopolitical competitors – first and foremost China as part of the turn to Asia – as they might threaten to (partially) close the global Open Door.

### ***Confronting geopolitical challenges to the open door: Russia, China, and the Asia Pivot***

As we have seen, the theme of rising powers – including the so-called BRICs – figured quite prominently in the grand strategic thinking within the elite policy planning bodies later affiliated to the Obama administration, as well as among its grand-strategy makers once Obama had entered the White House. While “liberal engagement” – or the attempted integration into America’s global Open Door empire – has been the preferred strategy vis-à-vis non-Western powers since the end of the Cold War, the worry that engagement may yet fail (and, especially in the case of Russia, already has) remains as well. Here, within the American foreign policy establishment, the discourse oscillates between a more pessimistic (neoconservative) pole (see e.g., Kagan, 2008; 2012) and a more optimistic (liberal internationalist) one (see e.g., Hachigan and Sutphen, 2008).

The position of the Obama administration has actually shifted between these two poles. The NSS of 2010 is still clearly of a more optimistic tone, declaring as a major plank of the administration’s strategy to “renew American leadership,” and as part of a broader policy of “engagement,”

to build deeper and more effective partnerships with other key centers of influence – including China, India, and Russia ... so that we can cooperate on issues of bilateral and global concern, with the recognition that power, in an interconnected world, is no longer a zero sum game.

(White House, 2010: 3)

However, as we shall see below, in the years since, Obama and his advisers have increasingly come to view – for different reasons – both Russia and China (with the focus on the latter) as geopolitical competitors that need to be confronted, while making sure that gains already made in terms of opening these markets are not lost. We will now first briefly examine the United States’ evolving policy vis-à-vis Russia, and then move on to the second central element of Obama’s grand strategy proper – his signature pivot to Asia.

*Russia: containing a regional threat to the Open Door*

In line with its strategy to make other (rising or declining) powers “partners” in what was to be yet “another American century” (Obama, 2009h), Vice President Biden early in 2009 called “to press the reset button” in U.S.–Russian relations (Biden, 2009). Subsequent events, however, proved that Russia was not to be coopted in this way, and the “reset” pursued by Secretary Clinton gave way to a different U.S. approach. What in fact had already become clear at the end of the Clinton presidency – that the new post-socialist but far from liberal capitalist Russia was not going to be incorporated into the U.S.-led liberal world order (at least not on America’s terms) – was once more confirmed by the Ukraine crisis, including the Russian annexation of Crimea in response to a U.S.-backed coup against the democratically elected pro-Russian government of Kiev.<sup>10</sup> What the Obama administration had apparently underestimated was the extent to which Russia under Putin would not only reject but increasingly actively resist – in the form of its own regional and statist imperialism (see Pozo-Martin, 2011) – U.S. expansionism into the territory of the former Soviet Union.

At the end of 2012 Hillary Clinton warned Moscow against its “move to re-Sovietize” the region by restoring its influence across the former USSR, adding that “we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down and prevent it” (Clinton cited in Gearan, 2013). In other words, Putin’s attempt to “re-Sovietize” Russia’s own region are to be resisted because it tends to challenge America’s extra-regional hegemony that it has been seeking to expand since the end of the Cold War, thus frustrating the attempt to indeed “Americanize” the region. In this sense, the Ukraine crisis, and in particular Putin’s actions in response to the internal unrest in his southern neighbor, have been another form of blowback to 20 years of American expansionism behind the former Iron Curtain (see also Mearsheimer, 2014).

The increasingly acrimonious relations with Russia have in the eyes of Washington strengthened the case for the TTIP, with the current secretary of state, John Kerry, recently in a speech before the Atlantic Council identifying the trade pact, together with energy independence, as the most important element of a strategy to create “a stronger, more prosperous transatlantic community” as part of the needed Western response to “Russia’s actions in Ukraine [that] tell us ... that today Putin’s Russia is playing by a different set of rules” (Kerry, 2014). The Open Door thus needs to be bolstered and defended against this reemerging Russian threat, which moreover has, in the words of Kerry, called NATO “back to the role that this alliance was originally created to perform, and that is to defend alliance territory” (*ibid.*). Notwithstanding this belligerent rhetoric, and talk of a new Cold War, Obama himself downplayed the (potential) geopolitical threat of Russia by declaring that (after the annexation of Crimea) “Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors not out of strength, but out of weakness,” adding that while “Russia’s actions are a problem, they don’t pose the number-one national security threat to the United States” (Obama, 2014b).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it is a rising China, rather than a geopolitically

resurgent but structurally declining Russia, that might develop into a *global* threat to America's liberal imperium.

### *Confronting China: maintaining the Open Door in Asia*

The more important shift, then, in America's relations with other great powers has involved the geographical refocusing on the Asia-Pacific region of Obama's grand strategy, whereas, as we have seen – even if the neoconservative intellectuals that dominated the Bush administration did early on recognize China as an emerging rival – the greater Middle East had been the geographical focal point of Bush's grand strategy. As indicated in the previous chapter, this did not mean that China and the wider region was entirely neglected, and in fact Bush pursued a China policy which substantively was often not that different from what would become the policy under Obama. What has been new under Obama has been, as Obama put it in a key speech before the Australian parliament, “the strategic decision” of the United States “[a]s a Pacific nation,” to “play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future by upholding core principles” (Obama, 2011c), and thus to shift attention, and to a limited extent resources, toward the Asia-Pacific and undertake a more sustained effort to maintain American hegemony. While East Asia had already been singled out as one of the strategic priorities within the policy planning network out of which many of Obama's grand-strategy makers were recruited (such as around the Phoenix group and the Brookings Institution), it was only in the course of the first years of the Obama presidency that this geographical shift became a central and explicit facet of Obama's grand strategy, with what came to be known as the Asia Pivot in particular taking place in the years 2010 and 2011.

This new East Asia policy was first explicitly formulated in a November 2011 *Foreign Policy* article by Secretary of State Clinton entitled “America's Pacific Century,” in which – continuing a long tradition of seeking to bolster and reproduce American globalism by invoking the specter of isolationism – Clinton made clear that the rise of Asia was also to be taken as an opportunity, indeed a (legitimizing) rationale, to continue America's global leadership. Arguing that those who call for America “not to reposition [towards Asia], but to come home” “have it exactly backward” because “we cannot afford not to [engage with the world].” Clinton justified this “engagement” thus: “[f]rom opening new markets for American businesses to curbing nuclear proliferation to keeping the sea lanes free for commerce and navigation, our work abroad holds the key to our prosperity and security at home” (Clinton, 2011). It is hence that the United States, according to Clinton, should once more, as it has always done since the end of World War II, resist “the gravitational pull of these ‘come home’ debates.”

It thus follows that “[a] strategic turn to the [Asian] region fits logically in our overall global efforts to secure and sustain America's global leadership,” which is “irreplaceable” (*ibid.*). It is only U.S. power in this view which can provide for security and prosperity in the region, which in turn are inextricably linked to the prosperity and the security of the United States (*ibid.*).

Indeed, at the heart of the pivot is a commitment to the economic Open Door: “[o]pen markets in Asia” providing the United States with “unprecedented opportunities for investment, [and] trade,” seen as key to domestic economic recovery, which “depend[s] on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base in Asia” (*ibid.*; see also Obama, 2011c). The “vast consumer base in Asia,” coveted by U.S. transnational capital of course, clearly echoes the original Open Door policy as it was formulated with respect to the Chinese market at the end of the nineteenth century (see Chapter 2), and underlines the historical continuity. What is different more than a century later is that the United States is facing not the declining, supine imperial China that was an easy target for American and European imperialism, but a resurgent China, which for now has made a successful transition to a market economy but, crucially, not (yet) a liberal capitalist one, and that is not only about to become the biggest economy in the world, but with growing military capabilities and its perceived geopolitical awakening (Department of Defense, 2011b), is increasingly regarded as a potential geopolitical challenge to U.S. hegemony. As such, China’s rise is no longer just an investment opportunity for U.S. capital, but a phenomenon that needs to be managed with a view to America’s long-term (corporate) elite interests.

Within the Obama administration this view of a rising China as a potential contender has been reinforced by what has been perceived, and constructed, as a growing assertiveness of China, in particular what is seen as China’s “push” into several surrounding maritime areas (Bader, 2012: chs. 7, 10; Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 29–44, CSIS, 2010; cf. Johnston, 2013). The major geopolitical flashpoint here is the South China Sea, with regard to which China has since long made expansive territorial claims that conflict with the (less extensive) rival claims of other surrounding states, but above all clash with the American view that the South China Sea is a key international waterway in which the freedom of navigation has to be ensured on the basis of the Law of the Sea. Indeed, while the interests of China and regional rivals like the Philippines and Vietnam have taken a territorial form, a territorial interest in part explained by the fact the area holds significant though difficult to exploit oil and gas reserves, the American interest in the area – as elsewhere in the region – is premised on the “non-territorial” expansionism of the Open Door. This interest is highlighted in a recent Council on Foreign Relations report stressing the need to keep open a waterway through which US\$5.3 trillion of trade passes annually (Glaser, 2012: 4). While in part responding to Chinese actions and (perceived) strategy, it must be stressed that Obama’s Asia strategy was not merely reactive but also a proactive strategy of seeking to bolster U.S. power in the region – a strategy that would also be pursued without the challenge from a rising China. However, given that China’s rise does contain a potential threat to the Open Door, America’s Asia strategy has become increasingly “China-centered” (Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 42).

It is within this context, then, that the Asia pivot in U.S. grand strategy was made, as Obama’s strategic response to a rising China. Next to Clinton, her deputy James Steinberg (e.g., Bader, 2012: xi, 76; Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 19, 30, 56),

as well Kurt Campbell (Bader, 2012; x–xi), assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs and founder of the Center for a New American Security, played an important role in shaping Obama’s China policy from within the State Department, while the Treasury also had an important role to play, with Geithner together with Clinton leading the so-called U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, next to Clinton (Bader, 2012; Mann, 2012: ch. 17). As we have seen, all of these grand-strategy makers were well embedded in the elite network of the corporate and policy planning communities that also under Obama remain key social sources of the Open Door. Let us below examine the China strategy these grand-strategy makers elaborated in somewhat more detail.

### *Obama’s “hedging strategy”*

On the one hand, China’s integration into global capitalism and the deepening interdependence with China – a relationship, as one American analyst (Brenner, 2010) has put it, of “mutually assured economic destruction” – has made Obama’s grand-strategy makers rule out a Cold War-like *containment* strategy (Bader, 2012: 69; Zhao, 2012: 21; cf. Mearsheimer, 2010).<sup>12</sup> It is thus that the NSS of 2010 stressed that “a pragmatic and effective relationship between the United States and China [is] essential to address the major challenges of the 21st century” (White House, 2010: 43). Here the liberal *engagement* strategy seeks to promote China’s further integration into not only global capitalism but also into its liberal governance, seeking to make it into what the Bush administration called a “responsible stakeholder” (see Chapter 5), in other words, making it behave according to Western and above all U.S. rules of the game, or what in the NSS 2010 are called “rules of the road,” that “must be followed” (White House, 2010: 3). As put succinctly by Obama’s then National Security Advisor Donilon in an op-ed: “America is back in the Pacific and will uphold the rules” (Donilon, 2011; see also Obama, 2011b).

While such a strategy, clearly defining the limits within which China’s rise is welcomed, as such reveals a hegemonic and imperial ambition, rather than a strategy of cooperation based on some kind of equal partnership, Obama’s grand-strategy makers have, on the other hand, and increasingly so after the first year when the emphasis was still more on “engagement” (see Zhao, 2012), come to worry that incorporation on American terms might not work and that a non-liberal and increasingly powerful China might seek to change the rules of the game. As such, the so-called Asia Pivot has shifted its emphasis toward “hedging” against the latter possibility – evolving into a strategy deploying multiple policy instruments, including diplomacy, trade policy, and defense policy, in short, seeking to manage China’s rise “with every element of American power” (Obama, 2011a).

