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Making America Grand Again:
Toward a New Grand Strategy

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



Center for a
New American
Security



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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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

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.

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 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.

³This 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.

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 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

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).

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, 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

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

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

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

⁸Benjamin 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.

⁹Office 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).

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, market-based economies would be the system of choice.¹⁵ Political and economic freedom in the

¹⁰For 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.

¹¹Early 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.

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

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

¹⁵Francis 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.

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

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 *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2008), available online at <http://www.cnas.org>, for an argument in favor of including climate change and environmental security as an important national interest.

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 Iraq. Meanwhile, the U.S. current account deficit

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>.

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.

“In acting as if U.S. power could control rather than just shape world events, we have diminished our influence.”

“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.

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.

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

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.

³²We 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).

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

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

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 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

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."

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

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.

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

“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.”

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 of 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.

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.

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 *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2008), for similar arguments on the centrality of the current international system to America's enduring interests.

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.

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 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 also 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.

⁴⁴ See Sarah Sewall's chapter in *Finding Our Way*, 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.

⁴⁶ See the papers by G. John Ikenberry and Frederick Kagan in *Finding Our Way*.

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

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

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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 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

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>.

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

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

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

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.

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

⁵⁵ See the chapters by Robert Art and Sarah Sewall in *Finding Our Way* on why strong alliance structures are central to American interests.

⁵⁶ See the chapter by Frederick Kagan in *Finding Our Way*.

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>.

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 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.

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

⁵⁸See Barry Posen's chapter in *Finding Our Way* in addition to his article, "The Case for Restraint," *The American Interest* (November/December 2007): 7–17.

⁵⁹See 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."

⁶⁰See Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2007).

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 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

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 *Finding Our Way* 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.

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).

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.

“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.”

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 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 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

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.”

⁶⁷ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America” (September 2002): 15.

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

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

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.

⁷⁰ See Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).

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

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

⁷¹For 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.

⁷²See 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.

⁷³See 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.

⁷⁴See Hitoshi Tanaka, *Japan and Asia in Transition* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2007).

⁷⁵For 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).

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 flashpoint.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 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

⁷⁶See 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.

⁷⁷Robert D. Kaplan, "America's Elegant Decline," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 2007): 104-116. Also see Kaplan's, *Hog Pilots, Blue Water Grunts*.

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

“A grand strategy aimed at sustaining a stable global system will require robust and persistent investment across all tools of American statecraft.”

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 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 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

⁷⁸Indeed, as Andrew Krepinevich 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 Krepinevich and Robert Work, *A New Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007): i.

⁷⁹See Kurt Campbell and Celeste Ward, “New Battle Stations?” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2003): 95–103.

⁸⁰See 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>.

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 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.

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.

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.

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 propa-

“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.”

ganda 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, America 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 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 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.

⁸⁶See Kim Hart, “Gates Calls on Congress for Science Education, Visas,” *Washington Post* (13 March 2008): 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.

⁸⁷Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, “Stop Getting Mad, America. Get Smart,” *Washington Post* (9 December 2007): B3.

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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