

Hentz, James J., ed. *Obligation of Empire: United States' Grand Strategy For A New Century*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

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[See table of contents](#)

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explicitly with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Andjelic perhaps misses out in his passing discussion of the impact of a provincial *illiterati*. The cohering role of a cosmopolitan urban elite is its understated corollary, but neither is explored in sufficient depth to make them more than awkward asides. None of these criticisms is truly the point. Rather, the role of future elites is, and they are only explored in a very narrow window, their trajectories artificially bracketed into a pre-war historical box. Where Andjelic's overall discussion of events addresses, quite rightly, the economic and political elements of collapse, it lacks a narrative backbone that logically extends into the war years and beyond. For students of Bosnian history, this book will be an invaluable reference. For those interested in transitional politics, it is not the last word on the subject.

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Hentz, James J., ed. *Obligation of Empire: United States' Grand Strategy For A New Century*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

As an insightful guide for US foreign policy analysis, *Obligation of Empire* takes on the daunting challenge of measuring proposed grand strategy options for the US in the context of its current hegemonic status. More than mere foreign policy, grand strategy is considered here to reflect the strategy a nation adopts for employing all of its military, economic, financial, social, and cultural resources in pursuit of an established set of objectives abroad. A justification for each of the competing options is artfully pursued using a mix of US foreign policy tradition, world history, and international relations theory. While discourse on the subject has generated a wide array of ideas, this text correctly focuses on the four primary grand strategy options that are at the center of the current debate on this issue.

Obligation of Empire offers a creative perspective for assessing these differing policy approaches, and understanding this perspective is made easy by its simple-to-follow organization. In Part One, a detailed understanding of each of the four strategy options is provided. Neo-Isolationism endorses a significant degree of withdrawal from active engagement in World affairs; selective engagement suggests that the US should only involve itself in situations and endeavors of strategic interest; cooperative security favors active participation in the shaping of world affairs through multilateral cooperation with other great powers; and primacy urges the US to capitalize on its current hegemonic power and shape the world to its advantage, unilaterally if deemed necessary. In Part Two of the book, the focus shifts to considering five areas of the world of greater strategic impor-

tance for the US (the Middle East, Southern Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia). American interests in these regions are discussed separately. A suitable approach for the US in each part is determined by examining its regional interests and its historical relationship to the respective countries of the area. The overall conclusion does not extend itself to justifying the merits of one strategy over the others, however, but simply provides an assessment of the practicality of these options through a regional lense.

The book serves as a useful contribution to both American foreign policy and international relations studies. With respect to the latter, the authors ensure that proper attention is given to explaining the theoretical foundations of the options presented in order to broaden the readers' understanding of the world perspective each is premised on, and the relevance of that perspective to different regional realities. The authors demonstrate a strong command of their respective schools of thought. Participation by reputable academics and experienced policy makers alike, greatly adds to the credibility of the points of view put forward.

There are a number of strengths to this book. To begin with, it adopts a constructive approach to its analyses by first providing balanced and theoretically grounded arguments on the strengths of the four examined strategies before assessing the viability of these strengths against the practical realities of the different regions studied. Secondly, the authors wonderfully enrich their arguments by legitimizing them in US foreign policy tradition, American ideals, and world history.

Another strength is that the scope of understanding of the subject matter is made more qualified by a concerted effort to assess the projected international implications of each strategy against scenarios of likely foreign reaction. This is an aspect that is continuously addressed in the book and I am glad to see that it is. Many would argue that 9/11 serves as an example of repercussions that have resulted from a long history of US engagement and narrow-minded policy-making practices that have failed to give sufficient attention to negative world reaction and the dangers it poses for America.

While the quality of the study is impressive, I did nevertheless identify gaps that in my opinion take away from the overall comprehensiveness of the analyses. First, though it adopts a broader definition of grand strategy that includes such elements as democratic institution-building and economic strength as both power resources and policy objectives, these elements are under-emphasized in the text. The emphasis instead appears to be mainly on military predominance as the primary factor in determining strategy; both as a tool to wield power and as an objective in itself. If, for example, more attention were paid to economic interests, the strength and at the same time increasingly global interdependence of the US economy would be given its deserved weight as a necessary factor in determining opportunities and optimal degrees of engagement for the US.

And this under-emphasis also extends to the relevance of both US public opinion and world pressure as historically significant influences on US foreign policy. For the most part, the book misses how domestic political forces, the demands of the international community, and US public opinion have historically played a strong hand in setting the parameters that have confined and thus helped mold US foreign policy approaches. World War Two and American relations with countries such as South Korea or Israel serve as important examples of this influence.

Lastly, the authors could have put greater effort into reconciling their arguments against the strengths of the other points of view in the book. For instance, the argument in favor of neo-isolationism would surely be more balanced if it was somehow shown to overcome or make up for what appears to be a theoretical clash between its own doctrine and one of the fundamental principles of the American Creed: that the US serves as a beacon, and thus has a duty to fight for the promotion of democratic liberty and free-market prosperity in the world – one of the main points used by cooperative security and primacy proponents for justifying active US involvement in world affairs. Many similar instances can be found throughout the text where the authors in their arguments fail to rectify discrepancies such as these.

This book comes to us during a perplexing moment in US history. As the Cold War drifts farther and farther behind us, America for over a decade now has found itself in the uncharted waters of uncontested and unparalleled strength in the world. With the occurrence of 9/11, the US and international political environments have never been more welcoming and wanting of quality ideas that can contribute toward charting a more effective American foreign policy approach in the years ahead. In light of this, the constructiveness and insight of this book deserves to be given a respectable place in this debate because it succeeds in broadening the scope of understanding by offering a regional perspective through which more practical approaches can be identified. Readers interested in international affairs will surely find this book of quality substance.

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