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Finding Our Way: *Debating American Grand Strategy*

Edited by Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimley
Contributing Authors: Robert J. Art, G. John Ikenberry,
Frederick W. Kagan, Barry R. Posen, Sarah Sewall, Vikram J. Singh



Center for a
New American
Security

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Cover Image

Compass Pointing to North America on a Map

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About the Solarium Strategy Series

The CNAS Solarium Strategy Series draws its name and inspiration from an effort undertaken by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953. The original Project Solarium was a competitive strategy development process that is credited with helping articulate several pillars of American Cold War strategy. Through a similarly structured process of inclusive debate and extensive analysis, CNAS has developed several strategy documents that are designed to serve as useful inputs to the broader national debate over U.S. national security in the post-September 11 era. They are available online at www.cnas.org.

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INTRODUCTION

By Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy

In March 2003, as the 101st Airborne Division was fighting its way from Kuwait to Baghdad, then-Major General David Petraeus asked *Washington Post* reporter Richard Atkinson a question that has come to haunt America: “How does this end?”¹ The absence of a plan for post-war Iraq has mired America in a war with no clear end in sight.

As a consequence, the next U.S. President and commander in chief will inherit a war in Iraq that will have been waged for a longer period of time than our participation in both world wars combined. The argument over Iraq will surely continue to dominate the current presidential election cycle. This is as it should be, for many thousands of lives have been lost, hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent, and over 130,000 American troops will almost certainly remain in Iraq in early 2009.

But the argument over Iraq is crowding out a more fundamental debate over the nature of America’s purpose and power in a changing world. In a way, the absence of a strategy for Iraq in 2003 is a particularly tragic microcosm of a more fundamental and consequential problem — the absence of a grand strategy for America.

What is the nature of this changing world? What are America’s core national interests and how should they best be pursued? What is the purpose of American power? These are questions that confound analysts as distinguished as Henry Kissinger, who recently wrote, “[i]n a world in which the sole superpower is a proponent of the prerogatives of the traditional nation-state, where Europe is stuck in halfway status, where the Middle East does not fit the nation-state model and faces a religiously motivated revolution, and where the nations of South

¹ Richard Atkinson, “The Long, Blinding Road to War; Unexpected Challenges Tested Petraeus in Iraq,” *The Washington Post* (7 March 2004): A1.

and East Asia still practice the balance of power, what is the nature of the international order that can accommodate these different perspectives?”²

Such questions can only be answered by a rigorous effort to assess challenges, identify core interests, and set forth a long-term vision or intent that provides parameters for the development of a national security strategy and its attendant policy initiatives. Accordingly, a truly “grand strategy,” to quote Edward Mead Earle, “is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is rendered unnecessary or undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.”³ Grand strategy is thus much closer to a vision statement, or what the military might call the “commander’s intent,” than a blueprint or action plan for short-term policy priorities. Nor is grand strategy simply an exercise in sloganeering or public relations. A real effort at developing a grand strategy requires thinking about the kind of world that is most conducive to American interests and how to set a course that, over several decades and multiple administrations, stands a good chance of helping to bring such a world about. Grand strategy becomes most meaningful as it helps to answer the question of where to place emphasis in the practice of statecraft, where to accept or manage risk, and what kinds of investments to make in order to best position America for a challenging future.⁴ This is the “grand” in grand strategy.

The challenge of developing a new grand strategy for the United States is not new. America faced a similar challenge in the early years of the Cold War. Those early years were marked by great uncertainty, anxiety, and a kind of pervasive fear that America was not ready for yet another struggle against a totalitarian foe. President Truman presided over the development of the earliest contours of a grand strategy of containment, clearly manifested in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Marshall Plan, and Truman’s pledge to support “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation.” In 1953, President Eisenhower reassessed his strategic inheritance by convening a competitive strategy development process—called the Solarium Project—that questioned the basic assumptions of America’s global strategy. Multiple teams presented alternative viewpoints on the nature of Soviet intentions and capabilities and recommended different approaches. Such a process, conducted in the weeks prior to the Korean armistice, is remarkable not only for the fact that it occurred at all, but that it has never been duplicated.⁵

Solarium also had a deeper influence, providing a vehicle to further develop and socialize the key assumptions underlying America’s strategic position and our basic national interests in a rapidly changing world. Today, America finds itself in a similar position, one in which our fundamental interests and objectives are worth examining anew.

² Henry Kissinger, “The Three Revolutions,” *The Washington Post* (7 April 2008): A17.

³ Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943): viii.

⁴ G. John Ikenberry calls such a process a kind of “neo-Rawlsian” question: “[t]he national security question for America to ask today is: what sorts of investments in global institutional architecture do I want to make now so that the coming power shifts will adversely impact me the least?” See his chapter in this report.

⁵ David Rothkopf concludes in his book, *Running the World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005): 71, that the Solarium Project was “not just the work of a good executive or a master bureaucrat or even a canny politician; it was a magisterial illustration of an effective president in action, perhaps one of the signal events of the past sixty years of the American presidency.”

In light of the daunting strategic inheritance the next President will face, the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), inspired by Eisenhower's Solarium effort, commissioned five authors to write their best case for what America's grand strategy in the early 21st century should be. CNAS then convened a well attended conference in early 2008 at which authors and attendees engaged in a robust debate over the papers and positions taken.⁶ This report is a result of this process. Revised papers from the commissioned authors are included along with a new strategy paper by CNAS authors that was informed, in part, by the papers and the conference.

While each paper stands on its own, the range of assessments regarding the current and future security environment, America's core interests, and the various strategies presented offer the reader a compelling snapshot of the contemporary debate over American grand strategy. As such, this volume is intended to offer a new administration useful intellectual capital on which to draw in developing a new direction and course for America. We hope that it plays at least a small part in helping to shape and elevate the ongoing and critical debate over America's purpose and place in the complex and dynamic world of the 21st century.

⁶The conference materials (papers, videos, transcripts) are available on the CNAS website: <http://www.cnas.org>.



FINDING OUR WAY

By Shawn Brimley

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Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



FINDING OUR WAY

By Shawn Brimley

America has lost its way. Not since the early years of the Cold War has America faced such profound strategic challenges and the imperative to make hard choices. This is an era of consequence for America and for the world, and the time before a new President will make key decisions is short. The next occupant of the oval office, Democrat or Republican, will need to not only articulate a vision for the role of the United States in the world, but also devise a grand strategy that is smart, sustainable, and saleable both at home and around the world. This is a daunting, though not impossible, task.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 have blinded us from the full panoply of challenges we face as a nation. And though the response to that terrible September day has been used to both justify and critique the major foreign policy decisions and domestic choices made by the Bush administration, the attacks did not “change everything.” Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has struggled to define its purpose and place in the world—the passage of time has only accentuated the uncertainty and raised the stakes.¹

Some would argue that now is not the time to debate the nature of America’s purpose, that ongoing wars abroad and fiscal woes at home make any such discussion indulgent or detached. That view is incorrect. It is precisely because the challenges are so enormous that a renewed debate on American grand strategy is needed. Others might contend that the onerous task of articulating the necessary contours of a new grand strategy should be left to a new administration. While it is obviously correct that the responsibility of strategy development belongs to the next president and his or her advisors, they will inherit two ongoing wars, a global struggle against terrorism, and a host of other strategic challenges that will rightfully dominate their critical early months. There is no better time than now to renew the debate concerning American grand

¹ Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier make this point in their forthcoming book *America Between the Wars: 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008). Also see Fred Kaplan, *Daydream Believers* (New York: Wiley, 2008): 1–6. Finally, see David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Touchstone, 2002).

strategy and to build intellectual capital on which the next administration can draw.

The United States has faced similar moments in the past. During the early years of the Cold War, politicians, policymakers and pundits engaged in intense debates over the nature of American power and purpose in the world.² The threat of the Soviet Union did not instantly catalyze America's strategic priorities. Rather, it took several years to approach anything resembling a basic strategic consensus. For a generation of Americans that came of age in the waning years of the Cold War, it is easy to overlook the fact that strategy during that challenging era was anything but static.³ While George Kennan wrote in 1947 that America should prepare to engage in the "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies," the strategy that evolved took years to coalesce, and took many forms over the course of four decades.⁴

The next occupant of the oval office will shoulder not only the most profound burdens of a nation at war, but also the imperative to move America forward. This volume is premised on the belief that the United States for too long has allowed the inertia of the post-Cold War era to perpetually push a consequential debate over America's purpose and place in the world beyond the horizon.

During perhaps the most consequential period since the fall of the Berlin Wall nearly two decades ago, America deserves a debate that transcends shallow partisanship and hollow rhetoric. In an

age of consequence, it is necessary to explore the nature of the strategic inheritance, the fundamental choices and attendant risks facing the nation, and the opportunity this moment provides for sustaining American leadership and renewing our standing in the world.

The Inheritance

The next president will inherit perhaps the most challenging set of strategic problems in a generation. Not since the Truman administration has an incoming commander in chief taken responsibility for two major ongoing wars.⁵ Not since George H.W. Bush inherited a rapidly changing world in 1989 has a new president had to contend with such an uncertain strategic environment. And unlike both of these cases, the new president will not ascend from the vice presidency. This unique circumstance carries both opportunity and danger. It is therefore vital that the transition from George W. Bush to his successor be managed effectively. Such an effort depends on a clear understanding of a troubled bequest.⁶

First, the next president will inherit wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — conflicts in which the ability of the United States to shape outcomes is eroding. In both theaters, the dynamics of insurgency, tribalism, and ethno-sectarian tensions are preventing the achievement of anything close to the maximalist goals of the Bush administration.

In Iraq, it seems all but certain that the next commander in chief will take office with approximately 130,000 troops on the ground.⁷ Much has been made

² There are any number of books that describe the debates in the early Cold War period, including several by John Lewis Gaddis as well as Lawrence Friedman, *The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000); Edward Judge and John Langdon, *A Hard and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996); Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: How America's Cold War Victory Shapes Our World* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2002); Ernest R. May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993); and Peter Grose, *Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Curtain* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

³ See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴ George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947).

⁵ I am referring, of course, to World War II's constituent elements — the war against Germany in Europe and against Japan in the Pacific.

⁶ This section draws from Kurt Campbell and Michèle Flournoy, *The Inheritance and the Way Forward* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2007).

⁷ See Michael Abramowitz and Karen DeYoung, "Next President Will Discover If U.S. Footprint Stabilizes Iraq," *The Washington Post* (10 April 2008): A16 and Steven Lee Myers and Thom Shanker, "Bush Signals No Further Reduction of Troops in Iraq," *The New York Times* (11 April 2008).

of the drop in violence associated with the “surge” and the assorted tribal truces that the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy has helped to consolidate. The reality, however, is that the underlying political and security situation is still exceedingly fragile. Several persistent tensions threaten to renew the simmering civil war: Sunni tribesmen could renew the insurgency against a central government unwilling to meet their demands for political inclusion and employment, intra-Shiite tensions appear to be intensifying, and many refugees are returning to find their homes occupied and a largely unresponsive government. Absent fundamental political accommodation, the situation in Iraq is likely to remain precarious.

According to the January 2008 report of the Afghanistan Study Group, “the mission to stabilize Afghanistan is faltering.”⁸ Hopeful progress in the months and years after the fall of the Taliban has been replaced with rising violence, a resurgent Taliban, an economy largely based on opium, and a fragile government in Kabul.⁹ Persistent violence in the south and east of the country has eroded the security situation to such a degree that the viability of planned presidential elections in 2009 is in doubt. In January 2008, retired Marine General James Jones told Congress, “what is happening in Afghanistan is a loss of momentum.”¹⁰ Equally worrisome, the continued conflict is eroding political support in many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, putting incredible strain on the alliance.¹¹

Second, America’s economy is showing serious signs of weakness. What began as a problem in America’s subprime mortgage market in 2007 has sent worrisome ripples across the global economy. Domestic views of America’s economy are more negative than at any point in nearly 15 years, and Congress recently scrambled to approve a massive stimulus package.¹² Also, the Bush administration’s last and largest budget — \$3 trillion — will likely push this year’s budget deficit to at least \$400 billion. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the United States will face “severe long-term budgetary challenges” as a result of pressure from “ongoing increases in health care costs, along with the aging of the population.”¹³ The pressure will not be alleviated by possible future economic growth, “as Medicare and Medicaid and, to a lesser extent, Social Security require ever-greater resources under current law.”¹⁴ Moreover, if the proposed fiscal year 2009 sum of \$515.4 billion is passed, the next president will inherit a defense budget that in inflation-adjusted dollars is the largest since World War II.¹⁵ Since 2001, Congress has approved a total of \$691 billion for the so-called “global war on terror,” and the cost of the wars could rise to nearly \$900 billion by next spring and may reach \$1 trillion by the end of 2009.¹⁶ The next president will have to deal with real economic and budgetary tensions that will force hard choices about where to place emphasis and how to manage risk.

⁸ *Afghanistan Study Group Report* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of the Presidency, January 2008): 15.

⁹ See Carlotta Gall, “U.N. Warns of Huge Crop of Afghan Opium Poppies,” *The New York Times* (6 February 2008).

¹⁰ James Jones, *Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (31 January 2008).

¹¹ Ann Scott Tyson and Josh White, “Gates Hits NATO Allies’ Role in Afghanistan,” *The Washington Post* (7 February 2008): A1; Helene Cooper, “Rice Tries to Convince Europe on Afghanistan,” *The New York Times* (7 February 2008); and “Afghanistan Spawns Tensions with Allies,” *The Associated Press* (7 February 2008). Also see Paul Gallis, *NATO and Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 2008).

¹² See Michael Abramowitz and Jon Cohen, “U.S. Concern Over Economy is Highest in Years,” *The Washington Post* (4 February 2008): A1; Graham Bowley and Floyd Norris, “Dow Plunges on New Sign of Recession,” *The New York Times* (6 February 2008): 1, and “It’s Rough Out There,” *The Economist* (26 January 2008).

¹³ Congressional Budget Office, *The Budget and Economic Outlook: Fiscal Years 2008 to 2018* (24 January 2008): 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 1.

¹⁵ The sum of \$515.4 billion does not include the \$172 billion in supplemental war funding for Iraq and Afghanistan, nor the \$16.1 billion for defense spending controlled by the Department of Energy or the \$5.2 billion for “defense-related activities” at other government agencies. See Fred Kaplan, “What’s Really in the U.S. Military Budget?” *Slate* (4 February 2008).

¹⁶ Yochi Dreazen and John McKinnon, “Rising Cost of Iraq War May Reignite Public Debate,” *The Wall Street Journal* (4 February 2008): A1. Also see Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 9 November 2007) and Steven Kosiak, *FY2009 Request Would Bring DOD Budget to Record (or Near-Record) Levels* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 4 February 2008).

Third, America is suffering from strategic distraction. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the global campaign against terrorism have so transfixed America's leadership and dominated the exercise of statecraft that areas of the world and key relationships vital to our interests have been given scant attention. The next president will have to contend with several emerging challenges: the future of Russia's political evolution is in doubt; the continued rise of China poses challenges to America's strategic alliances in the region; stability in Pakistan could unravel quickly; relations with Latin America have deteriorated; North Korea has tested a nuclear weapon; and Iran continues to undermine our interests in the Middle East. According to Francis Fukuyama, "American preoccupation with Iraq limits Washington's options in other parts of the world and has distracted the attention of senior policy makers from other regions such as Asia that in the long run are likely to present greater strategic challenges."¹⁷ Moreover, the continued rise of transnational challenges such as radical Islamist ideology, non-state weapons proliferation, global climate change, and energy security will pose ever-increasing problems for the United States and its allies. At a time of profound strategic importance, America requires a renewed focus on the steady application of statecraft in order to navigate the dangerous waters ahead.

Navigation requires a choice of direction, however, and perhaps the most ominous feature of the national security inheritance is the deep skepticism concerning the efficacy of our efforts at home and abroad. Domestically, an overwhelming percentage of the public feel that the United States is on the wrong track, and over 60 percent believe that the country is

not winning the war on terrorism.¹⁸ Polling in 2007 by the Pew Global Attitudes Project revealed that over the last five years, "America's image has plummeted throughout much of the world, including sharp drops in favorability among traditional allies in Western Europe, as well as substantial declines in Latin America, the Middle East, and elsewhere."¹⁹ However, according to a May 2007 survey, 67 percent of Americans believe that the United States should take an active role in world affairs, and 93 percent believe that the decline in America's moral authority is a serious problem. Clearly, the next president will need to work hard to improve the image of American power both at home and abroad — the good news is that he or she will have the support of the American people towards that end.

Surveying the contours of the national security inheritance is sobering, as is the realization that the next administration will quickly shoulder a near-overwhelming burden of wartime responsibility that will seriously limit the time and space for deep introspection, debate, and the formulation of a new grand strategy for America. As vital as a debate on grand strategy will be in early 2009, the next administration will not enjoy the luxury of time. There is thus a real danger that the tyranny of the inheritance will prevent a new administration from arresting the strategic drift that has for too long forced America off course. An imposing inheritance combined with a long-eroded capability for serious and sustained national strategic planning requires an honest and urgent debate over America's purpose and place in the world.²⁰

¹⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 182.

¹⁸ See Associated Press-Ipsos poll conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs, 4–6 February 2008. Also see CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll, 6–9 December 2007. Polling data available at <http://www.pollingreport.com>.

¹⁹ *Global Unease with Major World Powers: 47-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, June 2007): 13.

²⁰ For a discussion on the lack of strategic planning ability in the U.S. government, see Aaron Friedberg, "Strengthening U.S. Strategic Planning," *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2007–2008): 47–60. Also see Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, *Strategic Planning for U.S. National Security: A Project Solarium for the 21st Century* (Princeton University: Princeton Project on National Security, 2005).

Dealing with Risk

Not only does the magnitude of the national security inheritance require concerted and urgent attention from a broad range of analysts as well as past, present, and future policymakers—a failure to reconsider the parameters of American security strategy in the early period of the next administration carries at least four types of risk.

First, inaction early in the next term will increase the likelihood that America will reach a point of strategic exhaustion. In addition to the economic strains described above, America's military is under profound strain and is at risk. In recent testimony before Congress, outgoing Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody warned policy makers that, “[t]he current demand for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the sustainable supply, and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies . . . Overall, our readiness is being consumed as fast as we build it. If unaddressed, this lack of balance poses a significant risk to the All-Volunteer Force and degrades the Army's ability to make a timely response to other contingencies.”²¹ Similarly, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen told Congress that, “[the] pace of ongoing operations has prevented our forces from fully training for the full spectrum of operations and impacts our ability to be ready to counter future threats. This lack of balance is unsustainable in the long term. We must restore the balance and strategic depth required for national security.”²²

Second, inaction risks exacerbating American weakness around the world. Absent concerted action that addresses key challenges such as managing military

risk, a weakening economy, faltering alliances, the rise of China and India, and larger structural issues such as climate change and energy security, we may well reach a point where simple course corrections will no longer be sufficient to arrest America's strategic drift. Moreover, as allies and adversaries have reacted to American actions over the last seven years, and in a world that looks increasingly less unipolar, it is vital that a new administration engage with the world as it is, not as some might wish it to be.²³ Inaction on a host of foreign policy and national security challenges will cause a new administration to rapidly sink into the quicksand of daily crisis management.

Third, for a new administration to deal with the various components of the inheritance in the absence of a new strategic framework would risk serious error early in the next term. The next administration will need to distinguish between vital and important strategic interests and assess how policy shifts in one area might affect others. History is replete with serious errors made during presidential transition periods—from the Bay of Pigs during the Eisenhower-Kennedy transition to the humanitarian mission in Somalia that the Clinton administration inherited from George H.W. Bush.²⁴ Campaign promises dealing with Iraq, Afghanistan, or the campaign against terrorism enacted quickly on their own perceived merits may exacerbate risks to other American interests. Perhaps more than at any other point in recent history, the next administration needs a strategic framework that can help guide key early decisions.

Fourth, considering strategy now can lower the risk that the next administration will miss important opportunities that are unique to periods of transition.

²¹ General Richard Cody, *Written Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (1 April 2008).

²² Admiral Michael Mullen, *Written Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee* (6 February 2008).

²³ See Richard Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity,” *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2008): 44–57. Also see Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: Norton, 2005).

²⁴ This is the topic of a forthcoming book by Kurt Campbell and James Steinberg, *Difficult Transitions: Why New Presidents Fail at Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, forthcoming).

While it is false to suggest that current problems are the singular fault of the Bush administration, presidential transitions are by their very nature obvious breaks with the past. Republican or Democratic, the new administration will have a brief window of opportunity to engage the American people and the international community in order to generate the momentum and goodwill necessary to deal with the large challenges it will inherit.

These overlapping and crosscutting risks will pose a serious challenge for the new team in the early months of 2009. Inaction will be unacceptable in political and strategic terms, but rapid action absent effective strategic thinking would likely be worse. The next administration will face hurdles on two dimensions—the strategic challenges it will inherit and the perils unique to presidential transitions.

Echoes of History

While the next administration faces a troubled bequest to be sure, it will not be the only White House team to experience such turbulence and uncertainty. The history of American foreign policy echoes with examples of significant disagreement and debate concerning how a new administration might deal with the responsibility of office and the imperative to exercise statecraft.²⁵

This volume draws inspiration from the early years of the Cold War—in particular the Eisenhower administration—when, in a period of profound and rapid change to the international strategic context, structured debates regarding American grand strategy helped set the country on a sustainable path that, in time, culminated in the destruction of the iron curtain and the fall of the Soviet Union.

President Dwight Eisenhower, in addition to inheriting an unpopular war in Korea, believed that the level of defense spending was unsustainable, and was convinced that sustaining conventional military parity with the Soviet Union in Europe while keeping pace on the nuclear dimension would ultimately pose serious threats to America's economy and way of life. During the summer of 1953, President Eisenhower convened a process by which his top advisors reconsidered the contours of a Cold War strategy for the long haul. Dubbed "Project Solarium," the exercise culminated in a series of daylong briefings and debates among Eisenhower's top national security advisors.²⁶ Multiple teams presented different proposals ranging from the continuation of the Truman strategy, to a more robust policy of nuclear deterrence, to a strategy aimed at using covert instruments to "roll back" areas of Soviet influence. This unique approach helped to shape what ultimately became known as Eisenhower's "New Look" policy, which in part relied on what Secretary of State Dulles referred to as the threat of "massive retaliation" with nuclear weapons, but also concentrated on the use of alliances, psychological warfare, covert action, and negotiations.²⁷ In a recent book on the history of the National Security Council, David Rothkopf concluded that the Solarium effort was "not just the work of a good executive or a master bureaucrat or even a canny politician; it was a magisterial illustration of an effective president in action, perhaps one of the signal events of the past sixty years of the American presidency."²⁸

²⁵ Works dealing with the early history of American foreign policy include Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Mariner Books, 1997) and Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

²⁶ "Solarium" refers to the White House solarium, in which Eisenhower engaged in a preliminary meeting with his advisors and conceived of the longer and more structured process.

²⁷ The best historical account of this process can be found in Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see chapter five of Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*. Finally, see Christopher Preble, *The Uses of Threat Assessment in Historical Perspective: Perception, Misperception and Political Will* (Princeton University: Princeton Project on National Security, 2005).

²⁸ David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005): 71.

Of course, other administrations rejected or refined elements of American strategy throughout the Cold War. While Eisenhower made revisions to the Truman-era strategy, President Kennedy made modifications to the “New Look” strategy as well. The Kennedy administration rejected the notion that massive retaliatory nuclear strikes as a response to Soviet aggression were a truly credible threat, introducing instead a policy of “Flexible Response,” which emphasized “counterforce” nuclear targeting in order to make America’s deterrence policy more believable. From President Johnson’s belief that the threat posed by North Vietnam justified the commitment of significant military force, to Nixon’s decision to open diplomatic relations with China in 1972 and pursue détente with the Soviet Union, from Carter’s emphasis on arms control and human rights, to Reagan’s increase in defense spending and hard rhetoric, American strategy during the Cold War was certainly not monolithic. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important conclusions one can draw from the Cold War era is that America’s grand strategy of containment can more aptly be described as *strategies* of containment.²⁹ Deviations from one administration to the next reflected both continuity and change. But whatever the specific strategic shifts pursued throughout the Cold War, there was an overarching grand strategy that helped incoming administrations navigate. Containment was, in a sense, a strategic north star that provided direction and helped guide the nation for decades. John Lewis Gaddis has concluded that containment:

... was a feat of imagination, made all the more impressive by the bleak circumstances in which it originated. The transferable lesson here is a psychological one: that any strategy in which the only choices available

are deadly, dangerous, or otherwise undesirable requires rethinking. That is how Nixon and Kissinger responded when they inherited the Vietnam War, the product of an inability to rethink. In doing so, they were following Kennan’s precedent.³⁰

It is therefore entirely appropriate and in accordance with the historical pattern of American foreign policy that the new administration takes a hard look at the Bush administration’s strategic legacy and determines which elements need to continue and which should change.

Competing Approaches

Given both the contours of the strategic inheritance and the need to arrest the strategic drift described above, the next administration will have to address some of the fundamental choices available to the United States. In general, there are four basic options or ideal strategic types when conceiving a nation’s grand strategy: isolationism or restraint, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy. Each of these competing strategic visions has a robust history in both academic and policy literature and each contains significant individual strands that are unique in history and in practice.³¹ Each school has modern advocates, and in general, American national security strategies tend to contain elements from several of these schools.³²

First, isolationism holds that America’s only true vital interest is national defense—defined as securing the liberty, property, and security of the homeland. According to this school of thought, the United States should not attempt to maintain world order, and the promotion of democracy around the world only serves to

²⁹ See Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*.

³⁰ Ibid.: 386.

³¹ This section draws several insights from Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* (Winter 1996–1997): 5–53.

³² For example, both Clinton and Bush-era National Security Strategies contain elements of selective engagement, cooperative security and primacy.

generate additional enemies and risk strategic exhaustion.³³ Isolationists are highly skeptical of the use of American power abroad and retain a deep animosity toward international institutions and international law. Contemporary arguments seldom use “isolationism,” but rather terms like “restraint” or “offshore balancing.” In *The Peace of Illusions*, Christopher Layne argues that, “offshore balancing is a multipolar — not unipolar — strategy, and therefore it would accommodate the rise of new great powers while simultaneously shifting, or devolving, to Eurasia’s major powers the primary responsibility for their own defense.”³⁴ In a November 2007 article in *The American Interest*, Barry Posen concluded that 16 years of post-Cold War strategy had failed, and that the United States should thus “conceive its security interests narrowly, use its military power stingily, pursue its enemies quietly but persistently, share responsibilities and costs more equitably, watch and wait more patiently. Let’s do this for 16 years and see if the outcomes aren’t better.”³⁵ In the context of the likely strategic inheritance in early 2009, a strategy of restraint will have some salience in America’s domestic politics.

Second, selective engagement represents a hybrid strategy that is firmly rooted in the realist goals of security and prosperity, but also includes liberal goals such as expanding free markets, human rights, and international openness.³⁶ Unlike most neo-isolationist ideas, engagement strategies posit that a precautionary or forward posture that seeks to prevent significant threats from materializing is preferable to one that employs offshore balancing.

Therefore, selective engagement strategies would maintain core American alliances such as NATO and bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea. In order to actually be selective, advocates of selective engagement would employ a tiered hierarchy of national interests, differentiating between the *vital* interest of defending the homeland, the *highly important* goals of maintaining Eurasian great power peace and access to Gulf oil at reasonable prices, and *important* interests such as international economic openness, growth of democracy and human rights, and preventing severe climate change.³⁷ In *A Grand Strategy for America*, Robert J. Art argues that selective engagement is both politically feasible and affordable, steering “a middle course between not doing enough and attempting to do too much; it takes neither an isolationist, unilateralist path at one extreme nor a world policeman role at the other.”³⁸

Third, advocates of cooperative security strategies are typically liberal internationalists who argue that America has a vital interest in pursuing a “world of liberty under law.”³⁹ For this school, a post-Cold War era defined by growing interdependence and deepening connectivity demands that American interests be defined broadly, that wars anywhere stand a greater chance of spreading and expanding, and that the United States must therefore pursue liberty both at home and abroad.⁴⁰ Others argue that in a world in which transnational threats such as non-state nuclear proliferation are likely to increase, the international community has a “duty to prevent,” which rejects the proposition that sovereignty

³³ See Eugene Gholz, Daryl Press, and Harvey Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security* (Spring 1997): 5–48.

³⁴ Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006): 160.

³⁵ Barry Posen, “The Case for Restraint,” *The American Interest* (November–December 2007): 7–17.

³⁶ See Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement,” *International Security* (Winter 1998–1999): 79–113.

³⁷ Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003): 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 10.

³⁹ See G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 2006).

⁴⁰ Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* (Winter 1996–1997): 23.

is absolute.⁴¹ Advocates of cooperative security thus place a great deal of instrumental value on the creation and effective performance of multilateral institutions and international law. But more fundamentally, advocates of collective security such as G. John Ikenberry have argued that, “American power may rise or fall and its foreign policy ideology may wax and wane between multilateral and imperial impulses — but the wider and deeper liberal global order is now a reality to which America itself must accommodate.”⁴² This school believes it would be foolhardy and counterproductive for America to disengage from a world order that it not only helped to create, but one that is inherently conducive to the pursuit of core American interests.

Finally, advocates of primacy argue that only sustained American hegemony ensures continued global stability. From this perspective, the rise of a peer competitor in Eurasia would pose a dramatic threat to international order and significantly increase the risk of war. Most advocates of primacy argue that the United States is, on balance, perceived to be a benign hegemon, and thus significant balancing behavior that would undermine America’s strategic position is unlikely to occur.⁴³ Moreover, even if there is growing resentment of continued American primacy, Michael Mandelbaum argues in *The Case for Goliath* that American abdication from its current role would “deprive the international system of one of its principal safety features, which keeps countries from smashing into each other, as they are historically prone to do. In this sense, a world without America

would be the equivalent of a freeway full of cars with no brakes.”⁴⁴ Some in this school believe that the so-called unipolar moment must be sustained, and thus China and other rising powers should be viewed as strategic competitors rather than potential partners.⁴⁵ Critics of perpetual primacy often argue that an insistence on hegemony is a recipe for strategic overstretch, national exhaustion, and a decline of power and influence.⁴⁶

The Opportunity

It is hard to believe that the post-Cold War era has lasted nearly two decades. For far too long, America has suffered from a strategic drift that has contributed to the erosion of any residual consensus over our purpose and place in the world. The attacks of September 11th and the pervasive fear the attacks engendered have arguably altered America’s strategic culture to the point where an administration’s national security strategy could produce what John Quincy Adams warned against so long ago — an America that deliberately goes “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”⁴⁷ According to John Lewis Gaddis, “it’s here then, that the Adams legacy and the Bush strategy part company, for such a quest, Adams feared, would make the United States the ‘dictatress of the world.’ Bush, in contrast, sees the United States as securing liberty throughout the world.”⁴⁸ It is long past time to renew the debate over whether America should pursue an empire of liberty or a more modest grand strategy that accepts or imposes limits on the exercise of American power abroad.

⁴¹ See Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, “A Duty to Prevent,” *Foreign Affairs* (January–February 2004): 136–150.

⁴² G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2006): 3.

⁴³ See William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (July–August 1996): 18–32.

⁴⁴ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World’s Government in the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005): 195.

⁴⁵ See Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1990–1991): 23–33. Also see William Kristol and Robert Kagan, eds., *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2000).

⁴⁶ See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1997).

⁴⁷ John Quincy Adams, *Speech to Congress* (4 July 1821).

⁴⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004): 110.

Whatever the outcome of this critical debate and whoever ends up as the 44th president of the United States, it is vital that some form of consensus emerge on America's fundamental role in the world.⁴⁹ The challenges are too imposing and the costs of inaction are too overwhelming to avoid making strategic choices that are informed by a grand strategy sufficiently broad to capture America's global interests. Recall the words spoken by Winston Churchill to an American audience at the beginning of the Cold War, "[i]t is a solemn moment for the American Democracy. For with primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future... Opportunity is here now, clear and shining... To reject it or ignore it or fritter it away will bring upon us all the long reproaches of the after-time."⁵⁰

The next commander-in-chief will inherit challenges that, in scale and scope, are perhaps beyond any since the end of the Second World War. Such an imposing inheritance threatens to overwhelm

the new administration and prevent the development of a new grand strategy that this country so desperately needs. America has an opportunity to renew its standing in the world and to sustain its leadership beyond the challenges that presently divide us. That process can and should begin now, lest the opportunity this period provides be lost, and America continues its strategic drift into the ever more troubled waters that churn beyond the horizon. The inheritance is daunting and the costs of inaction or error are great, but America has faced such challenges before and has risen to meet them. In the early years of America's last long, twilight struggle, a mid-ranking diplomat wrote words that would come to define an era—words that still resonate today, "[s]urely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Historian Robert Kagan argues persuasively that such a consensus already exists, but it is too often ignored. See Robert Kagan, "Neocon Nation: Neoconservatism, c.1776," *World Affairs* (Spring 2008): 13–35. Also see Robert Kagan, *Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2008).

⁵⁰ Winston Churchill, *Speech to Westminster College* (5 March 1946).

⁵¹ Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."

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SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AFTER BUSH

By Robert J. Art

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AFTER BUSH

By Robert J. Art

Many of the ideas in this paper draw from Robert J. Art, A Grand Strategy for America (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). I thank Jill Hazelton for research assistance.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the strategy of selective engagement. To do so, I proceed as follows: in the first section, I enumerate the salient aspects of the current international environment. In the second, I lay out what I conceive to be America's overarching national interests in the current era, together with the threats to them. In the third, I define the main features of selective engagement, show how it advances U.S. national interests, describe the risks associated with this strategy, and then show how to avoid them. In the last section, I highlight several key issues that the next administration, whatever its political complexion, will have to deal with if selective engagement is to be implemented effectively.

The International Environment

There are six features of the current international environment most salient to devising an effective grand strategy for the United States. They are: (1) the absence of a peer competitor to the United States; (2) the lack of legitimacy for U.S. actions in the eyes of other states; (3) the continuing advance of democracy; (4) the advance of globalization, together with the backlash that is forming against it; (5) the rise of China and the coalescing of Europe; and (6) the trilogy of ills of grand weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism, the global Islamic jihadi threat, and climate change.

First, the United States has no peer competitor. Today it stands at the pinnacle of its power when measured in terms of its capabilities vis-à-vis other states. It is the mightiest state in the world militarily and outspends nearly all other states on defense, even if it does not have the world's largest armed forces. It has the world's largest single national economy, which is three times larger than its nearest national competitor (Japan), when measured in nominal dollars, and twice as large as its nearest national competitor (China) when measured in

purchasing power parity (PPP).¹ It is the world's most efficient economy, and its economic reach is global. It is the dominant source of technological innovation in the world today and dominates most of the key value-added, high tech industries. Finally, it continues to exert a global cultural influence that no other state can yet match.

These unparalleled assets together with the absence of a peer competitor allow the United States to shape its international environment, but also present clear dangers and require the U.S. to choose priorities. The dangers lie in the arrogance that great power too often brings and the consequent attempt to try and do too much, producing an overextended grand strategy. The difficulty of choice lies in the need to select from among the many things that great power makes possible those things that produce the greatest benefit to the state. Great power does not make all desirable things possible, and it is too easy to waste resources in the belief that one has a superabundance of them. America's unipolar position is thus a double-edged sword.

Second, while its hard power assets remain unrivalled and its cultural appeal remains extensive, America's political appeal, if not its influence, is significantly

diminished from where it was in the decade after the Cold War's end; its image as a positive force in world politics is at low ebb, and the legitimacy of its international actions in the eyes of other states has reached its lowest point since the end of World War II. The precipitous decline in America's standing began with the Bush administration and was especially steep with the onset of the 2003 Iraq war.² By January 2007, a BBC World Service poll taken in 25 countries found that 1 in 2 citizens felt the United States was playing a "mainly negative" role in the world. An April 2007 poll found that majorities in 10 of the 15 publics polled believed the United States could not be trusted to "act responsibly in the world" and 5 out of the 7 publics polled believed that the "United States does not take their interests into account when making foreign policy decisions."³ America's image in the Arab world is especially bad. A University of Maryland/Zogby poll released in February 2007 found that 57 percent of Arabs in six countries had a very unfavorable opinion of the United States and 69 percent had no confidence in the United States. In April 2008, the same poll found that the unfavorable opinion had risen to 64 percent while the no confidence figure remained the same.⁴ The disjuncture between unparalleled U.S. power

¹ These comparisons are based on 2006 figures in trillions of dollars. Nominal and PPP figures, respectively, are: United States, \$13,195 and \$13,195; Japan, \$4,337 and \$4,092; China, \$2,835 and \$6,381. The year 2006 is the latest year for which actual figures are available for China; figures for 2007 and 2008 are estimated, which is why I have used 2006 figures. Estimated figures for 2008 put the U.S. economy a little under three times greater than Japan in nominal dollars (\$14,195 trillion to \$4,867 trillion) and 75 percent greater than China's in PPP dollars (\$14,195 trillion to \$8,105 trillion). See International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/faq.htm>. Recent World Bank recalculations put China's output at roughly 40 percent less than the Bank's previous estimates and are lower than International Monetary Fund figures for China's gross domestic product (GDP). See Keith Bradsher, "A Revisionist Tale: Why a Poor China Seems Richer," *The New York Times* (21 December 2007): C1. For geopolitical comparisons and weight in the global economy, as Richard Cooper argues, nominal dollars are superior to PPP dollars. See Richard N. Cooper, "Testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission" (7 December 2001), available at <http://www.uscc.gov/textonly/transcriptstxt/tescpr.htm>.

² See Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006): 97 and more generally chapter 2, for documentation on the precipitous decline in U.S. legitimacy and an analysis of the reasons for it.

³ The January poll is from Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, World Public Opinion.org, "Global Views of the USA Improve" (1 April 2008), available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/incl/printable_version.php?nt=306. The April poll is World Public Opinion.org, "World Publics Reject US Role as the World Leader," at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/CCGA+_ViewsUS_article.pdf. A poll by the BBC, conducted between October 31, 2007 and January 25, 2008, saw some small improvement in America's standing: 47 percent of those polled said that the United States was having a negative influence globally (down from 52 percent a year earlier), while 35 percent (up from 31 percent a year earlier) believed it was having a positive influence. See World Public Opinion.org, "Global Views of the USA Improve" (1 April 2008), available at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/463.php?lb=brglm&nt=463&nid=&id=. For a full analysis of how others view the United States, see Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How We are Different and Why We are Disliked* (New York: Times Books, 2006).

⁴ The Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, University of Maryland/Zogby International 2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey (8 February 2007): 24, 26. The six countries are Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The 2007 poll is available at <http://www.brookings.edu/views/speeches/telhami20070208.pdf>. I am indebted to Shibley Telhami for providing me with the results of the poll released in April 2008.

and equally unparalleled low U.S. legitimacy is a product of both policy choice and unipolarity and needs to be addressed if any U.S. grand strategy is to be successful, for the simple reason that power alone is never sufficient to produce lasting results in international politics.

Third, democracy remains on the advance. Freedom House's most recent annual survey shows that as of 2006, 90 countries (nearly half) are free, 58 partly free, and 45 not free. This compares with 42 free countries in 1976; in 30 years, then, the number of democracies has more than doubled.⁵ While there are year-to-year fluctuations in the number of democracies, the trend over the last 30 years has been upward: there are many more democratic states today than ever before. Even in the Middle East, the United States has won the battle for democracy in the minds of the publics. They prefer democracy to its alternatives; it is their governments that are the impediment. To the extent that there is a "democratic peace" among republican governments, the advance of democracy benefits the United States.

Fourth, as will be shown below, the United States benefits in many ways from the advance of globalization, but it is no longer seen as an unparalleled good, not only by foreign publics but also by American workers who feel disadvantaged by it.⁶ On balance, globalization is a net benefit to the United States both economically and politically. It is also a net benefit to other countries that participate heavily in globalization (i.e. are open to the international economy) because openness fosters economic growth, more civil liberties and political rights, and less corruption.⁷ An open

international economic order should not be taken for granted, however, because globalization will not continue unless proper political steps are taken to preserve it.

Fifth, the United States may as yet have no peer competitor and it may well be quite a while before it does, but the rise of China and the political coalescing of the European Union (EU) present their own set of challenges to the United States. As China's economy continues to grow and its military forces improve in quality, America's preeminent position in East Asia is under challenge. China is now a more important economic market for Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan than the United States, and China's global economic influence continues to grow, through its demand for energy sources and raw materials. China is the military hegemon on the mainland; the United States, if it is to be an influential political-military actor in East Asia, must remain the maritime hegemon. This may well necessitate an air/maritime arms race with China should it seek to contest the blue-water supremacy of the United States.

The coalescing of the EU, particularly the formation of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) presents a different sort of challenge to the United States. It is not that Europe seeks to, or will, become a military rival of the United States; that is not Europe's intent. Rather, the challenge is to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). If the ESDP develops into an effective mechanism for integrating European defense efforts and defense policy, then an EU bloc could well emerge that will significantly affect how NATO functions. The United States has been comfortable with a NATO

⁵ See *Freedom House in the World 2007: Selected Data* (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2007), available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/press_release/fiw07_charts.pdf.

⁶ For example, a BBC World Service poll of 34,500 people in 34 countries conducted in early 2008 found that 1 out of 2 believed that economic globalization was moving too quickly and 64 percent felt that the benefits and burdens of globalization were not shared fairly. See World Public Opinion.org, "Widespread Unease about Economy and Globalization — Global Poll" (7 February 2008), at <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/btglobalizationtradera/446.php?lb=brglm&pnt=446&nid=&id>.

⁷ See A.T. Kearney, "Measuring Globalization," *Foreign Policy* (January/February 2001): 61; and Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 217 – 218.

that it dominates and with a situation in which it deals with European states on a bilateral basis. An EU bloc within NATO would mean a NATO that the United States could not dominate and perhaps even a NATO that the United States would not want to remain a member of. How to avert this potential train wreck is not self-evident.⁸

Finally, the trilogy of ills of grand terrorism, the global jihadist threat, and climate change are all too familiar. In their own way they are all collective action problems. The United States needs the cooperation of other states if fissile materials are to be kept out of the hands of terrorists. The global jihadist threat, which is more akin to a movement than a monolithic organization, cannot be dealt with by the United States or the West alone. It requires the cooperation of non-Western states that often have neither the incentives nor the capacity to take the measures necessary to deal with their own jihadis. Climate change represents the biggest collective action challenge of all; the action required to mitigate the problem has not yet been forthcoming. This trilogy of collective action issues requires leadership from the world's most powerful states and especially from the United States.

