REACTING TO AMERICA

Anti-Americanism as a para-constitutional check on US power

by Sergio Fabbrini

Professor of Political Science at the University of Trento (Italy). He is the Editor of the “Italian Journal of Political Science”. His last publications are: America and Its Critics: Virtues and Vices of the Democratic Hyper-power (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008) and Compound Democracies: Why America and Europe Are Becoming Similar (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).

Address: Trento University, Dept. Soc. and Social Research, via Verdi 26, 38100 Trento (Italy) sergio.fabbrini@unitn.it

Abstract

From the end of the Cold War (1991) to the end of George W. Bush presidency (2008), anti-Americanism gradually re-emerged (in the 1990s) and thus exploded (in the 2000s) in many parts of the world and in Europe in particular. Anti-American world opinion was motivated by mainly two rationales, one economic and the other political. Anti-Americanism was the reaction both to neo-liberalism and unilateralism of US economic and political foreign policy. Although anti-Americanism continues to be rooted in many political cultures and experiences, nevertheless the crisis of the US neo-liberal model and the arrival of an anti-unilateral governmental majority in Washington D.C. in 2008 have apparently reduced its popular appeal. It is thus plausible to argue that anti-Americanism is a sort of para-constitutional check which tends to be activated when US domestic constitutional checks are unable to keep under control the exercise of US international power.

Key words: Anti-Americanism, Globalization, US Foreign Policy, US Separation of Power, International System.

1. Introduction

Anti-American sentiments are deeply rooted in the political cultures and experiences of many countries in all the continents (for the European case, see Fabbrini 2008; 2004; 2002). The nature of anti-Americanism may change considerably from one country to another, from one continent to another. It might represent a critique of what the United States does, but also a refusal of what the United States is. Sometimes, critique and refusal overlap, especially in time of international crises. At the same time, anti-Americanism is the label used by those Americans who seek to de-legitimize any criticism by foreigners to US decisions and choices. Something like the accusation to be un-American raised against domestic critics all along US history. As Ellwood (1999: 3) wrote, in the United States. “external hostility is called anti-American and internal hostility is called un-American”. Indeed, in the course of the 1990s and 2000s, several studies have been done for identifying the varieties of anti-Americanism (O’Connor 2007; Judt and Lacorne 2004; Rubin and Rubin 2004; Ross and Ross 2004). Scholars coming from different academic backgrounds have dissected anti-Americanism, thus constructing typologies of the latter (among which the distinction between the liberal, social, nationalistic and radical anti-Americanism, Katzenstein and Keohane 2007a).

Here, it is not my aim to contribute to the debate on the nature and implications of anti-Americanism. Rather, my aim is to interpret anti-Americanism as a functional counter-power of the international system which tends to be activated when the exercise of US power seems domestically unchecked. For this reason, I will use a loose concept of anti-Americanism, comprising the criticism of both specific policies and the US system as such. What matters to me is to explain why anti-Americanism appears and disappears, as a mobilizing global force, in specific historical periods. Here, I will proceed as follows: first, I will locate anti-Americanism in the constitutionalized international system emerged in the post Second World War period; second and third, I will examine the economic and political anti-Americanism in the 1990s and 2000s; fourth, I I will correlate anti-Americanism to the two main syndromes of US foreign-policy-making, for arguing, finally, that its functional role increases when no significant domestic checks constrain the exercise of US international power.
2. Balance of power to a constitutionalized international system

The post Second World War international system differs qualitatively from the previous international systems. Thanks to the role exercised by the United States as a new global power (Ikenberry 2000), the balance of powers of the inter-wars period has been substituted in the post war period by a constitutionalized international system, based on multilateral institutions and the institutionalization of legal and normative standards (Ikenberry 2006: Ch. 4). It was the United States that strongly pushed for the transformation of the old and failed system in a new system which paralleled the domestic experience of the US constitutional democracy. In fact, once become an undisputed international actor, the United States has decided to export at the global level its constitutional approach, although revised and adapted to the international context, to the management of its domestic inter-states rivalries (Hendrickson 2009: Part One). In the new international system, abuses of power have to be dealt within the multilateral institutions, through the recourse to established and agreed procedures and not through the balance of power in traditional sense. Certainly, this approach was congealed at the global level by the development of the Cold War, which rather fostered a militarization of the relations between the two super-powers. Moreover, the Cold War’s imperative were utilized for justifying an imperial policy by the United States in many developing areas of the world, in particular in South America and Asia (Cox 2004). However, within the US area of influence, in particular in Europe, that approach favored also a process of constitutionalization of the relations between the United States and its (European) partners.

Within this densely institutionalized system the United States could exercise its power but within semi-constitutional constraints (represented by the norms and procedures of the various multilateral institutions and alliances). With the end of the Cold War, the constitutionalized system has gradually included the previous foes and rivals of US power. As in domestic constitutional systems, in a constitutionalized international system public opinion plays a systemic role. It is both a political force in itself and an instrument for activating the various institutional or political forces necessary for checking the power of the leading actor of that system (the United States, in our case). Indeed, anti-Americanism has globally emerged when both the external
checks of the constitutionalized international system and the internal checks of the US separation of powers system have not been effective in keeping under control the US decision-makers (in particular the President and his advisors). In this sense, anti-Americanism might be interpreted as an additional or para-constitutional check on US power. It is this functional anti-Americanism which will be the focus of this paper.