The already discussed TPP forms the main economic pillar of Obama’s Asia Pivot, and is in part intended to, in the words of Commerce Secretary Pritzker (2014) “promote a level playing field for U.S. businesses,” in particular “when U.S. companies are competing against state-owned enterprises.” While not

formally excluding China, China has been made to understand that it could only join if it subscribes to principles regarding investment and trade so much at odds from its own economic and trade practices that this thus far has been an invitation China is unlikely to accept (Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 59; Sanger, 2012: 412). The TPP is indeed intended to make sure that as many countries as possible adopt America's economic "rules of the road," thus seeking to prevent China from creating a more China-centric regional free trade area, possibly with its own less liberal, more statist, version of those rules, closing rather than further opening the door to U.S. transnational capital. The geopolitical and the geo-economic are thus closely intertwined here, or, as Vice President Biden explained its rationale, the TPP is needed "on behalf of our own companies and in defense of open commerce" while also becoming "a symbol of American staying power" (Biden, 2014).

Last but not least, the pivot to Asia has also led to an adjustment of U.S. military strategy (see Department of Defense, 2012: 2). Here, in particular "China's emergence as a regional power" (*ibid.*: 2) is regarded as a potential threat, in as much as China may undermine U.S. pre-eminence through its persistent attempt to "counter our power projection capabilities" (*ibid.*: 4). The military aspect of the Asian-Pacific strategy has taken concrete form by the decision to deploy 2,500 U.S. marines in Darwin, northern Australia (the point closest to the South China Sea) by 2017, while also having started negotiations on increasing military presence in the Philippines (Bradsher, 2013), and the decision to change the distribution of naval forces between the Atlantic and the Pacific from 50/50 to 60 percent assigned to the latter (Perlez, 2012). Regarding the South China Sea, Hillary Clinton responded in 2010 with the unequivocal statement that "freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea" was a U.S. "national interest" (Clinton, 2010; see also CSIS, 2010), an interest to be backed up by U.S. military power to assure "access to and freedom of maneuver within the global commons" (Department of Defense, 2011a: 3).

While in part premised on a discourse about China's growing assertiveness, it became increasingly clear into Obama's second term that the Asia Pivot was antagonizing Beijing and may have helped to provoke precisely the kind of Chinese behavior Washington sees as a threat to its Open Door interests, that, is not sticking to the (liberal) "rules of the road" (McDonald, 2012: Dyer, 2012). This includes what is perceived as China's recent territorial expansionism in the South China Sea, with actions such as placing an oil rig in disputed waters, developments to which the United States responded with the announcement of a "tougher line" countering "China's naval advance" (Dyer *et al.*, 2014). Arguably this creates a real dilemma for the United States as they would rather avoid the kind of geopolitical rivalry that this action-reaction pattern is engendering (Dyer *et al.*, 2014; see also Nye, 2013). But the alternative to taking a "tougher line" would arguably be accommodation of China's region ambitions to an extent that it might undermine the global hegemony to which the U.S. elite remains committed.

The self-fulfilling prophecy aspect of the Asia Pivot reveals a dynamic that is even more clearly visible in the case of the fourth and final element of Obama's grand strategy that we analyze here, which is his use of force in the periphery, especially the ongoing, renewed, and indeed expanding War on Terror.

### ***Defending the Open Door: expanding the War on Terror by remote control***

Above we have noted how military power also forms a critical dimension of the Asia Pivot. Indeed, even if, as we have seen, a conscious attempt to restore "soft power" and hence consent was undertaken by the Obama team, the foreign policy pursued did not become much less militarized. Focusing upon the use of force as a means to defend and maintain America's Open Door, we distinguish three aspects, marking both strong continuities and some discontinuities vis-à-vis his immediate predecessor.

The first aspect, then, is that Obama's grand strategy thus far has not witnessed a significant scaling back of coercive power. To be sure, Obama and several of his advisers distanced themselves from the neoconservative belief in the efficacy of military power and shared the common critique that under Bush the United States showed a counterproductive "over-reliance on the military instrument" (Hennessey and Parsons, 2014), emphasizing that *not* "every problem has a military solution" (Obama, 2014a). But from his campaign onwards, Obama has been fully committed to maintaining American military superiority, notwithstanding – after a rise of more than a decade – a recent, and most probably temporary, stabilization of the defense budget, seen as a necessary reduction of the costs of American globalism in the context of the economic crisis and the subsequent effort to bring the budget deficit down. Indeed, the United States in 2012 continued to outspend the next ten biggest defense spenders (a majority of which are U.S. allies – Perlo-Freeman *et al.*, 2013). Next to maintaining military supremacy, the massive global cyber surveillance and espionage by the National Security Agency (NSA) as disclosed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, has revealed the expansion of a new powerful "data-intelligence complex" (Luce, 2013b) under Obama, further boosting the hard power capabilities of American hegemony.

While domestically Obama into his second term in a major foreign policy speech seemingly has sought to position himself between those who warn "against foreign entanglements" and those (liberal) "interventionists" who argue "that America's willingness to apply force around the world is the ultimate safeguard against chaos," in the same speech he stressed his commitment to American leadership, identified "[t]he military" as "the backbone of that leadership," and added the usual declaration that "isolationism is not the option" (Obama, 2014a). More importantly, Obama's record clearly shows a rather bellicose and indeed interventionist presidency, with Obama relying on the military instrument in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, and Syria (not counting smaller-scale Special Forces operations in many more countries). Indeed, Obama has been fighting more wars than Bush.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, far from repudiating the Bush doctrine, Obama, already as a candidate, made it clear that “I will not hesitate to use force, unilaterally if necessary, to protect the American people or our vital interests whenever we are attacked or imminently threatened” (Obama, 2007a: 6), a position that has been later reaffirmed in the NSS (White House, 2010: 22) and in several key speeches (Obama, 2011c, 2014a). While unilateral force in this Obama “doctrine” is seen as justified when America’s “core interests” are at stake, “issues of global concern [that] do not pose a direct threat to the United States” but do “stir our conscience or push the world in a more dangerous direction” are argued to call for a more multilateral approach: “[i]n such circumstances, we should not go it alone [but] … mobilize allies and partners to take collective action” (Obama, 2014a). While this emphasis on multilateralism (but not of course making it dependent upon UN Security Council approval) marks a symbolic distancing from the Bush doctrine, the fact that “core interests” are broadly defined and can cover military action around the globe and the fact that the “collective action” may very well take the form of a “coalition of the willing,” once more underlines the strong continuities, notwithstanding differences in emphasis, with regard to this particular means of American grand strategy.

A second aspect is that we can witness a partial shift away from the large-scale use of ground forces to a return to Clinton’s preference for airpower, often in combination with the use of (covert) Special Forces. What has been seen as a general preference of Obama and some of his grand-strategy makers for a so-called “light” or “small-footprint” military strategy (Department of Defense, 2012: 3; Sanger, 2012) can be seen as partly informed by the Asia Pivot that emphasizes naval and airpower in countering China’s growing military capabilities (Dyer, 2014), and partly as what inside the Obama White House itself is viewed as the lessons from the Bush 43 government regarding the unintended consequences of starting large land wars. Thus, in the aforementioned 2014 major foreign policy speech Obama, in a clear veiled reference to the Iraq War, indicated his administration’s reluctance to start new large-scale ground wars by stating that “some of our most costly mistakes came not from our restraint, but from our willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences, without building international support and legitimacy for our action” (Obama, 2014a).

The shift has nevertheless been only partial – and the term “light” in any case arguably highly misleading from the perspective of its victims – because as we shall discuss below Obama first massively expanded the number of U.S. ground troops in Afghanistan. Moreover, while, e.g., Clinton relied much more exclusively on the Air Force and on cruise missiles, Obama, though reducing the overall number of “boots on the ground” with the (partial) withdrawal from Iraq and later Afghanistan, has in fact expanded the number of Special Forces “on the ground” in an increasing number of countries. Furthermore, with respect to Bush 43 even the shift in military doctrine – insofar as it has been realized – is arguably more apparent than real. Ironically, while presented by the Obama administration as in opposition to the “military adventurism” of the preceding

administration, the “light footprint” approach of Obama’s military doctrine can also be viewed as a consolidation of the kind of reforms – discussed in the previous chapter – that G.W. Bush’s defense secretary Rumsfeld had been trying to implement (Haddick, 2011). Nevertheless, in the practice of Obama’s grand strategy, we can observe, more than under Bush, a preference for a type of military means that are less costly, less risky (in terms of risking U.S. casualties and a domestic political backlash), and avoid long-term commitment of U.S. military resources. This preference has been most clearly expressed by Obama’s increasing reliance on the new drone weapon.

The third aspect is that both America’s overt and covert wars under Obama all have continued to take place largely within what the Bush administration defined as the “Greater Middle East,” a region stretching from North Africa to Pakistan. Moreover, these wars have by and large continued to be waged under the banner of the global fight against terrorism, though, as we have seen, this has been somewhat more narrowly circumscribed by the Obama administration as a war against “al-Qaeda and its affiliates.” We will now analyze the use of force in some concrete cases in the aforementioned area, and argue how they fit within a larger pattern of Obama’s variety of (neo)liberal globalism.

#### *From Iraq to “AfPak” and back again*

While troops were fully withdrawn from Iraq at the end of 2011, this was less of a break with Bush than is often presented, as Obama was only carrying out an agreement that Bush had signed with the Iraqi government in 2008.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime Obama chose to expand his “war of necessity” (Obama, 2009i; see also Woodward, 2010), tripling the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to a total of around 101,000 in July 2011 (Norland, 2012). The administration was divided about the nature and extent of America’s continuing military involvement in Afghanistan. On the one hand, especially Defense Secretary Gates and Clinton strongly supported what came to be the second surge at the end of 2009, as part of a broader so-called counter-insurgency strategy aimed at defeating the Taliban. On the other hand, some of Obama’s White House advisers, as well as Biden, were more skeptical of the ambitious political goals this implied, and instead favored a somewhat more limited so-called counter-terrorist strategy, aimed at targeted strikes against suspected (al-Qaeda) terrorists. However, no one within the administration questioned the rationale of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan as such (Gates, 2014; see also Woodward, 2010, Mann, 2012: ch. 9). Underlining, the tactical nature of this debate, Gates (2014: 384), in his memoirs, admits that the difference between him and his biggest political opponent on this matter in the Obama White House came down to Gates recommending 13,000 troops more than the 85,000 Biden recommended. In fact, Obama decided to pursue both counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism, building up troop levels while also continuing to expand targeted attacks.

What united both camps was the consensus that the “enemies of globalization” needed to be defeated, whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere, and U.S.

global hegemony maintained. Gates, and it is worth quoting him at length here for the imperial logic it reveals, explains why in his view success in the Afghanistan war in this respect was essential:

For Islamic extremists to defeat a second superpower in Afghanistan would have devastating and long-standing consequences across the entire Muslim world. For the United States *to be perceived* as defeated in Afghanistan *at the same time we were suffering an economic crisis* at home would have grave implications for our standing in the world. Nixon and Kissinger had been able to offset the consequences of U.S. defeat in Vietnam with the dramatic openings to Russia and China, demonstrating that we were still the colossus on the global stage. The United States had no such opportunities in 2010.

