New Paradigms, Old Hierarchies? Problems and Possibilities of US Supremacy in a Networked World

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Abstract

As Obama took office at the beginning of 2009, several new figures attained important advisory positions in his administration. Anne-Marie Slaughter, former Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University, and now Director of Policy Planning in the State Department, is a prime example of the 'change' that has come to Washington. In recent years she has been part of a growing academic circle that views networks at the centre of international relations. At the same time, she has promoted the idea that the US can be 'the most connected country' in such a world. By taking a closer look into the discourse of US supremacy and the current state-of-the-art in the theory of transnational networks, this article reveals the divergence between wishful thinking and reality in Slaughter's position. By analysing her position and introducing three case studies, we conclude that the complexity of power relations in a world of networks makes any assumption of US supremacy highly problematic. Some might 'mirror' the beliefs and values of America (Open Society Institute); some might only be a 'prism' of various different voices (Al-Jazeera); and some might fall totally outside state control to form 'shadow' networks' (Khan Network). Ultimately, it is the belief in US exceptionalism that perpetuates the claim that the US has 'an edge' in such a world, with potentially problematic consequences.

Introduction

When Barack Obama addressed the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in April 2007, expectations were high. A new, more convincing approach to global problems, and above all to the trouble-spot of Iraq, was badly needed. Obama succeeded in connecting with public concerns, promising to bring to an end 'a foreign policy based on a flawed ideology' which fought 'a 21st century struggle with a 20th century mindset' (Obama, 2007). He effectively presented himself as having 'a new vision of American leadership and a new conception of our national security' with which it would be possible to 'turn the page and open a new chapter in American leadership'. Obama's fresh and articulate style was appealing, if nothing else because he had the credentials of being a staunch opponent of the Iraq war. But what would 'a new conception' of national security look like? The withdrawal from Iraq and the closure of the Guantanamo Bay prison were important steps but not sufficient on their own to indicate a new path in US foreign relations. Since Obama took office in January 2009, however, it is clear that new directions and agendas are being introduced.

Central to this is the work of Anne-Marie Slaughter, now Director of Policy Planning in Hilary Clinton's State Department and one of the influential voices in setting out a new vision on global affairs. In recent years she has been part of a growing academic circle claiming that 'networks constitute the new social morphology of our society' (Castells, 1996, p. 469). At the same time, Slaughter has like many other American scholars (and President Obama himself) promoted the idea of the US as the 'indispensable nation' which should - and eventually will - reassume the role of global leader. But is US supremacy (or empire) in a networked world really as self-evident and inevitable as suggested by Slaughter? Does it not 'blind us to the new forms of power emerging today'?(Hardt, 2006, p. 27). By examining the latest research on transnational networks and the implications for power relations and hierarchical order in

the global system, this question will be critically assessed. In doing so we move beyond the interminable feuds surrounding the 'US empire' debate, which have 'provoked a good deal of heat but very little light' (Cox, 2005, p. 21). The discussion on supremacy in a new global order is central to US foreign policy, reflecting as it does the prevalent thinking of influential figures such as Slaughter and the global reality that they wish to respond to.

The article first sketches Slaughter's vision of a networked world under US leadership, pointing out the contradictions that emerge if American supremacy is claimed in such a setting. It then examines in what way and to what degree a system of networks can be presented as an alternative paradigm for international relations. Power structures are here far from clear, resulting in considerations of order either not being discussed or being presented discursively (comparable to Joseph Nye's idea of 'soft power'). To illustrate this state of affairs more clearly, three case studies – the Open Society Institute, Al-Jazeera, and the Khan Network – will be presented as examples of networks with different relations to established forms of US power.

The Newest Adaptation of American Exceptionalism

In January 2009 Anne-Marie Slaughter accepted Hillary Clinton's offer to become Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the US State Department. Originally created by George Kennan in 1947, this body is intended 'to take a longer term, strategic view of global trends and frame recommendations for the Secretary of State to advance U.S. interests and American values' (US Department of State, n.d.). The Director of the policy planning staff reports directly to the Secretary of State, which effectively makes Slaughter one of the most influential advisors in the foreign policy apparatus of the Obama administration.