A political link has thus emerged between the international power of the United States and the international criticism of it. Anti-Americanism has tended to emerge when many sectors of the international public opinion have perceived that the US international power was abused by its governmental authorities (President, Congress, independent agencies such as the FED). Or better when those governmental authorities have not been able to check each other. To be sure, other great powers regularly abused their international power in the past (i.e. Soviet Union) and continue to do so in the present (i.e. China or Russia), but none of them has ever aroused the same level of global mobilization as it has happened with the United States. It is not only the US as great power which makes the global public suspicious of its actions, it is also the global perception of the United States as a different great power which makes its abuses unacceptable. Functionally, the global reaction to the United States has emerged as the last resort for contrasting an exercise of its international power escaped from internal and external constraints. If it is true that the liberal-democratic nature of the United States has not created the pressure for balancing its power at the international level, it is also true that anti-Americanism might be considered as the functional equivalent of such balancing need, when other constitutional or semi-constitutional checks have not functioned properly.

If one considers that anti-Americanism in the 1990s and 2000s was motivated by basically two reasons, “power imbalances” and “a backlash against globalization” (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007b: 306), it is not surprising that anti-Americanism has waned with the change of US political and economic foreign policy after 2008. Anti-Americanism emerged in the past two decades when no significant domestic force seemed able to halt, both within the US constitutional system and the UN constitutionalized system, the economic and political agenda pursued by the United States. Finally, that agenda was defeated on the ground. The high human and political
costs of the Iraq adventure activated a US domestic opposition to unilateralism, which brought to the defeat of the Republicans in the mid-term congressional elections of 2006 and thus to the formation of a new Democratic majority in Congress and in the Presidency in the elections of 2008. In particular President Obama won the 2008 presidential election advocating the need of a renewed multilateral approach in foreign policy. At the same time, the financial crisis exploded in the US in the September 2008, thus diffused all over the world, has inevitably called into question the neo-liberal approach to globalization adopted by both the two Bill Clinton (1993-2000) and the two George W. Bush (2001-2008) presidencies. The financial crisis triggered not only the electoral success of the Obama’s candidature, but also the emergence of an alternative approach to the governance of globalization which has stressed again the role of the state in regulating the market. This new approach is certainly critical of the neo-liberalism of the past, although many economic advisers to the new President come from that experience (such as Lawrence Summers and Robert Rubin who served under the Clinton presidencies).

In this perspective, it is not surprising that anti-Americanism has significantly waned after the 2008 presidential and congressional elections. According to the Transatlantic Trends, before those elections (2008: 16), the “European views of US leadership in world affairs” was considered undesirable by 59 per cent (and desirable by 36 per cent) of the respondents. At the same time, the “European views of U.S. leadership vs. views of President Bush” (p.7) resulted in even a deeper distrust of both: 36 per cent were in favor of the former and only 19 per cent accepted the latter. The view was not different in other parts of the world, indeed it was even worst. Writing at the end of the George W. Bush era, Zaakaria (2008: 228) remarked as “people around the globe worry about living in a world in which one country has so much power”. Although there are not yet comparable data for the countries considered by the Transatlantic Trends (the new data will be available on Fall 2009), very significant changes in the global opinion towards the United States have emerged in the first months of President Obama’s era. Ipsos Public Affairs (2009a) pooled 22 countries covering 75% of world’s GDP in January 19, 2009 and in June 4, 2009 for detecting “favorability towards the United States”: it emerged that, after few months, the US image rose significantly in all the countries considered but 3 countries (Russia, Czech
Republic and Poland). It is worth noticing that the highest increase was in Spain (+10%), France (+13%), Belgium (+12%), Germany (+11%) and the Netherlands (+11%), that is mainly in those European countries which more openly opposed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (the “old Europe” according to the then US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld). More in general, the Ipsos/Reuters Global Poll released on June 4, 2009 shows that “favorability towards the US among global citizens has increased by 6% percentage points overall” since January 2009. February 15, 2003, when millions of Europeans gathered in the streets and squares to protest US intention to invade unilaterally Iraq, seems quite far away.

At the same time, perception of the United States and President Barack Obama has improved significantly in the Arab world. Majorities (or near majorities) in each of the countries polled by Ipsos Public Affairs (2009b) (Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait) believe President Obama will positively impact their country, the United States and the world, this sentiment being especially strong among Jordanians and weaker among Egyptians. Certainly, in five of the six countries surveyed, “Brand USA” received more unfavourable than favourable ratings, and one country tied in its ratings. However, President Obama has a stronger “brand image” than “Brand America” with majorities in three of the countries placing him well within the favourable range and with plurality’s in the other three countries surveyed doing the same. As stated by the Report (Ibidem: 3), “there is no single country in the Arab world surveyed where brand Obama’s unfavourable rating out-rank his favourable ratings”. The speech given by President Obama in Cairo on June 4, 2009 has probably increased his already favourable rating in the Arab world. In sum, it is arguable that anti-Americanism becomes a mobilizing force in the global arena when the United States is perceived to use its hyper power in a domestically and internationally unrestrained way. If that is plausible, then this functional anti-Americanism is not a threat to US decision-makers, but a necessary bell for awakening them from their “follies of power” (Calleo 2009).

3. Economic anti-Americanism and the neo-liberal globalization
There is a general consensus on the reasons which motivated anti-Americanism of the 1990s and 2000s. The first has to do with the process of globalization: anti-Americanism was the reaction to the US attempt to export world wide its economic model of de-regulated capitalism. In fact, the idea that globalization requires a de-regulated international market in order to spread all over the world became a sort of official economic ideology of both Democratic and Republican presidents. Thus, the United States, as the only great power at the global level, was in the condition to impose not only its own economic power but also its economic model on the international economic organizations. This is why, globalization was perceived as a vehicle for promoting the Americanization of the world economy through the de-regulation and liberalization of industrial and financial activities. In those two decades, the literature on globalization was a growth industry (A.A.V.V., 1997; Spybey, 1996; Waters, 1996). Globalization was identified with the spread of economic patterns that were tried out in the laboratory of the United States first of all. The United States was a forerunner in the information revolution that brought in its wake new forms of planetary communication; it was the leader in the unprecedented dislocation of the production process that brought great efficiency gains; it opened up its financial markets further and faster than anybody else.

