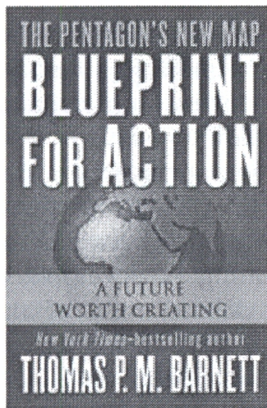
indecision and delay. The place for political debate is in politics. Presidents need to be able to select their advisors and design a command-and-control system that works. They can then be judged by voters and historians on the decisions that only the president can make.

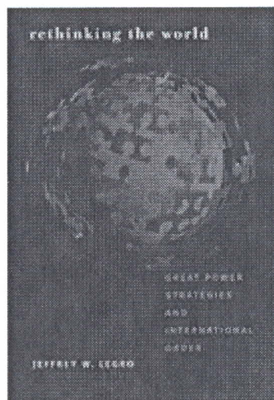
Are Great-Power Politics Extinct?
by Justin Logan

Justin Logan (jlogan@cato.org) is a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute.

Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004); 435 pp., $26.95, paper $16; and *Blueprint for Action: A Future Worth Creating* (New York: Putnam's, 2005). 440 pp., $26.95.

Jeffrey W. Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). 253 pp., $39.95.





The past decade has seen a sustained assault on traditional theories of international politics. Political realism, practiced by Metternich and Kennan and refined by Morgenthau and Waltz, has been the victim of most of the attacks. By 2000, the criticism of realism had become so frequent and widespread that Waltz replied to the chorus of critics in the pages of *International Security*.[1]

During the Clinton years, much of the battle was fought between liberal institutionalists and realists. Clinton acolytes claimed that the cynicism and pessimism of realism could be largely overcome by rallying international cooperation around American power after the end of the Cold War. Indeed,

[1] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security*, Summer 2000.

then-national security adviser Anthony Lake announced that the successor to containment, the organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy for more than forty years, should be a doctrine of "enlargement—enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies." In the Clinton administration's vision, international institutions would be a primary tool for enlargement.

Lake's enlargement speech and the Clinton administration's acute interest in the affairs of countries ranging from Haiti to Bosnia to Kosovo were clear indications that the advancement of American values—even in the absence of any discernable American security interests—had taken new priority in the crafting of U.S. foreign policy. As George W. Bush assumed the presidency, many observers of international affairs suspected that moralism in foreign policy would once again be deemphasized, at least in practice, and that U.S. security policy would focus on containing and/or attempting to shape the rise of potential peer competitors—namely, China.

However, after 9/11, democratizing the Middle East became the centerpiece of U.S. security policy. President Bush's decision to invade Iraq—which was opposed by the vast majority of international relations academics[2]—signaled to a significant degree the president's embrace of a relatively esoteric theory of international politics advanced by a small group of intellectuals closely associated with Paul Wolfowitz. These scholars held that autocracy in the Middle East was a threat to American interests, that containment in Iraq had been a failure, and that the triumph of democratic values in that region would advance the U.S. national interest.

Realism and mainstream liberal institutionalism were swept aside, and the new approach was applied to Iraq. As the plausible realist arguments for the war were stripped away (potential collaboration between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, or the belief that Iraq was nearing the development of a nuclear arsenal), the country was forced into a debate over the only remaining argument—that transforming Iraq was a vital U.S. interest, central to the new war against Islamist terrorism. A variety of scholars spoke up on behalf of the new course of policy.

Among them was Thomas Barnett, formerly a professor at the U.S. Naval War College and now a corporate consultant and *Esquire* foreign affairs writer. Barnett exploded onto the scene in 2004 with his widely read *The Pentagon's New Map*, which held that in the twenty-first century, disconnectedness from the global economy is dangerous. Barnett, who has given numerous briefings to the Pentagon, divides the countries of the world into two categories: the "functioning Core" and the "non-integrating Gap."[3] Core countries are "actively

[2] Susan Peterson, Michael J. Tierney, and Daniel Maliniak, "Inside the Ivory Tower," *Foreign Policy*, November 2005, p. 58.