Slaughter has been typified by some critics as belonging to the trend of 'muscular liberalism' of recent years, whereby the assertiveness of the neoconservative vision of US power is being combined with a renewed commitment to international law (Smith, 2007). Yet Slaughter deserves more attention, since over the past few years she has been developing a vivid and insightful view on global affairs. Just a few days before her installation at the State Department in February 2009, Slaughter had an article in *Foreign Affairs* that laid out her standpoint on global politics:

> The twentieth-century world was, at least in terms of geopolitics, a billiard-ball world, described…as a system of self-contained states colliding with one another. The results of these collisions were determined by military and economic power... The emerging networked world of the twenty-first century, however, exists above the state, below the state, and through the state. In this world, the state with the most connections will be the central player, able to set the global agenda and unlock innovation and sustainable growth. Here, the United States has a clear and sustainable edge. (Slaughter, 2009, p. 95)

In *A New World Order* Slaughter proposed the formation of transnational problem-solving networks, made up of governmental officials, representatives of international organisations, and the NGO sector designed to bring together those most able to deal with a particular issue (for instance terrorism or environmental decline) (Slaughter 2004). She defines them as 'informal institutions linking actors across national boundaries and carrying on various aspects of global governance in new and informal ways' (Slaughter & Zaring, 2006, p. 215). This 'web' of transnational networks would shift decision-making powers from the realm of national governments to a realm of global governance (from the unitary state to the disaggregated state), improving information exchange, extending regulatory oversight, and bringing about increasing cooperation and convergence among state and non-state actors alike. This points to the all-inclusive but weak UN model being bypassed by a flexible, exclusive but accountable network model, its legitimacy being claimed from its outputs (solutions) and its correspondence with the reality of politics in the new millennium.

Crucial to this scenario is the role of the United States. Slaughter is in no way assuming that this process will lead to a levelling of power relations – quite the contrary. It will be the US, the 'central player in an integrated world' (Slaughter, 2009, p. 113), that creates and leads transnational networks, decides on who is in and who is out, and determines the agenda. Slaughter's views are a classic reformulation of US exceptionalism, according to one critic standing in the tradition of Winthrop's shining 'city on a hill' and Lincoln's idea of the US being 'the last, best hope for mankind' (Burman, 2008, p. 70). American values (freedom, democracy) are universally beneficial and justify the 'global purpose' of the United States as the supreme power (Slaughter, 2009, p. 113).[1] Policy adaptations in fields such as migration, education and international cooperation will 'sharpen the edge' of the US advantage over others.

Slaughter's work can be situated among recent International Relations thinking that sees transnational networks as representing a new phase of global politics. Nevertheless her understanding of global order remains traditional. The US is the most connected nation, but its power rests on a neo-Waltzian list of material resources: population, terroritory, economic capability, military strength, political stability (see Waltz 1979, p. 131). The result is that Slaughter sketches a new global environment based on networks but falls back on a Neorealist notion of power based on 'state capacities'. This perpectuates a focus on the attributes of actors and not the associations between actors, the crucial field of network analysis (Hafner-Burton et.al., 2009, p. 562). If power does not lie anymore exclusively with the nation state but with other non-state actors, what exactly is the relevance of having 'an edge' over other nations? And what does it matter who is at 'the top'?

Shifting the Focus: From the Nation State to Transnational Networks

The most fundamental reason for the search for new global hierarchies lies in the realisation that the relative power of the nation-state is in decline. Many observers agree that there is a 'growing gap between the space where the issues arise (global) and the space where the issues are managed (the nation state)' (Castells, 2008, p. 82; see also Bauman, 2002). The causes for this differ according to various voices, from the impact of technological advances (Herz 1957, 1968; Rosenau, 1999) to the creation of extra-territorial spaces outside nation-state regulation (Palan, 2003). Castells (2008) illustrates the general decline by describing four distinct crises that affect the nature of governance. Firstly, a crisis of efficiency emerges as global problems such as terrorism, climate change or financial meltdowns cannot be solved by the single nation state alone (see also Beck, 2000). Secondly, a crisis of legitimacy flows from a growing distrust in the effectiveness of national politicians. Thirdly, there is a crisis of identity as individuals start basing their autonomy on local or cultural grounds rather than on their political identities as citizens. Fourthly, there is a crisis of equity due to the lack of a just regulatory apparatus for the global economy. The reaction of many to these circumstances is to turn to non-state actors in search of remedies.