3.1. The domestic sources of the neo-liberal model

It is undoubted that the process of globalization and its neo-liberal development has been the outcome of specific political choices and has been supported by specific ideological frameworks, choices and frameworks originally defined within the United States. “Not only were global capital markets established by political action –as some critics of globalization had noted- but their continued existence and the nature of their evolution remained subject to the needs and desire of states operating on very traditional political grounds”, Cohen (2001: 21) remarked. The needs and ideology of the US governing coalitions were all the more influential in promoting the opening and deregulation of the market on a increasingly larger scale. Since the two Reagan presidencies of 1981-1988, the United States pursued a course in economic policy of liberalization and deregulation of large sectors of the economic and financial system,
with the aim of making them more competitive and dynamic. Thus supported by the new conservative Thatcher government in Britain (which lasted from 1979 to 1990, although the Tories remained in power till 1997), the United States was able to set a neo-liberal framework for the governance of the international markets which largely favored a given combination of domestic economic and social interests. In other words, neo-liberal policies started as a domestic strategy to neutralize and defeat the traditional New Deal coalition supporting public regulation of the market, although their internal success required an international market hospitable to their expansionary thrust.

Again Cohen well identified this link between domestic interests and international outcomes. He wrote (2001: 75): “globalization as we know it in the United States is primarily the result of a political economic program and set of policy choices designed to expand the role of market institutions in American life. The greater immersion of American society into the global economy is one part of this larger strategy of reform, a strategy originating in a set of domestic calculations of interest and power and developed in the realms of politics and policy choice. This market-opening approach to the role of the state in American society was the dominant response to the crisis of the social compact in the 1970s, and it is to this political program that globalization owes its origin”. Once successful in the United States, neo-liberal policies were gradually adopted by other industrialized countries, finally becoming the predominant policy framework of the more important international institutions of financial and economic co-operation (i.e. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Moschella 2008). In particular, “trade liberalization was achieved through the various negotiating rounds of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) leading up to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its new dispute settlement system.” (Risse, 2002: 11). On pressure from the United States, these international institutions for international economic governance redefined the structural requirements and the ideological frameworks of economic trade and financial transactions on a global scale. They institutionalized the so-called “Washington consensus”.

Even the more developed continental European countries had to adapt to the neo-liberal approach which appeared to challenge their established neo-Mercantilist
policies. A neo-Mercantilism historically based upon a prudent combination of economic competition and social protection. After the failure of the nationalization policies pursued by the French socialist government in 1981-1983, a nationalization which brought the country on the edge of a financial bankruptcy, the European countries speeded up the process of economic integration through a reduction of national barriers and a deregulation of important economic sectors. The approval (by the then European Community, now European Union, or EU) of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 represented a crucial turning point in this transformation of the European political economy. The SEA, in fact, created the structural and normative conditions which made thus possible the approval of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, with its pledge to conclude the building of a common market with the adoption of a common currency (the Euro), finally introduced in January 2002. Not by chance, it was the British neo-liberal Thatcher government which strongly pressured for the approval of the SEA, interpreted as a tool for dismantling traditional protectionist policies within the member states of the European Union, policies largely expression of the interests and values represented by the social-democratic parties. Interestingly enough, the British pressure had also undesired effects, at least for the Euro-skeptic Thatcher government. The SEA and the Maastricht Treaty, in fact, accelerating the process of economic and monetary integration, made urgent the need to govern the former with more integration on the political level (that the Euro-skeptics disliked).

The globalization process which took place till the late 2000s, thus, cannot be considered the natural outgrowth of the unbridled functioning of the economic market. On the contrary, it was the outcome of the global transfer of the neo-liberal economic principles to the main international agencies as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO in the wake of the neo-conservative turn, since the 1980s, in the domestic politics of the United States especially. These principles were also uphold by the Clinton presidencies (1993-2000) that, on other grounds (i.e. in foreign policy), represented an alternative to the neo-conservatives (who became the majority in Congress from the mid-term elections of 1994 to the mid-term election of 2006). President Clinton and his Presidency (among which the then Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin) were instrumental in pushing towards a de-regulation of the economic and financial market. Probably, the most significant act of this policy was the definitive repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act.
which established in 1933 the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) with its banking reforms, some of which were designed to control financial speculation. Some provisions such as Regulation Q, which allowed the Federal Reserve to regulate interest rates in savings accounts, were already repealed by the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act of 1980. Thus, provisions of the Glass-Steagall Act that prohibit a bank holding company from owning other financial companies were repealed on November 12, 1999, through the approval by a Republican Congress and a Democratic President of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act.