[3] In some ways, Barnett's analogy resembles the core-periphery model of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis. See, e.g., Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

integrating their economies into a global economy," whereas Gap countries are "failing to integrate themselves into that larger community and all the rule sets it generates." Barnett believes that the ties of globalization are so strong that great-power politics have been rendered obsolete: by his own acknowledgment, he is an economic determinist, and "darned proud to be one."

Some might argue that the lines of Barnett's map are drawn improperly: he places Ukraine, Russia, and China in the Core, and Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey in the Gap. It might, for example, seem curious that Saudi Arabia is not seen as integrated into the global economy, whereas China is seen as a member of the Core willing to integrate itself into security rule-sets as defined by American-led globalization.

Barnett argues that 9/11 was "an amazing gift—as twisted and cruel as that sounds" because it allowed us to recognize that focusing on potential great-power conflict is a destructive distraction from the Core's calling: to bring Gap countries into the Core. This process, Barnett argues, must generate "far more hope than fear, far more love than hatred, and—most important—far more understanding than pain." Connecting Gap countries to the Core will involve unprecedented great power cooperation, in Barnett's mind, and must start in the Middle East.

Barnett's views on Al Qaeda and the nature of Islamic radicalism are original, if a bit confused. The problem of Islamic radicalism, like every other problem Barnett explores, is rooted in disconnectedness. For instance, the object of the 9/11 attacks was "simply the promotion of disconnectedness." At times, however, the treatment and the ideas get a bit jumbled. The Iraq War, for example, was a proper response to the "system perturbation" of 9/11 because the Core needed to work at "disconnecting the Great Disconnector [Saddam Hussein] from the Gulf's security scene." Given that the Gulf security scene is disconnected to begin with, disconnecting the Great Disconnector from the disconnected reads a bit confusingly.

In fact, Al Qaeda is remarkably connected. Its global propaganda wing deftly utilizes that most connected of technologies, the internet, and Al Qaeda's interpretation of international politics has gained far more ground in the Muslim world than has the United States'.[4] As Richard Holbrooke presciently wondered in 2001, "How can a man in a cave out-communicate the world's leading communications society?"[5] Not through disconnectedness. Al Qaeda is not so much at war with connectedness as it is attempting to coopt connectivity for its own ends.

Al Qaeda gets a more thorough exploration in *Blueprint*, but there again the descriptions are unconvincing and at times contradictory. We learn

[4] For evidence on this claim, see "Arab Attitudes towards Social and Political Issues, Foreign Policy and the Media," a public opinion poll conducted jointly by Prof. Shibley Telhami and Zogby International, at www.bsos.umd.edu.

[5] Richard C. Holbrooke, "Get the Message Out," *Washington Post*, Oct. 28, 2001.

that "[t]here is no policy the United States can adopt, change, or cease" that would help to unravel support for Al Qaeda. At the same time, "significant changes in [U.S.] policies might assuage the anger of these discontented Muslims the world over." All this, though, is moot for Barnett—to him, the war on terror is really not much more than the means by which we can pursue the real end: ending disconnectedness. "[I]f [bin Laden and Zarqawi] did not exist, we would have to create them, and indeed, we will have to replace them whenever they are caught or killed."

In order to connect the Gap, small regime-changing wars will need to be fought, and the Core will have to launch ambitious, long-term nation-building missions in the Gap. Accordingly, Barnett advocates a wholesale transformation of the U.S. military into a war-fighting body (the "Leviathan" force) and a nation-building corps (the "SysAdmin" force) that will allow the United States to engage in multiple operations around the world simultaneously. Defense budget watchers may wonder how even with this substantial restructuring and the emphasis on heavily personnel-intensive nation-building operations, "the defense budget's top line will remain relatively flat, growing only with inflation." No detailed explanation of this massive reorganization of the world's biggest bureaucracy appears in either *New Map* or *Blueprint*.

Blueprint offers a restatement of the Core-Gap dichotomy and an application to current policy issues. *Blueprint* promised to present a grand strategy for pursuing Barnett's admirable goals: "universal inclusiveness and global peace." In fact, "we cannot be safe until everyone has been invited into global economy [sic] in a deeply integrating manner that reflects not just order but likewise justice." Unfortunately, however, Barnett's second book delivers more repetition of his central themes than expansion or, more importantly, a sufficient defense of them.