The modernist paradigm claimed that political communities ultimately want to achieve statehood in order to secure power and identity. In contrast, certain forms of 'statelessness' are now recognised as a significant source of power. Modern technologies allow these groups to 'organize themselves, seek financing, and plan and implement actions against their targets — almost always other states — without ever establishing a state of their own' (Grygiel, 2009). The modern epoch, portrayed in International Relations as the Westphalian system with at its core the principles of territory, sovereignty, and statehood, is now passing (Ruggie, 1993, p. 144), and 'the relationship of geographic space to identity and to security is in

question' (Maier, 2000, p. 816). Castells (2006, p. 88) emphasises that the use-value of the nation state form is declining: 'the state faces organizational problems because agencies that previously flourished via territoriality and authority vis-à-vis their societies cannot have the same structure, reward systems, and operational principles as agencies whose fundamental role is to find synergy with other agencies'.

What are the primary vectors in this post-territorial political landscape? Transnational networks will clearly play a key role. As Maier states, 'decisive resources will not be those of space but of networks and interaction, regardless of the area over which they take place' (2000, p. 825). Tracking the diffuseness of power in a global context now requires escaping the reductive confines of 'methodological nationalism' (Beck, 2002, p. 51). Back in 1993, commenting on the changing 'contours of the new post-postwar order,' Ruggie (1993, p. 144) complained that 'no shared vocabulary exists in the literature to depict change and continuity.' Since then a network-based paradigm has arisen, fuelled notably by the ground-breaking work of Manuell Castells and his analysis of the network state (Castells, 1996; 2005). The term 'network' has become a 'root metaphor' (Catlaw, 2008, p.3) from which 'a fundamental image of the world…may be derived' (Brown 1976, p. 170). Much of the attention in this field has been on the impact of communications systems (Castells, 2007; 2008) and the implications for national security in the wake of 9/11 and the activities of the danger network *par excellence*, Al Qaeda (Carter, 2001; Deibert and Stein, 2002).

In all definitions of networks (be they social or technological) there is a common understanding that these entities are composed of nodes and connections. Nodes can be individuals, groups, states or even things such as computers. They relate to each other due to 'the existence of shared principles, interests, and goals...to which the members subscribe in a deep way' (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001, p. 9). Networks appear to be decentralized,

'multiple, dispersed, and loosely connected' (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2005, p. 7). It is thus often difficult to determine a hierarchal structure or line of command, in contrast to traditional modes of social organization. According to Deibert and Stein (2002, p. 5), the only prerequisites for networks are 'a center or a "hub", financial support, and a secure environment for the "host".' Although networks (particularly the social kind) have long existed, the network form has become ever more pervasive in the era of globalization, closely linked with the revolution in information technology which provides the perfect infrastructure for their functioning (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001; Deibert and Stein, 2002; Castells, 2004). Castells (2004, p. 224) states that the 'network society' is now a reality, where the trade-off between increased flexibility and declining coordination leads to an 'unstable social system at an increasing level of complexity' (Castells, 1999, p. 6):

> The strength of networks is their flexibility, their decentralizing capacity, their variable geometry, adapting to new tasks and demands without destroying their basic organizational rules or changing their overarching goals. Nevertheless their fundamental weakness, throughout history, has been the difficulty of co-ordination towards a common objective, toward a focused purpose, that requires concentration of resources in space and time within large organizations, like armies, bureaucracies, large factories, vertically organized corporations. (Castells, 1999, p. 6)

In this context it is clear that Slaughter's understanding of networks is limited at best, opportunistic at worst. She appreciates their relevance but does not question the global order in which they operate. She therefore fails to meet the paradigm shift that requires 'reconceptualizing many social processes and institutions as expressions of networks, moving away from conceptual frameworks organized around the notion of centers and hierarchies' (Castells, 2000, p. 696). Slaughter chooses to ignore this problem by re-affirming US supremacy instead. This is not to say that alternative conceptions of order are easy to identify – the network model seems to portray more of a global chaos than a new world order.

