

# Alternative Futures

## Choices

There are always choices. In the aftermath of the terrorist hijacking of four planes and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, it may appear that the future course of U.S. foreign policy is crystal clear and that only one path is open. In truth, the content and conduct of American foreign policy will remain contested. Those who share the belief that eliminating terrorism should be its defining feature will disagree over how to go about achieving this goal, and over the proper relationship between it and other goals that the United States might pursue. Those who reject it as the focal point of American foreign policy will be divided over what goals to pursue instead. Moreover, goals change. What seems obvious today may look far less obvious in the future. Analogies with the past that seem to provide guidance today may in the long run prove to be illusory.

Beneath the coherence of the phrase *the national interest* lies a complex array of individuals and institutions competing for positions of prominence in setting values and priorities. The ascendancy of one constellation of political interests does not mark their permanent triumph nor mean an end to efforts to alter the foreign policy agenda. Broad-based support for military action—even war—in the period immediately following the terrorist attack does not mean an end to the isolationist impulse or a permanent rejection of Wilsonianism.

Since the end of the cold war, the makers of American foreign policy have occupied unfamiliar but not totally unprecedented territory. The United States has been in this position before, after World War I and World War II.

There has been the challenge of constructing an international system in which the United States can be secure and prosper. James Kurth argues that the core foreign policy problem facing the United States as the victor in the cold war has been constructing a "victor's strategy": one that orders the world in such a way that it does not provoke a major new war. The great danger he sees is that policy makers will succumb to the "victory disease" and rely upon strategies that brought it victory but are now inappropriate due to changed circumstances.

Constructing a strategy that avoids falling victim to the victory disease begins with a vision of the proper role that the United States should play in world politics. It presumes that choice exists. This choice may not be unlimited. Limitations on resources may create a frustrating gap between what U.S. foreign policy can aspire to and what it can accomplish. Choice also may be severely constrained by such factors as past foreign policy actions or inaction, the amount of time available within which to act, as well as accident and chance.

We close our treatment of U.S. foreign policy by introducing nine competing visions. The differences between them are many, but there are also points of overlap. We ask three questions of each alternative future: (1) What is the primary threat to U.S. national security? (2) What responsibility does the United States have to other states? and (3) What responsibility does the United States have to the global community? The answers given reflect different views about the degree to which the United States should be involved in world politics, how much power it possesses, and the extent to which the post-cold war world will differ from its predecessor.

## Alternative Futures

### THE UNITED STATES AS AN ORDINARY STATE

For some, the key to the future is realizing that foreign policy can no longer be conducted on the assumption of American uniqueness or that U.S. actions stand between anarchy and order. The American century is over, and the challenge facing policy makers is no longer that of managing alliances, deterring aggression, or ruling over the international system. It is now one of adjusting to a new role orientation, one in which the United States is an "ordinary state."<sup>2</sup> The change in outlook is necessary because international and domestic trends point to the declining utility of a formula-based response to foreign policy problems be they rooted in ideology, concepts of power politics, or some vision of regional orders. Governments ruling over internally divided societies and those ruling over unified populations are finding themselves forced to pursue narrowly defined national interests at the expense of international collaborative and cooperative efforts. In this altered environment, flexibility, autonomy, and impartiality are to be valued over one-sided commitments, name-calling, and efforts at the diplomatic, military, or economic isolation of states.

As an ordinary state the United States would not define its interests so

rigidly that their defense would require unilateral American action. If the use of force is necessary, it should be a truly multilateral effort; and if others are unwilling to act, there is no need for the United States to assume the full burden of the commitment. Stated as a rule: "The United States should not be prepared, on its own, and supported solely by its own means, to perform tasks that most other states would not undertake."<sup>3</sup> Ordinarity does not, however, mean passivity, withdrawal, or a purely defensive approach to foreign policy problems. The quality of U.S. participation in truly multilateral efforts to solve international problems will be vital because the core ingredients to international influence in the future will be found in the fields where the United States is a leader: economics, diplomacy, and technology. The goal of these collaborative efforts should be to "create and maintain a world in which adversaries will remain in contact with one another and where compromises are still possible."<sup>4</sup> The three primary areas for such efforts (and thus for U.S. foreign policy) are to bring about a balance between Russia and the West, the Arab oil producers and the consuming states, and the rich and the poor states. To summarize, in the Ordinary State perspective:

1. The greatest threat to U.S. national security lies in trying to do too much and in having too expansive a definition of its national interest.
2. The United States' responsibility to other states must be proportionate and reciprocal to that which other states have to the United States.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is to be a good global citizen—nothing more and nothing less.