(Gates, 2014: 496; our emphasis)

Here we then see how the risk of being *perceived* to lose a war, especially, as in this case, in the context of an (economic) crisis already (perceived to be) undermining U.S. power, for American grand-strategy makers committed to global hegemony may in itself be a reason to continue to invest in that war because of detrimental effects of such a perception on American power and standing. At the same time, the context of rising costs and the need to better adjust ends to the more limited financial means in the wake of the same financial crisis and the priority of domestic recovery (Obama, 2009c; Gates, 2014: 372), as well as the lack of success of the surge, prompted the acceleration of the already planned gradual withdrawal of troops from 2011 onwards (Obama, 2009c; Zeleny and Calmes, 2011). Nevertheless, probably both to maintain the perception of not having lost the war completely and to be able to continue to exercise a modicum of control in what remains a strategic area in the periphery of America's empire, the Obama administration at the time of writing still has kept close to 10,000 troops in the country.

The war in Afghanistan has, under Obama, also been de facto expanded to Pakistan (with the two countries seen as part of one strategic "AfPak" region) through Obama's massive expansion of remotely piloted covert drone attacks aimed at killing "suspected" al-Qaeda affiliated "terrorists" (in practice often lower ranking insurgents – see Berger and Tiedemann, 2010) in, above all, northwest Pakistan, though the drone war has also extended into countries like Yemen and Somalia. Part of what has turned out to be not only a continuation but indeed an expansion of the global War on Terror, Obama's expansive targeted killing program – with hundreds of attacks by 2014 having killed thousands, among whom are hundreds of civilians, and according to human rights lawyers having created a permanent terror for the affected population<sup>15</sup> – can indeed be viewed as a de facto application of Bush's pre-emptive strike doctrine, and even with the permission of the Pakistani government is of very dubious international legality (Aslam, 2011), despite the administration's protestations to the contrary (Brennan, 2012; Obama, 2013b). Indeed, underlining the continuity

with Bush, Obama has argued that, in what according to critics (e.g., Amnesty International, 2013) amounts to a virtual global license to kill, the drone strikes are permitted under the same *Authorization of the Use of Military Force* granted by Congress after 9/11 to fight the global war against al-Qaeda (Obama, 2013b). Next to Leon Panetta, first as director of the CIA – which thus far has been carrying out the drone strikes – and then as Pentagon chief, and Obama’s counter-terrorism adviser John Brennan (who is now heading the CIA, where he remains closely involved), Obama himself has also been closely involved in the waging of these drone wars, according to a *New York Times* report “personally overseeing the shadow war with al-Qaeda,” approving the “kill lists” drawn up for him (Becker and Shane, 2012).

In defending the steep increase in drone strikes under his watch (about which the administration remained initially largely silent), Obama has several times made the argument that the great advantage of using drones is that it avoids the need invade and occupy (part of) a country, which is not only much more costly (for the United States) but also more likely to produce backlash of the local population, fanning terrorism (e.g., White House, 2012; Obama, 2013b), even though there is clear evidence that the drone wars in Pakistan have already been producing their own blowback (Hudson *et al.*, 2011; McCrisken, 2013). What the Obama’s administration’s defense of the shift to drones and away from large-scale ground wars thus underlines is that this is indeed a shift in *means* rather than the ends of this aspect of American grand strategy and that the apparent need to use force if the periphery cannot be otherwise controlled is thus never called into question.

Obama’s renewed War on Terror has also taken the shape of – as part of the abovementioned increasing reliance on more “flexible” forces – an enormous expansion of the deployment of covert so-called *Special Operations Forces*, which are now reported to be active in 134 (!) countries in all continents, up from around 60 in 2009 (DeYoung and Jaffe, 2010; Turse, 2014). Not surprisingly, the greater Middle East, as well as the Horn of Africa, has been a key focus of Obama’s covert warfare. American grand strategy under Obama has in fact remained fully committed to preserving hegemony over this key strategic region, as testified by his administration’s response to the so-called Arab Spring, and its aftermath, which threatened to upend America’s longstanding policy of supporting pro-United States Arab dictatorships as a key pillar – together with the unrelenting support for Israel – of its regional hegemony (see Gates, 2014: 502–10 for Obama’s secretary of defense’s worries in this respect). Hence Obama’s publicly cautious response to the uprisings, refraining from lending them America’s outright support in spite of its rhetorical commitments to democracy (Kitchen, 2012: 56).<sup>16</sup>

It was also in this context, and to draw a line in the sand (if not very successfully given the subsequent civil war in Syria) vis-à-vis “rogue leaders” in the region threatened by popular revolt – and maybe not wholly coincidentally after relations between U.S. oil majors and the Gaddafi regime had “soured” (Mufson, 2011) – that another war in the Muslim world was, with European allies, waged

in the spring of 2011.<sup>17</sup> While the air war against Libya was legitimated by “liberal idealist” presidential rhetoric (Obama, 2011c) and by an expansive interpretation of a UNSC resolution to protect the civilian population – invoking the new humanitarian intervention discourse of “responsibility to protect,” propounded among others by Obama’s UN ambassador Rice – it not unintentionally ended with regime change (Indyk *et al.*, 2012: 164–6), which subsequently ended up with the country descending into violent anarchy.

Meanwhile, Iran, and its purported nuclear ambitions, remains a structural long-term challenge to U.S. hegemony in the Persian Gulf. The containment of this regional adversary of the U.S.-led Open Door thus has remained a key priority for the Obama administration as it was for its predecessors. At the time of writing, what had started out as a policy of conducting covert cyber-attacks against Iran’s nuclear program (Sanger, 2012: ch. 8) had – in keeping with Obama’s strategic choice to pragmatically “engage” with adversaries in cases where regime change is deemed as an all too costly if not impossible policy (a conclusion to which, in the case of Iran, the Bush administration had also already come in its final years) – been replaced by high-level negotiations that the United States hopes will neutralize Teheran’s nuclear ambitions. In April 2015 these negotiations led to a historic interim agreement that if its becomes final might well achieve Obama’s aims in this respect. As current CFR president Richard Haass argued in an approving comment on an earlier preliminary November 2013 deal: “Iran, not simply owing to its nuclear ambitions but also because of its drive for regional influence, is a challenge to be managed more than a problem to be solved” (Haass, 2013).

While thus seeking to manage the Iranian challenge, the Obama administration into its second term was faced with the conundrum that while keeping the door open in the wider Middle East required containing Iran and opposing its ally in Syria, the regime of Assad, both of these Shiite adversaries are potential partners in the U.S. multi-annual military (bombing) campaign in both Iraq and in Syria, which also already has involved sending thousands of “military advisers” back into the former country, aimed at “destroying” (Obama, 2014c; Schmidt *et al.*, 2014) the Sunni Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also known as ISIS or ISIL). Thus being drawn into an increasingly complex regional rivalry between a Sunni and Shiite power bloc, the decision to “eradicate” the “cancer” of ISIS (Obama, 2014c) was taken after – during the summer of 2014 – the off-shoot from al-Qaeda had come to control not only major areas of both Syria and Northern Iraq, but above all was rapidly advancing into the Kurdistan region, the one relatively successful part of post-invasion Iraq and host of much Western FDI, especially in the region’s energy sector, including its abundant oil (Hanna and Hammoud, 2014). Even if the Obama administration originally claimed that its actions were motivated by the humanitarian concerns over threatened religious minorities, once those aims appeared to have been achieved (Obama, 2014d), it turned out that Obama’s grand-strategy makers were viewing ISIS as a much broader threat to U.S. “core interests” around the globe, justifying a long-term campaign. As Defense Secretary Hagel explained in a press

conference: “they [ISIS] are an imminent threat to every interest we have, whether it’s in Iraq or anywhere else” (Department of Defense, 2014). The “core interests” threatened – given that, as also Obama (2014) admitted, ISIS thus far has had no plans to carry out any attacks on U.S. targets (beyond the beheading of U.S. journalists, which galvanized U.S. public opinion) – are once more about America’s strategic interests in keeping open the economic door in post-invasion Iraq, and more broadly keeping control over the Middle East and ensuring the free flow of its oil. More generally, what is at stake here is America’s credibility and standing as the world’s hegemon in and beyond the Middle East – indeed, the most dominant theme of Obama’s speech announcing the new war was the “enduring burden” of “American leadership” (Obama, 2014c).

### *The endless War on Terror and the Open Door*

While Obama in a 2013 speech, suggested that the war that has started after 9/11, “like all wars, must end” (Obama, 2013b), and in his first term several times claimed that “the tide of war was receding” (Obama, 2012b), his actual legacy appears to be more that of an “endless” War on Terror, thus at least in this respect having consolidated the neoconservative shift in U.S. grand strategy (see Chapter 5; also Bentley and Holland, 2014). While this arguably shows the structural power of the ideational and discursive shifts that have taken place post 9/11 in U.S. foreign policy (Krebs and Lobasz, 2007; Holland, 2014), there are also strategic elite interests at stake here that have conditioned Obama’s grand-strategy makers’ perceived need to defend the global Open Door against not just a rising China but also non-state contenders.

In as much as transnational terrorism directed against the United States is itself a product of America’s strategy of openness, the United States has an interest to keep it under control rather than abandoning the Open Door, and to show to its own population that it can thus protect “national security” (see on this point Bacevich, 2002: 118–21). The U.S. state moreover has an interest in the public perceiving terrorism as a threat, and therefore in constructing it as such (see Buzan, 2006), because this way it secures public support for what is the more important reason for continuing this war: to police the liberal world order, and to punish those forces and countries who do not wish to succumb to this order, or even threaten it with disruption. Not only is the disruption itself a threat to (neo)liberal capitalism and the operation of the world market (especially in strategic areas), but “terrorists” also challenge the United States’ credibility as the world’s hegemon and thus its role as the guarantor of the Open Door.

## **Conclusion**

The global context with which Obama and his grand-strategy makers saw themselves confronted was one in which U.S. global standing and position was perceived to be under threat by the damage done by Bush’s aggressive unilateralism, as well as the fallout of the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, coinciding

with a more structural power shift in the global economy, especially the rise of Asia. For the grand-strategy makers that came into office in 2009 this context offered less an opportunity for further expansionism and more a perceived need to restore American power and maintain the Open Door empire against multiple challenges. Obama thus set out to pursue a grand strategy of imperial restoration that saw to pragmatically adjust policy to the perceived failings of the Bush era, while holding on to the same overall goals.

Indeed, more than six years into his presidency it has become clear that Obama's grand strategy has offered more continuity than change. We have seen how, once more, under the Obama administration all the tenets of the Open Door worldview have been reproduced not only in its grand strategic discourse but also in the actual practice of its foreign policy. Seeking to explain that continuity in terms of social sources, that is the social position of Obama's grand-strategy makers, this chapter has shown how also the Obama team has been extensively tied to both the corporate community as dominated by transnational big business, and to the policy planning world of corporate-funded think tanks – together showing a high degree of recruitment from America's corporate elite network. Leading figures of his national security team in the first term were also big corporate linkers – especially Clinton and Gates – while his economic team (mainly Summers and Geithner) had important Wall Street links. Our selection of Obama's grand-strategy makers equally show a tight network of connections to especially central and centrist think tanks such as CFR, the TC, and Brookings. The ties to these institutions, such as the latter's Hamilton Project, can also be seen as an important source of continuation of a largely neoliberal variety of the Open Door under Obama, with a clear commitment to globalization as a project of enhancing the freedom of transnational capital, including finance. Yet beyond a continuing commitment to the above ends, the means employed also show more continuity than some had expected, especially with regard to the use of force. Here, as Obama has opened another chapter in the endless War on Terror with the war against ISIS, contributing to a continuous dynamic of blowback provoking U.S. responses engendering further blowback, the effects of the prior American grand strategy on the current global context facing U.S. grand-strategy makers – in this case Bush's War on Terror and especially the Iraq War – continue to condition present U.S. grand strategy formation.

