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Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy

Barry R. Posen and
Andrew L. Ross

The dramatic events that marked the end of the Cold War and the subsequent early end of the twentieth century require the United States to reconsider its national security policy. What are U.S. interests and objectives? What are the threats to those interests and objectives? What are the appropriate strategic responses to those threats? What principles should guide the development of U.S. policy and strategy? In short, what should be the new grand strategy of the United States?

Four grand strategies, relatively discrete and coherent arguments about the U.S. role in the world, now compete in our public discourse. They may be termed neo-isolationism; selective engagement; cooperative security; and primacy (see Table 1 for a summary presentation of the four alternative visions). Below, we describe each of these four strategies in its purest form; we borrow liberally from the academics, government officials, journalists, and policy analysts who have contributed to this debate, but on issues where others have kept silent, or been inconsistent, we impose consistency in the interest of clarity. Our purpose is not advocacy; it is transparency. We hope to sharpen the public debate, not settle it. We then offer our characterization and critique of the evolving grand strategy of the Clinton administration, an uneasy amalgam of selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy. Finally, we speculate on what might cause the United States to make a clearer grand strategy choice.

The state of the U.S. economy, the national finances, and persistent social problems largely drove foreign and defense policy out of the 1992 presidential race. The 1996 campaign was little different. The first months of the first Clinton administration were characterized by indirection, and later by a nearly single-minded focus on economic issues. Security matters were dealt with sequentially and incrementally; no obvious grand scheme emerged until Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Anthony Lake proposed in Septem-

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Table 1. Competing Grand Strategy Visions.

		Neo-Isolationism	Selective Engagement	Cooperative Security	Primacy
Analytical Anchor	Minimal, defensive realism	Traditional balance of power realism	Liberalism	Maximal realism/unilateralism	
Major Problem of Int'l Politics	Avoiding entanglement in the affairs of others	Peace among the major powers	The indivisibility of peace	The rise of a peer competitor	
Preferred World Order	Distant balance of power	Balance of power	Interdependence	Hegemonic	
Nuclear Dynamics	Supports status quo	Supports status quo	Supports aggression	Supports aggression	
Conception of National Interests	Narrow	Restricted	Transnational	Broad	
Regional Priorities	North America	Industrial Eurasia	Global	Industrial Eurasia & the home of any potential peer competitor	
Nuclear Proliferation	Not our problem	Discriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention	
NATO	Withdraw	Maintain	Transform & expand	Expand	
Regional Conflict	Abstain	Contain; discriminate intervention	Intervene	Contain; discriminate intervention	
Ethnic Conflict	Abstain	Contain	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Contain	
Humanitarian Intervention	Abstain	Discriminate intervention	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Discriminate intervention	
Use of Force	Self-defense	Discriminate	Frequent	At will	
Force Posture	Minimal self-defense force	Two-MRC force	Reconnaissance strike complex for multilateral action	A two-power-standard force	

ber 1993 that U.S. policy shift “From Containment to Enlargement.” Not until July 1994 were the ideas initially advanced by Lake codified in the administration’s *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. Those ideas remain intact in the February 1996 version of that White House document.¹ Yet the Clinton administration, like the Bush administration before it, has failed to build a domestic political consensus in support of its strategic vision. Thus the post-Cold War grand strategy debate continues.

We distinguish the four alternative strategies in four ways. We ask, first, what are the major purposes or objectives each identifies for the United States in international politics? These range from a narrow commitment to the basic safety of the United States to an ambitious effort to secure permanent U.S. global preeminence.

Second, we ask: what are each strategy’s basic premises about international politics? Though advocates are seldom explicit, underlying disagreements among the strategies on basic questions help to explain their other disagreements. In particular, the four strategies disagree on the “fragility” of international politics—the propensity for developments unfavorable to the United States to cascade rapidly in ever more unfavorable directions, and for developments favorable to the United States to move in ever more favorable directions. A fragile international political system both requires and responds to U.S. activism. Answers to three central questions of modern international relations theory affect each strategy’s assessment of the fragility of international politics: (1) Do states tend to balance against, or bandwagon with, expansionists? That is, will most states, faced with a neighbor growing in power and ambition, take steps to improve their power through some combination of internal military preparation and external alignment? (2) Do nuclear weapons make conquest easier or harder? If secure retaliatory nuclear deterrent forces are easy to get, and the risks they impose for ambitious aggressors are easy for those aggressors to grasp, then they make it difficult for aspiring hegemons to improve their power position through intimidation or conquest. If, on the other hand, they cause hegemons to perceive themselves as invulnerable to attack, such states may be emboldened to act aggressively. (3) How much potential influence does the United States actually have in international politics? How do we measure relative power in international politics; is it reasonable to speak of a unipolar world? Here, there are two subsidiary issues. Measured globally,

1. Anthony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement,” *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 4, No. 39 (September 27, 1993), pp. 658–664; *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [U.S. GPO], July 1994); and *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, February 1996).

how much international political influence can the current U.S. "share" of gross world power resources—economic, technological, and military capabilities—buy? How much money, and how many lives, are the American people willing to pay for influence in international politics in the absence of a major threat? If the United States is relatively quite powerful in international politics, then it can think in terms of great objectives. If not, its objectives will need to be limited. If the United States is inherently much more powerful than is often believed, then the American people may not need to sacrifice much more than they already do for the United States to undertake ambitious policies successfully.²

We ask, third, what are the preferred political and military instruments of each strategy? Do advocates prefer to work multilaterally or unilaterally? Do they favor international organizations or prefer traditional alliances? How much military force does the United States require, and what kind? Our force structure analysis is indicative rather than comprehensive; as a heuristic device we rely substantially on the array of alternative force structures developed by the late Les Aspin during his tenure as Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and then as Secretary of Defense early in the Clinton administration.³ The force structures (see Table 2) were developed with an eye to the number and variety of contingencies they could support—the "business end" of grand strategy.⁴

2. Each grand strategy should have an economic component. Most of the literature, however, treats the economic component in a cursory way, if at all. As we began to consider the possible economic elements of each alternative we determined that a separate essay would be required to offer more than a superficial treatment. Therefore, this essay confines itself to the political and military aspects of alternative U.S. grand strategies.

3. We also rely on these options because they have the unusual attribute that five of them largely employ the same basic methodology to develop force structure and to estimate the costs of those force structures. Representative Les Aspin, "An Approach to Sizing American Conventional Forces for the Post-Soviet Era," February 25, 1992 (unpublished manuscript); Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1993); Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Staff Memorandum, "Fiscal Implications of the Administration's Proposed Base Force," December 1991 (unpublished manuscript); see also Andrew F. Krepinevitch, *The Bottom-Up Review: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Defense Budget Project, 1994); and Dov S. Zakheim and Jeffrey M. Ranney, "Matching Defense Strategies to Resources: Challenges for the Clinton Administration," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Summer 1993), pp. 51–78. The Bush-Cheney-Powell "Base Force" was probably generated by a somewhat different methodology. The individuals who made the budget estimates in every case had access to the best available cost information. Other analysts have developed force structures and estimated costs on the basis of their individual methodologies; we chose not to employ them because we could not be sure they were strictly comparable.

4. However, there are reasons why the cost estimates in Table 2 could be too high or too low. Most estimates, particularly those for the Base Force and Clinton Bottom-Up Review (BUR) force,

Fourth, to illustrate the real world implications of each grand strategy, we ask: what are their positions on a number of basic issues now on the U.S. agenda, including nuclear proliferation, NATO enlargement, and regional conflict?

After describing each strategy along these four dimensions, we offer a short critique, which reflects both our own specific concerns and what we believe are the most credible counter-arguments that the proponents of the other strategies might offer.

The essay closes with a brief review and analysis of the Clinton administration's grand strategy, which consists of a core of cooperative security principles and impulses, drawn toward primacy as it has faced a less tractable international environment than it expected, but constrained toward selectivity by a U.S. citizenry whose support for ambitious foreign projects seems shallow at best. We explain why this compromise has proven necessary, and offer some hypotheses about what could cause this grand strategy to change.

Neo-Isolationism

Neo-isolationism is the least ambitious, and, at least among foreign policy professionals, probably the least popular grand strategy option.⁵ The new isolationists have embraced a constricted view of U.S. national interests that renders internationalism not only unnecessary but counterproductive. National

probably underestimate the cost of major procurement after the turn of the century. On the other hand, many estimates of the costs of smaller forces probably do not take credit for the savings that ought to accrue from proportional reductions in defense infrastructure that ought to accompany reductions in force structure. This tends to occur for two reasons. First, because U.S. defense politics focuses on the Future Years Defense Plan, or FYDP, most policy-oriented budget analysts focus primarily on the near-term budgetary consequences that would directly arise from incremental reductions in existing forces. Second, infrastructure, particularly bases and depots, are often politically protected. It is only slightly absurd to suggest, therefore, that nearly all the conventional combat power in the U.S. military could be eliminated, and still leave us with a defense budget of \$100 billion a year, which is the implication of the trend of costs versus force structure in Options A–D.

5. The new isolationists seldom refer to themselves as isolationists. Indeed, they often vociferously deny isolationist tendencies. Earl Ravenal, "The Case for Adjustment," *Foreign Policy*, No. 81 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 3–19, prefers "disengagement." Patrick J. Buchanan, too, in "America First—and Second, and Third," *National Interest*, No. 19 (Spring 1990), pp. 77–82, uses "disengagement." Doug Bandow, "Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home," *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 579 (January 1994), pp. 8–13, prefers "benign detachment." Eric A. Nordlinger, however, in the most sophisticated, and perhaps least conventional version of the new isolationism, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), embraces "isolationism."

