

# Cheap Hawks, Cheap Doves, and the Pursuit of Strategy

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by Harvey Sicherman

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*The post-9/11 threats to American security require a complete revision of American national strategy. For too long, presidents have had to favor quick, cheap solutions to crises, unable to count on support from the “homebody” public for long, drawn-out conflicts. “Cheap hawks” among them have hoped that apocalyptic rhetoric will suffice when resources fall short; “cheap doves” hope that by ignoring the threat, it will go away. But with the war on terror, the revival of geopolitics, and ever-accelerating globalization, the U.S. tradition of bellicose rhetoric backed by underwhelming force is a recipe for failure. To effectively manage its threats, America needs a new catechism and to make sure its economic, energy, and military policies support this.*

Four years after 9/11 demolished America's sense of security, the United States wages a war on terror fraught with new responsibilities. A short list includes the creation of democracies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine; as well as the prevention of nuclear proliferation by Iran and North Korea. More far-reaching is President Bush's second inaugural pledge to spread freedom 'round the globe, with major effort devoted to the Middle East. While these projects sound Wilsonian, Washington proposes to achieve them not through the United Nations, the lineal descendant of 1919, but rather through a fluctuating series of coalitions.

The results will be long in coming. Meanwhile, the decade and a half during which the United States—and the world—were free of dangerous great-power rivalry, the usual cause of war, is rapidly drawing to a close. Vladimir Putin's Russia does not seem to have a democratic destiny. Old Kremlin habits, including the subversion of neighbors, appear to be alive and well. China has arrived as a world-disturbing economic power somewhat earlier than expected, and so has India. Both these nations are hot in pursuit of raw materials for their economic booms, a classic motive for expansion of influence. And all of this—the war against terror and the reemergence of incipient great-power rivalry—takes place in the context of globalization, a

new, barrier-breaking economic system that challenges rich and poor countries alike.

These issues are not short-term by nature. They cannot be fixed by America's favorite tool, the swift and decisive campaign that resolves the problem, after which the United States subsides in relief. Because the challenges are long-term, the conflicts associated with them will be protracted, and therefore American policy must assume a longer-term perspective, as well.

Such a perspective is the precondition for a national security strategy, a plan that proposes objectives and then relates means to ends. And America seems awash these days with strategy. The Bush administration published one in 2002, the *National Security Strategy*, and two others since.<sup>1</sup> A fair dozen books have tackled the subject over the last two years. They cover a bewildering variety of ideas and schools: idealists vs. realists; unilateralists vs. multilateralists; hard-power advocates vs. soft-power advocates; imperialists vs. republicans; conscious imperialists vs. semi (or unconscious) imperialists; and nearly everyone vs. the neoconservatives.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, American national strategy is a one-two step. Because Americans prefer to work out the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness in their own continental spaces, and burdened by exasperating institutional constraints, American presidents have often preferred the "hustle," a strategy predicated on a quick, spectacular, and inexpensive solution to the crisis at hand.<sup>3</sup> Its hallmark is excessive rhetoric supported by underwhelming force. As such, the hustle often works brilliantly in recruiting domestic support, if only for a short while. But it suffers from a singular defect: it is a bluff waiting to be called. Only then, after the failure of this strategy, do the American people and their leaders come to grips with the need for a sustained effort. And the challenges we face today—the protracted conflict over terrorism, the reemergence of great-power rivalry, and the strains of globalization—demand the tools and stamina for a strategic effort of the sort that won the Cold War.

## A Nation of Homebodies

In a democracy, foreign policies that cut across the grain of public opinion cannot be expected to last for long. An electorate whose beliefs and judgments are offended will quickly reject actions regarded as wrong or

<sup>1</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Sept. 17, 2002; *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Dec. 11, 2002; and *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Feb. 14, 2003, all at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>2</sup> For a sampling, see Charles Hill, "The U.S. Search for Grand Strategy," *Orbis*, Fall 2004, and Harvey Sicherman, "Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?" *The National Interest*, Summer 2004, pp. 163–69.

<sup>3</sup> For the idea of the "hustler" as American archetype, see Walter McDougall's *Freedom Just Around the Corner: A New American History, 1585–1828* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), pp. 1–10.

incompetent. These are common-sense observations that politicians—and strategists—ignore at their peril.

Public opinion, of course, takes its shape not only from current events, but also from traditions, institutions, and education. In the American case, observers have long noted a peculiar combination of these factors that makes strategy a very difficult enterprise. The American identity is a combination of exceptionalism and universalism that is both mysterious and irritating to foreigners. Americans have counted God as an ally from the country's earliest days. "God will protect and prosper it," insisted even Benjamin Franklin on the eve of revolution.<sup>4</sup> Yet, this unique experiment has worldwide application; as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the last letter of his life, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the same Revolution, "to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all," because "the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion" would prevail.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, presidential rhetoric has always invoked this wellspring of American self-esteem in dealing with other national and international problems.