The divergence of opinion on this point is illustrated best by the approaches of Diane Stone and Hardt and Negri. Trying to track the dimensions of public policy in a globalised world, Stone posits the view that many public goods – health, education, information – are increasingly being provided not by the nation-state but through non-linear policy processes contributed to by a conglomerate of networks of public and private, state and non-state actors (Stone, 2008a). Dissatisfied with the standard Liberal vocabulary for global governance (for instance global civil society, global public sphere, or global policy arena) and its focus on democratisation and accountability, Stone (2008a, p. 21) coins the term *global agora* 'to identify a growing global public space of fluid, dynamic, and intermeshed relations of politics, markets, culture, and society' that is, crucially, 'normatively neutral.' Networks in this setting 'can be thought of as creating spaces of assembly' (Stone, 2008a, p. 31) in a cacophonic universe:

> The concept of a 'global agora' makes no assumptions about the communicative, progressive, or deliberative character of institutional or network interactions. The dynamics for exclusion, seclusion, and division are just as likely. A 'global agora' encompasses a wider array of political relationships inspired by liberal democracy through to coercive arrangements of strong authoritarianism, as well as to patterns of disorder, randomness, and an absence of rational imposition of planning. The global policy agora may become an accessible participative domain for plural expressions of policy input. But it might not. (Stone, 2008a, p. 22)

Stone does not address to any real degree how power relations operate within the global agora but argues merely that there are 'continuing conflict[s] and power battles' over 'who gets to set global agendas' (Stone, 2008a, p. 26). Yet 'network participation is resource intensive,' making the agora 'more so exclusionary than participatory' and contrasting '"passive" citizens' with '"wholly active" citizens of transnational policy communities' (Stone, 2008, pp. 32-34). Since even 'passive' non-networked citizens are in the global agora, we are confronted with an all-encompassing system (meaning that there is no outside) that lacks an overarching hierarchy or general order. On closer examination, this idea seems to resemble

Castell's 'network society' - a ubiquitous yet unstable system. Both authors seem to conclude that the new organizational structure of networks does not favour the establishment of hierarchies but a more fluid, dynamic system in which a global order can hardly be proven.

The opposite view, implying that there actually is a global order but in a different form, has been promoted by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their magnum opus *Empire*. Attempting to identify new systems of domination, the authors sketch the vision of an abstract, post-modern global space in which national sovereignty has effectively come to an end. In its stead, 'sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single *logic* of rule' (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. xii, our emphasis). This system the authors name Empire, and describe further that it 'presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity' (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. xiv). Since 'no nation-state can today form the center of an imperialist project,' the authors point to an era of 'network power' where which nation-states, supranational institutions, and major capitalist corporations act as the 'primary elements, or nodes' (Hardt and Negri, 2004, pp. xiv, xii). There is no longer any clear inside and outside but only a 'smooth space of Empire' where 'there is no *place* of power – it is both everywhere and nowhere' (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 190). Whereas Bentham's panopticon provides the image of modern, sovereign power projection, the global reach of the free market is the appropriate diagram for the 'anti-architecture' of imperial power. Overall, the model introduced by Hardt and Negri is comparable to Stone's in terms of its all-inclusiveness, yet it differs greatly in the understanding of order in general.

This review of the seminal work of Castells, Stone, and Hardt and Negri indicates that the rising significance of networks is inextricably linked to the declining power of the nation

state. The networks approach does not dismiss the state as insignificant but strives to move away from the image of a 'billiard-ball world' in which states are presented as the only significant actors. According to these voices, the rules of the game have fundamentally changed. Slaughter does recognise how networks 'can be as malign and deadly as they can be productive and beneficial' (Slaughter, 2009, p. 112), but her argument of the US being a unitary actor at the centre of the networked world – and thus in a position of supremacy – clearly comes from an exceptionalist foundation. Three case studies will now be explored to illustrate the different functions and importance of networks in global politics, and the various ways in which they problematise the apparent supremacy of the unitary American nation-state.

Three Networks, Three Relations

Three types of network, each with its own relation with US hegemonic influence and power, are presented here: the 'mirror', the 'prism', and the 'shadow' network. *Mirror networks* on the whole reflect the discourse of values as propagated in US foreign policy (for instance democracy and human rights). This might involve transnational corporations in the pursuit of the free market as it might NGOs looking to foster democratic reform. The Open Society Institute, with its mission to promote democratic freedoms and human rights across Eurasia, fits this category. *Prism networks* are more complex formations which cannot be reduced to reflecting a dominant discourse. Refracted through the prism network, the light of a formerly hegemonic discourse is interpreted in different ways, both positively and negatively, revealing different meanings. Al-Jazeera is the perfect example of this. Its approach of contextual objectivity means that it supports the democratisation of Middle Eastern society while at the