If these six features are among the most salient aspects of the contemporary international setting, what U.S. national interests follow from them? What should be America's goals in this current era and what are the foreseeable threats to them?

Interests and Threats

The United States has six fundamental national interests in the current era: first, to protect the homeland from attack; second, to keep a deep peace among the Eurasian great powers; third, to preserve assured access to stable supplies of oil;

fourth, to preserve an open international economic order; fifth, to spread democracy and the rule of law, protect human rights, and prevent mass murders in civil wars; and sixth, to avert severe climate change.⁹

The first goal requires that the United States prevent the spread of WMD, especially nuclear and biological weapons, to more states and keep such weapons out of the hands of terrorists. The second requires that the United States retain its two central alliances at either end of Eurasia—the NATO alliance and the U.S.-Japan alliance. The third requires that the United States act in ways that prevent any state, from within the region or without, from acquiring hegemony over Persian Gulf oil supplies. The fourth requires that the United States maintain its commitment to international economic openness and use its military power in ways that preserve global stability. The fifth requires that the United States help foster political liberalization and the rule of law within states, and promote economic development that helps create the large middle class upon which stable democracies depend. In addition, the United States must act in concert with other states to stop or prevent mass murder in ethnic and civil wars that have already begun or are highly likely to occur. The sixth goal requires that the United States and the world first cut and then stabilize the emissions of CO₂ and its equivalents into the atmosphere at levels that avoid severe climate change.

Why are these goals in America's interests to pursue?

When it comes to homeland security, the United States faces no state-centered threat of attack, either conventional or nuclear. No state, except the United States, is capable of

⁸For some ideas on how to do so, see Tomas Valasek, "The Roadmap to Better EU-NATO Relations," Centre for European Reform Briefing Note (December 2007), at http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/briefing_tv_eu_nato_20dec07.pdf.

⁹For fuller analysis, see Art, *A Grand Strategy*: chapter 2.

launching trans-oceanic conventional attacks; consequently, there is no conventional threat to the U.S. homeland. Similarly, the United States need not fear nuclear attack from hostile states because deterrence works between nuclear-armed state actors. In the hands of states, nuclear weapons are weapons par excellence of defense. The only serious threat to the American homeland comes from terrorists groups, like al Qaeda, that would use WMD — either for blackmail or attack — if they had them. Avoiding such grand terror attacks against the U.S. homeland necessitates, in turn, doing two things: limiting nuclear and biological spread to state actors, and locking down fissile material in the hands of states more effectively than has been done to date.¹⁰ The reason for the latter is obvious: terrorist theft of fissile material enables them to bypass the most difficult step in acquiring nuclear weapons. The reason for the former should also be clear: the more states that have nuclear weapons, the greater the chances are that fissile material can fall into the hands of non-state actors, especially when we consider some of the likely candidates for further state acquisition of nuclear weapons. Whereas terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons is the near-term threat of greatest severity to the United States, the biological threat will probably be more serious in the medium to longer term because of the continuing advances in modern biology, and because it is harder to control the spread of biological weapons than nuclear ones.

A deep peace among the Eurasian great powers means that none of them seriously contemplates war with one another to resolve their inevitable political conflicts. Keeping the peace deep among these powers has many advantages for the United States. It preserves economic openness (wars lead

to economic closure); it avoids intense security competitions (these can encourage nuclear and biological spread); and it averts big Eurasian great power wars (they have traditionally dragged in the United States). Keeping the peace deep in Western Eurasia is easy because of the current and foreseeable state of relations among the European great powers. This task is more difficult in Eastern Eurasia — due to the rivalry between a Japan used to being number one in the area and a rising China that no longer cedes that position to Japan — but it is by no means impossible. There are many things the United States can do to help keep the Eurasian great power peace deep, but one clearly stands out: preserve its two central alliances in Eurasia — NATO in Europe and the U.S.-Japan alliance in East Asia. These two alliances reassure America's other allies, help deter war, dampen down political conflicts, generally help maintain stable great power relations, give the United States fairly reliable allies, and provide bases from which to exert global influence.

Preserving assured access to stable oil supplies is necessary as long as the United States and the rest of the world remain dependent on oil to run their economies. The United States clearly needs an effective energy policy, one that reduces its dependence on fossil fuels and Persian Gulf oil imports, but until it devises one, it and other nations will have to rely on the Persian Gulf because it contains two-thirds of the world's proven reserves of oil and at least one-third of its proven natural gas supplies. As a consequence, the Gulf must, of necessity, remain of vital interest to the United States, even though the U.S. obtains only about 16 percent of its oil imports from the Gulf. The world oil market is highly integrated; big disruptions in

¹⁰ The United States and the rest of the world have not done as much as needs to be done in locking down the world's fissile material. This is especially crucial because no set of homeland security procedures can completely keep hostile actors from bringing fissile material into the United States. Therefore, it makes the most sense to prevent this material from falling into the hands of terrorists. For the state of "the lockdown" of global fissile material, see Matthew Bunn, *Securing the Bomb 2007* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, September 2007), at <http://www.nti.org/securingthebomb>.

one area affect supply and price globally. Because Gulf oil currently supplies about 40 percent of the oil consumed globally every day, and is projected to supply an even greater percentage a decade or two from now, the United States must prevent any power — external or internal to the region — from disrupting the flow of oil out of the Gulf. The 2003 Gulf War eradicated the Iraqi threat to the stable flow of Gulf oil, but Iran now aspires to be the regional hegemon in the Gulf.

The fourth interest — preservation of an open international economy — may not be as vital as homeland protection, but it is, nonetheless, highly important to the United States. For starters, the United States is the world's most economically competitive economy, and a country as efficient as the United States will do well in an open international order because its goods and services are highly competitive in other states' markets.¹¹ International openness translates into more U.S. exports of goods and services than if the international economy experienced closure, and produces a U.S. GDP that is about 10 percent higher than would otherwise be the case.¹² Moreover, due to the workings of comparative advantage, openness also means cheaper imports and consumer goods for Americans than would be the case if the international economy were more closed than it is. An open international economic order also facilitates economic growth in other states; the record shows unequivocally that developing states whose economies are more open to the international economy grow faster than economies that are more closed to it. Economic growth in other states means better customers for U.S. goods. Economic growth also helps generate the middle classes upon which

are built stable and mature democracies, thus contributing to the spread of democracy. Finally, economic growth and high levels of economic interdependence can have pacifying effects on state relations. To the extent that states believe they can prosper through trade rather than war, international openness can be a force for peace among states.

Many things could threaten today's open international economy. The increasing gap in income between globalization's winners and losers within societies could lead to political backlash and protectionism. Loss of jobs due to offshoring of manufacturing and provision of cheap services abroad could also create a backlash. Similarly, if the one state that has been the most consistent since 1945 in pushing for lowering of barriers to international economic interactions — the United States — were to backtrack, openness could suffer. These are serious possibilities that need to be dealt with through a series of measures, such as retraining displaced workers, redistributing income, producing more skilled workers through better education, and the like.¹³ But an equally serious challenge to international openness could arise if it were shorn of the political-military framework that undergirds it. As E.H. Carr famously wrote, “[a]ll economic orders presuppose a political order.” Through the projection of its military power since 1945, the United States has provided the political-military framework that has made openness possible and enabled globalization to flourish. Should the United States retrench from its overseas military presence, openness may well suffer. In this case, the “enemy” is us.

¹¹ World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report, 2007–2008*, at <http://www.gcr.weforum.org/>. In the report's words, “[t]he United States confirms its position as the most competitive economy in the world.”

¹² C. Fred Bergsten, ed., *The United States and the World Economy: Foreign Economic Policy for the Next Decade* (Washington, D.C.: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2005): 6.

¹³ Robert Lawrence finds that most of the increase in U.S. wage inequality has little to do with trade with developing countries and more to do with the rising share of the super rich and the increased share of profits in income. He calls for income redistribution policies to deal with the inequality and adjustment programs to deal with job dislocation. See Robert Z. Lawrence, *Blue Collar Blues: Is Trade to Blame for Rising US Income Inequality?* (Washington, D.C.: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008).

The fifth interest of the United States—to promote the spread of democracy and to prevent mass murder in ethnic and civil wars—is a combination of self-interest and moral duty, respectively. By fostering political liberalization, the rule of law, economic development, and the generation of large middle classes in the developing world, the United States will help create societies that are more likely to be democratic, rich, satisfied, respectful of human rights, and more peaceful than if these societies remain poor, non-democratic, and more conflict prone, both internally and externally. A world in which democracy is spreading is clearly preferable for the United States on hardheaded grounds over one in which democracy is in retreat.

The injunction to prevent or stop mass murder is a moral imperative for the United States. Clearly, it cannot intervene in every civil war in the world; neither the United States nor the international community has either the political will or the resources to do this. But in cooperation with other states, the United States, out of moral conscience, can and should act to stop the worst civil wars—those that experience or that are likely to experience the mass murder of non-combatants.¹⁴ Such interventions not only save lives—they can, if done properly (which requires a considerable investment of resources and a prolonged international presence in the affected states), rescue failing or failed states from capture by extremist groups that may provide shelter to terrorists, and perhaps even help promote the spread of democracy.

The sixth interest of the United States—to cut CO₂ emissions so as to avert severe climate change—is either highly important or vital, depending on the severity of climate change. Because it is rich and technologically advanced, the United States, under moderate warming scenarios (2 to 3 degrees centigrade), will be less hard hit by global warming than the poorer states in that it will be better able to adapt. Even if it suffers less, however, the United States will still suffer. All sections of the country will be affected, although unevenly; the costs of adaptation will be large, and public sector budgets will be under severe strain.¹⁵ Even worse is eventually in store for the United States if the Greenland Ice Sheet continues to contract because that will lead to a significant rise in sea level (measured in meters) that will directly affect the 53 percent of Americans living in coastal regions.¹⁶ Finally, should global warming continue unabated, there is the distinct possibility that the earth could be kicked into a new climatic state that could have catastrophic consequences for human life. Past evidence concerning large climate changes suggests this could occur over decades, not centuries.

Even short of that doomsday scenario, moderate climate change will likely produce an international environment less stable than the current one because of the social, economic, and political changes it will bring about. Depending on the degree of severity of the temperature increases, climate change could produce mass migrations of people fleeing inhospitable living conditions,

¹⁴By mass murder, I mean the deliberate killing of more than 50,000 non-combatants within a five-year period. By this criterion, 20 to 25 percent of civil wars since 1945 have experienced mass murder. This definition of mass murder comes from Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004): 10–16; the 20–25 percent figure for civil wars comes from Art, *A Grand Strategy*: 151–152.

¹⁵For details, see *The US Economic Impacts of Climate Change and the Costs of Inaction, Executive Summary* (College Park, MD: Center for Integrative Environmental Research, 2007), at <http://www.cier.umd.edu/climateadaptation/index.html>.

¹⁶The percentage of Americans living in coastal areas comes from Art, *A Grand Strategy*: 74. According to the International Panel on Climate Change, gaps in current scientific understanding about sea level rise do not permit a clear upper limit for the rise. Current models do not predict significant melting of the Antarctic Ice Sheet. See International Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report* (16 November 2007): 8, 13, at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf.

conflicts brought on by resource scarcity, the collapse of governmental authority in already poor and weak states, the spread of diseases and the risks of pandemics, and the like. Thus, although the U.S. homeland will likely be less adversely affected physically by climate change than that of the poorer states, these changes in the international environment, should they materialize, will pose serious national security challenges for the country, even if their exact dimensions and scale cannot yet be spelled out.¹⁷

Over the next 50 years, as a consequence of the previous 150 years of CO₂ emissions by the rich, industrialized states, the earth's average temperature will inevitably rise, causing climate change. The only questions now are how large the temperature increase will be and how extensively the climate will change. Both depend critically on what actions are taken over the next decade or so. Thus, because of the potentially large costs to the United States — and especially because of the risk of triggering a dramatic change to a new and more adverse climatic state for human life — arresting the rise in global temperature and averting severe climate change are clearly in America's interest. U.S. action is all the more imperative because other states, notably China, are unlikely to take serious steps to limit their CO₂ emissions unless the United States does also.¹⁸

These, then, are the six key national interests of the United States in the current era. How does the strategy of selective engagement advance them?

The Strategy of Selective Engagement

As I have defined it, the strategy of selective engagement has six key features. First, it embraces the above set of U.S. national interests and holds to the view that the projection of U.S. military power — when properly done — is useful, although not sufficient, to attaining them. Selective engagement does not deny the importance of the other instruments of statecraft — the political-diplomatic and the economic. Indeed, it views them as central to an effective grand strategy. What it argues, however, is that under contemporary conditions, these two instruments of statecraft will not be successful, and U.S. national interests will not be protected, unless the United States projects its military power abroad. Power projection is therefore central to an effective American grand strategy.

The purpose of power projection is to shape events, not simply react to them. Selective engagement seeks to mold the international environment in order to make it more congenial to U.S. interests, rather than to just allow adverse events to happen. In this sense it is a precautionary strategy, and the assumption is that it is costlier to have to deal with adverse events than to prevent them from happening in the first place. Of course, not all adverse events can be prevented and not all things can be controlled. What selective engagement does is project U.S. military power in ways that can help tilt the balance of international forces so as to advance America's six national interests. This means working to produce international conditions that will, in turn, foster beneficial trends within and among states, rather than directly intervening with military force within states — although the latter is not totally ruled out. Selective engagement is a strategy that seeks to shape, not control, the international environment.

¹⁷ See Kurt M. Campbell et al., *The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Global Climate Change* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for a New American Security, November 2007); and John Podesta and Peter Ogden, "National Security Implications of Climate Change," *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2007 – 2008): 115 – 139. The latter is adapted from Campbell et al., *The Age of Consequences*: chapter 3.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of how the United States can reduce CO₂ emissions, see Jon Creyts et al., *Reducing U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions: How Much at What Cost?* (McKinsey and Company, December 2007), at <http://mckinsey.com/client-service/ccsi/greenhousegas.asp>.

Second, selective engagement is a forward defense strategy; hence it stresses the importance of bases abroad from which to exert power. If the projection of U.S. military power abroad is useful to advance U.S. interests, then this is done more easily from bases abroad than from the homeland. Forward operating bases make an in-theater presence possible on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. The assumption is that the United States can more easily influence events within a region if it has an in-theater military presence than if it does not. Such influence is exercised regionally through the deterrent, reassurance, and buffering roles that a U.S. military presence in a region can produce. Together, these three roles can help to produce stability among the main actors within a region and facilitate beneficial trends within states in the region.

The exact nature of these bases will vary according to regional conditions. Some bases may be large, along Cold War lines — although they are likely to be the exceptions, not the rule. Others may be staffed by a small number of logistics personnel, but capable of being rapidly expanded should the need arise. Forces afloat may be the best alternative for power projection when regional political conditions make bases onshore generators of anti-Americanism. The exact nature of bases abroad is less important than the fact that an in-theater presence, either onshore or offshore, provides tangible evidence of U.S. power and commitment.

Third, not all regions are of equal import to the United States, and the United States does not require permanent forward operating bases in every area of the world. On historical, military, economic, and natural resource grounds, the areas of key importance to the United States are East and Southeast Asia, Europe, the Persian Gulf, and because of the war in Afghanistan today, Central Asia. In general, forward operating bases in South

America and Africa are not necessary to advance America's interests and should be eschewed.

Fourth, essential to a forward presence posture are the two key alliances of the Cold War era — NATO and the U.S.-Japan Alliance. In addition, because of the importance of the Persian Gulf, worth retaining are the various de facto alliances in the form of executive agreements that the United States has with the Persian Gulf sheikdoms of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. The alliance with South Korea is a waning asset and can be terminated once Korea is unified because a united Korea is more likely to bandwagon with China than balance against it. Also worth retention are the alliances with Pakistan, the Philippines, and Australia. None involve the permanent stationing of U.S. troops, but each has value to the United States: the alliance with Pakistan, to help combat terrorists along the Pakistani-Afghan border; those with the Philippines and Australia, as useful porting stations and fallback bases should they be needed. All told, the United States has security commitments to about 37 nations, excluding the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, but including the de facto alliances with Israel and Taiwan.

Selective engagement favors the retention of America's alliances, not only because they enable a forward defense posture, but also because they are tools of political management and because they enhance cooperative solutions to regional security issues. Some analysts today are arguing that the United States "should favor pragmatic partnerships over the formalized international institutions of the Cold War era."¹⁹ There is nothing wrong with pragmatic partnerships, and they should be utilized whenever they are of use to the United States, but America's key alliances retain enduring value. They

¹⁹ Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, "Grand Strategy for a Divided America," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007): 82.

assure U.S. access to overseas bases where needed; they facilitate joint training in peacetime and consequently joint operations in wartime; they promote transparency and a more open dialogue in security matters; and they help structure expectations and develop shared attitudes towards problem solving. Standing alliances clearly experience difficulties and conflicts among their members, but all other things being equal, regional stability is more likely with institutionalized alliances than with ad hoc, informal arrangements. Because the United States benefits from regional stability, it should preserve its standing alliances.

Fifth, although an ambitious strategy, selective engagement aims to be selective in the use of force if war is to be waged. It stresses the following guidelines for waging war: (1) pay large military costs only when vital and highly important interests are involved; (2) rule out costly military action for secondary interests; (3) refrain from interventions in humanitarian crises that arise from civil wars unless U.S. strategic interests are directly threatened, or unless mass murder has begun or is likely to begin, or unless the United States can find partners to go in with, and pay only small to moderate costs; (4) refrain from military interventions within states to spread democracy, unless the costs are small, which they almost never are; (5) emphasize containment and deterrence against a hostile state over going to war whenever possible, even if that state is WMD-armed or about to be, but take preventive and preemptive action against terrorists; and (6) in general keep the amount of force used commensurate with the intrinsic value of the interest at stake. Obviously, it is easier to state these guidelines than to apply them in practice. Nevertheless, it is better to have some guidelines than no guidelines because their real value consists of the calculations that they force policymakers to go through when contemplating war.

Sixth, selective engagement stresses the necessity of U.S. leadership in finding solutions to collective action problems, whether they involve security or non-security issues. International politics is still organized around the nation-state model; consequently, states remain the primary, although certainly not the only, actors in world politics. The United States is the world's most powerful state, and therefore its actions or inaction bear mightily on whether international initiatives will succeed or fail. By the same token, however, because of the emphasis it places on alliances and regional cooperation, selective engagement has a strong multilateral bias. It seeks to walk the fine line between assertive U.S. leadership on the one hand and multilateral cooperation on the other. The international community cannot succeed in its major initiatives without U.S. support, but neither can the United States advance its interests without the cooperation of the world's other powerful states. Therefore, while the United States must lead, it must also avoid excessive unilateralism. This requires that it take allies' and other interested parties' interests into account when formulating policies, and that, in turn, means compromising in its policy choices, not simply consulting after it has decided on a course of action.

These, then, are the attributes of selective engagement: projection of U.S. military power to advance U.S. national interests, a forward defense posture to facilitate power projection, regional concentration in power projection, maintenance of key alliances, clear guidelines for the judicious and selective use of force, and forging a combination of leadership and multilateralism.

Selective engagement is not without its risks, however. Two in particular deserve mention. First is the loss of selectivity. It is too easy for a state as powerful as the United States to believe that it can impose its will, undertake new commitments, and take on missions that are desirable but

not essential. These temptations must be resisted, and the principles for the use of force set out above must be rigorously maintained. Second is the provocation of countervailing coalitions. Selective engagement depends heavily on the cooperation of other states. The United States cannot maintain forward bases if regional powers do not offer them, and it does not have the resources to maintain a military presence in several regions simultaneously if opposed by all the significant actors and potential allies in those regions. Cooperation requires compromise with influential regional powers. Losing selectivity and provoking counter-coalitions will undercut the feasibility of the selective engagement strategy. Selective engagement therefore calls for discipline in the exercise of power, avoidance of excessive ambition in the face of so much power, and deftness in diplomacy to forge coalitions for action.

If properly implemented, selective engagement best protects America's interests in the current and foreseeable international environment. It works actively to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by extending the U.S. nuclear umbrella. It is more likely to avoid backlash and balancing against America's use of military power, or at least minimize those two, than muscular Wilsonianism (the George W. Bush policy) because it eschews excessive unilateralism and ambition, and because it takes into account the interests of key regional allies in framing policy. It avoids the Lippmann gap by the judicious use of American military power. It better preserves America's key alliances and their stabilizing role in Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf—through the maintenance of a forward presence—than does the strategy of restraint.²⁰ It assures the free flow of Persian Gulf oil through an onshore and offshore military presence there better than either the

strategy of restraint or offshore balancing, and does not destabilize the region the way muscular Wilsonianism has.²¹ It helps to preserve an open international economic order by providing a stable political-military framework within which the international economy operates, something offshore balancing does not provide. It advances the spread of democracy through the generation of wealth and the expansion of the middle classes that an open international economic order facilitates and, in general, avoids getting bogged down in costly military interventions to fashion democracies. Finally, even if indirectly, it can help combat climate change by making the world more stable, and hence better able to muster the resources necessary to deal with climate change than if the world were more conflictual than is now the case.

Key Issues for the Next Administration

The Bush administration made a hash of the strategy of selective engagement by its unilateralist streak and arrogance; its excessive ambition regarding democracy promotion by force; its preventive war with Iraq; its failure to find an effective political strategy for dealing with the global jihadist threats; its belief that states will bandwagon in the face of the exercise of power when, in fact, they usually balance against it; and its violation of the cardinal rule of statecraft: do not start a second war until you have won the first one you are fighting. If selective engagement is to be successfully implemented, the next administration will have to clean up the mess wreaked by Bush, but it will also have to deal with some other problems that are not wholly of Bush's making.

First on the list for the next administration is what to do about Iraq and Afghanistan. Second and third are two key challenges that bear heavily on America's global standing and support for

²⁰For the strategy of restraint, see the chapter by Barry Posen in this volume.

²¹For the strategy of offshore balancing, which calls for the withdrawal of American troops from abroad and the dissolution of America's alliances, see Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007): chapter 8.

its policies: the need to restore legitimacy to U.S. policies in the eyes of other states and the need to devise a more effective political strategy for countering the Islamic jihadis. Fourth is dealing with two political conundrums with allies in Europe and the Persian Gulf: with NATO, how to keep the alliance viable while at the same time encouraging and accepting a more robust ESDP; with allies in the Persian Gulf, how to lower the U.S. military profile in the Gulf without totally abandoning a forward presence there. All four challenges will require judicious and sustained consideration by the next administration. All I can do here is offer some brief suggestions for how to deal with each of them.

1. Stay the Course in Afghanistan; Draw Down and Withdraw from Iraq. The United States is currently overextended militarily, largely due to the war in Iraq. The war in Afghanistan has suffered as a result. Which is more important to U.S. interests? Judged from the standpoint of terrorism, it is Afghanistan. A military withdrawal from Afghanistan by NATO and U.S. forces would likely lead to the collapse of the central government and the resurgence of warlordism, which has to date not been fully eradicated. Such a resurgence, in turn, risks a Taliban recapture of the government and the extension of the safe zone for al Qaeda from the Pakistani-Afghan border into Afghanistan proper. It is not in the U.S. interest to permit the Taliban to rule in Afghanistan once again because it is likely to provide a safe haven for al Qaeda and perhaps other terrorist groups. The situation is different in Iraq. The Sunni Awakening is in part a reaction to the brutality of al Qaeda in Iraq against the Sunnis. The Shiites have no interest in allowing al Qaeda to hijack the Iraqi state. Neither do the Kurds. Consequently, continual warnings that a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq will lead to “al Qaedaland” in Iraq are baseless.

America’s strategic overextension has prevented it from putting sufficient military resources into Afghanistan, where the populace—unlike in Iraq—largely supports the NATO and U.S. presence. Thus, the next administration should draw down U.S. troops in Iraq, enhance the training of Iraqi forces, and set a clear timetable for withdrawal. If the Iraqis want to have their civil war, there is little the United States can do to prevent it. At least a clear timeline for withdrawal will concentrate Iraqi minds and, faced with the hard reality of an all-out civil war, they just may make the political compromises necessary to avert it. The resources released can be channeled to Afghanistan.

2. Restore Legitimacy to American Foreign Policy. Even though international relations are anarchic, legitimacy still matters because all politics is a blend of coercion and legitimacy. In international politics, coercion is more prevalent than in domestic politics, but legitimacy still counts. To the extent that other states believe in the value of what a leader does, they are more willing to support it. Since the United States needs the cooperation of other states, the more legitimacy its actions possess in their eyes, the less coercion it needs to wield, the more support it is likely to get, and hence the greater the probability that its policies will succeed. Legitimacy is especially important for the United States today because there is no equivalent of the Soviet threat to drive allies into America’s arms. The United States needs to woo other states more in the contemporary era than in the previous one, and it can better woo if others believe its policies to be meritorious and legitimate. Legitimacy is thus something the United States needs to be concerned about.

Two factors explain the precipitous decline in America’s global standing and the perception of the legitimacy of its actions over the last seven

years. First is America's overwhelming power, especially military power; second is the foolish manner in which the Bush administration wielded it. The two together proved a deadly combination to America's legitimacy in the eyes of others.

Great concentrations of power have always caused concern in world politics. There is an inevitable amount of resentment, fear, and wariness that a powerful state engenders in others just by being so powerful, no matter how benign that state may be. The more powerful the state, the greater the concern, resentment, fear, and wariness. Enemies of powerful states fear that they are the object at which the great power is directed; allies worry that the powerful state will either drag them into situations from which they prefer to remain aloof or bring in train effects that will redound adversely against them. Both allies and adversaries are wary of great powers. The United States today is the world's only superpower, and, as a consequence, it engenders concern in enemies and allies alike. Paradoxically, the more powerful a state is, the greater the care it has to take in how it utilizes its power. It has to be especially mindful of how its actions affect others and how they look to others. By its foolish approach, the Bush administration enhanced and magnified the inevitable worries that America's unipolar condition engenders in others. Bush magnified many times over what was an underlying concern of other states in the latter years of the Clinton administration, and, as a consequence, made the problem much, much worse than it needed to be.²²

Therefore, the single most important thing the next administration must do for U.S. foreign policy is to rectify this situation by restoring America's legitimacy. Right now, the United States appears to too much of the rest of the world like a malign hegemon. The task for the next administration is a tough one: to make the United States look more benign, and yet at the same time advance America's national interests by employing the nation's considerable power.

This is a difficult, but not impossible, task. After all, the United States was as powerful, if not more powerful, under Clinton than under Bush (because China was not as strong and the EU not as cohesive when Clinton was president), but the image of the United States was much more positive. For example, a 1997 Roper poll found high ratings for the United States when foreign publics were asked whether their opinion of the United States was favorable or unfavorable.²³ And a Pew poll released in August 2001 found Bill Clinton's approval rating for his international policies was 40–60 percentage points above President Bush's.²⁴ Although the task of restoring legitimacy to U.S. policies and actions is not impossible, it will be difficult for the next administration because polls such as the Pew suggest that where in the past foreign publics' dislike of U.S. policies did not lead to dislike of the American people, foreign publics "are now increasingly equating the U.S. people with the U.S. government."²⁵ In other words, it is not only what we do that is increasingly bothering foreign publics, but also who we are, and at the top of who we are is that we are so powerful. It

²² In a revealing statement, Joschka Fischer, former foreign minister of Germany, said, "Bush neither invented American unilateralism nor triggered the transatlantic rift between the United States and Europe. To be sure, Bush reinforced both trends, but their real causes lie in objective historical factors, namely America being the sole world power since 1989 and Europe's self-inflicted weakness." In my view, Fischer understates the role that Bush played, but his statement does point to the underlying structural effects of unipolarity. Quoted in EurActiv.com, "Europe Hopes for Change with US Elections" (6 February 2008), at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/elections/europe-hopes-change-us-elections/article-170133>.

²³ In Britain, 80 percent of respondents gave the United States a very or somewhat favorable rating, compared with 72 percent in Italy, 70 percent in France, 65 percent in Mexico, 65 percent in Japan, and 51 percent in Germany. See *The Public Perspective* (1997). *The Public Perspective* was the flagship publication of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

²⁴ Clinton's approval rating for international policy was 68 percent in France, 86 percent in Germany, 71 percent in Italy, and 66 percent in Great Britain, compared to Bush's approval rating of 16 percent in France, 23 percent in Germany, 29 percent in Italy, and 17 percent in Great Britain. See Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Bush Unpopular in Europe, Seen as Unilateralist" (15 August 2001), at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=5>. Bush's approval ratings in Europe never increased substantially from these low levels.

²⁵ Kohut and Stokes, *America Against the World*: 29–30.

is “resentment of American power, as much as its policies or leadership [that] drives anti-American sentiments.”²⁶ Still, the picture is not uniform. For example, the University of Maryland/Zogby polls have found that 70 to 80 percent of Arabs in six countries said their attitudes were based on U.S. policy, not on U.S. values.²⁷ It appears that both policies and power are at work in the current wave of anti-Americanism.

Thus, although no great power can wholly remove the concerns that others have about its power, the high approval other publics gave to the Clinton administration — together with the distinction foreign publics made during the first Bush administration between the administration and the American people — suggests that perceptions of policies play a significant, if not wholly determinative, role in how others view us. The United States cannot shed its power overnight, nor should it forsake using that power to advance its interests. Consequently, the place to begin restoring U.S. legitimacy and standing is first, to avoid excessive unilateralism, which is the all-too-natural impulse of a state as powerful as the United States, and second, to implement policies that carry broader support but that still advance U.S. interests. America’s unipolar position need not condemn it to being as distrusted by the rest of the world as it currently is.

3. Devise an Effective Political Counterterrorism Strategy. A second big strategic task for the next administration is to devise a more effective political counterterrorism strategy. The central task of counterterrorism is to take down the current

generation of terrorists — by killing, incarcerating, or turning them — and at the same time avoid generating more terrorists in the process. The point is to eliminate the current generation without creating the next one.

In this regard, the United States has not been doing well because the Iraq war has proved a disaster. As the April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States,” concluded, “the Iraq jihad is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives” and “anti-US sentiment is on the rise and fueling other radical ideologies.”²⁸ One intelligence official with access to the report stated that it “says that the Iraq war has made the overall terrorism problem worse.”²⁹ Even more damaging is recent polling by the World Public Opinion organization in Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia, which concluded, “[v]ery large majorities believe the United States seeks to undermine Islam and large majorities even believe it wants to spread Christianity in the region.”³⁰ Thus, the Iraq war not only has created the next generation of terrorists, it has also convinced large numbers of Muslims that the United States is at war with Islam.

The United States lacks an effective political strategy to guide its counterterrorism efforts. The elements of such a strategy should include, but are not limited to, the following guidelines: (1) avoid the excessive use of force that angers publics and creates more sympathy for terrorists;³¹ (2) allow

²⁶Ibid.: 38.

²⁷In the 2006 poll, the figure was 70 percent; in the 2008 poll, it was 80 percent. See University of Maryland/Zogby International 2006 and 2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey: 30 and 10, respectively.

²⁸“Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate ‘Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States’ dated April 2006,” at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf.

²⁹Quoted in Tom Regan, “U.S. Intelligence Report: Iraq War Breeding More Terrorists,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (25 September 2006), at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0925/dailyUpdate.html>.

³⁰World Public Opinion.org, “Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda” (24 April 2007), at http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf.

³¹See Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, eds., *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007): 570–572.

the terrorists to hang themselves through their excessive use of force—they usually overreach and lose appeal to the groups upon which they rely for support, intelligence, and recruits;³² (3) respond in some fashion to the legitimate causes of discontent that the population sympathetic to the terrorists shares with the terrorists, even if they do not approve of the terrorists' tactics—this helps weaken the appeal of the terrorists to the groups that support their goals;³³ (4) find ways to “mobilize the moderates and marginalize the militants” while recognizing that this is tricky and difficult because there are severe limits to what the United States can do directly to aid Muslim moderates within their own countries without undermining and discrediting them;³⁴ (5) rely, as Barry Posen suggests, on the locals in other states to deal with their terrorists since they know the local scene better, as the recent successes by Saudi Arabia against its home-grown terrorists show (unless, of course, the locals are failed states, in which case Special Operations and CIA forces may be required to operate in the country);³⁵ and (6) devise policies that can undercut or lessen the appeal of terrorists—abandon policies that serve as recruiting posters for terrorists, and recognize that better public diplomacy cannot counteract bad policies.

In this regard, the single most important policy change that the U.S. could institute to help undercut the appeal of terrorists in the Muslim world is to be seen

as actively engaged in bringing peace between Israel and the Palestinians. As Shibley Telhami, an astute observer of the Arab world, says, “[t]hree quarters of Jordanians and other Arabs have ranked Palestine as their ‘top issue’ or ‘among their top three’ in their priorities for five years in a row . . . most Arabs identify successful American peace diplomacy as the single most important factor in improving their views of the United States.”³⁶

In sum, counterterrorism cannot be allowed to hijack America's grand strategy, but by the same token other policies should not be allowed to undermine an effective counterterrorism strategy. The next administration must find a better balance than the current administration has.

4. Solve the NATO and Persian Gulf Conundrums.

NATO and the American bases in Europe remain of value to the United States, in part because Europe serves a useful logistical function for deployments in Central Asia and the Middle East, and because the U.S. presence in Europe facilitates joint training and joint operations with the Europeans.³⁷ NATO today, however, is in trouble, and this trouble is reflected in Afghanistan. Certain NATO members are bearing the brunt of the fight against the Taliban. This violates the fundamental principle of NATO from its inception: the sharing of risk. It is unhealthy for the alliance to have the burdens of combat unequally

³² Recent polling by World Public Opinion shows that increasing numbers of Muslims around the world “reject suicide terrorism and other forms of violence against civilians and say they have no confidence in Osama bin Laden.” See WorldPublicOpinion.org, “Large and Growing Numbers of Muslims Reject Terrorism, Bin Laden,” at http://worldpublicopinion.org/incl/printable_version.php?nt=221.

³³ This strategy proved especially effective in fighting the Shining Path in Peru. See the case study on the Shining Path by David Scott Palmer, in Art and Richardson, eds., *Democracy and Counterterrorism*: 195–221.

³⁴ See Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, “Conclusion,” in Art and Richardson, eds., *Democracy and Counterterrorism*: 575–576; Mona Yacoubian, “Engaging Islamists and Promoting Democracy: A Preliminary Assessment” (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, August 2007), at <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr190.pdf>; and Ronald R. Krebs, “Cruel To Be Kind,” *Slate* (3 January 2008), at <http://www.slate.com/toolbar.aspx?action=print&id=2181263>.

³⁵ Barry R. Posen, “The Struggle Against Terrorism: Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics,” *International Security* (Winter 2001–2002).

³⁶ Shibley Telhami, “It’s Not About Iran,” *The Washington Post* (14 January 2008): A21. A University of Maryland/Zogby International poll found that 62 percent of Arabs in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia said that America’s brokering of a comprehensive Israeli–Palestinian peace agreement would improve their views of the United States the most. The next most popular step was withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, with 32 percent. See University of Maryland/Zogby International 2006 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey: 62.

³⁷ See Government Accountability Office, *Military Readiness: Effects of a U.S. Military Presence in Europe on Mobility Requirements*, GAO-02-99 (28 November 2001).

shared. The alliance faces serious differences about the threats it faces and the responses required. A reinvigorated compact between the United States and the Europeans about the purposes of NATO should be high on the next administration's agenda. This may take the form of a new strategic concept for NATO even though, strictly speaking, NATO does not need one. The present strategic concept (devised in 1999), together with the comprehensive political guidance adopted at the Riga Summit in 2006, covers practically every conceivable contingency. That said, a new strategic concept may be a valuable political exercise to reinvigorate and revitalize the alliance. That concept may well include functions that NATO does not now perform, such as engaging in joint planning with non-military organizations.³⁸ Whatever form and substance revitalization eventually takes, the members of NATO need to rededicate themselves to the alliance and refashion it in ways that take into account the new realities that the United States and Europe face. This will not happen without U.S. leadership.

Beyond that, NATO faces another serious issue, one which manifests itself institutionally but is, at its heart, political. The United States needs to find a way to encourage the Europeans to develop a more integrated, effective European defense capability without undermining the NATO alliance in the process. The Europeans, especially the French, remain serious about developing a European defense capability (ESDP) that will enable them, for certain contingencies, to operate independently of NATO and the United States. The United States should encourage this because there will be missions that it will not want to undertake,

or will not have the forces to undertake, and because the United States will ultimately benefit from a Europe that fields a more effective military force. The problem lies not with these independent missions or with a more effective European force, but with the development of a European organizational identity that comes to operate as a "European pillar" within NATO. The natural development of a more cohesive and effective ESDP is that the Europeans are likely to operate as a bloc within NATO. This will be difficult for the United States because it has always preferred to deal bilaterally with the European members of NATO and to not have to face a united European bloc. The next administration will have to find a way to square the circle: to encourage the further development of ESDP without undermining NATO.

In the Persian Gulf, the United States faces a different political problem. Many of the Gulf sheikdoms favor some U.S. military presence there, but their publics do not support it. In fact, public opinion polls of the Muslim world show strong majorities opposed to the U.S. military presence in the Middle East.³⁹ In addition, some analysts are now making credible military arguments that the United States does not need an onshore presence in the Gulf to assure the free flow of oil out of the Gulf, but, instead, can do it from forces afloat that are over the horizon.⁴⁰ This may well be the case, but the issue becomes complicated if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. In this case the United States should extend its nuclear umbrella over the Gulf states in order to discourage them from acquiring their own independent nuclear capabilities, much as the U.S. alliance with Japan discourages Japan from going nuclear.⁴¹ Whether this umbrella is

³⁸See Tomas Valasek, *Roadmap to Better EU-NATO Relations*, Centre for European Reform Briefing Note, at http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/briefing_tv_eu_nato_20dec07.pdf.

³⁹See World Public Opinion.Org, *Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda* (24 April 2007): 7–8, at <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org>; and University of Maryland/Zogby poll (April 2008): 11.

⁴⁰See Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, *Energy Alarmism: The Myths that Make Americans Worry about Oil* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2007), at http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8161.

⁴¹See Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East*, 100th Cong., 2nd sess., February 2008.

credible in the Gulf without a visible, in-theater, onshore military presence of some sort in the Gulf sheikdoms is important to ascertain. This will require careful analysis and negotiations with the sheikdoms about the relative merits of a U.S. onshore versus offshore military presence after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

Conclusion

Selective engagement is the best grand strategy for the United States in the current era, for the reasons laid out above. The unipolar era will not last indefinitely because America's economic and military edge relative to its allies and rivals will erode, even if it does not totally disappear. This means that the United States should begin to make plans now for what to do when its current edge begins to wane. A wise grand strategy looks not just to the present but also to the future.

One approach, which I have suggested elsewhere, lies in using its present power to fashion regional security structures that are based on solid regional balances of power, on American participation in those balances, and on some degree of institutionalization of those balances.⁴² This process is already well advanced in Europe. Work needs to be done in both East Asia and the Persian Gulf. The approach requires a commitment to genuine multilateralism and a more balanced sharing of burdens and responsibilities with regional allies.

The goal is to allow the United States to lower its regional profile as its relative power wanes. The United States will still remain an important element in these regional balances of power, perhaps even the most important element, but its role will not be as dominant as it is now. The trick is to fashion a soft landing from a robust form of selective engagement to a more modest one. Planning for that eventuality now will not only foster a safe transition, but will also conserve U.S. resources and extend the useful life of selective engagement.

⁴² Art, *A Grand Strategy*: 246–248.



AN AGENDA FOR LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL RENEWAL

By G. John Ikenberry

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



AN AGENDA FOR LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL RENEWAL

By G. John Ikenberry

In the 21st century, America confronts a complex array of security challenges.¹ But it does not face the sort of singular geopolitical threat that it did with the fascist and communist powers of the last century. Indeed, compared to the dark days of the 1930s or the Cold War, America lives in an extraordinarily benign security environment, and it possesses an extraordinary opportunity to shape its security environment for the long-term. It is the dominant global power, unchecked by a coalition of balancing states or a superpower wielding a rival universalistic ideology. Most of the great powers are democracies and tied to the United States through alliance partnership. State power is ultimately based on sustained economic growth; and no major state today can modernize without integrating into the globalized capitalist system. What made the fascist and communist threats of the 20th century so profound was not only the danger of territorial aggression but that these great power challengers embodied rival political-economic systems that could generate growth, attract global allies, and create counter-balancing geopolitical blocs. America has no such global challengers today.

The most serious threat to American national security today is not a specific enemy but the erosion of the institutional foundations of the global order that the United States has commanded for half a century and through which it has pursued its interests and national security. America's leadership position and its authority within the global system are in serious crisis—and this puts American national security at risk. The grand strategy America needs to pursue in the years ahead is not one aimed at a particular threat, but rather one aimed at restoring its role as the recognized and legitimate leader of the system and rebuilding the institutions and partnerships upon

¹This essay draws on G. John Ikenberry, "Liberal Order Building," in Melvyn Leffler and Jeff Legro, eds., *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), forthcoming.

which this leadership position is based. America's global position is in crisis, but it is a crisis that is largely of its own making; and it is a crisis that can be overcome in a way that leaves the United States in a stronger position to meet the diffuse, shifting, and uncertain threats of the 21st century.

The grand strategy I propose can be called "liberal order building." It is essentially a 21st-century version of the strategy that the United States pursued after World War II in the shadow of the Cold War — a strategy that produced the liberal hegemonic order that has provided the framework for the Western and global system ever since. This is a strategy in which the United States leads the way in the creation and operation of a loosely rule-based international order. The United States provides public goods and solves global collective-action problems. American "rule" is established through the provisioning of international rules and institutions and its willingness to operate within them. American power is put in the service of an agreed-upon system of Western-oriented global governance. American power is made acceptable to the world because it is embedded in these agreed-upon rules and institutions. The system itself leverages resources and fosters cooperation that makes the actual functioning of the order one that solves problems, creates stability, and allows democracy and capitalism to flourish. Liberal order building is America's distinctive contribution to world politics — and it is a grand strategy that this nation should return to in the post-Bush era.