Woe betide the president, however, who mistakes this self-esteem as a blank check for idealistic forays. The national culture of pragmatism subjects foreign policy to severe tests: Is it working? What's in it for us (or for me)? And can it be done for less? A policy to secure the national interest, ideals notwithstanding, must be seen to work and to work clearly in America's tangible benefit, especially if American lives are to be risked in the process.

Almost as if they feared the potential for foreign policy adventures, the framers of the Constitution saddled the chief executive with a system that, as Tocqueville noted early on, deprived American foreign policy of secrecy and dispatch. This deprivation is enforced not only by the ceaseless struggle between Congress and the president but also by an aggressive media and instantaneous communication, even if the footage seen by the American people tells only part of the story.

While arguments rage today about soft vs. hard power, through much of its history the Congress has often made sure that presidents lacked both. Defense unpreparedness was the rule, and except for the Marshall Plan, American foreign aid remained more or less the stepchild of all national security expenditures. During the eighties and nineties, the Congress could not even pass a bill because of a dispute over birth control. Even today, although the \$20 billion the United States spent on foreign aid in 2004 is a large sum, it ranks low as a percent of GDP, and most Americans—in contrast to their leaders—think it is too much.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Michael Ignatieff, "Who Are Americans To Think That Freedom Is Theirs To Spread?" *New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> *Global Views 2004: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004), pp. 14–15.

Polls may claim that the American people are overwhelmingly internationalist, but the U.S. educational system hardly prepares Americans to understand foreign cultures. Americans lack knowledge of history, not only of other countries' but of their own.<sup>7</sup> And a nation of immigrants speaking every known language manages to become mostly monolingual in a generation or two. A shortage of linguists has been a perennial problem for the military, intelligence, and diplomatic branches of government. But the descendants of those immigrants, formed into special-interest lobbies, are determined to fix things in the Old World that they willingly left, making lots of trouble for presidents and secretaries of state, almost from the beginning of the Republic.

Most telling of all is the history of our presidential elections. Only a third of our presidents have had any experience in foreign policy before taking office. Very few elections have turned on such issues. Especially after the end of the Cold War, foreign issues dropped to the bottom of Americans' interest. Even after 9/11, the presidential election of 2004 showed that for nearly half its electorate—those who voted Democratic—only 14 percent identified terrorism as the major issue.<sup>8</sup>

Small wonder, then, that so many commentators on American power have doubted that it can be applied effectively for long, simply because Americans lack the knowledge, interest, and stamina necessary to do what needs to be done. Whether described as apathy or an attention deficit, the result is the same: a preference for quick fixes and short-term exertion.<sup>9</sup>

Most American presidents, faced with the combination of deeply ingrained homebody attitudes, institutional restraint, and want of resources, have had to perform an international version of the hustle, pursuing swift, decisive results—and the cheaper the better. Only after this faux strategy has been tried (and failed) are the American people ready to consider both the design and demands of a longer-term enterprise.

### **The “Hustle,” or Cheap Hawks and Cheap Doves**

The hustle comes in two versions. The Cheap Hawk, recognizing the threat to America but fearing that resources will not be forthcoming, hopes that apocalyptic rhetoric can frighten.<sup>10</sup> The Cheap Dove, preferring not to

<sup>7</sup> For a few shocking statistics, see Gordon S. Wood, “Colonial Correctness,” *New Republic*, June 6 and 13, 2005, p. 34. See also Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, “Thinking Outside the Tank,” *The National Interest*, Winter 2004–2005, pp. 95–96.

<sup>8</sup> See Dick Meyer, “Moral Values Malarkey,” CBSNews.com, Nov. 5, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> See Chris Kupchan, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003) and Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> See Newt Gingrich's televised speech, “The Contract with America,” delivered in Washington, D.C., April 7, 1995.

recognize the threat (often because he wants the resources for other purposes), does nothing. The result is often the same: a bluff waiting to be called.

Many presidents have hustled. James Monroe proclaimed his famous doctrine without the Navy to enforce it. “A species of arrogance peculiarly American,” Bismarck later called it.<sup>11</sup> Woodrow Wilson thought to prevent aggression through economic sanctions.<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly, given his reputation, Harry S Truman must also be counted among the cheap hawks. The Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, and North Atlantic Treaty overshadowed Truman’s decree that defense expenditures not exceed one-third of a greatly reduced federal budget.<sup>13</sup> Truman’s bluff worked for half a decade, but when it was called in Korea and U.S. forces were unprepared, his leadership never recovered.