3.2. The international diffusion of the neo-liberal model

Thanks to the powerful role exercised by the United States in the international institutions, since the 1990s globalization came to acquire a specific feature. As Faux then (1997: 18) asserted, “(t)he ideological hegemony of the US model is so complete that dissent is largely confined to complaints about the cost of transition to this laissez-faire future”. For several observers, globalization had the inevitable outcome to form a one-world homogeneous market where American corporations are the main economic actors. As Hutton said (in Giddens and Hutton, 2000: 41), “(t)here is a dimension of globalization that is about opening up the world to American interests in particular and Western capitalism in general”. The same author (1999: 54) previously stressed that the enforcers of globalization are “the US Treasury, the Federal Reserve, Wall Street, and the IMF. Its chief beneficiaries are US investment and commercial banks and the rest of Fortune 500”, reminding his readers that “it is not simply capitalist values that are being transmitted to the globe; it is American capitalist values”. It was therefore inevitable, for several sectors of the world public opinion, to identify globalization with Americanization. Indeed, in Europe as in other continents, globalization came to be interpreted as the prelude to the imposition of a single social model. Some sociologists talked of the “McDonaldization” of world society (Ritzer, 1996; Melling and Roper, 1996), understanding by this the establishment of social relationships based upon standardized patterns of consumption. For Taylor (1996: 282), “the American dream had become the world dream”.
Certainly, the United States was not the only promoter and beneficiary of globalization. As Risse (2002: 10) remarked at the beginning of the 2000s, “globalization (has come largely to mean) OECDization”. Within the EU single market, the neo-liberal approach to the deregulation of financial markets could enjoy the significant support of several EU member states, starting from the British (first Tory and then Labor) governments. To be sure, other EU member states (such as France or Germany) continued to adopt a more regulated approach to the functioning of financial and industrial markets. As Calleo (2001: 239) wrote in the midst of the neo-liberal triumph, “much of continental Europe wants to keep the postwar era’s neo-mercantilist welfare state. Such ideas are deeply implanted in Western societies. The more brutally these ideas are assaulted, the more violent will be the reaction”. Nevertheless, French and German policy-makers and trade-union leaders had to face the formidable pressure coming from the international markets. The welfare state was not dismantled in many western European countries, although its ideological, fiscal and organizational project was put under severe strains. The neo-Mercantilist approach was unable to represent a viable alternative to the neo-liberal one, given especially the extraordinary success of the US economy in the 1990s. Globalization, although initially promoted by the United States choices and policies, gradually acquired a dynamic of its own, ending up in benefitting a large variety of public and private economic interests. If this were not so, globalization might never have had the strength to develop as it did.

In the 1990s, in the United States, the only alternative to neo-liberalism was the traditional protectionist policy advocated by well-trenched interest groups (such as the trade unions of the decaying manufacturing industry). The difficulty of elaborating a modern alternative to the de-regulation’s approach to globalization and the weakness of the anti-neo-liberal forces within the main economic international institutions fostered an international opposition to the neo-liberal globalization which was mainly defensive, protectionist, if not regional- or local-oriented. Certainly, the various anti-globalization movements of the last twenty years filled a void, highlighting the dark side of the neo-liberal globalization consisting in increased income and social disparities within and between countries. However, they were unable of defining an alternative economic paradigm. Indeed, the neo-liberal approach failed on the ground, through the implosion of the de-regulated financial markets in the late 2008. Although ineffective, those
movements, to use Robert Dahl (2005: 203) expression, sent nevertheless important signals of the incoming crisis, as the canaries used to do in the coal mines.

4. Political anti-Americanism and the US foreign policy

Let’s now look at the political anti-Americanism. In a speech at the *Institut Francais des Relations Internationales* in June 12, 1995, the then French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine stressed as the United States has become a *hyper-power* “whose supremacy extended to every aspect of the world’s economy, technology, language, and culture. The United States saw itself as the victor of history, chosen to propagate democracy everywhere. Not surprisingly, the rest of the world might see this as a pretention to global hegemony”1 Indeed, the United States has been an hegemonic power since the end of the Second World War, but till 1989-1991 its hegemony was mainly confined within the Western bloc and the countries influenced or controlled by it. With the downfall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has remained the only super-power on the face of the earth. This “unipolar moment” (Krauthamer 1990-91) created the conditions, in the United States, for a great debate between multilateralists and unilateralists.

4.1. The Bill Clinton era

Surprisingly enough, at the beginning of the 1990s the United States seemed to withdraw from taking full advantage of this new context. George H. W. Bush, the Republican foreign policy’s President of the period 1989-1992, the proponent of a new world order, the victor of the Gulf War of 1991, was defeated in the presidential election of November 1992 by Bill Clinton, the Democratic candidate who liked to remind that “it’s the economy, stupid” which decides electoral outcomes. In fact, the first two years of the Clinton’s mandate (1993-1994) were entirely devoted to domestic policy issues, such as –in particular- the reform of the public health system that the President hoped to achieve, also because the Democratic party enjoyed a majority in
both chambers of Congress. This attitude to deal primarily with domestic policy increased even more after the mid-term election of 1994, which showed a spectacular success of the neo-conservative candidates (led by Newt Gingrich, to become the Speaker of the House) of the Republican party, both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. Moreover, with the new Republican majority in Congress, the divided government (consisting of different party majorities in the Congress and the presidency) of the previous decades was re-established again, although this time it was overturned the control on governmental institutions².

The fact that the Democrats through Bill Clinton returned to the White House for the first time since Carter’s defeat in 1980, while the Republicans achieved the control of the Congress for long a bastion of New Deal and liberal politicians, was of great importance for the fate of US foreign policy. In fact, Republicans transformed the divided government in a formidable tool to weaken or even to call into question the legitimacy of the Clinton presidency. A tremendous assault on the presidency initiated from Republican quarters with the aim to impeach the President. This assault deepened after the Clinton re-election in 1996. From 1995 to 1998 the new Republican majority of the Congress acted as the only legitimate governmental majority of the country. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, portrayed “himself as a Prime Minister with more influence over policy than President Clinton” (Schickler 2002: 99). The assault on Clinton was so constitutionally improper (Dworkin 1999) that it finally backfired: in fact, in the mid-term elections of 1998 the Republicans had a very poor performance. For the first time, since 1934, the President’s party gained seats in the House during a mid-term election. This unexpected outcome brought to the resignation of Newt Gingrich from his high congressional office, although formally the resignation was motivated by ethical reasons³. Nevertheless, also with the less extremist Speaker Danny Hastert, the strategy of the Republican Party to try to impeach the Democratic