If America is smart and pursues an enlightened foreign policy, it is not fanciful to think that the United States can, in twenty years, still be at the center of a "one-world" system defined in terms of open markets, democratic community, cooperative security, and rule-based order. This is a future that can be contrasted with less desirable alternatives that echo through the past — great

power balancing orders, regional blocs, or bipolar rivalries. The United States should seek to consolidate a global order in which other countries bandwagon rather than balance against it and where it remains at the center of a prosperous and secure democratic-capitalist order, which in turn provides the architecture and axis points around which the wider global system turns. But to reestablish this desired world order, the United States is going to need to invest in re-creating the basic governance institutions of the system — investing in alliances, partnerships, multilateral institutions, special relationships, great power concerts, cooperative security pacts, and democratic security communities.

It is useful to distinguish between two types of grand strategies — positional and milieu-oriented. A positional grand strategy is where a great power seeks to counter, undercut, contain, and limit the power and threats of a specific challenger state or group of states: Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, the Soviet bloc, and perhaps — in the future — Greater China. A milieu grand strategy is where a great power does not target a specific state but seeks to structure its general international environment in ways that are congenial with its long-term security. This might entail building the infrastructure of international cooperation, promoting trade and democracy in various regions of the world, and establishing partnerships that might be useful for various contingencies. The point is that, under conditions of unipolarity, in a world of diffuse threats, and with pervasive uncertainty over what the specific security challenges will be in the future, this milieu-based approach to grand strategy is needed.

This paper makes four arguments. I start with an argument about the character of America's security environment in the decades to come. The United States does not confront a first-order

security threat as it has in the past. It faces a variety of decentralized, complex, and deeply rooted threats. It does not face a singular threat — a great power or violent global movement — that deserves primacy in the organization of national security. The temptation is to prioritize the marshaling of American resources against a threat such as jihadist terrorism or rogue states, but this is both an intellectual and political mistake. If the world of the 21st century were a town, the security threats faced by its leading citizens would not be organized crime or a violent assault by a radical mob on city hall. It would be a breakdown of law enforcement and social services in the face of constantly changing and ultimately uncertain vagaries of criminality, nature, and circumstance.

Second, these more diffuse, shifting, and uncertain threats require a different sort of grand strategy than one aimed at countering a specific enemy, such as a rival great power or a radical terrorist group. Rather, the United States needs to lead in the re-creation of the global architecture of governance, rebuilding its leadership position and the institutional frameworks through which it pursues its interests and cooperates with others to provide security. Above all, America needs to create resources and capacities for the collective confrontation of a wide array of dangers and challenges. That is, America needs a grand strategy of “multitasking” — creating shared capacities to respond to a wide variety of contingencies. In the 21st-century threat environment, a premium will be placed on mechanisms for collective action and sustained commitments to problem solving.

Third, America does have a legacy of liberal order building — it knows how to do it and doing it in the past has made America strong and secure. It needs to rediscover and renew this strategy of liberal order building. During the decades after World War II, the United States did not just fight

the Cold War, it created a liberal international order of multilayered pacts and partnerships that served to open markets, bind democracies together, and create a trans-regional security community. The United States provided security, championed mutually agreed-upon rules and institutions, and led in the management of an open world economy. In return, other states affiliated with and supported the United States as it led the larger order. It was an American-led hegemonic order with liberal characteristics. There is still no alternative model of international order that is better suited to American interests or stable global governance. But there are deep shifts in the global system that make it harder for the United States to act as it did in the past, as a global provider of goods and a liberal hegemon willing to both restrain and commit itself. Unipolarity and the erosion of norms of state sovereignty — among other long-term shifts — make the American pursuit of a liberal order building strategy both more difficult and more essential.

Finally, the new agenda for liberal order building involves an array of efforts to strengthen and rebuild global architecture. These initiatives include: building a “protective infrastructure” for preventing and responding to socioeconomic catastrophe, renewal of the Cold War-era alliances, reform of the United Nations (UN), and creation of new multilateral mechanisms for cooperation in East Asia and among the democracies. In the background, the United States will need to renegotiate and renew its grand bargains with Europe and East Asia. In these bargains, the United States will need to signal a new willingness to restrain and commit its power, accommodate rising states, and operate within reconfigured and agreed upon global rules and institutions.

In confronting the difficult struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan, this liberal order building strategy

offers no easy solutions. It does suggest that the United States should continue to encourage NATO to play the leading role in building stable order and rule in Afghanistan. This has the double dividend of actually helping to make Afghanistan less of a threat to itself and its neighborhood and strengthening the alliance as a vehicle for extended cooperative security. The implication of the liberal order strategy for Iraq is less direct. The United States should endeavor to reduce its involvement and, just as importantly, redefine the central security challenges that have been used to justify American military intervention. Five years from now, Iraq — or the rhetoric of the “global war on terrorism” — should not be the centerpiece or cutting edge of American security policy. The focus should be wider and more global.

Overall, the United States needs to reestablish itself as a producer of world order. What has made the American position in the global system so durable and legitimate over the past decades is that it has been a provider of rules, institutions, and public goods into the system. These features of the international order are what make the resulting system more liberal than imperial and more consensus than coercive. But powerful states are always torn between being “system makers” and “privilege takers.” With the end of the Cold War, the rise of unipolarity, and a diffuse and shifting security environment, it is harder for the United States to remain a system maker and easier for it to be a privilege taker. Nonetheless, the key to reestablishing America’s position at the center of a stable, open, and friendly international system will be to rediscover and reaffirm the restraints and commitments embodied in liberal order.

Threats, Challenges and Opportunities

Grand strategy is a state’s long-term and broad-gauged response to international threats and opportunities aimed at the promotion of national security. It is a public exercise in worrying about the future. And so, looking into the future, what should America be most worried about?

Some observers argue that American grand strategy should be organized around the confrontation with a specific enemy, as it was during the Cold War. Jihadist terrorism, in particular, is offered as this premier global threat around which all else should be subordinated and directed. The Bush administration has made this the centerpiece of its grand strategy — describing a “long war” against terrorism, a generational struggle akin to the Cold War. In the most evocative versions of this thesis, the United States is engaged in a war against “jihadist terrorism,” “militant Islam,” or “Islamofascists” who are the heirs of the fascist and communist threats of the past century and who wield a totalitarian political ideology and seek our violent destruction. We face the prospect of a twilight war with an evil foe and Western civilization stands in the balance.

Other observers argue that we are returning to an era where rival centers of power are emerging that will challenge and undercut America’s global position. The result will be a return to a multipolar great power system in which antagonistic authoritarian great powers will break apart the global system, returning it to a world of power balances and spheres of influence. In this view, China, Russia, Iran, and other states are accumulating wealth and power and will increasingly resist integration into and cooperation with the United States and the democratic-capitalist world order.² Rather than a war on terror, therefore,

² See Robert Kagan, “End of Dreams, Return of History,” *Policy Review* (August–September 2007).

the United States must brace itself for a return to traditional multipolar rivalry and great power security competition.

But it is not altogether clear that either of these specters captures the leading threats of the new century. What is most striking is not the pre-eminence of one threat but the scope and variety of threats. Global warming, health pandemics, nuclear proliferation, jihadist terrorism, energy scarcity — these and other dangers loom on the horizon. Any of these threats could endanger American lives and way of life either directly or indirectly by destabilizing the global system upon which American security and prosperity depends. Pandemics and global warming are not threats wielded by human hands, but their consequences could be equally devastating. Highly infectious disease has the potential to kill millions of people. Global warming threatens to trigger waves of environmental migration and food shortages, and could further destabilize weak and poor states around the world. The world is also on the cusp of a new round of nuclear proliferation, potentially putting mankind's deadliest weapons in the hands of unstable and hostile states. Terrorist networks offer a new specter of non-state transnational violence. The point is that none of these threats is, in itself, so singularly preeminent that it deserves to be the centerpiece of American grand strategy in the way that anti-fascism and anti-communism did in an earlier era.³

What is more, these various threats are interconnected and it is the possibility of their interactive effects that multiplies the dangers. This point is stressed by Thomas Homer-Dixon, who states, "It's the convergence of stresses that's especially treacherous and makes synchronous failure a possibility

as never before. In coming years, our societies won't face one or two major challenges at once, as usually happened in the past. Instead, they'll face an alarming variety of problems — likely including oil shortages, climate change, economic instability, and mega-terrorism — all at the same time."⁴ The danger is that several of these threats will materialize at the same time and interact to generate greater violence and instability. "What happens, for example, if together or in quick succession the world has to deal with a sudden shift in climate that sharply cuts food production in Europe and Asia, a severe oil price increase that sends economies tumbling around the world, and a string of major terrorist attacks on several Western capital cities?"⁵ The global order itself would be put at risk as well as the foundations of American national security.

We can add to these worries the rise of China — and more generally the rise of Asia. It is worth recalling that China was the preoccupation of America's national security community in the years before the September 11 terrorist attacks. China's rapid economic growth and active regional diplomacy are already transforming East Asia — and Beijing's geopolitical influence is growing. The United States has no experience managing a relationship with a country that is increasingly becoming its principal economic and security rival. It is unclear, and probably unknowable, how China's intentions and ambitions will evolve as it becomes more powerful. We do know, however, that the rise and decline of great powers — and the problem of "power transitions" — can trigger conflict, security competition, and war. The point here is that, in the long run, the way that China rises up in the world could have a more profound impact

³ This is our judgment in the Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security. See G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law* (Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School, 2006).

⁴ Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization* (Washington: Island Press, 2006):16–17.

⁵ Ibid.

on American national security than incremental shifts up or down in the fortunes of international terrorist groups.⁶

The larger point is — and it is a critical assumption here — that today, the United States confronts an unusually diverse and diffuse array of threats and challenges. When we try to imagine what the premier threat to the United States will be in 2015 or 2020, it is not easy to say with any confidence that it will be X, or Y, or Z. Moreover, even if we could identify X, or Y, or Z as the premier threat around which all others turn, it is very likely it will be complex and interlinked with lots of other international moving parts. Global pandemics are connected to failed states, homeland security, international public health capacities, etc. Terrorism is related to the Middle East peace process, economic and political development, non-proliferation, intelligence cooperation, European social and immigration policy, etc. The rise of China is related to alliance cooperation, energy security, democracy promotion, the World Trade Organization (WTO), management of the world economy, etc. Thus, we return to the importance of renewing and rebuilding the architecture of global governance and frameworks of cooperation to allow the United States to marshal resources and tackle problems along a wide and shifting spectrum of possibilities.

In a world of multiple threats and uncertainty about their relative significance in the decades to come, it is useful to think of grand strategy as an “investment” problem. Where do you invest your resources, build capacities, and take actions so as to maximize your ability to be positioned to confront tomorrow’s unknown unknowns? Grand strategy is about setting priorities but it is also about diversifying risks and avoiding surprises.

This is where the pursuit of a milieu-based grand strategy is attractive. The objective is to shape the international environment to maximize your capacities to protect the nation from uncertain, diffuse, and shifting threats. You engage in liberal order building. This means investment in international cooperative frameworks — rules, institutions, partnerships, networks, standby capacities, social knowledge, and the like — in which the United States operates. To build international order is to increase the global stock of “social capital,” which is the term Pierre Bourdieu, Robert Putnam, and others have used to define the actual and potential resources and capacities within a political community, manifest in and through its networks of social relations, that are available for solving collective problems. Taken together, liberal order building involves investment in the enhancement of global social capital so as to create capacities to solve problems that, left unattended, will threaten national security.

The Rise and Fall of Liberal Order Building

To pursue a milieu strategy of liberal order building is to return to the type of grand strategy that America pursued in the 1940s and onward with great success. In the postwar era, the United States did not just fight a global war against Soviet communism; it built an open and functional international order. This order was not just the by-product of the pursuit of containment. Instead, it sprang from ideas and logic of order that are deeply rooted in the American experience. It is an international order that generated power, wealth, stability, and security — all of which allowed the West to prevail in the Cold War.

This postwar liberal order was built around a set of ideas, institutions, bargains, democratic

⁶This argument is advanced in Francis Fukuyama and G. John Ikenberry, *Report of the Grand Strategic Choices Working Group* (Princeton: Princeton Project on National Security, 2005).

community, and American hegemonic power. It is upon this foundation that a renewed strategy of liberal order building must be based.

In comparison to the doctrine of containment, the ideas and policies of American postwar liberal order building were more diffuse and wide-ranging. It was less obvious that the liberal order building agenda was a “grand strategy” designed to advance American security interests. But in other respects, it was the more enduring American project, one that was aimed at creating an international order that would be open, stable, and friendly and that solved the problems of the 1930s, specifically the economic breakdown and competing geopolitical blocs that paved the way for world war. The challenge was not to deter or contain the power of the Soviet Union, but to lay the foundation for an international order that would allow the United States to thrive. This impulse — to build a stable and open international system that advantaged America — existed before, during, and after the Cold War. Even at the moment when the Cold War gathered force, the grand strategic interest in building such an order was appreciated. Indeed, one recalls that NSC-68 laid out a doctrine of containment, but it also articulated a rationale for building a positive international order. The United States needs, it said, to “build a healthy international community,” which “we would probably do even if there were no international threat.” The United States needs a “world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish.”⁷

Between 1944 and 1951, American leaders engaged in the most intensive institution-building the world had ever seen — global, regional, security, economic, and political. The UN, Bretton Woods, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT),

NATO, and U.S.-Japan alliance were all launched. The United States undertook costly obligations to aid Greece and Turkey and reconstruct Western Europe. It helped rebuild the economies of Germany and Japan. Through the Atlantic Charter, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, America articulated a new vision of a progressive international community. In all of these ways, the United States took the lead in fashioning a world of multilateral rules, institutions, open markets, democratic community, and regional partnerships — and put itself at the center of it all.⁸

The core notion of this liberal international order was that the United States would need to actively shape its security environment by creating a stable, open, and friendly geopolitical space across Europe and Asia.⁹ This required making commitments, building institutions, forging partnerships, acquiring clients, and providing liberal hegemonic leadership. In doing this, several ideas informed the substantive character of the emerging order. One idea was a basic commitment to economic openness among the regions. American officials also employed international institutions in new ways to manage the world economy and bind states together. New forms of intergovernmental cooperation were invented. The democratic countries were enmeshed in a dense array of intergovernmental networks and loosely rule-based institutional relationships. In doing so, the United States committed itself to exercising power through these regional and global institutions. This was a great innovation in international order. Finally, there is the idea of cooperation security or “security co-binding,” in which the United States connected to the other democratic countries. A

⁷NSC-68, published in Ernest May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 40.

⁸I sketch this logic of liberal hegemony in G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁹Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992): Chapter 2.

cooperative security order — embodied in formal alliance institutions — ensured that the power of the United States would be rendered more predictable. Power would be caged in institutions, thereby making American power reliable, accountable, and connected to Europe and East Asia.

This American-led system is now more than a half-century old and its institutions and bargains have eroded. The foundation upon which the United States exercises leadership and shapes its security environment is weakening — and this is America's greatest security threat.

Indeed, the American-led international order is in crisis in several ways. It is a crisis, most immediately, of America's global position as manifest in the Bush administration's foreign policies. The credibility, respect, and authority of the United States as the leader of the global system have been radically diminished in recent years.¹⁰ America has a legitimacy problem. There is a basic disconnect between the way the Bush administration wants the world to be run and the way other states and peoples want the world to be run. This is the most visible aspect of the crisis. Moreover, the postwar institutions through which America has traditionally operated are in crisis, or at least they have become severely weakened in recent years. The UN, NATO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and even the WTO are all searching for missions and authority. The rise of new powers — particularly in Asia — is also putting pressure on these old postwar institutions to reform their membership and governance arrangements.¹¹ The institutional mechanisms of

the system are not functioning very effectively or responding to emerging new demands. Finally, the deeper foundations of liberal international order have also been called into question. These are questions about how to reconcile rule-based order with a variety of new world historical developments, including the rise of unipolarity, the erosion of state sovereignty and democratic legitimacy, and the emergence of new sorts of security threats.

The immediate source of crisis is the Bush administration itself, which signaled from the beginning that it did not want to operate within the old postwar international order. The administration demonstrated this early on through its resistance to a wide array of multilateral agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Germ Weapons Convention, and the Programme of Action on Illicit Trade in Small and Light Arms. It also unilaterally withdrew from the 1970 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which many experts regard as the cornerstone of modern arms control agreements. Unilateralism, of course, is not a new feature of American foreign policy. In every historical era, the United States has shown a willingness to reject treaties, violate rules, ignore allies, and use military force on its own. But many observers see today's unilateralism as practiced by the Bush administration as something much more sweeping — not an occasional ad hoc policy decision but a new strategic orientation, or what one pundit calls the “new unilateralism.”¹²

In the background, longer-term shifts in the global system provided the permissive circumstances for

¹⁰Recent opinion polls from around the world reveal this changed reality. In a summary of these results, the report states, “A multinational poll finds that publics around the world reject the idea that the United States should play the role of preeminent world leader. Most publics say the United States plays the role of world policeman more than it should, fails to take their country's interests into account and cannot be trusted to act responsibly.” WorldPublicOpinion.org, *World Publics Reject US Role as the World Leader* (18 April 2007).

¹¹G. John Ikenberry, “A Weakened World,” *Prospect* (November 2005): 30–33.

¹²Charles Krauthammer, “The New Unilateralism,” *The Washington Post* (8 June 2001): A29. For good summaries of Bush grand strategy, see Ivo Daalder and James Lindsey, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003); and Ian Shapiro, *Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy against Global Terror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

the Bush administration's big doctrinal move. The shift from Cold-War bipolarity to American unipolarity has triggered a geopolitical adjustment process that ran through the 1990s and continues today. Unipolarity has given the United States more discretionary resources and, without a peer competitor or a great power balancing coalition arrayed around it, the external constraints on American action are significantly reduced. But with the end of the Cold War, other states are not dependent on the United States for protection as much and a unifying common threat has been eliminated. So old bargains, alliance partnerships, and shared strategic visions are thrown into question. At the very least, the shift in power advantages in favor of the United States would help explain why it might want to renegotiate older rules and institutions.

More profoundly, however, unipolarity may be creating conditions that reduce the willingness of the United States to support and operate within a loosely rule-based order. If America is less dependent on other states for its own security, it has reduced incentives to accept the restraints entailed in alliances and multilateral agreements. Incentives for other states to free ride on a unipolar America also increase. Under these circumstances, the United States may indeed act unilaterally in ways it did not in the past or, in the absence of willing partners, its own willingness to provide hegemonic leadership may decline.¹³

The erosion of international norms of state sovereignty is also putting pressure on the old liberal hegemonic order. This is the quiet revolution in world politics: the rise of rights within the international community to intervene within states to protect individuals against the abuses of their own governments. The contingent character of

sovereignty was pushed further after September 11 in the intervention in Afghanistan where outside military force, used to topple a regime that actively protected terrorist attackers, was seen as an acceptable act of self-defense. But the erosion of state sovereignty has not been accompanied by the rise of new norms about how sovereignty-transgressing interventions should proceed.

The shift in the “security problem” away from great power war to transnational dangers such as terrorism, disease, and insecurity generated within weak states also compounds the problem of legitimate authority inherent in the rise of unipolarity. America's unipolar military capabilities are both in demand and deeply controversial.

Taken together, American power and a functioning global governance system have become disconnected. In the past, the United States provided global “services” — such as security protection and support for open markets — that made other states willing to work with rather than resist American power. The public goods provision tended to make it worthwhile for these states to endure the day-to-day irritations of American foreign policy, but the trade-off seems to have shifted. Today, the United States appears to be providing fewer public goods while irritations associated with American dominance appear to be growing.

The New Agenda of Liberal Order Building

If American grand strategy is to be organized around liberal order building, what are the specific objectives and what is the policy agenda?

As we have seen, there are several objectives that such a strategy might seek to accomplish. The first is to build a stronger “protective infrastructure” of international capacities to confront an

¹³ Robert Jervis, “The Remaking of a Unipolar World,” *The Washington Quarterly*, (2006): 7 – 19; and G. John Ikenberry, “Global Security Trap,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, (September 2006).

array of shifting, diffuse, and uncertain threats and catastrophes — this is, in effect, creating an infrastructure of global social services. The second is the rebuilding of a system of cooperative security, reestablishing the primacy of America's alliances for strategic cooperation, and the projection of force. The third is the reform of global institutions that support collective action and multilateral management of globalization — such as the United Nations and multilateral economic institutions — to create greater institutional capacities for international decision making and the provision of public goods. The fourth is to create new institutions and reform old ones so that rising states — particularly China but also India and other emerging powers — can more easily be embedded in the existing global system rather than operate as dissatisfied revisionist states on the outside. Finally, through all these efforts, the United States needs to endeavor to reestablish its hegemonic legitimacy — a preeminent objective that must be pursued with policies and doctrine that signal America's commitment to rule-based order.¹⁴

Given these goals, the agenda of institutional order building would include the following.

First, the United States needs to lead in the building of an enhanced “protective infrastructure” that helps prevent the emergence of threats and limits the damage if they do materialize.¹⁵ Many of the threats mentioned above are manifest as socioeconomic backwardness and failure that generate regional and international instability and conflict. These are the sorts of threats that are likely to arise with the coming of global warming and epidemic disease. Institutional cooperation is needed to strengthen the capacity of governments and the

international community to prevent epidemics, food shortages, or mass migrations that create global upheaval — or mitigate the effects of these upheavals if they do, in fact, occur.

It is useful to think of a strengthened protective infrastructure as investment in global social services, much as cities and states invest in such services. It is typically money well spent. Education, health programs, shelters, and social services are vital components of stable and well functioning communities. The international system already has a great deal of this infrastructure — institutions and networks that promote cooperation in areas of public health, refugees, and emergency aid. But in the 21st century, as the scale and scope of potential problems continue to grow, investments in these preventive and management capacities will require commensurate expansion. Early warning systems, protocols for emergency operations, standby capacities, and like capabilities are the stuff of a protective global infrastructure.

Second, the United States should recommit to and rebuild its security alliances. The idea would be to update the old bargains that lie behind these security pacts. In NATO — but also in the East Asia bilateral partnerships — the United States agrees to provide security protection to the other member states and bring its partners into the process of decision making over the use of force. In return, these partners agree to work with the United States by providing manpower, logistics and other types of support in wider theaters of action. The United States gives up some autonomy in strategic decision making — although it is a more informal than legal-binding restraint — and in exchange it earns cooperation and political support. The United States also remains “first among equals” within

¹⁴This section builds on Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law*. The case for global order built around “multi-multilateralism” is made in Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹⁵Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law* (10).

these organizations, and thus retains leadership of the unified military command. The updating of these alliance bargains would involve widening the regional or global missions in which the alliance operates and making new compromises over the distribution of formal rights and responsibilities.¹⁶

The NATO efforts in Afghanistan are a crucial test of the viability of the alliance as a practical tool of American and European security. A long-term and shared commitment — anchored in NATO — to the stabilization of order and rule in Afghanistan is crucial to the wider health and welfare of the Atlantic security partnership.

There are several reasons why the renewal of security partnerships is critical to liberal order building. One is that security alliances involve relatively well defined, specific, and limited commitments, an attractive feature for both the leading military power and its partners. States know what they are getting into and what the limits are on their obligations and liabilities. Another is that alliances provide institutional mechanisms that allow accommodations for disparities of power among partners within the alliance. Alliances do not embody universal rules and norms that apply equally to all parties. NATO, at least, is a multi-lateral body, with formal and informal rules and norms of operation, that both accommodates the most powerful state and provides roles and rights for others. Another virtue of renewing the alliances is that they serve as institutional bodies, which form necessary “political architecture” across the advanced democratic world. The alliances provide channels of communication and joint decision making that spill over into the wider realms of international relations. They are also institutions

with grand histories and records of accomplishment. The United States is a unipolar military power, but it still has incentives to share the costs of security protection and find ways to legitimate the use of its power. The postwar alliances — renewed and reorganized — are an attractive tool for these purposes.

Robert Kagan has argued that to regain its lost legitimacy, the United States needs to return to its postwar bargain: giving some Europeans voice over American policy in exchange for their support. The United States, Kagan points out, “should try to fulfill its part of the transatlantic bargain by granting Europe some influence over the exercise of its power — provided that, in return, Europeans wield that influence wisely.”¹⁷ This logic informed American security cooperation with its European and East Asian partners during the Cold War. It is a logic that can be renewed today to help make unipolarity more acceptable.

Third, America should reform and create encompassing global institutions that foster and legitimate collective action. The first move here should be to reform the UN, starting with the expansion of the permanent membership on the Security Council. Several plans have been proposed. All of them entail new members — such as Germany, Japan, India, Brazil, South Africa, and others — and reformed voting procedures. Almost all of the candidates for permanent membership are mature or rising democracies. The goal, of course, is to make them stakeholders in the UN and thereby strengthen the primacy of the United Nations as a vehicle for global collective action. There really is no substitute for the legitimacy that the United Nations can offer to emergency

¹⁶ The case for renewal of NATO is made in G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law*.

¹⁷ Robert Kagan, “America’s Crisis of Legitimacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83 (March 2004): 86.

actions — humanitarian interventions, economic sanctions, use of force against terrorists, and so forth. Public support in advanced democracies grows rapidly when their governments can stand behind a UN-sanctioned action.

The other step is to create a “concert of democracies.” The idea would not be to establish a substitute body for the United Nations — which some advocates of a concert or league suggest — but to simply provide another venue where democracies can discuss common goals and reinforce cooperation. Proposals exist for various types of groupings of democracies, some informal and consultative and others more formal and task-oriented.¹⁸

The experience of the last century suggests that the United States is more likely to make institutional commitments and bind itself to other states if those countries are democracies. This is true for both practical and normative reasons. Because liberal democracies are governed by the rule of law and open to scrutiny, it is easier to establish the credibility of their promises and develop long-term commitments. But the values and identities that democracies share also make it easier for them to affiliate and build cooperative relations. These shared identities were probably more strongly felt during the Cold War when the United States was part of a larger “free world.” Institutionalized cooperation between the United States and its European and East Asian partners is surely driven by shared interests; but it is reinforced by shared values and common principles of government. American leaders find it easier to rally domestic support for costly commitments and agreements abroad when the goal is to help other democracies and strengthen the community of democracies.

The danger of a “concert of democracies” is that it will alienate great powers — such as China

and Russia — that are left outside its membership. There is also the danger that the concert will become too successful and undermine the UN as the key universal organization mandated to speak on the grand issues of war and peace. The concert should certainly not aspire to replace the United Nations Security Council and it should not become a vehicle to heighten tension between the democratic world and other states. It should be a club — like other gatherings in world politics — that helps facilitate collective action. It should be low-key and lead by the actions of the middle- to lower-tier democracies rather than through pronouncements from Washington. The concert should not be seen as a body that can simply legitimate American military actions. Quite the contrary, it should act in part to restrain, commit, and inform the exercise of American power and connect that power more closely to other states.

The fourth objective addresses the rise of China — and Greater Asia — and is perhaps the seminal drama of our time. In the decades to come, America’s unipolar power will give way to a more bipolar, multipolar, or decentralized distribution of power. China will most likely be a dominant state and the United States will need to yield to it in various ways. The national security question for America to ask today is: what sorts of investments in global institutional architecture do I want to make now so that the coming power shifts will adversely impact me the least? That is, what types of institutional arrangements do I want to have in place to protect my interests when I am less powerful? This inquiry is a neo-Rawlsian question that should inform American strategic decision making.

The answer to this neo-Rawlsian question seems to be two-fold. One is that the United States should try

¹⁸For proposals to create a Concert of Democracies, see Ikenberry and Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law*; Ivo Daalder and James Lindsey, “Democracies of the World Unite,” *The American Interest* (January–February 2007); and Tod Lindberg, “The Treaty of the Democratic Peace,” *The Weekly Standard* (12 February 2007).

to embed the foundations of the Western-oriented international system so deeply that China has overwhelming incentives to integrate into it rather than to oppose and overturn it. Those American strategists who fear a rising China the most should be ultra-ambitious liberal institution builders. The United States should reconcile its differences with Europe and renew joint commitments to multilateral global governance. The more that China faces not just the United States, but a united West, the better. The more that China faces not just a united West, but the entire Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) world of capitalist democracies, the better. This is not to argue that China should face a grand counter-balancing alliance against it. Rather, China should face a complex and deeply integrated global system — one that is so encompassing and deeply entrenched that China essentially has no choice but to join it and seek to prosper within it. Indeed, the United States should take advantage of one of the great virtues of liberal hegemony, namely, that such a world order is easy to join and hard to overturn. The multiple layers of institutions and channels of access provide relatively easy entry points for China to join the existing international order.¹⁹ Now is precisely the wrong historical moment for the United States to be uprooting and disassembling its own liberal hegemonic order.

The second answer to the neo-Rawlsian question is to encourage the building of a regional East Asian security order that will provide a framework for managing the coming power shifts. The idea is not to block China's entry into the regional order but to help shape its terms, looking for opportunities to strike strategic bargains at various moments along the shifting power trajectories and encroaching geopolitical spheres. The big bargain that the United States will want to strike with China is this: to accommodate a rising China by offering

it status and position within the regional order, in return for Beijing accepting and accommodating Washington's core strategic interests, which include remaining a dominant security provider within East Asia.

In striking this strategic bargain, the United States will also want to try to build multilateral institutional arrangements in East Asia that will tie down and bind China to the wider region. China has already grasped the utility of this strategy in recent years and it is now actively seeking to reassure and co-opt its neighbors by offering to embed itself in regional institutions such as the ASEAN Plus 3 and Asian Summit. This is precisely what the United States did in the decades after World War II, building and operating within layers of regional and global economic, political, and security institutions, thereby making itself more predictable and approachable while reducing the incentives for other states to resist or undermine the United States by building countervailing coalitions.

The challenge for the United States is to encourage China to continue along this pathway, allaying worries about its growing power by facilitating China's binds to the region. But to do this, there will need to be a more formal and articulated regional security organization into which China can integrate. Such an organization need not have the features of an alliance system, as the countries in the region are not ready for this. What is needed, however, is a security organization that has at its center a treaty of non-aggression and mechanisms for periodic consultation.

Finally, America must reclaim a liberal internationalist "public philosophy." When U.S. officials championed the building of a rule-based order after World War II, they articulated a distinctive internationalist vision of order that has faded in

¹⁹ See G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China, Power Transitions, and Western Order," in Robert Ross, ed., *The Rise of China* (forthcoming).

recent decades. It was a vision that entailed a synthesis of liberal and realist ideas about economy, national security, and the sources of stable and peaceful order. These ideas—drawn from the 1940s experiences with the New Deal and the previous decades of war and depression—led American leaders to associate the national interest with the building of a managed and institutionalized global system. What is needed today is a renewed public philosophy of liberal internationalism that can inform American elites as they make trade-offs between sovereignty and institutional cooperation.

What American elites need to do today is recover this public philosophy of internationalism. In the past, restraint and commitment of American power went hand in hand. Global rules and institutions advanced America's national interest rather than threatened it. The alternative public philosophies that circulate today—philosophies that champion American unilateralism and disentanglement from global rules and institutions—are not meeting with great success. There now exists an opening for America's postwar vision of internationalism to be updated and rearticulated.

Conclusion

The United States needs to plan for a future of shifting, diffuse, and uncertain security threats. This means pursuing a milieu-based grand strategy, particularly by building international frameworks of cooperation to deal with multiple and evolving contingencies. To build grand strategy around one threat is to miss the importance of the others as well as miss the dangerous connections between these threats. This is not to belittle the al Qaeda threat. The point, however, is that it is important for the United States to pull back and invest in the creation of an international environment to handle anything, come what may.

In this regard, the good news is that the United States is very good at pursuing a milieu-based grand strategy. The Bush administration sought a radical break with the postwar American approach to order but it failed—and failed spectacularly. The administration sought to construct a global order based around American unipolar rule, asserting new rights to use force while reducing the country's exposure to multilateral rules and institutions. America's strategic position has weakened as a result and the institutions that have leveraged and legitimated U.S. power in the past have eroded. If America wants to remain at the center of an open world system—one that is friendly, cooperative, and capable of generating collective action in pursuit of diverse and shifting security challenges—it will need to return to its tradition of liberal order building.

The United States needs to reinvest in the liberal international order, reinforcing those features that encourage engagement, integration, and restraint. The more this order binds together capitalist democratic states in deeply rooted institutions, the more open, consensual, and rule-based it is, and the more widely spread its benefits, the more likely it will be that rising powers can and will secure their interests through integration and accommodation rather than through war or opposition to America. If the liberal international order offers rules and institutions that benefit the full range of states—rising and falling, weak and strong, emerging and mature—its dominance as an international order is all but certain.

For the most part, the great powers of the modern era have pursued “positional” grand strategies. They have identified rivals and enemies and then organized their foreign policies accordingly. Across historical eras, the results have been various sorts of balances of power and imperial systems. Once in a while, a state can dare to ask

slightly loftier questions about the organization of the international system. Here, the questions are meta-questions about political order itself. These are essentially “constitutional” questions about the first principles and organizational logic of the global system. The great powers collectively did this after 1815 and the United States and its allies did it again after the world wars. Today, the United States can once again ask these constitutional-like questions. What sort of global governance order would the United States like to see in operation in, say, 2020 or 2030? If we are uncertain today what precisely will worry us tomorrow, what sort of mechanisms of governance would we like to see established to deal with these unknowns? If all we know is that the security threats of tomorrow will be shifting, diffuse, and uncertain, we should seek to create a flexible and capable political system that can meet and defeat a large number of variant and complex threats.

We do know that growing globalization and the diffusion of technologies of violence will make it necessary to develop a complex protective infrastructure that will support global efforts at intelligence, monitoring, inspections, and enforcement. We will need the International Atomic Energy Agency on steroids. We also know that new states will be rising and wanting to share in or compete for leadership, creating an incentive today to get the rules and institutions embedded for the future. Under conditions of intensifying globalization, the opportunity costs of not coordinating national policies grows relative to the costs of lost autonomy associated with making binding agreements. So when we look into the future, we do know that there will be a growing premium attached to institutionalized forms of cooperation. The governance structures that pass for international politics today will need to be rebuilt and made much more complex and encompassing in the decades ahead.

Looking into this brave new world, the United States will find itself needing to share power and rely in part on others to ensure its security. It will not be able to depend on unipolar power or airtight borders. To operate in this coming world, the United States will need—more than anything else—authority and respect as a global leader. It has lost that authority and respect in recent years. In committing itself to a grand strategy of liberal order building, America can begin the process of gaining it back.



GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE UNITED STATES

By Frederick W. Kagan

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



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Grand strategy is the use of all of a state's resources to achieve all of its objectives. It is not a plan, but a process of evaluating the global situation; developing clear objectives; understanding available resources; recognizing enemies, threats, and challenges; and then putting resources against tasks in an iterative fashion, adjusting objectives, approaches, and resource allocation as appropriate to the changing situation. Since the scope of grand strategy is global, the effects of grand strategic decisions often take years or even decades to become apparent. But since all human activities are non-linear, it is impossible to predict the development of the global situation with any accuracy over the period covered by any particular grand strategic approach. Balancing the long-term view with the need to respond to changes in a dynamic and unpredictable situation comprises the high art of grand strategy. It is so difficult a task that very few states or individuals have ever managed to do it well for very long.

The development and execution of grand strategy is thus a process of continuous adaptation. Efforts to define a "grand strategy" to be executed over the course of years or decades are doomed to failure. The actual execution of grand strategy is so immense a task that only a government can undertake it. The most that a single thinker can hope to do is to outline a grand strategic concept that identifies principal objectives, offers a general appreciation of the current global situation, considers available resources, and suggests ways of allocating resources to tasks. That is the limited aim of the paper that follows.

A last caveat is in order before proceeding to the task at hand. Humans do not make decisions based on reality, but rather on their perceptions of reality. No one's perception is perfect, and almost all are tinted by ideologies and preconceptions. Different states observing the same situation

invariably perceive reality differently and act upon those different perceptions rather than upon a common reality. This banal observation is important because it seriously undermines the idea of “rational actors,” not because the actors are not rational, but because their actions are not based on a common appreciation of the world. When developing and executing grand strategy, therefore, it is of the utmost importance not merely to attempt to understand reality as accurately as possible, but to consider the ways in which other states and actors are likely to perceive it differently.

Even in matters as superficially objective as the availability of resources, perception normally overwhelms reality. How many soldiers can a given state field on a given population with a given economic situation? There is no abstract answer. In some eras, large populations could support only small armies; in other times, even small states could field mass armies. Capabilities vary for many reasons, but a key and unpredictable factor is national will. The history of war is replete with examples of states and leaders who believed that they had mobilized their states as completely as was possible, only to realize (as war threatened or worsened) that additional sacrifices made additional mobilizations feasible. For this reason, among others, it is not appropriate to take the resources available to a state in pursuit of its grand strategic objectives as a given, but rather one must evaluate them as another set of variables interacting with the global situation and the perceptions of the leaders and people of the state.

America's Objectives

The principal objective of U.S. grand strategy is to protect the American homeland and American citizens in a way that maintains their rights and way of life as guaranteed by the Constitution and established by long custom. All of the essential requirements of American grand strategy flow from this objective and the requirements for securing it in the world as it is today. Americans

have historically believed in the rightness of supporting democratic developments around the world; maintaining free markets; preventing or mitigating large-scale atrocities, poverty, and the effects of natural disasters; and a number of other things. But American decision makers have almost invariably selected specific courses of action based upon the interaction of these and other secondary desiderata with the core aim identified at the start of this section. And rightly so. The fundamental purpose of any government is to protect and advance the interests of the people it governs, placing all other desirable aims below that goal.

In the early days of the republic, protecting America's homeland, citizens, and way of life required relatively little interaction with the world. George Washington could warn against “entangling alliances” because the young United States had little need of them. As America grew more integrated into the global economic, political, and power structure, American leaders correctly chose to abandon Washington's outdated admonition and recognize that they could not fulfill their obligations to the American people without continuously interacting with other states and powers in the world. Debate on this point continued until the Second World War, and largely ended with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, although isolationist tendencies continue to grow and wane in strength among both liberals and conservatives.

The most immediate and uncontroversial requirement of grand strategy is the protection of the state against direct military threat. The clear and present danger Soviet arms posed to the United States during the Cold War made the development of a consensus about the need to resist the Soviet Union relatively easy, although debates about the best way to resist remained intense. The fall of the Soviet Union removed this easy consensus and plunged American grand strategists into a series of more fundamental debates about the nature and purpose of American power in a world that no longer

seemed threatening. The September 11th attacks changed the debate again, as most Americans began to perceive the world as dangerous but also unpredictable and difficult to understand. Consensus about how to respond to the current set of challenges has been elusive and is likely to remain so.

Even at the height of the Cold War, defending against the Soviet military threat was insufficient to achieve America's grand strategic aims. Close economic and political ties entangled America inextricably with Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The relatively lesser importance of such ties with most of Latin America and Africa meant that American attention to those continents was more episodic and spasmodic than coherent.

In the period following World War II it became an axiom of American grand strategy for the first time that fundamental instability in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia posed a direct challenge to American national interests because of the economic, political, and military repercussions of such instability in the face of the Soviet threat and American economic interdependence with these regions. This axiom provided the foundation for the Marshall Plan and the reconstruction of Japan, the intervention in Korea, the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, repeated efforts to limit the scope of Arab-Israeli conflicts, support for the Shah of Iran and Egyptian leaders, and many other actions that defined American foreign and military policy in this period.

The advent of nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles added a new dimension to the challenge of defending the American homeland. Avoiding full-scale war with the Soviet Union became a fundamental objective of American grand strategy and remained so until the end of the Cold War. The experience of World War II and the need to sustain large armed forces in

peacetime for the first time added a new dimension to American grand strategy as well. The task of balancing economic power — which was always rightly seen as the essential advantage America held over the planned economies of the Soviet bloc — with the need to sustain military power over the long term became more intricate and controversial than ever before.

The Cold War was always an ideological struggle for America. National Security Council Paper NSC-68, the archetype of the strategy of containment that defined American grand strategy in this conflict, repeatedly emphasized the goal of defending the American way of life against Soviet attack, the superiority of American values over Soviet values, and the inevitability of America's success based on that superiority as long as a reasonable grand strategy was pursued. The casting of the Cold War grand strategic debate as a struggle of the "free world" against the Communist dictators and their slaves was simply an adaptation of a traditional American view that our destiny and responsibility is to spread the bounties of freedom that we enjoy to other peoples.

It introduced a level of complexity into Cold War grand strategy, however, when the Soviet leadership chose in the 1950s to pursue the global struggle primarily in the Third World by supporting Communist insurgencies. In many cases, those insurgencies faced more or less authoritarian governments that the United States chose to back, despite our principled commitment to the spread of democracy. The argument frequently repeated was that whereas Communist dictators almost never fell, other strongmen could be easily removed and the benefits of democracy spread to their people, once the danger of Communism is relieved. But American leaders paid a continual political and moral price for supporting despots, and that support was usually given with reluctance and distaste.

For much of the Cold War, Democratic leaders were the traditional champions of internationalism and of the need for morality to inform American foreign policy directly. Franklin Roosevelt was the driving force behind the creation of the United Nations (UN). The establishment of the Peace Corps and other internationalist efforts characterized John F. Kennedy's tenure as president. Efforts to infuse American foreign policy with American morality reached their apotheosis during Jimmy Carter's presidency, when military and economic aid programs were frequently evaluated based upon the human rights records of their recipients. Republican presidents such as Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon tended to spurn such approaches, arguing on the basis of *realpolitik* considerations instead. Republican congressmen and failed presidential candidates often held anti-internationalist, sometimes even isolationist, views, although they generally favored continuing to resist the Soviet Union one way or another. The great exception was Ronald Reagan, a Republican internationalist who infused a great deal of moralism into his approach to foreign policy while nevertheless acting for the most part on the basis of *realpolitik*.

George H. W. Bush pursued a largely pragmatic approach to grand strategy. The invasion of Panama and the liberation of Kuwait were almost entirely *realpolitik* decisions — the one reflecting the danger of drugs and criminality from the Noriega regime, the other protecting a vital American economic interest. The elder Bush remained aloof from the collapse of Yugoslavia, which he saw primarily as a European rather than an American interest, and the atrocities that developed during that conflict left him relatively unmoved. He was drawn reluctantly into humanitarian efforts in Somalia that did not apparently serve core American *realpolitik* interests, and his reluctance was manifested in the weak and feckless policy developed and implemented there.

