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 2 MANN, UND JÜRGEN WILZEWSKI, eds. *Welt-*  
 3 *macht vor neuen Herausforderungen. Die*  
 4 *Außenpolitik der USA in der Ära Obama*  
 5 (Atlantische Texte. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2014), 476 pp.

In the preface to this collection of essays, the editors lament that research on the United States has become marginal in German political science departments (IX). Maybe so, but, fortunately, its institutional marginality has not prevented German-speaking political scientists (it should be noted that several contributors to this volume are based in Austria) from producing excellent work grounded in empirical research and theoretical frameworks. *Weltmacht vor neuen Herausforderungen* (A World Power Facing New Challenges: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Obama Era) is the latest publication in a series of conference volumes aimed at analyzing American world power in its domestic and international settings. As the title suggests, the book focuses on the efforts of the Obama administration to renew America's claim to world leadership as well as its international credibility, which had suffered significantly during the presidency of George W. Bush. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had led to what many observers considered "imperial overstretch" even before the financial crisis of 2007/8 dealt a serious blow to American economic power. When he assumed office in 2009, President Barack Obama faced a grave domestic crisis and a populace tired of military interventions and increasingly skeptical of international commitments. Internationally, the rise of China and Russia's anti-Western turn posed momentous challenges to American leadership. At the beginning of his first term, Obama not only promised to restore American power but also to reduce its costs, pursue multilateral approaches, and abide by international rules. To what extent has he been able to deliver on his promises and to what extent has he succeeded in restoring America's global leadership role? Six years into the Obama presidency, the authors of this book offer tentative answers to these questions.

*Weltmacht vor neuen Herausforderungen* contains thirteen essays divided into three major parts. Part one addresses the domestic constraints on Obama's attempt to implement a foreign policy based on smart power, which consists of a prudent mix between ele-

ments of hard military and economic power, and soft power, which includes commitments to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law on the other. Jürgen Wilzewski concedes that Obama has been genuinely committed to smart power but also notes the failure to close the detainment camp at Guantanamo and the policy of "targeted killings" as conspicuous violations of a foreign policy based on values; Congress, the author finds, is only partly to blame for that failure. In their analysis of congressional polarization over foreign policy issues, Florian Böller and Oliver Kausch convincingly argue that partisanship and ideology have become powerful constraints on presidential foreign policy. If presidential leadership will suffice to balance an increasingly dysfunctional political system, however, appears doubtful.

The second part of the book probes into the various regional challenges to American leadership. In his essay on the United States as a Pacific power, Reinhard Wolf paints a pessimistic picture. The Obama administration's so-called "pivot to Asia," he argues, amounts to a policy of containing China and maintaining a dominant role in East Asia, which Beijing cannot accept. The ensuing Sino-American confrontation that Wolf predicts will also have serious consequences for Europe and NATO. India is often seen as a potential counterweight to China, but even though the relations between India and the United States have improved dramatically since the George W. Bush presidency, Christian Wagner considers a formal alliance highly unlikely given India's tradition of non-alignment. Simon Koschut disagrees that the pivot to Asia is bound to weaken America's commitment to NATO, as many observers have argued. The Western alliance, he claims, has been essential for America's identity as global leader for democracy. This will not change any time soon. At the same time, American elites have continued to demand that NATO adopt a global outlook because, as one American author put it as late as 2013, Russia was "not a real threat" any longer (172). After the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Barack Obama called Russia "a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors—not out of strength, but out of weakness" (180). In the view of Franz Eder and Gerhard Mangott, this quote leads to the core of the conflict between Vladimir Putin's Russia and the West. Russian foreign policy, they argue, seeks rec-

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ognition as a great power of equal status with the United States within the framework of a multipolar international system. American leaders are unwilling to grant such recognition (214). According to the authors, Obama's "reset" in the bilateral relationship failed because Putin returned to the Russian presidency with a distinctly anti-American mindset in 2012 and because the U.S. Senate pilloried Russia as a repressive regime and violator of human rights. In the meantime, Russia has become engaged in "hybrid" warfare in Ukraine, and relations with the United States have returned to Cold War-like confrontation.

In the Middle East, the picture does not look much better for the United States. For decades, Lars Berger holds, a realist policy aimed at stability was relatively successful in safeguarding U.S. interests in the Arab world. Over the past decade or so, the rise of political Islam and the Arab Spring has destroyed whatever stability there was. So far, the Obama administration has found no strategy to cope with the new situation. To complicate matters further, Obama's attempt to put pressure on Israel has led to an open rift between his administration and the Netanyahu government and triggered harsh criticism from the Israel lobby at home. Obama's efforts to broker a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians, concludes Steffen Hagemann, must be viewed as a failure (261).

The third part of the book engages global challenges to American leadership ranging from terrorism to climate change and trade policies. In a critical analysis of Obama's strategies to fight terrorism, Peter Rudolf sees change mostly at the rhetorical level (291). Obama sought to distance himself from his predecessor's "global war on terror," yet the national security state and Obama's fear of appearing weak in the eyes of the American public precluded any significant changes. As a matter of fact, warfare by drones has become "the trade mark" of Obama's strategy against terrorism, albeit at a high price in terms of America's international prestige. Martin Senn looks at the American discourse on advancing a world without nuclear weapons. Although prominent academics and elder statesmen have launched initiatives for the elimination of nuclear weapons, it is uncertain if the United States will lead the drive toward a substantial reduction. Unless America leads the way, Senn predicts that nuclear proliferation will be difficult to contain. In the fight against climate change, the Obama

administration has not exercised global leadership, according to Matthias Heyack and Ronja Ritthaler, because the goal of making the United States energy-independent has continued to enjoy priority. Nor has the United States played a leading role in the humanitarian interventions in Libya and Syria, respectively, as Dennis-Jonathan Mann and Angelika Wahlen point out in their essay. While the Obama administration supported intervention and, ultimately, regime change in Libya, it acted much more cautiously when it came to confronting Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. In the Syrian case, external opposition from Russia and China as well the high risks and costs of intervention have arguably been the key variables that explain American restraint.

Finally, Andreas Falke analyzes the American interest in the controversial Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). While a comprehensive agreement could possibly generate considerable growth on both sides of the Atlantic, the author details the many potential stumbling blocks to harmonize regulatory standards. The strategic goal behind TTIP, namely the creation of a powerful economic counterweight against China, may well be thwarted by petty bickering and domestic opposition.

All things considered, the essays paint a rather sobering picture. Obama, readers are forced to conclude, has not been able to deliver on his promises to restore American global leadership and prestige. In many areas, he has continued the policies and approaches of his predecessor rather than implement change. Then again, given the severe domestic constraints, the thorny regional problems, and the daunting global challenges Obama has faced in his foreign policy, readers may also wonder if we will simply have to jettison the notion of the U.S. president as the most powerful person on earth who may be expected to provide leadership in solving the world's problems. Unfortunately, Americans and non-Americans alike have grown so accustomed to this rhetoric that it will be difficult to adjust to a diminished role of the United States in the world.

*Weltmacht vor neuen Herausforderungen* will be a profitable read for everyone interested in America's global role in the twenty-first century. The book attests to the excellent work German-speaking political scientists have produced on U.S. foreign policy in recent years. However, it is not necessarily smooth riding for general readers and

1	students. Some chapters are unnecessarily	the editors might have reminded them that
2	long and redundant because several of the	most readers of academic books are familiar
3	younger scholars among the authors were	with the basic concepts of constructivism and
	apparently eager to demonstrate their theo-	discourse analysis.
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	upon their models and approaches. Perhaps	Heidelberg
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