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The 'Indispensable Nation' in a Post-American World: American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Post-American Vision of Hegemony

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One of most powerful and enduring of America's national myths is the belief that America is different from the rest of the world.¹ American exceptionalism provides a key component for the geopolitical imagination of the United States and the articulation of the country's unique identity in world politics. As Trevor McCrisken has commented: "The belief in American exceptionalism provides an essential element of the cultural and intellectual framework for the making and conduct of US foreign policy."²

The conventional definition of American exceptionalism states that a special and unique set of social, political and economic features elevates the historical development of the United States above and beyond that of other nations. Frequently, a historic imagination of the United States as 'new' entity in world politics, and its 'unique' political origin are brought forward to construct an exceptionalist genealogy of the United States from the first Puritan settlements and the American Revolution all the way to the present day.³ Fabian Hilfrich for example notes that: "Enlightenment thought and the American Revolution completed the secularization of exceptionalism by postulating that the democratic foundations of the United States were the distinguishing features of its uniqueness."⁴

In this reading, American exceptionalism is the ultimate expression of the difference of the United States and its political, social and economic otherness. The uniqueness and superiority of capabilities in turn, in particular in the military realm, and the ability of the United States to control the 'global commons' of sea, air and cyber space is seen as the ultimate definition of US hegemony, or primacy.⁵

As such, the foreign policy establishment in the United States regularly fuses themes of American exceptionalism with an account of the economic and military superiority of the country to underwrite a grand strategy of liberal hegemony: American power and American values as foundation of a liberal international order of democracy, free trade, and the rule of law. Under the Obama presidency however, this elite consensus of America's world political role has come under pressure, as Obama has frequently acted as a pragmatist and realist, rhetorically confirming American exceptionalism, while at the same time advocating a foreign policy course of limited engagement and military restraint.

No apology: Obama, American exceptionalism and the contested vision of US hegemony in domestic politics

Asked by a European reporter in 2009 at a NATO summit press conference in Strasbourg if he believed in American exceptionalism, President Obama famously stated that he believed in it, like the British would believe in British exceptionalism, or the Greeks in Greek exceptionalism.⁶ This remains quite a remarkable contextualizing statement from an incumbent US President about the uniqueness of the identity of the United States in world politics. Subsequently, it was widely reported in the media, and

drew heavy criticism from Republican circles. However, and often overlooked, it was in the same statement that President Obama also declared that the United States was ‘objectively’ exceptional in several ways:

If you think of our current situation, the United States remains the largest economy in the world. We have unmatched military capability. We have a core set of values that are enshrined in our Constitution, in our body of law, in our democratic practices, in our belief in free speech and equality, that, though imperfect, are exceptional (...). I see no contradiction between believing that America has a continued extraordinary role in leading the world towards peace and prosperity and recognizing that leadership is incumbent, depends on, our ability to create partnerships because we can’t solve these problems alone.⁷

Where President Obama did deviate from the established exceptionalist consensus of the 1990s and 2000s was that he did not unanimously endorse American exceptionalism as vision of American global primacy and unipolarity. Instead of focusing exclusively on the sole status of the United States as ‘indispensable nation,’ and its unique superiority of power and the singularity of its values, he argued for an exceptionalism of America’s role in the world that acknowledged the unique potential the US had in establishing cooperation with others in order to achieve global outcomes.⁸

This went directly against the Jacksonian unilateralism that dominates foreign policy views in large parts of the Republican Party and the strong emphasis on outstanding military power that began under Ronald Reagan.⁹ Here American exceptionalism stands symbolically for an unapologetic support of American primacy, military preeminence, and unilateral assertiveness. The Republican discourse also strongly associates

exceptionalism with the belief in a new ‘American century’ and the rejection of any notion of even relative decline. American exceptionalism had thus become a contested issue in domestic American politics. It was a contest about which geopolitical vision of leadership should guide the nation into the future: President Obama’s approach of cooperative engagement, or the Republican vision of American primacy.