Table 2. Comparison of Alternative Future Force Structures.

	Force A ¹	Force B ²	Force C ³	Force D ⁴	Base Force ⁵	Clinton-BUR ⁶
ARMY						
Active divisions	8	8	9	10	12	10
Reserve divisions	2	2	6	6	6	8
MARINES⁷						
Active divisions	2	2	2	3	$2\frac{1}{3}$	3
Reserve divisions	1	1	1	1	1	1
AIR FORCE						
Active wings	6	8	10	11	15	13
Reserve wings	4	6	8	9	11	7
NAVY						
Total ships	220	290	340	430	450	346
Carriers	6	8	12	15	13	12
Attack subs	20	40	40	50	80	45-55
Amphibious assault ships ⁸	50	50	50	82	50	44
PERSONNEL						
Active	1,247,000	1,312,000	1,409,000	1,575,000	1,626,000	1,450,000
Reserve	666,000	691,000	904,000	933,000	920,000	905,000
1997 BUDGET AUTHORITY, billions 97\$ (DOD+DOE) ⁹	231	246	270	295	291-301	253

NOTES:

- ¹ Alternatives A,B,C, and D were devised by the House Armed Services Committee under the leadership of then Chairman Les Aspin. Force A: A “foundation” of nuclear, forward presence, special operations, and continental defense forces, and an industrial mobilization base, plus forces for one “major regional contingency” (MRC) such as the 1991 war against Iraq, and a modest humanitarian intervention capability.
- ² Force B: Preceding plus sufficient airpower to support heavily an ally in a second major regional contingency.
- ³ Force C: Preceding plus sufficient forces in reserve to sustain comfortably a large new forward deployment for a major regional contingency, plus the capability to mount simultaneously a small invasion similar to the attack on Panama in 1989.
- ⁴ Force D: Preceding with “a more robust response,” plus a second humanitarian intervention and naval “power projection” for the second MRC.
- ⁵ Base Force: Proposed by President Bush and Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell. General Powell was attempting to develop a force structure that accommodated the widespread expectation of a “peace dividend,” and at the same time clearly preserved the image and the fact of U.S. superpower status.
- ⁶ Clinton Bottom-Up Review: Two “near simultaneous regional contingencies” plus a moderate peace-keeping operation and substantial forward presence; objective for the year 2000; 1997 force structure is close but not identical. The “Bottom-Up Review” was developed by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin early in the Clinton administration. It relied substantially on the analysis that he had conducted as a Congressman to generate Options A-D. The BUR Force Structure is meant to be able to fight two Desert Storm-scale “Major Regional Contingencies” (MRCs) “nearly” simultaneously, and to sustain a high level of forward military presence in peacetime. The BUR force structure has the unusual attribute of being slightly larger, but costing somewhat less than Force C, Aspin’s earlier preference.
- ⁷ Marine divisions and Navy Carriers each have associated air wings, respectively slightly larger and slightly smaller than their Air Force counterparts, which number 72 aircraft.
- ⁸ These transport Marine units to their attack positions; some of these ships (10–12 in the current force) are very large, roughly half the size of a standard Nimitz class carrier, and carry VSTOL aircraft, helicopters, and hovercraft.
- ⁹ Totals include roughly ten billion dollars of DOE funding to maintain the nuclear weapons complex. Among budget analysts, it is generally agreed that the available defense dollars that the Bush administration projected and the Clinton administration projects after the turn of the century would be inadequate to support their preferred force structures. By 2005, \$20–65 billion more than the projected 1997 budget would be required to fund the Base Force; see Congressional Budget Office, “Fiscal Implications of the Base Force,” p. 11. The CBO estimates that after the turn of the century the modernization of the smaller Bottom-Up Review Force Structure with new technology weapons currently in development or production would require between \$7 billion and \$31 billion more per year than the current budget plans for the year 1999, which is little different from the 1997 plan. See CBO, *An Analysis of the Administration’s Future Years Defense Program for 1995–1999* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, January 1995), p. 50.

defense—the protection of “the security, liberty, and property of the American people”⁶—is the only vital U.S. interest.

The new isolationism subscribes to a fundamentally realist view of international politics and thus focuses on power.⁷ Its advocates ask: who has the power to threaten the sovereignty of the United States, its territorial integrity, or its safety? They answer that nobody does.⁸ The collapse of the Soviet Union has left a rough balance of power in Eurasia. If either Russia or China begins to build up its military power, there are plenty of wealthy and capable states at either end of Eurasia to contain them. Indeed, Russia and China help to contain one another. Thus no state has the capability to conquer the rest and so agglomerate enough economic capability and military mobilization potential to threaten the American way of life. Like traditional isolationism, this strategy observes that the oceans make such a threat improbable in any event. The United States controls about one quarter of the gross world product, twice as much as its nearest competitor, Japan, and while not totally self-sufficient, is better placed than most to “go it alone.” U.S. neighbors to the north and south are militarily weak and destined to stay that way for quite some time. The United States is inherently a very secure country.⁹ Indeed, the United States can be said to be strategically immune.¹⁰

The new isolationism is strongly motivated by a particular understanding of nuclear weapons. It concedes that nuclear weapons have increased the poten-

6. Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” p. 10.

7. The version of realism that underlies the new isolationism is minimal. Its strategic imperatives are even more limited than those of the minimal realism outlined by Christopher Layne, “Less is More: Minimal Realism in East Asia,” *National Interest*, No. 43 (Spring 1996), pp. 64–77. Layne distinguishes between maximal and minimal realism. He views a balance of power approach (which we call “selective engagement”) as minimal realism. Layne links primacy with maximal realism. For an earlier version of minimal realism and neo-isolationism, see Robert W. Tucker, *A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise?* (New York: Universe Books, 1972). Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, is the most significant exception to the generalization that neo-isolationism is driven by a realist interpretation of international politics. His eclectic approach to developing a national strategy of isolationism and its concurrent foreign policy is, in the end, informed more by liberalism than realism.

8. Alan Tonelson, “Superpower Without a Sword,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 179, observes that “few international conflicts will directly threaten the nation’s territorial integrity, political independence or material welfare.”

9. Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), p. 48, makes this point. He uses it to support an argument for a grand strategy that he calls “strategic independence.” It bears some similarity to the selective engagement strategy outlined below, albeit a rather inactive version of it.

10. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconsidered*, pp. 6 and 63–91.

tial capacity of others to threaten the safety of the United States. But nuclear weapons make it very hard, indeed nearly inconceivable, for any power to win a traditional military victory over the United States. Nuclear weapons assure the political sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the United States. The collapse of the Soviet Union has so reduced the military resources available to its successor states that a counterforce attack on U.S. nuclear forces, an old and exaggerated fear, is out of the question. There can be no politically rational motive for any country large or small to explode a nuclear weapon on North America. U.S. retaliation would be devastating. Moreover, the fact that Britain, France, the People's Republic of China, and Russia have nuclear retaliatory forces makes it quite likely that these powers will deter each other, further reducing the risk that an ambitious hegemon could dominate and militarily exploit the economic resources of the Eurasian landmass.

ISSUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Given the absence of threats to the U.S. homeland, neo-isolationism holds that national defense will seldom justify intervention abroad. The United States is not responsible for, and cannot afford the costs of, maintaining world order. The pursuit of economic well-being is best left to the private sector. The promotion of values such as democracy and human rights inspires ill-advised crusades that serve only to generate resentment against the United States; consequently, it is a poor guide to policy and strategy.

The new isolationism would concede, however, that our great capabilities are a magnet for trouble so long as we are involved in any way in various political disputes around the world. Intervention in these disputes is thus a good way to attract attention to the United States. The strong try to deter the United States; the weak to seduce it; the dispossessed to blame it. Neo-isolationism would argue that those who fear terrorism, especially terrorism with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, can increase U.S. safety by keeping it out of foreign conflicts. Middle Eastern terrorists, for instance, whether sponsored by Syria, Iran, Iraq, or Libya, would find little reason to target the United States and its citizens, either abroad or at home, if the United States refrained from meddling in the Middle East.

Neo-isolationism advises the United States to preserve its freedom of action and strategic independence. Because neo-isolationism proposes that the United States stay out of political conflicts and wars abroad, it has no particular need for political instruments. Even traditional alliance relationships that obligate

the United States in advance, such as NATO, ought to be dismantled. International organizations are a place to talk, perhaps to coordinate international efforts to improve the overall global quality of life, but not to make or keep peace. This would implicate the United States and draw it into conflicts.

Most of the foreign policy issues now facing the United States would disappear under the new isolationism. The future of NATO, for instance, would be left to Europe. Neo-isolationists would have the United States abandon that anachronistic alliance, not lead the way in its ill-conceived expansion. Bosnia, too, is a European problem in which the United States has no concrete, material stake. The United States would no longer be preoccupied with Russian political and economic reform, or the lack thereof. Arabs and Israelis would have to sort out their affairs (or not) without U.S. meddling. Islamists would be deprived of the Great Satan. The North Korean threat would be left to South Korea, the country whose interests are actually threatened. In Latin America and Africa, the United States would no longer rescue Haitis and Somalias. Humanitarian assistance, if and when provided, would be confined to disasters—famines, epidemics, earthquakes, and storms. The United States might be willing to help clean up the mess after foreign wars have sorted themselves out. But intervention of any kind during wars would be viewed as a mistake, since at least one side is likely to be disadvantaged by humanitarian assistance to the others and would thus come to view the United States as an enemy.