Among more recent presidents, Jimmy Carter managed to be both cheap dove and cheap hawk. He began by decrying an “inordinate fear of communism” backed up by substantial cuts in a military already reeling from Vietnam. He ended up declaring the Carter Doctrine for the defense of the Persian Gulf, a task that was beyond U.S. military capability in 1980. Luckily for his successors, the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War, changing Soviet strategic objectives, and the Reagan-era military build-up gave the United States enough time to assemble the resources that met the challenge when Saddam seized Kuwait in 1990.

President Bill Clinton managed a bipartisan hustle. He proved a cheap dove on Bosnia until forced into the fray in 1995, thereafter becoming a serious hawk on Kosovo. He “cheap hawked” Iraq in 1994, 1996, and 1998, when the rhetoric about undoing Saddam went unmatched by deeds. Most tragically, he seemed to grasp the looming threat of Osama bin Laden, but shrank from applying, or asking for, the military resources that might have disrupted Al Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks.<sup>14</sup> Clinton’s budgets reduced U.S. military forces by a third, enforced a “procurement holiday,” cut the CIA’s operational arm, and impaired the State Department’s capability.<sup>15</sup> These actions reflected the president’s “cheap dove” proclivity even as U.S. forces were increasingly deployed on various peacekeeping missions. His successor inherited a highly capable but much smaller military and an intelligence operation soon to

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Nancy Mitchell, “Germans in the Backyard: Weltpolitik vs. Protective Imperialism,” *Prologue*, Summer 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 92–94, for Wilson’s resistance to a League of Nations with a military capability.

<sup>13</sup> For Truman’s overall view of defense spending, see Robert S. Donovan, *Tumultuous Years* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), pp. 58–59.

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 225. For a good source of U.S. and terrorism policy before 9/11, see *9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), chs. 3–5.

<sup>15</sup> *Department of Defense Annual Defense Review*, at [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil).

become notorious for its deficiencies. Then, on September 11, 2001, a bluff was called.

George W. Bush, who was not elected for his national security credentials, became the first president since James Madison to have the continental homeland attacked. He reacted by taking the war to the enemy in a way never dared by his predecessors, and in the case of Iraq, he faced fierce opposition even from some of America's allies. Yet, Bush is now perilously close to joining the cheap hawk fraternity. In both Afghanistan and more obviously in Iraq, the United States overthrew noxious tyrannies with very low numbers of American lives lost. Those victories, however, are in jeopardy because the meticulous planning for the day of battle was not matched by resources for the day after. Beguiled by the advanced technology that enable fewer troops to wield more accurate force, the administration seemed to have convinced itself that a military occupation, especially in Iraq, would not be necessary; that surgical strikes on the top level of Saddam's regime, the sparing of critical infrastructure, and a swift march to Baghdad would allow a new political transplant while the structure of government was preserved. The administration apparently thought it would be a war ideally suited to the ten-division army and its short-haul reserve system, neatly avoiding both U.S. deficiencies in nation-building capabilities and a long-term commitment of most of U.S. combat troops. High-level officials in the Defense Department opined that a large American occupation force would be unnecessary and that the oil wealth of Iraq would pay for reconstruction.<sup>16</sup>

The first phase of this exercise worked brilliantly, with Baghdad falling in three weeks, at the cost of just one hundred-plus U.S. and coalition casualties. By fall 2003, however, America clearly lacked the forces to preserve vital infrastructure, protect reconstruction, and suppress a growing resistance from Saddam loyalists, Sunni tribes, and foreign jihadists. "Plan B" then became a frantic effort to "stand up" Iraqi political and military structures so that American troops could "stand down," which is still the strategy.<sup>17</sup> Two years later, escalating violence threatened political and economic progress, while the American military system itself began to show critical weaknesses for

<sup>16</sup> See Wolf Blitzer, "Bush Asks for an Additional \$80 Billion for Iraq," *CNN.com*, Jan. 25, 2005, for Paul Wolfowitz's remarks during his testimony to the House Budget Committee on Feb. 27, 2003, during which he stated that General Eric Shinseki's claim that "several hundred thousand troops" would be required in Iraq was "wildly off the mark." Wolfowitz also claimed that oil would pay for Iraq's reconstruction: "We're dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction, and relatively soon." See House Committee on Appropriations Hearing on a Supplemental War Regulation, Mar. 27, 2003; see also Ann Scott Tyson, "Pentagon Official Admits Iraq Errors," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2005; Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), pp. 282–84; and General Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), pp. 391–93, 419–25, 545.