During the presidential campaign of 2012, American exceptionalism fully emerged as a major foreign and security policy issue on the public scene, between President Obama and his Republican contender Mitt Romney. Romney, who had publicly declared to be a firm believer in American exceptionalism, repeatedly criticized Obama for ‘apologizing for American values’.¹⁰ President Obama’s approach to international relations and foreign policy was and is still seen as deeply flawed by conservative critics because it is supposedly not rooted in the belief in American exceptionalism and singular leadership, but motivated by a negative view of the international role the United States had played in the past. A President, who frequently stresses international cooperation and multilateral approaches to global governance, and who has distanced himself from the unilateralism associated with the previous Bush administration, was criticized for going on an alleged ‘apology tour’ around the world, when he first came to office.¹¹ In his bestselling book, subtly titled *No Apology*, the Republican Presidential candidate had thus explained:

I reject the view that America must decline. I believe in American exceptionalism. I am convinced that we can act together to strengthen the nation, to preserve our global leadership, and to protect freedom where it exists and promote it where it does not.¹²

Romney's vociferous confirmation of American exceptionalism actually reiterated a neoconservative vision of global leadership, based on America's military capability for global power projection, including regime change in so called 'rouge states'.¹³ This was not surprising, given that the chief advisor on foreign affairs for Romney's campaign was Robert Kagan, a major neoconservative scholar, who remains a staunch advocate of US hegemony and unipolarity as only guarantee for the survival of the liberal world order, and thus for the maintenance of great power peace, the spread of democracy, and economic prosperity.¹⁴ For President Obama's conservative critics, American exceptionalism represents an item of faith, defining America's national greatness, and the ideational foundation that should animate the country's grand strategy of unapologetic American leadership. A policy that is seen as moving away from US hegemony is therefore seen as antithesis to American exceptionalism.

In his critique of Obama's alleged derisive view of American exceptionalism, Romney connected to a growing populist campaign against Obama's foreign and security policy on the Right. Bill O'Reilly for example, multiple bestselling author and host of the conservative *Fox News Channel's* top rated *The O'Reilly Factor* explained: "(...) Barack Obama is an internationalist, which means he believes America does not have an 'exceptional' place in the world."¹⁵ *The Obama Diaries*, which topped the *New York Times* non-fiction bestseller list in August 2010, devoted its entire opening chapter to the issue of American exceptionalism and its endangered status under the Obama administration.¹⁶ Here, the conservative political commentator Laura Ingraham stated:

His [Obama's] recitation of America's purported sins creates an equivalency between the United States and nations that do not begin to approach our economic, military, or cultural strength. [...] As described by the president, the United States seems like just another defective member of the League of Nations.¹⁷

Fears that President Obama, due to his 'exotic' upbringing, multicultural background, and ideological disposition, is somehow 'un-American', are frequently raised on the American Right, and were especially pronounced during the Presidential campaign of 2012.¹⁸ Beyond a mere dispute about politics, the foreign and security policy of President Obama is scrutinized for being anti-exceptional, and therefore anti-American by its very design. A white Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity is supposed to have been the cultural foundation for America's greatness and hegemonic status in the world.¹⁹ Thus, under Obama the question of defining American exceptionalism and leadership also becomes tied to the issue of the country's changing demographics and the meaning, not just of America's role in the world, but also of what American identity means at home. This ideological conflict over national identity exposes increasingly diverging conceptualizations of the meaning of American national identity for its world political role.

Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio, for example, has not only endorsed a distinctive neoconservative, interventionist foreign policy vision in support of American exceptionalism, but also accused President Obama of actively seeking to weaken the United States internationally and domestically.²⁰ The battle over the meaning of American exceptionalism and its meaning as guiding principle for US foreign policy

has thus continued unabated, and even intensified in the 2016 presidential primaries. Here, several Republican candidates have built their platform around variations of the exceptionalist theme, supplemented with elements of militarism and jingoism, and in the case of Donald Trump outright racism. Trump, for example has vowed to 'make America great again', while simultaneously endorsing a policy of economic confrontation with China, a wholesale ban on Muslim immigration and military escalation in the Middle East. Ted Cruz, meanwhile has vowed to 'carpet bomb' the ISIS terror organization implying a policy of indiscriminate air strikes that would produce a staggering number of civilian casualties. While Trump and Cruz in particular seem also wary of a repeat of the Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive war, forced regime change through ground invasion, and expansive counter-insurgency operations, the amalgam of nationalism and militarism the American exceptionalism debate is revealing on the Right is nonetheless worrying, indicating a deteriorating level of public political discourse in the United States.

In contrast to the exceptionalist vision of American primacy favored by the Republican establishment and a populist nationalism as espoused by Trump, the foreign and security policy of President Obama seems in many ways influenced by what the journalist and political scientist Fareed Zakaria has dubbed, the 'post-American world.'²¹ In this scenario the 'rise of the rest' is perceived to shift the global geopolitical balance of power into an increasingly multipolar order, while the United States is expected to remain the most powerful and influential player in global affairs for the foreseeable future.²²

This transformation is reflected in the way Obama defines American exceptionalism and utilizes it to orient US foreign policy. It is an exceptionalism for an increasingly complex and interdependent world in which the meaning of global leadership is less defined by imposing one's will on a political opponent, and more associated with organizing working international relationships on issues from climate change to trade agreements. In essence, President Obama articulates a belief in the exceptionalism of the United States and its 'unique' values with a careful appreciation of the scope and limitations of US power. Both inform his ideas of American leadership in international relations that emphasize cooperation and restraint over a missionary exceptionalism with a singular focus on hegemony and military preeminence. This represents a clear repudiation of neoconservative geopolitics and unilateral primacy that was similarly brought forward by a broad range of discursive producers, linking Obama's vision of cooperative leadership to a wide network of geopolitical elite discourse in the media, think tanks and academia.²³ A geopolitical vision of engagement and cooperation for the United States was hailed by President Obama from the very beginning. For example, in his 2009 State of the Union Address:

In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America.²⁴

The American exceptionalism that President Obama advocates, and that connects intertextually with some segments of the US foreign policy establishment does not doubt the economic and military strength of the United States, discards its historical achievements or seeks to diminish America's role in the world, as conservative critics

argue. Rather, it seeks to develop the global hegemony and leadership role of the United States in a cooperative, multilateral context that does not exclusively emphasize the military dimension of America's exceptional status in the world.

Leading from behind

The military intervention in Libya in 2011 saw the United States act in a way that corresponded to the reframing President Obama undertook in orienting the country's geopolitical identity. While still exceptionally powerful and acting in defense of its unique values, Obama's America did not seek the spotlight in directing a new campaign against yet another dictator in the Middle East. Rather, it sought to exercise its leadership role in a more limited fashion, and operate primarily through allies and partners. In arguing for America's involvement in Libya the President again linked American exceptionalism and American leadership:

To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader and — more profoundly — our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different.²⁵

While its unique and 'exceptional' military assets were providing the opening round of strikes against the Gaddafi regime, and the support of the United States was decisive in securing a vote sanctioning the intervention by the UN Security Council, the United States soon withdraw and let others, notably France and the United Kingdom take the lead in operating militarily against Gaddafi. This new, more cooperative, and at the

same time more limited and restrained approach would later become famous as ‘leading from behind.’ The term is attributed to an unknown member of the Obama administration, and it found a wide media echo, in particular after it featured prominently in an article by the *New Yorker*.²⁶