---

¹ As it has been reported and summarised by Calleo (1999: 326, footnote 57).
² From 1981-1992, the presidency was controlled by the Republicans and the Congress by the Democrats, while, after the brief parenthesis of the unified (Democratic) government of 1993-1994, from 1995-2000 it was the reverse.
³ In 1998 the House Ethics Committee concluded an investigation on the Speaker’s misuse of tax-exempt funds received by a college for courses run for political purposes, stressing that inaccurate information supplied to investigators by Speaker Gingrich represented "intentional or ... reckless" disregard of House rules”. Because the House Ethics Committee was controlled by the Republicans, this statement brought Newt Gingrich to renounce to submit his candidature for the 1998 mid-term election.
President continued, ending up in a formal vote of the Senate in 1999 which did not reach the qualified majority of 2/3 necessary to fire the president. David Calleo wrote (2000: 72): “over the past three decades, the Congress, the courts and the states have frequently combined to cut the presidency down to size. Nothing illustrates this trend more than Clinton’s ordeal. Despite the president continuing popularity with the electorate and his impressive achievements in the economic field, his presidency has been subjected to the most savage constitutional attack since Nixon’s time”.

Foreign policy’s incoherence was the net effect of the divided government of the second half of the 1990s. On one side, the Congress became more and more assertive in a growing number of foreign policy’s issues. That meant, given the nature of the legislature, that its decisions were largely conditioned by private lobbies and interests, corporate groups, political action committees, district and state constituencies. The Congress “pursues an incoherent aggregate of private agendas. In trade legislation, congressional unilateralism regularly defied not only presidential authority, but also the country’s treaty obligations” (Calleo, 2000: 73). On the other side, President Clinton tried to answer to this mounting congressional initiative through an internationalist strategy, become more and more pronounced after his 1996 re-election. A strategy inspired by the twin principles of (democratic) “enlargement” and (economic) “engagement” (McCormick 2000: 61). In particular, the strategy of enlargement was designed to fill the void left by the containment strategy run out of date with the demise of Soviet Union. More and more Clinton made recourse to a sort of neo-Wilsonian rhetoric on the promotion of democracy around the world. Although Clinton preoccupation with democracy promotion was “part of a larger American way of thinking about the sources of a stable, peaceful and prosperous international order” (Cox, Ikenberry and Inoguchi, 2000: 11), the Congress, however, did not share it.

In fact, Congress challenged successfully the President’s positions in the security and defense spending areas. It opposed the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the passage of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the ratification for the Convention of the Right of the Child or for the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. It imposed the President to renegotiate the ABM Treaty and hold back the due US financial contributions to the United Nations. In some cases, the President was able to
retain at least some of his proposals, but the determination of the congressional Republican majority was so effective that he arrived even to sign the National Missile Defense Act in 1999 which he previously labeled as a policy mistake (Mc Cormick 2000). In 1999 the Senate passed by a narrow margin (51-48) the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, a margin which was still sixteen votes short of necessary 2/3 support required. Inevitably, as the previous presidents, Clinton did an abundant recourse to executive agreements, which need only a majority’s vote in both houses of Congress to pass.

Clinton was able to advance through the Congress some pieces of its presidency’s foreign policy agenda, but those successes were temporary. On the trade side, for instance, the approval of NAFTA in 1993 was soon followed by the failure of Congress to renew Fast Track in 1997 (which recognizes negotiating authority to the President, whose deals with foreign countries have to be approved or rejected by the legislature in their totality). On the democracy promotion side, significant was the success in getting congressional support for the settlement of the Bosnian conflict with the Dayton Agreement (November 21, 1995) and for the military intervention in Kosovo in the Spring 1999, aimed at preventing the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population of that region. Successes thus largely curtailed by the overt opposition of Congress to US humanitarian interventions, especially if inserted within the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. As Williams (2002: 242) remarked, “Congress and the President were frequently at loggerhead over funding for the non-military aspects of American foreign policy institutions. Between 1991 and 1998 there was a 25 percent decline in the international affairs budget (of the State Department and related agencies)”.

In sum, in the 1990s, a multilateral President and a unilateral Congress regularly crashed over the main issues of foreign policy. However, the conflict between the President and Congress, although producing a contradictory foreign policy, combined with the functioning of the multilateral international institutions to keep under control...

---

4 In fact, “there is no distinction between the two in international law, but if Congress approves on the tactic, executive agreements are generally used as delegated powers of negotiation, especially in trade. Thus, between 1933 and 1945 the United States entered into 105 treaties and 123 executive agreements,
US international power. Indeed, in that decade, global political opinion looked favorably at the US foreign policy. Anti-Americanism had basically an economic character.

4.2. The George W. Bush era

In 2001-2008, US foreign policy passed through different phases. Three seem the more relevant (Ikenberry 2009). The first one concerns the period 2001-2003 and might be called as selective unilateralism. The new Republican president winner of the 2000 contrasted elections, George W. Bush, inaugurated his new presidency trying to reduce, but not to solve, the previous foreign policy incoherence. The President endorsed many congressional unilateralist positions but he gave a pragmatic interpretation of the latter. After all, in the 2000 elections, the Republicans retained the majority in the House but lost the Senate although for only one seat. The year before September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush operated as a pragmatic leader, selecting the approach (multilateral or unilateral) considered more effective, in a given situation, for achieving US aims. Indeed, large sectors of world and European public opinion continued to view the United States as a positive force for the global political governance. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 increased further this positive view, rallying the large majority of world opinion around the United States. As the Worldview 2002 reported (p.23), solid majorities of European (80%) in the countries pooled (Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland) had a favorable view of the “Bush administration handling of overall foreign policy” (4% thought it was “excellent”, 34% “good” and 42% “fair”). Asked how desirable it is for the United States to exert strong leadership in world affairs, well “64% of Europeans say it is desirable”.