<sup>17</sup> President George W. Bush in his televised address from Fort Bragg, June 28, 2005, at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

a longer-term struggle. The gamble on swift, decisive, and low-cost action failed. Hustle had become self-hustle.

### **Three Tests: Terrorism, Geopolitics, and Globalization**

In the face of falling polls, Bush attempted to renew support for the Iraqi venture in a nationwide address on June 28, 2005. He characterized the global war on terror as a prolonged conflict that demanded courage and “the perseverance of our citizens,” reminding Americans, among other things, of the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War II, and the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> This note of extended struggle marks the passage from hustle to strategy.

Strategy must focus on ends and means. What are the most essential objectives? How do we achieve them? And have we got, or can we assemble, the resources?

American policy designed for the long haul must pass three looming tests. The first, the war on terror, concerns the shape of the twenty-first century’s international order. A second, the revival of geopolitics, affects crucial relationships with a shrunken, embittered Russia, a rising, ambitious but still limited, China; and two regional linchpins, India and Turkey. A third, globalization, determines the extent to which the American economy will support the national security.

#### *Terrorism*

The war on terror comprises both a general principle and a specific application. In general, terrorists make civilians both a target and a shield, a deviant form of warfare that erases the distinction between combatant and non-combatant at the heart of every attempt to limit warfare, including the just-war theories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The century just past reminds us of the horrors that ensue when that distinction is erased. It is, therefore, in America’s interest—indeed, in the interest of all those with a stake in a humane international order—to stigmatize terrorism as a repugnant method for effecting political change.

Beyond this general principle lie the specifics of today’s terrorists. “Bin Ladenism” draws skillfully on the vast reservoir of Muslim resentment against the West and the United States, especially among the Arabs. If the “crusaders and the Jews” can be driven out of the Middle East, then the way is open for the Holy Warriors to renew the caliphate. Thus empowered, the Muslims can resume the long-dormant campaign for the world dominion that they believe is due Islam.<sup>19</sup>

Though possessed of a unique ideology, bin Laden and his allies share many characteristics of earlier terrorists. They employ modern technology to

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> For a succinct account, see the *9/11 Commission Report*, ch. 2.

work between the cracks of the legal, political, and military defenses of their targets. More than criminals but less than soldiers, their wanton attacks on civilians are designed to demoralize opposition. The targets face a dilemma. A purely defensive strategy gives the terrorists the initiative, and massive retaliation risks high civilian casualties that make new converts for the cause.

Finally, the front is everywhere. The terrorists are adept at exploiting weak or failing states, making alliances of convenience with stronger states, and operating in democratic societies whose tolerance they abuse, as the London bombings of July 7, 2005, reminded us. Small wonder that Britain's MI5 had concluded before those attacks that "the global reach, capability, resilience, sophistication, ambition, and lack of restraint of Al Qaeda and associated groups around the world place the current threat on a scale not previously encountered."<sup>20</sup>

This war will be won or lost on three battlefields. The first and most easily identifiable is the Middle East and most specifically Iraq. Baghdad was the last seat of an Arab caliphate before the Mongols destroyed it and the Ottomans eclipsed it. The country's strategic position and oil reserves offer great potential, perhaps on a Saudi scale. But its fractious ethnic and religious divisions seemed to offer only a political horizon of pathological dictatorship following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. If the terrorists can seize power in Baghdad, that would more than compensate for numerous setbacks: the United States did not collapse in fear after 9/11, Afghanistan was lost, the Saudi monarchy has not been overthrown, and Western society functions much as before. On the other hand, if Iraq can be refashioned into a working democracy, then the country can show the way to a more humane future shaped by citizen initiative—a dramatic break with the victimization culture that underlies both Arab nationalist ideology and the would-be jihadist reformers.

The American objective must therefore be to offer a successful alternative to Iraq's past while avoiding civil war or an Islamic republic. This might be possible if the Iraqis and their political leaders can be persuaded that this post-Saddam state must reflect "three negatives": no Sunni dictatorship, no Kurdish independence, and no Islamic republic. Such a constitution, reinforced by an equitable share of oil wealth and an army sworn to uphold the negatives, is the best outcome available. But this will never be possible if the United States and its allies cannot wear down the insurgency, which is being fueled by Baathists, tribal fears, and foreign jihadists.<sup>21</sup> Anticipation of an early U.S. withdrawal, aggravated by demands for an exit date, will also make American efforts to reconstruct the country futile.

Iraq, then, is the key to the American project for changing the direction of Middle East politics. Compared to this prospect, the laudable goals of a

<sup>20</sup> "International Terrorism," at [www.MI5.gov.uk](http://www.MI5.gov.uk).