The public and expert reaction to ‘leading from behind’ was so strong, because the term seemed to encapsulate a new geopolitical vision, a new way the United States exercised its power, and understood its hegemonic position in world politics. As Ryan Lizza, the author of the *New Yorker* article put it: “(...) at the heart of the idea of leading from behind is the empowerment of other actors to do your bidding (...).”²⁷ At the same time, the advisor who coined the phrase admitted: “It’s so at odds with the John Wayne expectation for what America is in the world.”²⁸

However, as the Syria episode would demonstrate, any reframing of American exceptionalism and ‘difference’ would still have to occur within the established geopolitical imagination of American leadership and could not successfully be brought in line with a political practice that would fail to document the exercise of US hegemony.

Team America no longer wants to be the world’s police

There seems to exist a general weariness in the United States about the country’s global commitments, disillusionment with military interventions and their political outcomes, and a heightened awareness for the complexity of world politics in the 21st century. As one newspaper article headline put it: “Team America no longer wants to be the World’s Police.”²⁹ The title itself is a pop-cultural reference to the filmic parody of the

United States as a militarist, over the top superpower in the 2004 comedy film *Team America: World Police*. While the popular representation of America's heroism and military power still regularly provide the context for successful Hollywood blockbusters, from *Act of Valor* (2012) to *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014), the era of excess and hubris *Team America* parodied seem no longer to capture American's imagination of their country's role in the world.³⁰ A much reported Pew research poll found that 52% of Americans said the US should 'mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own' — the first time since 1964 that more than half the public held that view.³¹

The President acknowledged this national fatigue, when he directly quoted from a veteran's letter addressed to him, during his nationally televised address on Syria: "This nation is sick and tired of war."³² But while in this speech Obama reemphasized his focus to end America's wars, not to start new ones, and to focus on rebuilding the nation at home, he did invoke the image of American exceptionalism as a special responsibility for the United States to act when its unique values were violated, as with the gas attacks attributed to the Assad regime in Syria. On the other hand, he went to great lengths to distinguish a possible military intervention in Syria from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the beginning ruling out the possibilities of ground invasion, regime change, or even a prolonged air campaign like in Kosovo, or Libya.

This caveated, limited and cautious link between exceptionalism and US policy that Obama demonstrated in his speech was then further strained by the fact that the President postponed seeking an authorization for military strikes from Congress, a vote

he was likely to have lost, and instead opted for a diplomatic solution in accordance with Russia. President Obama closed his remarks on Syria with the following:

America is not the world's policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong. But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, [...], I believe we should act. That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional. With humility, but with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth.³³

The image of American exceptionalism in Obama's speech implied a special responsibility of the United States to commit its outstanding military assets when its unique values were violated, however a policy that would demonstrate this exceptional responsibility failed to materialize. While President Obama has worked towards redefining American exceptionalism along the lines of engagement and multilateral cooperation, it remains an image that is fundamentally tied to an image of American leadership through military preeminence. On Syria however, the President could not provide an image of determined leadership.

Conclusion

The implied consequences for crossing 'red lines' Obama set up did not result in military actions by the United States in Syria, and 'red lines' has become a symbol for the perceived weakness of the United States under Obama among conservative critics, foreign policy experts and the media.³⁴ And even though a majority of Americans

avored a diplomatic solution in Syria, the dominant impression is that Obama and the United States have been diplomatically outmaneuvered by Putin.³⁵ A CBS/New York Times poll, released on 25 September 2013, revealed that just 37 percent approved of President Obama's handling of the Syrian crisis. His general approval ratings on foreign policy also dropped significantly over the course of the Syria episode.³⁶ This indicates that any redefinition of American exceptionalism in the context of current US foreign policy has its limits. As Kagan has remarked in the *Washington Post*, while according to polls Americans in general favor a focus on 'nation building at home' and 'leading from behind,' the geopolitical image of exceptionalism, leadership and indispensability has also been a source of national pride and self-confirmation: "To follow a leader to triumph inspires loyalty, gratitude and affection. Following a leader in retreat inspires no such emotions."³⁷ It seems that while the image of American exceptionalism can be utilized to define a style of American leadership that shares responsibilities with others, rather than only relying on the United States to act as the 'indispensable nation', it cannot be reconciled with a perceived absence of leadership. The 2016 presidential election will show, if Americans will accept a more limited definition of American exceptionalism as guiding principle of their country's world political role, or if they seek a return of American greatness via the Republican promise of unapologetic nationalism.

