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Since the late nineteenth century, only sovereign states have been acknowledged by international law to possess the legal and customary right to employ transborder violence. In fact, "[w]ar came to be characterized as a 'right inherent in sovereignty itself.' Moreover, the war-making right was thought of as the paramount attribute to sovereignty" (Dinstein 2001, 71). Today, only a sovereign state has the privilege to issue a transborder-armed challenge to another state. Thus, international war also became a practice of exclusion and a device to set a group (of states) apart from other wielders of force. Historically, however, sovereignty and actorhood in the sphere of transborder violence were not identical. Between the sixteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, nonstate extraterritorial wielders of violence—such as mercenaries, brigands, filibusters, pirates, and privateers—often practiced transborder violence either independently or in the official service of sovereign states (Thomson 1994). In addition, nonsovereign polities claimed the legitimate right to order and authorize transborder violence. However, as Thomson and Spruyt have shown, states gradually delegitimized nonstate and nonsovereign violence and its wielders and avoided using it as a resource—initially because it was seen as a counterproductive and later because it was considered immoral as well. States constructed a cartel of sovereigns that prohibited other actors from ordering and employing intensive transborder violence. In effect, sovereign states today constitute an elite club in world politics that excludes nonsovereign and nonstate authorizers and wielders of transborder force. [T]he 9/11 attacks alerted the members of this club to the efforts of outsiders to change the rules for admission. Part of the trauma of 9/11 was precisely related to the realization that this elite club of states had been invaded by predatory nonstate actors thought to have disappeared two hundred years ago.

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In principle, Great Powers could tolerate persistent agents transnational harm (PATHs) and abstain from countering their harmful practice. Nonetheless, when opposing the practices of PATHs, Great Powers can respond to the transnational challenge thorough various measures and policies. I suggest that *there is a spectrum of Great Power counterharm policy or interruptive measures with regard to PATHs' practices.* Ideal points on this spectrum would be as follows:[1]

1. Attempting to induce the PATHs to stop their practice through unarmed means and *incentives or sanctions or pressuring another state that has leverage over the harmful actors* to restrain them.

2. Attempting to contain or ward off the harmful transnational agents through policing, law enforcement, and defensive efforts within one's territory or on one's borders (e.g., border patrols, coast guard operations, capturing and jailing of the PATHs' leaders and operatives, or reconnaissance missions).

3. Ordering limited military offensive strikes against the PATHs.

4. Launching a *full-blown military offensive* strike against the PATHs, *including* occupation of territorial bases that serve the PATHs and annihilation of the PATHs' leadership and organizational structure through the use of military destructive platforms.

I argue that the explanation for interaction between Great Powers and PATHs lies in how Great Powers understand transnational harmful actions and constitute them as challenges (or not) to their authority in world politics. Accordingly, … policy employed toward PATHs is a result of the *authority*

predicament that PATHs represent to Great Powers. And more formally, *the stronger the authority predicament posed by a PATH to a Great Power, the more offensive and destructive will be its anti-PATH policy.* In addition, the Great Powers as a group will cooperate against PATHs (passively, by putting their own competition aside and allowing one or several of them to act against the PATHs; or actively, by contributing resources and forces to a joint operation) when the PATHs are constituted as a high threat to the normative structure that enables Great Power authority in world politics.

Great Power perception of the authority predicament posed by PATHs is based on the following clusters of variables. First are they type, intensity, and identity of the subjects of the PATH's propagated or facilitated harm. These variables stand for the "what kind," "how much," and "address" of harm—whether, for example, the harm was a result of the use of designated means of destruction, what the objective material magnitude of the harm was, and who suffered it (e.g., civilian populations or armed forces, upper or lower orders of society). Another important variable determining the authority predicament is the "why" of harm: the professed reasons, ideologies, motivations, and interests that the PATHs provide—or that are deduced (e.g., through secret intelligence)—for their propagation or facilitation of harm. Finally, how the PATHs consider themselves vis-à-vis states in general and the Great Powers specifically in terms of rights is also very important to the authority predicament; they could publicly claim to have rights equal to the Great Powers and states or superior rights over states, or they could remain ambiguous or silent in this regard.