same time being critical of US intervention in the region, placing the channel outside the dominant strategic narrative portrayed by Western media. Finally, the *shadow network* (Nordstrom 2000) illustrates the activities of Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadir Khan.[2] While the Pakistani state and military leadership proclaimed themselves to be acting as an ally of the United States, behind the scenes Khan was running a nuclear technology bazaar that actively undermined the non-proliferation regime that the US was attempting to uphold. The fact that Western intelligence is said to have known of his activities does not avoid the fact that the Khan network is a remarkable case of sub-state contracting in matters of national security, with serious consequences for US presumptions of authority and control.

The Open Society Institute: A Mirror Network

The Open Society Institute (OSI) is a private operating and grant-making foundation created by billionaire George Soros in 1993. The idea of an 'open society' derives from philosopher Karl Popper of whom George Soros was a 'devoted follower' during his time as a student at the LSE in the 1950s (Guilhot, 2007, p. 460). Soros (1998) appropriates the term of the open society 'to describe the positive aspects of democracy: the greatest degree of freedom compatible with social justice.' The most important characteristics are 'the rule of law; respect for human rights, minorities, minority opinions; the division of power; and a market economy' (Soros, 1998). The OSI serves as a kind of 'meta-NGO' to promote the idea of the open society, operating as a 'hub' for the Soros foundations network and associated autonomous groups and organizations in more than 60 countries. Affiliated institutions include the Central European University (CEU), the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). OSI is also involved in humanitarian initiatives such as fighting AIDS, Tuberculosis and landmines (Stone, 2008b). Although these projects are carried out on a global scale, OSI has been particularly influential

in Eastern European states moving away from their communist past. Stone, who has used OSI as a case study to investigate the origins, functions and actions of global policy networks, has described the organisation's considerable but diffuse power thus:

> The source of OSI power and influence does not lie in numbers; it does not have or seek electoral support, and it is not a social movement. Nor does it have the power and authority of public office; it is outside the international civil service of intergovernmental organizations and state bureaucracies… Instead, the sources of its power in policy lie in the appeal of its norms, knowledge and networks. That is, the norms of the open society and human rights bolstered by knowledge creation through think tanks, university and policy fellowships that is jointly disseminated and advocated through collective action of alliances, partnerships and networking (Stone, 2008b, p. 26-27) .

How does OSI relate to the United States as the (presumably) central actor in the global network society? Three aspects should be considered here. Firstly, it is clear that the core values of the open society, namely democracy, human rights and the free market, are considered to be American values. Although strictly speaking the concept of the open society calls for diversity, Soros (1998) proclaims that there are 'some universal values' which are non-negotiable. Soros specifically states that 'the principles of the open society are admirably put forth in the Declaration of Independence.' Secondly, it is worth considering the origins of the Institute, coming as it did out of the Cold War transnational networks established by the CIA-supported Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). In 1991 the CCF's European Foundation for Intellectual Cooperation merged with the OSI, effectively 'finding a second life in the most powerful representative of the "new philanthropy"' (Guilhot, 2006, p. 407). Lastly Soros has, similar to Slaughter, never questioned the predestination of the US as global leader, caliming that 'the world is looking to us for leadership' and that 'nothing much can be done in the way of international cooperation without the leadership… of the United States' (Soros, 2003).

In these circumstances it would seem that the US could easily 'connect' to OSI's principles and practices, since it operates as a mirror network reflecting the values, interests and discourses prevalent in the US. Yet the crucial issue at hand here is autonomy. Soros is far from being an unconditional supporter of the US. During the presidency of George W. Bush he compared US supremacy to a financial bubble and declared that the Bush doctrine 'stands in opposition to the principles of an open society, which recognize that people have different views and that nobody is in possession of the ultimate truth' (Soros 2003). Similarly, OSI has been engaged in various activities opposing the Iraq war, as for instance in financing studies that emphasised the disproportionately high number of civilian casualties caused by the conflict (Montague, 2008). The 'appropriation' of OSI as an additional channel for extending US power and influence is therefore problematic. The significance of Soros and the OSI network is exactly their role as independent actors outside of the gravitational pull of any nation-state or group of states. It is not just a question of the methods and goals of US foreign policy meeting the Institute's standards of cooperation and openness. OSI's credibility as an NGO is exactly built on its distance from US power, not its association with it. Autonomy is its *raison d'etre*, perhaps to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis when and where interests with state actors coincide, but never to be placed at the mercy of other decision-makers. For these reasons the increase in network power of OSI is directly linked to a ceding of power by the nation state.

