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Logan vs. Robert Kagan

February 25, 2011 by [Grover Cleveland](#)

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ABOUT PILEUS

Pileus is a group of scholars who examine public policy and philosophy in light of our respective disciplines. We differ in many ways but share a commitment to liberty and personal responsibility.

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WHAT IS A PILEUS?

In ancient Rome, a pileus was a felt cap given to slaves upon receiving their freedom. Since then, this simple cap has been a powerful symbol of liberty.

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Justin Logan – Cato Institute colleague of *Pileus* guest blogger Christopher Preble – takes on Robert Kagan and “benevolent global hegemony” in the [American Conservative](#). My favorite part of the post is this:

The disconnect between the academy and the Beltway foreign-policy community could hardly be starker. Forty-five years ago, Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser sketched what they termed the “economic theory of alliances.” They explained that when several countries join together to protect a shared interest, smaller members have an incentive to free ride in the presence of a much larger, wealthier partner. Once the large, wealthy partner has stated its own vital interest in the objective—in this example, security—smaller countries believe that the larger contributor will pay for the goal itself even in the absence of “fair” contributions from the other partners.

The basic insight has stood the test of time. Ignoring this reality, Washington blindly subsidizes allies’ domestic welfare programs by allowing them to channel resources away from self-defense. There are many terms that could describe this phenomenon, but “fiscal responsibility” is not one of them.

And the almost inevitable result of this is that the collective goods provider goes into relative decline. Sounds like a great plan to sustain American interests, no? Time to gently nudge the allies out of the nest and to restore a realistic foreign policy to Washington.

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