As the context within which America's next president from 2017 onwards will have to seek to pursue a grand strategy is in part shaped by the strategic conduct of America's current foreign-policy makers – and how this in turn affects the global context and the U.S. position within it – let us now conclude by assessing each of the four main components of Obama's grand strategy analyzed in this chapter, and thus at the legacy he might leave for his successor. First, while Obama set out to restore America's "soft power," his failure to match some of his rhetoric with action, such as the failure to close Guantanamo; the expansion of the targeted killings in violation of international (humanitarian) law; the continued unilateralism in spite of the multilateralist discourse; arguably all have contributed to the fact that Obama's and the U.S. international poll

ratings have not improved on a durable basis. While the numbers went up, especially in Europe, right after his election, recent trends have been downward again (Pew Research Center, 2013: 21–2). The Snowden revelations in 2013 of the extent of the spying and surveillance by the NSA have further undermined American legitimacy, with public mistrust of the United States in, for example, Germany dropping to levels as low as under Bush 43 (Knigge, 2014). While Atlanticism on the part of especially European elites for now remains strong, the successors of Angela Merkel and François Hollande may well display a different orientation, not just taking their cues from their less pro-American publics, but also given for instance their ongoing dependence on Russian gas or their growing dependence on the Chinese export market. In the Middle East, meanwhile, America's soft power seems to have been lost for good.

The priority Obama has given, also as part of his NSS, to economic recovery, has been successful in as much as the economy has been out of recession for several years now and its growth rates have been higher than in the eurozone (although that is not necessarily a big achievement). Yet this growth has not been “broad-based.” On the contrary, despite Obama’s declared policy intentions, income inequality has actually worsened under his administration, with an estimated 95 percent of the income gains during the first three years of the so-called recovery since 2009 accruing to the top 1 percent (Saez, 2013: 4). The “phony financial profits” that Obama spoke of meanwhile have not been tackled; rather – with Obama’s response to the U.S.-centered global and financial crisis above all having been oriented to restoring market confidence – financial sector profit rates have returned to pre-crisis levels and often based on forms of speculative finance that had earlier triggered the crisis (Hager, 2012). All of this shows that Obama’s recovery strategy has failed to solve – even if managing them temporarily – the underlying contradictions of the neoliberal growth model that had led to its crisis, and underlines the continuing fragility of U.S. capital accumulation, especially in the face of outperforming rising economies such as that of China.

Continuing to embrace neoliberal globalization as part of its commitment to the Open Door, Obama moreover into his second term has staked much of his attempt to revive economic growth for the longer term on an agenda of further liberalization of both trade and investment in the key regions of Europe and Asia through initiatives such as the TTIP and TPP. Yet while the much discussed pivot to Asia might be seen as an important foreign policy legacy (possibly together with a deal with erstwhile rogue state Iran), the challenge of China as a potential geopolitical competitor, and as a leader of the eastward shift in the center of gravity of global capitalism, remains, and will continue to preoccupy Obama’s successors.

Finally, the current rise of the Islamic State underscores that Islamic terrorism increasingly reveals itself as a global anti-imperialist front that always comes back in new forms and in new places, and often stronger the harder it is hit (Napoleoni, 2014). That notwithstanding, this observation – which is obvious to any observer of events in the broader Middle East since the end of the Cold War – Obama has chosen to fight yet another war in the country that he had just withdrawn

America's troops from, demonstrates that although Obama and his grand-strategy makers, and previously his affiliated policy planners, were more aware of the financial and political costs of what they saw as Bush's military adventurism, ironically they may well have secured the post-9/11 legacy of Bush 43 – with Obama, having campaigned and been elected as the “anti-Bush,” further entrenching the legitimacy of a war he declared he wanted to end.

While Obama has arguably proven to be a more competent manager of American empire than G.W. Bush, for structural reasons it remains rather questionable whether Obama, at the time of writing in his seventh year in office, has achieved his overarching goal of restoring and preserving U.S. power and thereby being able to maintain the global Open Door. While Obama's second NSS that came out in February 2015 boasts that “[a]fter a difficult decade, America is growing every day,” and views the current “challenges” from ISIL to “Russian aggression” and the “risk of another global economic slowdown” as signs of “complex times that have made clear the power and centrality of America's indispensable leadership” (White House, 2015: 1–2), the current increasingly chaotic and violent geopolitical developments and the persistent instability of financialized global capitalism may well be taken from a more objective standpoint as signaling that America's Open Door expansionism may well have reached new limits that it will no longer be able to transcend.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For the various relevant rankings of Vinson & Elkins see the website of the renowned Vault's: [www.vault.com/company-profiles/law/vinson-elkins-llp/company-reviews](http://www.vault.com/company-profiles/law/vinson-elkins-llp/company-reviews).
- <sup>2</sup> Orszag's successor as Hamilton director was Jason Furman, who later went to the White House to serve as the chair of Obama's Council of Economic Advisors.
- <sup>3</sup> The anxiety about the United States possibly losing its primacy as the global structure is arguably shifting from unipolarity to multipolarity is paralleled by a new academic debate that erupted around Obama's election. On the other hand, there are those who argue that this time America's hegemonic decline is “for real” (Layne, 2012; see also Layne, 2009; Arrighi, 2005a, 2005b; Mahbubani, 2008), while on the other hand there are those who in light of what they see as America's continuing economic, technological, financial, and, arguably above all, military superiority, argue that “America's edge will endure” (Beckley, 2013), in part because as Sean Starrs (2013) recently argued, its (economic) power has in fact globalized through its transnational corporations.
- <sup>4</sup> This theme of power diffusion also figures prominently in the work of former Clinton official and leading Democratic elite policy planner Joseph Nye – see Nye (2011).
- <sup>5</sup> For the same reason, Obama's pragmatism should not be confused with realism (cf. Zakaria, 2009; Kitchen, 2011), at least not the academic (but normative) realism of International Relations, which emphatically rejects what is still to be regarded as a liberal internationalist strategy aimed at maintaining global hegemony and favors a more restrained offshore balancing instead (Layne, 2006a; Mearsheimer, 2001).
- <sup>6</sup> In fact, also Obama himself personally seems to strongly reject the notion of American decline (despite what is often alleged) as in an off-the-record meeting with journalists Obama at length defended the notion of continuing American primacy by drawing upon and endorsing an argument made by neoconservative writer Robert Kagan about the “myth of American decline” (Rogin, 2012; see also Kagan, 2012).

- 7 Others who wanted a tougher stance vis-à-vis the banks but were to lose the argument vis-à-vis Summers and Geithner were Obama's CEA chair, Romer – one of the more outspoken Keynesians within the economic team – and Clinton's former CEA chair, Tyson (see Suskind, 2011).
- 8 Both were connected to the policy planning network through, among others, the CFR as, respectively, former senior fellow and director.
- 9 Next to the United States the other 11 nations are: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- 10 That the United States was actively involved in seeking to engineer and steer Ukrainian regime change emerged most clearly from a leaked conversation between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine (notorious for the former's exclamation of "fuck the EU" out of her apparent frustration of the EU not fully following Washington's hardline) in which the two of them discuss how to cajole various opposition politicians either to take up or not to take up particular positions in a new government and reveal the depth of U.S. involvement in Ukrainian domestic affairs (see BBC News, 2014).
- 11 Obama responded to a question from a journalist who confronted him with the claim by his 2012 rival in the presidential elections, Mitt Romney (at the time much ridiculed by the Obama camp), that Russia was America's "number one geopolitical foe."
- 12 Indeed, the United States is well aware of how its own dependency on China to continue to finance its deficits sometimes constrains its own actions, given for instance Clinton's remark (as revealed in one of the WikiLeaks cables – U.S. Secretary of State, 2009) that it is difficult to deal "toughly" with your banker (even if China's current holding of US\$1.3 trillion in U.S. treasuries also means that it is in fact caught in a "dollar trap," while also relying on the U.S. market for its export-led strategy – cf. Drezner, 2009; Ho-fung, 2009).
- 13 Obama indeed was never the anti-war candidate he was sometimes made out to be, and during the campaign often emphasized the need to maintain U.S. military supremacy and to create "[a] 21st century military to stay on the offense, from Djibouti to Kandahar" (Obama, 2007b). When not wanting to bomb the Syrian regime of Assad without Congressional support in 2013, the misconception of Obama's policies made a comeback, with much misguided "media analysis" of Obama allegedly being "over cautious" and "too reluctant" to use force, and having "over-learned the lessons of the Bush era" (McGregor, 2014; see also Baker, 2014). When Obama started bombing the Islamic State (see below) such criticism became muted again.
- 14 The so-called Status of Forces Agreement signed by President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki required all U.S. troops to leave the country by the end of 2011 (Gates, 2014: 237). Nevertheless, it had always been the intention to leave behind a contingent of 5,000–20,000 troops, which the Obama administration somewhat unexpectedly failed to achieve as it could not reach an agreement with the Iraqi government over the immunity of its troops (Arango and Schmidt, 2011).
- 15 The most cited and probably most reliable source regarding U.S. drone strikes and their estimated casualties is the Bureau of Investigative Journalism: [www.thebauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones](http://www.thebauinvestigates.com/category/projects/drones). For a report on how the drone attacks terrorize the population of the targeted tribal areas in Pakistan, see International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School and Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law (2012).
- 16 Although some in the administration, especially Gates, were even more reluctant, until the last moment, to abandon Egypt's dictator Mubarak (see Gates, 2014: 504–6). Gates might be pleased to see the Obama administration now continuing to lend its multi-billion support to Egypt's new strongman, al-Sisi.
- 17 According to a leaked (WikiLeaks) cable the U.S. State Department for years had been worrying about growing "Libyan resource nationalism" hampering Western oil companies that had returned to Libya in the years before (U.S. Embassy Tripoli, 2007).

# Conclusion

This study has shown that American grand strategy in the post-Cold War era has continued to be aimed at the further opening of foreign markets and thereby the expansion and deepening of a U.S.-centered global capitalism; the spread of liberal institutions and ideas, thus expanding and entrenching a (neo)liberal world order, while defending this order and America's hegemonic position within it against any state or non-state contender threatening closure. In short, the United States has continued to pursue a grand strategy of the global Open Door, a strategy that has its origins in the end of the nineteenth century and has in terms of its overarching ends remained largely unchanged throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. It has been a grand strategy, to repeat a quotation from what America's grand-strategy planners wrote 65 years ago in the Cold War blueprint NSC-68, "designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish" (Department of State, 1950). The American system here is, above all, a liberal capitalist system, and its flourishing has for over a century been deemed by America's foreign policy elite to be dependent upon the existence of a *global* capitalism premised on open markets. This, then, has involved a strategy of the extension of the American system as a liberal market "democracy," creating an economically unified yet politically fragmented global space in which, above all, U.S. transnational capital can roam freely.

While we have thus observed a striking continuity in grand strategy in terms of its overall objectives (and in many respects also its legitimating discourse), we have also identified variation across the three post-Cold War administrations in terms of the means employed in pursuit of these ends. Since the making of grand strategy always involves the remaking of a pre-existing strategy we are bound to always observe elements of both continuity and change. While there has been and still is a strong elite consensus in favor of the Open Door, there also have always been significant intra-elite debates about the exact strategy to be pursued, about *how* to use *which* means to achieve agreed-upon overall objectives, serving common elite interests. In conjunction with a changing global context, which is not only in part the outcome of past American grand strategy but also mediates present American grand-strategy making as it is interpreted by present grand-strategy makers, these intra-elite differences have sometimes

translated into shifts in grand strategy, especially as a new set of grand-strategy makers came into power with the election of a new president. So, it has also been, we have argued, for the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Each staying within the bounds of the Open Door but pursuing the goal of liberal expansionism in somewhat different ways, with their own ideological emphases and with changing mixes of political, economic, and military means, coercive and less coercive forms of power.