FORCE STRUCTURE. Neo-isolationism generates a rather small force structure. It is unlikely to cost more than two percent of GDP.¹¹ First and foremost, the United States would need to retain a secure nuclear second-strike capability to

11. Ravenal, "The Case for Adjustment," pp. 15–19, develops a force structure and defense budget within these parameters which is explicitly geared to support a grand strategy quite similar to what we label isolationism. He suggests an active force of 1.1 million people, with six Army and two Marine divisions, eleven tactical air wings, six carriers with five air wings, and a strategic dyad of submarines and bombers, which could be funded for about \$150 billion in constant 1991 dollars, perhaps \$175 billion in 1997 dollars, or roughly 2.5 percent of GDP. See Force A in Table 1, which is roughly the same size, but which then-Congressman Aspin estimated would cost considerably more, \$231 billion in 1997 dollars, roughly 3 percent of GDP. See also Tonelson, "Superpower Without a Sword," pp. 179–180, who argues for a similar force structure, but who seems to subscribe to a conservative version of selective engagement. The Center for Defense Information has proposed that an even smaller force structure would be sufficient to support a strategy of disengagement. For \$104 billion in constant 1993 dollars, CDI proposed to field a force of only 500,000 people, one Marine and three Army divisions, four Air Force tactical wings, two carriers and 221 other combat vessels, and a nuclear force of 16 submarines. See "Defending America: CDI Options for Military Spending," *Defense Monitor*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1992). Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, p. 46, suggested that forces at half the levels sustained during the Cold War and early post-Cold War years would be sufficient.

deter nuclear attacks from any quarter. Modest air and missile defenses might be put in place to deal with low-grade threats. Second, the U.S. intelligence community would have the task of watching worldwide developments of weapons of mass destruction in order to forestall any terrorist threats against the United States. If such threats occurred, it would be their job to find an address against which retaliation could be directed. Third, the United States would probably wish to retain a capable navy (perhaps a third to a half the current size), and diverse special operations forces. The purpose would largely be to protect U.S. commerce abroad from criminal activity—piracy, kidnapping, and extortion. The remainder of U.S. forces would be structured to preserve skills at ground and tactical air warfare in the event that the balance of power on the Eurasian land mass eroded, perhaps requiring a return to a more activist U.S. policy. Since the burden of defending wealthy allies can be discarded in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s fortuitous collapse, those forces need not be forward-deployed in Europe and Asia. A major mission of the intelligence community would be to provide timely warning of strategic developments in Eurasia that would warrant a return to a more activist foreign and security policy. The U.S. force structure would no longer be driven either by demanding and costly forward presence requirements or by the need to prepare to engage in multiple foreign contingencies. American military forces would be used only to defend narrowly construed U.S. interests. Given these limited requirements, even “Force A” (see Table 2), the smallest of Aspin’s notional force structures, is larger than necessary.

CRITIQUE

The United States can, more easily than most, go it alone. Yet we do not find the arguments of the neo-isolationists compelling. Their strategy serves U.S. interests only if they are narrowly construed. First, though the neo-isolationists have a strong case in their argument that the United States is currently quite secure, disengagement is unlikely to make the United States more secure, and would probably make it less secure. The disappearance of the United States from the world stage would likely precipitate a good deal of competition abroad for security. Without a U.S. presence, aspiring regional hegemons would see more opportunities. States formerly defended by the United States would have to look to their own military power; local arms competitions are to be expected. Proliferation of nuclear weapons would intensify if the U.S. nuclear guarantee were withdrawn. Some states would seek weapons of mass destruc-

tion because they were simply unable to compete conventionally with their neighbors. This new flurry of competitive behavior would probably energize many hypothesized immediate causes of war, including preemptive motives, preventive motives, economic motives, and the propensity for miscalculation. There would likely be more war. Weapons of mass destruction might be used in some of these wars, with unpleasant effects even for those not directly involved.

Second, if these predictions about the international environment are correct, as competition intensified U.S. decision-makers would continuously have to reassess whether their original assumptions about the workings of the balance of power in Eurasia and the deterrent power of nuclear weapons were still valid. Decision-makers require both good political intelligence and compelling cause-effect knowledge about international politics to determine that a policy shift is in order. More importantly, decision-makers would have to persuade the country that a policy reversal is necessary, but U.S. foreign policy is a tough thing to change. Given these problems, how much trouble would have to occur before the United States returned to a more active role? Would the United States return in time to exert its influence to help prevent a great power war? If the United States did decide that a more active role was necessary, how much influence would it have after years of inactivity? Would the United States return in time to prevent an aspiring hegemon from getting a jump ahead, as Nazi Germany did in World War II? If not, the costs of containment or rollback could prove substantial.

Third, though the United States would save a great deal of money in its defense budget, perhaps 1–1.5 percent of GDP, or \$70–100 billion per year relative to the budgets planned by the Clinton administration, these annual savings do not seem commensurate with the international influence the strategy would forgo. Though this is a lot of money, which has many worthy alternative uses, the redirection of these resources from the military is unlikely to make the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy economy that is already some seven trillion dollars in size. Neo-isolationists seem willing to trade away considerable international influence for a relatively modest improvement in domestic welfare. Given the potential stakes in international politics, the trade-off is imprudent. Engagement in international politics imposes obvious burdens and risks. Shedding an active role in international politics, however, increases the risks of unintended consequences and reduces U.S. influence over the management of those consequences, and over issues that we can hardly anticipate.

Selective Engagement

Selective engagement endeavors to ensure peace among powers that have substantial industrial and military potential—the great powers.¹² By virtue of the great military capabilities that would be brought into play, great power conflicts are much more dangerous to the United States than conflicts elsewhere. Thus Russia, the wealthier states of the European Union, the People's Republic of China, and Japan matter most. The purpose of U.S. engagement should be to affect directly the propensity of these powers to go to war with one another. These wars have the greatest chance of producing large-scale resort to weapons of mass destruction, a global experiment that the United States ought to try to prevent. These are the areas of the world where the world wars have originated, wars that have managed to reach out and draw in the United States in spite of its strong inclination to stay out.

Like the new isolationism, selective engagement emerges from the realist tradition of international politics and its focus on large concentrations of power.¹³ Like cooperative security, it is also interested in peace. Though some of its proponents agree with the neo-isolationist premise that U.S. geography and nuclear deterrence make the United States so secure that a Eurasian hegemon would not pose much of a security problem for the United States,¹⁴ selective engagement holds that any great power war in Eurasia is a danger to the United States.¹⁵ On the basis of both the increased destructive power of modern weaponry and the demonstrated inability of the United States to stay

12. Robert Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 1991), pp. 5–53; and Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't: American Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1990), pp. 1–51, are the two most complete expositions of selective engagement. See also Ronald Steel, *Temptations of a Superpower* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

13. Selective engagement is informed neither by the minimal realism that underlies the new isolationism nor the maximal realism that drives primacy; it is instead based on the traditional mainstream balance-of-power realism evident in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed., rev. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

14. Posen classifies himself as a "selective engagement" advocate. He does believe, however, that the United States should not only act to reduce the probability of great power war, it should also pursue the traditional policy of opposing the rise of a Eurasian hegemon who would conquer or even dominate the world's centers of industrial and economic power. The latter risk seems very low in the short term, but preserving the political division of industrial Eurasia remains a U.S. interest.

15. On this point see Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters," pp. 8–10; and Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 45–50.

out of large European and Asian wars in the first half of this century, selective engagement argues that the United States has an interest in great power peace.

Selective engagement shares the neo-isolationist expectation that states balance, and that nuclear weapons favor the defender of the status quo. However, selective engagers also recognize that balancing may be tardy, statesmen may miscalculate, and nuclear deterrence could fail. Given the interest in great power peace, the United States should engage itself abroad in order to ensure against these possibilities in the places where the consequences could be the most serious. Balancing happens, but it happens earlier and more easily with a leader. Nuclear weapons deter, but why not place the weight of U.S. strategic nuclear forces behind the status quo powers, just to simplify the calculations of the ambitious? Selective engagement tries to ensure that the great powers understand that the United States does not wish to find out how a future Eurasian great power war might progress, and that it has sufficient military power to deny victory to the aggressor.

Advocates of selective engagement do start from the premise that U.S. resources are scarce: it is simply impossible to muster sufficient power and will to keep domestic and international peace worldwide, or to preserve the United States as the undisputed leader in a unipolar world.¹⁶ The United States does have 22 percent of gross world product, at least half again as much as Japan, its closest economic competitor, but only 4.6 percent of the global population. Global economic development will gradually reduce the U.S. economic advantage, and demographics already limit U.S. capacity for intervention in labor intensive civil wars. Desert Storm does not suggest a permanent, overwhelming U.S. military superiority; other wars may not be so easy. Moreover, short of a compelling argument about an extant threat, the people of the United States are unlikely to want to invest much money or many lives either in global police duties—cooperative security—or in trying to cow others into accepting U.S. hegemony—primacy.

ISSUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Selective engagement advocates are worried about nuclear proliferation, but proliferation in some countries matters more than in others.¹⁷ Countries seek-

16. Art, "Defensible Defense," p. 45. See also Jonathan Clarke, "Leaders and Followers," *Foreign Policy*, No. 101 (Winter 1995–96), pp. 37–51, arguing both that the U.S. share of global power is too small to support cooperative security or primacy, and that U.S. public support for such strategies is too weak.