Blueprint is, like *Map*, a deeply confused book. It is rife with internal contradiction, unsupported claims, and a dangerous idealism. Barnett ignores the work of a wide swath of international relations scholarship, presenting his ideas as a grand unified theory of international politics without confronting or even acknowledging the existence of other theories.

Oddly, although Barnett warns early on in *Blueprint* that realists in particular should view the book as a "further repudiation of all they hold dear," he refuses throughout the book to deal in any manner with the most fundamental aspects of realist theory, which fly in the face of Barnett's iconoclasm. Instead, the term realism is presented in almost every instance in "ironic quotes."

To take one example, realists will be surprised to learn that Barnett either (a) does not believe that all great powers aspire to be hegemons, or (b) believes that an existing hegemon will accommodate a peer competitor's rise. Either of these two propositions would be highly controversial, but Barnett does not deign to explain his reasoning. Nor does he convince the reader that the Core powers can join in perpetual cooperation. Instead, he

proceeds to claim that "with the addition of each New Core power to the inner halls of great-power membership, it's not the case that each seat there is somehow devalued but rather that the reach of the entire group is commensurately extended."

Here, as in several other instances, it is not clear whether Barnett is being descriptive or prescriptive. Is he arguing—as a matter of fact—that relative shifts in the balance of power do not matter? Or is he arguing that nation-states should rise above the competition for power and learn to cooperate in order to shrink the Gap? This distinction is frequently unclear, and leads to some confusion in attempting to interpret the arguments Barnett offers.

Indeed, most security experts would agree that it is the accretion of relative power that countries are concerned with; that shifts in the balance of power are zero-sum; and that even if absolute power is growing for all states, if one state's power is growing more quickly than the others', eventually that state will challenge or overtake the others.[6] If Barnett believes that this is incorrect, he should explain why. If he is arguing that this state of affairs is what obtains today, but should not, he should be clear that he is arguing for an appropriate policy shift. But Barnett seems to find these recognized principles unworthy of response.

Moving to specific policy debates, Barnett starts with a defense of the Iraq War that is wholly unpersuasive. It opens with the now-obligatory critique of the management of the war's aftermath, but his preferred course of action is detached from reality. In Barnett's view, the right way to go would have gotten China, Russia, and India to each deploy 50,000 troops each in order to help stabilize Iraq. Russian president Vladimir Putin made his views on potential operations in Iraq clear when he responded as follows to a reporter's question about the United States' May 2003 request for troops: "In answer to the proposal that Russian troops take part in operations in Iraq, you just want to say, 'Right, like we're that stupid.'"[7]

The deployment of Russians and Chinese, in particular, would have sent a message to the insurgents, Barnett believes:

> This is not just the Americans. This is not just the West that might pull out if you give it a good bloody nose or execute some hostages. This is a force both Occidental and Oriental, both West and East, and it's full of people who aren't squeamish about killing troublemakers to prevent an uprising.

Given Russia's counterproductive wars in Chechnya and China's fumbling in Xinjiang, it is unclear what Barnett thinks these countries could offer other than personnel, which they have staunchly refused to contribute. Regardless, all of this is rather thin gruel when served now, with the United States bogged down

[6] For a concise explanation of this concept, see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), pp. 34–36.

[7] Michele A. Berdy, "Linguistic Highlights of the Putin Presidency," *Moscow Times*, May 14, 2004, at Johnson's Russia List.

in Iraq, and with the Chinese and Russians busily cooperating to balance against U.S. influence in Central Asia.

The profound and vocal disagreement between great powers over the Iraq war does a good deal to unravel Barnett's proposition that the Core will work together to forcibly connect the Gap. Not to worry, though: "In the end, it was almost impossible for the Iraq occupation to go too badly, because the worse it became, the more it transformed the region." Barnett argues that the catastrophic success in Iraq has yielded other dividends around the world, which brings us to the closest thing to an actual blueprint for action that Barnett's second book offers. Barnett advances a three-plank policy platform providing his answers to three of the stickiest problems for U.S. foreign policy today: the dispute between China and Taiwan and the nuclear ambitions of both Iran and North Korea.