The observed continuities and shifts within post-Cold War American grand strategy are a puzzle from the perspective of conventional IR theory and foreign policy analysis. Indeed, as we have seen, from the perspective of (in the field of grand strategy analysis) still dominant neorealist theory, the expansionist, indeed imperialist, nature of U.S. grand strategy presents a stark anomaly, as from the perspective of a theory that presumes that the primary goal of any state is to maximize security, a strategy of global hegemony is seen as counterproductive. Our alternative interpretation is, however, that we should see the purpose of American grand strategy not primarily in terms of “national security” but in terms of securing the interests of a corporate elite representing the apex of the American capitalist class. This requires abandoning the realist abstraction of the state from society, but rather seeing how state and society are related, thus examining the “domestic” or rather social sources of state policy. Whereas neoclassical realism also seeks to do this it ultimately has a rather limited understanding of state–society relations and tends to focus on ad hoc “intervening” variables such as domestic “ideas” and “beliefs” without being able to explain these by linking them to wider social structures and social relations in which the agents that hold them are located.

Having developed an alternative *critical political economy approach* – drawing upon but also going beyond existing critical approaches that hitherto have not systematically examined the determinants of U.S. grand strategy – we have argued that instead we must put the American state – ultimately acting through the individuals holdings its offices – within its social context and recognizing that this from the nineteenth century onwards has been the context of an outwardly expanding capitalism. From this perspective the *central argument* of this book has been that we can explain these continuities and changes within American grand strategy over the past 20 years – that is, the grand strategies as pursued by Clinton, Bush, and Obama as *three variations of the same Open Door imperialism* – by analyzing the *social sources* and more broadly the social context in which grand-strategy makers are embedded. Emphasizing the interplay of structure and agency over time, we have argued that prior social positions of actors, the social networks in which they have been embedded, matter for understanding the agency of these actors, as it is in these networks that they have been socialized, and their worldview and (grand strategic) ideas have been shaped.

## The transformational model of grand-strategy making evaluated

Specifically, from within our critical political economy approach, what we have (following Bhaskar, 1979), called our *transformational model* of grand-strategy making, we have identified three potential sources of both continuity and change: (1) a change in the grand-strategy makers and their social positions in terms of their prior corporate and policy-planning affiliations; (2) the preceding grand strategy; and (3) the global context and its interpretation by the actors (and with that also their evaluation of the preceding grand strategy).

First, then, in order to analyze the continuity and change in the social positions of grand-strategy makers across the three administrations we have used biographical mapping and applied the method of Social Network Analysis (SNA) – uncommon in the field of foreign policy analysis but, as we hope to have demonstrated, a powerful tool to analyze foreign policy’s social (“domestic”) sources – to provide a topography of the elite networks in which grand-strategy makers’ worldview and ideas have been shaped. Second, we have carried out a qualitative analysis in order to trace the process by which grand-strategy makers, thus partly shaped by their prior social ties, have come to interpret the changing global context and, relatedly, the limits and failings as well as achievements of the preceding grand strategy. In turn, we argue, this interpretation will form the basis of a new and partially adjusted grand strategy. Let us now look at how across the three administrations this approach has enabled us to account for both continuity and change.

### *Explaining continuity: corporate elite networks and a permissive global context*

Our SNA has substantiated our key claim that America’s foreign policy elite – in our case close to 90 grand-strategy makers of the three administrations – is *closely embedded in a corporate elite network*, consisting of both direct corporate affiliations and indirect ties to a corporate-elite directed policy planning network. It has been this continuing nexus between the U.S. state and U.S. capital that to a large extent helps to explain the continuity of American grand strategy in terms of the Open Door – which obviously serves the interests of U.S. transnational corporations and of the elite directing these firms – not because U.S. grand-strategy makers are agents representing the corporate elite, but because in fact they are often part of the corporate elite themselves, or at least of broader corporate elite networks, which makes them part of an elite consensus prevalent and constructed in these networks.

In all three cases – that is, of the 30 selected grand-strategy makers of each administration – we observed a comparable extent of prior corporate affiliations with about two thirds of our grand-strategy makers holding (often multiple) prior top-level corporate positions at, in many cases, Fortune 500 firms, or, for instance, law and consultancy firms providing services for American TNCs.

Next to the latter, we find that the financial sector predominates – arguably indicative of their dominant position within financialized U.S. capital. Across all three administrations all of our sectors are represented, with many actors having ties to more than one sector, indicating that the interconnectedness with the corporate community is broad-based and that in as much as these corporate ties shape grand-strategy makers' worldview this has to be understood in terms of the *general* outlook and interests of American transnationally oriented capital. This outlook on the part of grand-strategy makers is reinforced over time as they tend to go through the revolving door back to the corporate sector and then back again to serve in high positions in the federal administration.

We furthermore found that in all three administrations more than two-thirds of our selected grand-strategy makers had prior formal ties with often multiple think tanks and other policy planning bodies. The core network of these bodies that we have identified employing SNA – that is, those institutions to which all three administrations were linked – consists of organizations (like the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, Bilderberg, and the Aspen Institute) whose ideological orientation and foreign policy outlook can all be seen as falling within the mainstream of Open Door globalism. In fact, these organizations play a critical role in translating an outlook that is generally in line with the interests of the American transnational corporations – that, as we have shown, not only fund these think tanks but also sit on their boards of directors – into actual (foreign) policy ideas. We have seen that many of the officials and advisors of Clinton, Bush, and Obama fulfilled such a role as grand-strategy *planners* before assuming the levers of power in the White House and thus becoming involved in the actual *making* of grand strategy.

While we have emphasized the importance of this embeddedness of *America's* foreign-policy makers in *American* corporate elite networks for accounting for the continuity in ends of *American* grand strategy, the global and international structure and America's pre-eminent position within it must also – in line with the arguments put forward by neoclassical realists – be regarded as an important permissive condition. While it is the Open Door worldview that makes grand-strategy makers see the pursuit of global hegemony as a strategic imperative, it is the structural power of the United States within the international political system and the global political economy – in part a product of a successful globalist hegemonic strategy of past grand-strategy makers – that enables such a project of global hegemony in the first place.

Of course, we have seen, particularly with the neoconservatives, but actually also in the other two administrations, that U.S. foreign-policy makers sometimes overestimate the power of the United States to remake the world in its own image. This later on might lead to some strategic adjustment when reality starts to bite. In the case of the United States, however, it has not led to abandoning the goal of global hegemony. First of all, because, in spite of all apparent failings of U.S. foreign policy (and global interventionism in particular), this strategy aligns well with the interests of an American corporate elite that wants the U.S. state to maintain a U.S.-centered global capitalism in which U.S. TNCs have

thus far thrived. Second, because America's global power remains sufficiently preponderant to continue to make global hegemony a realistic objective in the eyes of America's foreign policy elite, even if the rise of China is seen as a potential challenge to this preponderance (see below).

### ***Explaining change within continuity: distinctive policy networks, changing context, and variations on the Open Door theme***

When Bill Clinton came to power shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dramatic change in international structure (or what realists see as the distribution of material capabilities) did not lead to any dramatic shift in U.S. grand strategy. On the contrary, as Christopher Layne (2000: 67) put it, after the unexpected end of the Cold War "American policymakers did not skip a beat." In fact there was some change, but above all in the form of yet more of the same. The end of the Cold War was above all perceived by Clinton and his foreign policy team as an enormous opportunity to further expand America's non-territorial empire – to enlarge the zone of liberal *market* democracies into the former Soviet Union and truly globalize the Open Door. In this sense, the changing global context was only a source of change in as much as it permitted the pursuit of the essentially same grand strategy on a yet grander – geographically more encompassing – scale. At the same time what was distinctive about Clinton's variety of this strategy was its deepening *neoliberal* nature, aimed as it was at not just opening foreign markets for trade and investment but also at enhancing the freedom of transnational capital in a much more radical way, and, above all, at liberalizing and globalizing *financial* markets that had been much more restrained in the post-war era.

It was thus under Clinton that the third neoliberal wave of non-territorial expansionism, that had set in after the world economic crisis of the 1970s, gathered pace and height. While neoliberalism first rose under Reagan, it was only in the 1990s when the "New Democrat" Clinton had come to power that a U.S. neoliberal globalization offensive could fully mature. In this strategy the overriding focus was on breaking down barriers to global trade and investment, including, critically, financial investment, while ideologically the political Open Door of democracy promotion also made a comeback. Embracing and promoting U.S.-led globalization, the emphasis lay more on consent than on coercion, though in practice much economic and financial coercion (for instance through the IMF) took place, with military coercion becoming more prominent in a more unilateralist second term. The grand strategy of neoliberal globalization was, as we have analyzed, in part planned by Democrats – linked above all with the Democratic Leadership Council and the Progressive Policy Institute – who were instrumental in neoliberalizing the Democratic Party while also taking it to the right, emphasizing a hawkish and militaristic agenda of "democratic enlargement." As such, then, the particular variety of the global Open Door under Clinton indeed must also be explained in terms of its distinctive policy planning network while those central bodies with which the Clinton team shared ties with

the other two administrations, such as the Trilateral Commission, also – as part of a broader transnational neoliberal project – were increasingly promoting “market-based” solutions to perceived domestic and global economic problems. At the end of the Clinton presidency, however, the limits to expanding U.S. power in this way became increasingly apparent, and so-called neocon intellectuals began to clamor for a more coercive, forceful way to boost U.S. global power.

The Bush administration in many respects continued the neoliberal globalization project of Clinton, yet after 9/11 became characterized by a particularly muscular and militaristic variety of the Open Door, taking U.S. exceptionalism – and with it (market) “democracy promotion” and regional transformation through coerced regime change to new heights, with an unapologetic and openly unilateralist outlook. All of this embedded in a discourse of good and evil in which the new post-Cold War enemy finally had been found and framed as the omnipresent “terrorist” harbored and nurtured by rogue states placed on an “axis of evil.” This grand strategy, as it became embodied by the global War on Terror, and its underlying “Project” to maintain U.S. unrivaled power into a “New American Century,” had been long in the making, carefully prepared and persistently advocated by a group of neoconservative policymakers-cum-planners and intellectuals, firmly embedded, as we have shown, in a policy planning network including outspoken neoconservative platforms such as the Project for a New American Century, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. While this outspoken program was perceived as too extreme prior to 9/11, its – initially broadly supported – adoption into U.S. grand strategy within a matter of weeks was, we have argued, crucially facilitated by the window of opportunity offered by the attacks of September 11, 2001.

While standing out for its coercive foreign policy and military large-scale – entanglements – including two (ongoing) and increasingly unpopular wars – the grand strategy of Bush was equally wedded to the economic Open Door, underpinned by an expansive freedom agenda, aiming at the opening up of markets, implementing free market principles and liberal economic values in those regions and places where these did not yet prevail, or, put differently, where the doors to U.S. transnational capital were still closed. While this underlying goal, as we have shown, thus underpinned the War on Terror – in particular the Iraq War, with the regime of Saddam seen as a prime obstacle to, and oil-rich Iraq as the perfect starting point for, the further integration of the Middle East into a U.S.-dominated liberal world order – it also informed an ambitious free trade agenda. Here, Bush took further the Clinton-era trade agenda through an unprecedented number of free trade arrangements, and, importantly, through the accession of China to the WTO, seeking to integrate this potential contender and discipline it into following the rules of the game largely written by Washington.

While some of the limits of the Bush doctrine became increasingly manifest in the second term, which led to somewhat of a policy moderation, the contradictions inherent in the continuing neoliberal growth regime of deepening financialization were largely left to his successor to manage (though not solve).