Together these elements determine the deviation of PATHs from the institutions of violence and thus construct a perception of the degree of their defiance of authority. The further PATHs deviate from the institutions of violence and thus construct a perception of the degree of their defiance of authority. The further PATHs deviate from the institutions of violence in these respects—and the further they advance opposing or alternative norms, concepts, and ideas to those embedded in and sanctioned by these institutions—the more predatorial they will seem to the Great Powers. *Since Great Powers authority is first and foremost based on the regulation and institutionalization of organized violence, predators are those actors whose acts, ideas, and discourse risk deregulating and deinstitutionalizing organized violence in the system.* They arouse strong objection on the part of the Great Powers—the regulators and rule suppliers of the system.

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The nonstate, religious, and elusive global nature of the terror network was understood by the United States and other powers and states to remove a considerable constraint on its use of unlimited violence constituting a different kind of wielder of organized violence in a system that is founded upon state-centric principles and institutions of violence. But the most crucial points that set al Qaeda apart from previous terrorists are that it was *the first terror group that attacked the U.S. homeland and that the attack was so massive.* An intensive attack by a nonstate actor on the homeland of a Great Power *carries* for the latter *a message of absolute disrespect and defiance of authority*. It can be interpreted by the attacked power as nothing less than complete disregard for hierarchy in world politics. Bin Laden further reinforced this image when he argued that the aim of the 9/11 attacks was to melt the "superpower myth" of the United States just as jihadists proved the Soviet superpower a myth during the Afghan war in the 1980s. The 9/11 attacks were intended, according to al Qaeda, to create a "balance of terror" between the "Muslim nation" and America—that is, for every act of "terror" the United States perpetrated against Muslims, al Qaeda would retaliate.[1] The United States could not accept a balance of terror with bin Laden because—unlike the balance of terror with the Soviets, which transmitted into "bipolar stability"—al Qaeda's stated definitions of what constitutes stability are completely different form those of the United States. Al Qaeda's professed willingness and ability to deviate form the institutions of violence simply meant for the United States that al Qaeda would persistently continue to perpetuate harm on America if it did not comply with its dictates [*sic*].

Other *evidence that the United States perceived the War on Terror as a war for authority* is in the stated resolve of the United States to continue to determine the rules of the game.

After all that has just passed—all the lives taken, and all the possibilities and hopes that died with them—it is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear. Some speak of an age of terror. I know

there are struggles ahead, and dangers to face. *But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.*

(Bush, 9/20/2001; emphasis added)

The reiteration of President Roosevelt's famous freedom versus fear metaphor was not coincidental. Fear and terrorism are the "heirs," as Bush claimed, of "all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century." Al Qaeda's violence "was an attack not only against citizens, but also against freedom and liberty. The U.S. is the defensor of liberty all over the world, and that's what this attack was about".[2] The American attack on Afghanistan was thus aptly named "Operation Enduring Freedom". Beyond the domestic political connotations of the concept of freedom, it also represents the American idea of a superpower's freedom of action in international politics. Terrorists, in this sense, seek to "blackmail" America (Bush 2002a, 10). Freedom means the ability to act as one wishes; it signifies American exceptionalism (Lafeber 2002, 552) and the function of the United States as the redeemer ("defensor") of the international system. In a sense, freedom means a privileged American sovereignty "because the United States represents 'good' " (Kaldor 2003, 12). Terrorism is menacing because it threatens this privileged position and because as Bush repeatedly argued, it is faceless; in other words, it is difficult if not impossible to punish. But state sponsors or hosts of terrorists are more visible, and these were to be the prime target of the American disciplining effort. Searching for the face of terrorism, the United States presented the Taliban an ultimatum: to "deliver" (not extradite) al Qaeda leaders to U.S. authorities, to close down all the terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, and to hand over every terrorist to unspecified "appropriate authorities". If these demands were not met, the Taliban would share the fate of the terrorists. The hopes that the Taliban would yield were slim, as the United States considered them and al Qaeda to be "really the same," "joined at the hip," and "inseparable" (Woodward 2002, 33, 52, 149). But since they were offered an opportunity, their rejection of it allowed the United States to legitimately embark upon destroying them.

The War on Terror, as Bush defined it, was to be a struggle between two normative systems, two ideologies, and two historical narratives. In this context, the "superpower myth" motive played an important role in planning and wielding the American war in Afghanistan. The spectacular symbolism in the 9/11 attacks was clear almost from the first moment: they were aimed at the heart of America's financial (the World Trade Center) and bureaucratic (the Pentagon) power, the same power that propels and organizes the overwhelming U.S. military superiority and that stands as the foundation of American hegemony. All this was carried out by a nonstate network, which owns none of the advanced military technologies and resources of a modern Great Power.