Although “a modest majority (55%) of Europeans agreed with the statement that ‘American foreign policy contributed to the September 11 attacks’” (Ibidem: 24), the Worldview 2002 Report (p. 23) did not detect any serious “anti-Americanism in between 1945 and 1952 it entered into 132 treaties but 1,324 executive agreements, and since then similar proportions have prevailed” (Emmott, 2002: 21).
Europe” at the beginning of the 2000s. Indeed, “Europeans support the United States playing a strong leadership role in the world” (p. 23). In fact, the US intervention in Afghanistan received the support of European and world public opinion. The George W. Bush presidency organized that intervention within the multilateral framework, engaging in a wide diplomatic campaign of coalition building, successfully polling together friends and foes in support of the US military option. To get the necessary international legitimacy for the intervention, moreover, the Congress was finally persuaded by the President to pay the US dues to the UN. A spirit favorable to more international co-operation seemed to emerge from the public statements of the President and his team. Surely, there was not a lack of signals that, within the US presidency, powerful forces were pushing for a more unilateralist approach, as when the Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfield refused the European proposal of activating the mechanism of Art.5 of NATO Charter (on the basis of which an attack to one member of the security community has to be considered as an attack to the entire community, thus bringing the latter to war).

US foreign policy changed after the November 2002 mid-term elections that, thanks to the unusually active campaign of the President in favor of Republican candidates, brought to the formation of a clear Republican majority in both the House and the Senate. Those elections created a unified government around a coherent majority led by a undisputed leader. In 2003 a second phase of foreign policy started, which might be called as unapologetic unilateralism, also because it got the support of important sectors of congressional Democrats. Although the new strategy was made public by the President before the mid-term elections (on September 20, 2002, Bush 2002), it was fully implemented with the decision to invade unilaterally Iraq in March 20, 2003. It was based on the idea that the United States has to take advantage of the “unipolar moment” for creating a new world order. For doing that, it has to use its military superiority to free itself from the semi-constitutional constraints of the multilateral international system. Now, it is the United States that decides whether or not a country is an international threat and it is the US national sovereignty which weights much more than the national sovereignty of all the other countries in the world (Dumbrell 2002). In its action, the United States will decide which are its partners or allies (in Ikenberry 2002: 54). The claim that American national sovereignty comes
first called radically into question the constitutionalized logic of the multilateral institutions built in the post-war period.

Inevitably, in Europe as well in other parts of the world, public opinion turned strongly against the United States, thus supporting and legitimizing an active mobilization for denouncing US unilateralism (Isernia and Fabbrini 2007). Between the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2006 mid-term elections anti-Americanism was at its height all over the world. The timidity of domestic opposition to Bush’s foreign policy, the acquiescence of the Congress with the most controversial presidential decisions (such as the authorization to use torture against the “enemy combatants” or the illegal regime adopted in the Guantanamo and other military prisons) and the tightening of the executive control on the domestic press (Mann and Ornstein 2006), these and other factors contributed to activate a powerful reaction to US foreign policy in Europe and many other countries. According to the 2006 Transatlantic Trends (which inherited the Worldview data on European public opinion), “the desirability of US leadership” jumped down from 64% (in 2002) to 37%, while “the approval of President Bush” jumped down from 38% (in 2002)\(^5\) to 18%.

External reaction to US unilateralism combined with the growing human and financial costs of the Iraq’s invasion created the conditions for a change of domestic public opinion. The congressional Democratic Caucuses organized effectively for the 2006 mid-term campaigns. Indeed, in that election, Democrats regained significant majorities in both House and Senate, with a woman, Nancy Pelosi, becoming the first female Speaker of the House in US history. With the return to divided government in the period 2007-2008, George W. Bush foreign policy registered a third phase, which might be called as uncertain unilateralism. Although the President continued to control foreign policy, the Democratic Congress decided finally to activate its constitutional powers of checking and balancing executive discretion. Immediately after the mid-term elections, Defense Secretary Ronald Rumsfield, probably the official most responsible for the militarization of the war on terror (and in general of the US foreign policy), was fired. However, the rationale of the national security strategy exposed in September

\(^5\) Combining the 4% who thought the Bush administration handling of overall foreign policy was “excellent” and the 34% who thought it was “good”.
2002 continued to inspire US international action. The imperial impulses of the previous period were moderated, but the idea that the United States has to play a domineering role in the world was still there (Calleo 2009: Part I). Unsurprisingly, European and world opinion continued to distrust both the United States and its President. According to the 2008 Transatlantic Trends, “the desirability of US leadership” decreased slightly from 37% (in 2007) to 36%, while “the approval of President Bush” increased slightly from 18% (in 2007) to 19%. Both the United States and the Bush leadership in world politics were rejected by, respectively, 2/3 and ¾ of respondents. The sympathy and goodwill generated around the world for the United States after September 11, 2001 disappeared in few years.

5. Syndromes of US decision-making and anti-Americanism

US power is not easily manageable. Domestically, it has to be exercised within a system of “enabling constraints” (Starr 2007), with no equivalent in other established democracies. Certainly, the efficacy of those constraints is not guaranteed. In fact, the presidents have tried to reduce the influence of congressional checks and balances on their action. Nevertheless, the process of presidentialization has not altered the separate nature of the US government. The United States has a separated government (Fabbrini 1999) because decision-making power is shared by governmental institutions which are separated not only functionally but also electorally and operationally.