17. See Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 23–30.

ing nuclear weapons who have no conflict of interest with the United States or its friends are viewed more favorably than those who do. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is viewed as an instrument to permit countries who have neither the wealth to support nuclear forces, nor the political insecurity or ambition to need or want them, to find a refuge from a race that they would rather not run. Selective engagement advocates may be willing to try to cajole India, Israel, Pakistan, or Ukraine into surrendering their nuclear capabilities and joining the NPT, but they hold that it would be absurd to turn neutrals or friends into enemies on this issue alone.

Proliferation really matters in politically ambitious countries that have demonstrated a certain insensitivity to risks and costs. North Korea, Iraq, and Iran fall into this category. The most important response is to convince them that they are being watched, and that the United States intends to stand against any nuclear ambitions they might have. Depending on the pace of their weapons programs, and the extent of their bellicosity, stronger measures may be warranted. There is no consensus on the use of force, however. Advocates of selective engagement are always sensitive to costs; preventive attacks may not be feasible.

Regional competitions among small states matter to the extent that they could energize intense great power security competition. This risk preserves the Persian Gulf as a core U.S. security interest.¹⁸ The problem is not so much U.S. dependence on Gulf oil but the far greater dependence on it by many other great powers. A struggle over the control of the Gulf could draw in great powers on opposing sides, or set off competition elsewhere to expropriate energy resources. Moreover, should most of the economic potential associated with this oil fall into the hands of one ambitious actor, it could provide the underpinnings for a substantial regional military challenge. If Iraq could achieve the military development it did on its own oil revenues, how much more might it have achieved with the revenues of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia? Even if such a power would not pose a direct threat to the United States, it would certainly be in a position to pose a threat to many of its neighbors. A great war in the Persian Gulf, with the risk of large-scale use of weapons of

18. Art, "Defensible Defense," p. 47. Stephen Van Evera, "The United States and the Third World: When to Intervene?" in Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Eagle in a New World* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 127–131, makes a comprehensive case for the U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf in 1990, Operation Desert Shield, but expresses skepticism about the necessity for Operation Desert Storm.

mass destruction, is the kind of experiment that the United States probably ought not to wish to run.

For the advocates of selective engagement, then, the parts of the world that matter most are the two ends of Eurasia—Europe and East Asia—and the Middle East/Southwest Asia. Traditional alliances are the appropriate vehicle to pursue these interests. Selective engagement especially favors the preservation of NATO, though not its expansion. That is not to say that the rest of the world can be completely ignored. Some countries may matter more than others for particular reasons. For example, proximity alone makes Mexico an important U.S. foreign policy interest. Moreover, if selective engagement is to remain a viable strategy, it will need to adapt to the likely emergence of sizeable new powers, and the potential for conflict among them.¹⁹

Advocates of selective engagement are concerned with ethnic conflict where it runs the risk of producing a great power war. Fortunately, there are not many places where this seems likely. Arguably, there is only one dangerous potential conflict of this type in Eurasia today—the currently dormant rivalry between Russia and Ukraine. Conflicts elsewhere in Eurasia may tempt one or more great powers to intervene, and thus they merit a certain degree of judicious diplomatic management. Most of these conflicts do not engage the vital interests of any state; they are strategically uninteresting. The former Yugoslavia, for instance, contains no military or economic resources that would affect the security of any European great power.

Advocates of selective engagement view humanitarian intervention as a question to be settled by the normal processes of U.S. domestic politics. There is no clear strategic guide that tells which interventions are worth pursuing and which are not. Their perspective does suggest several critical considerations. The most important strategic question is the opportunity cost. Given one's best estimate of the plausible course of the humanitarian intervention, what will be its consequences for U.S. material and political ability to intervene in more strategically important areas if trouble should arise during or after the humanitarian intervention? An intervention to bring sufficient order to Somalia

19. Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, and Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January/February 1996), p. 33, have singled out Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia as pivotal states "whose future will profoundly affect their surrounding regions." The list is long, the adjective "pivotal" seems premature, and systematic attention to these states in addition to the great powers is hardly selective. Nevertheless, the list does highlight states that may pose special problems today, or which may become serious contenders for regional power in the future.

to permit the distribution of humanitarian assistance required the equivalent of a single division of ground forces and involved the risk of relatively modest U.S. casualties. But even the horror of what had transpired earlier in Somalia proved insufficient to preserve U.S. public support through the relatively modest U.S. casualties that ensued. To preserve by force the unitary, multi-ethnic, ethnically intermingled Bosnia-Herzegovina that existed at the moment of Yugoslavia's dissolution could have required three or more U.S. divisions for the indefinite future, plus European forces.²⁰ There would likely have been more than a few casualties. Intervention in Yugoslavia would have made it more difficult to intervene elsewhere. As the casualties mount in any intervention, and the bloodshed begins to make the U.S. position more morally ambiguous to the American public, the political will to act in more important regions could erode.

FORCE STRUCTURE. A selective engagement policy probably requires a force structure similar to those proposed by the late Secretary of Defense Les Aspin in 1992 as "Force B" or "Force C" (see Table 2). A strong nuclear deterrent is still needed to deter nuclear attack on the United States and to protect its freedom of action in a world of several nuclear powers. Since the United States has an interest in stability in three critical areas of the world (both ends of Eurasia and the Middle East), and since simultaneous trouble in two or more areas cannot be ruled out, it is reasonable to retain a "two regional wars" capability. Both force structures have sufficient air and ground forces for one major regional contingency ("MRC"), and sufficient air forces to support a regional ally in a second contingency. "Force C" places additional emphasis on sea and air lift and on aircraft carrier task forces, perhaps more than is truly necessary given that the United States ought to be able to identify in advance the location of the interests over which it might be willing to threaten or wage war. "Force C" also assumes that the United States must maintain sufficient reserve forces to sustain with ease a new major forward deployment of indeterminate duration, and at the same time conduct a small offensive operation such as the invasion of Panama. These additions seem an overly conservative interpretation of the forces necessary for selective engagement; "Force B" may be adequate.

20. Barry R. Posen, "A Balkan Vietnam Awaits 'Peacekeepers,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1993, p. B7. The article assesses the force requirements to police the "Vance-Owen Plan," which intended to preserve a unitary Bosnia-Herzegovina. The three principal ethnic and religious groups in Bosnia would have remained intermingled, as they were at the outset of the war. Thus the police problem would have been quite complex and demanding, similar to the British problem in Northern Ireland.

CRITIQUE

Selective engagement has its own problems. First, the strategy lacks a certain romance: will the cool and quiet, steady, long-term exercise of U.S. power in the service of stable great power relations win the political support of any major constituency in the United States? Compared to other strategies, there is relatively little idealism or commitment to principle behind the strategy. It lacks the exuberant U.S. nationalism of primacy, or the commitment to liberal principle of cooperative security. It focuses rather narrowly on interests defined in terms of power. Can such a strategy sustain the support of a liberal democracy long addicted to viewing international relations as a struggle between good and evil?

Second, the strategy expects the United States to ignore much of the trouble that is likely to occur in the world. America's prestige and reputation might suffer from such apparent lethargy, however, which could limit its ability to persuade others on more important issues. Great power rivalries are currently muted, and if successful, the strategy will quietly keep them so. This would be an enormous contribution to the welfare of the entire world. However, it is an open question whether a regular tendency to avoid involvement in the issues that do arise will ultimately affect the ability of the United States to pursue its more important interests. Arguably, it was fear of such a result that provided one of the impulses for the ultimate U.S. involvement in trying to end the war in Bosnia.

Third, selective engagement does not provide clear guidance on which ostensibly "minor" issues have implications for great power relations, and thus merit U.S. involvement. It posits that most will not matter, but admits that some will. Some connections are more obvious than others, but all will be the subject of debate. Since trouble in peripheral areas is likely to be more common than trouble in core areas, the selective engagement strategy gives its least precise positive guidance on matters that will most commonly figure prominently in the media, and hence in the public debate on U.S. foreign policy. The responsible practice of selective engagement will thus require considerable case-by-case analysis and public debate.

Fourth, selective engagement is not as selective as its advocates would have us believe. Europe and Asia matter because that is where the major powers reside; and the Middle East matters because of its oil resources. Much of the world, therefore, matters. Developments on the periphery of this rather large expanse of the earth will invariably and regularly produce intense media coverage and committed partisans of intervention. The argument will often

prove tempting that the frontiers of “what matters” need to be pacified to protect “what matters.” NATO enlargement is a good example; advocates want to pacify eastern Europe “preventively” even though Russia is weak and there is no obvious simmering major power conflict there. Few advocates of selective engagement favor this policy, in part because they believe in balancing behavior, and fear that Russia will be catalyzed into reactions that will cause exactly the kind of trouble the United States hopes to avoid. It is likely that those who subscribe to selective engagement would be doomed to spend their careers arguing against grand strategy “mission creep” even if U.S. policymakers explicitly chose selective engagement as the national strategy.²¹

Finally, neo-isolationists would argue that there is one huge tension in the selective engagement argument. The United States must maintain substantial military forces, threaten war, and risk war largely for the purpose of preventing war. A traditional realist position accepts the risk of war, and the costs of waging war, to prevent aggressors from building sufficient power to challenge the United States directly. Neo-isolationists, however, argue that if you want to avoid war, you must stay out of the affairs of others. They remind us that it is quite unlikely that the results of even a great power war could decisively shift the balance of power against the United States. If the United States goes out into the world to prevent hypothetical wars, it will surely find some real ones. Advocates of selective engagement resist this deductive logic for two reasons: the United States was drawn against its intentions into two costly world wars that started in Eurasia; and the United States pursued an activist policy during the Cold War which both contained Soviet expansionism and avoided great power war.