<sup>21</sup> See Amatzia Baram, "Who Are the Insurgents?" U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report 134, April 2005.

two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the prevention of Iranian nuclear proliferation are worthy in their own right, helpful to the larger cause, but distinctly secondary to the issue of who rules in Baghdad.

The second front consists of the “coalition war.” Vital as America’s homeland defense efforts may be, the United States cannot defend its own territory unless we manage a broad (and unwieldy) coalition. Western European states, for example, are increasingly both the target and the source of jihadist cells and recruitment.<sup>22</sup> Other governments, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, are crucial to the war but hardly ideal allies.

The third objective is preventing more failed states and, when failure occurs, building new structures. This, too, is a task that demands many hands. The Balkan experience, and more recently Afghanistan, have lessons to teach.<sup>23</sup> Quite aside from the humanitarian aspects, a program of state-strengthening for various African governments may be the best way to prevent new Somalias. Part of the answer lies in UN or regional organizations, including forces who are prepared to shoot. Otherwise, the failed-state phenomenon may offer terrorists new territorial bases.

### *Geopolitics*

In the waning years of the Cold War, the United States bet that political and economic engagement with its former communist adversaries in Russia and China would yield reformed governments with shared interests. These bets paid off in one important dimension. Both Moscow and Beijing have abandoned their aggressive ideologies. Today, each exhibits a geopolitical approach to foreign policy that is quite familiar to students of the pre-1914 era. Sharing values with the United States is not in the lexicon. Neither friend nor foe in principle, they decide their policies by cold calculations of material interests. And each, in turn, presents a separate challenge, Russia because of its weakness and China because of its strength.

*Russia.* Despite American hopes, Russia is an increasingly authoritarian state. Its leader, Vladimir Putin, has lamented the Soviet Union’s demise, which he calls the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the last century.”<sup>24</sup> He has gradually increased state control over the media and personal dominance over the political system. Assisted by an economic recovery based on high oil prices, he has attempted to regain some measure of international influence through a zigzag of a foreign policy that offers equal measures of cooperation

<sup>22</sup> See Robert S. Leiken, “Europe’s Angry Muslims,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/Aug. 2005.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Zalmay Khalilzad, “How to Nation-Build,” *The National Interest*, Summer 2005; and “The Failed States Index,” *Foreign Policy*, July/Aug. 2005; and Celeste J. Ward, “The Coalition Provisional Authority’s Experience in Iraq,” U.S. Institute of Peace Special Report 139, May 2005.

<sup>24</sup> President Vladimir Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, Apr. 25, 2005, at <http://president.kremlin.ru>.

and contention with the United States. Overruling his advisors after 9/11, Putin facilitated the American attack on Afghanistan, exacting in exchange American support for the Russian suppression of Chechnya. But Moscow's cooperation did not extend to Iran, where the Russian nuclear reactor has become a point of recurring tension. After signaling possible support on Iraq, Putin joined France and Germany in opposition, hoping to split the Atlantic alliance in the process. Russia intends to remain a nuclear power and continues its role as a major international arms supplier, especially to China. Putin has also attempted on several occasions to build a common interest with Beijing in Central Asia, most recently to contain U.S. influence.

In 2004–05, Putin felt confident enough to dispense with several illusions still held by the West. He finagled the legal and tax system to bring down a major opponent among the Yeltsin-era “oligarchs” in a fashion that shook international investor confidence as he resumed state control of Russia's oil resources. And he hardly troubled to conceal Russia's attempts to ensure that its nominees became the leaders of key adjacent states.

Putin is no Stalin and Russia is not the Soviet Union. Its declining population suffers from poverty and rampant corruption. The army still bleeds in Chechnya. But as Alexei Arbatov, deputy chairman of the Duma's Defense Committee, told a U.S. journalist, “We are still oriented toward a war against the West. This stems from Russian military strategy since the days of Peter the Great.”<sup>25</sup> The United States can expect repeated probes by Moscow to recover influence among its immediate neighbors. Inevitably, this will bring friction with an expanded NATO. Moscow also is far from giving up its desire to enlarge its position in the Middle East. Setting the barriers against Moscow's more dangerous policies can only be done as part of a broader coalition, centered in NATO, but also relying on the persuasive (or seductive) economic powers of the European Union. Failure to do so could open an extremely unwelcome problem that could threaten to undo post–Cold War political arrangements in Europe.

*China.* If the United States has lost its bet on a democratic Russia, what about the other big gamble, that of a peacefully rising China integrating with the global economy as its society moves toward greater freedom?