Al-Jazeera: A Prism Network

The television / web channel Al-Jazeera represents the notion of networking on two accounts, as it belongs to the well-established category of television networks as well as to the new transnational networks explored here. The remarkable conjunction of old and new in Al-Jazeera is also reflected in the fact that the station represents a revolutionary force in orthodox

media as opposed to the Web 2.0 interactive media revolution that allows everyone to generate 'news'. In recent years, Al-Jazeera has captured an astonishing market share through its insistence on going against established hierarchies of power and dominant narratives, being the first channel to permanently break the global news monopoly that had been enjoyed by Western media for decades (Herman and McChesney, 1997). During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when it operated independently of the system of 'embedded' media with the Coalition, Al-Jazeera counted over 35 million viewers in the Arab world (Seib, 2005), and its entertainment and news programmes reach around 150 million Arab speakers worldwide (Seib, 2008). A study conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE found that 45 percent of all respondents watched Al-Jazeera, making it the channel with the greatest regional outreach (Stanley Foundation, 2006).

Al-Jazeera originated out of the failed BBC Arabic Television project (BBCATV) when the latter lost one of its most important financiers, the Saudi royal family. Using the finances of the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to hire former BBCATV employees, the Al-Jazeera news channel went on air in 1996. Since then its political independence has caused various Middle Eastern governments to periodically shut down its coverage when it proved critical of their conduct (Seib, 2005). As one commentator put it in the early 2000s:

> It was popularly held in the Arab world that Al-Jazeera was a pawn of the CIA, the American press regularly decried the station as a mouthpiece for terror, the Israelis complained about its alleged pro-Palestinian bias, while the Kuwaitis had shut Al-Jazeera's bureau for supporting Saddam Hussein (Miles, 2006, p. 219).

The Al-Jazeera effect' of satellite media channels offering differing perspectives on global affairs has transformed the presentation of global news. Al-Jazeera English started to broadcast in the DC area as from 1 July 2009, overcoming another significant symbolic territorial boundary in the process (Grim, 2009).

These protests have not prevented some from questioning to what extent Al-Jazeera offers an authentic alternative discourse, suggesting that it merely presents itself as the voice of the subaltern (Iskandar, 2005). Professionalisation has turned its alleged political authenticity into nothing more than a strategic marketing trick, even if it was a venue for dissent in the beginning. Nevertheless, this should not obscure why the network is both important and revolutionary from the perspective of US power. Al-Jareera's insistence on 'contextual objectivity' created a media/information space beyond direct US influence, in the process challenging the dominant US narrative on world events.[3] Al-Jazeera and other Middle Eastern channels such as Al-Arabiya are 'libertarian more than Islamist or Arabist in that they try to assess the entire spectrum of different views and offer different voices' (Stanley Foundation, 2006, p. 13). Al-Jazeera therefore reflects aspects of a US-led global order, but its openness to all points of view reduces the US to one voice among many, rejects the assumptions of US supremacy, and highlights how US interests will always be interpreted in different ways in different locations. Hence the term prism network.

This situation is complicated further by the wider relationship between Qatar and the United States. Since his assumption of power in 1995 Sheikh Hamad has openly positioned Qatar within the US sphere. With US forces moving out of Saudi Arabia, Qatar became the hub of the US military apparatus in the Persian Gulf region. Coalition Central Command for the Iraq invasion in 2003 was situated at As-Saliyah, and the enormous Al-Udeid US air base is located in the Qatari desert. Meanwhile the Sheikh has come under severe US pressure due to Al-Jazeera airing bin Laden statements, and the perception that the channel threatens and disrupts news management favourable to US interests led to 'accidental' air strikes on Al-Jazeera offices in both Baghdad and Kabul. One report even claimed that the network's central office in Qatar itself could be targeted (Miles, 2006, pp. 331-332). Nevertheless the

Sheikh has maintained Al-Jazeera as an autonomous operation, not as an extended tool of state power. The credibility that comes with such autonomy has proven a vital asset for both the OSI and Al-Jazeera networks. While the overwhelming capabilities of the US represented a centralisation of military power, Al-Jazeera represented exactly the decentralising forces at work in the global media landscape. And it has been the network power of the satellite tv channel that has proven to be the most far-reaching in its effects.