Cooperative Security

The most important distinguishing feature of cooperative security is the proposition that peace is effectively indivisible.²² Cooperative security, therefore, begins with an expansive conception of U.S. interests: the United States has a

21. Chase, Hill, and Kennedy, “Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy,” provide an illustration of how the project grows. See also James A. Baker III, “Selective Engagement: Principles for American Foreign Policy in a New Era,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. 60, No. 10 (March 1, 1994), pp. 299–302. The former secretary of state argues for an expansive strategic agenda that looks more like primacy than selective engagement.

22. Inis L. Claude, *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization*, 4th ed. (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 247; Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays*

huge national interest in world peace. Cooperative security is the only one of the four strategic alternatives that is informed by liberalism rather than realism.²³ Advocates propose to act collectively, through international institutions as much as possible. They presume that democracies will find it easier to work together in cooperative security regimes than would states with less progressive domestic polities.

Cooperative security does not view the great powers as a generic security problem. Because most are democracies, or on the road to democracy, and democracies have historically tended not to fall into war with one another, little great power security competition is expected.²⁴ A transitional Russia and an oligarchical China remain troublesome, but the answer there is to help them toward democracy as in the Clinton administration formulation, "Engagement and Enlargement." The motives for great powers to collaborate are presumed to be greater than in the past, and the barriers to cooperation are presumed to be lower.

The cooperative security enterprise represents an effort to overcome the shortcomings of traditional collective security.²⁵ For both, aggression anywhere, and by anyone, cannot be allowed to stand. Both place a premium on international cooperation to deter and thwart aggression. It is to be "all for one and

on *International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 183-184: "'any aggressor anywhere' is in fact the national enemy of every country because in violating the peace and law of the community of nations it endangers, if indirectly, the peace and security of every nation."

23. On the differences between realism and liberalism, see David A. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996); Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Charles W. Kegley, Jr., ed., *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); and Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

24. Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 149-150; and Richard Ullman, *Securing Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 76.

25. For the core works, see Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry, and John D. Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, Occasional Paper (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992); Janne E. Nolan, ed., *Global Engagement: Cooperation and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994); Paul B. Stares and John D. Steinbruner, "Cooperative Security and the New Europe," in Stares, ed., *The New Germany and the New Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992), pp. 218-248. For a shorter exposition, see Randall Forsberg, "Creating a Cooperative Security System," in *After the Cold War: A Debate on Cooperative Security*, Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, Reprint, Cambridge, Mass., first published in *Boston Review*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (November/December 1992).

one for all.” Cooperative security advocates do not rely on spontaneous power balancing because this is only likely when traditional vital interests are engaged. Instead, international institutions, particularly the United Nations, are to play a critical role in coordinating the deterrence and defeat of aggression. Regional institutions, particularly a transformed NATO, have an important role to play where international institutions are weak. Institutions respond to imminent threats, and deter all who would break the peace.

Previously, great powers could view small wars as unlikely threats to their national security. But the emergence of weapons of mass destruction means that any arms race or war can produce a world-class disaster.²⁶ The United States, and indeed the rest of the industrialized world, simply cannot live with these risks indefinitely. Nuclear weapons do not favor the status quo, except for the very small number of great powers who have them. Most states do not have the resources or organizational skills to deploy secure retaliatory forces. Most do not yet have, and many will not be able to acquire, nuclear weapons. The casualty-sensitivity of the democracies suggests that the risk of even a small nuclear attack might discourage them from coming to the assistance of a country in trouble. Aggressors are expected to be undemocratic, greedy, and casualty-insensitive; nuclear weapons favor them. Thus nuclear arms control, particularly non-proliferation, is at the heart of cooperative security.

Cooperative security subscribes to one premise that, for the most part, the other three strategies do not even consider. A high level of what one might term “strategic interdependence” is posited. Wars in one place are likely to spread; unsavory military practices employed in one war will be employed in other wars. The use of weapons of mass destruction will beget their use elsewhere; ethnic cleansing will beget more ethnic cleansing. Refugees fleeing the nationalist violence of one country will energize xenophobia in countries of refuge. The organization of a global information system helps to connect these events by providing strategic intelligence to good guys and bad guys alike; it connects them politically by providing images of one horror after another in the living rooms of the citizens of economically advanced democracies.²⁷ The result is a chain of logic that connects the security of the United

26. “Proliferation of destructive technology casts a shadow over future U.S. security in a way that cannot be directly addressed through superior force or readiness. Serious economic and environmental problems point to an inescapable interdependence of U.S. interests with the interests of other nations.” Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, p. 4.

27. Madeleine K. Albright, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, “Realism and Idealism in American Foreign Policy Today,” *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 5, No. 26 (June 27, 1994), pp. 434–437, offers an explicit and comprehensive statement of these views.

States and its more traditional allies to a host of distant troubles. Thus, these distant troubles cannot be ignored.

ISSUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Cooperative security advocates believe that they now have more effective means to achieve their goals. The United States is presumed, based on the Desert Storm victory, to hold decisive military-technological superiority and thus to be able to wage speedy, low-casualty wars. In the past, advocates of collective security relied on world public opinion, and on economic sanctions. They understood that it is difficult to get self-interested states to support military intervention on the side of peace in distant places, so they stressed the impact of these less costly measures. Cooperative security advocates still like these mechanisms, but history has taught them to be skeptical that they will prove sufficient. Instead it is argued that real military action is cheaper than it once was.²⁸

Advocates of cooperative security have added the arms control mechanisms developed in the last three decades to the traditional collective security repertoire. With enough arms control agreements, transparency, and confidence-and security-building measures (CSBMs), and enough intrusive verification, states around the world will be able to avoid conflicts arising from misperception or first-strike advantages. The offensive military capabilities that enable states to engage in aggression will thus be acquired by few countries. Peace-loving states will adopt defensive military postures and an international military division of labor that will provide only their combined forces with an offensive capability. The few “rogue states” left after all this arms control and institution-building can either be intimidated by the threat of high technology warfare or decisively defeated in short order.

A cooperative security strategy depends on international organizations to coordinate collective action. They are part of the complicated process of building sufficient credibility to convince all prospective aggressors that they will regularly be met with decisive countervailing power. The threat of great powers to intervene—even when they have no immediate interests at stake—must be made credible. A standing international organization with substantial domestic and international legitimacy is necessary to coordinate multilateral action and to create the expectation of regular, effective intervention for peace.

28. See Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, pp. 24–30.

Its advocates stress that cooperative security is a work in progress.²⁹ Global cooperative security structures will not emerge fully developed. Indeed it is argued that they need not: existing “overlapping, mutually reinforcing arrangements” provide the foundation upon which cooperative security can be built. As three leading proponents have written, “military establishments around the world already are entangled in a large web of internationally sanctioned restraints on how they equip themselves and operate in peacetime. Cooperative security means making the effort to thicken and unify this web.”³⁰ That, clearly, entails a long term project.

In at least one area of the world, the project is seen as already well under way. Europe has begun to practice cooperative security with a web of diplomatic, economic, and security arrangements, particularly the arms control, transparency, and CSBMs associated with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Clinton administration views NATO enlargement, in part, as an extension of the cooperative security project.³¹ If Europe, even during the Cold War, could develop such arrangements, the proponents of cooperative security ask, can other regions not do the same now that the distractions of the Cold War are behind us?

Proliferation is a key issue for cooperative security advocates. They support very strong measures to prevent and reverse it.³² They supported not only the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995 but also the strengthening of its safeguards. The demonstration effect of any new proliferation is presumed to be great. It is therefore reasonable to oppose any new nuclear power beyond those declared nuclear weapons states in the original treaty. Moreover, the policy must be pursued equally versus friends, enemies, and neutrals. Israeli, Indian, and Ukrainian nuclear weapons are all

29. Ross, who is sympathetic to cooperative security, emphasizes this point.

30. Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, pp. 8 and 9.

31. Strobe Talbott, “Why NATO Should Grow,” *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 42, No. 13 (August 10, 1995), p. 28: “Enlargement of NATO would be a force for the rule of law both within Europe’s new democracies and among them. . . . An expanded NATO is likely to extend the area in which conflicts like the one in the Balkans simply do not happen.” The administration’s case for expansion incorporates the logic of containment as well as that of cooperative security. As Talbot put it, “among the contingencies for which NATO must be prepared is that Russia will abandon democracy and return to the threatening patterns of international behavior that have sometimes characterized its history” (p. 29). See also Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler, and Stephen Larrabee, “NATO Expansion: The Next Steps,” *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring 1995), p. 9; and the systematic critique offered by Michael E. Brown, “The Flawed Logic of NATO Expansion,” *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 38–39.