¹ Neil Renwick, *America's World Identity* (New York: St. Martin's Press 2000) p. 202.

² McCrisken (note 4) p. 2.

³ Cf., Madsen (note 2); Lipset (note 2); Robert R. Tomes, 'American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century,' *Survival* 56/1 (2014) pp. 27-50. Agnew provides an insightful critical analysis of this historicism in the political geography of American exceptionalism and contrasts it with a world political economy perspective, see John Agnew, 'An excess of 'national exceptionalism': towards a new political geography of American foreign policy,' *Political Geography Quarterly* 2/2 (1983) pp. 151-166.

⁴ Fabian Hilfrich, *Debating American Exceptionalism* (New York: Saint Martin's Press 2012) p. 78.

⁵ Cf., Barry R. Posen, 'Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,' in Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford Jr. (eds.), *American Defense Policy* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press 2005) pp. 248-268.

⁶ 'Obama on exceptionalism,' *The Atlantic*, April 04, 2009, available at <<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2009/04/obama-on-exceptionalism/9874/>>.

⁷ Quoted in Karen Tumulty, 'American exceptionalism, explained,' *The Washington Post*, September 12, 2013, available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/09/12/american-exceptionalism-explained>>.

⁸ See also James M. Lindsay, 'George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the future of US global leadership', *International Affairs* 87/4 (2011) pp. 765-779.

⁹ In this context, see especially Russell Mead, *Special Providence* (New York: Routledge 2009) pp. 218-263.

¹⁰ Scott Wilson, 'Obama, Romney differ on U.S. exceptionalism,' *Washington Post*, September 26, 2012, available at <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-26/politics/35497342_1_obama-and-romney-exceptionalism-clinton-global-initiative>.

¹¹ Joe Sterling, 'CNN Fact Check: Obama went on an apology tour, Romney and others say,' *CNN*, October 23, 2012, available at <<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/10/23/politics/fact-check-apology-tour/index.html>>.

¹² Mitt Romney, *No Apology* (New York: St. Martins Press 2010) p. 29.

¹³ Brian Montopoli, 'What does Mitt Romney believe on foreign policy?,' *CBS News*, October 08 2012, available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-250_162-57528085/what-does-mitt-romney-believe-on-foreign-policy/>.

¹⁴ Kagan (note 17); see also David Milne, 'Pragmatism or what? The future of US foreign policy', *International Affairs* 88/5 (2012) pp. 935-951, pp. 946-947.

¹⁵ Bill O'Reilly, *Pinheads and Patriots* (New York: Harper Collins 2010) p. 87.

¹⁶ Laura Ingraham, *The Obama Diaries* (New York: Threshold 2010) pp. 24-30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 13.

¹⁸ Seema Mehta, 'Romney, Obama and God: Who sees America as more divine?,' *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2012, available at <<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/13/news/la-pn-obama-romney-america-exceptional-20120413>>.

¹⁹ See Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We?* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2004).

²⁰ Peter Beinart, 'Sanders, Trump, and the War Over American Exceptionalism,' *Atlantic*, February 11, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/02/sanders-trump-and-the-war-over-american-exceptionalism/462267/>

²¹ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton 2008).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ This includes such diverse voices as the liberal commentator and popular show host on MSNBC, Rachel Maddow, the conservative international relations scholar and bestselling author Andrew Bacevich, or major centrist and progressive Washington think tanks, like the Brookings Institution, or the Center for a New American Security; see for example Rachel Maddow, *Drift* (New York: Crown Publishers 2012); Bacevich (note 26); Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy (eds.), *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, (Washington DC: CNAS 2008); Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Brookings 2012).