Khan: A Shadow Network

The third network is perhaps the most profound. The Khan Network was based around the activities of Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan from the late 1980s onwards (Levy and Scott-Clark, 2007; Armstrong and Trento, 2007). Khan learnt his skills during studies in Delft, West Berlin, and Leuven before becoming a researcher within the Urenco centrifuge facility in the Netherlands in 1972. Following the explosion of India's first nuclear device in May 1974, Khan offered his services to the Pakistani government to help develop a response. By 1975 Dutch intelligence noticed that he was photographing centrifuge components at Urenco, yet in November that year the CIA declared that Khan should be left alone. From this time onwards the message was that the CIA was keeping the situation under control by monitoring and tracking Khan's activities. Khan sensed he was being watched and departed for Pakistan, but continued cultivating his links at Urenco and elsewhere in Europe.

By the 1980s Pakistan had become a vital ally in the covert support for the Mujahideen's war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and Reagan's White House enforced a legal no-go area around Khan, despite intelligence that started to implicate hardware from China and finance from Saudi Arabia. When a prosecution *in absentia* made it to the Dutch courts the CIA again stated that Khan should be left alone. By the late 1980s the Khan network takes on a different

meaning. With a Pakistani bomb now developed, Khan turned away from gathering materials via his European supply chain and himself looked to find outlets for his technology abroad. By the mid-1990s, while the CIA set up front companies to infiltrate Khan's procurement programme, deals were already being made with North Korea to exchange uranium enrichment technology for missile launch systems, and trading similar technology with Iran. The apotheosis of this expansion comes in 2000-2001 when it emerges that the Pakistani charity, Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN), founded by two prominent nuclear scientists, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Chaudiri Abdul Majeed, was being used to offer nuclear weapons technology to Al Qaeda, including meetings with bin Laden and Al Zawahiri in August 2001 (Tenet, 2007, pp. 262-263).

What is the significance of Khan and his shadow network? Three signatories of the Non Proliferation Treaty – Iran, Libya, and North Korea – benefited from Khan's willingness to trade nuclear technologies, breaking international law in the process. Contacts were further extended to Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Dual-use components were obtained with relative ease just like any other traded product. Khan was clearly acting with the full knowledge of successive Pakistani governments and military chiefs of staff, despite claims to the contrary (Weiss, 2005). Meanwhile there was the continuous assumption of omnipotence on the part of US and other Western intelligence services, whereby action was avoided purely because of Pakistan's strategic value, and a constant monitoring of Khan's activities somehow substituted for addressing what was a flagrant undermining of the NPT regime over a period of three decades.[4] Yet the significance of this example goes further. Writing in March 2009 following the end of Khan's house arrest, Daryl Kimball claims that 'the release of Khan and the tepid U.S. response reinforce the perception, built up over decades of dealings with Pakistan and its rival, India, that U.S. nuclear proliferation concerns will always take a back

seat to other geostrategic and economic interests.' But strategy here assumes an orchestrator (the USA) and a clear set of goals. Instead we are faced not only with a massive ongoing set of contradictions, but also the prime case for illustrating how a network, the limits and motivations of which are still being pieced together, has completely escaped a dominant US geostrategic narrative. Khan and his network remained out of reach of US jurisdiction both literally and figuratively, protected as he is by Pakistani political and military elites. It would take the most mistaken arrogance of power to place the Khan network within any conception of US empire.

Conclusion

Anne-Marie Slaughter's appointment as Director of Policy Planning at the Department of State indicated the potential for new directions for US foreign policy under President Obama. Her understanding of a networked world no longer dominated by sovereign nation states appeared to break new ground. Yet her insistence on US supremacy and ability to appropriate an increasing web of networks for its own purposes instead illustrates the shortcomings of her world-view. By examining the qualities and significance of networks in international politics, it is hard to conclude as she does that the 'twenty-first century looks increasingly like another American century' (Slaughter 2009, p. 100). Slaughter's version of American exceptionalism grates severely against the views of other theorists who identify the anti-hierarchical, random nature of politics and order in a networked world. For Castells, Stone, and Hardt and Negri, for instance, it is apparent that no state today can exercise primacy, be it unilaterally or multilaterally. Slaughter's 'plug in and play' politics ignores the realities of the networked world.