32. Commission on America and the New World, *Changing Our Ways: America and the New World* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992), pp. 73–75.

bad, regardless of the fact that the United States has no political conflict of interest with any of these countries. Proliferation must also be headed off for another reason: the more nuclear powers there are in the world, the more dangerous it will be for international organizations to act aggressively against miscreants, the less likely they will be to act, and the more likely it is that the entire cooperative security edifice will collapse.³³ War to prevent new nuclear powers from emerging would be reasonable in some circumstances.³⁴

Regional conflicts among states are of critical interest to cooperative security advocates. Cross-border aggression has always been the most clear-cut problem; it is never acceptable. Conflicts within states emerge as a new, serious problem for a cooperative security strategy.³⁵ Historically, collective security tried to establish the conditions for peace among a small number of great powers and empires. Today we have many more states, and even more groups aspiring to statehood. Politically conscious groups often span the boundaries of several territorially defined states. Thus inter-group conflict may become inter-state conflict. Even when irredenta are not involved, civil wars may attract outside intervention by the greedy, and thus precipitate international wars. Finally, ethnic conflict tends to be ferocious. The brutal behavior portrayed on the television screens of the world creates a malign precedent.

Cooperative security advocates favor military action for humanitarian purposes.³⁶ But the connection between immediate humanitarian concerns and the task of building sufficient credibility to deter future aggressors is tenuous. Indeed, the goals may conflict, as often seemed the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the first phase of that war, the United States and other democratic states could have supplied arms to the Bosnian Muslims with relative ease to help

33. Advocates seldom make this point explicitly, but a similar point is made by Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner in *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, p. 51: "many countries that feel threatened by an intrusive reconnaissance strike capability they cannot match can aspire to chemical agents as a strategic counterweight."

34. "The Commission believes that the use of military force to prevent nuclear proliferation must be retained as an option of last resort." Commission on America and the New World, *Changing Our Ways*, p. 75.

35. See Gareth Evans, "Cooperative Security and Intrastate Conflict," *Foreign Policy*, No. 96 (Fall 1991), pp. 3-20. Comments by cooperative security advocates on the war in Yugoslavia reveal a strong desire for some cooperative security organization to intervene militarily. See Forsberg, "Creating a Cooperative Security System," p. 3; and Jonathan Dean, "Moving Toward a Less Violent World—Test Case, Europe," *Boston Review*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (November/December 1992), p. 7.

36. Commission on America and the New World, *Changing Our Ways*, p. 51: "The United States should be more actively engaged in strengthening the collective machinery to carry out humanitarian actions. In this way we can reduce the likelihood of having to choose between unilateral military intervention and standing idle in the face of human tragedy."

them fend off the military attacks of the Serbs. They might even have flown tactical air sorties to assist the Muslims. This would have made the point that aggression does not pay. But it is unlikely that UN humanitarian efforts would have survived such a policy. A large-scale intervention with several hundred thousand troops might have been necessary both to stop the Serbs and to sustain the UN humanitarian effort to care for those in need of the everyday necessities of life. Despite such difficulties, cooperative security advocates seem to want to pursue short-term humanitarianism and long-term political principle at the same time. This makes for demanding military operations.

FORCE STRUCTURE. What kind of U.S. force structure is required to support a cooperative security strategy? While cooperative security envisions the adoption of defensive military postures, “a small number of nations, including the United States, must maintain certain elements of their armed forces beyond that required for territorial defense and make those elements available to multinational forces when needed.”³⁷ The U.S. contribution to this multinational force would emphasize the country’s comparative advantage in aerospace power: the three elements of the reconnaissance strike complex—command, control, communications and intelligence; defense suppression; and precision-guided munitions—that were employed in Desert Storm.

Advocates have suggested that this force would be smaller than the “Bottom-Up Review” force advocated by the Clinton administration (see Table 2).³⁸ But their assessment focuses on means, while assuming that others will cooperate to the maximum extent of their ability—i.e., that they will maintain larger forces than they currently plan. Moreover, it ignores the necessity for a period

37. William J. Perry, “Military Action: When to Use It and How to Ensure Its Effectiveness,” in Nolan, *Global Engagement*, p. 235.

38. See William W. Kaufmann and John Steinbruner, *Decisions for Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1991), pp. 67–76, which offers a cooperative security force structure that would cost roughly \$150 billion (1992 dollars, excluding Department of Energy expenses on nuclear weaponry) annually by the end of the century. Their recommended force structure is quite similar to Aspin’s “Force A,” Table 2. The authors seem to argue that the adequacy of such a force structure would depend on a series of prior diplomatic developments in the world that would, for all intents and purposes, put a functioning cooperative security regime in place. Jerome B. Wiesner, Philip Morrison, and Kosta Tsipis, “Ending Overkill,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (March 1993), pp. 12–23, offer a force structure, costing \$115 billion per year, which they seem to believe is consistent with a collective security strategy. Though small, the air and naval forces they recommend are quite capable; the Army they recommend, however, with a total active personnel strength of 180,000, would barely be adequate for a repetition of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. It is difficult to see how it could support a collective security strategy. More recently, Michael O’Hanlon, *Defense Planning For the Late 1990s: Beyond the Desert Storm Framework* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 32–40, has proposed a force structure estimated to cost about \$20 billion a year less than the Bottom-Up Review force.

of regular and consistent military action if there is to be any hope of building the international credibility necessary to affect the calculations of prospective aggressors everywhere.

A true cooperative security strategy could involve the United States in several simultaneous military actions. U.S. forces were recently engaged in Iraq and in Somalia simultaneously, while advocates clamored for a third U.S. military action in Bosnia. Haiti subsequently replaced Somalia on this list, even as the U.S. military role in Bosnia expanded. UN forces were deployed in several other places—arguably in insufficient numbers to accomplish their missions completely. The experiences in Desert Shield/Desert Storm and in the Somali relief operation suggest that U.S. leadership is often the key ingredient for substantial international cooperation.³⁹ It is not the subtle diplomacy of the United States that proves critical, but rather its military reputation, which depends on large, diverse, technologically sophisticated, and lushly supplied military forces capable of decisive operations. At least initially, the United States would have to provide disproportionate military power to launch a global cooperative security regime. A force structure in the range of the Clinton administration's "Bottom-Up Review" force and the "Base Force" (see Table 2) may be necessary to pursue a true cooperative security policy with a good chance of success.

CRITIQUE

Cooperative security is vulnerable to a range of criticisms. First, individual states are still expected to be able to rise above narrow conceptions of national interest in response to appeals for action on behalf of the collective good, and to engage in what will seem to them as armed altruism. In theory, some collective action problems associated with collective security⁴⁰ may be ameliorated by cooperative security. In particular, the combination of intensive arms control, military technological superiority, and U.S. leadership is meant to reduce substantially the costs of cooperation for any given member of the cooperative security regime. Nevertheless, there will still be defectors and free

39. Laying out the realist theoretical argument for why coalitions need leaders, and why leaders are defined by great power, is Josef Joffe, "Collective Security and the Future of Europe: Failed Dreams and Dead Ends," *Survival*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 40–43.

40. See Richard K. Betts, "Systems for Peace or Causes of War? Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 5–43; Joffe, "Collective Security and the Future of Europe"; and John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 5–49.

riders. Major power aggression would still be a problem for cooperative security, as it was for collective security, if some powers perceive the intrinsic stakes as small and the aggressor as far away and difficult to fight. It seems unlikely, for example, that the NATO allies would ever fight the People's Republic of China over Taiwan, even if the United States wanted to do so. States concerned about the possible competitions of the future will still ask if any given opportunity for current cooperation to achieve a common good, or oppose a common bad, changes their power position relative to all other potential challengers, including one another.

Second, the task of building sufficient general multilateral credibility to deter a series of new and different potential aggressors seems very difficult. Regular U.S. action to oppose the Soviet Union during the Cold War did not entirely dissuade that regime from new challenges. Since this was an iterative bipolar game, credibility should have accumulated, but that does not seem to have happened. Although U.S. credibility appears to have been quite high in Europe, where direct interests were great and deployed military power was strong, elsewhere Soviet behavior was often mischievous. It is quite likely, therefore, that a true cooperative security strategy would involve the UN, designated regional organizations, and effectively the United States, in a number of wars over many years if it is to have any hope of establishing the ability to deter the ambitious and reassure the fearful. This would, however, serve to further strain public support for a demanding strategy.

Third, democracies are problematical partners in a cooperative security project in a crucial respect: their publics must be persuaded to go to war. Since the publics in modern liberal democracies seem to be quite casualty-sensitive, the case for risking the lives of their troops in *distant* wars is inherently difficult to make. This is one reason why the decisive military superiority of a technologically dominant coalition of peace-loving states is a necessary condition for cooperative security to work. This in turn depends on the military power of the United States.

Fourth, cooperative security places a heavy burden on arms control. It is not clear that arms control can bear that burden. Nonproliferation efforts have met with mixed success. Verification and, especially, enforcement remain problematic. The open international economic system, which most cooperative security advocates strongly favor, inevitably accelerates the diffusion of the economic and technological underpinnings of military power. While arms control can increase the economic costs and political risks of engaging in proscribed activities, determined states will continue to acquire and employ military forces.

Thus the members of a cooperative security regime are likely to have to respond to aggression more often than the proponents of such a regime predict. Cooperative security must oversell the probability and magnitude of an international happy ending in order to elicit political support for an indeterminate initial period of high activism.

Primacy

Primacy, like selective engagement, is motivated by both power and peace. But the particular configuration of power is key: this strategy holds that only a preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace.⁴¹ The pre-Cold War practice of aggregating power through coalitions and alliances, which underlies selective engagement, is viewed as insufficient. Peace is the result of an imbalance of power in which U.S. capabilities are sufficient, operating on their own, to cow all potential challengers and to comfort all coalition partners. It is not enough, consequently, to be *primus inter pares*, a comfortable position for selective engagement. Even the most clever Bismarckian orchestrator of the balance of power will ultimately fall short. One must be *primus solus*. Therefore, both world order and national security require that the United States maintain the primacy with which it emerged from the Cold War. The collapse of bipolarity cannot be permitted to allow the emergence of multipolarity; unipolarity is best. Primacy would have been the strategy of a Dole administration.

