

US no longer defends international rule of law

Gideon Rachman, in “Trump, Obama and their battle with the ‘blob’” (December 3) and “Why Europe will choose the US over China” (December 10), misconstrues US foreign policy and Europe’s interests.

The US is a global military superpower pursuing military and geopolitical primacy. It no longer defends the international rule of law, since the international rule of law is now antithetical to continued US primacy. With only 4.2 per cent of the world population, 15 per cent of global output (PPP), and the rapid global spread of digital innovation and technological adoption, the US can pursue primacy only by breaking the international rule of law in global trade, climate policy, technology policy, and UN Security Council mandates. The US aims to contain China by any means, legal or otherwise. President Donald Trump utterly disdains multilateralism. He mimics George W Bush’s infamous demand of Europe and others that “You are with us or you are with the terrorists”, but now the US attack is directed at China, Iran and other nations that reject US primacy.

America’s aggressive and militarised foreign policy is not in Europe’s interest. US wars of choice in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya have destabilised European politics. The US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and promotion of fossil fuels threaten Europe’s and the world’s environment. US attempts a decade ago to expand Nato to Ukraine and Georgia provoked two regional wars. The US abandonment of important nuclear arms agreements and expansion of the military into space will instigate a new and destabilising arms race. The US government is actively integrating Big Tech fully into the military-industrial complex, to the greedy encouragement of Big Tech chief executives such as Amazon’s Jeff Bezos (“Bezos warns US military it risks losing tech supremacy”, December 9). The US abandonment of the Iran nuclear agreement threatens a new regional or even global war, one that US hardliners actually encourage.

Mr Rachman portrays Europe’s choice as following either the US or China. Nonsense. Europe should instead lead its own global efforts for a peaceful, rule-based and sustainable multipolar world without the primacy of any country. In this Europe will cooperate with China at least as much as with Mr Trump’s “America First” policies. The time is urgent for the EU to defend the UN Charter, the WTO, the UN Security Council, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the international nuclear disarmament regime. It should work constructively with China and other nations in pursuit of these global objectives rather than blindly and recklessly following the US attempts to sustain its outdated military and geopolitical primacy through a new cold war with China.

Prof Jeffrey Sachs

Columbia University, US