The President, the House and the Senate represent separated electoral constituencies (a national constituency the first, a district constituency the second, a state constituency the third), have a separated temporal mandate (four years the first, two years the second, six years the third), and they do not depend on the confidence of the others for operating. Through the principle of checks and balances such separation has been mitigated, but it has also been made more cumbersome. The President needs the advice and consent of the Senate (the institutions representing states’ interests) for implementing executive decisions (to nominate the members of his administration, to substitute the judges of the Supreme Court, to sign international agreement) and, at the same time, the Congress needs the signature of the President for concluding the
legislative process (in case of a presidential veto, it might revote on a previously approved law, but this time by the qualified majority of 2/3). Finally, the decision-making process is made even more complex by judicial review of ordinary legislation, whereby any court at any level of the jurisdiction may declare the unconstitutionality of any law, suspending it till a final Supreme Court decision. A separated government is a system in which democracy’s safety is guaranteed by a reciprocal control between governmental institutions rather than between political forces as in parliamentary government (Fabbrini 2007). In the United States there is no a government as such (that is a Cabinet holding the ultimate decision-making power as in parliamentary systems). And, consequently, there is not also an opposition as an institutionalized political force.

The foreign policy making process of a separated government is extremely contradictory (Cox and Stokes 2008). It represents an invitation to struggle for the privilege of controlling the international relations of the country (Fisher 2004). In the long XIX century, during which Congress was the most important institution (the so-called period of congressional government), the problem of governing implicit in the system was resolved through the action of congressional parties holding together the separated institutions, in that case primarily the House and Senate. The executive was not yet institutionalized, also because, in that century, foreign policy was not a central issue for the country (Mead 2002). In the XX century, the governing role of the President has increased, bringing with it the formation of a true executive branch, the presidency (the so called period of presidential government) (Lowi 1985). After the Second War World, the US separated government came to be structured around two “pillars”, that is two different decision-making regimes: one for domestic politics and one for foreign policy. In the first regime, the Congress plays a role as powerful as the one of the President. In the second regime, it is recognized to the President a decision-making pre-eminence vis-à-vis the Congress, given the necessity for the country to speak with only one voice in the international arena. However, pre-eminence is not pre-dominance. Indeed, the Congress has retained its basic foreign policy powers as the Constitution prescribes: the Senate’s advice and consent is necessary for the main decisions and the House’s approval is necessary for financing them. Presidential government and presidentialism do not coincide (Slaughter 2007).
This separated government has manifested two syndromes in the foreign policy-making process which are important for understanding the role of anti-Americanism. The first syndrome might be called as \textit{incoherent government}. It has appeared in particular during the period of divided government but it is a structural property of policy-making in a separation of powers system. Because governmental institutions represent different constituencies and operate according to different time schedules, it is highly plausible that they end up in expressing two different political majorities. In fact, from 1969 to 2002, and thus from 2007-2008, the United States endured an almost uninterrupted period of divided government in which the separated institutions of federal government were controlled by different political parties. Certainly, this did not prevent them from agreeing in specific issues. However, divided government has given a partisan tone to the institutional conflict inherent to the system of separation of powers, with the potential to elevating any partisan clash into a constitutional crisis. As Nye stressed (2002: 112), “American foreign policy making is a messy process for reasons deeply rooted in our political culture and institutions. The Constitution is based on the eighteenth-century liberal view that power is best controlled by fragmentation and countervailing checks and balances. In foreign policy, the Constitution has always invited the president and Congress to struggle for control. That struggle is complicated when the Congress and presidency are controlled by different political parties”.

In foreign policy-making, the syndrome of incoherent government has been traditionally kept under control by an extra-political condition: the existence of a specific and formidable threat. Indeed, during the Cold War period, the global confrontation with Soviet Union helped to discipline the internal disordered policy-making process in favor of the President. However, when the latter abused his role as the pre-eminent decision-maker in foreign policy, then Congress activated its checking powers. For instance, when President Nixon (1969-1974) created a sort of “imperial Presidency” (Schlesinger 1973), the Congress not only started the procedure for impeaching the President\footnote{The positive starting of impeachment procedure by the House of Representatives obliged the President to resign in 1974, the first President ever to do that.} but it also run fast to approve a panoply of legislative acts for introducing more stringent controls on executive discretion in foreign policy (among which the War Powers Act of 1973). The post-Watergate presidents did not accept...
easily the old and new constraints, but the Congress retained its checking powers, as it is witnessed by the fierce conflict between the Republican President Ronald Reagan and the Democratic Congress in the 1980s, a conflict known as the Iran-Contra Affairs of 1987. If divided government has made US foreign policy uncertain and incoherent, at the same time it has also kept under control the executive’s power.

The second syndrome of US foreign policy-making is the opposite of the first one. It might be called as unchecked government. In its purest form it emerged in the 2000s, because of the radical polarization of congressional and partisan politics inaugurated in the 1970s and arrived to maturation in the 2000s (Fabbrini 2006). As it never happened in the past, the two parties, and in particular the Republican Party, became ideologically at loggerheads. When the Republicans finally enjoyed a cross-the-board majority in the governmental institutions in 2003-2006, they were in the organizational and ideological conditions to create an (unprecedented) party government, led by a President behaving as (an unquestioned) Commander in Chief, without any opposition within his party. The United States got finally the party government desired by several generations of reformers, but it was a party government taking place in a system without an institutionalized political opposition. In the period 2003-2006, with the Congress giving up its constitutional role of checking the President, with the congressional Republican caucuses internally cohesive and ideologically united around presidential leadership, the decisions taken by the presidency were never seriously questioned by the rival institutions.