Primacy is most concerned with the trajectories of present and possible future great powers. As with selective engagement, Russia, China, Japan, and the most significant members of the European Union (essentially Germany, France, and Britain), matter most. War among the great powers poses the greatest threat to U.S. security for advocates of primacy as well as those of selective engagement. But primacy goes beyond the logic of selective engagement and its focus on managing relations among present and potential future great powers. Advocates of primacy view the rise of a peer competitor from the midst of the great powers to offer the greatest threat to international order and thus the greatest risk of war. The objective for primacy, therefore, is not merely to preserve peace among the great powers, but to preserve U.S. supremacy by politically, economically, and militarily outdistancing any global challenger.

41. This is the maximal realism of hegemonic stability theory. See Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

The Bush administration's draft Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), leaked to the press in March of 1992, provides the most fully developed blueprint for precluding the rise of such a peer competitor. The DPG is the high-level strategic statement that launches, and in theory governs, the Pentagon's annual internal defense budget preparation process. Subsequent published commentary by former Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney suggests that the Bush administration broadly subscribed to the principles suggested by the leaked passages.⁴² The authors of the draft DPG were unyielding in their insistence that the United States maintain its status as the world's sole superpower:

Our first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration . . . and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. . . . Our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor.⁴³

Those parts of the world identified as most likely to harbor potential peer competitors were Western Europe, East Asia, the territories of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia.

Strategic planners in the Department of Defense and more recent advocates argue that others already believe, or can be led to believe, that the United States is a benign hegemon. Thus the project is expected to meet with global support rather than opposition.⁴⁴ Other states will not balance against the United States. Thus:

the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests. . . . In the non-defense areas, we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from

42. See Dick Cheney, "Active Leadership? You Better Believe It," *New York Times*, March 15, 1992, Section 4, p. 17. The draft DPG is placed in the larger contexts of the Bush administration's national security policy and strategy, and a discussion of primacy in U.S. policy and strategy by David Callahan, *Between Two Worlds: Realism, Idealism, and American Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

43. "Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: 'Prevent the Emergence of a New Rival,'" *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, p. 14.

44. The notion that U.S. hegemony is benevolent and perceived as such by others is evident also in William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (July/August 1996), pp. 18–32; and Joshua Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership: A Challenge to Neo-Isolationism* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1996).

challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. . . . We will retain the pre-eminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests, but those of our allies or friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations.⁴⁵

Present and aspiring major powers are to be persuaded, it seems, that they can rest easy, and need not bother investing in the political, economic, and military means they might otherwise require to safeguard their interests. Indeed, any assertion of strategic independence by the likes of Germany and Japan would only erode the global and regional stability sought by all.⁴⁶

In addition to maintaining U.S. primacy by reassuring others of the purity of its intentions, the draft DPG envisioned the United States seeking to prevent the rise of challengers by promoting international law, democracy, and free-market economies, and precluding the emergence of regional hegemons. It is important to note that though primacy focuses on the maintenance of overwhelming U.S. power and influence, it remains strongly committed to liberal principles. It is simply more judicious about the commitment of U.S. military power to particular liberal projects than is the cooperative security strategy. Support for political and economic transformation are seen as the best way to ensure that Russia will not revert to the authoritarian, expansionist habits of old, though the United States should hedge against the failure of such reform. In Europe, the United States would work against any erosion of NATO's preeminent role in European security and the development of any security arrangements that would undermine the role of NATO, and therefore the role of the United States, in European security affairs. The countries of East and Central Europe would be integrated into the political, economic, and even security institutions of Western Europe. In East Asia, the United States would maintain a military presence sufficient to ensure regional stability and prevent the emergence of a power vacuum or a regional hegemon. The same approach applied to the Middle East and Southwest Asia, where the United States intended to remain the preeminent extraregional power. The United States would also endeavor to discourage India's hegemonic ambitions in South Asia. The regional dimension of the strategy outlined in the draft DPG is thus

45. "Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: 'Prevent the Emergence of a New Rival'."

46. The Assistant Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning when the draft DPG was prepared, Zalmay Khalilzad, has suggested that "the United States would not want Germany and Japan to be able to conduct expeditionary wars." Khalilzad, "Losing the Moment? The United States and the World After the Cold War," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring 1995), p. 105.

consistent with the global dimension: the aspirations of regional as well as global hegemons are to be thwarted.

Proponents of primacy are more than a little upbeat about the post-Cold War international position of the United States. Even though all too few Americans recognize their good fortune, “they have never had it so good.”⁴⁷ In this best of all possible worlds, the United States today is the only world superpower. It “enjoys strategic and ideological predominance” and exercises hegemonic influence and authority.⁴⁸ The U.S share of gross world product is considered to be more than sufficient to sustain primacy. According to primacy advocates, this is in line with its share at the outset of World War II, in which the United States led a global war and simultaneously enjoyed the highest standard of living in the world.⁴⁹ Moreover, looking only at GDP masks the extent of U.S. dominance. The United States has more hard-to-measure “soft power”—domination of the news media, mass culture, computers, and international communications—than any other nation.⁵⁰ And the United States is the master of the most advanced military technologies, especially intelligence and command and control capabilities and precision-guided munitions. This technological advantage renders traditional military organizations vastly less capable against the United States than traditional military analysis would suggest. (Primacy and cooperative security share this premise.) Advocates of primacy, like those of selective engagement, do recognize that U.S. resources are limited, but they contend that the United States is a wealthy country that all too often acts as if it were poor.⁵¹ The problem is not a lack of resources, but a lack of political will. Advocates of primacy are quite optimistic, however, that the U.S. public can be induced to sacrifice for this project.⁵²

47. Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” p. 22.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

49. Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, pp. 32–33.

50. Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” p. 21. The term “soft power” is associated with Joseph Nye, Dean of the Kennedy School of Government and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. He and former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff William A. Owens develop the notion of U.S. dominance in these new tools of power in Nye and Owens, “America’s Information Edge,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (March/April 1996), pp. 20–36.

51. According to Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, p. 36: “We can afford whatever foreign policy we need or choose. We are the richest country in the world, the richest country the world has ever known. And we are richer today than we have ever been before. We command not fewer but more resources than ever.” He calls for spending 5 percent of GDP on what he calls foreign policy (“defense, foreign aid, and everything else”); p. 44.

52. Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” pp. 26–27, 30–32; and Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, pp. 36–50. Muravchik argues both that the United States allocates too few resources to the military and to foreign aid to support a strategy of primacy

ISSUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Certainly the most serious threat to U.S. primacy would be an across-the-board political, economic, and military challenger. Yet even a power that rivaled the United States in only one or two of these three dimensions of national power could erode U.S. preponderance. That the Soviet Union during the Cold War was unable to issue a credible challenge in the economic realm, as well as the political and military, did little to allay U.S. fears. It is generally the one-dimensional challenge that is seen as providing the near-term threat to continued U.S. primacy.⁵³ Some fear a resurgence of a militarily capable Russia. Others argue that the United States is most vulnerable in the economic realm. For a time, Japan was viewed as the main contender. Others worry about the rise of China, fearing an imminent, mutually reinforcing growth of its economic and military power.

The debate on NATO enlargement has shown that some still view Russia as strong and dangerous. Though smaller and weaker than its Soviet predecessor, it is presumed to be on the move again.⁵⁴ The remedy is a revived policy of containment. This “new containment,” however, is little more than a stalking horse for primacy. Whether targeted at Russia or China, the new containment, like the old containment, identifies a threat that provides the rationale for remaining heavily involved in Eurasia and for maintaining the political, economic, and especially military capabilities needed to pursue an intense global strategic competition. One advocate of primacy who wants the United States “to be the global hegemon of the regional hegemons, the boss of all the bosses” has explicitly called for the “potential” or “latent” containment of both Russia and China, while others prefer a more active version.⁵⁵

and that it requires a balanced budget. He suggests that to remedy these deficiencies the U.S. should solve the problem of rising medical costs and social security solvency, and add revenues, and in just two pages, he explains how (pp. 42–43).

53. As the Cold War drew to a close, some saw an economic challenge from Japan as the principal threat to U.S. primacy. See, e.g., Samuel P. Huntington, “America’s Changing Strategic Interests,” *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January/February 1991), p. 10; Huntington, “The Economic Renewal of America,” *National Interest*, No. 27, Spring 1992, p. 15; and Huntington, “Why International Primacy Matters,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 71–81. Huntington’s concern about U.S. economic strength and how it might be preserved and strengthened are echoed in Zalmay Khalilzad, “Losing the Moment?” pp. 103–104.

54. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994), p. 76. Oddly, though he presents many of the same arguments for NATO expansion in a subsequent article, he is somewhat less alarmist there about the extent of the current danger emanating from Russia. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, “A Plan for Europe,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (January/February 1995), p. 34.

55. James Kurth, “America’s Grand Strategy: A Pattern of History,” *National Interest*, No. 43 (Spring 1996), pp. 3–19; the quotation is from p. 19.