The Clinton administration evinced a high degree of moralism in its rhetoric and doctrine, as well as an overt belief in America's unique power and nature. Madeleine Albright encapsulated that belief in her declaration that the United States had become the "indispensable nation." Yet the Clinton administration at first also displayed a high degree of *realpolitik* in its decision making — winding up the American involvement in Somalia without really achieving the objectives of the intervention, and remaining passive for two years as the Balkan wars gathered steam. Even the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo reflected *realpolitik* concerns more than anything else. In the first case, the Clinton administration came to realize that a failure to act would lead to the humiliation of the UN and our European allies, support of which was a key tenet of its foreign policy. In the second, conflict in Kosovo threatened European stability and NATO profoundly. In both cases, however, the administration argued for the conflict on both humanitarian and *realpolitik* grounds.

George W. Bush's grand strategy was characterized by highly moralistic rhetoric and highly *realpolitik* decision making. The "democracy agenda" and the explicit promotion of particular strands of American morality pervaded Bush's speeches and documents and captured the imagination of administration opponents, including many who had earlier endorsed precisely such democratizing rhetoric. It is extremely easy, in fact, to compile a selection of key quotations from Bush and Clinton administration speeches about foreign policy that would leave the casual reader unable to determine who said what.

But the two major grand strategic decisions of the Bush administration were based almost entirely on *realpolitik* calculations. The attack on Afghanistan was a direct response to the Taliban regime's continued support of the al Qaeda group that had attacked us. The attack on Iraq was motivated

primarily by the administration's belief (widely shared by the international community) that Saddam Hussein had a WMD program. The fact that that belief was mistaken reflects the gap between perception and reality, but not the motivation of decision makers. A careful review of the administration's discussions about the war in Iraq shows that it is extraordinarily unlikely that Bush would even have considered attacking Iraq if he had not been convinced that Saddam had a weapons program. The belief that establishing democracy in Iraq would generate a "demonstration effect" in the Middle East, the core of the so-called neoconservative agenda, was invariably a second-order concern in those decisions and discussions, just as the humanitarian justifications for American intervention in the Balkans were secondary to fundamental concerns about European stability and NATO's survival. In both cases, the ideology and moralism were significant factors; in neither case were they sufficient or decisive.

In almost every other major foreign policy decision, the Bush administration has behaved pragmatically: yielding to North Korean demands for negotiations rather than preempting the development of Pyongyang's nuclear program; delaying any attack on Iran for its violation of international nuclear sanctions, its activities in Iraq, or its suppression of its own people; complete pragmatism in dealing with China, where ideological values of many sorts might have driven more direct confrontation; and so on.

The purpose of this historical excursion has been to show the tremendous continuity of American grand strategy over the past six decades, from which it is possible to deduce a number of core grand strategic objectives on which there has been general consensus. American grand strategy focuses most heavily on protecting vital interests from perceived threats. Ideology and moralism

infuse the perception of those threats by American decision makers (as with all decision makers), but they rarely define them. Americans do feel moral obligations to help the victimized, to support democracy and oppose tyranny, and a variety of other things, but rarely act on them on a large scale unless doing so coincides with the defense of a perceived vital interest. America has not intervened in Darfur or Rwanda because the scale of the effort required far exceeded the perception of any vital interest in doing so, despite the horrific nature of those conflicts. It intervened in the Balkans and Haiti because the smaller scale of those operations matched the perception of American interests involved. Even if the "neocon agenda" drove the invasion of Iraq as much as some believe, the basis of that agenda is more *realpolitik* than moralistic—proponents of that view argued that democracy is inherently good for all human beings, but that spreading democracy also advanced American interests and security.

The key tenets of American grand strategy over the past 60 years are thus both clear and widely embraced:

- The United States must protect its homeland and citizens from attack.
- American political and economic interests are fundamentally threatened by serious instability in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.
- Maintaining global free trade is critical to the wellbeing of the American economy.
- The promotion of democracy in non-democratic states is generally seen as both morally right and as supporting American interests.
- Helping the helpless and stopping bloodshed have broad support in general, but usually motivate American action only when they coincide with other vital interests.

- The United States desires no increase in territory and aims for no particular gain in relative economic power beyond that which it believes will accrue naturally from the superiority of its system.
- Americans want to preserve their civil liberties and way of life.
- Americans desire the support of allies, alliances, and international organizations, although they do not feel constrained to inaction by the absence of such support.
- Americans like the idea of international law and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, but also see themselves as holding a unique position that transcends both. This view has been shared equally by Democratic and Republican internationalists. NATO operations in Kosovo were conducted without international sanction or support and were thus technically violations of international law despite the fact that our European allies joined us in the endeavor. In addition, both Democratic and Republican administrations have insisted upon provisions in many treaties giving the United States special status.
- The United States aims to maintain its current relative advantage in military power and fears the rise of “peer competitors,” hostile alliances, or the development of “asymmetric” threats that might erode that relative advantage.
- The United States seeks actively to deter the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of all varieties.
- Many Americans see expanding gender equality and eliminating racial and religious discrimination as positive goals.

- Americans increasingly believe that the United States must act unilaterally and in conjunction with the international community to address climate change.

These goals and desires, which have had broad bipartisan support for decades, define around 90 percent of America’s grand strategic requirements when examined within any particular international context. Debates about American grand strategy have generally focused on the relative priorities and, above all, means used to achieve these aims rather than on the aims themselves. Confusion about the nature of those debates, particularly over the past seven years, has led many to see a much greater divide over U.S. grand strategy than exists, and to see a much larger gap between the basic goal of the Bush administration and those of its predecessors and likely successors.

The crux of the debate over the invasion of Iraq never lay in the broad grand strategic principles that underlay that decision. The Bush administration defined a doctrine of preemption, but acted under the valid legal authorities of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). Some administration officials and allies heavily emphasized the “democracy agenda,” but the decision to go to war did not flow from that rationale. War critics who argued that the containment program of economic sanctions would have been sufficient were not generally arguing that containment and sanctions were always and in every case better than military action — simply that it was so in this case. The entire debate over the future of American grand strategy would benefit enormously from the recognition that the controversy surrounding the 2003 invasion arose from a particular decision in particular circumstances much more than from any fundamental innovation in American strategic thought.

The Global Context

THE UNIPOLAR MOMENT CONTINUES

America remains the preeminent economic, political, cultural, and military power in the world today. At nearly \$14 trillion, American gross domestic product (GDP) is roughly equal to that of the entire European Union (EU), and twice that of China — the next single-state competitor. Put another way, it is more than one-fifth of the global total. Politically, the United States remains the indispensable nation. It is virtually impossible to build a regional or global consensus on any significant issue without American involvement. American international “isolation” following the Iraq war led not to American irrelevance but rather to dysfunction in an international system that had come to rely on American involvement. Culturally, the United States remains dominant (for good or for ill). American styles, music, tastes, and attitudes are broadly copied around the world. Despite the fact that European mores are generally more relaxed than in America, the United States remains the focus of hatred for conservative societies that resent the intrusion of modernity. There is considerably more sex on European television than on American television and European popular music is virtually indistinguishable from its American counterpart, but conservatives resent the United States more because of the perceived supremacy of American culture. There is great irony in the fact that the United States is seen as the epitome of secular and anti-religious culture, considering that many more Americans identify themselves as religious than do Europeans, for instance. This phenomenon reflects the global perception that the United States is the origin and arbiter of international culture.

America also remains preeminent militarily, the strains on the U.S. armed forces resulting from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts notwithstanding. No other state can project combat power — air,

land, and sea — over global distances on anything like the scale that America can. In truth, only France and Britain retain independent force projection capabilities on a global scale, but the size and staying power of the forces they can project is a fraction of America’s capability. American air and sea power faces challenges only in certain scenarios against China and possibly Russia. The fact that most of the world’s advanced militaries belong to America’s allies further enhances America’s relative military strength. The current strains on the American military, finally, reflect conscious decisions not to mobilize for war rather than inherent limitations on American military power. The United States spends around four percent of its GDP on defense — 28 states in the world (including China) spend a greater proportion than that; Russia follows closely at around 3.9 percent. The size of the U.S. military remains considerably below that of 1980s levels despite the significant increase in the number of troops deployed to active combat operations since that time. American military advantages in technology and human capital are so great that virtually no state can even hope to compete, even though the United States remains at a fundamentally peacetime level of mobilization. American dominance in most fields, and the global perception thereof (as distinct from U.S. “favorability” ratings), has not meaningfully slipped as a result of the 9/11 attacks or the war in Iraq.

As a result, no state or reasonable combination of states poses a serious threat to the American homeland or to America’s global position. The EU is roughly equal to the United States in population and economy, but the strong alliance between the United States and the EU eliminates military competition; there is no reason as yet to imagine that the European economy will fluctuate less than America’s or perform significantly better over the long term, and the inherent limitations in the

EU's manner of governance are likely to continue to hinder any efforts by Brussels to take the lead in international affairs. China, India, and Russia all have large populations, territories, and natural wealth; and all seek to challenge the United States economically. China and Russia seek to challenge the United States militarily and politically as well. But large Chinese and Indian populations are as much a burden as an advantage economically, and inefficient systems of governance and economics place additional restrictions on the Chinese and Indian economies. The loss of Russia's "near abroad" places sharp limits on Russian economic, military, and political potential unless Moscow moves toward an even more authoritarian regime aimed at mobilization. In terms of direct economic or military competition, only extraordinarily unlikely alliances could manifest serious challenges to America's global position over the coming decades, absent some dramatic shift in the relative performance of the American economy or the decision by one or more competitors to begin an all-out military race against the United States. The United States thus remains considerably more secure and more predominant globally than it was during the Cold War or at any previous time in our history.

The 9/11 attacks, U.S. current account deficits, large holdings of American debt by foreign countries, and other factors are often evinced as evidence of increasing American vulnerability. The 9/11 attacks caused enormous economic damage — at least \$50 billion in direct damages and many times that in indirect costs — but they did not fundamentally derange the U.S. economy or prevent a recovery from the recession caused by the bursting of the internet bubble at the end of the 1990s. One could certainly imagine future terrorist attacks doing considerably more damage — particularly if they included WMD. This threat remains the most immediate and significant danger, although

the likelihood of a terrorist group succeeding in an attack sufficiently large and well coordinated to do basic and irreparable harm to the U.S. economy is relatively low. The economic threats posed by America's debt and its foreign holders are generally more imaginary than real. The major foreign holders of U.S. debt are so intimately connected with the American economy that any large-scale assault on American credit worthiness would do them enormous direct harm as well. Individual actors could nevertheless choose to accept such damage in the interests of some other gain, but it is unlikely that any could do so on a scale that would fundamentally alter America's economic position over the long term.

In recent years it has become clear that the problem of climate change will play an increasing role in the formulation and execution of American economic strategy, a key part of U.S. grand strategy. The relative priority given to climate change in Europe, the United States, China, and elsewhere has introduced new strains into international relations and added further complexity to the problems of modernizing developing states. The challenge of climate change in the coming decades is likely to be indirect — global weather trends are unlikely to affect the United States dramatically and directly in any time frame appropriate for developing grand strategy, nor is it likely that any conceivable combination of American and global policies will affect such trends very much in the coming decades. The determination to address climate change, however, will place additional burdens on the American (and the global) economy, add distortions to the market, and contribute to international tensions. Climate change is not, as many Europeans would have it, the preeminent security challenge of our era, but neither can it be left out of consideration in the development and execution of grand strategy.

As a result of all of these factors, the principal challenges to American grand strategy in the coming years are likely to stem from the dynamics of core regions of central interest to the United States, rather than from direct threats to America's security or place in the world. Discussions of the "end of unipolarity" or the inevitable decline of America's position in the world are generally wide of the mark, at least in the time frame of current grand strategy. From the standpoint of formulating grand strategy, that is almost unfortunate — existential threats concentrate the mind and often simplify the task of policy formulation. The task of developing and executing grand strategy in the coming decades is thus likely to be enormously challenging intellectually, not susceptible to reduction to a single overarching concept, and difficult to form any long-term political consensus behind. The absence of an existential threat, moreover, will continue to complexify the problem of mobilizing American resources in support of any strategy. Most individual grand strategic decisions and initiatives will appear to be optional and thus it will be difficult to maintain widespread support in favor or resourcing them. Educating the American people and decision makers about the importance of consistency, of developing and applying a coherent approach to regional policies over the long term, and of the need to provide the necessary resources to succeed in each particular policy is an enormous challenge but a prerequisite for success.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

America now has important interests in all regions of the world. Venezuelan oil, Latin American narco-trafficking, African genocide, and many other issues of concern require our attention. The dynamics of the EU, stability within Europe, and the future of NATO are likely to have extremely important consequences for the United States in the

long term. The rise of an increasingly hostile Russia imperils European stability primarily through the danger of economic power (natural gas supplies) and political influence derived from that power. But the rise of Russia also gives new life to old tensions in Russia's "near abroad," where NATO influence has also been rising. Direct conflict between Russia and NATO is highly unlikely in the near future, but increasing competition, both political and economic, is very likely. All of these issues require the careful attention of the grand strategist. They are presented summarily here only in the interest of brevity and because they are unlikely to require more than reasonably adroit political and economic policies for now.

East Asia presents a different set of problems. China's rise presents military, economic, and political challenges within the region and beyond. Although the Chinese military is a long way from being able to undertake offensive operations against the United States, Beijing has no such need or aim. China has focused instead on the balance across the Taiwan Strait and on the ability to defend its territory from U.S. attack. The Chinese military has made significant progress in both areas and continues to advance. Although there is little likelihood that China will succeed in the near term in establishing the capability to ward off the full force of the U.S. armed forces, it is by no means out of Beijing's reach to design a force that could act opportunistically when U.S. forces were heavily engaged elsewhere or American will was perceived to be weak.

China has been increasingly aggressive beyond East Asia, moreover, underwriting Iranian military and economic developments, and engaging militarily and economically throughout Africa and in Pakistan. China's support flows disproportionately to regimes and actors hostile to the United States, possibly simply because those offer

the best opportunities rather than out of any desire to form an anti-American mini-bloc. Whatever the intention, Chinese involvement beyond East Asia is generally negative and destabilizing. It also raises the possibility of conflict between the United States or an American ally and a Chinese proxy to which Beijing feels the need or desire to respond. Over time, it is quite possible that the U.S.-China tension will move beyond the Taiwan Strait into areas that have seemed, until recently, far beyond Beijing's sphere of interest, let alone influence. South and Central Asia and Iran are particularly likely as flashpoints that might involve not only U.S.-Chinese tensions, but Russian and Indian interests as well. The possibility of a new "Great Game" developing, which involves most of the world's great powers, is quite real, and the stakes could be the enormous energy resources of Central Asia and Iran. China's rise could pose grand strategic challenges on many fronts, and it would be a mistake to focus entirely on the problem of defending Taiwan, important though that requirement is.

North Korea presents a series of different challenges. The danger of a Northern attack on South Korea seems minimal now, but the nature of the problem is shifting. The proliferation of North Korea's nuclear and missile technology remains a serious concern. The mere existence of the North Korean nuclear program is a destabilizing factor in the region. Pyongyang is unlikely to maintain its grip on power indefinitely, moreover, and the collapse of North Korea could become the trigger for regional destabilization if it is not handled properly. American economic interests in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea create enormous American equities in the outcome on the Korean peninsula—to say nothing of treaty obligations to Seoul and Tokyo and the presence of U.S. military forces in Korea and Japan. It is as certain as anything can be that Korea will once again capture the attention of American strategists in the coming decades, quite possibly in ways that will surprise us.

THE MUSLIM WORLD—U.S. INTERESTS

The most obvious and important grand strategic challenge facing the United States is the series of struggles now underway in the Muslim world. Whereas describing the challenges in East Asia or Europe is a relatively straightforward exercise in geostrategy, capturing the essence of the struggles in the Muslim world is a more elusive goal. We must start by asking why we care about those struggles. To begin with, a small number of groups have a program of attacking and destroying the United States and its allies, and some of them have acted on that program. A larger number of groups are working actively to overturn the status quo in the Muslim world through more or less violent revolutionary programs. The states that rule the Muslim world are by and large non-representative and authoritarian. They have been hemorrhaging legitimacy and stoking the flames of this insurgency. American support for many of those regimes, among other factors, contributes to widespread anti-Americanism in the Muslim world. And since the Muslim world includes large minority populations in Europe and the United States, all of these sentiments are naturally of concern to U.S. policy makers. There are, finally, around 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. Any movement that threatens the stability of such an enormous global community is an imminent threat to American security.

All of this would be true if there were no oil in the Middle East at all, if Israel did not exist or if the United States did not support it. American interests in the outcome of intra-Islamic struggles flow primarily from the enormous direct impact those struggles can have on a quarter of humanity, which will inevitably have enormous indirect impacts on the other three-quarters. Direct economic concerns stemming from the supply of oil are important enough in themselves to warrant serious attention, of course, but are secondary to the greater problem. Put another way, even if the

Western world weaned itself from Middle Eastern oil tomorrow and Israel fell into the ocean, we would still be intimately and vitally concerned with the stability and welfare of the Muslim world.

SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

The systemic problems in the Muslim world are enormous. Vast disparities of wealth and tremendous poverty, dysfunctional governments, weak civil societies, poor educational systems, and many other socioeconomic challenges create instability in a region still struggling to come to terms with modernity. On the other hand, those systemic problems exist in almost every modernizing state in the world in a greater or lesser degree, and most Muslim states are by no means the worst off in almost any area. Attempts to treat instability in the Muslim world as a byproduct of socioeconomic dysfunction or poverty are intellectually sterile and doomed to fail because they do not explain why in the *Umma* alone these dysfunctions have led to a coherent global network of insurgent terrorists that threaten the existence of Muslim regimes and the wellbeing of the West. Poverty and, even more, state illegitimacy and dysfunction, provide opportunities for these terrorists that must be eliminated over time, but they are not the cause of the problem.

We can dismiss relatively easily a few other factors frequently adduced as the cause of the violence and disorder that threatens us. Anti-Americanism is not the problem. It is quite true that polls show that 78 percent of Egyptians and Jordanians, 68 percent of Pakistanis, 83 percent of Turks and 86 percent of Palestinians have unfavorable views of the United States. On the other hand, 66 percent of Germans, 72 percent of Argentinians, 60 percent of French and Spanish and even 50 percent of Czechs also have unfavorable views of America.¹ The number of German, French, Spanish, Argentinian, and

Czech terrorists attacking American targets (or any targets, for that matter) is vanishingly small. It's a long way from disliking America to killing Americans and their allies, and "fixing our image in the Muslim world," even if it were possible, is unlikely to address the real issue.

Islam itself is not the problem either. Islam is not by nature any more or less warlike than Judaism or Christianity. Muslims have lived alongside Jews and Christians for centuries and engaged in no more fighting against them than all three communities have engaged in among themselves. The Ottoman Sultan declared a jihad against the Russian Empire in 1826—and was soundly defeated in the war that followed with little support from his own people, let alone the Muslim community at large. The appeals of Muslim rulers to resist the "Crusaders" and defend the true faith have varied widely in effect and generally led to little mobilization of the Muslim community. There is nothing inherent in Islam that would explain the current struggle in the context of centuries of normal coexistence of religions.

America's support for Israel and the failure of the Arab-Israeli peace process is, finally, almost irrelevant to this issue. Anti-Zionism is certainly a powerful rhetorical point for America's Muslim foes, and it certainly does motivate some insurgent terrorists. The question is: what would the United States have to do to eliminate that motivation? Would halving our aid to Israel help? Pushing the Israelis to concede some but not all of the occupied territories? It is hard to see how any compromise solution would satisfy radicals whose complaint is not the size of Israel but its existence; not the scale of American support but its persistence. The nature of extremists is that they are not satisfied by compromises, and insurgent terrorists who take up arms against us because of Israel are extremists.

¹ Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Spring Survey 2007: Global Unease with Major World Powers* (27 June 2007), at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=256>.

There is no conceivable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict that would satisfy those for whom that conflict is justification for terrorism, no possible level of American support to Israel that would liberate us from the label of Zionist supporters. Overt anti-Semitism in the United States did not prevent either Communists or Nazis from labeling America the leader of a vast Zionist conspiracy even before the foundation of the state of Israel. The United States could probably affect public attitudes on these issues on the margins, but no feasible American policy will eliminate them as a source of anti-Americanism or violence.

CONCRETE CHALLENGES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

All of these systemic and global issues have clouded our thinking about the problems of the Muslim world. It is not that they are not valid or relevant studies in themselves, but rather that they offer no usable solutions. We are not going to cure poverty and governmental dysfunction in the Muslim world, fix whatever we think is broken within Islam, jettison Israel, or make everyone like Americans. U.S. grand strategy must focus instead on the specific problems that we actually face today and that we can actually hope to address. Of those, the most important are the persistence of a Leninist revolutionary ideology grafted onto a distorted version of Islam, Iranian ambitions within the Greater Middle East, and Pakistan's instability. Socioeconomic and cultural problems of Muslim minorities in Britain, France, and Germany are also significant and can even produce direct threats to the United States, but there is a real limit to what American grand strategy can do to address those problems directly. Tensions within Muslim communities in India, China, Indonesia, and Africa also hold the potential to produce serious

problems down the road, but for now they remain secondary challenges.

It is tempting and not entirely unreasonable to try to bring all three challenges together: Iran is a threat to regional stability because its regime pursues a variant of the same ideology that motivates al Qaeda, while Pakistani instability worries us mainly because of the proximity of al Qaeda bases to Islamabad's nuclear weapons.² These commonalities, among other things, have led to a focus on the ideology itself as the center of gravity of the problem, leading to fruitless arguments about whether to call the enemy "jihadis," "Islamofascists," "Islamists," "militant Islamists," or just terrorists. I have argued elsewhere that "*takfiris*" is the best term, since it is both doctrinally accurate and carries a pejorative connotation to most Sunni Muslims, but almost any other term is acceptable (with the exception of Islamofascism, whose connotations of a this-worldly hero worship are entirely out of key with the nature of *takfiri* ideology).

But the problem is not simply the ideology. *Takfirism* in its present form has existed since Sayyid Qutb outlined it in the 1950s and 1960s. It is a Leninist variant on a Kharajite school of thought dating back to the earliest days of Islam (although modern-day *takfiris* hotly resent being called Kharajites). When *takfirism* is rejected, the way of thinking it manifests will continue to exist and will someday form the basis for some other ideology, just as radical interpretations of Judaism and Christianity periodically throw up ideological innovations that lead to violence such as the Ku Klux Klan and David Koresh or the terrorist elements of the Zionist movement before the

²Limitations of space prevent the elaboration of this assertion in this context. The core idea is that both the Khomeini regime and Qutbist movements assert that they can determine whether or not someone is a true Muslim by his behavior—and that those who do not conform are infidels or, worse, apostates, who can (and some say should) be killed. The Sunni term for the process of declaring someone an infidel is "takfir." Although the word has a very different meaning in Shiism, the principle is nevertheless part of the Khomeini ideology, hence the license used here in misapplying the term to a Shiite context.

formation of the Israeli state. This is not to say that “defeating” or, at least, discrediting this particular variant of the ideology is not important — it is very important. But the way to succeed is not by persuading Muslims that *takfirism* is a heretical distortion of their religion (which it is), but rather by defeating those who claim that it will lead them to victory.

From the early days of the Cold War, policy makers and scholars debated whether the enemy was Communism or the Soviet Union. In the end, the distinction was meaningless. Communism became so intimately entwined with the Soviet Union that the U.S.S.R.’s fall discredited the ideology almost completely. But Communism also informed and directed the behavior of Moscow’s rulers sufficiently that defeating the Soviet Union required understanding and overcoming the ideology. The same is true of the struggle today. Defeating *takfirism* requires defeating al Qaeda and the current Iranian regime.³ It is not possible to discredit the ideology in the eyes of Muslims and yet allow al Qaeda or the current Iranian government to succeed.

The conflict cannot, therefore, be seen as primarily ideological. Our goal should not be to convince Muslims that democracy is preferable to *takfirism*. Judging from the reaction of Muslim populations subjected to *takfiri* rule, the overwhelming majority of Muslims is already convinced. The problem is to defeat the specific states and organizations that use various forms of force and leverage to impose their views on populations that are largely hostile to them while also working to convince the Muslim world that there is a legitimate and feasible alternative. It is a daunting challenge that requires both the skillful blending of all instruments of national and international power and the mobilization of the resources necessary to succeed. But the

stakes of the conflict are too high to ignore — the stability of a large portion of the world’s population is not something that America or any world power can abandon in safety.

Ways and Means

It is beyond the scope of a paper on grand strategy to evaluate the specific approaches necessary to defeat particular enemies. Such considerations belong more properly to the realm of regional strategy. The debate over the best ways of combating *takfirism*, either in its state-based Iranian form or in its non-state al Qaeda form, however, has sufficient impact on considerations of grand strategic resources and approaches that a few words about it are required.

THE MUSLIM WORLD

The United States has three overarching objectives in the Muslim world that should define our basic approach to the problem: preventing *takfiri* groups from attacking America or American citizens, defeating those groups, and helping the region establish a new stability — different from the current unstable stasis — that secures our other core grand strategic interests. The problem is that these objectives often conflict with one another. Measures required to preempt *takfiri* attacks or defeat *takfiri* groups can increase instability locally or even regionally for a time. And any region transitioning from one form of quasi-stability to another offers opportunities for insurgent terrorists to establish themselves. The United States can easily trap itself into inaction through constant fears of stoking instability by attacking *takfiris* on the one hand, or stoking *takfirism* by supporting authoritarian regimes in the name of stability on the other. No course is safe. The region is now unstable and under threat from *takfiri* groups. There is no reason to imagine that either problem will solve itself without outside intervention — and many reasons

³ This statement should not be construed as a call either to invade or to overthrow the Iranian regime — simply as a call to prevent it from succeeding in its larger regional aims.

to imagine that neither will do so. The challenge is to abandon the search for the perfect, safe solution that does not exist and choose wisely among various dangers and risks.

The United States has attempted several strategies for dealing with both the *takfiri* challenge and the problem of instability in the Muslim world. We have used targeted military strikes against individual leaders of *takfiri* networks, minimizing American presence on the ground in sensitive areas (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa). We have also used large conventional forces in counterinsurgency/counterterrorism campaigns (Iraq, Afghanistan). Against state-based actors, we have used massive conventional attacks (Iraq) and economic and political sanctions regimes (Iran and Syria). In some areas we have used our own forces (Iraq, Afghanistan); in others we have supported proxies (Ethiopians in Somalia, Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in 2001).

The results of these various experiments offer no clear pattern. The badly-conducted invasion of Iraq in 2003 clearly led to greater regional instability and the initial growth of *takfirism*. The well conducted counterinsurgency campaign of 2007 did tremendous damage to *takfirism* and is reestablishing stability. Supporting Northern Alliance proxies in Afghanistan in 2001 was partially successful, but inadequate follow up has led to a drift toward instability and regrowth of *takfirism* in the region. The jury is still out on the success of the Ethiopian proxy effort in Somalia, but the long-term indicators are not positive there. *Takfiri* groups have repeatedly demonstrated (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa) that they can reconstitute faster than pinpoint military attacks can disaggregate them — the Special Forces' counter-network approach to the problem by itself has pretty clearly proven unable to do more than attrit and inhibit *takfiri* groups without defeating them. Political and economic sanctions regimes have also

had limited utility. The sanctions regime against Iraq in the 1990s did, it seems, persuade Saddam to abandon his WMD programs — but it did not persuade him actually to comply with the various UNSCRs to prove that he had done so. The sanctions also created an intense hatred for America that had not been present in Iraq to the same extent previously, as economic sanctions regimes often do. Sanctions against North Korea have not prevented that state from developing a nuclear capability, although they have done it enormous economic harm. The consequences of that approach remain to be seen. Similarly, it is unclear how the use of economic and political sanctions against Iran will turn out — they have certainly not convinced the Islamic Republic to abandon its efforts to destabilize Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Levant by supporting *takfiri* and other militant terrorist groups throughout the region.

The most serious damage to *takfiri* groups has resulted from conventional military counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations — such operations defeated the Taliban and routed al Qaeda (initially) in Afghanistan; defeated al Qaeda in Iraq in 2007; (as conducted by the Ethiopians) defeated the Islamic Courts in Somalia; and (conducted by the Lebanese) defeated Fatah al-Islam in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Al Qaeda itself recognizes setbacks in Lebanon and Iraq, resulting from these conventional operations, as major defeats. But success in these particular theaters does not mean that such operations are the model of how to defeat *takfirism* everywhere. The likelihood of regional destabilization resulting from a conventional attack on Iran or a unilateral intervention in Pakistan is far higher than the likely benefits we might gain from such operations. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this problem, and each challenge must be taken on its own merits.

There is near-unanimous consensus on one point in this struggle, however — the United States needs to find, support, encourage, and work closely with allies and partners in the region that oppose *takfiris* and seek to contribute to regional stability. Hitherto, we have had few options. States that opposed *takfirism*, such as Egypt, have also been notoriously autocratic and have contributed to instability through their repressive nature. Some strategic partners, such as Saudi Arabia, are extremely ambivalent about *takfirism*. Others, such as Pakistan, claim to be anti-*takfiri* but have generally found accommodating *takfiri* groups more advantageous than attacking them. There are only two states in the region now that combine a serious commitment to combating *takfirism*, the desire for close relations and cooperation with the United States, and the beginnings of political structures that could become legitimate, stable, non-authoritarian states: Iraq and Afghanistan. Coincidentally, these states occupy critical strategic positions — they straddle Iran, and while Iraq is at the heart of the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan occupies a critical nexus between Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and China.

One clear element of U.S. strategy in the Muslim world thus emerges: America should do everything in its power to support the establishment of stable, legitimate regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan with the hope of shifting its reliance away from regional partners such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to these new states that are far more committed to the struggle against *takfirism* and to containing Iranian ambitions. In the short term, this policy will require the continued deployment of American combat forces in counterinsurgency and armed mediation strategies in both countries for some time. In the longer term, it will require serious bilateral and multilateral security commitments, significant economic investment, assistance with capacity-building and democracy-building efforts, and a solid strategic partnership with both

Baghdad and Kabul. Fortunately, there is good reason to think that both states desire such a partnership.

If the military component of U.S. strategy in the Muslim world has been ill thought out and poorly executed, the non-military components have been even worse. Vast amounts of aid to states like Egypt and Pakistan have purchased some stability, but at a very high price — and have done very little to help in the struggle against *takfirism* of any variety. American reluctance to provide economic aid to oil-rich states has also created opportunities for Iran and China to move in and work to establish their own economic-dependency zones that are generally oriented against the United States and its allies. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the international development community does not see development as a tool of strategy except in the very basic sense that modernizing states are thought to be more likely to produce stability (an extremely tenuous assumption). The relative coherence of economic aid with strategic requirements and goals that characterized the containment strategy of the Cold War is entirely lacking in our approach to the Muslim world today, and that must change.

It is in America's interest to outbid Iran in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, and the Levant. It does not matter that Iraq has large potential income or that Afghanistan is hopelessly poor. The aim should not be simply to build economic or political capacity for its own sake, but to encourage the development of stable economies and polities that are oriented to the United States and its Western allies and not to Iran or China. This approach was a key element of America's success in the Cold War, and it will be essential in the current world situation as well. Shifting the strategic focus in the region away from traditional partners toward the nascent democracies we have helped create will require a fundamental reexamination of all of our aid and political programs. The result will

not necessarily be the elimination or reduction of assistance to Egypt and Pakistan or dramatic changes in our relations with Saudi Arabia, but all options should be on the table as we reevaluate our equities in light of the changing circumstances.

Developing such a coherent political-military-economic strategy of containment toward Iran is far preferable to moving toward direct military conflict with that state. Finding ways to press Pakistan toward liberalization and a more serious commitment to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism is far more attractive than direct Western military intervention there. Containing Iran requires solid relationships with Iraq and Afghanistan; pressing Pakistan requires liberating ourselves from dependence on Islamabad for help in Afghanistan. In every way, U.S. strategy in the Muslim world must undergo a fundamental paradigm shift that puts priority on building stable relations with stable governments in Baghdad and Kabul as a way of gaining strategic flexibility to deal more gracefully with other regional challenges.

BEYOND THE MUSLIM WORLD

The rise of China and the resurgence of Russia are clearly issues that require close attention. It is difficult to see a path toward military conflict with Russia in the near or even medium term, but it is quite possible that relations between Moscow and the West will continue to deteriorate steadily, particularly if Russia takes military action against Georgia, seriously threatens military or major economic action against Ukraine, or creates intolerable economic pressure on the Baltic states or Western Europe. The United States has very little leverage over Russia as long as oil prices remain high and Moscow's aims remain relatively limited. The art of strategy in this region will lie in finding ways to establish, communicate, and enforce "red lines" without moving to overt conflict. A Russian

attack on Georgia is quite possible, and would be intolerable. But the West would hardly move to intervene to defend Georgia militarily. Economic and political levers are unlikely to be very useful. The best approaches probably lie in helping and encouraging Western Europe to emancipate itself from Russian energy resources (the key leverage point Moscow holds over our allies), strengthening ties with Poland, the Baltic States, and Ukraine, and generally making Russian adventurism as unattractive to Moscow as possible. But if Moscow continues to pursue a cautious adventurism abroad, it will be difficult to prevent it from doing so.

The grand strategic problem with China is in principle easier to resolve. The United States must continue to maintain sufficient military force and a sufficiently credible commitment to defend its allies in East Asia that can continue to deter any adventurist tendencies that may arise in Beijing. Since China can only reach our most important allies either by crossing straits or passing through North Korea, the military challenge of maintaining such deterrence is fairly straightforward, if expensive. Addressing the problem of Chinese political and economic expansion into the Middle East and Africa is more difficult. In Iran, we are caught on the horns of a dilemma—the more we pursue punitive economic sanctions as a preferred option, the more we lay Iran open to dependency on China. One of the virtues of establishing a real containment regime that includes actively bidding against Iran (and China) in the Middle East, rather than simply punitive sanctions, is that it may create new policy levers that do not push our foes more closely into dependence on Beijing. Nor is it entirely clear what the Chinese are buying for their investments anyway—the states they support tend to be weak and unstable (apart from Iran), and likely to prove unreliable partners on any level.

The Bottom Line

The United States must pursue a grand strategy that aims to reestablish and maintain stability in key regions, that defeats al Qaeda while doing our best to prevent any further terrorist attacks, that contains Iranian and Chinese ambitions without leading to full-scale conflict with either state, and that addresses instability in Pakistan and other critical states. Success in such a grand strategy will require active American involvement in key regions around the world, supporting our allies, deterring or defeating our foes, and assisting key states in transitions from less to more stable political and economic configurations. Such a grand strategy is in no material way different from what the United States has been trying to do for the past six decades or more and is in line with, and in support of, American interests and objectives about which there is broad bipartisan consensus. Defense of the American homeland is important, and more challenging now than it has been since the fall of the Soviet Union, but it is not all-important. We could theoretically prevent, preempt, or deter all future attacks on the United States but nevertheless allow key regions of the world to be so disrupted as to generate greater harm to the American economy and way of life than any likely terrorist attack would do. American wellbeing and our way of life are too closely connected with the welfare of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia for anyone to imagine that we could continue to live in peace and prosperity while any of those regions collapsed in flames.

Pursuing such a grand strategy will be expensive. The American military is too small to shoulder the burden, and current defense spending is inadequate to rectify the problem. The United States must place the highest priority on winning the wars it is fighting now—which are also struggles for critical geostrategic terrain in the

most important and most highly contested region of the world today—but it must also maintain the forward-looking capability to deter China, Iran, and any other regional or possible global competitor. In addition, we must rethink the way we provide military and economic assistance to other states. Recalibrating that effort to support the grand strategy outlined above will probably also be expensive. It will also be bureaucratically difficult, as the U.S. government is not now configured to develop and execute a coherent political-military-economic grand strategy, and individual agencies will continue to resist efforts to do so.

Paying for all of this may require tradeoffs. It is almost a platitude in Washington now that rising “entitlement” costs will, in fact, force reductions in defense and foreign aid programs in the coming years. One might argue that this is as it should be—the purpose of our grand strategy, after all, is to preserve our way of life, and reducing entitlements will seem to erode that way of life to many. But this is short-term thinking. The harm to the American economy of state collapse and war in the Middle East; of a Chinese bid for hegemony in either East Asia or Central Asia; of a resurgent and hostile Russia pressing Western Europe for all it’s worth—any of these things will cost considerably more than any proposed increases in defense or foreign policy budgets.

The argument for preserving entitlements at the expense of maintaining an appropriate foreign policy assumes that the world will tick along peacefully regardless of our activities, or that we can axiomatically accomplish whatever we need to accomplish in the world on a pre-set budget, or that there is no real connection between stability in key regions of the world and American prosperity. Since none of these assumptions is true, it follows that we must keep an open mind about the

relative priority of domestic spending versus foreign and defense spending *simply for the purpose of optimizing our way of life over the long term*. It does not follow, of course, that we should bankrupt ourselves maintaining vast armies and fleets or subsidizing every state in the world. We will have to pick our battles and accept risk in low-probability scenarios or areas in which we can really afford to lose.

The risks we are currently accepting overall, however, are far too high. As such challenges go, Iraq is by no means at the high end of the difficulty spectrum. The strain on our military forces in fighting that war cannot be taken as evidence that we should never again fight such a war—that was the lesson we learned from Vietnam, and it served us extremely ill in the years that followed. The signs of strain should instead be taken as a warning. It is of course better not to fight wars, and of course better to fight short, decisive wars than long, drawn-out ones. But history is clear about one thing—states do not always get to choose which wars they fight, and frequently don't get to choose how those wars will be fought. Having the capability to handle a post-conflict reconstruction/nationbuilding/counterinsurgency/counterterrorism effort does not make doing so attractive or desirable, but not having that capability measurably increases the likelihood of disaster.

The key thing moving forward is that we must put our recent disagreements in context. Most of the heat about the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 reflected a disagreement about that specific decision, but much of it was cloaked in the language of ideology and grand strategic difference. The ideology was important, to be sure: belief in the inevitable triumph of democracy once the dictator was removed certainly did short circuit necessary thinking and planning for post-war operations within the administration.

Fundamental misconceptions about the nature of war also contributed to post-conflict failures, as I have argued elsewhere. But substituting the “multilateralist” agenda for the “democracy” agenda by claiming that a preference for diplomacy and the use of international organizations will always necessarily lead to success is as dangerous as anything the Bush administration has ever done.

The only agenda underpinning American grand strategy should be the pursuit of our goals and interests through all of the means of American state power, skillfully integrated and suitably adapted to continuously changing circumstances. It is far easier to demand and even describe such an agenda than to execute it, of course, but there is no real alternative. True students of Clausewitz know that anyone who provides a list of his “principles of war” fundamentally missed the point of an entire treatise devoted to proving that there are no such principles. Advocates of one or another sort of foreign policy “doctrine” similarly miss the point. America will not be well served by a “McCain,” “Obama,” “Clinton,” or “Kagan Doctrine,” for that matter, which reduces the grand strategic challenges to a set of aphorisms and preferred methods. Grand strategy is a process, not a plan.

The background is a solid blue color with a faint, light-blue overlay. The overlay consists of a world map showing the continents and a compass rose in the lower-left corner. The compass rose has labels for 'N', 'NE', 'E', 'SE', 'S', 'SW', 'W', and 'NW'. The title 'A GRAND STRATEGY OF RESTRAINT' is centered in white, uppercase letters.

A GRAND STRATEGY OF RESTRAINT

By Barry R. Posen

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



A GRAND STRATEGY OF RESTRAINT¹

By Barry R. Posen

The foreign policy elites of both parties share a commitment to a grand strategy of international activism, including the regular use of military power, which is serving the United States poorly. Since the early 1990s, the United States has used military force habitually, and at considerable human, material, and political costs. The thrust of much of this military action has been the political transformation of other societies in endeavors to produce stable democracies. However, public opinion in much of the world is now hostile to America. Bosnia remains an ethnically divided society, a protectorate of the European Union. The humanitarian intervention in Kosovo still occupies U.S. troops; Serbia remains highly nationalistic and resentful of the two U.S.-led wars against it. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq show no sign of ending; indeed, Afghanistan is deteriorating. Despite this abysmal record, politicians of both parties publicly flirt with the possibility of yet another war, against Iran, a country stronger and more capable than Afghanistan and Iraq combined. This activism has mainly been paid for with borrowed money; the imminent retirement of the “baby boomers” and their looming health care demands in combination with the generally exploding costs of health care will soon swell demands on the public purse.² Meanwhile, the American public has grown weary of the war in Iraq and doubts the foreign policy advice of its leaders. This grand strategy is not sustainable. Below I develop an alternative—the grand strategy of “Restraint.”³

In this paper, I offer a brief definition of grand strategy, discuss the theoretical premises that underpin my own strategic thinking, assess the state of the world on the basis of those premises, review and critique the current grand strategy

¹ An earlier version of this article is “The Case for Restraint,” *The American Interest*, Vol. III, No. 2, (November/December 2007).

² Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid funding is projected to grow from 8.4% of GDP in 2007 to 14.2% of GDP in 2030. See Congressional Budget Office, *The Long Term Budget Outlook*, (December 2007): Table 1–2, 5.

³ Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, Harvey M. Sapolsky, “Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security*, Vol. 21 (Spring, 1997): 5–48.

consensus, and finally offer an outline of an alternative grand strategy, “Restraint,” which is gaining traction among a small group of international relations scholars and policy analysts.⁴

What is Grand Strategy and Why Would You Want One?

A grand strategy is a nation-state’s theory about how to produce security for itself. Security has traditionally encompassed the preservation of sovereignty, safety, territorial integrity, and power position—the last being the necessary means to the first three. States have traditionally been quite willing to risk the safety of their people to protect national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and power position. A grand strategy enumerates and prioritizes threats and potential political and military remedies to threats. A grand strategy contains explanations for why threats enjoy a certain priority, and why and how the proposed remedies would work. A grand strategy is not a rule book; rather, it is a set of concepts and arguments that need to be revisited regularly. Sometimes nation states write their grand strategies down in one place, sometimes they do not.