In many ways, the gamble, initiated by the Nixon administration, has survived its origins and taken on a new character. China has risen peacefully; its economic growth, a steady 7–9 percent annually over the past decade, has lifted hundreds of millions out of desperate poverty through trade and investment from abroad. Chinese society has become much more open as the totalitarian regime of Mao gave way to a communist rule that allows striking latitude to its citizens so long as they do not try to challenge the Party's control. But the regime shows little interest in democracy.

Beijing pursues a foreign policy devoid of ideological pretension and heavily influenced by traditional geopolitical factors that justify growing

<sup>25</sup> David Remnick, “Letter from Moscow, Post-Imperial Blues,” *New Yorker*, Oct. 13, 2003.

military power. It draws on economic success and a revived Chinese nationalism to sustain its domination. Its most dangerous disputes with the United States are over Taiwan and, increasingly, Japan.

Every American administration, after a little experimentation, has reverted to a Taiwan policy that might be dubbed the two “no’s” and one “yes.” Washington warns China not to try to seize the island by force and Taiwan not formally to declare independence. Instead, it urges both sides to develop a *modus vivendi*. But Beijing and Taipei test Washington’s limits in recurring bouts of tension. We have certainly not seen the last of this peculiar dance. Until fundamental positions change, however, the two “no’s” and one “yes” policy remains workable.

China’s historic rivalry with Japan remains unresolved, simmering below the surface, and sometimes above the surface, as its anti-Japanese riots of 2004–05 gave ample proof. The Japanese have reacted by emphasizing ties to the United States. A future flashpoint may be the protection of the vital sea-lanes carrying two-thirds of all world trade that extend through the Taiwan and Mallaca Straits. A Chinese blue-water navy, ostensibly to secure such transit points, might stimulate a dangerous naval competition.

The one place where China is thought to have decisive influence—North Korea—remains subject to speculation. Beijing has consented to the six-power talks and opposed nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but it also seems to fear a collapse of North Korea even more. It appears to be playing for time and a nascent alliance with South Korea against the day when reunification might occur.

Finally, of course, the United States and China face a series of trade frictions, including currency valuation, the mounting Chinese trade surplus, and egregious violation of intellectual property rights. This has been compounded by the incendiary issue of world oil supplies. For the biggest global development is the emergence of the Chinese economy as a world pacesetter whose torrid demand has now eliminated reserve capacity in a host of commodities, such as copper, iron, cement, and oil, greatly inflating previously stable prices. China, which seeks to secure oil supplies at the source rather than buying on the market, has invested in commercial transactions, such as CNOOC Ltd.’s bid for an American oil company, which has created a political and strategic sensation quite out of proportion to the facts of the deal.<sup>26</sup> It does not help the Chinese case that the Beijing government itself owns CNOOC.

China is no enemy of the United States, nor is it an ally. Traditional diplomatic methods and economic negotiation should ease tension between the two states. Moreover, the Chinese leadership is just completing a generational change, and further political evolution may be in the offing. The gamble is still on. But to keep that gamble from going dangerously astray, the relationship must be tended. And the balance also depends on the United

<sup>26</sup> “CNOOC to fine-tune Unocal bid; U.S. hearing begins,” Reuters, July 13, 2005.

States' sustaining its alliance with Japan, not least to prevent a relapse of Chinese-Japanese hostilities that could wreck Asia's astonishing progress.

*India and Turkey.* Two other vital geopolitical relationships should command American attention. To everyone's surprise, the United States has been able to revive its alliance with Pakistan to fight the war on terror yet simultaneously transform its dealings with India. The world's largest democracy has been freeing itself slowly of its Cold War-era frictions with the United States, its antiquated "Raj license" economy, and its fixation with Pakistan. American and Indian political and economic interests have suddenly converged, leading to a quantum leap in cooperation. India bids fair to move into the Chinese league, becoming an increasingly significant regional and global power.

Thus far, both Washington and New Delhi have been careful not to promise or expect too much. Still, both powers stand to benefit vastly from an alliance, even in the security realm. This relationship is emerging as a linchpin of the security of South Asia, a natural check on excessive Chinese ambitions, and a moderating influence in the Persian Gulf. India also has the world's second largest Muslim population. It could set a standard of communal harmony important to the Middle East. The key here will be for Washington to avoid over-enthusiasm or seeing the Indian relationship as some sort of compensation for failed policies elsewhere.

Finally, the U.S.-Turkish alliance badly needs tending. This historic relationship was damaged by the Iraq War and remains beset by ambiguities over the direction of the Islamic-influenced government. The United States supports Turkey's desire to join the EU, a problematic exercise stretching years into the future. It would be more than problematic, however, if Turkey took a turn toward political Islamism as a result of European rejection. Even more dangerous might be Turkish intervention into Kurdistan should the United States fail in Iraq. These disasters can be avoided by a U.S. policy that anchors Turkey to NATO and American partnership.