Obama, then, came to power in a context in which America's standing in the world had been eroding – the loss of legitimacy of its global power projection due to the Iraq debacle and Bush's blatant unilateralism more broadly – while a more structural power shift toward Asia appeared to be accelerating due to the global financial crisis that had erupted at the end of Bush's term. It was in this context that a more pragmatic variety of the established grand strategy was developed by the grand-strategy planners tied to the Obama administration and then implemented once some of them came into office, a strategy aimed at restoring American power and thus seeking to maintain the Open Door.

Indeed, we have seen how Obama's grand-strategy makers – many of them affiliated to core policy planning bodies such as Brookings, with a clear globalist and neoliberal orientation, but also to a more distinctive network of smaller organizations and groups that were less bipartisan but no less part of an elite consensus committed to a continuation of a strategy of global hegemony – were very critical of many of Bush's policies, and therefore advocated an adjustment of the means of American grand strategy, but remained very much committed to the same ends. Hence the intention was to restore and preserve U.S. global leadership – perceived to be damaged by Bush – through investing in American “soft power,” but above all through restoring the economic foundation of U.S. global power by seeking to resolve the crisis. Yet the latter did not involve abandoning neoliberal globalization, but rather an attempt to preserve the gains already made in that respect since the 1990s and indeed expand and deepen the process through the creation of new free trade and investment blocs, the TTIP and the TPP. The latter, of course, was also a pillar of Obama's signature foreign policy reorientation, the rebalancing toward Asia as an attempt to maintain the Open Door in that increasingly pivotal region and preserve a U.S.-led world order against the rise of a state-capitalist China that might not be willing to stick to the extant Western “rules of the road.” Obama's efforts to restore U.S. power in this way have arguably been marred by another of his predecessor's legacies, the ongoing War on Terror, or the *long war* of the neoconservatives that has indeed turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy (while also pointing to the durability of the discursive shift that took place after 9/11), as the war against Al Qaeda (and, importantly, against Saddam Hussein) has now transmogrified into the war against the Islamic State.

The summaries of our cases above in our judgment show that our transformational model of U.S. grand strategy formation goes a long way in explaining both continuity and change over the past 20 years. We have seen how the global context – unipolar power under Clinton and Bush, the increasingly manifest limits of power under Obama – and specific events within it and their ideological construction (e.g., the September 11 attacks) has been an impetus for the adjustment of American grand strategy in terms of its means, though always mediated by the ideas grand-strategy makers hold, ideas that are in part conditioned by the latter's social position. Here the ties to elite policy planning networks have been an important source of both continuity – in terms of commitment to the global Open Door – and variation with regard to how that goal could be best achieved.

### ***Limitations and suggestions for further research***

While providing a comprehensive explanation of both continuity and change in U.S., (though this model might arguably also be applied to other cases) grand strategy, our transformational model, and the analysis we have undertaken in this study, also has limitations, pointing to areas for further research. First of all, we have in our study of the role of the policy planning network focused on a mapping of the affiliated policy planning bodies, starting from our selection of grand-strategy makers and subsequently delineating a profile of the worldview broadly constructed and reproduced within these think tanks – with a focus on how this has informed the ideas of our grand-strategy makers. What we have not provided in this study is an in-depth and extensive process-tracing (though we have done this to some extent, tracing the process backwards from our grand-strategy makers) of the route through which these policy planning bodies themselves – and the tons of reports, advocacy documents, and edited volumes, as well as public events they produce – actually plan and shape U.S. grand strategy. While this fell outside the scope of this study, we would expect such an analysis to provide additional insight into how the process moves from the grand-strategy planning phase to the phase of actual grand-strategy making. Here, it would also be helpful to undertake – beyond what we have already been able to show – more extensive research into the corporate funding and the social networks of the directors of these policy planning bodies.

Second, in our analysis of the social sources of grand strategy – theorized in terms of the social position of grand-strategy makers – we have identified and analyzed two domains (of elite membership) that we have deemed crucial: affiliations to the corporate world (operationalized as high-level positions within corporations), and to the policy planning network (membership of think tanks, policy institutes, and the like). While for the purpose of our study this selection brought us far in terms of providing an explanation of the continuities of and some intra-elite variations in U.S. Open Door imperialism, there are other dimensions of social background that might also be relevant and merit additional research. One such important variable is social class, and in particular to what extent one is a member not only of the capitalist class through one's (acquired) corporate elite positions, but to what extent family background, (inherited) wealth, education, social club membership, charity activities, and the like, also point to an upper-class background. It would be interesting to see how far social class, thus defined, overlaps with the indicators of corporate elite membership on which we have focused in this study, and how important it is in recruiting and lending cohesion to the foreign policy elite planning and making U.S. grand strategy.<sup>1</sup>

Such a research strategy would necessitate a more disaggregate analysis in which one would compare different dimensions of individuals' biographies in terms of their (interacting) effects on the formation of elites. In addition, one could seek to analyze connections to individuals that end up within a particular social elite network and the ideas that they came to advocate. Here, beyond

analyzing social class background, a more detailed comparative mapping of grand-strategy makers' career patterns might further deepen our understanding of how social context conditions strategic conduct of individual actors. A useful tool in addition to SNA here could be a method like sequence analysis that maps and compares elite careers by coding their different phases to create a sequence similar to that of DNA, which can then be analyzed through computer-aided techniques to identify how far they match with each other (see Seabrooke and Nilssen, 2015, who have pioneered this method in political science).

Third, our focus has been on the variation within an overarching continuity of grand-strategy formation between three different post-Cold War U.S. administrations. While in no way suggesting the U.S. grand-strategy making elite to be a monolithic bloc, our focus on a broader foreign policy cum corporate elite consensus has necessitated us to give less in-depth attention to the conflicting interests and ideas *within* the different administrations – although in our narrative we have highlighted the most pertinent ones. Research into how such intra-elite differences – and the often conflict-ridden process to consensus formation – play out inside administrations, as well as how this is also mediated and influenced from the outside through, for instance policy planning bodies, media, and lobbying groups – would in our view yield additional insights into grand-strategy formation.

Fourth, while our analysis has amply demonstrated that many grand-strategy makers are recruited from America's corporate elite, the question that has only been indirectly touched upon is why this is the case and how this process takes place. While the latter obviously points to the *structural power* of (transnational) capital and of the American corporate capitalist within the U.S. state–society complex, it would be useful to understand more exactly *how* this structural power is translated into what Domhoff (2009) calls the “power of appointment.” While there is important research (see especially Ferguson, 1995) that points to the large role of money, including campaign finance, in the U.S. political system – which is obviously crucial in understanding why certain candidates get selected and elected for the office of the presidency (from which subsequently other appointments are made) – research that would more explicitly link these findings to the research on grand-strategy formation as laid out in this study would be welcome.

Related to this, one could combine our research into how embeddedness in corporate elite networks socialize grand-strategy makers into having a world-view in line with the interests of that elite, with research of other channels and causal mechanisms through which this elite power is exercised. In addition to the aforementioned role of corporate-funded and corporate-directed policy planning bodies, as well as campaign finance, one can think here of various forms of big business lobbying, the role of corporate-owned media, and other ties between state officials and corporate capital than the formal prior ties that we have examined. For instance, it is probable that even while formal ties are absent or have been severed once in office, foreign policy officials continue to have informal contacts with and sometimes direct input from corporate lobbies and from individual business leaders (such as with former colleagues).

## The future of American grand strategy: the deepening contradictions and limits of the Open Door

In this book we have argued that U.S. foreign-policy makers have since the end of the nineteenth century formulated America's "national interest" in globalist, indeed imperialist, terms and have since pursued an expansionist grand strategy aimed at constructing and maintaining global hegemony. This grand strategy has throughout this history received a new impulse every time the United States, and often with it the whole global economy, entered into a prolonged period of crisis, such as the Great Depression. Expansion in order to export surplus goods and capital has thus often been the solution preferred over more radical domestic reform. This liberal imperialism has not only contributed to the profitability of U.S. transnational capital, but has also helped to preserve the privileged position of the social class tied to it. As we have seen, this logic has also conditioned Obama's response to the greatest crisis since the 1930s, seeking to turn both the Atlantic and the Pacific into giant free trade – and above all "free investment" – areas in which transnationally mobile capital can roam freely.

The question, however, is whether with Obama we are seeing the beginning of a new fourth wave of expansionism as a response to what can be regarded as the current crisis of overaccumulation (Harvey, 2010: 45–6; McNally, 2009). Arguably there are still plenty of opportunities for widening and above all deepening markets, and hence extending commodification and creating new outlets for excess capital. Ultimately, for global capital as a whole this may provide the basis for another round of expansion, but most probably this will be in a different form from what we have seen throughout much of the past century, that is, an expansion of U.S.-centered liberal capitalism. As we have argued, global capital that is headquartered in the United States is still also *American* capital. It is not only dependent on the United States as a large home market but, secured through its close ties with the U.S. state, has also benefited disproportionately from U.S. expansionist policies. Although the expansion of capital on a global scale might still be possible, it might not necessarily be U.S. firms at the head of this. Even if U.S. TNCs are currently often still the most competitive (Starrings, 2013), it is at least doubtful whether this competitive edge, or that of the United States more generally, will endure (cf. Beckley, 2011), given the rise of Chinese transnational capital (de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, forthcoming). While in military terms the world remains unipolar, America's continued hegemony in global capitalism (Panitch and Gindin, 2012) seems far from assured. Even though the United States for now remains the most powerful state–society complex within the global political economy (Starrings, 2013), we arguably do witness increasing signs of hegemonic decline vis-à-vis especially a rising China (Layne, 2012; Arrighi, 2005a, 2005b). The recent battle over the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), where the United States in vain sought to prevent close allies such as the UK and later other NATO members joining what Washington regards as a China-dominated alternative to the U.S.-dominated World Bank, is a case in point.

This gradual power shift to East Asia within the global political economy is a process that America's grand-strategy makers, in spite of the renewed strategic focus on this region, are unlikely to reverse. While China may not have an interest in closing the door through which it also has now accumulated much wealth, the United States may very well in the future be no longer in the position to *control* whether in the East Asian region that door will stay open, or under which – or whose – terms. In this context, then, the contradictions and limits of the Open Door grand strategy appear set to only further deepen. But while internal and external challenges to U.S. global hegemony are arguably mounting, in the short to medium term – in which the global structural conditions are likely to worsen but also likely to still be sufficiently permissive for at least the attempt to hold on to global primacy – America's foreign policy elite is not likely to change course in any fundamental sense.

Indeed, America's latest National Security Strategy, published by the Obama administration, is correct in observing that “[a] strong consensus endures across our political spectrum that the question is not *whether* America will lead, but *how we lead in to the future*” (White House, 2015: 2; emphasis in original). In other words, the debate remains one about the means rather than the ends of the Open Door and its concomitant aspiration of global hegemony. While this is above all an intra-elite debate – indeed, the political consensus is not one necessarily always fully supported by public opinion – this elite consensus about the objectives of American grand strategy will remain in place as long as the nexus between the U.S. state and U.S. transnationally oriented capital, cemented by the embeddedness of America's foreign policy(making) elite in corporate elite networks, remains intact. A genuine shift in the ends of U.S. foreign policy, and the social purpose it serves, can thus only be expected if the global context – with for instance a rapid decline of U.S. power – simply makes the pursuit of a globalist grand strategy impossible, or if the power structure of American society itself will undergo a radical change, that is, a regime change in Washington itself leading to a fundamental transformation of its corporate elite.

## Note

- 1 On the concept of social upper class in relation to the corporate and policy planning communities, see Domhoff, 2009: ch.3, p. 116, [figure 4.1](#); see also Scott, 1997).