A violent nonstate transborder challenge to the authority and status of the hegemonic power in the international system might oblige other Great Powers to cooperate with the hegemon; if the latter is shown to be vulnerable to terror, then the domestic and international authority of the lesser powers would clearly be just as vulnerable, if not more so. Whatever happens today to the hegemon might happen to the lesser powers tomorrow. Again, even if the intentions of al Qaeda were "minimalist" and limited to anti-Americanism in the Middle East, by deviating so strongly from the institutions of violence in world politics, the terrorists threatened not only American authority (as legitimized power) but also the authority of other states. Even if the terrorists had "only" limited goals, their act risked norm decay in the international system as a whole. What would other copycat groups do to advance their goals in light of al Qaeda's example? States therefore felt a need to unite and support the American effort to exclude and delegitimize al Qaeda. Thus, the concept of legitimized power itself— not the specific power of a certain state—was at stake here.

… This was not just a threat to U.S. authority as such, or even a threat to the elite club of the Great Powers, but a threat to international society as a whole.

(Mendelsohn 2005)

… The attacks created a sense of common fate among sovereign states by underlining their common values and their mutual interests. The institution of sovereignty itself was seen as under attack by a predatorial terrorist network and a rogue state that played host to such a predator, persistently refusing to adhere to minimal international standards of good citizenship in international society. The

fact that all the other Great Powers and many smaller states willfully cooperated with the United States in its War on Terror, and even took pride in identifying with the United States, testifies to this aspect of shared values that invoked systemic conservatism.

Thus, Russian president Putin declared that terrorists "strike objects and models of *civilized* economic and social development….Furthermore, *particularly dangerous is terrorism the aim of which is the usurpation of state power.*"[3] Putin already introduced the concept of a threat to civilization immediately after 9/11, starting that "this was a strike against the whole of humanity, at least against the entire civilized world, of which Russia considers itself a part."[4] … Also, immediately after the attacks of 9/11, the G8 heads of state declared, "We, the leaders of the G8, condemn in the strongest terms the barbaric acts of terrorism carried out against the United States…. The perpetrators, and all who have harbored, assisted or supported them by any means, have launched an offensive against innocent persons and against the central values and interests of international community."[5] Chinese president Jiang Zemin described terrorism as a "common scourge" for the international community and as a challenge to mankind.[6] Even Cuba's Fidel Castro strongly denounced terrorism and offered his condolences to the United States.

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In the War on Terror in Afghanistan, the United States attempted to set right a time out of joint. The purpose of the war was not only revenge, self-defense, or even deterrence. The war embodied a strong effort to restore previous notions of authority (as legitimized power) and thus to realign the course of time, to relegate the unthinkable that suddenly materialized with 9/11 to the realm of fantasy once again. This desire, I believe, stood at the heart of the preventive national security strategy that the United States officially adopted in 2002. In a sense, the war against terrorism was actually a war against time. As former secretary of state George Shultz wrote in an e-mail from March 2004 distributed worldwide by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, "First and foremost, we must shore up the state system. The world has worked for three centuries with the sovereign state as the basic operating entity … Increasingly, the state system has been eroding. Terrorists have exploited this weakness … Our great task is restoring the vitality of the state system.

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[1] See, for example, bin Laden's Sermon for the Feast of the Sacrifice, March 2003, available at the Middle east Media Research Institute Web Site, www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP47603 (accessed June 4, 20004). Even before 9/11, bin Laden talked about American power as a "legend". In a CNN interview in January 1999, he said "I am confident that Muslims will be able to end the legend of the so-called superpower that is America" (quoted in Parachini 2001, 397).

[2] "President Bush and Italian Prime Minister Discuss war Effort," available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011015–3.html (accessed January 25, 2005).

[3] See speech by Russian president Vladimir Putin at the Russian Rectors Conference, Moscow, December 6, 2002, available at www.ln.mid.ru/Bl.nsf/arh/3977216E424Bo78D43256C8A005EFA97?OpenDocument

[4] See interview with president Vladimir Putin with German ARD Television Compay, September 19. 2001, available at www.ln.mid/ru/Bl.nsf/arh/5C4D35E784EBC9B543256AD2003D61FF/OpenDocument (accessed July 28 2004)

[5] See G8 Heads of State and Government Statement, September 21 2001, available at www.g.7utoronto.ca/g7terrorism/sept.192001html (accessed January 15 2003).

[6] See *People's Daily*, October 1, 2001.

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