An American success in Iraq, flanked by Turkey and a growing Indian alliance, would certainly set the stage for change in the greater Middle East. These relationships then are the strategic framework for securing the eastern flank of the region, pending dramatic developments—for better or worse—in Iran.

### *Globalization*

Economic developments since the end of the Cold War have been dubbed globalization. This clumsy elocution hides the real meaning: a Western-style model for economic growth. Globalization is marked by integration of markets, especially the supply chain; lowered tariff and trade barriers; and free-market policies.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 13–23.

On the whole, this pattern has worked very well for most nations, especially through its application to the Chinese and East Asian region, where hundreds of millions have benefited. The U.S. economy is also a major beneficiary. America's GDP as a percentage of the world's actually rose during the '90s, despite many prognostications of decline. American strengths, especially in high technology, have given the United States considerable advantage.

Yet globalization today is under increasing assault from labor, environmentalists, and those who fear foreign economic domination. Other significant dangers include over-dependence on exports to the United States for growth (the trade deficit) and potential shortages of American scientists and engineers. The most significant problem, however, is the prospect for real shortages of oil.

### **Sinews of Strength**

Winning the war on terror, meeting geopolitical challenges, and dealing with globalization are well within American reach. In addition to our own resources, we can count upon alliances west (NATO) and east (Japan) that together vastly outweigh our adversaries, whether Islamist terrorists, Russian revanchists, or would-be Chinese middle kings. The American economy will remain the center of global economic growth. Still, current American policies, rooted as they are in the hustle, remain insufficient for the day. America's safety requires enlarged sinews of strength, including clarity of purpose.

#### *A New American Catechism*

America's fundamental message to the world should be clarified to a new American catechism, stating that (1) we favor democracies, however imperfect, over non-democracies; (2) we favor those who are moving toward democracy, however tentatively, over those who are not; and (3) we favor friends over enemies.

U.S. policy should reflect a careful balance among these criteria. The case for democracy must also be made on more than God-given truths. Compared to most regimes in the Middle East, for example, adept only at staying in power, democracy, which has worked well in at least a few locations in the region (notably Turkey and Israel) offers a constructive alternative. Our argument should be: take it both because it works and because the United States will support you. Leave it if you like the unsupportable status quo, or an Iranian or Taliban regime.

In addition to a clarified message, the United States needs some improved tools, especially in the fight against terrorism. One aspect of the

9/11 Commission's work remains barely begun: the reform of Congress into a few super-committees, so that secrets can be kept. This is not a plea for executive release from Congressional oversight; rather, it is a necessity if such oversight is to help the CIA become more effective on the ground.<sup>28</sup>

Homeland security also needs a boost. Most vital installations (such as electricity, transportation, and water) and major industries (such as chemicals) are operated not by the federal government but by state, local, and private owners that often lack the skill to determine potential threats, the key to overcoming legal and insurance hazards. So homeland security often emphasizes "first response," i.e., recovery from attack rather than prevention of it.<sup>29</sup> The federal government can take the lead in organizing a set of standards, a "Security Impact Statement" that allows state, local, and private authorities to justify measures fully supported by legal and insurance criteria. This would go some way toward barring the soft-target door that Al Qaeda and others are so adept at entering.

### *The Military*

President Bush has declared that "America has changed how you fight and win war" in a way that greatly reduces U.S. and civilian casualties.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, few nations would dare to challenge the United States to a classic battlefield contest. Unhappily, this is not the kind of war we face. The current combination of a superbly trained and equipped volunteer Army intended to devastate the enemy and then move on, with its reliance on a reserve system also designed for the short haul, just won't do the job. Terrorism, counter-insurgency, and state-building require more "boots" of a different kind. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's DoD has recognized this in its new plan to add 30,000 troops under emergency legislation, enlarging 33 conflict brigades to 43 (17 are now in Iraq). This should also relieve strain on the reserve components, but it may not be enough. A shortage of forces of the right kind severely undermines our progress in Iraq and emboldens America's adversaries, whether in Damascus, Tehran, or Pyongyang, to believe we are hamstrung.

### *Economics and Energy*

Can the U.S. economy support the current or even expanded national security needs? The answer, as the late Herbert Stein used to say, is that the United States cannot do everything but can do what needs to be done. Today,

<sup>28</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 419–23.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Gale and Lawrence Husick, "From MAD to MUD: Dealing with the New Terrorism," *FPRI Wire*, vol. 11, no. 1, Feb. 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, p. 425.

for example, the defense budget consumes 3.5 percent of GDP and 17.6 percent of all federal government outlays. These figures are historically low. Moreover, those states holding large parts of the American national debt are not likely to manipulate it either because they are allies or, as in the case of China, because they would do themselves great injury if they provoked a run on the dollar.