A grand strategy is a key component of a state’s overall foreign policy, but foreign policy may have many goals beyond security, including the improvement of the prosperity of citizens at home, or the welfare of people abroad. These are appropriate goals for a foreign policy, but great care should be taken not to conflate these goals with security goals as they have historically been understood, lest one fall into the trap of prescribing security means for the solutions to these goals. Grand strategy is ultimately about fighting, a costly and bloody business. Environmental change, the risk of global pandemics, human rights, and free trade may be important and worthy foreign policy

problems for the United States. There may be a connection, as cause or consequence, between these problems and the massive U.S. defense budget, the peacetime deployment of large U.S. forces around the world, the U.S. alliance structure, and the employment of U.S. military power in war, but this is to be demonstrated, not assumed. And if a connection is found, the right answer may be to sever rather than accept the linkage.

Though states have often gone without clearly stated grand strategies, they do so at their peril. Grand strategies serve four functions. First, resources are invariably scarce. If a grand strategy includes clearly stated priorities, it provides a guide for the allocation of these scarce resources. Second, in modern great powers, several large and complex organizations must cooperate to achieve a state’s security goals. Micro-management of this cooperation is difficult. A clearly stated grand strategy helps these organizations to coordinate their activities. Third, insofar as grand strategies pursue interests abroad, deterrence and persuasion of potential adversaries and reassurance of allies and friends is preferable to the actual use of force. Grand strategies communicate interests. Finally, clearly stated grand strategies assist internal accountability. They permit criticism and correction when they are proposed; they organize public discourse when new projects are suggested; and they allow for evaluation of such policies after the fact. Grand strategies are good for democracy.

The Premises of Restraint

The analysis below is guided by a realist depiction of international politics, an appreciation of the power of identity in domestic and international politics, and a grim respect for the utility and the limits of military power. Together, these premises call for a conservative and cautious grand strategy.

⁴ An earlier version of this article is “The Case for Restraint,” *The American Interest*, (November/December 2007). See also my response to my critics, “Restraining Order,” *The American Interest* (January/February 2008).

Realists depict the international political world as anarchy — a realm without a sovereign. In this realm, self-help is the rule. Most states wish to achieve as much autonomy as possible. Any state can resort to armed force, so all will want at least some armed force and the material and human assets that contribute to armed force, to protect themselves against the worst case. States seek power; some pursue what they perceive to be “sufficient” power to defend themselves and some chase all the power that they can. Some chase power recklessly, while others are shrewd and cautious, waiting for opportunities. Ironically, superior relative power is one such opportunity; the strong typically wish to get stronger and their superior capability may allow them to do so.

States wish to survive. They will balance against those who seem too greedy for power, wondering what they intend to do with it. In the face of military build-ups or aggression by others, they will seek to increase their own capabilities, pursue allies, or aim to achieve a combination of the two. States will also “buck pass.” To husband their own power, they will encourage others to deal with international problems, until they are forced to deal with these problems themselves. States will “free ride” and “cheap ride” if another state is willing to do the heavy lifting.

Nuclear weapons profoundly affect the relationships among the states that possess them. Nuclear weapons in the hands of an adversary raise the stakes of any great power clash. Because they are quite small relative to their potential destructive power, nuclear weapons are easy to deliver and easy to hide. They are also relatively cheap. Thus, moderately advanced states ought to be capable of developing an assured ability to retaliate against a nuclear attack by its peers, a “secure second strike capability.” Even a ragged retaliation puts much of an opposing state’s wealth and population at risk.

This is not difficult for statesmen to understand and, thus, they will be very cautious in dealing with other nuclear weapons states. Nuclear powers are difficult to coerce and impossible to conquer. Nuclear weapons strategically favor the defense.

Identity politics is a strong feature of the modern world. Though people identified with and battled for their families, tribes, and clans in antiquity, modern nationalism has raised these inclinations to a larger scale. Since the French revolution, we have seen the propensity for very large groups of people without blood ties to connect their fates together on the basis of shared language, culture, and history. These “imagined communities” seek political power to advance their collective interests and to ensure their collective survival and prosperity. Ambitious politicians find that appeals to nationalism are particularly effective in periods of physical and economic insecurity. Thus is born the nation-state. Nationalism has been one of the most powerful political forces of modern times, providing the political energy that sustained the two world wars, the wars of decolonization, and the numerous conflicts that followed the collapse of Soviet power, including the collapse worldwide of multi-ethnic states that had survived largely due to the superpower dole.

Political scientists argue vehemently about the sources of nationalism, and whether or not nationalism *per se* is a source of conflict. That said, intensification of nationalism has traveled with conflict quite often, as cause or consequence. Nationalism is a powerful political tool for military mobilization. And nationalism has been resurgent since the end of the Cold-War ideological competition. It must be acknowledged, however, that other identities have likewise proven powerful. Religious identities are often part and parcel of national identities. Some states are inhabited by multiple ethnic groups struggling to determine the content

of a national identity or striving to secede to establish their own nation-states. Most important, the spread of modern nationalism makes states hard for outsiders to conquer and govern.

Though essential for the achievement of security in international politics, military power is a crude instrument. Students and practitioners of war understand that war is costly and not easily controlled. Carl von Clausewitz asserts that war is an extension of politics, and that every act in war should be connected to the ultimate political end. He also observes, however, that war creates an environment of its own — of fear, fog, and friction. War is an intense competition, subject to strong emotions and random events. The achievement of political purposes is thus quite difficult.

The U.S. weapon of choice since 1991 has been the aircraft-delivered precision guided bomb, and the tactical effectiveness of this weapon has created strategic confusion among political leaders. They have become enamored with the airplane flying above the fray, immune to the obsolescent or nonexistent air defense weapons of far less prosperous adversaries, placing weapons on key targets of high value and either disarming the adversary entirely or eliciting his cooperation. The use of force thus seems cheap; its costs are measured mainly in money. The following question, however, remains: How does one turn the destruction of targets into the achievement of political purposes? Where defense of an independent country is concerned, military power is terrific. The purpose is simple and the destruction of useable military power will do the trick. Where purposes are more complex, such as changing the minds of leaders or peoples, or changing the way they will govern themselves, the organization and employment of military power becomes much more complicated. In a world characterized by nationalism, an outsider, however powerful, will face grave difficulties imposing a particular political order on a mobilized people.

World Politics as We Find It

Five factors constitute the most important drivers of world politics today and in the foreseeable future: unipolarity — the concentration of capabilities in the hands of the United States; regional balances of power — rough equipoise among the consequential powers on the Eurasian land mass; globalization — the intense integration of much of the world into a capitalist economy that crosses borders and the propensity of that intense integration to disrupt societies; diffusion of power — the spread of military capacity to states and non-state actors; and finally, the de-mystification of nuclear weapons technology, which has permitted even poor states to acquire these weapons, albeit slowly and at considerable cost.

Table 1

2005 International Comparison Program Preliminary Results		
Gross domestic product share of global GDP (%)		
Country	PPP-based	Market exchange rates
United States	23	28
China	10	5
Japan	7	10
Germany	5	6
India	4	2
United Kingdom	3	5
France	3	5
Russian Federation	3	2
Italy	3	4
Brazil	3	2
Spain	2	3
Mexico	2	2

Source: World Bank, December 17, 2007

GLOBAL UNIPOLARITY

By almost every reasonable measure, the United States emerged from the Cold War as one of the most powerful states in history. Its gross domestic product (GDP) was and remains two or three times that of its closest economic competitor. Even immediately after post-Cold War reductions, U.S. military spending exceeded the combined defense budgets of most of the rest of the larger powers in the world; today, it exceeds the defense spending of the rest of the world combined. U.S. military technology, conventional and nuclear, sets the world standard. U.S. intercontinental nuclear forces remained large and capable. U.S. population size exceeds that of any other great or middle power with the exception of China and India, and U.S. population continues to grow. The American population, though aging, will remain much younger than that of most other powers. The United States had command of the global commons—sea, air, and space—at the Cold War’s end, and retains this command today.⁵ U.S. technical capabilities for intelligence collection dominate those of any other state; indeed, the U.S. intelligence budget has roughly equaled the entire defense budgets of Britain or France, two of the world’s most capable military powers, and the only ones other than the United States with any global reach. America enjoys a favorable geographical position, with weak and friendly neighbors to the north and south and oceans to the east and west. The Cold-War network of global alliances, coupled with massive investments in strategic lift, gave the United States the ability to put large forces almost anywhere there is a coastline. In 1991, five U.S. divisions reached Saudi Arabia in four months, and nearly ten in six months. It is no wonder Charles Krauthammer called this the unipolar moment; and it is no wonder that the term has stuck.

REGIONAL BALANCES

Although the United States is the preeminent power in global politics, consequential powers are to be found in Eurasia, including Russia, China, and Japan, and the principal Western European powers, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, who can sometimes concert their capacity, and that of other European states, through the European Union (EU). India may soon ascend to the club of consequential powers, but it is not quite there yet. In contrast to the bloody first half of the twentieth century, rough balances of power exist at both ends of the Eurasian land mass. The possibility that a Eurasian hegemon could arise and develop sufficient power through internal mobilization and external conquest to match U.S. capability and significantly threaten U.S. security is remote. In the long term, China seems the most likely candidate to do so, but even before confronting the United States, it will need to overcome many difficult obstacles.

Russia is incapable of conquering Western Europe; it does not have the economic, demographic, or military capacity to do so. Independently, the principal western European states are incapable of conquering Russia, and the EU is insufficiently united to concert their power to do so. Europeans possess, after the United States, the second most capable set of military forces in the world. But these forces are divided among the major and minor European powers and they could not easily be coordinated for positive military action on the scale of an offensive aimed at Russia. Indeed, some wonder whether they can be coordinated effectively for modest humanitarian interventions in Africa. Russia, France, and the UK possess strong nuclear deterrent forces, which would make conventional or nuclear aggression suicidal. Europe may be a strategically stable as it has ever been, with or without the U.S. presence.

⁵ Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security* (Summer 2003): 5–46.

Much has been made of the rapid growth of China's economic and military potential. If the entire Chinese population can be brought into a modernized industrial economy, the nation's potential power will be truly enormous. That said, Japan, not China, still has the second most potent economy in the world. Japanese science and technology remains ahead of China's. Japan designs and produces more complex, sophisticated consumer and capital goods than does China. It also produces more sophisticated weaponry. Because Japan's population is smaller, its per capita GDP is much higher than China's. Its ability to extract resources from its economy for military purposes is therefore higher. If the two powers shared a land border, China's vastly larger population could permit it to threaten Japan, despite China's relative poverty. Japan and China are separated by water; thus, neither can even hope to invade the other without a massive mobilization and, given the difficulty of large amphibious operations, even that might not work. Further, China is a nuclear power and, therefore, Japan could not challenge it without great risk. Most experts agree that Japan is a "near nuclear" power. A truly hostile China would quickly find itself facing a nuclear Japan, which would then be all but unassailable. Both Japan and China are trading states and are vulnerable to serious economic consequences from a war at sea. Yet, their vulnerability is reciprocal and that vulnerability seems to fall well short of the ability of either truly to strangle the other. Finally, China faces a rapidly growing potential adversary in India. In a competition with Japan, China's rear is not secure. Ultimately, if China is barely competitive with Japan, then it is far from competitive with the United States.

An ambitious China could think of going north into relatively under populated, and resource rich, Pacific Russia. It will not be long before Russia

will lose its ability to defend these areas with non-nuclear forces. Whether it would risk nuclear war to hold this land or quietly cede it to Chinese control may turn out to be the most important strategic problem of this century. But it is a problem about which the United States can do little.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization and the closely associated process of modernity are both important facts of global politics. I define globalization as the spread of capitalism across the globe and the intensification of international trade, manufacturing, and investment. This is enabled by the continuing improvements in all modes of transportation for goods and people. The information technology revolution has made possible on a global scale low-cost, high-bandwidth communications. Globalization has largely been embraced by U.S. business and political elites as a good thing and it certainly offers economic opportunity to many formerly excluded from most of the benefits of modernity.

All of this opportunity and change comes at a cost, however.⁶ Specifically, it accelerates modernity. The intensification of industrial capitalism in the late 19th century socially mobilized large numbers of people for politics by disrupting their traditional ways of life, drawing them into cities, subjecting them to the new insecurities of industrial capitalism, and exposing them to regular intense political communication. Globalization is likely to have similar effects in many parts of the world. Those socially mobilized for politics in the late 19th century became vulnerable to the appeals of nationalists, communists, and fascists, who all offered simple and powerful ideologies of solidarity and inclusion, especially in times of economic and political uncertainty. Predictions about the pace of population growth and urbanization over the next

⁶ Jonathan Kirshner, "Globalization, Power, and Prospect," in Jonathan Kirshner, ed., *Globalization and National Security* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 321–338.

several decades suggest that the developing world will see a steady supply of urbanized citizens at the lower end of the income scale, experiencing acute economic and personal insecurity, at the same time that modern technology opens them to intense mass communications and simultaneously permits small independent groups to communicate directly with large numbers of people.⁷ These individuals will want political protection and participation and they will be vulnerable to political mobilization on the basis of identity politics. Insofar as the governments of many developing countries will have a hard time keeping up with these demands, political entrepreneurs will find fertile ground for appeals based on the resurrection of traditional values. Globalization adds some new complications to these old processes. The intensity of international trade and investment makes it easy for political entrepreneurs to blame foreigners for local problems. The enhanced ability to communicate and travel makes it possible for like-minded groups in different countries to find each other, to organize, and to cooperate.

To the generic problems posed by globalization must be added the peculiar tinder of the Arab world. There, pan-Arab and Islamic identities overlap, and do so in 22 countries with a combined population of more than 320 million. Population growth and urbanization both proceed apace, but economic growth lags, and the political organization of these countries leaves vast numbers bereft of any sense of control over their political destinies. The oil wealth of some Arab countries, compared with the poverty of so many others, fuels resentment. Oil and gas also bring the interests and presence of the great powers to the region, especially the United States. The emergence of an economically and militarily successful,

Westernized Jewish liberal democracy — Israel — in their midst serves both as a focus of identity politics and a reminder of the extent of Arab political failures since the end of the Second World War. Macro-level economic and technological forces and specifically regional characteristics thus combine to create fertile ground in the Arab world for extremists hostile to the existing international political and economic systems.

THE DIFFUSION OF POWER

The diffusion of power, especially of military capacity, is a critical development of the last two decades. Although the United States faces few, if any, plausible competitors in the open oceans, or space, or even in the air at medium and high altitudes, nation states and groups have learned how to compete with the Americans on their home turf. In infantry combat, ruthless, committed, and oftentimes skilled Somalis, Iraqis, Afghans, and miscellaneous al Qaeda fighters have directly fought U.S. forces. They seldom “win,” but they do make the Americans pay. Somali, Iraqi, and al Qaeda air defense gunners have shot down dozens of U.S. helicopters, mainly with heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. Serb SAM operators, primarily using 1970s technology, shot down few U.S. aircraft, but sufficiently complicated U.S. air operations that most Serb ground forces in Kosovo survived the 1999 air campaign. It is worth noting that all of these opponents profited from the vast arsenals of the former Warsaw Pact — especially its infantry weapons — much of which has since fallen into the wrong hands. At the same time, the ability to manufacture such weapons has spread. Simple long range artillery rockets and more complex anti-ship missiles manufactured in Iran turned up in the hands of Hezbollah in the summer 2006 war with Israel.

⁷ United Nations Population Fund, *State of World Population 2007, Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* (2007). The urban population of the world is expected to increase by roughly 50 percent, or 1.6 billion people over the next two decades, with most of the growth in the developing world (see page 6). Many of these people will be poor, and young (27). Young people aged 15–24 commit the largest number of violent acts (26–27). The revival of religion, including radical Islam, has been associated with the recent wave of urbanization (26).

According to the U.S. government, components of the Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP), off-route, anti-armored vehicle mines, discovered in Iraq were manufactured and supplied by Iran, which surely has more sophisticated versions of the same weapons in greater numbers in dumps on the other side of the border. Iran is also one of the world's largest producers of new warheads for the ubiquitous Soviet-designed RPG 7 rocket-propelled grenade launcher. More ominously, Iranian arms exporters now offer night vision devices for sale. If these devices work, an area of presumed significant U.S. tactical superiority in infantry combat will soon wane.

More important than the proliferation of low- and medium-technology conventional weapons is the apparent spread of military expertise. The combination of quality conventional weapons, large numbers of committed young men, proven tactics, and competent training that is cleverly adapted to urban, suburban, and rural environments, which favor infantry, has preserved meaningful costs of combat for high-technology U.S. ground forces. Costs escalate if U.S. or other Western forces intend to settle into other countries to reform their politics and are then forced into long counterinsurgency campaigns.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Just as conventional military technical and tactical capacity has diffused, so has the capacity to design and build nuclear weapons. U.S. policy makers were surprisingly successful in ensuring that only one nuclear successor state would emerge from the wreckage of the Soviet Union — Russia. Three

states have, however, found their own ways to nuclear weapons capacity since the end of the Cold War: India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Iran may be next and Israel has long been assumed to have developed a nuclear weapon. Though these states vary in their respective economic and technical capacities, they each developed a nuclear capability on relatively thin resource bases. This tells us that nuclear weapons technology is no longer mysterious or particularly costly. The five original nuclear powers set up a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and regime, which has failed to achieve non-proliferation; it has achieved “slow” proliferation. The lesson of these new nuclear powers, therefore, is that proliferation cannot be prevented; it can only be managed.

The U.S. Response: The Grand Strategy Consensus and its Costs

Since the end of the Cold War, the American foreign policy establishment has gradually converged on a highly activist grand strategy for the United States. There is now little disagreement among Republican and Democratic foreign policy experts about the threats that the United States faces and the remedies it should pursue.⁸ This strategy has produced or will produce an erosion of U.S. power, an increase in U.S. state and non-state opponents, and an epidemic of irresponsible behavior on the part of U.S. allies through acts of omission or commission.

Democratic and Republican strategists alike hold that the most imminent threats are to U.S. safety. Terrorism, basically Islamic in origin, is the key problem. It is caused by something

⁸The three candidates still in the 2009 Presidential race as of March 2008 all published articles on National Security in *Foreign Affairs*. There is a striking degree of commonality among the three strategies. See Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-First Century,” and John McCain, “An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom,” both in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86 (November/December 2007): 2–34. See also Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86 (July/August 2007): 2–16. My colleague, Dr. Cindy Williams, reviewed these articles and recorded the following commonalities: All three see terrorism, non-state actors, and weak or failed states as threats to the United States. All are concerned about rising powers. All insist on the need for U.S. leadership. All believe in the use of force to prevent atrocities abroad. All strongly support NATO, though they all want it to do more. Obama and Clinton note that they subscribe to the unilateral use of force; McCain is silent on the matter in the article, but he surely concurs. All rate nuclear proliferation as a very serious problem; all agree Iran must be prevented from getting nuclear weapons; all are open to a military solution to Iran's nuclear programs. Also noting the overlapping positions on Iran is David Rieff, “But Who's Against the Next War?” *The New York Times*, (25 March 2007).

that is wrong with Arab society in particular but also the societies of other Islamic countries, such as Pakistan. “Rogue” states, with interests and forms of government different from our own, a willingness to use force, and, in the worst case, an inclination to acquire nuclear weapons form a closely related threat because they may assist terrorists. Failed states, and the identity politics that travels with them, are also a serious threat not only because they produce or nurture terrorists, but also because they produce human rights violations, refugees, and crime. The possibility of a loss of U.S. influence is an overarching threat and, thus, the rise of a peer competitor is a real but at this time distant problem.

The consensus therefore supports a U.S. grand strategy of activism. The United States must remain the strongest military power in the world by a very wide margin. It should be willing to use force and preventively, if need be, on a range of issues.⁹ The United States should endeavor to change other societies so that they look more like ours. A world of democracies would be the safest global environment for America, and the United States should be willing to pay considerable costs to produce such a world. Additionally, America should directly manage regional security relationships in any corner of the world that is of strategic importance, which increasingly is every corner of the world. The risk that nuclear weapons could “fall” into the hands of violent non-state actors is so great that the United States should be willing to take extraordinary measures, including preventive war, to keep suspicious countries from acquiring these weapons.

The key difference between the two political parties lies in attitudes toward international institutions: Democrats like and trust them;

Republicans do not. Republicans accuse Democrats of a willingness to sacrifice U.S. sovereignty to these organizations. This is not the case. Democrats obscure that they like and trust international institutions because they think that the great power of the United States will permit it to write the rules and dominate the outcomes. The legitimacy of any given outcome achieved in an international institution will rise due to the processes that have been followed, but these processes can be controlled to produce the outcomes that the United States desires. Legitimacy will lower the costs for America to get its way on a range of issues. Democrats expect that international institutions will thus produce a net gain in U.S. influence.

U.S. strategists have responded to the facts of the post-Cold War world with costly national security policies that produce new problems faster than they solve current ones. The great concentration of power in America skews the security policy debate toward activism. If the global distribution of power were more equal, U.S. policy makers would have to be more cautious about the projects they choose. The existence of a peer competitor would inject into the U.S. policy debate a persistent question: Will this project help or hurt our ability to deter or contain country X? Moreover, it is tempting in any case to imagine that with this much power, the United States could organize a safe world, once and for all, where America remains the acknowledged military and ideological leader.

A realist international relations theorist (which I am) predicts that this much power will tempt the United States toward activism and that the combination of activism and power is bound to discomfit other states. At the same time, the great concentration of American power makes

⁹ This position is now associated mainly with President George W. Bush. See The White House, *The National Security Strategy for the United States of America* (November 2002). However, similar views were expressed by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in 1998. On the matter of attacking Iraq she averred, “But if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us.” See Madeleine Albright, interview on *The Today Show* (19 February 1998).

direct opposition to the United States difficult and dangerous. Nevertheless, other states are doing what they can to protect their own national interests. Some fear U.S. freedom of action and the possibility of being drawn into policies inimical to their interests. They want an ability to distance themselves from the United States if they must, even as they “cheap ride” on the U.S. security umbrella.

The EU has gradually strengthened its ability to run military operations so that they can get along without the United States, if they must. Paradoxically, these same European states, in their NATO guise, under-invest in military power consequently constraining NATO’s effort in Afghanistan. Other states fear that U.S. policies will hurt their interests indirectly and look for ways to concert their power. Russia and China have reached out to each other in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Still others expect U.S. attentions to be directed straight at them and they improve their abilities to deter U.S. military action or directly engage the United States in combat. North Korea and Iran pursue nuclear weapons. Iran also has developed a conventional capability to inflict costs on the United States in the Gulf and has been implicated in inflicting such costs in Iraq. To the extent that the United States continues its current policy path, these reactions will continue and they will slowly increase the costs of future U.S. activism as well as reduce the propensity of others to cooperate in order to share these costs.

Other states take advantage of U.S. largesse to improve their own positions, sometimes against U.S. interests. They are not free riders, but rather reckless drivers. The Taiwanese nationalist party in power for the last eight years seemed bent on

causing a confrontation with mainland China that the United States wished to avoid. America helped make Israel the preeminent military power of the Middle East to assure its security; it has used that position to increase its hold on lands taken in the 1967 war, which the United States believes must revert to Palestinian control. The occupation has harmed the U.S. position in the Arab world.

American activism also interacts with globalization to provoke negative reactions to the U.S. Insofar as the U.S. economy is the largest and most dynamic in the world, the forces associated with globalization — trade, global supply chains, investment, travel, and communications — will often be associated with America by those experiencing the consequences. Political entrepreneurs in the developing world will find it expedient to attribute the difficulties experienced by their target populations to the actions of the United States. An activist foreign and security policy makes the United States the most obvious unkind face of globalization. When U.S. activism turns to direct military intervention in the affairs of other countries, local political leaders can rely on the most elemental of forces, nationalism. Most people who have formed any collective identity strongly prefer to run their own affairs and can generally be relied upon to resist violently those who try to reorganize their politics at gunpoint. Sometimes such movements are weak, but one ought not to count on it.

Aside from Saddam Hussein’s attempted smash-and-grab robbery of Kuwait, the first troublesome conflicts of the post-Cold War world were internal and centered on identity.¹⁰ Given the weakness of the opposition, the United States paid a surprisingly high price to intervene in these disputes. For the U.S. military, this included Desert Storm’s

¹⁰ A still unexplained increase in the number of internal conflicts, many of them about identity, began in the late 1970s, peaked in 1991, and then mysteriously declined to the present level, roughly equal to the level of the mid-1970s. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that 118 of the 228 armed conflicts recorded since the end of World War II, occurred after the end of the Cold War. The vast majority of these conflicts were internal. See Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflict and its International Dimensions, 1946–2004,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42 (2005): 623–635.

unhappy postscript in the rebellions in northern and southern Iraq and civil wars in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. U.S. leadership eschewed military intervention to stop the Rwanda genocide, but those in the Clinton administration who made this decision all regret it deeply and critics of this policy believe that such an intervention would have been easy and successful.

The U.S. approaches to these conflicts have certain similarities, rooted in U.S. liberalism, which exalts the rational calculating individual and thus underestimates the power of loyalty to the group. America was usually surprised by one or more of the following: the outbreak of conflict itself, the extent of group ambitions, the intensity of violence, the intensity of group loyalties, and the cost and duration of any U.S. military effort to intervene. This myopia crossed party lines and persisted: Republican security strategists were as surprised and confounded by the bloody, stubborn, and resilient identity politics of Iraq as the Clinton Administration was in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo. The interventions of the Clinton years should have served as a warning. The United States is facing a half-trillion-dollar bill for the direct costs of its effort in Iraq, an effort that has seriously damaged the U.S. Army and has served as a school for jihadi fighters.

Despite the great power of the United States, its national security establishment is particularly ill suited to a strategy that focuses so heavily on intervention into the internal political affairs of others. The U.S. national security establishment, including the intelligence agencies and the State Department, remains short on individuals who understand other countries and their cultures and speak their languages. The United States seems to lack sufficient numbers of analysts, diplomats, advisors, and intelligence agents for the array of global engagement opportunities in which it is involved. Moreover, it should be admitted that

a good many people who are capable find their vocations in non-governmental organizations. They are more interested in representing the problems of the places where they work and study to the U.S. government and public than figuring out what the United States should do in these places from the point of view of its own security interests. Additionally, U.S. politicians are reluctant to provide significant funds for non-military projects overseas. Whether or not foreign economic assistance produces much long term benefit in the recipient countries, it is an important tool of an activist foreign policy. Without it, the center of gravity of U.S. foreign policy efforts shifts to the military.

U.S. active ground forces, which carry the weight of efforts to transform other societies, have been relatively small since conscription was abandoned at the end of the Vietnam War. The all-volunteer U.S. ground forces shrunk quickly from their end of Cold War peak of nearly one million, reaching 470,000 in the Army and just under 170,000 in the Marines in 2001. By comparison, the United States had 440,000 Army soldiers and Marines in Vietnam in 1969 out of a total strength of nearly 2 million. Even with the 100,000-person increase now pledged by Republicans and Democrats, U.S. ground forces will remain small. It is difficult to maintain more than a third of a professional ground force in combat at any one time without suffering retention, recruitment, and training problems. Roughly half of American forces are currently deployed and this is understood to be unsustainable. Half of Iraq's land area and population essentially swallowed the Army and Marines over the last five years and the demands of that fight have turned U.S. ground forces into "Iraq only" capabilities. Other possible U.S. adversaries dwarf Iraq in population — Iran is nearly three times as populous and Pakistan is nearly six times. A prolonged period of peace, vast sums of money,

and a suffering economy might allow a significant expansion of U.S. ground forces without conscription but even a return to the Cold War peak would be insufficient to meet the problems raised by an activist grand strategy. If the attacks of September 11, 2001, coupled with the demands of the war in Iraq, have not produced a political consensus for the reinstatement of conscription, it is hard to see what would.

The United States also seems to lack the domestic political capacity to generate sufficient material resources to support its foreign policy over the long term. The American public has been trained by its politicians to be chary of taxes. As a result, the U.S. government has financed much of its security efforts since September 11 with borrowed money. Even obvious security related taxes, such as a tax on gasoline to discourage consumption to help wean America off imported oil, find no political sponsors. It is difficult to believe that U.S. hegemony can long be financed with borrowed money. Economists seem unworried about the mass of foreign debt the United States has accumulated, noting that debt as a share of U.S. GDP is remarkably low compared to other advanced industrial powers. America, however, will soon add the financing of the retirement and health care of a huge cohort of baby boomer retirees to its foreign policy bills.

The activist grand strategy that is currently preferred by the national security establishment in both parties thus has a tragic quality. Enabled by its great power and fearful of the negative energies and possibilities engendered by globalization, the United States has tried to get its arms around the problem; it has sought more control. But this policy injects negative energy into global politics as quickly as it finds enemies to vanquish. It prompts states to try to balance U.S. power however they can and it prompts peoples to imagine that

America is the source of their troubles. Moreover, Iraq should be seen as a harbinger of costs to come. There exists enough capacity and motivation out there in the world to significantly increase the costs of U.S. efforts to directly manage global politics. Public support for this policy may wane before profligacy so diminishes U.S. power that it becomes unsustainable. But it would be unwise to count on this prudent outcome.

A Grand Strategy of Restraint

If security is about deterring or defending against threats to safety, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and power position, what is to be done? The United States should have three overriding objectives: the preservation of its power and power position, the reduction of its political and emotional salience in the eyes of populations suffering the insecurities associated with entry into the modern globalized world, and the weakening of states and non-state actors intent on enacting violence against the United States. It is not easy to pursue these goals simultaneously. An activist solution has been tried and is not working. The United States is getting weaker, albeit slowly; its salience in the eyes of others has increased; and al Qaeda seems no weaker than it was on September 11 and is, in fact, arguably stronger. A less activist strategy would work better.

THE POLITICS OF PRESERVING U.S. POWER

For now, most threats to America are not threats to U.S. sovereignty or territorial integrity. The country is in no danger of conquest or diktats from those more capable. U.S. territorial integrity is secure. The reasons these dangers are small is because the U.S. power position is excellent—any power position that allows a country to think about running the world ought to provide ample capability for defense. Protecting this power position is an important goal, but intense armed international activism is the wrong way to proceed.

First, the United States should lower its participation in regional security schemes. As argued earlier, a rough balance of power now exists in Eurasia. If and as regional powers grow strong enough to threaten their neighbors, and perhaps ultimately threaten U.S. interests, local actors will wish to balance that power. The United States should preserve an ability to help out if necessary but should remain stingy in this regard. Others should get organized and dig into their own pockets before Americans show up, thus saving U.S. resources for other uses until they are really needed; these other uses may increase overall U.S. capabilities if properly invested.¹¹ A more distant stance to these regions would likely increase U.S. influence. Currently, U.S. interest is taken for granted and local actors do little to earn U.S. support.¹²

The U.S. forward stance pokes and prods other states. If Russia, China, or Iran wishes to make themselves enemies of the United States, it would be better to put the onus on them. As it stands today, U.S. pressure brings these states and others like them together. We should want to keep them divided. They are not all natural allies of one another. Moreover, although these states are not perfect democracies, they must confront their own domestic politics. Why make it easy for them to build domestic coalitions in favor of external assertiveness, masked as resistance to U.S. pressure? As the United States depends excessively on military power to support its diplomacy, others see U.S. efforts as particularly threatening. Americans have

no concept of how others view this. Few Americans know about the Unified Command Plan, which puts U.S. forces in hailing distance of all the consequential powers in the world. Few understand that America is the only power in the world that for all intents and purposes is ready to go to war almost anywhere at any time. Theodore Roosevelt said speak softly and carry a big stick—today the United States only follows half that advice.

Finally, the United States has grown too fond of using military power. This instills fear in other states; some may become more cooperative but they also take measures to better defend themselves and, in turn, weaken the U.S. position. Some military operations have been inexpensive; others have been quite costly. If one wages enough wars, eventually one will go poorly. The Iraq War has proven immensely costly in dollars, moderately costly in lives, and very costly to the U.S. reputation. Even if the endgame in Iraq can be portrayed as a success to the public, this war will not have strengthened the United States; it will have weakened it. Vast resources have been expended for little or no security gain. Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist Iraq had almost no capability to attack the U.S. homeland or its interests. U.S. power to deter Iraq was ample. Containment and deterrence worked against the Soviet Union; a heavily armed state with roughly half of the equivalent U.S. GDP, and equal or greater defense spending. Iraq's whole GDP was considerably less than the U.S. defense budget.

¹¹ Given politically realistic expectations about tax and spending policy, the United States now risks a rate of deficit spending that is unsustainable, and which could significantly lower U.S. economic output over the next forty years. Tax increases and spending cuts will be necessary to bring revenues and expenditures into a sustainable equilibrium. Though Social Security and health care are the major sources of expenditure growth, it is unlikely that defense can escape the paring knife. See Congressional Budget Office, *The Long Term Budget Outlook* (December 2007): 14.

¹² Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. to Bolster Forces in Afghanistan: Pentagon Cites NATO's Failure to Provide Additional Troops," *The Washington Post*, (10 January 2008): A04. See also Data Analysis Section, Force Planning Directorate, Defense Policy and Planning Division, NATO International Staff, *NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence*, (20 December 2007), for data showing that U.S. allies consistently spent a much lower share of GDP on defense than the United States, even before the attacks of September 11, 2001. This NATO report now includes data on Russia, but has eliminated aggregate comparisons of U.S. and NATO European defense spending, burying the relative weight of European and U.S. contributions to the common defense. The reader must now calculate this. The formerly annual U.S. Dept. of Defense "Allied Contributions to the Common Defense" has not been published since 2004. U.S. citizens now have a more difficult time judging the efforts of their allies.

PROTECTING U.S. SAFETY

Today the most imminent U.S. security problem is safety. Here, I agree with the consensus view. The main threat is al Qaeda but if the analysis above is right, there are deeper forces feeding that organization than their interpretation of religious texts, and these forces could give rise to future violent organizations. This threat should not be minimized, but neither should it be exaggerated. Al Qaeda is ruthless, persistent, and creative. It will remain possible for such groups to kill tens and hundreds, if not occasionally thousands, with materials ready at hand. This will not bring down the United States of America and it would be wise to stop conveying to these groups that they can. If such groups get their hands on a nuclear weapon and use it, the costs are obviously much worse. It is important, however, to remind others that America would still go on and that it will hunt down the perpetrators and whoever helped them, no matter how long it takes.

The United States needs to do two things to deal with al Qaeda, specifically, reduce its political salience in the populations from which al Qaeda recruits, and keep al Qaeda busy defending itself, so it cannot focus resources on attacking the United States or its friends.

Two strategies have been suggested to take on al Qaeda. The United States has pursued an expansive strategy of direct action. After September 11, I suggested a different strategy, one more defensive than offensive and more precisely directed at al Qaeda, though I did support the overthrow of the Taliban, and still do.¹³ The basic orientation of the Bush Administration was offensive, but their priorities were bizarre. They appropriately went after al Qaeda *and* the organization's most immediate friends, but before finishing the job they quickly turned to Saddam Hussein and Iraq, dubious

future allies of al Qaeda. The respite allowed al Qaeda to recover, by the U.S. Intelligence Community's own admission.¹⁴ Moreover, the United States has squandered one relatively constant factor that should work in its favor, the fact that the nature of al Qaeda condemns it to theatrical terrorist attacks against innocent people, since such attacks have a way of alienating potential supporters. By over stressing offensive action in Iraq and, by occupying an Arab country in particular the United States has contributed to the al Qaeda story in the Arab world and has done a terrible job of telling the U.S. story. Some think the United States can do a better job debating al Qaeda in the Arab world. I doubt it, but it is worth a try. The scarcity of U.S. expertise about Arab nations and culture suggests that their pitching staff is larger than ours. To weaken al Qaeda, the United States must first stop giving it debating points for its narrative.

An alternative strategy to fight al Qaeda is to draw as many other states as possible into the effort while avoiding adding new facts to the jihadi narrative. America needs to reduce, not increase, its presence in the Arab and Islamic world. The U.S. military should abandon permanent and semi-permanent land bases in Arab states and should generally lower the profile of its military and security cooperation with Arab states. The fight against al Qaeda should continue, but it should be conducted in the world of intelligence. Cooperation with foreign intelligence and police agencies comes first, but the U.S. intelligence community may need to engage in direct action from time to time. To the extent that America has interests in the Arab world that can only be pursued with old fashioned military power, such as the possible need to defend Arab states from Iranian

¹³ Barry R. Posen, "The Struggle Against Terrorism: Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics," *International Security*, Vol. 26 (Winter 2001/2002): 39–55.

¹⁴ National Intelligence Council, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland* (July 2007).

expansionism, the United States should rely on its massive power projection capabilities. The U.S. military should be over the horizon.

To reduce political sympathies for its enemies, the United States needs projects in the developing world that are consistent with U.S. values and permits America to look like the “good guy.” Three steps commend themselves to these objectives.

1. The United States should build on the experience of Operation Unified Assistance, which provided prompt relief to victims of the Pacific tsunami of December 26, 2004.¹⁵ The remarkable “power projection” capability of the U.S. military provides an inherent capability to get into many major natural disaster areas “first with the most.” Admiral Thomas Fargo, then head of U.S. Pacific Command, quickly saw the potential assistance that could be rendered by the U.S. military in the early and desperate days after the disaster. No other country or organization could have done what was achieved. Political results were seen quickly through shifting opinions of America in the countries in question, including most notably Indonesia. Disasters happen, and the United States can earn a great deal of political respect for coming to the aid of those most impacted. Further, and in contrast to peace-keeping and peace enforcement operations, which for many have the same purposes, natural disaster relief efforts have a clear exit strategy.
2. Instead of focusing on the export of democracy, which we lack sufficient cause-effect knowledge to accomplish in any case, let us recommend practices that will allow others to find their own way to democracy, or at least to more benign forms of government. The United States should make itself a voice for the rule of law and for press freedom.
3. The United States should be willing to assist in humanitarian military interventions, but under reasonable guidelines. The most important guideline is to eschew overselling the mission to the American people. Prior to engaging in armed philanthropy, U.S. leaders should not disguise the effort as the pursuit of a security interest. If the latter is required to sell the policy, then the policy is already in trouble. Once characterized as a security interest, the U.S. Congress and public expect that American forces will lead the fight, that decisive military means will be employed, and that victory will be achieved. This raises U.S. military and political costs. Instead, the United States should only engage in armed philanthropy in large coalitions, operating under some kind of regional or international political mandate. America should not insist on leadership; indeed, it should avoid it. On the whole, the United States should offer logistical, rather than direct combat, assets.

The United States must also develop a more measured view of the risks of nuclear proliferation. It will not be possible, without preventive war, to physically stop all potential new nuclear weapons programs. Nuclear weapons are no longer mysterious, but neither are they easy to get. It is costly and technically difficult to produce fissionable material in quantities sufficient for nuclear weapons and only a few countries have this capability. It has taken a good bit of time for those smaller states who wished to develop nuclear weapons to get them. Though an imperfect regime, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) do provide obstacles to the development of nuclear weapons and some early warning that mischief is afoot. Good intelligence work can provide more warning

¹⁵ Bruce A. Elleman, *Waves of Hope: The U.S. Navy's Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia*, Center for Naval Warfare Studies Newport Paper 28, (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Press, 2007).

and presumably some intelligence operations could slow the diffusion of nuclear know-how, slowing the progress of national nuclear programs, if need be.

It is worthwhile to keep proliferation relatively costly and slow because other states require time to adapt to such events and extra time would be useful to explain to the new nuclear power the rules of the game they are entering. American policy makers feel compelled to trumpet that all options, including force, are on the table when dealing with “rogue” state proliferators. True enough. The United States is a great military power and on security matters its forces are never off the table. But preventive war ought not to be casually considered. It has serious and probably enduring political costs, which the United States need not incur. Deterrence is a better strategy. America is a great nuclear power, and should remain so. Against possible new nuclear powers such as North Korea, or Iran, U.S. capabilities are superior in every way. In contrast to the Cold-War competition with the Soviet Union, where neither country would have survived a nuclear exchange, it is clear which nation would survive such an exchange between the United States and North Korea or Iran. Indeed, these states should worry that they will be vulnerable to preemptive U.S. nuclear attacks, in the unhappy event that they confront the United States over important issues. In addition, new nuclear states ought not to be encouraged through loose talk to believe that they can give nuclear weapons to others to use against America and somehow free themselves of the risks of U.S. retaliation.

ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBILITY

Finally, U.S. security guarantees and security assistance relieves others of the necessity to do

more to ensure their own security and enables others to pursue policies that counter U.S. interests. The United States should stop this; as part of a strategy of restraint there must be a coherent, integrated, long-term effort to encourage long-time wards to look after themselves. If others do more, this will not only save U.S. resources, it increases the salience of other countries in the discourse of political entrepreneurs hostile to globalization. The other consequential powers benefit as much from globalization as does the United States, and they should also share political ownership of the political costs. If others need to pay more for their security, they will think harder about their choices. Virtually all existing U.S. international relationships need a rethink. Below I offer some examples, but there are surely many more relationships and policies that should be reconsidered. These changes must be implemented as a package to produce the desired effect. It would not be prudent to launch these policies overnight; a governing rule should be *not* to so rapidly or decisively alter regional politics that windows of vulnerability or opportunity are opened to tempt or compel military action.

- The effort to preserve and expand NATO, a project aimed at ensuring U.S. power and influence in Eurasia, enabled the excessive drawdown of some European military capabilities, notably those of Germany and Italy, and stood in the way of possible improvements in European military capacity in the EU. This also has had the effect of allowing members of the EU to postpone decisions about how to integrate Turkey into Europe. They can consign this task to NATO and the United States. The United States should develop a ten-year plan to turn NATO into a more traditional political alliance. America should withdraw from military headquarters and commands in Europe, which could migrate to the EU, if Europeans actually find them useful. Most U.S. military forces still in Europe today would return home.