The imagery advanced by the Ordinary State perspective is one most Americans find troubling. Its denial of American uniqueness; its lack of optimism; its focus on restraints rather than opportunities; and its admonition to not try to do too much all run against the traditional American approach to world politics. For that reason it is a perspective that is unlikely to be endorsed (at least by this name) by politicians. At the same time, it is a perspective on the future that cannot be dismissed. Political leaders must acknowledge it because it taps into a feeling shared by many Americans that while the United States should not retreat into isolationism it should not be the first to take risks in places such as Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti. Its admonition not to undertake herculean tasks also resonates well in some portions of the scholarly community. Ronald W. Pruessen, for example, in comparing the 1950s with the 1990s notes that one reason for the failure of American foreign policy at the earlier time was the overly optimistic "game plan" that the Eisenhower administration sought to execute.<sup>5</sup>

### REFORMED AMERICA

According to proponents of the Reformed America perspective, U.S. foreign policy has traditionally been torn between pursuing democratic ideals and empire.<sup>6</sup> The United States wants peace—but only on its own terms; the United States supports human rights—but only if its definitions are used; the

United States wants to promote third world economic growth—but only if it follows the U.S. model and does not undermine U.S. business interests abroad. Historically, the thrust toward empire (whether it is called containment, détente, or trilateralism) has won out, and democratic ideals have been sacrificed or only given lip service. Whether it is foreign aid, human rights, environmental protection, or arms control, U.S. policy makers have given highest priority to maintaining the United States' position of dominance in the international system and promoting the economic well-being of U.S. corporations.<sup>7</sup>

The need now exists to reverse this pattern. Democratic ideals must be given primary consideration in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy. Not doing so invites future Vietnams and runs the risk of undermining the very democratic principles the United States stands for. Foreign policy and domestic policy are not seen as two separate categories. They are held to be inextricably linked together, and actions taken in one sphere have an impact on behavior and policies in the other. Bribery of foreign officials leads to bribery of U.S. officials; an unwillingness to challenge human rights violations abroad reinforces the acceptance of discrimination and violations of civil rights at home; and a lack of concern for the growing disparity in economic wealth on a global basis leads to an insensitivity to the problems of poverty in the United States.

The Reformed America perspective demands global activism from the United States. The much heralded decline in American power is not seen as being so great as to prevent the United States from exercising a predominant global influence. Moreover, the United States is held to have a moral and political responsibility to lead by virtue of its comparative wealth and power. The danger to be avoided is inaction brought on by the fear of failure. The United States cannot be permitted to crawl into a shell of isolationism or to let itself be "Europeized" into believing that there are limits to its power and accepting the world "as it is." The power needed for success in creating what amounts to a new world order that is faithful to traditional American democratic values is not the ability to dominate others but to renew the American commitment to justice, opportunity, and liberty. In sum, the Reformed America perspective holds that:

1. The primary threat to U.S. national security is a continued fixation on military problems and an attachment to power-politics thinking.
2. The United States' responsibility to other states is great provided they are truly democratic, and the United States must seek to move those that are not in that direction.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is also great and centers on the creation of an international system conducive to the realization of traditional America values.

The values underlying this perspective were widely embraced in the post-cold war period as many commentators urged presidents to move more aggressively toward a neo-Wilsonian foreign policy. G. John Ikenberry, for example, asserts that a liberal grand strategy for foreign policy can be constructed around assumptions about how democracy, economic interdepend-

dence, international institutions, and political identity interact to create stable political orders.<sup>8</sup>

Both advocates and critics of the Reformed America perspective wrestle with the question of what specific courses of action and instruments of foreign policy further this vision of the future. Military power tends to be rejected, yet many neo-Wilsonian are adamant supporters of humanitarian interventions. Economic sanctions are a preferred option, yet they have been condemned as having "contributed to more deaths than all the weapons of mass destruction throughout history" during the post-cold war period alone.<sup>9</sup> Even international institutions are sometimes cited as often contributing to international problems rather than being part of the solution.