# Appendix

## Overview of grand-strategy makers of Clinton, Bush, and Obama, and their affiliations

Clinton 1993

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Clinton, William (President)	Governor of Arkansas	—	Wright, Lindsey and Jennings	Council on Foreign Relations Council for Excellence in Government Trilateral Commission Dem. Leadership Council Bilderberg Group
Gore, Albert (Vice President)	U.S. Representative U.S. Senator for Tennessee	—	—	Dem. Leadership Council
McLarty, Mack (Chief of Staff)	Special Envoy for the Americas (Clinton)	McLarty Companies Arkla Gas/Arkla, Inc.	National Petroleum Council	—
Gearan, Mark (Deputy Chief of Staff)	—	—	Dem. Leadership Council	Meyer, Suozzi, English & — Klein, P.C.
Ickes, Harold (Deputy Chief of Staff)	—	—	—	—

*continued*

Clinton 1993 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Christopher, Warren (Secretary of State)	Deputy Attorney General (Johnson) Deputy Secretary of State (Carter)	O'Melveny and Myers Lockheed Southern Edison California First Interstate Bank	Council on Foreign Relations Triilateral Commission Bilderberg Group World Affairs Council American Academy of Arts and Sciences Carnegie Corporation	Rockefeller Foundation Council on Foreign Relations Foreign Policy Association The Aspen Institute Overseas Development Council Asia Foundation Triilateral Commission The Asia Society
Wharton, Clifton (Deputy Secretary of State)		Equitable Life Ford Motor Company Time Warner Federated Department Stores TIAA-CREF Tenneco, Inc.	—	Council on Foreign Relations The Aspen Institute Dem. Leadership Council
Aspin, Les (Secretary of U.S. Defense)		Secretary of Defense (Clinton)	Electronic Defense Laboratories of Sylvania/GTE California ESL, Inc.	American Academy of Arts and Sciences The Aspen Institute Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Perry, William (Deputy Secretary of Defense)	Undersecretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (Carter)	—	Technology Strategies & Alliances	Hambrecht and Quist

Bentsen, Lloyd (Secretary of the Treasury)	U.S. Representative U.S. Senator for Tennessee	—	Lincoln Consolidated Lockheed Aircraft Continental Oil Trunkline Gas Bank of the Southwest PanHandle Eastern Corp.	Bilderberg Group Council on Foreign Relations Triilateral Commission Democratic Leadership Council
Altman, Roger (Deputy Secretary of the Treasury)	Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Carter)	—	Lehman Brothers Blackstone Group Bank of Credit and Commerce International	Council on Foreign Relations
Reno, Janet (Attorney General)	—	—	Lewis & Reno Steel, Hector & Davis	—
Albright, Madeleine (U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations)	Congressional Liaison (Carter)	Secretary of State (Clinton)	Center for National Policy Council on Foreign Relations Atlantic Council	—
Emanuel, Rahm (Senior Adviser for Policy and Strategy)	—	U.S. Representative — Chief of Staff (Obama) Mayor of Chicago	—	—
Stephanopoulos, George (Senior Adviser for Policy and Strategy)	—	White House Senior Adviser (Clinton)	Council on Foreign Relations	—
Lindsey, Bruce (Senior Adviser)	Deputy White House Counsel (Clinton)	Wright, Lindsey and Jennings	—	—

*continued*

Clinton 1993 *continued*

<i>Name /position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Lake, Anthony (National Security Adviser)	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (Nixon) Dept. of State Director of Policy Planning (Carter)	–	Council on Foreign Relations Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	
Woolsey, James (Director of the CIA)	Under Secretary of the Navy (Carter)	Shea & Gardner Fairchild Industries Titan Corporation Ltd DynCorp International Martin Marietta British Aerospace	Center for Strategic and International Studies Council on Foreign Relations The Aspen Institute Atlantic Council	
Brown, Ron (Secretary of Commerce)		Boggs and Blow	Council on Foreign Relations National Urban League	
Rubin, Robert (Director – of the National Economic Council)	Secretary of the Treasury (Clinton)	Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen and Hamilton Goldman Sachs	Center for National Policy Carnegie Corporation Council on Foreign Relations Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	

*continued*

*Clinton 1993 continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Kantor, Mickey (U.S. Trade Representative)	—	Secretary of Commerce (Clinton)	Manatt, Phelps, Phillips and Kantor	Trilateral Commission Center for Study of Democratic Institutions
Herman, Alexis (Assistant to the President for Public Liaison)	Secretary of Labor (Clinton)	Green, Herman and Associates	A.M. Herman and Associates	—
Daley, William (Special Counsel on NAFTA)	Secretary of Commerce (Clinton) Chief of Staff (Obama)	Daley and George Amalgamated Bank of Chicago Fannie Mae	Mayer, Brown and Platt	Chicago Council on Global Affairs Economic Club of Chicago
Berger, Samuel (Deputy National Security Adviser)	Deputy Dept. of State Director of Policy Planning (Carter)	National Security Adviser (Clinton)	Hogan and Hartson	Council on Foreign Relations
Reich, Robert (Secretary of Labor)	—	—	—	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

		National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counter-terrorism (Clinton and G.W. Bush)	
Clarke, Richard (Special Adviser at the National Security Council)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence (Reagan) Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs (H.W. Bush)		
Bush 2001	<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate positions</i> <i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Bush, George (President)	Governor of Texas	—	Spectrum 7 Harken Energy Texas Range Baseball Franchise Caterair International, Inc. Airbus US

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Bush 2001 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate positions</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Cheney, Richard (Vice President)	Chief of Staff (Ford) Assistant to Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (Nixon) Secretary of Defense (H.W. Bush)	—	Halliburton Proctor & Gamble Union Pacific Electr. Data Systems Morgan Stanley TRW IGI Laboratories, Inc. US West, Inc. Bradley, Woods & Co	Council on Foreign Relations Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs Project for the New American Century Center for Security Policy American Enterprise Institute Trilateral Commission
Card, Andrew (Chief of Staff)	Deputy Chief of Staff (H.W. Bush) Secretary of Transportation (H.W. Bush) Special Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs (Reagan)	Founder White House Iraq Group (G.W. Bush)	American Automobile Manufacturers Association (AAMA) Iteris, Inc. General Motors	—
Bolten, Joshua (Deputy Chief of Staff)	General Counsel to U.S. Trade Representative (H.W. Bush)	Director OMB (G.W. Bush) Chief of Staff (G.W. Bush)	Goldman Sachs O'Melveny and Myers	—

Hagin, Joseph (Deputy Chief of Staff)	Head Vice President's Legislative Affairs (H.W. Bush)	Federal Home Loan Bank – of Cincinnati ChiquitaBrands
Appointments Secretary (H.W. Bush)	Federated Department Stores	International Federated Department Stores
Powell, Colin (Secretary of State)	National Security Adviser (Reagan) Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (H.W. Bush)	American Online (Time Warner) Gulfstream Aerospace
Armitage, Richard (Deputy Secretary of State)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia and Pacific Affairs (Reagan)	ManTech Intl. Corp. Weston Solutions, Inc. Armitage Associates
	Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security (Reagan)	Gilead Sciences Allstate Forstman Little General Instrument Corp. G.D. Searle & Company Gulfstream Aerospace
Rumsfeld, Donald (Secretary of Defense)	Director Office of Economic Opportunity (Nixon) Chief of Staff (Ford) Secretary of Defense (Ford)	Tribune Company Metrimon, Inc. Sears, Roebuck and Co ABB AB Kellogg Company Amylin Pharmaceuticals Solomon Smith Barney William Blair and Co.

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*Bush 2001 continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate positions</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Wolfowitz, Paul (Deputy Secretary of Defense)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Regional Programs (Carter) Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Reagan) Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (H.W. Bush)	—	Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy Project for the New American Century Council on Foreign Relations Bilderberg Group Trilateral Commission The Aspen Institute	The RAND Corporation The Private Sector Council American Enterprise Institute Business Council for Sustainable Development Peterson Institute for International Economics Gerald R. Ford Foundation The Conference Board
O'Neill, Paul (Secretary of the Treasury)	Assistant Director OMB (Nixon) Executive Director White House Council on Economic Policy (Nixon) Deputy Director OMB (Ford)	—	International Paper Company Alcoa Eastman Kodak	

Ashcroft, John (Attorney General)	Governor of Missouri	—
Dam, Kenneth (Deputy Secretary of the Treasury)	Program Assistant Director OMB (Nixon) Deputy Secretary of State (Reagan)	—
Cravath, Swaine & Moore	Council on Foreign Relations Chicago Council on Foreign Relations The Aspen Institute America-China Society	—
IBM	German-American Academic Council The Brookings Institution American Enterprise Institute Bilderberg Group	—
Alcoa	Atlantic Council American Academy of Diplomacy U.S. Council for International Business Foreign Policy Association The Asia Society	—
	Japan Society Academy of Arts & Sciences Rockefeller Foundation The RAND Corporation Committee for Economic Development American Council on Germany	—

Bush 2001 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate positions</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Negroponte, John (U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations)	Director for Vietnam, National Security Council (Nixon) Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Carter) Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (Reagan) Deputy National Security Adviser (Reagan)	Director of National Intelligence (G.W. Bush) Deputy Secretary of State (G.W. Bush)	McGraw-Hill	Council on Foreign Relations American Academy of Diplomacy French-American Foundation U.S. Council for International Business
Rove, Karl (Senior Adviser)	—	Chair of the White House Iraq Group (G.W. Bush)	Karl Rove & Co Phillip Morris	—
Hughes, Karen (Senior Adviser/Counselor to the President)	—	Deputy Chief of Staff (G.W. Bush) Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (G.W. Bush)	—	—

Rice, Condoleezza (National Security Adviser)	Director and Senior Director of Soviet and East European Affairs National Security Council (H.W. Bush)	Secretary of State (G.W. Bush)	Chevron Hewlett Packard Transamerica Corporation JP Morgan Charles Schwab	Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies Hoover Institution Carnegie Corporation Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Tenet, George (Director of the CIA)	CIA Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (Clinton)	–	–	Council on Foreign Relations
Evans, Donald (Secretary of Commerce)	Director of the CIA (Clinton)	Tom Brown, Inc.	Economic Strategies Enron	American Enterprise Institute National Bureau of Economic Research
Lindsey, Lawrence (Director of the National Economic Council)	Special Assistant to the President for Policy Development (H.W. Bush)	–	–	American Council on Capital Formation
Hubbard, Robert (Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (H.W. Bush)	–	–	American Enterprise Institute The Brookings Institution National Petroleum Council National Bureau of Economic Research

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Bush 2001 *continued*

Name (position in administration)	Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions	Selected subsequent state and political positions	Prior corporate positions	Prior policy planning network affiliations
Kroszner, Randall (Member of the Council of Economic Advisers)	–	–	G.J. Stigler Center for the Study of the Economy and the State National Bureau of Economic Research	
McClellan, Mark (Member of the Council of Economic Advisers)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy (Clinton)	–	National Bureau of Economic Research Hoover Institution The RAND Corporation	
Daniels, Mitch (Director of the Office of Management and Budget)	Governor of Indiana	Eli Lilly and Company Indianapolis Power & Light & Co	Hudson Institute Center for Security Policy	

Zoellick, Robert (U.S. Trade Representative)	Dept. of State Counselor (H.W. Bush) Undersecretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs (H.W. Bush) Deputy Chief of Staff (H.W. Bush)	Deputy Secretary of State (G.W. Bush)	Fannie Mae Goldman Sachs Alliance Capital Said Holdings Jones Intercable Precursor Group Enton Viventures	Center for Strategic and International Studies Project for the New American Century German Marshall Fund European Institute Council on Foreign Relations American Institute of Contemporary German Studies National Bureau of Asian Research Overseas Development Council Peterson Institute of International Economics Trilateral Commission American Council on Germany Eurasia Foundation The Aspen Institute Defense Policy Board Inter-American Dialogue
Perle, Richard (Chairman Defense Policy Board)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reagan)	-	Hollinger Digital, Inc./ Hollinger Int'l Autonomy Tapestry Pharmaceuticals, Inc. American Interactive Media, Inc. AppNet, Inc. Cardiff Software, Inc. Morgan Crucible Co. PLC Jerusalem Post Trireme Partners Geobiotics	American Enterprise Institute Project for the New American Century Jewish Institute for National Affairs Defense Policy Board Bilderberg Group Center for Security Policy

