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978-0-521-76767-5 - Follies of Power: America's Unipolar Fantasy

David P. Calleo

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Follies of Power

The election of Barack Obama notwithstanding, the political imagination of America's elites remains deeply attracted to a unipolar view of world politics. In this way of looking at the world, peace and prosperity in the global system require a reigning superpower. Great Britain is imagined to have played this role in the nineteenth century and the United States to have inherited it in the twentieth. America's interest and duty are thought to lie in fulfilling this fate that history has thrust upon us. The vision persists but is more and more false. In reality, today's disposition of international power and wealth is increasingly plural. Our unipolar vision grows progressively dysfunctional as much of the world fears and resists it. Chapter 1 spells out these themes. Chapters 2 and 3 look at the disastrous consequences of the unipolar vision at work – in the Middle East and in Europe. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 assess the nature and limits of American power – soft, military, economic, and moral. Chapter 7 discusses the problems of order and coexistence in a plural world. It speculates on the possible contributions of “Old America” and “New Europe” as models for organizing the future. America's own constitutional equilibrium, David P. Calleo argues, increasingly requires friendly balancing from Europe. To face their responsibilities to the world and to each other, both sides of the West will need to liberate their imaginations from thralldom to past triumphs.

David P. Calleo is University Professor at The Johns Hopkins University and Dean Acheson Professor at its Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Before coming to SAIS, he first taught at Brown University and then for several years at Yale University. He has also been a visiting professor or research Fellow at several American and European universities and institutes. He has also served as Consultant to the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs.

His previous books include *Rethinking Europe's Future* (2001), *The Bankrupting of America: How the Federal Deficit Is Impoverishing the Nation* (1992), *Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance* (1987), *The Imperious Economy* (1982), *The German Problem Reconsidered* (1978), *America and the World Political Economy* (with Benjamin M. Rowland, 1973), *The Atlantic Fantasy* (1970), *Britain's Future* (1968), *The American Political System* (1968), *Coleridge and the Idea of a Modern Nation State* (1966), and *Europe's Future* (1965).

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For my beloved Yale ghosts:

Lewis Perry Curtis

Joseph Toy Curtiss

Eugene V. Rostow

Frederick Watkins

Teaching that grows more vivid with the years.

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Economic Trends Unite or Divide the Two Sides of the Atlantic?” Geir Lundestad (ed.), *Just Another Major Crisis?: The United States and Europe Since 2000* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp. 182–209; “Twenty-First Century Geopolitics and the Erosion of the Dollar Order,” Eric Helleiner and Jonathan Kirshner (eds.), *The Future of the Dollar* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009) pp. 289–336; “How Europe Could Save the World,” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 25 (3), Fall 2008, pp. 3–12; and “The Tyranny of False Vision: America’s Unipolar Fantasy,” *Survival*, Vol. 50 (5), October–November 2008, pp. 61–78.

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