### THE UNITED STATES AS A GLOBAL MANAGER

According to the Global Manager perspective, the key issues in world politics no longer revolve around power politics. They are rooted in dynamics growing from economic integration and globalization. When first put forward as an alternative organizing principle to power politics, interdependence tended to be treated as a positive force for international cooperation. The same was true for globalization. It would bring economic efficiency and prosperity to all corners of the globe. As we have gained experience in living with the political and economic realities of interdependence and globalization, we now recognize that neither has succeeded in bringing an end to international conflict. Responsibility for causing and fixing financial crises, trade disputes, resource shortages, environmental degradation, and the sociopolitical effects of international economic activity are now points of contention and conflict.

From the Global Manager perspective, the challenge facing the United States today is quite traditional. It has always been the task of the dominant economic power to structure and manage global economic relations. The problem today is that the depth of interdependence and pace of globalization has created an international order that frustrates both traditional unilateral exercises of economic power as well as management by committee. The need is to develop a new style of leadership.

Commentators have sought various ways to capture and express the essence of this new leadership style. One asserts that the United States must learn to lead by example and be the first to offer concessions.<sup>10</sup> Another speaks of the need to be an honest broker. Doing so requires not only a clear vision of the future but also earning the trust of other states through one's actions.<sup>11</sup> Still another speaks of the need for the United States to enter into a "constitutional bargain" with other states.<sup>12</sup> It can do so by joining international institutions whose rules and operating procedures place limits on its exercise of power. By accepting these constraints, the United States will lessen fears of domination and abandonment. Its use of power will become open and predictable. In sum, the Global Manager perspective holds that

1. The primary threats to U.S. national security are economic in nature and stem from the growing pace of global interdependence.

2. The United States has a responsibility to help other states deal with their economic problems, but it cannot solve these problems for them. Its first concern must be to position itself so that others will follow its lead.
3. The United States' responsibility to the world community is great because its economic well-being is inseparable from the well-being of all states.

Glimpses of the Global Manager orientation to American foreign policy come through quite clearly in efforts to create and expand a North American Free Trade Zone and to establish the World Trade Organization and work for China's membership in that organization. It is less evident, or missing, in the continued ad hoc system of crisis management that oversees the international monetary system, in trade conflicts with Europe and Japan, and in an unwillingness to participate in the Kyoto Protocol.

### PRAGMATIC AMERICA

The Pragmatic America perspective holds that the United States can no longer afford foreign policies that are on the extreme ends of the political spectrum. Neither crusades nor isolationism serve America well. In the words of long-time strategist and policy maker James Schlesinger, what is needed in U.S. foreign policy is "selectivity."<sup>13</sup> The United States, he argues, must avoid impulse and image in formulating foreign policy. What is needed is a strong dose of moderation in means and ends. Above all else, the end of the cold war is seen as vindicating a policy of moderation.<sup>14</sup> As to ends, some world problems require U.S. attention, but not all do. The United States must recognize that the American national interest is not identical to the global interest and that not all problems lend themselves to permanent resolution. The most pressing issue on the agenda is for the United States to develop a set of criteria for identifying these problems and then acting in moderation to protect American interests.

A certain amount of overlap exists between the Global Manager and Pragmatic America perspectives. Both emphasize a utilitarian outlook on world politics and recognize the lessened ability of military force to solve foreign policy problems. They differ in their view of what needs to be managed. Instead of economics, the Pragmatic America perspective sees military problems as continuing to be the most threatening ones facing the United States. The nature of these problems is not what it used to be and thus the remedies must also differ. President Clinton's first Director of Central Intelligence R. James Woolsey pointed out that while the cold war dragon represented by the Soviet Union has been slain, the world confronting the United States is now populated by large numbers of poisonous snakes. For many who embrace this view, the most effective means of countering those snakes deemed to be threatening to the United States is through some form of collective action instead of by unilateral or bloc-based moves. One national security practitioner suggests that the ideal practical method for moving forward is the creation of international pacts.<sup>15</sup> Just as in the old American West, when security threats present themselves the United States (the sheriff) should organize and deputize a posse of like-minded states that will end the threat. It will

then disband. This is far less expensive politically and militarily than acting through standing alliances such as NATO or international organizations such as the United Nations. In sum, the Pragmatic America perspective holds that:

1. The primary threats to U.S. national security continue to be military in nature.
2. The United States has a responsibility to other states on a selective basis and only to the extent that threats to the political order of those states would lessen American security.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is limited. More pressing is a sense of responsibility to key partners whose cooperation is necessary to manage a threatening international environment.

President George Bush in his farewell foreign policy address argued for a position that is consistent with this view.<sup>16</sup> Warning against becoming isolationist, Bush asserted that the United States can influence the future but that "it need not respond to every outrage of violence." It cannot be the police officer of the world but must be prepared to act militarily. He went on to note that no formula exists that tells with precision when and where to intervene. "Each and every case is unique. To adopt rigid criteria would guarantee mistakes involving American interests and lives. . . . Similarly we cannot always decide in advance which interests will require our using military force." When force is used, Bush urged that the mission be clear and achievable, that a realistic plan exist, and that equally realistic criteria be established for withdrawing U.S. forces.

The Pragmatic America perspective is seen by some as well suited for an international system in a state of flux. Rigidly applied guiding principles such as containing communism or spreading democracy are held to be of little value in a world where change is the dominant condition. At the same time, its measured approach to solving foreign policy problems is also a fundamental weakness in the Pragmatic America perspective. Because pragmatism can be interpreted differently by different people, the policy it produces tends to move forward in a series of disjointed steps. The result is that whereas defenders see it as producing flexibility and adaptability, detractors see in it a foreign policy by lottery in which the past provides little guidance for friends or enemies as they seek to anticipate America's position.

### NEO-CONTAINMENT

The Neo-Containment perspective takes issue with the assertion that a fundamental change has taken place in the nature of world politics.<sup>17</sup> Neither the overall stake of the United States in the makeup of the international system nor its underlying dynamics are different from those that confronted U.S. policy makers in the years immediately following World War II. World politics continues to be governed by considerations of (military) power politics. In the early post-cold war period, Russia was seen as the primary threat to national security that needed to be contained. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, asserted that talk of an American-Russian partnership was premature. It was based on flawed assumptions regarding the

prospects for democracy there and an incorrect reading of Russian strategic goals. From the Neo-Containment perspective Russian foreign policy continued to be driven by an imperialist impulse that extended beyond the territory around its borders. A premature and overly enthusiastic embrace of Russia was held to be dangerous because it could cause the United States and its allies to squander all that has been accomplished in Europe since the end of the cold war.

Whereas for some the prospect of a resurgent Russia remains the principal national security threat to the United States, others have come to see China in this light. Just as with Russia, China possesses a strong historical sense of mission that places it at the center of regional, if not world, politics. Proponents of Neo-Containment see China's military and economic power as approaching a critical mass that will propel it into a position where its interests in regional domination will clash with the United States' interest in a balanced Asia. They note that should conflicts break out, the United States will be at a strategic disadvantage due to the great distance it must travel in projecting power and the lack of military bases and staging areas in the Pacific. For this reason, they oppose policies designed to promote U.S. investment in China and the transfer of technology to China.

Advocates of the Neo-Containment perspective argue for a policy built upon the conceptual foundation that underlay the cold war doctrine of containment. Most pointedly this involves basing political relationships on power and not on notions of transnational common interests. It also involves a recognition that international stability is best assured by a foreign policy that seeks to establish a balance of power among states and to offset the military power of potentially hegemonic states. Thus, a key point of similarity between the old and new containment doctrines is the emphasis on delineating lines beyond which Russian or Chinese domination is not to extend.

In sum, Neo-Containment holds that

1. The primary threats to U.S. national security continue to emanate from quite traditional sources and call for a buildup of U.S. military power to offset that possessed by a potentially hostile superpower.
2. The United States' responsibility to other states is real but limited to its core allies.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is minimal. A balance-of-power system is held to exist, and the primary responsibility of the United States is to act in a manner consistent with its basic principles.