It is interesting to notice that the formation of “a more responsible two party-system” able to generate a Westminster-like party government was the aim of all the liberal reformers of the US separation of powers of the last century, from Woodrow Wilson (1908) to the American Political Science Association (APSA 1950) to Cutler (1985) and others. Those reformers were generally belonging to the liberal camp and

---

7 Between the fall of 1986 and the winter of 1987 details were made public concerning the involvement of the Reagan Presidency, and in particular of National Security Council officials, in the illegal sale of arms to Iran, by way of Israel. The proceeds of the sales were subsequently transferred, by means of complicated series of transactions in private bank accounts, to the Nicaraguan Contras to finance their guerilla war against the Sandinista government. These activities of Presidency clearly were illegal as the violated both a US decision not to maintain diplomatic relations with Iran (taken after the Iranians had taken hostage several Americans at the US embassy in Teheran in the late 1970s) as well as a decision of Congress not to financially support the anti-Sandinista guerrillas and to promote, instead, a diplomatic initiative in the region. See Congressional Joint Committees, Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair, U.S. Congress, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987
their aim was to create the political conditions for promoting even in the United States the policy transformations introduced in Europe by labor and social-democratic parties. However, in the 2000s, reformers’ liberal dream took the form of a conservative nightmare. In fact, after September 11, 2001, party government took the features of a process of presidential centralization of governmental authority that, with the justification of the protection of national security, brought to a serious political and judicial infringement of individual and civil rights. In those years, it emerged a (second) imperial presidency (Rudalevige 2005), much more insidious than the previous one because it was supported by a faithful congressional party (in the 1960s, in fact, the Southern wing of the Democratic Party frequently coalesced with the Republican congressional minority against the Democratic Presidents).

As it did with the constitutional checks of the domestic system, the neo-conservative coalition called also into question the semi-constitutional checks of the international multilateral system. The net result was a country enjoying a hyper-power status and behaving without any significant domestic constraints. In such a context, global anti-Americanism came to play a systemic role, both as public opinion and social movement, in supporting those countries questioning US decisions (within the UN Security Council, the NATO Council, the multilateral international institutions). If the first syndrome has produced a contradictory although domestically constrained foreign policy, the second syndrome has produced a less contradictory but also a less domestically constrained one. Thus, anti-Americanism has come to play two different systemic functions, supporting domestic actors in the first case and external actors in the second case.

In sum, the anti-Americanism of world public opinion has ended in playing a functional role, in the post Second World War constitutionalized international system, providing a para-constitutional check on US international power. Although it is difficult to measure the correlation between the decrease of domestic checks and the increase of external checks, it seems plausible to assert that US power is accepted globally as long as it is exercised within (domestic and international) constitutional limits. When the United States is unable of restraining itself, then external constraints tend to activate. These domestic and international constraints make illegitimate for the United States to
exercise its power in a unilateral way. Although those constraints have not been always sufficient in deterring the presidents and thus the United States from behaving unilaterally, however they have institutionalized (domestically and internationally) principles of political legitimacy that a liberal-democratic country, even if it is a hyper-power, cannot escape too long from respecting. This is why, for the United States (but also for the other non-democratic great countries), the power of the world public opinion cannot be underestimated.

6. Conclusion

If it is true that anti-Americanism has historical roots in many countries, it is also true that it has tended to become an active force internationally when the United States has showed to be incapable “of engaging in ‘strategic restraint’ reassuring partners and facilitating cooperation” (Ikenberry, 1998: 47). It is not just that “in international politics, unbalanced power constitutes a danger even when it is American power that is out of balance” (Waltz 1999: 700). In the newly constitutionalized international system emerged in the post Second World War period, the balancing of US power does not necessarily consist in the formation of a coalition of states alternative to the United States. The United States has contributed to create a multilateral system where the checks and balances on the exercise of its international power pass through the activation of norms and actors internal to that system. Anti-Americanism has showed to be functional to this activation, especially when the exercise of US power does not take into consideration the plurality of interests institutionalized in the domestic and international multilateral systems.

The world leadership role is recognized to the United States because of its material strength, military capability and ideological nature (Leffer and Legro 2008). It is the open nature of the US political system which represents the main soft power of the country (Nye 2004), also because that opening guarantees both its international partners and rivals. After all, the United States is a continental democracy constituted not only by an incredible wide array of social, economic and territorial interests, but also national and ethnic communities, all of them intervening in the policy-making
process through the various separated governmental institutions. Foreign countries can affect the US decision-making process directly (bringing their view to the Congress and the presidency) or indirectly (through the mobilization of their conational communities). This has certainly contributed to make the United States an acceptable (and in certain cases, an invoked) international power (Zimmermann 2002). However, when the domestic system was unable to keep opened and balanced the US decision-making process, and the constitutionalized international system was unable to balance the unilateral impulses of the country, then the reverse did happen, with the United States meeting the refusal of the world public opinion (Walt 2005).

To be sure, as Tony Judt (2001:4) observed time ago, around the world “anti-American sentiment…in the first place is driven by humiliation, the feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness shared by hundreds of millions in the Islamic world and elsewhere”. But, in itself, this is not sufficient to feed a specific anti-American sentiment. In fact, Judt (Ibidem) added, “what ties this widespread sentiment of wounded pride to a certain image of America in particular is American arrogance”. Of course, all great powers were and tend to be arrogant or are perceived as such by those who resent their power. Nevertheless this behavior is particularly resented when it is assumed by a country which has built its identity on constitutional liberalism, thus making the latter the inspiring ideology for the creation of the new post Second World War international system. Because the United States has diffused globally a message that economic and political power needs to be exercised within constitutional constraints, it is not paradoxical that the strongest external criticism has emerged when the domestic constraints were ineffective in keeping the country on its constitutional track. Although anti-Americanism has hosted the refusal of what the United States is, its function has been to activate the checks on what the United States does.
References


Emmott, Bill (2002), ‘Present at the creation – Our law, your law’, *The Economist*, June 29th-July 5th.


Moschella, Manuela (2008), Ideas and Policy Change: the International Monetary Fund from Orderly to Properly Sequenced Liberalization, doctoral dissertation, School of International Studies, Trento University (Italy).