²⁴ Barack H. Obama, 'Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery Address to Joint Session of Congress,' February 24, 2009, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress>.

²⁵ Quoted in Scott Wilson, 'On Syria, Obama's past words collide with national security implications,' *The Washington Post*, February 02, 2014, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/on-syria-obamas-past-words-collide-with-national-security-implications/2014/02/20/2f61ad7a-9969-11e3-b931-0204122c514b_story.html>.

²⁶ Ryan Lizza, 'Leading from Behind,' *The New Yorker*, April 27, 2011, available at <<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/04/leading-from-behind-obama-clinton.html>>; see also Charles Krauthammer, 'The Obama doctrine: Leading from behind,' *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2011, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html>; Michael Boyle, 'Obama: 'leading from behind' on Libya,' *The Guardian*, August 27, 2011, available at

<<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/aug/27/obama-libya-leadership-nato>>; Katy

Steinmetz, 'Top 10 Buzzwords: 10. *Leading from Behind*,' *TIME*, December 07, 2011, available at

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101344_2100571_2100582,00.html.

²⁷ Lizza (note 67).

²⁸ Quoted in Ryan Lizza, 'The Consequentialist. How the Arab Spring remade Obama's Foreign Policy,' *The New Yorker* May 2, 2011, available at

<http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all>.

²⁹ Aaron Blake and Sean Sullivan, 'Team America no longer wants to be the World's Police,' *The Washington Post*, September 13, 2013, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/09/13/team-america-no-longer-wants-to-be-the-worlds-police/>>.

³⁰ Cf., Georg Löfflmann, 'Hollywood, the Pentagon and the Cinematic Production of National Security,' *Critical Studies on Security* 1/3 (2013) pp. 280-295.

³¹ Bruce Drake, 'Obama charts a new foreign policy course for a public that wants the focus to be at home,' *Pew Research Center*, May 28, 2014, available at <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/28/obama-charts-a-new-foreign-policy-course-for-a-public-that-wants-the-focus-to-be-at-home/>>.

³² Quoted in 'Full Transcript: President Obama's Sep. 10 speech on Syria,' *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2013, available at <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-10/politics/41939044_1_chemical-weapons-poison-gas-sarin-gas>.

³³ Barack H. Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria,' September 10, 2013, available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>>.

³⁴ Cf., Matt Spetalnick, 'Obama's Syria 'red line' has echoes in his warning to Ukraine,' *Reuters*, February 20, 2014, available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/20/us-ukraine-crisis-obama-idUSBREA1J2C920140220>>.

³⁵ Dan Balz and Peyton M. Craighill, 'Poll: Americans strongly back diplomatic solution on Syria but give Obama low marks', *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2013, available at <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-17/politics/42124841_1_chemical-weapons-61-percent-47-percent>.

³⁶ Ariel Edwards-Levy, 'Americans think Putin has been more effective than Obama on Syria', *The Huffington Post*, September 27, 2013, available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/27/putin-obama-syria_n_4002351.html>; beyond the negative popular reaction to Obama's performance, there also seems to be a significant elite perception of American 'weakness,' in context with Syria. A recent article in *Foreign Policy* remarked how Japanese leaders and scholars saw American passivity on Syria and now Ukraine as having damaged American credibility in Asia, see Will Inboden, 'Obama should be thinking about Kennan this Week,' *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2014, available at <http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/04/23/obama_should_be_thinking_about_kennan_this_week>.

³⁷ Robert Kagan, 'President Obama's Foreign Policy Paradox,' *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2014, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obamas-foreign-policy-paradox/2014/03/26/c5284c2e-b4f8-11e3-8cb6-284052554d74_story.html>.