**AMERICA’S UNDYING EMPIRE: WHY THE DECLINE OF US POWER HAS BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED**

For more than a decade, people have been saying that the era of US dominance is coming to an end. But in reality there are still no other global players to rival it.

In recent years, the idea that the United States is an empire in decline has gained considerable support, some of it from quarters that until very recently would have denied it was ever an empire at all. The New York Times, for instance, has run columns that describe a “remarkably benign” American empire that is “in retreat”, or even at risk of decline and fall.

Yet the shadow American power still casts over the rest of the world is unmistakable. The US has military superiority over all other countries, control of the world’s oceans via critical sea lanes, garrisons on every continent, a network of alliances that covers much of the industrial world, the ability to render individuals to secret prisons in countries from Cuba to Thailand, preponderant influence over the global financial system, about 30% of the world’s wealth and a continental economy not dependent on international trade.

To call this an empire is, if anything, to understate its range. […]

If proponents of the end of the US global order do not assert a decrease in the potency of the instruments of American power, that is because there has been no such decrease. The share of global transactions conducted in dollars has been increasing, not declining. No other state can affect political outcomes in other countries the way the US still does. The reach of the contemporary US is so great that it tends to blend into the background of daily events. […]

For more than a decade, commentators on international affairs have obsessed over the supposed transition from a unipolar order, in which the US is the sole global superpower, to a multipolar or polycentric world in which the distribution of power is less lopsided. But this is easy to overstate. International affairs scholars have long predicted a return to a balance of power among the great states, as a correction to the enormous imbalance represented by the US since the late cold war, if not since the end of the second world war. One question is why it seems to have taken so long. Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, two scholars at Dartmouth College, persuasively argued that the extent of American power had to be reckoned with in a different way: the US had attained power preponderance – a degree of global power so great that its very extent served to disincentivise other states from challenging it.

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