Barnett's solution to the Taiwan issue is simple: immediately abandon Taiwan. Barnett thinks the American stance toward Taiwan is a dangerous bluff. He argues that, in any case, the United States would back down in a cross-Strait crisis, "leaving Taipei severely embarrassed and Beijing feeling excessively emboldened." To advocate abandoning Taiwan assumes away one of the most likely sources of great-power conflict in the twenty-first century, tautologically shoring up Barnett's case that great-power conflict is extinct. By preemptively dropping any pretense of a defense commitment to Taiwan, Barnett argues, we can "lock in China at today's prices," getting China to opt in to our "rule sets" that will govern how we connect the Gap.

This optimistic vision is rattled just a few pages later by the admission that during a war game conducted by Barnett's consulting firm, the gamers concluded that "China's continuing economic rise will give it more than enough diplomatic muscle to counter any American attempts to impose its will on the international security order, unless the United States itself were to start a war with China." Barring such an American provocation, why would China accede to American-led rule-sets, if it possesses enough weight to oppose and obstruct U.S. policy? If we look to current events for evidence that Barnett's ideas regarding great power cooperation are right, we don't find much.

China's reunification leads to Barnett's second initiative: North Korea. Barnett asserts that China and the United States share the same interest in changing the regime of Kim Jong Il. This claim defies the ample evidence that China fears a pro-Western, unified Korea on its border. Barnett nonetheless believes that the United States can get China to join it in achieving regime change in Pyongyang.

This is where the benefits wrought by the disorder in Iraq come into play: when the United States joins with China and the South Koreans (they've decided to come along, too) to forcibly evict Kim from the North, "it probably won't have to come to full-blown war, simply because the neocons have given the United States such a scary reputation right now that we can probably stare down the Dear Leader."

In so hoping, Barnett banks on the deterrent value of the fact that Washington has demonstrated that it is "willing to wage war with almost no concern for the resulting VIP body count, the subsequently incompetent occupation, or the inevitable political uproar back home. I say, when we've got it, flaunt it." But this would be a risky gambit indeed for the South Koreans: they would be the ones absorbing the roughly 500,000 artillery shells that Pyongyang would rain on Seoul during the first hour of a war.

And what about postconflict operations in North Korea? That country, with a population of roughly 23 million, would presumably be in a shambles, requiring a massive stabilization and reconstruction mission. Here again, not to worry: South Korea and China will provide the bulk of the reconstruction forces, and Japan will chip in for humanitarian aid.

That leaves the Iran issue. Barnett concludes that Iran's acquisition of a nuclear arsenal is inevitable—the United States has no workable strategy that could prevent it from happening. (Why the same logic of intimidation that Barnett applies to regime changing North Korea wouldn't apply here as well is undetermined.) Thus, we should offer Iran a grand bargain: allow Iran to get the bomb and full diplomatic recognition in exchange for Iranian support for both the peace process in Israel/Palestine and stability in Iraq, as well as full diplomatic recognition of Israel.

One might wonder, however: if a nuclear Iran is a foregone conclusion, what leverage would the United States or Israel have in order to extract such deep concessions as Barnett proposes? If a nuclear Iran is indeed inevitable, the Iranian regime would likely know this as well, making it unlikely that Iran would proffer the concessions Barnett envisions.

Barnett's approach to the Iran issue—and the Taiwan and North Korea issues—are quite radical. Such propositions should raise a few eyebrows and require substantial defense against the legion of counterarguments. But Barnett covers each issue in his typical slam-dunk, just-so style—each of these enormously complex problems garners less than ten pages of coverage. Each policy argument reads more as a declaration, to be embraced by virtue of the source, rather than based on any evidence or reasoning.

Beyond his glib treatment of such serious matters, Barnett's work suffers from a fundamental error. At the center is Barnett's economic determinism and his denial that great-power politics will endure even in an age of globalization. Midway through *Blueprint*, Barnett has gotten into deep trouble when he admits that since America has the greatest concentration of national power in the world, "it's logical that America's sense of strategic priorities will guide the sequencing of Gap shrinkage over the years."

Here, Barnett has given the game away. He has acknowledged that the United States is currently the dominant force in the international system, and as a result has the luxury of being able to pursue its own sense of strategic priorities with relative impunity. Why, though, wouldn't some other power

prefer to be in charge? Should we really expect deference to America's sense of strategic priorities on the part of other powers? Does the historical record over, say, the past hundred years, lead us to believe that we should?