Critics of Neo-Containment come from two quarters. Not unexpectedly, one set argues that Neo-Containment misreads the extent to which the international system has been transformed, making balance-of-power thinking obsolete. A second group of critics agrees with the concept of containment but disagrees on the question of who is to be contained. It is not clear to all strategists that Russia is the primary threat to the United States. Colin Gray speaks of the likely need for the United States to intervene in Europe in order to support Russia and Britain against a continental bloc led by Germany.<sup>18</sup>

Others have identified Japan as the primary future national security threat to the United States.

### TRIUMPHANT AMERICA

Those who embrace the Triumphant America perspective on the future see the post-cold war world as a dangerous place and believe that a new strategic environment confronts the United States. But, unlike many, they see the world as having become unipolar rather than multipolar. The alternative to American unipolarity is held to be chaos, not an eighteenth-century balance of power among mature European states. The roots of today's chaos are found in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction throughout the third world. Iraq represents the prototypical threat with North Korea and Libya not far behind.

From the Triumphant America perspective, the United States emerged from the cold war as the clear winner, and the end of the Persian Gulf War symbolized the beginning of a Pax Americana. It will take a generation before new power centers emerge that are capable of challenging the United States for preeminence. Only the United States possesses the military, economic, and diplomatic resources to intervene decisively in conflicts around the world. That the United States possesses this ability does not mean that it should involve itself in every conflict. As Charles Krauthammer, the leading exponent of this perspective, notes, primary places great burdens on the United States. It must "make the connection between America's moral and geopolitical standing."<sup>19</sup> This connection is necessary because the American peace cannot rest on power alone. It must be acquiesced to by the nations of the world or the United States will find itself encountering the kind of resistance that marked the Soviet cold war rule of Eastern Europe. However, when the United States chooses to intervene it must do so in a "robust" fashion. It must act decisively and unashamedly. When possible it should act with allies in a multilateral setting, but it must not hesitate to act unilaterally if it is the right thing to do.

In sum, the Triumphant America perspective holds that

1. The primary threats to U.S. national security stem from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There are no states equal in power to the United States.
2. The United States' responsibility to other states is limited and determined by American values and interests as it defines them.
3. The United States has a responsibility to the world community that stems from its ability to lay down the rules of world order and enforce them.

Putting these principles into prescriptive policy advice, Krauthammer opposed the Clinton administration's policy in Somalia.<sup>20</sup> Referring to Somalia as a place for "Utopians," he argued that the United States is not in the business of nation-building. "It is bad enough playing cop to the world. Playing God is crazy." He went on to argue that with the passing of the immediate



humanitarian crisis there were no U.S. interests at stake in Somalia. U.S. policy should be "to stay in Somalia just long enough to punish Aidid—preferably by killing him—to show one does not murder four American soldiers with impunity. Then get out."

### AMERICAN CRUSADER

At base, the Triumphant America perspective is status quo oriented. It sees the United States having won the cold war and now intent upon enjoying the fruits of its victory as the dominant global power. Threats are to be met forcefully, but there is no sense of mission or global purpose behind these actions. The concern is with protecting narrowly and self-defined American interests and prerogatives.

The American Crusader perspective starts from the same power premise as Triumphant America but rejects its relatively complacent view of the state of world politics. This perspective adds a sense of global mission and purpose to American dominance that is rooted in the perception of real and pressing security threats. Unlike the Reformed America perspective, the American Crusader perspective does not act so much out of a sense of shared humanity as out of a sense of historical mission. It builds upon an important strain in the American national style that defines security in absolute terms. The objective is "unconditional surrender." As James Chace and Caleb Carr observe, "for more than two centuries the United States has aspired to a condition of perfect safety from foreign threats" real and imagined.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the Reformed American perspective, the American Crusader perspective identifies military power as the instrument of choice. It is rooted firmly in that part of the American national style that rejects compromise and seeks engineering and permanent solutions to political problems.