The three case studies illustrate in various ways the awkward fit between non-state networks and (US) state power. A 'mirror' network such as the Open Society Institute might work in the interest of a state by reflecting its discourse and promoting its values, but this will be more coincidence than design. OSI advocates human rights because of the inherent value that they represent, not because they are part of the US foreign policy platform. What is more, OSI is not burdened (and has no wish to be burdened) by the kinds of difficult choices and compromises which US policy faces when human rights remain the ultimate objective but obstruct immediate strategic goals, as has occured in US support for Israel or Uzbekistan. As a result this network deliberately escapes appropriation even if the goals remain similar.

Al-Jazeera operates in a comparable way. Dedicated to 'contextual objectivity,' the satellite tv channel projects a multi-sided view of events that gives the US a voice as no more than one among many. The Emir of Qatar is like Soros in favour of a US-led world order and broadly supports the application of US power to maintain it, but neither figure tolerates either the misuse of that power or the demand that they put their resources at its disposal. But whereas the mission of the OSI network is clear, Al-Jazeera's approach instead triggers a variety of critical responses depending on what is at stake with each news item. Thus Al-Jazeera is a 'prism network' rather than a mirror, not reflecting the image of US power but instead refracting it out of a Western-dominated media context and presenting it for audience reception in different politicla and cultural contexts.

Lastly there is the 'shadow network' of Abdul Khan, impossible to appropriate and a direct challenge to the normative non-proliferation interests of the US. The Khan network's full use of the borderless ethic of transnational capitalism graphically exposed the presumptious notion that trade in nuclear-related dual-use technology could be controlled. Khan's protection by Pakistani elites also illustrates the limitations to US influence. As with OSI and

Al-Jazeera, this is a case of a nominal ally refusing to cooperate according to the demand that they fit within the bounds of a US-led ideological system. All three case studies are exactly associated with US allies (Soros, Qatar, and Pakistan). Their importance comes partly from their determination to maintain autonomy of action outside of any American dictat. It also comes more significantly from the nature of the network that they represent, whether that be the NGO operating in between inter-state structures (OSI), the satellite/web channel spreading news and information that goes against the norms of Western narratives, or the informal business/security network that undermined the presumptions of a stable US-led state system. Both Al-Jazeera and Khan epitomise 'network power' whereby "valued information and scarce resources are transferred from one actor to another" outside of any dominant state hierarchy (Knoke, 1990, p. 9). The United States may well be the most connected nation at the centre of all forms of social, economic, political, and knowledge networks, but the case studies point out that the network form is not so easily appropriated for the ends of state power – even those networks of alleged allies.

Notes

[1] In response to Slaughter's standpoint, Michael Barnett remarked that because Americans are 'infused with the hubris of exceptionalism' they are 'psychologically not capable of having this moment of honesty' (*International Herald Tribune*, 23 May 2007). Rieff (2008, p. 108) adds that 'normalcy – the idea that the United States is a nation like any other, with its strengths and weaknesses, virtues and defects… – does not stand much chance of appealing to many Americans, left or right.' As Slaughter rejected accusations of exceptionalism, Rieff (2008, p. 108) noted further that 'her secular grafting of the old-time progress narrative onto the actual history of the United States only works so long as she touts a self-loving vision of the political and moral essence of the country.' Lee Marsden goes further by arguing that exceptionalism is deeply grounded in religious sentiments and therefore to a certain extent even inherent in America's identity (Marsden, 2008).

[1] Nordstrom originally coined this term to refer to international groups which provide public goods outside of the authority of the state, thereby building up there own local and regional legitimacy (for instance mafias or insurgent groups).

[1] On the difficulties for US public diplomacy to convey its message, see for instance Marc Lynch (2003, p. 87) who describes that the appearance of US officials 'all too often… only confirms the viewer's worst stereotypes.' Likewise Cherribi (2009) uses the example of Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes's appearance on Al-Jazeera in 2005 to show that even a very eloquent performance might not lead to the expected (and desired) result.

[1] See the tracking of the Khan network as chronicled at http://www.historycommons.org/project.jsp?project=aq_khan_nuclear_network

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