Evidently, Barnett believes that we can indeed expect such bandwagoning indefinitely. Accordingly, "all of the military spending inside the Core that is directed at defending powers there against one another . . . is fundamentally money spent to no purpose." But if the United States were to reallocate a huge chunk of its spending on advanced weapons systems to nation-building forces, as Barnett proposes, is there any doubt that China would, over time, use that opportunity to surpass America's military dominance, removing the constraint of American power from China's own sense of strategic priorities?

The core of Barnett's argument is ultimately hollow. For his theory to have either prescriptive or descriptive value, Barnett would have to succeed in convincing policy elites in all governments that great-power conflict is futile, and that cooperating to shrink the Gap should be the animating principle of each country's foreign policy. If one state opted out of this great power pacifism regime, that state would aggrandize itself, either leading other states to rearm, or else achieving hegemony in the international system. Each state would have every reason to cheat.

At times Barnett argues that there is a sort of Hegelian historical inevitability of globalization's triumph over international politics. At one point, he warns that "I don't speak of possibilities here but inevitabilities. The work will eventually be done, if not by our leadership, then by the leadership of others." Perhaps, but stating it doesn't prove the point.

If these ideas sound familiar, it is because they are so similar to those in Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion* (1911), which famously argued that war among the great European powers was futile, because national economies were inextricably tied together, rendering an attack on another sovereign deleterious to the attacker. Angell made much the same arguments as Barnett, but his ideas were discredited by the summer of 1914. Barnett's arguments turn on the same dubious axis as did Angell's. Unless one is prepared to believe that there are not and will not be grievances among great powers, some means for adjudicating those grievances is required. The acknowledgment that interstate conflict was an inherent attribute of the international system led Hans Morgenthau to acknowledge in 1948 that "[t]here can be no permanent international peace without a state coextensive with the confines of the political world."[8] And unless we are to believe that a world state is forthcoming, interstate grievances and disputes over power will continue to be resolved through international politics—or, ultimately, by war.

Barnett does deserve credit for doggedly pointing out the economic costs of war, and emphasizing just how destructive potential great-power

[8] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1973), p. 489.

conflict in the twenty-first century would be. Unfortunately, his theory's reliance on economic determinism and utopian post-history will ultimately cause it to fall flat—though hopefully less spectacularly than Angell's.

In contrast to Barnett, Jeffrey Legro, an associate professor of politics at the University of Virginia, offers rigorous, thoroughly researched, and fresh insights into the conduct of foreign affairs: specifically, the role of ideas in foreign policymaking. In *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*, Legro seeks not to assault realism or balance-of-power theory, but rather to point out that the range of foreign policy strategies available to governments is limited by the bounds of collective national ideas about how to best pursue the national interest. Legro goes further, attempting to flesh out a theory as to how old orthodoxies are overthrown and how new ones take root. He explains that in order for a new orthodoxy to entrench itself, it must emerge after a shock and then fend off competing explanations for the policy failure that led to the shock.

Legro does not advance a constructivist argument: he is not claiming that ideas are the prime factor driving foreign policy considerations. Rather, he believes that the role of ideas as "ideational constraints" has been overlooked in the study of foreign policymaking. To this end, Legro offers case studies of several instances of continuity and change in foreign policy ideas in order to explain "how ideas come together in particular and regular ways with other factors (e.g., power, domestic coalition pressure) to influence continuity or change in foreign policy." He examines both the United States and Germany after the world wars; Japan in the middle-to-late nineteenth century; and the Soviet Union's shift to a less confrontational policy at the end of its life.

Legro begins by wondering why shocks to a state—most often, wars—do not always precipitate changes in accepted views on foreign policy. What in particular about certain shocks causes change, whereas other shocks do not? After assessing the cases, Legro concludes that the determining factor for shocks is the event's "relationship to preexisting ideas and the consequences of experienced events." He designs a matrix of ideas and consequences: whether certain policies are (a) prescribed by ideas or (b) proscribed by them, juxtaposed against whether the consequences yield (a) success, or (b) failure. Legro argues that the most likely precipitants of change are occasions in which a course of policy is prescribed by the existing orthodoxy, yet yields a failure, leading to an intellectual consensus to "Do Something!"