Faint echoes of the American Crusader perspective can be found in post-World War II foreign policy. During the Eisenhower administration, some commentators called for rolling back the iron curtain, feeling that containment was too passive and accommodating a strategy. During the Persian Gulf War there was a moment when defeating Saddam Hussein had the characteristics of a crusade, at least at a rhetorical level. The American Crusader perspective burst upon the scene with full force following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

In sum, the American Crusader perspective holds that

1. The international system holds real and immediate threats to American national security that must be unconditionally defeated.
2. The United States has a responsibility to help other states that are allies in its cause because their security increases American security.
3. The United States' responsibility to the international community is great, but how that responsibility is defined is a matter for the United States to determine based on its historical traditions.

There are some who share the American Crusader's view that the international system contains immediate and serious threats to American security

but question its wisdom. One concern expressed is that it overlooks the fact that superpower status does not convey total power to the United States. The challenge of bringing means and ends into balance is an ongoing one. A second concern is that by acting in this manner the United States may hasten its own decline. Rather than stay on the American "bandwagon" as an ally, second-order states may decide that since they too may become the object of an American crusade it is necessary to build up their own power and balance that of the United States.

### AMERICA THE BALANCER

Out of a conviction that unipolarity is bound to give way to a multipolar distribution of power in the international system, some commentators argue that the prudent course of action is to adopt the role of a balancer today. The United States needs to stand apart from others yet be prepared to act in concert with them. It cannot and should not become a rogue superpower acting on its own impulses and imposing its vision on the world.

The starting point of wisdom from this perspective is that not all problems are threatening to the United States or require its involvement. It poses a considerable amount of freedom to define its interests. In addition, the United States must recognize that one consequence of having put a global security umbrella in place is that it has discouraged other states and regional organizations from taking responsibility for preserving international stability. This must be reversed. Others must be encouraged to act in defense of their own interests. Finally, the United States must learn to live with uncertainty. Absolute security is an unattainable objective and one that only produces imperial overstretch.

In sum, the America as Balancer perspective holds that:

1. The primary national security threats to the United States are self-inflicted. They take the form of a proliferation of security commitments designed to protect America's economic interests.
2. The United States has a limited responsibility to other states because the burden for protecting a state's national interests falls upon that state.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is limited. American national interests and the maintenance of global order are not identical.

Christopher Layne provides a rationale for the role of balancer as part of a strategy of strategic independence.<sup>22</sup> He argues that a return to multipolarity is inevitable. Trying to reassert or preserve American preeminence and suppress the emergence of new powers is held to be futile. There is thus little reason for the United States to become deeply involved in the affairs of other states on a routine basis. In spite of this inevitable move toward multipolarity, Layne sees no reason to change America's long-standing foreign policy concern with the rise of a hegemony in Europe. What is needed is a hedging strategy, one that will allow the United States to realize this goal without provoking others into uniting against it or accelerating their separate pursuits of power. Blessed by its geopolitical location, Layne believes that the answer lies

in adopting the position of an offshore balancer. The United States is positioned to allow global and regional power balances to ensure its strategic independence. Only when others prove incapable of acting to block the ascent of a challenging hegemony should the United States step in to affect the balance of power. Given its continued power resources, such an intervention is held likely to be decisive.

One issue that needs to be confronted by advocates of the America the Balancer perspective is how to most effectively exercise American military power. Traditionally, war was the mechanism by which a balance-of-power system preserved stability in the international system. Commentators positioned across the political spectrum have raised the question of whether wars can continue to play this role on a large scale. If they cannot, then how is the balancer to enforce its will? One possibility is that rather than using American power to deter or defeat an adversary, America the Balancer will play a central role in compelling adversaries to change their behavior. The distinction is potentially important. One commentator who has looked at compellence suggests that it is more of a police task than deterrence, which is a military task.