American financial vulnerability stems from other factors. Defense's percentage of GDP and share of federal outlays are misleading in that they ignore the structure of the budget itself. Only 40 percent qualifies as discretionary, meaning subject to vote; the rest, such as debt payments, social security, and health care, are mandated by law. Defense consists of nearly half of the discretionaries. The budget will grow tighter still if health care costs and social security are not tackled.

The other proximate danger is a commodity shock, namely, oil. Although the United States uses much less oil per dollar of GDP today than in 1973 or 1979, it is acutely vulnerable to disruption in the transport sector. Lack of refining capacity and environmental hazards make it even more vulnerable.

The United States must begin an aggressive effort to untangle these knots. Even though the details may hold, the overall criteria for such a program include alternative technologies for motor vehicles; new infrastructure investment, (refineries, natural gas ports), and, at prevailing high prices, a mix of alternative fuels, whether through coal gas or shale, both of which are abundant in the United States.<sup>31</sup> The era of cheap oil is over.

### *Alliances and Institutions*

In February 2004, at the height of the transatlantic storm over Iraq, former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. declared, "We have failed to notice that the European Union may be facing the greatest crisis in its history."<sup>32</sup> The recent French and Dutch rejection of the European constitution and the quarrel over the budget revealed deep conflicts over the idea of Europe. The Franco-German combination that remains its economic engine is mired in low growth and high unemployment. Overall, the expanded EU ill fits a political mechanism designed especially for French leadership. On top of this breakdown, the EU also faces a demographic problem of falling birthrates, compounded by rising Muslim immigration, with too many of the immigrants either failing to integrate or outright hostile to democracy.

The EU's direction will take some time to sort out, and probably new French and German leaders. Until that is settled, the EU's influence,

<sup>31</sup> See Amory B. Levins, et al., *Winning the Oil Endgame* (Rocky Mountain Institute, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Alexander M. Haig Jr., "There Is A West," *FPRI Watch on the West*, vol. 5, no. 1, Feb. 2004.

along with its halting plans for diplomatic and military capabilities, will be circumscribed. The wisest policy for the United States will be to act as a friend at court.

Meanwhile, Washington has an opportunity to reemphasize the only working transatlantic security arrangement, namely NATO. The Alliance, unwisely cast aside after 9/11, remains the best forum to sort out a host of issues, including the development of expeditionary forces, such as those in Afghanistan, designed for nation-building and counterinsurgency. NATO can work well only if the United States relearns the diplomacy of articulating the common interest and rallying its necessary coalition partners to the task. Both the United States and Europe have now been chastened by events and their own mistakes. As they proceed, the allies would be wise to adopt the late Robert Strausz-Hupé's maxim: "flexibility of policy and tolerant urbanity."<sup>33</sup>

A final note is needed on international institutions. The United States and the UN have gone through a severe mutual disenchantment. Too much has been expected of an obsolete Security Council and too little has come from an inept (and partly corrupt) bureaucracy. Much useful work can still be done at the UN, but only if the United States approaches it with a coalition already in hand. The UN is no place to develop consensus; it is the forum to express consensus. The UN's role in dealing with failed or failing states could be invaluable if an idea such as a UN trusteeship can be revived.

### *The Pursuit of Strategy*

The war on terror, specifically its Iraq component, has brought home the lesson once more that in foreign policy, bluffs are usually called. Since 9/11, the United States has gambled that the essentials of this war could be won rapidly through a few masterstrokes that would deprive Al Qaeda of its base and Baghdad of its tyrant, thereby demonstrating that the terrorist methods, whether practiced by group or state, would fail.

Quick, decisive campaigns are beloved by Americans because they avoid the strains and consequences of long-term struggle. We hate wars of attrition. It should be clear by now, however, that terrorism is one of those wars; cunning fanatics determined to overthrow what America and all democracies hold dear. There is enough trouble in the world, especially in the Middle East, to assure a protracted conflict.

The long haul, however, contains more than just terrorists. There are critical geopolitical relationships to be managed and economic challenges to be mastered. The United States, working with its allies, surely has the resources to succeed.

<sup>33</sup>Robert Strausz-Hupé, et al., *Protracted Conflict* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 145.

Will we make the change from hustle to strategy? Winston Churchill reputedly quipped, “The Americans will always do the right thing . . . after they’ve exhausted all the alternatives.” Too often, America’s alternatives have been variations on the Cheap Dove or the Cheap Hawk. We are now at the tipping point. Success depends on more effort and the longer view. “Doing the right thing” will secure the safety and freedom of the twenty-first century.