- U.S. military assistance to Israel makes the occupation of the territories inexpensive for Israeli political leaders and implicates America in these efforts. This does not help the U.S. image in the Arab world. Occupation of the West Bank does not seem to be good for Israel either, but Israeli society can decide its security priorities for itself. The United States should develop a ten-year plan to reduce U.S. government direct financial assistance to Israel to zero. Israel is now a prosperous country. It is surrounded by military powers with no capacity to conquer the state. These countries can find no superpower patron to back them with great new supplies of modern conventional offensive weapons sold on credit or offered as gifts, including tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, fighter aircraft, and attack helicopters. There is no producer in the world today with the capacity that the Soviet Union once had to suddenly alter material military balances. Israel can then decide how much the occupied territories matter to its security and how to allocate security spending accordingly. Israel is not an enemy of the United States and it will not become one; friendly relations should continue. Israel should be permitted to purchase spare parts for existing U.S. military equipment and new military equipment to the extent that these are needed to assure a regional military balance. To ensure that the reduction of military assistance to Israel is perceived as fair in American politics, and to ensure against the creation of any windows of vulnerability or opportunity, U.S. assistance to Egypt should be put on the same diet, with an allowance for Egypt's comparative poverty. The United States should practice restraint in its arms sales to the region, and encourage others to do the same. If other states decide to disrupt the new regional military balance, U.S. leadership can reconsider both decisions and should convey the message that it would do so.
- The United States also needs to reconsider its security relationship with Japan. This relationship allows Japan to avoid the domestic political debates necessary to determine a new role for itself in Asia. In particular, it allows Japan to avoid coming to terms with its own past and relieves it of the necessity to develop diplomatic strategies to make it more "alliance worthy" in Asia. The modalities of a change in the alliance with Japan are trickier than they are in Europe because Asia is a more unsettled place due to China's rapid economic expansion and concomitant military improvements. Nevertheless, some change is in order. U.S. policy in recent years has endeavored to bind Japan ever more closely to U.S. global concerns. America seems to be consolidating its military base structure in Japan and integrating that base structure ever more tightly into its global warfighting capability. Japan cooperates in order to protect the one-way U.S. security guarantee embedded in the U.S.-Japan security treaty. The United States is obliged to come to Japan's defense, but Japan is not obliged to do anything. Japanese military cooperation is doled out by the thimble full, just enough to keep America engaged. Confidence in the U.S. security guarantee limits the necessity for Japan to launch an intensive diplomatic effort to reconcile with its former enemies and persuade them that today's Japan will not repeat the rampages of the last century. Thus, as with its activist grand strategy elsewhere in the world, the United States does more; others do less; and U.S. responsibilities mount.¹⁶ Under a grand strategy of restraint, America would reverse its military orientation in Japan and aim for the minimal military relationship necessary to implement the security treaty. Some U.S. forces would be withdrawn from

¹⁶Christopher W. Hughes, in *Japan's Emergence as a 'Normal' Military Power*, (London: IISS, 2004): 368–9, observes that Japan has significantly improved its military capabilities in recent years but at the same time, "the JSDF force structure is becoming ever more skewed to the point that Japan cannot defend itself without U.S. assistance."

Japan entirely in the near term. Other bases should be slimmed down.¹⁷ Japan must be made to understand that the U.S. commitment is no longer to defend Japan, but to help Japan defend itself, in extremis. The U.S. willingness to do so in the future will rest greatly on the extent and wisdom of Japan's military efforts at home and diplomatic efforts in the region.

MILITARY STRATEGY

A grand strategy of restraint suggests changes in U.S. military strategy. There are things that America should do, and things it should not do. First, the United States must maintain "Command of the Commons," an ability to use sea, air, and space when it needs to do so. This is the essential enabler for the United States to practice balance of power strategies on the Eurasian land mass, to employ military power to keep non-state enemies such as al Qaeda on the run, and to assist in humanitarian military operations in the rare occasions that these are deemed reasonable investments of U.S. power. Command of the Commons also permits "over the horizon" strategies in places where the United States may have interests that it wishes to defend, but where it does not want to incur the possible political costs of having forces ashore. The best example would be the Persian Gulf. Realistically, the United States may, from time to time, require access to land bases in various parts of the world in order to preserve an ability to move its forces globally. The model developed in the Global Posture Review should dominate. The United States should secure quiet agreements for access, and piggy back on existing national facilities that it can improve against the possibility that the capacity would be needed later. The United States should avoid the appearance of permanent presence and permanent bases. Some states will find it

in their interests to cooperate with America in this endeavor, and some will not. The United States should avoid the temptation of having visible permanent installations abroad whenever it can.

To ensure that states that might consider the acquisition of nuclear weapons consider carefully the risks they run by doing so, the United States must maintain a viable nuclear deterrent. This includes letting others know that the United States would retaliate if nuclear weapons were used against U.S. soil or U.S. forces. America would also need to let other states know that its intelligence agencies both have and prioritize nuclear forensics, or the determination of "return addresses" after a nuclear attack. Nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence are a terrible business. It is improbable that the Treaty-delineated nuclear weapons states will succeed in controlling entirely the technology that permits others to build nuclear weapons. The United States must take the world as it is—which means making crystal clear our willingness and ability to retaliate.

Finally, the United States needs to avoid pitting its weaknesses against others' strengths. This means avoiding protracted ground force engagements. Where U.S. ground forces are needed to help defend important allies from invasion, they should be used. Where they are needed to recover important ground, they should be used. Occasionally, it may be reasonable to "raid" areas that U.S. enemies are using to organize attacks against us. On the other hand, projects that involve long occupations for peace enforcement, nation building, and/or counterinsurgency should be avoided. U.S. ground forces are not large enough for most operations of this type. These operations run the greatest risk of direct collisions with aroused nationalism in populous countries. Moreover, though "doctrine"

¹⁷ Chris Preble, in *Two Normal Countries: Rethinking the U.S.-Japan Strategic Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, April, 2006), offers a systematic plan for how the United States should proceed in order to transform the U.S.-Japan relationship into a more equitable alliance.

has been written to guide U.S. forces in these contingencies, this is at best a codification of best practices, not a recipe for success. Politics matters more, and we have no political cookbooks to deliver stable, friendly democracies.

RESTRAINT: IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Grand strategy is a set of general principals. Grand strategy provides guidance for specific contingencies, but not detailed plans. Elsewhere, I have explored the reasons for and modalities of an exit strategy from Iraq. Here, I only sketch out an approach to Iraq.¹⁸ The principal U.S. security interests in Iraq are negative: limiting the prospects for a comfortable and well-funded base for al Qaeda, and limiting the prospects for a regional war that could significantly reduce the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. These goals can be achieved at lower U.S. costs in blood, treasure, and reputation by pulling U.S. forces out of Iraq and employing U.S. military power in the region to contain whatever problems Iraq may continue to create. Some also worry about the risks of civil war and intervention by outside powers into such a war. In my judgment, the costs of these two outcomes fall mainly on others. The United States should diplomatically engage all regional powers to explore common interests and concert action in an effort to avoid these unpleasant outcomes.

From offshore with naval power, from informal land bases in the region for special operations forces, from Diego Garcia, and through prepositioning and bare base agreements with local states, the United States can deal with the risks of greatest concern to America and others in the region. It is clear that the nightmare scenario of an al Qaeda takeover of Iraq cannot happen; the Shiites are now too strong. It is possible that a current U.S. exit from Iraq would leave bin Laden sympathizers able to operate in that country, as they can now.

From outside, the United States can, with intelligence operations and occasional raids, continue to observe and harass such people. There are plenty of people in Iraq who hate Bin Laden sympathizers and, in exchange for money and weapons, will be willing to pursue them. Neighboring states will have a greater interest in watching their borders with Iraq than they do now, because bin Laden sympathizers are a threat to all the regimes in the neighborhood. They could no longer count on U.S. forces to bear the bulk of the burden of controlling these threats so they would have to do more in their own interests. Many worry about the possibility of civil war in Iraq and the possibility that such a war would not only draw outside powers in, but escalate to a more general regional war. Civil war and outside intervention to support Iraqi clients is possible, but escalation to a general war is improbable, and it is only general war that much threatens the region's energy exports. The Gulf states and Iran both depend on vulnerable oil installations and export routes for the bulk of their national wealth and would have a great deal to lose from escalation. Some mutual deterrence may prevail. From an offshore military position, the United States ought to be able to generate sufficient military power to deter Iran from escalating to general war and reassure Saudi Arabia that its basic security is intact.

The overthrow of the Taliban regime was a necessary response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. The Taliban had been warned many times prior to the attacks to sever their relationship with bin Laden. U.S. leaders cannot allow other states to believe that they can host violent conspiracies against it, and could not allow al Qaeda to continue a safe existence in Afghanistan. The war itself was mismanaged; too little military attention was focused on bin Laden and his immediate circle and on key Taliban

¹⁸Barry R. Posen, "Exit Strategy: How to disengage from Iraq in 18 months," *Boston Review* (January/February 2006).

elements. Because both Taliban and al Qaeda elements survived the war and took refuge across the border in the tribal areas of Pakistan, there is a grave risk that, absent a U.S. presence, these elements could return to Afghanistan and their old ways. Thus, the United States is stuck managing a counterinsurgency and state-building exercise in Afghanistan.

Restraint still has some advice for the Afghan war. First, the United States must resist the temptation to keep adding forces to Afghanistan. Too many forces in country would probably energize nationalist resistance and help turn Afghans against America. Second, the problem of building a competent Afghan state and associated security forces needs to be treated more seriously. The best is the enemy of the good; the purpose is not to build an exemplary democracy but rather to build a state that can deliver some services, and keep some order. One reason not to increase the U.S. troop presence is to remind the Afghans that they do need to assume more responsibility for their security. Third, the United States must resist the temptation to expand the war to Pakistan. Although the Pakistan base areas of the Taliban and al Qaeda are a major problem, the United States must not energize Pakistani nationalism against it. Current discussions of quiet and sustained efforts to improve Pakistan's police forces seem the right way to go. Finally, the United States will need to significantly reduce its forces in the region well short of a decisive victory. The goal should be to help move the Afghan and Pakistani governments to a point where they can contain al Qaeda and Taliban fighters on their own. Staying longer also runs the risk of turning more local forces against the United States.

Conclusion

Presidents William Clinton and George W. Bush have been running an experiment with U.S. grand strategy for nearly sixteen years. The theory to be tested was, "Very good intentions, plus very great power, plus action can transform both international politics and the domestic politics of other states in ways that are highly advantageous to the United States at costs that the United States can afford." The evidence is in; the experiment has failed. Transformation is unachievable and costs are high. America needs to test a different grand strategy: it should conceive its security interests narrowly; it must use its military power stingily; it should pursue its enemies quietly but persistently; it should share responsibilities and costs more equitably; and ultimately, it must patiently watch and wait more.



A STRATEGY OF CONSERVATION: AMERICAN POWER AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

By Sarah Sewall

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



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The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the Carr Center, the Kennedy School or any other organization with which the author is affiliated.

Overview

The overarching strategic challenge facing the United States is the revitalization of the international system so that the nation might conserve its strength and power even as the global environment shifts. The United States, which has been the primary beneficiary of a stable international system and remains its preeminent power, must lead and shape a process of adapting the international system to provide greater stability and security in the 21st century.

The interstate system of international rules and institutions related to politics, economics, and security is under stress as many sub-state and transnational actors and processes undermine the well-being and security of states and persons. The system has failed to adapt to these challenges, raising questions about the continued relevance and legitimacy of its rules and institutions. This erosion of state and interstate capacity is a broad phenomenon that directly and indirectly undermines U.S. security and the American way of life.

The effective functioning of the interstate system was once a central goal of U.S. grand strategy, but since World War II, it has gradually devolved into an assumption rather than an end in itself. The effects of globalization and the consequences of a weakened international system could seriously erode U.S. security, but policy makers and the public do not fully appreciate this fact. Moreover, some U.S. policies designed to address discrete challenges have exacerbated the underlying structural problems of the system itself.

Creating an environment in which American citizens can continue to thrive and prosper demands a strategy of conservation with an internal paradox: in order to preserve stability, the rules and processes of the international system must adapt to new powers and challenges.

U.S. national security strategy should elevate the importance of two major objectives: first, shoring up the system's extant component parts—states—to enhance basic governance (especially security) within their borders, and second, revitalizing and adapting collective approaches—rules, institutions, and processes—to respond more effectively to transnational security and economic threats. Ironically, this strategy requires enlisting the cooperation of non-state actors and developing new fora and tools for dealing with challenges such as global warming and terrorism.

U.S. attention to these systemic ends cannot be exclusive of all other interests because of the inevitable tensions and tradeoffs inherent in international politics. Yet, even though the United States faces additional real and immediate security challenges, these challenges are properly understood and best addressed in the context of reforming an increasingly sclerotic interstate system.

The conservation strategy's very ambition demands alternative means to secure its objectives. The sources of state and systemic weakness are diffuse and deeply rooted, requiring sustained and multifaceted repairs. Solutions cannot reside wholly within the United States, despite its continued economic and military power. By definition, modernization and innovation of international governance require a high degree of consensus and active support from other states. Accordingly, the strategy's methods run counter to the conventional thinking reflected in contemporary U.S. national security debate and practice.

This paper focuses on two new complementary components of U.S. grand strategy: strategic flexibility and an indirect method. Strategic flexibility encompasses a host of policies designed to allow the United States to maintain its power and to shape the emerging security environment.

The policies that enable strategic flexibility reflect a long-overdue update of the political, economic, and security assumptions that once buttressed U.S. foreign policy. The world is no longer divided into two ideological camps frozen by the threat of mutual assured destruction. Yet, American assumptions about the world and how to protect U.S. interests have barely changed since the height of the Cold War. America's unipolar moment is already en route to being eclipsed by an increasingly diverse cast of global characters with the capacity to degrade or enhance U.S. security. The United States retains predominance in many arenas, but longer-term demographic and economic trends in key states and the diffusion of power from states to other entities suggest an emerging, if still largely invisible, shift of global power. The United States must revisit deeply engrained habits in order to obtain greater freedom of action to protect its interests.

If strategic flexibility is required to adapt to changing global constellations of power, the indirect approach reflects realism about the relationship of U.S. power to the demands of a conservation strategy that preserves the power of states and the international system. The indirect approach means working predominantly through, with, and by other actors to achieve U.S. strategic goals. This tactic is essential to share the burden and achieve U.S. ends. Even if the United States knew precisely how to do so, it lacks the resources to strengthen all states and would hardly be a welcome interlocutor in all cases. Furthermore, the United States alone cannot provide sufficient legitimacy and strength for a revised social compact among states and possibly other global actors. That legitimacy and strength must come from the collective, with consent and support from other players. Thus, a strategy of conservation directly confronts U.S. foreign policy traditions and its strong national preference for self-reliance.

The strategy outlined here upends conventional wisdom and national preferences in other respects as well. A conservation strategy is counter to conventional wisdom in asking Americans to think differently about the uses and limits of national power. First, conservation requires a sophisticated understanding of U.S. interests: a longer-term, holistic appreciation of what makes the United States strong. It demands considering the second- and third-order effects of U.S. foreign policy. It rejects zero-sum solution sets and accepts the need to tactically give as well as get in pursuit of U.S. strategic goals.

The conservation strategy demands far-sighted investment, rejecting a “get rich quick,” speculative approach to security in which short-term gains prove more costly over the long haul. This approach requires patience, as the returns may not be visible within a single budget cycle or presidential term. In essence, the strategy transitions the United States from a security speculator to a global steward and requires Americans to adjust their psychology accordingly. As such, a conservation strategy must surmount obstacles fundamentally rooted in U.S. political culture. Overcoming these tendencies is a tall order, but with inspired leadership, such as that of the post-World War II period, Americans can meet the challenge.

Challenges to U.S. Interests

The core sources of American power remain the freedoms, innovation, and optimism of its citizens. These characteristics have enabled Americans to develop technological, economic, and military strength and to meet pressing internal challenges. They have sustained the United States’ unity and power since its founding and are critical for its future.

In the country’s early years, Americans devoted their energies inward. Sheltered by oceans, settlers advanced across the continent, developing

vast internal resources, commerce, and political relations. Over time, the nation expanded its reach overseas, seeking resources and building commercial and political relationships. Following World War II, the United States consciously embedded itself within, reshaped, and assumed leadership of the entire international system. U.S. strategy sought to promote an environment of global economic growth and stability within which Americans could continue to prosper and maintain their way of life.

Not only was the United States the chief architect of the modern nation-state system, it was a primary beneficiary. Through enlightened self-interest, the United States created international rules and processes that it could dominate in concert with allies and through which it could prosper even as others, including enemies, could also choose to participate and benefit. That international system included international economic institutions that facilitated economic growth, rules to regularize international and national behaviors, and collective security arrangements to deter and manage conflict. It also developed a progressive normative dimension regarding the treatment of persons and behavior of states towards citizens, with innovations such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the concept of a state’s responsibility to protect its citizens. The overall system generally worked for others even as it worked particularly well for the United States.

This post-war system offered benefits to many who participated, even if some core tenets of that system sometimes failed to function as advertised. Indeed, the West used the threat of isolation from this international system, particularly from its economic premises and dimensions, as a key source of power during the Cold War. Integration was a significant carrot, and eventually it was

perceived as politically and economically valuable even by states that once stood largely outside that system, such as China and the Soviet Union.

The weakening interstate system is neither the sole nor the most acute challenge facing the United States today. A contemporary Pentagon briefing would highlight several real or potential threats: global terrorist networks; large-scale insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan; unstable new or aspiring nuclear powers both hostile (Iran, North Korea) and friendly (Pakistan); China's rapid military and economic expansion; and vulnerable nuclear materials, among others. Security officials frequently highlight other underlying trends of concern as well: a demographic youth bulge in poor, often Muslim, countries; diminishing energy and other natural resources; the diffusion of information and technology; environmental degradation; urbanization; and other phenomena that may be sources of instability. The erosion of state and interstate capacity and legitimacy lies at the intersection of traditional national security threats and these global trends of concern. Yet, this erosion is also virtually invisible; it is a subterranean process that links and exacerbates the more easily recognized and immediate threats.

The major challenges to U.S. interests can be separated into several often-overlapping categories. The striking link among the majority of the threat categories — dissolving states, non-state spoilers, fragile nuclear states, and eroding norms of global behavior — is the theme of state weakness rather than state strength. This theme suggests the need to focus on strengthening states directly and on adapting the global system to manage non-state actors and transnational challenges without displacing the central role of states.

Yet, problems of state weakness coexist with the very different challenge of shifts in global power and rising states. A handful of nations have the

potential ability to rival or surpass the strengths of the United States. Although still largely benign, these new loci of global power are unmistakable. The nascent strength of emerging powers could become directly troublesome, and their strength will indisputably complicate U.S. efforts to shape the world. A central question, akin to those following World War II, is whether the United States can align its vision of the global system with the expectations and interests of other key players finding common cause in the adaptation of global politics. Weakening states, non-state spoilers, new and fragile nuclear states, pressures on rules and norms, and rising state powers constitute the five main threats to global order.

WEAKENING STATES

The process of globalization both creates and destroys. The strength of transnational economic actors such as corporations, the instantaneous movement of capital, the fungibility of labor markets, and the spread of technology contribute to greater efficiencies but also limit the control of states and international regimes over the economy. Especially for smaller or weaker states, reduced power to control outcomes creates a perception of vulnerability to external forces. More fundamentally, the resources upon which globalization is premised, in particular available energy and other natural resources, are not sustainable. A meaningful international safety net, analogous to that provided within Western states to ensure minimal standards of living regardless of a state's status in the global economy, is notably absent.

Reduced state power extends beyond the economy to a variety of security challenges such as disease, environmental degradation, and armed conflict. These are also part of what most commentators mean by globalization. Throughout much of the world, citizens experience a human security deficit that neither states nor international or regional institutions appear capable of addressing.

Many states are losing their monopoly on violence and failing to meet their social contract, leaving individuals unable to satisfy basic human needs. Some states cannot control the borders that define their sovereign territory or plan with confidence for the future. In other countries, stagnant economies and weak or repressive political structures combine with demographics to create a youth bulge that can take a malignant form internally or externally. Some governments function in capitals yet have effectively ceded entire regions to criminal sub-state actors beyond the reach of the state security apparatus. Whether a state has failed, partially failed, or is failing, such power vacuums can give rise to regional crises or provide safe haven or foot soldiers for criminal and terrorist networks. They pose a chronic threat that can occasionally become acute.

NON-STATE SPOILERS

Related to the problem of weak states is the reach and potential impact of malignant non-state actors that essentially function as insurgents against the interstate system or its component parts. The insurgents with whom the United States is most concerned are global extremists engaged in terrorism against Western nations, but other non-state actors also create instability and danger in the United States and abroad.

Globalization has helped what were once marginalized or isolated actors—criminal networks, religious zealots, and nationalist malcontents—to become major economic, security, and political challenges for states and their larger system of rules and processes. Some of these actors aim to weaken states in order to aggregate their own power in a governance vacuum, whereas others seek to remake states or supranational entities in their own fantastic image. Technology for communication and destruction has fueled their recruitment and networking, enabling these organizations to more easily graft onto local grievances and then rebrand and franchise themselves.

Some actors, such as al Qaeda, have the potential to inflict catastrophic damage to states with system-wide effects and to completely escape the deterrence paradigm that has provided an important element of global stability. Current security concepts and concomitant pressures for preemption are insufficient, creating turbulence without fundamentally changing the equation. The problem, particularly with al Qaeda, is sufficiently grave and acute that it cannot be treated as derivative of root causes and must be addressed directly. The challenge for the United States is how to respond to this acute problem without undermining broader stability or weakening itself internally.

NEW AND FRAGILE NUCLEAR STATES

The end of the Cold War offered an opportunity to reduce the incentives for acquiring nuclear weapons. Instead, a new class of weak and insecure states that are either seeking or expanding their nascent nuclear capability has emerged. These states do so in order to overcome a perceived security deficit vis-à-vis their neighbors and/or to guarantee the survival of a specific regime. Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan represent variations of this potentially destabilizing trend, but others are waiting in the wings.

These states may prove troublesome for the United States not only when they are antagonistic toward it and its allies. Deterrence will continue to function as a stabilizing external check on volatile nuclear states. These states' internal weakness, however, poses a new problem because of the uncertainties associated with the state implosion of a nuclear power. Nuclear capabilities provide little domestic strength or cohesion (except insofar as they reinforce national perceptions of power) and cannot avert internal collapse. Their frailty is thus a grave challenge because of the risk of nuclear weapons' use or transfer should control of the weapons slip away from the regime.

The failure of a nuclear state poses threats that include but far surpass those of non-nuclear failed states, potentially threatening a broader constellation of states and peoples in immediate and devastating form.

Fragile nuclear states therefore pose new and difficult questions for the United States and international politics. What should be the international response be to signs of dissolution within fragile nuclear powers? Is there an international “responsibility to protect” others in such circumstances? Who decides a response is necessary and what form does that response take?

Related is the issue of preventing new nuclear states, whether they are fragile or not. In the absence of revitalized international efforts to halt nuclear proliferation and to address security deficits more broadly, the number of nuclear states may grow; with them will come greater insecurity for other states and greater risks of spread to non-state actors. Preventing the expansion of nuclear capabilities and the emergence of new nuclear states is important, but not at any cost.

PRESSURES ON RULES AND NORMS

Recent trends are challenging and pushing long-standing rules and norms of international politics in new and often destabilizing directions. From one direction, transparency and public pressures have pushed normative judgments inside borders as nations pronounce sovereignty to be conditional upon respect for key human rights. Although this is an important development, it changes the fundamental Westphalian bargain of compliance with international rules in exchange for an essentially free hand internally.

An equally profound set of challenges emerges from states and non-state actors that seek to counter, exploit, or leapfrog the present interstate power structure. Whether these subversives

seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or purposefully target civilians, they essentially reject widely accepted rules such as nonproliferation regimes and the laws of armed conflict that regulate international relations. Leading powers, principally the United States, have in turn responded by improvising within or, depending upon the perspective, violating those same rules in the name of countering the asymmetric or illegal actions of the subversives. Targeted killing, torture, and preemptive use of force are examples of such responses.

As the leading powers refuse to be handicapped by rules that the subversives reject, the international system enters a combustible period of normative flux. Rules, and to some degree the conceptual boundaries that accompanied them (such as what defines a state of war, a concept blurred by the indefinite nature of the war on terror), have become even more difficult to understand, apply, and uphold in practice. The modern system of states risks losing its normative syntax. Although the United States itself has done much to confirm cynicism about the role of law and ethics in international politics, the continuing dissipation of international rules and norms is contrary to the interests of the leading state power. The challenge is to adapt rules and norms to changing circumstances while retaining their positive impact and overall legitimacy for states that must uphold them.

RISING STATE POWERS

U.S. planners are expert at crafting and justifying strategy against a specific state adversary. They face constant temptations to imagine China, in particular, in the major peer competitor role that the USSR once played. Although current measures of economic or military strength do not support such worries, the power of several key states is growing quickly, and current trends projected forward will yield a significantly more

multipolar world than that of today. The United States' unipolar position is not likely to remain a permanent feature of global politics.

Rising regional powers can become key pillars that enhance international stability or seriously threaten U.S. interests. States such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China have even acquired their own acronym, BRIC, in briefings on the future security environment. China is of particular interest for reasons related to demographics, geography, economic potential, and interests that might clash most directly with those of the United States.

As these states increase their powers, they confront strictures of an outdated international system. Emerging regional powers such as Brazil and India present a new challenge to the UN Security Council and functional fora such as the Group of Eight (G8) that are still dominated by colonial powers of the nineteenth century. Can legacy powers accept the rise of these emerging powers and adapt governance structures to meet their needs? Or will these rising states undermine global systems, preferring regional hegemony devoid of more broadly defined rules of behavior?

If their ambition and interests are insufficiently recognized by the states with inherited seats of power, the upstarts will undoubtedly seek to displace or work around anachronistic international institutions. Channeling the energies of these powers against common threats and toward common benefits is a central challenge for the United States. This process is certain to entail compromises on short-term U.S. policy goals and normative preferences — and on the purposes and rules regarding the international governance architecture.

Many states and peoples today, including Americans, experience the failure of international rules and interactions to adapt to or ameliorate the negative consequences of the very forces of

globalism that they have unleashed. This dissatisfaction is reflected in domestic debates about free trade, genocide, climate change, nuclear proliferation, pandemic diseases, military preemption, and other issues. Yet these are seen as distinct and separable aspects of international security, with stovepiped debates occurring within different political constituencies and government agencies. These issues are linked to or exacerbated by the systemic failures of the international system, which also require action.

The United States has been reluctant to understand this linkage between international systemic weakness and U.S. security. The failure to grasp this connection has been a central flaw of U.S. national security strategy in the post-Cold War era, and it is precisely this failing that a conservation strategy will address.

Components of a Conservation Strategy

The fundamental goal of any U.S. national security strategy is to allow the United States and its citizens to continue to thrive and prosper. In order to preserve American power in the 21st century, the United States should aim to conserve and reform states and the international system. There are three component objectives within this strategy, based on a synthesis of the preceding threats and their bearing on U.S. security.

First, the United States must stigmatize, deter, and prevent the expansion of potentially catastrophic and system-challenging behaviors and actors while creating new rules and tools that address new threats. Second, it must enhance each individual state's (or, where necessary, other entities') accountability and capability for ensuring security within its area of responsibility, shrinking the amount of territory that lacks cognizable authorities. Third, it should revise bilateral and international expectations and institutions to channel emerging powers toward stable, system-reinforcing behaviors.

In the short term, these component objectives should align with the interests of a majority of states and peoples in a stable international environment and effective governance, a compatibility that is critical for the application of a conservation strategy. There will be tensions and tradeoffs, however, which deserve acknowledgment. Stability and state strength are not normative conditions *per se*, and may at least in the short term conflict with the goals of promoting human rights and democratic governance. Psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs indicates that physical security is paramount at the individual level; at the international level, stability can facilitate the advancement of other normative goals. Peace then becomes the paramount, albeit not exclusive, concern of this strategy. The strategy rejects normative crusading with destabilizing consequences in favor of stability that allows the incremental advancement of other normative goods. In the longer term, this approach is designed to protect U.S. interests even as global power continues to shift among and perhaps gradually beyond states. The art of applying a conservation strategy will lie in the effective calibration of continuity and change.

The component approaches and the specific policies and capabilities needed to fulfill a strategy of conservation derive from its ambition. The objective of stabilizing the interstate system and simultaneously transforming it for the 21st century by definition cannot be achieved by a single state or by force of arms. Several implications follow for the United States. It should demonstrate its benign intent as global leader; stress its broad interest in stability; and illustrate the alignment of its interests with other states, particularly great and rising powers.

These measures are key to sustaining the legitimacy and effectiveness of the strategy because the United States must rely heavily on other states,

international institutions and rules, and non-state actors to achieve shared goals. A sustainable and effective strategy of this ambition must be executed indirectly in many aspects. The United States will require greater political and strategic flexibility, because the strategy demands the pursuit of different paths and partners. Diplomacy and paradigm-changing ideas are vital, as overreliance upon U.S. military power or economic means may be counterproductive and will inevitably be insufficient.

These approaches are not entirely new. A conservation strategy would still employ alliances, nuclear deterrence, and security assistance and seek to maintain conventional military superiority, a technological edge, and other staples of U.S. national security policy. The key differences are attaining greater flexibility to explore new policies and partnerships and working by, with, and through other partners to achieve shared goals.

In terms of carrying out the strategy, the first order of business is restoring U.S. legitimacy as a global leader to enhance its ability to achieve all other ends. Although this will be an ongoing proposition, many steps with significant impact can be taken immediately. Some of the most important measures entail simply halting recent controversial and counterproductive practices. As it restores its authority and repositions itself internationally, the United States will be more effective in dealing with individual challenges and better positioned to lead a more ambitious and longer-term agenda of strengthening and/or re-conceiving institutions and solutions to global problems.

The following description divides implementation of a conservation strategy into two main strategies: strategic flexibility and the indirect approach.

Strategic Flexibility

Strategic flexibility includes two main missions: ending destabilizing practices and undertaking new policy initiatives to strengthen global leadership.

America should cease practices and policies that fail to stabilize the international arena, either because they upend interstate relations or they galvanize international opposition to the United States. It must place the struggle against violent extremism in the proper context, downplaying its exclusivity amongst U.S. interests; America cannot let terrorism become the nation's sole preoccupation. Phrases such as the "global war on terror," "long war," and "persistent conflict" offer a negative, militarized paradigm to describe the United States' global purpose. The country must instead communicate a positive agenda and outcome.

Until the United States has significantly disengaged from Iraq, it will lack essential strategic flexibility to protect other long-term interests. In order to revitalize the process of Iraqi reconciliation, the United States should begin a phased withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq. It must also clarify that it will not maintain permanent bases in Iraq. Intensified and broadened regional diplomacy can support and monitor Iraqi governance, and increased humanitarian assistance can help manage the consequences of withdrawal. Redeploying troops to other areas of the world is essential for restoring the U.S. armed forces' strength, shoring up military efforts in Afghanistan and against al Qaeda, repairing the U.S. economy, and restoring the country's international standing. In a related vein, Washington must reverse the U.S. policy of unilateral preemption, instead stressing prevention and collective action while reiterating the United States' enduring right to self-defense.

U.S. policy and practice must be reversed by committing to uphold international law governing the

use of force during armed conflict, including a flat and unequivocal rejection of torture, closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo, and a revision of military tribunals to include meaningful protections for the accused.

The United States should also abandon the policy of imposing democracy by force, which has proven ineffective and destabilizing. It should instead focus on modeling positive democratic practices and promoting human security, both of which result from effective governance, regardless of regime typology. Diplomacy and bilateral levers can carefully and consistently support incremental political reform in nations with which the United States maintains close relations.

The United States should halt its development of new nuclear weapons and apply realistic criteria to research on strategic ballistic missile defense. In order to strengthen global nonproliferation efforts, America should unilaterally reduce its nuclear arsenals, recommit to working toward the goal of a nuclear-free world, and reinforce arms control regimes and incentive structures. It should also work with other countries to increase efforts to secure nuclear material globally.

As a final step in ending destabilizing practices, Washington should initiate a review of all bilateral and international agreements signed or rejected since the 9/11 attacks, including security cooperation agreements related to terrorism as well as global initiatives such as the Kyoto Protocol and the ICC. It should also indicate a willingness to participate fully in shaping future international conventions to address global challenges.

The second component of strategic flexibility aims to create greater room for political maneuver and credibility for global leadership through new policy initiatives that reshape relations with key states, rebuild alliances, and create new partnerships with rising powers — with the aim

of marginalizing new or aspiring nuclear states and hostile non-state actors that challenge the stability of the international system. These steps should ameliorate hostility toward the United States and increase U.S. leverage to launch new and far-reaching initiatives. In some cases these policies are an exponential expansion of current efforts. In other cases, they represent significant departures from current U.S. policy.

In line with this mission, the government should require greater U.S. energy conservation through fuel efficiency standards and energy taxes and significantly increase funding for alternative energy development. This must be a presidential challenge, akin to putting a man on the moon, and will entail a populist educational effort, such as the national anti-smoking campaign. Such progress will signal a change in American attitudes; enable the United States to lead collective approaches to controlling climate change; and move the nation closer toward greater energy independence, which would fundamentally reshape strategic perceptions and options. This is essentially a call for national sacrifice and service, requiring large dislocations in the short term for a potentially game-changing strategic payoff.

The United States must also recast the struggle against terrorism as a predominantly criminal effort, including creating specialized terrorism courts to facilitate pursuit and prosecution of terrorist actors pursuant with transparency and accountability. Military efforts should combine selective and precise U.S. kinetic actions with an overall indirect approach of working by, with and through other states and actors. Non-military efforts must be emphasized and systematically coordinated with the direct or indirect use of force.

Washington should reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process with high-level and consistent U.S. engagement. Innovative incentives

are required to encourage the parties to successfully conclude negotiations that will allow them to live side by side in peace and security.

Finally, the United States can strengthen national resilience by increasing awareness of and strengthening responses to national crises such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Reframing the discussion from one of threat levels to response procedures stresses individual and community responsibility. A form of national service could include training in the infrastructure and local leadership of crisis response. Presidential leadership must prepare Americans without paralyzing them so that attacks and disruptions do not erode national will.

Indirect Approach

A key objective of the indirect approach is to leverage U.S. power by inducing other actors and institutions to more effectively support shared goals and to expand non-military tools and programs to achieve U.S. objectives rather than continuing to rely on military preeminence. From a U.S. perspective, these actions are designed to make virtue of necessity in the near term, when U.S. legitimacy and resources are depleted, and to enable a sustainable, devolved approach to security over the longer term as global power relationships continue to change. The four key facets of this indirect approach are diplomacy, military power, economic and other civilian assistance, and global governance.

DIPLOMACY

To reinforce international stability, Washington should reestablish the terms of its partnerships with traditional allies based on a division of labor. With Israel, the core issue is advancing the reality and third-party understanding of a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question and ensuring that other nations appreciate and support that outcome. With European/North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) allies, the central idea, contrary to the current U.S. focus, is not to expand their national military capabilities and commitments but instead to increase their concrete contributions to many non-military initiatives. Their roles could include international intelligence and police work, trade concessions, foreign assistance, political accommodation of other nations, and ultimately accepting a leadership role in international institutions that more accurately reflects the character of their power. While not abandoning military partnerships with traditional allies, the United States should accept the differences in political orientation and prioritization of issues and seek to develop complementary approaches to promoting international security.

The United States should reengage China, India, Russia, and other regional powers, recognizing their disproportionate interest in the character and stability of their geopolitical neighborhoods. Particularly in the near term, when the United States has limited capability to shape those affairs at the same time that it has growing concerns about new nuclear states and terrorist actors, U.S. policy should seek common cause with large and rising powers. Looking longer term, the United States should support greater roles and influence for these powers in the United Nations (UN) and new interstate or global organizations. The central idea is to vest rising powers in transparent and regularized processes of the international system.

The membership and focus of the G8 should be expanded, with criteria for China and other states to join so that they can engage other leading powers in this forum. The institution should deepen and expand the focus of its initiatives, including enhancing the stability of the banking system by initiating international banking reforms through Basel III deliberations, strengthening information technology security, and other common goals.

The United States should discreetly help to create space for moderate Muslim states to successfully govern and have influence beyond their borders. U.S. support often cannot take highly visible forms, as the knowledge of its involvement could be counterproductive. Washington must therefore provide greater incentives for Muslim governments and U.S. allies to take actions they may perceive as contrary to their interests. Muslim states, for example, should be encouraged to incrementally open political space to opponents of ruling regimes. The European Union (EU) should be encouraged to accept Turkey as a full member.

Meanwhile, Americans can counter the “clash of civilizations” narrative at home by respecting and facilitating the success of local Muslim populations and by lauding European nations that do the same. Encouraging facilitated dialogue across religions and among religious and state leaders at the highest level could also be helpful.

Finally, the United States should pursue potentially paradigm-changing initiatives in cooperation with other key states or international organizations. Candidates include alternative energy, climate change, and international economic development. U.S. contributions should be seen not as exclusively advantageous to Americans but also as benefiting a wider community.

USE OF MILITARY POWER

Perhaps counterintuitively, U.S. military power is a key component of peacefully co-opting other actors into shared norms and objectives and moving away from a reliance on military preeminence.

The modernization of U.S. intelligence institutions and methods can help improve attempts to preempt attacks against the United States and its allies by aspiring nuclear states, unstable nuclear

states, and non-state actors. The costs of acting late have become potentially catastrophic; acting early may avert crises altogether. The premium value of intelligence now lies in detecting and interrupting the acquisition of WMD or planned attacks against the United States.

Current reforms have been incremental and insufficient, but the United States cannot afford another bureaucratic reorganization. Instead it must focus on recruiting, rewarding, and retaining talent, particularly given the impending wave of retirements and lack of adequately experienced midlevel personnel. Human intelligence remains an essential investment for the foreseeable future. Timely, high-quality intelligence and analysis is no substitute for wise decision-making, but the latter is unlikely to occur without the former.

The United States should also take the lead in international disaster assistance efforts whenever possible. The unique capabilities of the U.S. military to respond quickly and efficiently in crises offer a powerful means of demonstrating American concern and leadership and of reshaping views of U.S. military forces, as was seen in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Washington must renew its support for UN peacekeeping in concrete, visible ways, not simply in full and prompt payment of UN assessments. Such support could include increasing training and materiel support—such as lift and equipment leasing—for peacekeeping forces and providing expertise to UN operations, similar to U.S. efforts to create a professional military structure for NATO. The United States should offer similar support for regional peacekeeping initiatives.

Counterterrorism missions must be segregated as much as possible from preventive, presence, relief, and stability operations. This is not just an issue of clarity within the chain of command; it is also

an issue of U.S. credibility and success. Bleeding competing missions together undermines both in the longer term. This blurring of missions has complicated U.S. efforts in Afghanistan in particular and is likely to become a problem in other areas as well unless U.S. forces more successfully segregate humanitarian and political activities from counterterrorism efforts.

The United States and NATO must focus their military efforts on Afghanistan and the Pakistan border. This goal should be the sole exception to a general decrease in high-profile U.S. military activities in the short term, and it should be nested within a broader integrated initiative to stabilize Afghanistan and contain al Qaeda. As forces are withdrawn from Iraq, the United States should gradually expand the U.S. troop presence in contested Afghan areas. Non-U.S. forces should be focused in more stable sectors. The United States should join with other nations to significantly increase economic assistance to Afghanistan and promote reconciliation with Taliban leaders willing to integrate into national political power structures. To minimize the possibility of radicalization, the military should explore alternatives to permanent U.S. military basing in Muslim nations.

As it carefully reduces its large force deployments in Iraq, the United States must restore the health of its armed forces. Political leaders' failure to acknowledge the true costs of two lengthy wars has masked a hollowing out of the military, particularly the Army. While it gains breathing space, the armed forces must not only rebuild, but also reorient themselves to support a conservation strategy.

Prevention of conflict or attack on the United States is the clear priority. But given the enormity of that challenge, strategic economy of force is essential. U.S. efforts should seek to disrupt and divide enemies through targeted actions rather than assume it can physically destroy every

opponent. The United States should devolve significant responsibility to other states and leading regional partners that share its interest in stability. Over the coming decade, U.S. forces should focus on strengthening foreign security forces through capacity building and internal defense. U.S. regular forces should develop new concepts of operation for small-footprint, lower profile, and self-sustaining engagements. They must continue to decentralize operations and develop adaptive leaders.

In the medium term, then, a conservation strategy requires significant investment in and employment of conventional ground forces for prevention, while restoring joint readiness for unanticipated major combat operations. The United States currently faces no conventional peer competitor. Moreover, any future state competitors are likely to combine conventional and unconventional methods and capabilities. Accordingly, the United States should rethink its current modernization emphasis and effort. Continued pursuit of incremental evolution of platforms and weapons may be outmoded given the diffusion and transformation of threats. Hedging against a near-peer competitor should remain largely in the realm of R&D at this juncture. The U.S. military should concentrate scarce investment dollars on high-payoff investments for the longer term: developing energy independence, cyber security (and redundancy in core functions), and next-generation technology research and development.

ECONOMIC AND OTHER CIVILIAN ASSISTANCE

Economic and other civilian assistance is another key component of the indirect approach to long-term global security.

The United States should create an effective civilian expeditionary capability to help conduct stability operations in high-risk environments.

This civilian corps should include representatives from civilian government agencies as well as external civilian experts who can carry out a range of stability operations tasks for which the military is not primarily prepared. The corps requires personnel with an operational mentality, cultural awareness, and significant tolerance of risk. The United States should not attempt to create a parallel to its military capability. However, a lean but ready civilian operational component is an essential element of U.S. humanitarian, counterinsurgency, and post-conflict efforts.

U.S. foreign assistance should be increased, with the goal of achieving a contribution that is roughly commensurate with the United States' proportion of global military spending. The increase would add some \$30 billion annually, a significant figure until compared to current defense expenditures. Specific initiatives would focus less on bilateral assistance than on multilateral initiatives and less on promoting democratization than on improving the results of governance for citizens' security and well-being. Here, the key challenge for the United States will be combining this stabilization approach with political efforts to promote incremental reform in countries of particular security interest and in countries with which America has long-standing bilateral relationships.

The United States should create a global pool for national risk coverage, a subsidized insurance fund for states suffering from natural disaster or terrorist attacks, to help make them more resilient in the face of such disasters.

America should also lead allied developed nations in making trade concessions to reinvigorate the Doha round of trade negotiations and restore confidence in international economic agreements.