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Bush 2001 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate positions</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Zakheim, Dov (Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) and CFO)	Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Planning and Resources (Reagan)	System Planning Corp. SPC International	Council on Foreign Relations Chatham House/Royal Institute of International Affairs Heritage Foundation Project for the New American Century Search for Common Ground American Jewish Committee Center for Strategic and International Studies Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf US Naval Institute Atlantic Council Foreign Policy Research Institute Center for Security Policy	Council on Foreign Relations Chatham House/Royal Institute of International Affairs Heritage Foundation Project for the New American Century Search for Common Ground American Jewish Committee Center for Strategic and International Studies Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf US Naval Institute Atlantic Council Foreign Policy Research Institute Center for Security Policy
Khalilzad, Zalmay (Special Presidential Envoy for Afghanistan)	Deputy Undersecretary for Policy Planning (H.W. Bush) Senior State Department Official Adviser (Reagan)	Ambassador to Afghanistan (G.W. Bush) Ambassador to Iraq (G.W. Bush) U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (G.W. Bush)	-	The RAND Corporation Council on Foreign Relations Project for the New American Century

	<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Bolton, John (Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs)	Assistant Attorney General (Reagan) Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs (H.W. Bush)	U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (G.W. Bush)	Covington & Burling Lerner, Reed, Bolton & McManus	Project for the New American Century Council on National Policy American Enterprise Institute Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf Council on Foreign Relations Manhattan Institute for Policy Research	National Policy Forum Jewish Institute for National Security
Libby, Lewis (Assistant to the President, Assistant and Chief of Staff to the Vice President)	Director of Special Project, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Reagan) Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (H.W. Bush)	—	Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP Dechert Price & Rhoades Dickstein, Sapiro and Morin Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Alexander & Fernon	Project for the New American Century The RAND Corporation Council on Foreign Relations Defense Policy Board	—
Obama 2009					
Obama, Barack (President)	U.S. Senator for Illinois	—	—	—	Joyce Foundation Public Allies
Biden, Joseph (Vice President)	U.S. Senator for Delaware	—	Biden & Walsh	—	

*continued*

Obama 2009 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Emanuel, Rahm (Chief of Staff)	Senior Adviser (Clinton) U.S. Representative	Mayor of Chicago	Wasserstein Perella & Co Chicago Mercantile Exchange Freddie Mac	Democratic Leadership Council
Messina, Jim (Deputy Chief of Staff)	–	–	–	–
Sutphen, Mona (Deputy Chief of Staff)	Staff member, National Security Council (Clinton)	–	Stonebridge International LLC	Council on Foreign Relations
Clinton (Rodham), Hillary (Secretary of State)	Chair Task Force on National Health Care Reform (Clinton)	First Lady (Clinton) U.S. Senator for New York	Rose Law Firm Wright, Lindsey and Jennings TCBY	Democratic Leadership Council Vital Voices Global Partnership Southern Development Bancorp Wal-Mart, Inc. Lafarge North America

Steinberg, James (Deputy Secretary of State)	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Analysis (Clinton) Dept. of State Director of Policy Planning (Clinton) Deputy National Security Adviser (Clinton)	– The Brookings Institution Markle Foundation The RAND Corporation International Institute for Strategic Studies Center for a New American Security Council on Foreign Relations Bilderberg Group America Abroad Media The Aspen Institute Trilateral Commission
Gates, Robert (Secretary of Defense)	Deputy Director CIA (Reagan) Deputy National Security Adviser (H.W. Bush) Director CIA (H.W. Bush) Secretary of Defense (G.W. Bush)	– Fidelity Funds NACCO Industries, Inc. Brinker International, Inc. Parker Drilling Company, Inc. Science Applications International Corporation TRW Lucas Varsity PLC The Mitchell Group, Inc. Votehere
Lynn, William (Deputy Secretary of Defense)	Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) (Clinton) Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs (Clinton) Undersecretary of the Treasury for International Affairs (Clinton) President New York Fed	– Raytheon Company DFI International Kissinger Associates, Inc. – – – – Center for Strategic and International Studies Council on Foreign Relations Trilateral Commission Bilderberg Group G-30 Center for Global Development The RAND Corporation Economic Club New York

*continued*

Obama 2009 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Wolin, Neil (Deputy Secretary of Treasury)	Deputy Legal Adviser – National Security Council (Clinton) Executive Assistant National Security Adviser (Clinton) Treasury Deputy General Counsel (Clinton) Treasury General Counsel (Clinton)	Appleseed The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc.	The RAND Corporation International Center for Research on Women Council on Foreign Relations The Brookings Institute	
Holder, Eric (Attorney General)	Deputy Attorney General (Clinton)	Covington & Burling LLP MCI (now Verizon Business)	Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation American Constitution Society	

Rice, Susan (U.S. Ambassador to the UN)	Director International Organizations and Peacekeeping, National Security Council (Clinton) Senior Director for African Affairs (Clinton) Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Clinton)	National Security Adviser (Obama)	McKinsey and Company Bureau of National Affairs	Council on Foreign Relations The Brookings Institution Atlantic Council The Aspen Institute National Democratic Institute Partnership for Public Service American Security Project Trilateral Commission Center for a New American Security
Axelrod, David (Senior Adviser to the President)	—	AKP&D Message and Media	—	—
Jarrett, Valerie (Senior Adviser for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Liaison)	—	The Habitat Company Chicago Stock Exchange 360 Communications USG Corporation Heller Financial, Inc. Navigant Consulting	Joyce Foundation Economic Club New York	—
Rouse, Peter (Senior Adviser)	—	Chief of Staff (Obama) Counselor to the President (Obama)	—	Chevron Corporation Boeing Corporation Honeywell International Invacare Cross Mach Technologies MIC Industries
Jones, James (National Security Adviser)	—	—	—	Atlantic Council U.S. Chamber of Commerce Bilderberg Group Bipartisan Policy Center

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*Obama 2009 continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Panetta, Leon (Director of the CIA)	U.S. Representative Director of OMB (Clinton) Chief of Staff (Clinton)	Secretary of Defense (Obama)	Panetta, Thompson and Panetta Fleishman-Hillard International Communications New York Stock Exchange BP America IDT Telecom Zenith National Insurance Company	Public Policy Institute of California Triilateral Commission Panetta Institute for Public Policy Pew Charitable Trusts Iraq Study Group Center for National Policy Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget –
Locke, Gary (Secretary of Commerce)	U.S. Representative Governor of Washington	U.S. Ambassador to China (Obama)	Connectics Corporation Corinthian Colleges, Inc. Blue Shield of California Key Technology, Inc. Waggener Edstrom Blue Marble Energy Corporation Davis Wright Tremaine mInfo Safeco Corporation	–

Summers, Lawrence (Director of the National Economic Council)	Undersecretary of the Treasury for International Affairs (Clinton) Deputy Secretary of the Treasury (Clinton) Secretary of the Treasury (Clinton)	D.E. Shaw  The Brookings Institution The Hamilton Project National Academy of Sciences Council on Foreign Relations Trilateral Commission Bilderberg Group Peterson Institute for International Economics G-30
Romer, Christina (Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers)	–	Center for Global Development Council on Competitiveness Committee for Economic Development Bretton Woods Committee Inter-American Dialogue American Academy of Arts and Sciences Partnership for Public Service World Economic Forum Eli and Edythe L. Broad Foundation Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Bilderberg Group  National Bureau of Economic Research American Academy of Arts and Sciences
Goolsbee, Austan (Member of the Council of Economic Advisers)	–	Chairman Council of Economic Advisers (Obama)

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Obama 2009 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Rouse, Cecilia (Member of the Council of Economic Advisers)	—	—	—	MacArthur Foundation National Bureau of Economic Research
Orszag, Peter (Director of the OMB)	Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy (Clinton)	—	Sebago Associates (now Competition Policy Associates)	The Brookings Institution The Tax Policy Center
Kirk, Ronald (U.S. Trade Representative)			McKinsey and Company Brinker International, Inc. Vinson & Elkins LLP Gadere Wynne Sewell LLP Dean Foods Company PetsMart, Inc.	Democratic Leadership Council

Volcker, Paul (Chairman of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board)	Chair Federal Reserve	-	American Stock Exchange	Trilateral Commission
			Nestle S.A.	The Aspen Institute
			Linx Partners LLC	Peterson Institute for International Economics
			Latham & Watkins	The American Assembly
			Wolfensohn & Co LLC	The American Council on Germany
			Deutsche Bank Trust	The International House
			Corporation	The RAND Corporation
			Sinshai Bank Ltd	Council on Foreign Relations
			Still River Systems, Inc.	Bilderberg Group
			TIAA CREF	G-30
			Bankers Trust Company	The World Justice Project
			Prudential Insurance Company	International Accounting Standards Committee
			UAL Corporation	Concord Coalition
			Chase Manhattan	Bretton Woods Committee

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Obama 2009 *continued*

<i>Name (position in administration)</i>	<i>Prior senior positions in federal administration (state) and selected other prior political positions</i>	<i>Selected subsequent state and political positions</i>	<i>Prior corporate affiliations</i>	<i>Prior policy planning network affiliations</i>
Tyson, Laura D'Andrea (Member of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board)	Chair Council of Economic Advisors (Clinton) Director National Economic Council (Clinton)	Member President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness (Obama)	Morgan Stanley AT&T, Inc. Healtheon Corporation Eastman Kodak H&Q Asia Pacific Ltd. The G7 Group, Inc. Generation Investment Management Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer KPMG International Human Genome Sciences, Inc.	Council on Foreign Relations American Academy of Arts and Sciences Trilateral Commission The Brookings Institution New American Foundation Peterson Institute for International Economics Hoover Institution Center for American Progress World Economic Forum Brussels European and Global Economic Laboratory The Asia Society Blum Center for Developing Economies MacArthur Foundation Pew Charitable Trusts Bilderberg Group Pacific Council on International Policy U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Holbrooke, Richard (Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan)	Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (Carter)	Perseus LLC Lehman Brothers Coca-Cola Company Credit Suisse (First Boston)	American Academy in Berlin National Endowment for Democracy Council on Foreign Relations Bilderberg Group Foreign Policy Association
	Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs (Clinton)	World Color Press, Inc. (Quebecor World, Inc.)	Global Business Council on HIV/ AIDS
	Special Envoy to Cyprus and the Balkans (Clinton)	Human Genome Sciences, Inc	American Academy for Arts and Sciences
	Ambassador to the United Nations (Clinton)	American International Group, Inc. (AIG)	International Institute for Strategic Studies
Danzig, Richard (informal adviser to the president)	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Carter)	Latham & Watkins National Semiconductor Corporation	The Asia Society
	Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics (Carter)	Human Genome Sciences, Inc	Center for New American Security
	Under Secretary of the Navy (Clinton)	Saffron Hill Ventures Nantero, Inc.	Center for Strategic and International Studies
	Secretary of the Navy (Clinton)		Partnership for Public Service
			Center for Naval Analysis
			Rockefeller Foundation
			The RAND Corporation
Podesta, John (informal adviser to the president)	Deputy Chief of Staff (Clinton)	Counselor to the President (Obama)	Podesta Associates, Inc.
	Chief of Staff (Clinton)		Equilibrium
	Assistant to the President, Staff Secretary and Senior Policy Adviser on Government Information, Privacy etc. (Clinton)		Capital Group LCC
			Center for American Progress
			Constitution Project
			League of Conservation Voters
			Center for New American Security

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