Legro's analysis of the United States after each of the world wars substantiates this view. In Legro's telling, Woodrow Wilson's efforts to bring the United States into World War I flew against the winds of the longstanding orthodoxy counseling against political-military involvement in Europe. Although it yielded a military victory, in America the overall result was seen as negative; the action was proscribed by ideas, and yielded failure, leaving the old orthodoxy intact. By contrast, Legro argues that the post–World War II

atmosphere in U.S. politics saw U.S. noninvolvement in Europe in the 1930s as both prescribed by prevailing wisdom and yielding failure: thus, "Do Something!" Legro rightly points out that the American tendency toward political-military integration preceded the Cold War and cannot be entirely explained by that conflict.

It bears pointing out that while Legro acknowledges anomalous examples, he does not do much to explain them or investigate their causes. For example, he acknowledges that "peace—even if it contradicted the desire for international revision and German expansion—was a consistent element of Hitler's speeches" in the mid-1930s. While it is certainly true that much of this rhetoric was intended to reach foreign audiences, it was heard at home, as well. From Legro's standpoint, this should either have been indicative of an actual acceptance of peace as a goal of German policy (Legro acknowledges it was not), or that Hitler should have lost political support for advocating policies outside the bounds of collective consensus (Legro concedes he did not). This seeming contradiction of Legro's theory warranted a more thorough assessment of its shortcomings.

The final chapter of the book examines the implications of Legro's theory for international relations in the twenty-first century. In exploring possible scenarios emerging from the war in Iraq, Legro argues that any one of three ideas could prevail. First is the "triumph of American supremacy," which would institutionalize the Bush Doctrine and is contingent on perceived success in Iraq. Second is "Atlantic Pact renewed," which would reemphasize transatlantic cooperation and seem to hinge on a repudiation of at least the unilateralism of the Bush administration. Third is the "tight perimeter," which would precipitate a retreat from the forceful internationalism of the first two outcomes, instead emphasizing offshore balancing and enhanced border security.

But in hypothesizing about what scenarios may cause ideational shifts toward any of these three outcomes, Legro embraces some questionable premises, in particular about what could cause support for a tight perimeter: Legro supposes that the tight perimeter could gain sway if the United States endured another, more devastating attack than 9/11. But surely the opposite is true. After having suffered another 9/11, it seems highly unlikely that America would scale back its military efforts abroad.

In this way, Legro fails to adequately discuss the direction of the pressures exerting themselves on prevailing ideas. While the Bush Doctrine remains highly controversial, its ultimate failure—in the form of a terrorist attack launched because of it—seems likely to ironically shore up support for an even more radical version of itself. An acknowledgement of failure in Iraq could possibly cause a repudiation of the Bush Doctrine deep enough to cause Americans to support offshore balancing, but an attack on American soil seems highly unlikely to do so.

In fact, Legro's analysis of the implications of his work may be the weakest aspect of the book. It would have been edifying if he could have at

least touched on the role of the media, in particular, in the context of shaping the debate about national policies. For example, in the wake of 9/11, cable news channels and op-ed pages around the country gave disproportionate space to commentators advocating a broad, deep military response to the attacks, pushing neoconservatives—who until then had been on the sidelines of the debates over security policy—to prominence. This is of particular interest in light of Legro's claims about the consolidation of new orthodoxies: "In cases where a single alternative idea exists, a more natural focal point of opposition is available and it is easier for those disenchanted with the old ideas to coordinate and effect change. In this case consolidation will be more likely." If this is so, what role did the lack of competing alternatives play in allowing the neoconservative interpretation of world politics to gain prominence? If the media did fail, why did it fail, and what can that tell us about the role of national institutions in constraining foreign policy options? This could be a useful topic for a work building on Legro's. Regardless, Legro has provided a fresh insight at the very foundation of the analysis of foreign affairs.

Both Legro's and Barnett's work are indications of a variety of challenges to traditional paradigms of international studies. Barnett believes that the balance of power can be cast off, rendered irrelevant by globalization and the purported convergence of great power interests. By contrast, Legro finds existing models still largely satisfactory, but in need of refinement—in particular, they need to better recognize the role of collective ideas as constraints in the crafting of foreign policy. As the debates over international politics continue, a great deal is at stake—both for the course of U.S. foreign policy and, by extension, the contours of the international system in the new century.