Pioneering a new multilateral Global Adjustment Initiative (GAI) could help nations adjust to the economic dislocation of globalization. The GAI would emphasize transparency, accountability, and human security. It would have less stringent criteria than the Millennium Challenge Account because it would be less concerned with ideology than impact and would seek to assist less-capable states as long as they were moving on the desired trajectory. These states would not need to meet formal requirements of democratic rule in the American image, but their programs would have to effectively enhance the basic human security of citizens.

Finally, the United States should encourage Muslim states to create a Muslim Development Corps to train and fund their youth as a means of supporting economic and social wellbeing at home and abroad. The corps would provide peaceful alternatives to jihad for the youth bulge in many poor Islamic countries. It would also function as a social safety valve and potential economic catalyst, akin to the role played by the U.S. Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. Finally, the corps would seek to undermine the strategies of radical groups for garnering the support of Muslims by meeting basic human needs.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Improving global governance is a crucial component of the effort to foster stability and prosperity worldwide.

Accordingly, the United States should develop multilateral support for an effective collective response to failing nuclear states. It should lead the UN or a broad coalition of states in developing guidelines for assessing and responding to the threat of disintegrating nuclear states. The pressures driving the U.S. preemption strategy are real, but a unilaterally defined and executed policy of preemption is highly destabilizing.

Moreover, a nuclear power at risk of losing control of its weapons of mass destruction is a special multilateral problem demanding a broadly accepted response. Such a scenario appears to create a new “responsibility to protect” that transcends state boundaries and involves the protection of a wider community of global citizens. Governments should begin discussing the roles of the UN or regional organizations in authorizing intervention. They should consider investing the International Atomic Energy Agency with the authority to oversee the safety and dismantling of nuclear capabilities in the event of intervention in a failing nuclear state.

A new paradigm for “trusteeship” of failed states or of regions within states could help the international community confront the collective security challenge of ungoverned spaces. This is a sensitive issue because of sovereignty concerns. Yet at present, many ungoverned areas within states have broader security ramifications. Sovereignty entails responsibility for controlling activities within borders. When this responsibility is not fulfilled, the international community has an interest in becoming involved. States should begin articulating and codifying such expectations and developing models for assisting states in fulfilling those expectations.

When states are incapable of policing threats in such regions, they are free to seek assistance from other states, but assistance through an international capability may be more acceptable and sustainable. The UN, regional organizations, or ad hoc groups of like-minded states should develop response capabilities that transcend the band-aid of peacekeeping to include governorship for extended periods of time. This governance capability could also be used in the event of state failure, but should be developed essentially as an adjunct to state capacity where it is lacking.

International decision-making must be modernized to incorporate rising powers. The UN, with its host of current and potential critical activities that require Security Council authorization, risks irrelevance unless the organization's decision-making reflects modern power realities. The UN must therefore find ways to accommodate the aspirations and power of India and Brazil at a minimum, and to address the disproportionate leverage of "grandfathered" European powers. Although many argue that Security Council reform per se is unattainable, it should be pursued alongside the development of creative auxiliary decision-making processes that might ease the way toward future reform. Member states need to confront the reality of informal consultative mechanisms, which would lack the transparency and accountability of the Security Council process, in order to move toward reform. The United States and other Security Council members can, through their independent and collective decision-making, begin acknowledging the growing role of emerging powers. They can also incorporate these states in other non-UN fora such as the G8 or create complementary fora to bring rising powers into solutions for global problems.

Similarly, international decision-making and problem solving must incorporate non-state actors as well. Even if states remain the dominant actors for the foreseeable future, non-state entities are increasingly important aspects of global challenges and solutions. In some cases, sub-state actors hold power in armed conflict and failed states and therefore must become part of a brokered political settlement. In others, non-state actors such as private businesses or nongovernmental organizations are significantly affected by and potentially able to assist in addressing problems that also affect states. These problems include global warming, terrorism, cyber attack, and global pandemics.

Integrating non-state actors into rule formulation and solutions is a vital new challenge for global governance. It poses new challenges for states, such as creating incentives for non-state actors to participate, minimizing the "free rider" problem of non-state actors enjoying the benefits but not contributing or complying, and managing increased diversity of power within the still-anarchic state system. The United States should propose to expand UN-sanctioned processes or create new consultative fora to integrate non-state actors into international discussions and action plans. To sustain global governance in the long term, the United States should begin building and experimenting with models of global governance that transcend interstate institutions issue by issue.

Rising to the Challenge

Conservation recognizes the larger international, systemic implications and requirements of conserving American power. Accordingly, it seeks to both shore up and modernize an interstate system to promote stability within which U.S. safety, prosperity, and freedoms can be preserved. The strategy does not preclude the full range of unilateral or military U.S. actions to protect American interests, but it seeks to develop common understandings of threats and collective expectations about responses to these threats. It aims to strengthen the ability of states to provide security within their borders and to reinforce a system of global governance to address effectively the transnational and international threats of the 21st century.

Conservation requires the support of other states for two complementary reasons. First, the United States lacks adequate resources and tools to carry it out alone. The strategy therefore leverages states, non-state actors, and international institutions to strengthen or supplement states that are ineffective at ensuring internal security.

In addition, reform of collective rules and institutions — by definition — requires consensus. Because cooperation from other actors is essential for the conservation strategy, the United States must be conscious of the interests and perspectives of others and preserve its own international legitimacy. Conservation therefore requires a longer-term, collective vision of how to keep the United States strong.

Democracies are famously slow to respond to chronic problems, often rousing themselves only in response to acute crises. As the Cold War ended, Americans were concerned first and foremost about securing a peace dividend rather than reexamining the requirements of international leadership. The United States did not fundamentally address the chronic problems of eroding states and international institutions. Occasionally, the U.S. government applied temporary band-aids to acute crises, but it largely failed to invest in sustainable solution sets. The United States chose not to create robust UN peacekeeping capabilities. It raised fresh hopes about nonproliferation agreements and institutions but then deviated from that path. And while states joined to create new international laws and institutions to meet collective responsibilities to justice and to the environment, the United States stood aside. Instead of a global steward, the United States came to be seen as a global outlier, unconcerned with common problems and shared solutions.

Certainly the underlying failings of the system have not been solely the fault of the United States. Yet, during its unipolar moment of the 1990s, a decade of relative peace without any peer competitor, America allowed the underlying weaknesses of the international system to fester. That missed opportunity has left the United States today with less attractive and likely less effective options for addressing the dislocations caused by globalization, terrorism, and weak states.

A significant reason that U.S. leadership did not rise to the challenge was the complexities of domestic politics. Unfortunately, this remains a key impediment to crafting a contemporary grand strategy. In domestic political debate, vocal constituencies scorn participation in collective security as an intrusion on sovereignty. They paint political compromise as forfeiting entitlements that they believe are due a preeminent power. They decry development assistance as a form of international welfare. Their faith in military might and unilateralism remains untarnished by evidence of its limits. This mentality, described as Jacksonianism by Walter Russell Mead, is imprinted on American politics — and continues to impose a severe constraint on U.S. global leadership.

In political terms, the overall international system lacks a domestic constituency or powerful bureaucratic proponent. There is no career reward for warning of a global “governance gap.” Policy makers tend to see particular manifestations of that gap and then work to address the specific issue independently. Furthermore, because systemic effects are corrosive and incremental, they are routinely pushed back in line behind the immediate challenges that greet Americans in the morning newspaper. As a body politic, Americans may come to recognize the system’s corrosion only after it has deteriorated beyond the point of manageable repair.

There will often be real tensions between approaches that best strengthen the system and those that address particular challenges in a manner most favorable to the United States. To some degree, resolving that tension will be a matter of perspective and timeline — short-term versus long-term benefits — or an uneasy weighing of a specific policy impact versus incremental improvement across multiple issues of concern.

Yet, many tradeoffs will also be real. There will be times when short-term exigencies require deviation from overarching strategic principles. The fundamental difference of a conservation strategy is its premise that the United States has a significant national interest in the character and effectiveness of the international system. The inability to recognize this interest and develop policies generally consistent with it has been a weakness of U.S. strategy in the post-Cold War era and the signal failing of U.S. foreign policy since the 9/11 attacks.

U.S. leaders must appreciate and educate Americans about the larger context of their national security. It requires investing in a stable interstate system in which all can benefit, even if the United States benefits most. By the end of World War II, U.S. security had already become inextricably linked with the security, politics, and economic relations among other nations. Global integration has only deepened even as the players have fragmented to include a dizzying array of new actors and threats. The United States has a vested interest in retaining states as primary component parts while simultaneously making them work more effectively to stabilize relations among themselves and to address long-term collective threats.

Other states and peoples experience the international system's security, political, and economic deficits far more acutely than do Americans. The United States, for all its perceived post-9/11 vulnerability, remains the world's strongest power by many measures. As such, it is still able to compensate for many failures of that collective system. Yet, we should not want the negative effects of global trends — dislocation created by new state winners and losers; fewer means of addressing the economic, security, or governance deficits; and increasing transnational challenges

that demand collective responses — to continue in their current trajectory with increasingly less effective global rules and processes for addressing them.

A conservation strategy will demand national sacrifice and determination. Where the United States lacks adequate resources, it must apply imagination, persuasion, and patience. Ironically, the solution sets that best address challenges facing peoples may ultimately not be based on the unit of the state, which conservation seeks to salvage. Yet in a broader historical sweep, even if it is ultimately a transitional phase of international politics, the strategy should enable the more stable adaptation to an alternative paradigm of international security.



MAKING AMERICA GRAND AGAIN

By Shawn Brimley, Michèle A. Flournoy, Vikram J. Singh

With contributions from Stefanie Garcia and Alice Hunt

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



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A Year of Firsts

This will be a year of firsts. In 2008, votes for president will be cast for the first time by Americans born after the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as by baby boomers collecting their first Social Security checks. It will be the first presidential election with oil prices above \$100 a barrel and the first time a new president inherits two significant hot wars overseas. China will emit more carbon than the United States this year. The most diverse slate of presidential candidates has been fighting to inherit what might be the most complex array of challenges to face the nation at any one time. When stepping into the Oval Office, the next president will face wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, global climate change, international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and economic turmoil. The next president will not, however, inherit a grand strategic vision for the United States of America. We have been without a grand strategy since the birth of our newest voters a generation ago, when Soviet Communism collapsed.

This election year, hope and confidence have given way to an anxious uncertainty about America's role and prospects in a rapidly changing and dangerous world. The most obvious causes of national anxiety—the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the prospect of a generations-long struggle against global terrorism, and growing economic concerns—will make this the most challenging presidential transition in decades. Specific issues such as these drive important but largely tactical debates about America's options. How would a new president confront a potentially nuclear Iran or finally find Osama bin Laden? How many troops should be in Afghanistan and Iraq and for how long? Important as such questions are, they have

limited value if not answered in the context of a more fundamental and critical discussion about America's purpose and interests in the world.¹ This discussion is essential to helping the next administration balance risk across a range of challenges, build sustainable consensus among the American people for important investments and sacrifice, and inspire allies and friends to share and support U.S. objectives around the world. America's inability to develop, effectively implement, and communicate a grand strategy is taking a significant toll. For America's future to be filled more with hope than with fear, the next president must engage the debate over America's purpose.

Even amidst globalization and the rise or reemergence of military and economic powers such as China, India, and Russia, America remains in many ways the global superpower. No state can fundamentally challenge U.S. military primacy; American culture continues to influence and be in demand globally; America's economy, even when troubled, is the world's largest and most dynamic. No state directly threatens the ultimate security of the American nation, and non-state actors such as al Qaeda, although able to inflict great harm, do not pose an existential threat. "By almost all objective measures," Fareed Zakaria has noted, "the United States is in a blessed position today."²

How strange it is, then, that the world seems to be passing America by. In Asia, a rising China's charm offensive is wooing many countries into a tighter embrace while the United States sees its influence on the decline. Russia has slipped

back into near autocracy while its democratic G-8 counterparts watch helplessly. Globalization continues to infuse the world marketplace with new, capable competitors while the value of the U.S. dollar remains near all-time lows and our economy slides toward recession.

Addressing any one particular issue will not get the United States back on track. U.S. leaders need to broaden their aperture and open a new debate over America's purpose and place in the world. The great debates that occurred in the aftermath of World War II engaged the senior leadership of the nation and charted a vision for this country and its priorities for 50 years. Yet, the question of U.S. grand strategy after the collapse of the Soviet Union remains unresolved.

Grand strategy articulates a vision for a nation's role in the world and helps it set priorities, illuminate the near-term and long-term costs and benefits of various courses of action, and explain choices to its own people and to other nations. Even as the specifics of how to best implement a grand strategy may be hotly debated, the broad contours of the vision, if shared, can help set a direction for the country that can be sustained over time and across administrations.³

It is difficult to identify a time when the United States was more in need of a new grand strategy than now. If we remain strategically adrift, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to protect and advance our interests in the face of such varied and daunting national security challenges. The next

¹ Henry Kissinger makes a similar point in "The Three Revolutions," *Washington Post* (7 April 2008): A17. "The long-predicted national debate about national security policy has yet to occur. Essentially tactical issues have overwhelmed the most important challenge a new administration will confront: how to distill a new international order from three simultaneous revolutions occurring around the globe: (a) the transformation of the traditional state system of Europe; (b) the radical Islamist challenge to historic notions of sovereignty; and (c) the drift of the center of gravity of international affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Indian Oceans."

² Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: Norton 2008): 251.

³ This was the motivation behind President Eisenhower's so-called "Solarium" exercise in the summer of 1953, in which multiple senior-level groups debated America's strategy toward the Soviet Union. See Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, *Strategic Planning for U.S. National Security: A Project Solarium for the 21st Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Project on National Security, 2006). CNAS' *Solarium Strategy Series* was inspired by the Eisenhower process. See the CNAS website at <http://www.cnas.org> for more information.

president must take up the challenge of redefining America's purpose in the world and setting a new course. In this year of firsts, the next president should give the country its first grand strategy for the 21st century by going back to basics: to the nature of the world and how best to understand, protect, and advance U.S. interests.

Adrift in a Contested World

In the waning days of the George H.W. Bush administration, a debate began over which threats would require the most attention of U.S. presidents and their diplomats and soldiers after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Should America focus on maintaining its military and economic primacy in order to dissuade potential rivals, or should it focus its power on spreading democracy and building international mechanisms to handle new global challenges? This realist versus internationalist debate was nothing new, except that now the two sides were arguing about the ultimate ends of American power rather than the best means with which to fight communism. The distinction matters. After generations of debate over *how* to protect our interests, American leaders were now arguing over *what* those interests really were in a world that suddenly seemed largely at peace.

The persistence in 2008 of debates started during the first post-Cold War presidential transition suggests that rather than 9/11 "changing everything," 11/9, the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, was the more consequential change.⁴ On September 11, 2001, a terrorist attack of unprecedented ambition succeeded on a devastating scale. Such an attack, however, had been possible from the days of the first commercial jet hijackings in the 1960s and 1970s. With 11/9, on the other hand, the world's most fundamental organizing principle became irrelevant. The risk of annihilation from thermonuclear war with the Soviet Union that had

long focused the attention of leaders and publics in the West was gone. 9/11 was an attack in a long-running battle by Islamic extremists against the modern order, and although it surely changed our awareness and resolve concerning the threat of global terrorism, 11/9 was the end of an epoch and left us at sea with only outdated charts and instruments, unable to plot a clear course.

This is not to say that America has been aimless for 20 years. In the Cold War, our compass point had been Europe's bloody century of hot and cold wars, so we focused in the 1990s on locking in our sudden gains through efforts to stabilize and reintegrate the newly free Soviet satellite states, expand NATO, and ensure that only one nuclear-weapons power (Russia) emerged from the ashes of the Soviet Union rather than four. We worked to enlarge the global community of free-market democracies. These achievements were important.

Yet, several questions were left to simmer throughout the post-Cold War years. How do threats of violent extremism fit into our vision of an increasingly free and capitalist world order? How does the world beyond the liberal-democratic fraternity factor into American interests? How should the rise of Asia change our strategic calculus? American leaders noted the dark sides of globalization, from terrorism to proliferation to pandemic diseases, but they fell short of crafting a compelling vision for managing America's affairs in a new global environment. Despite important successes in specific areas, we had not fleshed out a grand strategy for the post-Cold War era when the 9/11 attacks occurred. Nearly seven years later that fact remains true.

Although 9/11 created a sense of national shock and urgency, it did not inspire the development of a new grand strategy. As U.S. leaders refocused their strategic lens on pursuing al Qaeda in Afghanistan

⁴ 11/9 to 9/11 are described as America's modern interwar years in a new book by Derek Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

and elsewhere and on preventing even more catastrophic terrorist attacks, the aperture of American foreign and defense policy narrowed quite substantially. The “war on terror” became the unanticipated but understandable centerpiece of the Bush administration’s national security policy.

The strategic vision articulated in the Bush administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy maintained a rhetorical focus on advancing freedom and democracy, but it also departed from its predecessors by making the case for preventive military action to disrupt threats worldwide *before* they materialized.⁵ The Bush administration pivoted off of the 9/11 attacks and the challenge — some would say impossibility — of deterring WMD-armed terrorists to argue that rogue states such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq might be equally undeterrable if armed with WMD. This leap of logic led to a new doctrine justifying preventive war against “gathering” threats and, along with theories of transforming the Middle East through the imposition of democracy in a core state, ultimately laid the groundwork for the decision to go to war in Iraq. The result has been a massive expenditure of military and economic resources that, on balance, has left America less able to advance its most vital interests worldwide. Richard Haass has noted that under President George W. Bush “the United States has accelerated the emergence of alternative power centers in the world and has weakened its own position relative to them.”⁶

THE WORLD AHEAD

Henry Kissinger recently said, “We are at a moment when the international system is in a period of

change like we haven’t seen for several hundred years.”⁷ This moment may be coming to a head now, but it began with the rapid change and chaos at the end of the Cold War. In 1992, Benjamin Barber captured the uncertain mood of the time. “The planet,” he wrote, “is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment.”⁸ Driven by rapid economic growth and globalization, the tension between disintegration and integration continues today and is marked by three key trends.

First, the diffusion of power from strong states to weaker states and to non-state actors has created super-empowered groups and individuals able to impact the global system. The diffusion of power is amoral, enhancing the power of groups from terrorists seeking WMD to charitable organizations seeking to aid refugees and alleviate poverty.

On the dark side of the diffusion of power, terrorism will continue to claim lives and undermine stability. According to a July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, al Qaeda “is and will remain the most serious terrorist threat to the Homeland, as its central leadership continues to plan high-impact plots, while pushing others in extremist Sunni communities to mimic its efforts and to supplement its capabilities.”⁹ Modern technology and communications will enable al Qaeda and other violent extremists to continue their activities even under sustained military and law-enforcement pressure.

The proliferation of WMD is also likely to accelerate. The spread of nuclear power and scientific knowledge has been enough to enable India, Israel,

⁵ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (September 2002), available <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2002/index.html>.

⁶ Richard N. Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity: What will Follow U.S. Dominance,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2008): 50.

⁷ Henry Kissinger, *The Charlie Rose Show*, PBS (15 July 2007).

⁸ Benjamin Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld,” *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1992), <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber>. Barber was one of the first to describe the paradoxes of the post-Cold war era and published a book by the same title in 1995.

⁹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” (July 2007), available at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf (press release).

Pakistan, and even an isolated and impoverished North Korea to build a nuclear bomb. Trafficking in the tools to inflict massive harm can involve just a diagram on a flash drive or even simply the contents of a scientist's mind. Biological and chemical weapons will become ever more accessible as technology spreads from laboratories to home basements.¹⁰

The potentially positive side of the diffusion of power includes the increasing reach and influence of businesses, interest groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Private entities from standards organizations to professional societies increasingly act as effective regulatory proxies over business and industry. Experts in academia and think tanks help policymakers to decipher and tackle complex issues. The United Nations now accredits NGOs and involves them in its deliberations. Foundations confront the challenges of poverty and disease with resources and expertise that were once available only to governments.¹¹ The risk, of course, is that none of these entities are directly accountable to the public.

Second, the relative dominance of traditional U.S. power continues to decline. The shifting global political-economic balance, called a return of multipolarity by many, has enabled new autocratic alternatives to a liberal-democratic, free-market order to thrive in countries such as China and Russia with stabilizing and destabilizing impacts.

The United States remains by far the world's largest economy, with about 25 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), but this percentage continues to fall as other nations, particularly in Asia, experience faster growth rates.¹² Yet, this trend

does not suggest the rapid eclipse of U.S. fortunes. China, for example, faces internal contradictions that pose many pitfalls, and its rise, although stunningly fast, must also cover an incredible distance. According to Jeffrey Sachs, if current trends continue without any major disruption, China will reach just 50 percent of European per capita GDP by 2050.¹³ Joseph Nye estimates that China's per capita income will not equal that of the United States until the end of this century.¹⁴

Nonetheless, newfound wealth in other countries is sparking new forms of competition. Russia is flexing its muscle as an energy supplier and recapitalizing its military forces after years of neglect. China is rapidly modernizing its military and engaging in diplomacy and development on a global scale that aims to match the activities of Western powers but without conditions for human rights and good governance. The Pacific Ocean could soon be shared by more than a half-dozen blue-water navies (those of Australia, India, China, Japan, Korea, Russia, and the United States) and the international stage be crowded with influential actors seeking many of the same global goods, including energy, minerals, and food. This highly competitive environment will be ripe for conflict based on miscalculation, misinterpretation, or malice.

The demise of Soviet Communism led many to expect the long-running ideological debates about the best way to organize societies to fade into history. In the 1990s, many in the West took up Francis Fukuyama's banner to proclaim the "end of history" and the dawning of an era in which liberal-democratic political systems with capitalist,

¹⁰ For example, scientists in 2002 created a live polio virus from scratch using "chemicals and publicly available information," leading the president of the American Society for Virology to observe that a rogue lab with just two skilled workers could probably create a deadly virus such as Ebola. See Andrew Pollack, "Traces of Terror: The Science; Scientists Create a Live Polio Virus," *New York Times* (12 July 2002): 1.

¹¹ Early thinking on this issue can be found in Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1997): 183–197.

¹² *Global Economic Prospects 2007: Managing the Next Wave of Globalization* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2007): xi–xii.

¹³ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin, 2005): 169.

¹⁴ Joseph Nye, "Recovering American Leadership," *Survival* (February/March 2008): 57.

market-based economies would be the system of choice.¹⁵ Political and economic freedom in the 1990s marched strongly forward, with the percentage of nations rated “free” by Freedom House climbing from 61 in 1989 to 90 in 2008.¹⁶

Today, however, much of the world remains unsure about democracy and market liberalization. The financial crises of the 1990s in Argentina, Mexico, Russia, and Southeast Asia are generally seen as the fault of the Washington Consensus policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Worldviews that conflict with the liberal, Western paradigm for progress are now proliferating, including free-market authoritarianism in China, illiberal democracy in Russia, and resurgent populist leftism in places such as Venezuela. These latest trends represent regression and suggest that “the two-centuries-old struggle between political liberalism and autocracy has reemerged.”¹⁷ The West finds that helping victims of genocide in Darfur or allowing Kosovars to choose independence draws significant resistance from states concerned about the implications of international precedents for their own sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Third, transnational threats caused by human activity, from climate change to pandemic disease to environmental degradation, are taking on an unprecedented urgency. Climate change is increasingly seen to be the most significant and complex of these threats, with the potential to massively disrupt human society.¹⁸

Other risks include pandemic disease, food shortages and the danger of zero-sum competitions for scarce energy, water and natural resources. All of these can spark conflict and most are interrelated; good efforts in one area can inadvertently lead to worse outcomes in another. Most of these trends will disproportionately affect poor people and nations.¹⁹

This year, the world faces an unprecedented and unexpected crisis of food affordability, which has already sparked riots in dozens of countries.²⁰ Driven by everything from increased ethanol use (which diverts grain from the food system into fuels and drives up grain prices) to rising living standards in Asia, the Food and Agricultural Organization’s food price index jumped 40 percent in 2007.²¹ According to World Bank President Robert Zoellick, the trend “could potentially push 100 million people in low-income countries deeper into poverty.”²² Diseases are emerging and being transmitted at unprecedented rates through globalized food distribution and travel, with more than 1,100 epidemic events occurring globally between 2002 and 2007.²³ Demand for energy and other natural resources continues to skyrocket. In March 2000, OPEC adopted a \$22–\$28 per barrel price band. Today, oil is more than \$120 per barrel, causing unprecedented strain on industry, municipalities, and households. Countries such as China are tempted to lock in supplies with exclusive contracts from supplier countries, distorting market forces that could otherwise help lower prices.²⁴

¹⁵ Francis Fukuyama’s book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Harper, 1992) built on an essay he wrote for the *National Interest* in 1989. Though criticized by authors such as Robert Kagan and William Kristol as naïve, Fukuyama did not ignore the challenges to actually spreading liberal market democracy around the world.

¹⁶ *Freedom in the World 2008: Selected Data*, (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2008): 13, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw08launch/FIW08Tables.pdf>.

¹⁷ Robert Kagan, “End of Dreams, Return of History” *Policy Review* (September 2007). Also see Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2008).

¹⁸ See Robert Art’s chapter in this volume for an argument in favor of including climate change and environmental security as an important national interest. Washington, D.C.

¹⁹ For example, between 2001 and 2004, climate-related disasters impacted 1 in 1,500 residents of rich (OECD) nations and 1 in 19 residents of poor countries. See *Human Development Report 2007–2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2007): 16.

²⁰ Vivienne Walt, “The World’s Growing Food-Price Crisis,” *Time* (27 February 2008).

²¹ Joachim von Braun, “Rising Food Prices: What Should be Done?” (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research, 2008), available at <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/bp/bp001.asp>.

²² World Bank, “Food Price Crisis Imperils 100 Million in Poor Countries,” (15 April 2008), <http://go.worldbank.org/5W9U9WTJBO> (press release).

²³ *World Health Report 2007: A Safer Future: Global Public Health Security in the 21st Century* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2007), http://www.who.int/whr/2007/whr07_en.pdf.

²⁴ For a discussion of China’s state-backed efforts to secure oil, see Peter C. Evans and Erica S. Downs, “Untangling China’s Quest for Oil through State-backed Financial Deals,” *Brookings Institution Policy Brief* No. 154 (May 2006) http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2006/05china_evans/pb154.pdf. Also see the March 15, 2008 issue of *The Economist* for multiple articles exploring China’s expanding oil interests in Africa and elsewhere.

In sum, the diffusion of power to non-state actors, the relative changes in nation-state power through increasing multipolarity in the international system, and growing transnational crises emerging from the interface between human activity and nature create a complex web of sub-national, multinational, and transnational challenges for which America needs a new worldview and a new way forward. Although states remain the most powerful actors on the world stage, the key to success in this complex environment will be to understand the frequency, intensity, and possible simultaneity of problems and to build coalitions to tackle them.²⁵ Investment must support prevention when possible and response and recovery when necessary. Stopping a pandemic or countering violent extremism requires effective cooperation and collaboration between local, national, and international actors, both public and private. Nations will need flexibility and the ability to work effectively with a range of actors, not just other nation-states. International cooperation to manage and mitigate these crises will require a new type of sustained global leadership.

STRATEGIC SHORTFALL

So far in the post-Cold War era, American strategic thinking has fallen short, although the rhetoric has been relatively consistent. In 1994, President Bill Clinton said, “We face a contest as old as history — a struggle between freedom and tyranny . . . between tolerance and isolation. It is a fight between those who would build free societies governed by laws and those who would impose their will by force.”²⁶ He would be echoed later

by Bush’s first national security strategy, which promised that America would “use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world.”²⁷ Beyond this focus on democracy and free markets, American strategies have consistently discussed threats from rising powers such as China, terrorists, and other non-state actors, and occasionally transnational threats such as climate change.²⁸

This sounds fairly comprehensive, but these post-Cold War strategies did not attempt to prioritize across issues or balance investment. The assumption has been that everything is important and that the United States could do it all. The assumption has been that we would make the right investments, but the evidence has been quite to the contrary.

After 9/11, the consequences of having no true grand strategy became acute. The new driving imperatives to prevent threats before they materialized and actively address the conditions that can give rise to extremism set the United States on a course embracing a so-called freedom agenda supported by a doctrine of preventive war. This post-9/11 agenda has brought America to the edge of strategic exhaustion. After years of multiple back-to-back tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. ground forces will require years to fully recover and reset, and are too stretched to readily respond to an unforeseen contingency.²⁹ American strategic attention has become myopically focused on

²⁵ Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2008): 44–56.

²⁶ Bill Clinton, “Remarks to the 49th Session of the United Nations General Assembly” (3 October 1994). This quote was also included in “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement” (February 1996).

²⁷ See “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” (September 2002).

²⁸ The 1996 and 2006 national security strategies both address terrorism and great powers. Climate change is addressed in the 1996 national security strategy, while the 2006 document refers to energy security and “clean development” without specifically mentioning climate change.

²⁹ For example, outgoing Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody testified in March that “[t]he current demand for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the sustainable supply and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies” in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support (13 March 2008):1, available at <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2008/April/Cody%2004-01-08.pdf>.

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Iraq. Meanwhile, the U.S. current account deficit is expected to be more than six percent of GDP, continuing to put pressure on the dollar and drive inflation. Economic anxiety is driving xenophobia and protectionism on both sides of the American political spectrum.

“We may be too secure in both our sense of power and our sense of virtue to be ready to engage in a patient chess game with the recalcitrant forces of historic destiny,” Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in 1952. “We could bring calamity upon ourselves and the world by forgetting that even the most powerful nations and even the wisest planners of the future remain themselves creatures as well as creators of the historical process.”³⁰ Today, the world doubts both the wisdom and the competence of American leadership. The idea that the United States is crusading for the best interests of all is met with increasing cynicism. In acting as if U.S. power could control rather than just shape world events, we have diminished our influence.

America cannot retreat from an unmanageable world and should not stop trying to advance its vision of free, democratic societies. Without the United States’ active involvement, the new global environment

will become even more divisive and likely more violent. Whatever the degree of its overstretch, the United States is not in the imperial peril of ancient Persia or facing decline like the 20th-century British empire. U.S. power is strained but still largely intact.³¹ U.S. grand strategy must understand the limits of that power while still meeting our responsibility to lead.

Striking this balance will take patience and focused attention. In the absence of a single overarching enemy around which a grand strategy can be constructed, today’s challenge is akin to navigating treacherous waters. Grand strategy in such an environment requires choosing a direction and destination and being prepared for sudden storms, avoiding them when we can and weathering them when we must. The direction that America chooses should be based on its values and interests.

In the American Interest

In this extremely challenging security environment, the United States must get back to basics, determining the core conditions necessary for national security and prosperity. We must once again identify what matters most to the American people and their future well being. This process of reconsidering our fundamental national interests can also suggest the type of world that would best safeguard and advance them. Coming to a national consensus on U.S. interests and the global environment we desire are vital first steps toward a sustainable and successful grand strategy.

Although the United States has many interests, it is useful to focus on the most fundamental: security and freedom at home, economic prosperity, and access to the global commons.³²

³⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952): 134.

³¹ For a detailed discussion on this topic see Fareed Zakaria, “The Future of American Power: How America Can Survive the Rise of the Rest,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2008): 18–43.

³² We define the global commons as those physical or virtual areas that belong to no one state and that provide access to much of the globe. This is paraphrased from Barry Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security* (Summer 2003): 5–46. See also Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1890).

SECURITY AND FREEDOM AT HOME

The United States' primary interest is the basic security of the American people, the American homeland, and the freedoms that define who we are. Protecting Americans has always meant preventing violent attacks on American soil and averting significant disruptions to their daily lives. Whereas in the past U.S. security has been thought of in largely physical terms, in today's world the most imminent types of disruption could besiege our markets, our infrastructure, or our environment. The American way of life increasingly depends on the integrity of our communication systems, the reliability of our infrastructure, and a benign climate. Most fundamentally, Americans must be free to move, think, speak, and act according to their aspirations and consciences. For this reason, the United States' vital interest in safeguarding the American population, the homeland, and its public spaces today means not only preventing direct attacks on American soil but also protecting the systems and civil liberties on which Americans rely in their daily lives.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The foundation supporting the American way of life is the domestic economy. An economy that provides abundant jobs, goods, and services also improves standards of living by steadily improving the shelter, sustenance, education, and opportunities available for individuals and families. At a minimum, the domestic economy should provide American citizens with what President Franklin D. Roosevelt termed "freedom from want."³³

Yet, the domestic economy provides more than just basic survival. Economic prosperity advances social prosperity, facilitating improvements to quality of life by generating resources for research, development, innovation in the arts and sciences, and new enterprises. Economic

strength underwrites national power by enabling investment in a strong national defense. A durable economic system also provides a security net for times of national peril. When the demand for resources increases unexpectedly—as in times of war, disruption, or natural disaster—a strong economy has the surge capacity sufficient to respond to the needs of the country. America's economy must be diverse and durable enough to withstand the effects of natural disasters, changes in markets, fluctuations in currency and trade, and other variations in the international economic system.

Thus, the United States has a fundamental interest in protecting and advancing the vitality of an economy that is robust, resilient, and regenerative.

ACCESS TO THE GLOBAL COMMONS

The American economy does not exist simply within its own borders. Critical goods—from energy resources to important minerals and agricultural products—can be prevented from going to market if vital shipping routes, by which 90 percent of global commerce travels, are closed or rendered unsafe. Shares of American companies are traded at home and in stock exchanges around the world, all of which are sensitive to market shocks caused by changes in the supply of critical resources and goods. A complex communications network relying largely on satellites facilitates this international market system.³⁴ A loss of internet service in one country could freeze global economic activity in its tracks. In short, the health and vitality of the American economy depend on access to the global commons: to the seas, air, space, and cyberspace. Because trade routes, markets, and resources play such an essential role in U.S. economic well-being, prosperity, and security, the United States has a vital national interest in maintaining reliable access to those commons.³⁵

³³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms," President's Annual Address to Congress, (6 January 1941).

³⁴ Steven Lee Meyers, "Look Out Below, the Arms Race in Space May Be On," *New York Times* (10 March 2008): 3.

³⁵ See Posen, "Command of the Commons."

IN PURSUIT OF U.S. INTERESTS

If our core national interests are understood to be security and freedom at home, economic prosperity, and access to the global commons, maintaining international stability must also be a critical goal. In an interdependent world, instability in far-flung regions can have direct and dire impacts on the security of our homeland, the health of our economy, and the freedoms that Americans enjoy. Indeed, protecting and advancing America's basic interests in an integrating world compels U.S. leaders to widen their strategic aperture and recognize the interdependence of America's interests with those of others. Once achieved, it becomes apparent that U.S. security requires the cooperation of others to deal effectively with threats ranging from

“The world we want to live in is one in which the forces of integration are able to compete with the forces of fragmentation, and have the chance to triumph.”

transnational terrorism to WMD proliferation. U.S. economic prosperity relies on the productivity of other nations and an international system of free trade and investment. Moreover, maintaining secure access to the global commons requires the contributions of countless partners around the globe, including governments and the private sector. This, then, is the paradox of American power today:

possessing unparalleled capacity to coerce, the United States can only protect and advance its core national interests through cooperation.³⁶

Choosing a Destination

We live in a world that is rife with threats but also rich with opportunity. The currents of change, accelerated by the phenomenon of globalization, challenge us to protect our interests but also to articulate a vision of the world we want to see over the next few decades.

Every American leader has presented the public with an idealistic view of the world as it could be and of America's role in that world, so consistently that these aspirations are in danger of being dismissed as clichés. There are countless examples of sweeping rhetoric and striking imagery, articulating America's role as a beacon of liberty, a defender of freedom, and a shining city on a hill. Leaders have argued for a world that is free from want or fear, unoppressed by tyranny, and blessed by tolerance, prosperity, justice, and peace. There is value in these concepts; they are the same concepts that America's founding fathers believed in, and they are the ideals that bind us together as a nation. Any honest assessment of American goals and purpose must recognize that we are committed as a nation to these fundamental concepts.

However, rhetoric is only a first step. We must look further than simply reiterating our most valued principles. We must decide how we want to see those principles translated into the real world in a way that matters to the everyday experience of people and their governments. In so doing, the country must also recognize that an excess of idealism is as dangerous to the American vision as a dearth of idealism would be. We must accompany our aspirations with pragmatism, avoiding hubris and recognizing that our ability to achieve this vision will sometimes be limited by circumstance.

³⁶Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

The world we want to live in is one in which the forces of integration are able to compete with the forces of fragmentation and have the chance to triumph. We want to work toward a world that grows ever more secure, not less; ever more prosperous, not less; ever more free, not less; ever more stable, not less. We want a world of open markets in which there is a common perception of the value of globalization instead of movement towards protectionism and economic restriction. We want a world in which the United States can engage in healthy competition with other nations without overlooking the possibility of compromise or the promise of cooperation. We want a world of representative governments and the rule of law in which people can trust in their leaders and participate in their governments. We want a world of humanitarian conviction in which the international community can be entrusted with the responsibility to protect at-risk populations should states fail to do so. We want a world in which America is seen again as the last best hope for freedom and democracy and leads by example rather than coercion. We want a world in which American legitimacy is restored in the eyes of the global community so that U.S. allies feel comfortable, even inspired, to work with us in partnership. We want a world of responsible stakeholders in which the global community shares the burdens of dealing with challenges such as climate change and resource depletion that affect us all.

This is the desired destination that should guide a new American grand strategy.

Charting a New Course

Securing America's interests in the 21st century requires a global perspective and an outward-looking, active global strategy. It is all but impossible for America to adopt an inward-looking strategy that embraces isolationist tendencies. America cannot "return to normalcy" in 2009 any more than it could have in the aftermath of World War II or the Cold War.³⁷ The United States' relationship to the rest of the world necessitates a strategy that maintains a degree of basic order in the international system.³⁸

What is unique to America's global position is the fact that U.S. national interests overlap substantially with what might be called global public goods, those basic structures of the international system that if not attended to adequately will threaten stability and exacerbate hardship.³⁹

America's core interests are also global interests; that they coincide with deeply-held American values is one of the best advantages the United States has in trying to translate these interests into policy. We must recognize the inherent advantages of the international system currently in existence.⁴⁰ The system itself is so conducive to U.S. needs and interests that renewal and sustainment of that system should be one of our primary aims.

In this broader, global context, the basic parameters of how best to protect and advance American interests become clear.

³⁷ See Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Beyond the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1989–1990) for the classic argument in favor of returning to "normalcy."

³⁸ Much of this section was inspired by Nye's, "Recovering American Leadership," *Survival* (February/March 2008): 55–68. Also see Nye, "Toward a Liberal Realist Foreign Policy," *Harvard Magazine* (March/April 2008): 36–38, 84.

³⁹ Nye writes: "Three public goods that the United Kingdom [in the 19th century] took a leadership role in securing were the maintenance of the balance of power among the major states in Europe; the promotion of an open international economic system; and the preservation of the international commons such as the freedom of the seas" ("Recovering American Leadership": 64).

⁴⁰ See both Sarah Sewall and G. John Ikenberry's chapters in this volume for similar arguments on the centrality of the current international system to America's enduring interests.

First, the defense of the homeland and the protection of civil liberties at home require engagement with the world. In an era characterized in part by what Zakaria has called the “democratization of violence,” the United States cannot rely exclusively on borders and barriers for protection.⁴¹ Indeed, a critical pillar of securing America against terrorism and the potential use of weapons of mass destruction is our expansive network of alliances and partnerships. From partnerships with foreign intelligence and law-enforcement communities to establishing global standards for port security and international shipping, homeland security is a global mission shared by every modern state.⁴²

Second, America’s economic prosperity is predicated on a healthy global economy. America can no better shield its economy from the challenges that globalization has wrought than it can insulate its people from the global reach of pandemic disease and climate change. Thus, it is in America’s interest to promote an open international economic system that is based on shared rule sets that are promoted and legitimated by international economic institutions.⁴³ The answer to America’s current economic anxieties is not to increase protectionism but to adapt to and become more competitive in the global market. America’s economic growth is best pursued by playing an active leadership role in helping to sustain a robust and open international economic system.

Third, America has a vital interest in securing and maintaining access to the global commons, those critical sea, air, space, and cyberspace dimensions within which most global communication and trade occurs. Issues as diverse as freedom

of the seas, climate change, the militarization of space, and common internet protocols are all areas in which America and other great powers have overlapping and usually compatible interests. As the process of globalization continues to increase interdependence among nations, America must take a leadership role to ensure that access to the global commons remains a public good.

Finally, just as America has a stake in ensuring that key regions of the world remain stable, all of its allies are similarly motivated. Preventing wars that risk fundamentally destabilizing important regions of the world is a shared imperative. Although balances of power in particular areas change and evolve over time, the United States and other great powers have a shared interest in preventing rising tensions, miscalculation, and the use of force. For example, irrespective of China’s ambitions to pursue a path towards preeminence in Asia, it shares with the United States a need for stability. Shifting balances of power need not necessarily produce unstable or dangerous outcomes. America’s sustained commitment to stability in key regions can be a basis for cooperation while allowing natural competition.⁴⁴

So what does this imply for American grand strategy? Nye recently argued that considering the relationship of American power to global public goods helps to unveil “an important strategic principle that could help America reconcile its national interests with a broader global perspective and assert effective leadership.”⁴⁵ Thus, while America clearly has a much longer and more detailed set of interests that shift and evolve over time and with changing circumstances, at the most

⁴¹ See Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: Norton, 2003): 16.

⁴² See Stephen Flynn, “America the Resilient,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2008): 2–8, and Flynn, “The Neglected Home Front,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2004): 20–33. Also see Office of Homeland Security, “The National Strategy for Homeland Security” (July 2002): 59–61, http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/book/nat_strat_hls.pdf. In this respect, the current Container Security Initiative represents the type of international engagement necessary.

⁴³ See Kenneth Scheve and Matthew Slaughter, “A New Deal for Globalization,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007): 34–47.

⁴⁴ See Sarah Sewall’s chapter in this volume for a detailed argument in favor of conserving a stable interstate system.

⁴⁵ Nye, “Recovering American Leadership”: 63. Also see James Steinberg, “Real Leaders Do Soft Power: Learning the Lessons of Iraq,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2008): 162.

basic level the United States has vital interests that are commensurate with shared global goods. This bequeaths to America both great responsibility and an imperative to take a leadership role in the world.