### DISENGAGED AMERICA

The final alternative future put forward here calls for the United States to selectively yet thoroughly withdraw from the world.<sup>23</sup> The Disengaged America perspective sees retrenchment as necessary because the international system is becoming increasingly inhospitable to U.S. values and unresponsive to efforts at management or domination. Increasingly, the choices facing U.S. foreign policy will be ones of choosing what kinds of losses to avoid. Optimal solutions to foreign policy problems will no longer present themselves to policy makers, and if they do, domestic constraints will prevent policy makers from pursuing such a path. In the Disengaged America perspective, foreign policy must become less of a lance—a tool for spreading values—and more of a shield—a minimum set of conditions behind which the United States can protect its values and political processes.<sup>24</sup>

Becoming disengaged means that the United States will have to learn to live in a "second-best world," one that is not totally of its liking but one in which it can get by. Allies will be fewer in number, and those that remain will have to do more to protect their own security and economic well-being. Non-intervention will be the rule for the United States and self-reliance the watchword for others. The United States must be prepared to "let" some states be dominated and to direct its efforts at placing space between the falling dominoes rather than trying to define a line of containment. In the realm of economics, the objective should be to move toward autarchy and self-sufficiency so that other states cannot manipulate the sources of supply, it must be prepared to "substitute, tide over, (and) ride out" efforts at resource manipulation.<sup>25</sup> World order concerns must also take a back seat in U.S. foreign policy. As George Kennan has said about the food-population problem, "We did not create it and it is beyond our power to solve it."<sup>26</sup> Kennan argues that the United States needs to divest itself of its guilt complex and accept the fact that

there is really very little that the United States can do for the third world and very little that the third world can do for the United States. In sum, the Disengaged America perspective holds that:

1. The major threat to U.S. national security comes from an overactive foreign policy. Events beyond U.S. borders are not as crucial to U.S. security as is commonly perceived, and moreover, the United States has little power to influence their outcome.
2. The United States' responsibility to other states is minimal. The primary responsibility of the United States is to its own economic and military security.
3. The United States' responsibility to the global community is also minimal. The issues on the global agenda, especially as they relate to the third world, are not the fault of the United States, and the United States can do little to solve them.

Consistent with the Disengaged America perspective, Earl Ravenal asserts that in a period of international nonalignment such as the one we are now in, traditional principles of defense planning are largely irrelevant.<sup>27</sup> Military power, for example, should no longer be employed to further human rights or economic principles beyond American borders. Rather than pursue military goals, American foreign policy must concentrate on protecting American lives and property, the territorial integrity of the United States, and the autonomy of its political system. Consistent with these priorities, American military power would only be used for three purposes: (1) to defend the approaches to U.S. territory; (2) to serve as second-chance forces to be used if deterrence fails or unexpected threats arise; and (3) to provide finite essential deterrence against the United States and its forces overseas.

Ravenal's assessment of how American foreign policy needs to be changed is shared by other analysts at the Cato Institute, a foreign policy think tank with which he is affiliated. Doug Bandow urges the United States to remain culturally, economically, and politically engaged in the world, but insists that it curtail foreign aid programs and bring its troops home.<sup>28</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, its director, asserts that the primary responsibility of American foreign policy is to "guard the security and liberty of the American people. Washington has neither a constitutional nor moral writ to play Don Quixote and attempt to rectify all the ills of the world."<sup>29</sup> Or, in the words of Pat Buchanan, "America First—and Second, and Third."<sup>30</sup>

### The Future

Agreement cannot be expected on any of these (or other) visions of American foreign policy in the near future. Deciding which among them is best suited to protect and further American interests is only one of the challenges confronting the United States today. A second and equally important challenge is obtaining the leadership resources necessary to translate a desired strategic vision into policy.<sup>31</sup> This challenge operates at several different levels. At a structural level, it entails acquiring the power resources necessary to lead. Whether these resources primarily are military or economic in nature will depend on the vision selected, but traditional international relations theorizing

suggests that little will be accomplished unless the United States has the power to get others to follow. Realizing many of these visions will demand more than just possessing the ability to dominate others, it will also depend upon the ability to get others to follow in multilateral settings. Leadership at the institutional level will require that the United States develop a capacity for fostering cooperation among states by framing issues so that joint action is possible and providing the resources needed to implement solutions.

Finally, leadership will be necessary at the situational level. Here, the challenge will be to find creative solutions to problems, to find "good people" with insight into human nature and the dynamics of world politics so that opportunities for action are not lost.

## Notes

1. James Kurth, "The American Way of Victory," *National Interest*, 128 (2000), 5-16.
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