SUSTAINING THE GLOBAL SYSTEM

It is time for America to renew its longstanding bipartisan commitment to helping sustain the pillars of the modern international system. American grand strategy in the early 21st century should be centered on the promotion of shared interests and global goods that can form the basis of a renewed and more enlightened role for American leadership. A strategy premised on promoting global goods is aimed at something far deeper than the daily crises or storms that tend to preoccupy, drive, and in recent years distract U.S. foreign policy. A grand strategy of sustainment would reconnect with the deep historical currents of America's interaction with the world.⁴⁶ Supporting the pillars of the international system appeals not only to pragmatic imperatives to protect and advance American interests through the application of strength; sustaining an inherently liberal international framework appeals to enduring American pillars of statecraft that stretch back to the earliest days of the republic.⁴⁷

A new grand strategy should embrace both continuity and change. Like America's Cold War-era strategy of containment, a modern strategy should recognize that America is at its best when it is

promoting a set of interests that are shared global goods: an open global economy, stability in key regions, and fair access to the global commons. After all, America's Cold War strategy really consisted of two core pillars: containment and sustainment. The United States utilized all elements of its national power in *containing* what George Kennan called Russia's "expansive tendencies," but at the same time took a leadership role in building up and then *sustaining* an essentially liberal international system with rule sets that played to the strengths of America and its allies and put pressure on its adversaries.⁴⁸ Thus, U.S. Cold War strategy was as much about promoting the growth of a stable international system as it was about confronting an enemy, relying as much on a strong and competitive American economy as it did on traditional tools of military power.⁴⁹ Such themes apply to the modern era, and indeed are even more relevant. As James Steinberg recently argued, "Far from justifying a radical change in policy, the evolution of the international system since the collapse of the Soviet Union actually reinforced the validity of the liberal internationalist approach."⁵⁰ A renewed focus on sustaining a system that supports global public goods will again put steady pressure on adversaries who would revise or upend the vision that America shares with much of the world.

Moreover, like containment, sustainment is a strategy based on a deep faith in America. When we get grand strategy right, time is on America's side.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See the papers by G. John Ikenberry and Frederick Kagan in this volume.

⁴⁷ In addition to Frederick Kagan's chapter in this volume, see Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006) and Walter McDougall, *Promised Land*, Crusader State (New York: Mariner, 1997).

⁴⁸ See George Kennan ["X"], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947).

⁴⁹ Indeed, strengthening America's economy as a means to promote global economic growth was a key principle of America's Cold War strategy — a refrain echoed from Eisenhower to Reagan. See Ernest May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). Also see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ Steinberg, "Real Leaders Do Soft Power: Learning the Lessons of Iraq": 159.

⁵¹ This is a clear difference with the type of approach made on key issues by the Bush administration, epitomized by Vice President Dick Cheney's assertion during the build-up to the war against Iraq that "time is not on our side." See Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "Remarks by the Vice-President to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention" (26 August 2002) available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>.

*“A strategy premised
on sustaining the global
system recognizes
that in the modern age,
America cannot
be a loner — it must
be a leader.”*

While it is true that dangers abound in a globalizing world just as they did during the Cold War, two of the greatest dangers facing America today are overreaction and overextension.⁵² Indeed, one of the most profound errors of the Bush administration has been to put America’s strategic foundation at risk in the pursuit of a war in Iraq far removed from the goals of stability, economic openness, and access to the global commons.⁵³

A new strategy must recognize what Nye calls the “paradox of American power” — the world’s only superpower simply cannot lead the world alone.⁵⁴ A stable international system commensurate with U.S. interests requires a robust network of mutually reinforcing alliances and partnerships that extends and deepens the strength and thus the resiliency of the global system. America must focus on renewing key alliance structures in Europe and Asia as well as pursuing important changes and reform in international institutions such as the UN. American aloofness from and in some cases outright hostility toward international institutions and key alliances is a vice, not a virtue. America is

stronger and its actions are more legitimate when it works by, with, and through partners and allies.⁵⁵ A strategy premised on sustaining the global system recognizes that in the modern age America cannot be a loner — it must be a leader.

Such a strategy would not be revolutionary. In fact, there is little that is fundamentally new in a strategy emphasizing the very themes and currents that lie deep within American history and the bipartisan exercise of statecraft over many decades.⁵⁶ Reconnecting to core principles and basic interests can help reorient American strategy toward goals that are critical to our security, and thus serve as the basis for renewing and revitalizing the United States’ position as a global leader.

Finally, such a strategy can remind us that beyond the stormy seas that tend to preoccupy our attention, America has the ability to construct a strategy that can guide us toward calmer waters. The next administration, be it Republican or Democratic, needs to return to statecraft built on the recognition that stability, an open economic system, and secure and open global commons are manifestly in our interests. They not only play to our strengths but also help reinforce the foundations of American power upon which we can build U.S. security and spread shared values.

STRONG, PRAGMATIC, PRINCIPLED

This strategy embraces goals that have been consistent with American statecraft for decades. America must pursue these traditional goals from the basis of a strong strategic foundation. A new grand strategy must rest on three pillars: strength, pragmatism, and principle.

⁵²For historical context, see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987).

⁵³See Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2008).

⁵⁴See Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*.

⁵⁵See the chapters by Robert Art and Sarah Sewall for more discussion on why strong alliance structures are central to American interests.

⁵⁶See the chapter by Frederick Kagan in this volume.

America must be strong in order to sustain its role as a world leader in a century that will pose traditional problems such as interstate tensions, ethnic conflict, and economic competition as well as challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and resource competition. The basis for strength is derived from a robust economy as well as a strong military. The next president must focus on getting America's economic house back in order. Huge budget deficits derived from unsustainable spending need to be addressed, as does America's growing indebtedness to countries such as China.⁵⁷ Moreover, America's leadership role in the world requires a strong military able to operate and prevail across the full spectrum of conflict. U.S. military power needs to be organized and structured in order to secure the enduring interests that a sustainment strategy embraces. This includes maintaining strong air and naval forces sized and shaped to help keep the global commons open and secure while retaining the ability to dominate in conflicts that occur in contested zones on land and in coastal environments. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps will need to be strengthened after years of war and reset with the kinds of personnel, equipment, doctrine, training and education that will help ensure America's ability to prevail in complex 21st-century warfare.

A new grand strategy must embrace a pragmatism that will compel leaders to prioritize and allocate risk more prudently than in recent years. American leadership in the world does not mean we can do everything. Indeed, to believe that America can or should have complete freedom of action everywhere is to risk limiting our ability to act decisively anywhere. A more pragmatic strategy would tend to shun large-scale preventive military action and

reject theories of grand regional transformation via the armed export of democracy. In many ways, a new grand strategy should adopt a more restrained approach to the use of American hard power.⁵⁸ Five years into the war in Iraq, notions of democratic transformation sparked by preventive U.S. military action should be finally and firmly rejected. Embracing a strategy based on pragmatism would empower diplomats and policymakers to renew and strengthen American participation in key alliances, partnerships, and international institutions. Pragmatism does not mean embracing the status quo, but rather understanding that U.S. strength and security are reinforced when America accepts the limits of its ability to rapidly alter the international environment.

Finally, a grand strategy prioritizing strength and pragmatism has plenty of room for principle. In many ways, America's military strength and pragmatic approach to building a network of security and diplomatic networks during the Cold War allowed what Anne-Marie Slaughter has called "the idea that is America" to spread throughout the world.⁵⁹ Over the course of the Cold War, American ideals helped to create and sustain an increasingly liberal world order that helped to create, sustain, and reinforce an increasingly liberal world order that helped isolate the Soviet Union and accelerate its internal decay. A new grand strategy must pay attention to the maintenance of the foundations of American power precisely in order for our ideas of tolerance, justice, and democracy to spread. Amidst a resurgence of autocracy, the United States cannot ignore its role as an exemplar and supporter of freedom and liberty.

⁵⁷ See Government Accountability Office, "The Nation's Long-Term Fiscal Outlook: January Update," (January 2008), available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08591r.pdf>.

⁵⁸ See Barry Posen's chapter in this volume in addition to his article, "The Case for Restraint," *The American Interest* (November/December 2007): 7–17.

⁵⁹ See Slaughter, *The Idea that is America: Keeping Faith With Our Values in a Dangerous World* (New York: Basic Books, 2007). She concludes her book by arguing that America's "engagement with the world is built into the very core of who we are as a nation . . . It is an engagement borne of a conviction that liberty, democracy, equality, and justice are birthrights for *all* — not just all Americans."

A grand strategy centered on the promotion of global goods would therefore place a great degree of emphasis on revitalizing the pillars of American power that have served us well for generations: economic and military strength, robust alliances and partnerships based on pragmatism, and the value of America's ability to attract and inspire others through the embrace of principles both at home and abroad.⁶⁰

Renewing America's Security and Standing

In order for the next president to embark on a new grand strategy centered on pursuing global goods, he or she must focus on renewing America's global leadership. Grand strategy is a vision of how a nation should view and interact with the world—a vision that serves as a powerful declaration of American intent. A new administration will not only have to articulate such a vision but also take real steps to begin navigating in a new direction. At a time of great strategic inertia, both geopolitically and domestically, it will take leadership and a serious commitment to alter the United States' course. What follows are some key features of what a new administration should attempt in 2009 and beyond.

REVISING PRIORITIES AND REBALANCING RISK

One of the most dangerous features of America's current position is the increasingly real threat of strategic exhaustion. The lack of a unifying grand strategy has contributed to a steady proliferation of security commitments that, over time and especially in recent years, has begun to undermine America's freedom of action. It has become ever more difficult in an integrating world to make

hard choices on where to place strategic emphasis and where to accept and manage a degree of risk. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen has often talked about the need to rebalance global strategic risk.⁶¹ This is a question beyond simply allocating finite military resources. It is a problem of setting clear national priorities, striking at the heart of what happens when a nation persists without a clear grand strategy. A new administration would be wise to undertake a comprehensive review of its security commitments in light of where America should be in the future, not simply of what it takes to balance risk in the present.⁶²

The next administration should quickly and publicly reorder America's priorities commensurate with the key aims of stability, economic health, and access to the global commons. This would be more than just rhetoric. Goals in Iraq and Afghanistan should be rearticulated and the maximalist language used in past years should be replaced with the pragmatism that both wars demand. In Iraq, this does not mean abandoning the hope of a democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbors over the long term, but rather an acceptance that America's objectives must be more limited in the near- to mid-term: preventing a return to the kind of civil war dynamics seen in 2006, preventing violence in Iraq from destabilizing the broader region, and preventing al Qaeda and its affiliates from maintaining safe havens for the projection of terrorism outside of Iraq.⁶³ Sustainable stability in Iraq needs to be the central desired end state, driving how policymakers consider and evaluate

⁶⁰ See Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2007).

⁶¹ See "Posture Statement of Michael G. Mullen Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Committee on Senate Armed Services" (6 February 2008), available at <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2008/February/Mullen%2002-06-08.pdf>. Also see "First Public Address by Admiral Michael Mullen, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," Center for a New American Security (25 October 2007), available at <http://www.cnas.org/en/cev/?17>. Finally, in a meeting with editors and reporters of the *Military Times* family of publications, Mullen said: "It's a very, very challenging time right now, very uncertain, very unpredictable. There's lots going on in other places of the world. And we are a global force. We've got global responsibilities, and tied to that [is] engagement, and deterrence and dissuasion, those kinds of things around the world. We try to balance that, and that's more of a long-term view in terms of what's important as well." See "Transcript of Editorial Board with Admiral Mike Mullen," *DefenseNews.com* (28 November 2007).

⁶² See the conclusion of the edited volume for a discussion on what a comprehensive strategic reassessment might include.

⁶³ See Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, "No Genocide, No al Qaeda, No Division of Iraq," *Democracy* (Fall 2007): 27–31.

strategic options. In Afghanistan, a strategy emphasizing stability and rebalancing risk would likely allow a new president to argue in favor of increasing efforts to combat a resurgent Taliban, implementing better-resourced and more precisely targeted development and governance efforts, and continuing to work with NATO in a steady, long-term effort to consolidate a free Afghanistan.⁶⁴ The outcome of the conflict in Afghanistan is also central to a sustainment strategy, as it will impact important regional dynamics involving China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and key Central Asian states. A new strategic course that better links global interests to the outcomes of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan would be an improvement over one couched primarily in terms of U.S. interests, and thinking of outcomes in terms of specific interests is far more preferable than using terms such as “victory” or “defeat,” which tend to invite partisanship and hyperbole.

Revising priorities would also feature prominently in a new approach to the struggle against violent Islamist extremism. A new administration cannot continue to perpetuate an American grand strategy built around the threat of al Qaeda and the so-called war on terror. Such a myopic focus has substantially weakened the United States’ strategic position. This is not to argue that keeping a steady focus on bin Laden and his followers throughout the world is somehow not in our interest — it surely is. Yet, a new strategy must accept that while terrorism is clearly a threat, it does not and cannot suffice as an organizing principle for America’s role and purpose in the world. The very fact that al Qaeda has been able to completely reorient American strategy to the detriment of our own interests is a testament to the imperative

“A new strategy must accept that while terrorism is clearly a threat, it does not and cannot suffice as an organizing principle for America’s role and purpose in the world.”

to rethink our approach. As suggested by Philip Gordon, real victory against al Qaeda will “come not when Washington and its allies kill or capture all terrorists or potential terrorists but when the ideology terrorists espouse is discredited, when their tactics are seen to have failed,” and when the risk of terrorism is reduced to such a level “that it does not significantly affect average citizens’ daily lives, preoccupy their thoughts, or provoke overreaction.”⁶⁵ A strategy that pursues American interests through the pursuit of global public goods would not only constitute an important shift that allows for the construction of an appealing narrative regarding America’s purpose in the world, but it would also help ensure that the alliances that the United States depends on for ongoing counterterrorism efforts can be maintained over the long term.⁶⁶

Finally, the process of revising priorities and rebalancing risk should force a reexamination of preventive war as a key feature of American strategy. The Bush administration’s 2002 National Security

⁶⁴ See James Jones and Thomas Pickering, *Afghanistan Study Group Report: Revitalizing Our Efforts, Rethinking Our Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of the Presidency, 2008).

⁶⁵ See Philip Gordon, “Can the War on Terror Be Won?” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2007): 54, and *Winning the Right War* (New York: Times Books, 2007).

⁶⁶ Marc Sageman writes in *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008):126, that “because the threat of al Qaeda is self-limiting in terms of both structural capability and appeal, homeland security is best accomplished through a strategy of bringing to justice real terrorists, containing potential terrorists, and exercising restraint with respect to the Muslim community. Only then will the leaderless jihad expire, poisoned by its own toxic message.”

Strategy argued in favor of adapting “the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries,” and concluded that “in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world’s most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.”⁶⁷ While America, like any other nation, retains the right to act preemptively against state and non-state actors that pose imminent threats, the application of this logic in order to justify the use of force to *prevent* states who may at some future point threaten America can be highly dangerous and should be removed from its place of prominence in U.S. strategy. However, there is nothing incorrect or illogical in focusing on how the exercise of prudent statecraft can prevent threats from fully materializing. Early use of various tools of power to shape the international environment and prevent conflict or crisis — that is, acting early to keep small problems from becoming larger and costlier ones — should be a central strategic theme in a grand strategy focused on sustaining the foundations of the global system.

REVITALIZING ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

It is impossible and undesirable for America to maintain an international system alone, and advancing global collective goods will require an approach that in nearly every case will involve allies and partners. From more traditional conflicts and humanitarian operations to the challenges posed by energy security, nuclear proliferation, climate change, and homeland security, the United States will need to rely on strong partnerships to confront complex 21st-century challenges. Any new approach must increase the priority attached to ensuring strong alliances.

First, the transatlantic alliance remains vital for American security. This historic alliance has stood the test of time and must be renewed. While Afghanistan has and will continue to pose great challenges for NATO, the conflict must not be allowed to strain the alliance to the breaking point. Though working within NATO can sometimes pose challenges for the United States, particularly in high-intensity and long-duration military operations, on balance the benefits far outweigh the costs. It is also important to recognize just how far NATO has come in a relatively brief period of time. With a few notable exceptions, Europe’s collective strategic culture is undergoing a transformative shift from one based principally on continental defense against Soviet land forces to one that sees out-of-area expeditionary operations as a core mission. Clearly, while the pace of this transition is slow, halting, and frustrating to many, the very fact that NATO has come so far so fast should be celebrated rather than constantly criticized. As Robert Kaplan has written, “because NATO cannot be an alliance of equals does not mean that it won’t play a significant role in our grand strategy: to create a web of global arrangements and liberal institutions that will allow America to gradually retreat from its costly and risky position of overbearing dominance.”⁶⁸ NATO was never an alliance of equals and for America to frame its diplomacy toward NATO as such may have done more harm than good. A robust transatlantic alliance remains a central pillar of a strong and resilient international system. Finally, the United States should be willing to accept some costs to gain the benefits of legitimacy and credibility generated by working within alliances.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (September 2002): 15.

⁶⁸ See Robert Kaplan, “Equal Alliance, Unequal Roles,” *New York Times* (27 March 2008): 27.

⁶⁹ For example, while perhaps it was not militarily necessary or even advisable to accept the offer of help from NATO in the earliest phase of combat in Afghanistan, the failure to generate buy-in from the alliance from the start has come back to haunt us. The notion of accepting a degree of strategic risk to gain the legitimacy and credibility that result from working with accepted alliance structures is a complex one, but as the wars in Iraq and in Afghanistan have shown, legitimacy and credibility are critical dimensions in 21st-century conflict.

Second, as the last decade has made clear, the balance of power in Asia is shifting, and America must adapt if it is to retain the ability to shape strategic outcomes in the region.⁷⁰ India's and China's rise as powerful global actors constitute the most important structural developments in the 21st-century international system. Both countries are vital strategic pillars in Asia, and helping both integrate further into the global economic system while balancing the inevitable internal tensions that stem from their rapid ascent will require subtle and effective American statecraft. A new grand strategy should therefore consider how to deal with a rising China, enhance important bilateral relationships with India, Japan, and South Korea, and become more involved in key Asian institutions.⁷¹

Sustained long-term engagement with Asia should remain a key pillar of American strategy. U.S. participation in Asian alliance structures needs to be broadened and deepened in the years ahead. America currently relies principally on bilateral security and economic alliances to pursue its interest in maintaining its role as Asia's decisive strategic actor.⁷² Over time, however, and particularly as trade with China dominates regional economic dynamics, this system will come under increasing strain. The United States has a great interest in ensuring that the rise of China continues without fundamentally weakening the stability of the region or the security and prosperity of key American allies such as Japan and South Korea. However, relying simply on military alliances designed to contain or constrain Chinese growth carries with it the seeds of miscalculation and potential conflict. Nye has argued that "the belief in the inevitability of

conflict [with China] can become one of its main causes. Each side, believing it will end up at war with the other, makes reasonable military preparations which are then read by the other side as confirmation of its worst fears."⁷³

Moreover, the United States' deepening strategic relationship with a rising India needs continued attention. India is potentially the most important new partner for the United States in Asia. The Bush administration deserves credit for continuing the push to engage India in a stronger bilateral relationship that recognizes its importance as a strategic partner. On key regional issues—such as Iran's belligerence, instability in Pakistan, and the continued need for engagement in Afghanistan—cooperation between Washington and New Delhi will increase prospects for success. Much to the frustration of American policymakers, sharing democratic governance with New Delhi does not guarantee easy or productive relations. India is taking a *realpolitik* approach to regional relations—for example, engaging heavily with Burma in order to balance Chinese influence with the military junta—and has good relations with Iran. Domestic politics in India has grounded Washington's pioneering effort to offer a civilian nuclear deal to New Delhi. America needs to continue to invest in the relationship with India despite frustrations and disagreements.

Across the board, from pan-Asian economic initiatives to multilateral security arrangements, if America is to maintain influence in a region undergoing tremendous growth and change, the price of influence is participation.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

⁷¹ For differing views on America's strategy in Asia, see Victor Cha, "Winning Asia: Washington's Untold Success Story," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2007): 98–113, and Jason Shaplen and James Laney, "Washington's Eastern Sunset: The Decline of U.S. Power in Northeast Asia," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2007): 82–97.

⁷² See Daniel Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2007): 79–94. This so-called "hub and spoke" system of bilateral alliances and forward deployed military forces remains the foundation of America's strategy in Asia.

⁷³ See Nye, "The Challenge of China," in *How to Make America Safe: New Politics for National Security*, ed. Stephen Van Evera (Cambridge: Tobin Project, 2006): 73–78.

⁷⁴ See Hitoshi Tanaka, *Japan and Asia in Transition* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2007).

Moreover, in order to sustain an international system vital to global interests, America will need to take a leadership role in the construction of new and innovative institutions and partnerships optimized for the 21st century. For example, the Indian Ocean is destined to become an important strategic zone in the coming decades. Vital sea lines of communication will need to be managed as China, India, the United States, and others vie for influence and secure passage.⁷⁵ Similarly, climate change is altering the geography of the far north, and what has come to be referred to as “the great melt” will soon result in an Arctic Ocean open to marine transportation in addition to natural-resource exploration and exploitation. Tensions are inevitable, and unless they are managed properly, the region could become a flash-point.⁷⁶ From pandemic disease, to strains on global food and water supplies, to proliferation, America should continue to seek out innovative ways to work by, with, and through states, NGOs, international institutions, and the private sector toward the pursuit of global solutions to global problems.

Finally, a new strategy should accept that state-to-state dynamics are in some dimensions overshadowed by the nongovernmental ties that bind. From corporate integration, to transnational movements, to nongovernmental charity and relief organizations, the structure of the international system is changing rapidly. In order for America to be competitive in a multidimensional world order, it must work with a much broader array of partners and employ multidimensional strategies.

RESTORING OUR STRENGTH

The next president must focus on restoring America’s strength. The prosecution of a grand

strategy for the long haul depends on strong, effective, and resilient tools of statecraft. Years of war have put corrosive strains on America’s all-volunteer military, and years of neglect have atrophied America’s non-military tools of statecraft. Moreover, key questions regarding how a new administration should balance global risk and what this means for the United States’ presence around the world need to be considered in the context of both current commitments and the preparation for an uncertain future.

A pressing and immediate need for a new administration will be to deal both with the profound strain on America’s military forces and with the related need to rebuild sufficient non-military tools of statecraft. Addressing the strain on U.S. ground forces in particular will require honesty about the risks incurred by continuing to keep the preponderance of Army and Marine Corps combat power deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan at unsustainable levels. Moreover, it will require making difficult choices regarding both defense priorities and resource allocation early in the Pentagon’s next budget cycle.

A grand strategy focused on stability in key regions, an open global economy, and predictable and fair access to the global commons will require paying close attention to the roles, missions and capabilities of America’s military. While the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have stretched U.S. ground forces to the breaking point, an equally worrisome long-term challenge is the need to address the important roles the Navy and Air Force will play in sustaining key features of the international system. “In an age when 90 percent of global commerce travels by sea, and 95 percent of our imports and exports from outside North

⁷⁵ For discussions along these lines, see Kaplan, *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts: The American Military in the Air, at Sea, and On the Ground* (New York: Random House, 2007).

⁷⁶ See Scott Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2008):63–77. Also see Kurt Campbell, *The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Global Climate Change* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2007), and John Podesta and Peter Ogden, “The Security Implications of Climate Change,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2007–08): 115–138.

America do the same (even as that trade is set to double by 2020), and when 75 percent of the world's population is clustered within 200 miles of the sea," Kaplan argues, "the relative decline of our Navy is a big, dangerous fact to which our elites appear blind."⁷⁷ Similarly, America's growing dependence on space and cyberspace will pose equally imposing challenges as both mediums become increasingly important to the international economic architecture.

A grand strategy designed to preserve global goods will have implications not only for how the United States sizes and shapes its military forces but also for how it deploys and stations them overseas. A nation's global military posture reflects its basic strategic choices and which challenges it takes most seriously.⁷⁸ The United States has begun to shift from the forward-based garrison posture of the Cold War toward an emphasis on forward-deployed forces and expeditionary capabilities. Such shifts rely on new basing concepts in addition to a more responsive logistics and mobility infrastructure, and carry important strategic implications. As the United States adapts its global posture for the future, it is imperative that it take a more expansive view of what is needed and consider not only the immediate requirements of prosecuting a global campaign against violent extremism but also the longer-term requirements associated with sustaining stability, open markets and secure access to the global commons.⁷⁹ In this context, it seems clear that America should eschew basing significant ground forces in the Muslim world on a semi-permanent or permanent basis (à la Saudi Arabia in the 1990s and Iraq today) in

favor of a more expeditionary ground force posture complemented by a robust naval and air posture. The next president should ensure that any changes to where the United States stations forces, agreements in place with partner nations, and facilities built and maintained all stem from and support a grand strategic vision.

Moreover, in what has become a repeated refrain in recent years, America's non-military tools of statecraft need dramatic and far-reaching reform. Ironically, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has

"A grand strategy aimed at sustaining a stable global system will require robust and persistent investment across all tools of American statecraft."

been the most vocal about the need for civilian agencies to receive more resources, arguing in late 2007, "What is clear to me is that there is a need for a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security—diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development."⁸⁰ A grand strategy aimed at sustaining a stable global system will require robust and persistent investment across all tools of American

⁷⁷ Robert D. Kaplan, "America's Elegant Decline," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 2007): 104–116. Also see Kaplan's, *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts*.

⁷⁸ Indeed, as Andrew Krepinovich and Robert Work have argued: "If national strategy defines US *intent* in its approach toward global affairs and provides focus for American foreign policy, then the US global defense posture reflects the US *capability* to project military power beyond its borders and across transoceanic ranges in support of US national security policy objectives." See Andrew Krepinovich and Robert Work, *A New Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007): i.

⁷⁹ See Kurt Campbell and Celeste Ward, "New Battle Stations?" *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2003): 95–103.

⁸⁰ See Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), U.S. Department of Defense, "Landon Lecture: Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates" (26 November 2007), available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>.

statecraft. In particular, renewed focus on developing truly deployable civilian capacity should be a top priority—U.S. military services cannot and should not be the only tool of statecraft that can deploy and sustain operations in critical locales around the world.

RECLAIMING AND REHABILITATING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

The next president should maintain a focus on the state of democracy throughout the world. Unlike popular predictions during the 1990s, the contest between democracy and autocracy is far from over, and it is in America's interest to arrest what some have called a "democratic deficit."⁸¹ While it has become fashionable to criticize the Bush administration's "freedom agenda" and the promotion of democracy, such a focus should continue, provided it is grounded in the pillars of sustainment outlined above. It is also important to reject, as Fukuyama and Michael McFaul have argued, "the simple assumption that there is a zero-sum trade-off between these traditional security objectives and democracy promotion... Not all autocracies are or have been enemies of the United States, but every American enemy has been an autocracy."⁸² This means that when America takes a leadership role in pursuing common global goods, it does so while being clear about U.S. principles, values, and preferences for democratic change and good governance.

Such a focus should not make the mistake of infusing the promotion of democracy with the kind of ideological and thinly veiled hegemonic language that has tended both to highlight inevitable inconsistencies in American actions and to alienate people

around the world. This is a problem certainly not exclusive to the current Bush administration, but as the world continues to integrate and pay ever more attention to U.S. rhetoric, the costs of pronouncing American exceptionalism increase. Promoting democracy is not about regime change, but the long-term improvement of societies at a pace and of a nature that is far removed from particular short-term American security preferences. The promotion of democracy and good governance is a theme in U.S. foreign policy that has roots stretching to the earliest days of the republic. To turn away from such an idea as, in part, a visceral reaction against the Bush administration would be a grave error.⁸³

REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE

A strategy embracing the need to sustain the international system recognizes that America is at its best when it serves as an exemplar of liberty, democracy and the rule of law. This image was central to America's victory in the Cold War, and it has been severely tarnished in recent years, as the fear and paranoia that followed the horror of 9/11 has led to Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, rendition, and torture.⁸⁴ While it is true that many of our enemies would give no quarter to American prisoners, and while plenty of states employ depraved standards, the United States can and must be better than that. A strategy designed to support shared collective goods must rest on a restored American legitimacy and credibility that is as dependent on how we treat our enemies as it is on how we treat our friends.

Indeed, former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright, James Baker, Warren Christopher, Henry

⁸¹ See Larry Diamond, "The Democratic Rollback," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2008): 36–48; Robert Kagan, "End of Dreams, Return of History," *Policy Review* (August/September 2007): 17–44, and Azar Gat, "The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2007): 59–69.

⁸² See Francis Fukuyama and Michael McFaul, "Should Democracy Be Promoted or Demoted?" in *Bridging the Foreign Policy Divide*, eds. Derek Chollet, Tod Lindberg, and David Shorr (New York: Routledge, 2008): 148.

⁸³ See for example, Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Mariner, 1997). Also see G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 2006).

⁸⁴ See "There Were Orders to Follow," *New York Times* (4 April 2008): 22. Also see Dan Eggen and Josh White, "Memo: Laws Didn't Apply to Interrogators," *Washington Post* (2 April 2008): A1.

Kissinger, and Colin Powell have all called for America's prison camp in Cuba to be closed. Baker has said that Guantanamo "gives us a very, very bad name," while Kissinger has said it constitutes "a blot on us." Were it to be closed, Powell believes it would say to the world that "[w]e are now going to go back to our traditional respected way of dealing with people who have potentially committed crimes."⁸⁵ Terrorism is a base crime, not something that should be dignified as a legitimate tool of war. When America captures suspected terrorists on or off the battlefield, they should be prosecuted like the criminals they are, and their inhumane crimes should be broadcast to the world, not kept in an isolation too easily distorted as a type of martyrdom to vulnerable audiences. This is not a small point: the ability to hold and try people in secret to protect intelligence sources and methods is likely to undermine U.S. security by providing propaganda for the enemy. America is not alone in the desire to deal effectively with terrorists and should lead an effort to build consensus at home and abroad to create or modify the international laws, standards, and institutions that can accommodate the challenge of terrorism.

Moreover, in an ever more integrating world, American cannot shut off the exchange of people and ideas that are a vital component of our economic competitiveness. In recent years, immigration restrictions have led to a decline in foreign students studying in the United States as well as foreign workers receiving temporary work visas or permanent residency. Business leaders such as Bill Gates have publicly called for more flexibility in order to bring the world's top students and workers

"If we are to promote shared global goods as part of securing our own national interests, we cannot be insular, reactive, and paranoid. Most importantly, we cannot forget who we are."

to the United States, while the *Economist* calls the failure to do so "a policy of national self-sabotage."⁸⁶ The 1957 launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik satellite sparked a domestic outcry, leading to a generational focus on ensuring that the world's best and brightest were able to study and work in the United States and ultimately contributed to the West's Cold War victory decades later. In a competitive and fast-paced global economy, America's security again depends, in part, on ensuring that we attract the best and brightest.

A new strategy should also recognize that America's ability to lead depends on how the world perceives our exercise of power. Nye and Richard Armitage argued together that "when words do not match our actions, we demean our character and moral standing. We cannot lecture others about democracy while we back dictators. We cannot denounce torture and waterboarding in other countries and condone it at home."⁸⁷ If we are to promote shared

⁸⁵ Close Gitmo, five secretaries of state say," *United Press International* (28 March 2008). Also see an extensive and bipartisan array of officials and thinkers speak out on the issue of torture in "No More: The U.S. Must End its Policy on Torture," *Washington Monthly* (March 2008): 16–47.

⁸⁶ See Kim Hart, "Gates Calls on Congress for Science Education, Visas," *Washington Post*, March 13, 2008, p. D3; "Visas Needed; By Keeping Out Needed High-Tech Workers, U.S. Immigration Policy Pushes U.S. Jobs Abroad," *Washington Post* (25 March 2008): A14; Robert Pear, "High-Tech Titans Strike Out on Immigration Bill," *New York Times* (25 June 2007): 1. Also see "Help Not Wanted," *The Economist* (12 April 2008): 38.

⁸⁷ Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, "Stop Getting Mad, America. Get Smart," *Washington Post* (9 December 2007, p. B3).

global goods as part of securing our own national interests, we cannot be insular, reactive, and paranoid. Most importantly, *we cannot forget who we are*. The success of American strategy depends in part on the recognition that how we treat our foreign enemies and our foreign friends can reinforce a positive perception of American power—and ultimately restore our international standing and influence.

Making America Grand Again

America has been adrift for too long. The strategic myopia that 9/11 produced, combined with our growing strategic exhaustion after years of war in Iraq, has exacerbated an erosion of the United States' position in the world.

The only way to arrest America's strategic drift is to look beyond the crises of today toward tomorrow's threats and opportunities. Looking over the horizon, two imperatives are clear.

First, American influence needs to be renewed in order to meet 21st-century challenges such as transnational terrorism, failed states, nuclear proliferation, and climate change. No matter how powerful the United States is, it cannot effectively address these challenges alone. To safeguard our security and prosperity, we must be able to inspire others to make common cause with us.

There was a time not so long ago when America was a trusted leader in the world because its motives were understood to be compatible with the common interests of freedom-loving people everywhere. The next president must focus on restoring this view of America. He or she must seek to regain the respect of other countries and the legitimacy that enables effective leadership. Here, actions will undoubtedly speak louder than words.

The next president should take clear, early actions to signal that the United States that once championed the rule of law and multilateral cooperation is back. Closing the prison camp in Guantanamo, barring the use of torture, and recommitting to key alliances and multilateral institutions would be a start.

Second, America must use its power and influence to sustain the international system upon which all modern states depend. It is time to broaden our perspective and focus on the common interests that bring nations together rather than on narrowly construed interests that too often drive us apart. The United States is fortunate that its core national interests and those of most other nations overlap substantially. America and the vast majority of nations favor stability in key regions; an open, rules-based international economy; and fair access to air, sea, space, and cyberspace—the global commons. By helping to build and sustain a global system that benefits the common good, America can help itself while helping—and regaining the respect of—others. Such a strategy would be inherently advantageous to the United States, but would allow other states to compete and advance their own interests as well.

A grand strategy of sustainment would redefine America's purpose in the world, reframe our national interests as aligned with core global goods, and set a new course for a confident U.S. foreign policy that is consistent with our history and values. It might just make America grand again.

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J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



A SOLARIUM FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

By Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy

With only months to go before the November election, the debate over American foreign policy is heating up. From Senator McCain's pledge to kick Russia out of the G8, to Senator Clinton's commitment to begin the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, to Senator Obama's promise to engage in far more robust diplomacy with America's adversaries, the debate is as wide ranging as it is contentious.

But as important as the particular challenges are, the arguments they have engendered have been largely tactical and have not adequately addressed the most fundamental and critical task before us as a nation: rethinking America's purpose and place in the world. As Henry Kissinger has said, "the long-predicted national debate about national security policy has yet to occur."¹

The absence of a debate about the fundamental purpose of American power in the 21st century is particularly worrisome at this point in our history. We believe it is possible that America has reached an inflection point whereby a confluence of historical circumstance and executive decision could fundamentally alter the course of U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy for the better. From the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the rise of China and India, to the challenges of transnational terrorism, energy security, climate change, and nuclear proliferation, a new vision is required for American strategy. This opportunity should not be missed.

The Center for a New American Security initiated the Solarium Strategy Series in 2007 convinced of the great utility in debating the fundamentals of American grand strategy and that such a debate was needed, now more than ever. One year later, as the next administration's national security inheritance appears ever more troubling, we remain certain that rethinking the basics of America's

¹ Henry Kissinger, "The Three Revolutions," *The Washington Post* (7 April 2008): A17.

purpose and place in the world is vital to inform the most critical national security decisions of the next president.

The essays in this volume offer a snapshot of the contemporary debate over America's purpose and role in the world. From Barry Posen's argument that American strategy needs to be far more restrained; to Frederick Kagan's belief that America's exercise of power in the world reflects more continuity than change; to G. John Ikenberry's contention that building a liberal world order remains central to American power; to Sarah Sewall's proposition that America should transition from entrepreneur to global steward; to Robert Art's detailed proposal for selective engagement; to our argument that the containment strategy of the late 20th century should be replaced by a sustainment strategy for the early 21st century, the range of strategic options are as varied and contested as the challenges facing America today.

While this volume has concentrated on the debate over what America's grand strategy should be, and while we have particular views on how the next president should conceptualize American interests in a changing world, perhaps the most important thing a new president could do in the first months of 2009 would be to supervise a comprehensive strategic reassessment of his or her own. Only by initiating and overseeing such a comprehensive review can a new president and White House team fully assess their inheritance and determine a new strategic course.

We believe that a true strategic assessment must include three features: a directive from the president ordering a strategic review; a competitive strategy development process undertaken at the highest levels of government; and a subsequent

National Security Review designed to ensure that America's tools of statecraft are appropriately organized and resourced to support the new strategy. All three components of a comprehensive strategic reassessment have been done before, but only rarely, and without all three any strategic review will likely fail.

First, upon taking office, the next president should quickly issue a directive ordering the national security advisor, secretary of state, and the secretary of defense to begin a comprehensive strategic review. Such a review would include an assessment of the international security environment, an articulation and ordering of American interests, a statement of priority U.S. national security objectives, and the development of multiple strategic options for achieving those objectives.

A good example of a strategic directive from the Oval Office can be found in the Truman years. At a time of great strategic uncertainty in early 1950, months after the Soviet Union's successful test of an atomic bomb, and after several years of debate over how America should deal with the long-term threat posed by what George Kennan called "Russian expansive tendencies," President Harry Truman issued the following directive on January 31, 1950:

That the president direct the secretary of state and the secretary of defense to undertake a reexamination of our objectives in peace and war and of the effect of these objectives on our strategic plans, in light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union.²

This directive resulted in the drafting of NSC-68, which articulated American interests and recommended a strategy requiring a substantial defense

² As quoted in Ernest R. May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993): 24.

buildup. While the debate surrounding NSC-68 remains intense over a half-century later, the document remained central to the debate over America's developing Cold War strategy.³

We recommend that immediately upon taking office in January 2009, the next president issue a directive very similar to the one Truman issued in 1950. A modern directive might read as follows:

That the president direct the National Security Council to undertake a reexamination of our interests and objectives in peace and war and develop a strategy for achieving these objectives, in light of ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; the challenges posed by the rise of new powers; and the complex problems of globalization, including transnational terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change and energy security.

Second, we recommend that the next president immediately engage in a strategy development exercise similar to the Solarium process in the Eisenhower administration. Over the summer of 1953, President Eisenhower tasked multiple teams with articulating strategic options for dealing with the Soviet Union. Key debates were held between the teams in the presence of the president and his key national security advisors. Everything was on the table in these discussions, from assumptions about the nature of Soviet intentions and capabilities to America's military force structure and economic policy. Author David Rothkopf has concluded that the Solarium exercise constituted "a magisterial illustration of an effective president in action, perhaps one of the signal events of the last sixty years of the American presidency."⁴

A modern Solarium exercise would feature multiple teams tasked with assessing core American interests and developing a strategy designed to best protect them. The President could elect — as Eisenhower did — to order each team to develop strategic options from slightly different perspectives. The benefit of using multiple teams would be derived from observing the extent to which the various strategies overlap or, alternatively, the extent to which they suggest critical decisions or tradeoffs for the president. Each team should be led by a senior statesperson, not necessarily of the president's political party, and not necessarily a person actively serving in government.

A modern Solarium can only work if the next president dedicates significant portions of his or her time to the effort, requires his or her top advisors engage in the exercise, and then uses it to inform and frame the drafting of the administration's first national security strategy. Such an exercise must not be staffed out, but led and attended by the president, his or her Cabinet-level officials, and the nation's top military and intelligence officers.

While held in private to enable candid discussion and debate, components of the Solarium exercise could be made public, or at least described to key reporters and opinion shapers. At a time of great strategic challenge, letting the country know that the new president is taking on the most consequential issues facing the nation and soliciting views from all quarters would likely be warmly received.

More broadly, historians have looked favorably on both the process and structure of Eisenhower's National Security Council (NSC), and we recommend that the incoming team seriously consider reestablishing a robust strategic planning

³In addition to the Ernest May volume, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): especially chapter four, "NSC-68 and the Korean War."

⁴David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005): 72.

capability in the NSC staff that could significantly improve strategy development, interagency planning and oversight.⁵

Finally, we recommend that the strategic reassessment in the early months of the next administration be followed by an extensive National Security Review (NSR), similar to the Pentagon's Congressionally-mandated Quadrennial Defense Review. Such a review would be aimed at assessing the state of each of America's national security institutions in light of the newly articulated national security strategy. Such a comprehensive review will be necessary in order to identify areas that require a realignment of departmental authorities, adjustments in funding, or reforms to incentive structures, processes, or organizations. In particular, an NSR should make key recommendations on whether and how the nation's non-military tools of statecraft should best be organized and funded. The NSR should inform the budgetary requests of the various national security departments and agencies; close cooperation with the Office of Management and Budget will be important from the start.

We firmly believe that such a comprehensive strategic reassessment, if undertaken quickly and judiciously in the first months of the next administration, will increase the likelihood that key foreign policy choices and national security decisions will be made well — informed by a view of America's grand strategy that accounts for key challenges, core interests, and the complex tradeoffs required in a time of challenge and change.

The next occupant of the oval office — Republican or Democrat — will face the most complex and troubling national security inheritance in a generation. The challenge of moving America forward and navigating dangerous waters will be enormous and fraught with risks. Starting with a strategic reassessment of the fundamentals of America's purpose and place in the world, and articulating a vision for American foreign policy that can be sustained over many years would be a vital first step in charting a new course for this great nation and bringing about the changes that America so desperately needs.

⁵See Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 137. Also see Amy Zegart, *Flawed By Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimley, *Strategic Planning for U.S. National Security: A Project Solarium for the 21st Century* (Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School, 2006), available online at <http://www.princeton.edu/~ppns/papers/interagencyQNSR.pdf>

J U N E 2 0 0 8

Finding Our Way:
Debating American Grand Strategy



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The mission of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) is to develop strong, pragmatic, and principled national security and defense policies that promote and protect American interests and values. Building on the expertise and experience of its staff and advisors, CNAS aims to engage policymakers, experts and the public with innovative fact-based research, ideas, and analysis to shape and elevate the national security debate. A key part of our mission is to help inform and prepare the national security leaders of today and tomorrow.

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