Calls for containing Russia are most prominently identified with Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger, and have surfaced with the greatest clarity in the debate on whether NATO should formally expand and offer membership and protection to former Eastern European members of the Warsaw Pact. Both fear the seductive effect of a “security vacuum” in Eastern (newly re-christened “Central”) Europe. “A Russia facing a divided Europe would find the temptation to fill the vacuum irresistible.”⁵⁶ Observers should not be lulled by the relative decline in capability precipitated by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Soviet economy, and the deterioration of the Soviet (now Russian) military. Containment advocates cite a new Russian assertiveness, demonstrated in diplomatic, military, and economic interventions large and small around its periphery.⁵⁷ Russia brings three dangerous qualities to the table: it possesses tremendous inherent strategic reach, considerable material reserves; and the largest single homogeneous ethnic-cultural population in Europe. Brzezinski asserts that Russian culture somehow contains within it the seeds of expansion.⁵⁸ (One notes here echoes of Cold War logic, which viewed Communism as inherently aggressive.)

Because the new containment is so closely tied to NATO expansion, advocates say little about other regions of the world. It seems, however, that NATO expansion is part of a much more ambitious policy. Brzezinski adds a more forward U.S. policy around the Russian periphery.⁵⁹ In some recent work, he describes an “oblong of maximum danger,” which extends from the Adriatic to the border of the Chinese province of Sinkiang and from the Persian Gulf to the Russian-Kazakh frontier.⁶⁰ Here he expects a stew of ethnic and nationalist conflict and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—a “whirlpool of violence”—although the precise nature of U.S. interests here is not well developed. Similarly, Kissinger alludes to the role of a revived NATO in the resolution of the crises that will surely attend the adjustment of Russia, China,

56. Henry Kissinger, “Expand NATO Now,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 1994.

57. See Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership,” pp. 72–73. A disturbing account of Russian actions is found in Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett, *Back in the USSR: Russia’s Intervention in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and the Implications of United States Policy Toward Russia*, Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (Cambridge, Mass.: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, January 1994).

58. Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership,” pp. 71–75, calls this “the imperial impulse.” See also Brzezinski, *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Collier, 1993), pp. 173–181.

59. Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership,” pp. 79–82. He urges “political assurances for Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity”; “a more visible American show of interest in the independence of the Central Asian states, as well as of the three states in the Caucasus”; and “some quiet American-Chinese political consultations regarding the area.”

60. Brzezinski, *Out of Control*, pp. 163–166.

and Japan to the changed circumstances of the post–Cold War world; Kissinger has also alluded to a NATO role in Korea, Indonesia, Brazil, and India.⁶¹

Two elements in the case for NATO expansion suggest that its advocates perceive the Russian threat as less imminent than they often imply. First, they think that Russia's fears of an expanded NATO can be rather easily assuaged. Second, they see the Russian military threat as quite manageable. Advocates of NATO expansion usually advocate a simultaneous diplomatic approach to Russia in the form of some sort of "security treaty."⁶² They concede that NATO should not move large forces forward onto the territory of new members.⁶³ The combination of a formal diplomatic act of reassurance and military restraint is expected to ameliorate the possibility that the eastward march of a mighty and formerly adversarial military coalition could be perceived by Russia to pose a threat. These expectations seem inconsistent with the image of a looming Russian threat.

Similarly, advocates of NATO expansion are relaxed about its costs because they are relaxed about the current Russian military threat. As of late 1996, NATO had yet to release a public estimate of the costs of expansion.⁶⁴ One general statement of the threat has been offered by a team of political and military analysts from the Rand Corporation:

One should avoid assuming worst-case scenarios. Even a re-armed Russia would not be the military Leviathan the Soviet Union once was. It would have an imposing military force, but probably not a great deal more than that of Iran, Iraq, or North Korea—in short, a major regional contingency-sized threat. Defending against such a threat would be very different than against the theater-wide challenge posed by the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War.⁶⁵

Thus, there is no imminent or even remote military threat to these Eastern European countries that NATO cannot deal with rather comfortably with its current capabilities.

Given the politically and militarily relaxed image of the Russian threat expressed by NATO expansion advocates, one wonders what is actually driv-

61. Kissinger, "Expand NATO Now."

62. Brzezinski, "Premature Partnership," pp. 81–82; Kissinger, "Expand NATO Now."

63. Ibid.; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Bigger—and Safer—Europe," *New York Times*, December 1, 1993, p. A23.

64. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that NATO expansion would cost from \$61 billion to \$125 billion over the years 1996–2010. See Congressional Budget Office, CBO Papers, "The Costs of Expanding the NATO Alliance" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, March 1996).

65. Asmus, Kugler, and Larrabee, "NATO Expansion," p. 32.

ing them. In our judgment, it is first the desire to anchor the United States in a diplomatic enterprise that will preserve and widen its involvement in European and international affairs, simply because this is viewed as an unalloyed good in its own right. Second, it is to forestall even a hint of an independent German foreign policy in the east.⁶⁶ A revived containment policy in Europe may be nothing more than the adaptation of a politically familiar vehicle to the task of preserving U.S. primacy.

Another candidate for future peer competitor, and therefore long-term threat, is China.⁶⁷ Current economic trends in that country suggest that it could become a formidable economic competitor in the first quarter of the next century. Its new economic capability could easily be translated into not only regional but also perhaps global military might.⁶⁸ The admission of Vietnam into ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) can be read in part as reflecting regional concerns about China's intentions. China's rapid economic growth, improving military capabilities, stridency on Taiwan, and interest in the South China Sea have led to the suggestion that it would be prudent to hedge against the failure of engagement with China by means of a strategy of "hidden containment." Such a strategy would include maintaining U.S. military presence in the region, establishing a robust diplomatic relationship with Vietnam, and perhaps even reviving something along the lines of SEATO.⁶⁹ According to *The Economist*, containment "should mean recognizing that China is a destabilizing force and impressing upon it the need to forswear force in trying to settle its grievances."⁷⁰

Advocates of primacy share with the new isolationists and selective engagers a healthy skepticism of international organizations.⁷¹ International organizations have little if any power and therefore can do little to maintain or, particu-

66. Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler, and Stephen Larrabee, "Building a New NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (September/October 1993), p. 34: "While Germany remains pre-occupied with the staggering challenge of the political and economic reconstruction of its Eastern half, the need to stabilize its eastern flank is Bonn's number one security concern." See also Brzezinski, "A Plan for Europe," p. 42: "Most important, a united and powerful Germany can be more firmly anchored within this larger Europe if the European security system fully coincides with America's."

67. Khalilzad, an ardent proponent of primacy, has written that China "is the most likely candidate for global rival." Zalmay Khalilzad, *From Containment to Global Leadership? America and the World After the Cold War* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995), p. 30.

68. Karen Elliott House, "The Second Cold War," *Wall Street Journal*, February 17, 1994. She alludes to "the looming threat of a militarizing, autocratic China" and observes that "a resurgent China flexes its muscles at increasingly fearful neighbors."

69. Thomas L. Friedman, "Dust Off the SEATO Charter," *New York Times*, June 28, 1995, p. A19.

70. "Containing China," *Economist*, July 29, 1995, pp. 11 and 12.

71. See, for instance, Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, pp. 71-82.

larly, restore peace. Yet international organizations should not be entirely rejected because of fears that they may draw the United States into conflicts or concerns that they cannot credibly deter aggression. Even a hegemonic power will, from time to time, find it useful to exploit the diplomatic cover provided by international organizations. If the facade of multilateralism renders the rule of an extraordinary power more palatable to ordinary powers, as it did during the Gulf War, international organizations are a strategic asset.

Proliferation is as much a concern for primacy as it is for cooperative security.⁷² The threat to U.S. interests posed by the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery was highlighted in the draft DPG. Proliferation is a problem because it undermines U.S. freedom of action by increasing the costs and risks of U.S. military interventions around the world. Because they serve to perpetuate a U.S. military advantage, current nonproliferation efforts should be continued. But while prevention is a useful first line of defense in combating proliferation, by itself it is inadequate to the task. The United States must also be able to deter and defend against the use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons by present and future powers which might develop such capabilities.

Proponents of primacy view regional conflict, ethnic conflict, and humanitarian intervention in much the same light as do the advocates of selective engagement. Regional conflict matters most when it impinges on major power relations and the rise of potential peer competitors and regional hegemons. Outside of the Persian Gulf, most conflicts in what was once referred to as the Third World will be of little concern. Much the same can be said for ethnic conflict, however reprehensible it may be, and the need for U.S. humanitarian intervention.⁷³ There is no obvious security rationale, under primacy, for humanitarian military operations, though some operations (such as Bosnia) may offer opportunities to demonstrate and assert U.S. power and leadership.

FORCE STRUCTURE. The forces needed to support a grand strategy of primacy should inspire a sense of *déjà vu*. A nearly Cold War-size force, in particular the Bush administration's "Base Force," would do just fine (see Table 2). The draft DPG was intended to provide the classified rationale for a 1.62 million

72. Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1991), pp. 31-32. In previous versions of this essay we classified Krauthammer as a "cooperative security" advocate, but his emphasis on the dominant role of the U.S. warrants his inclusion here.

73. At least one advocate of primacy, however, sees the United States as having been, from the start, insufficiently active in Bosnia. See Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, pp. 85-131.

person Base Force. General Colin Powell apparently saw this force as essential if U.S. primacy was to be preserved.⁷⁴ Two advocates of primacy recently called for increasing defense spending by as much as \$80 billion above current levels, to roughly the level required to support the “Base Force.” They propose that the adequacy of U.S. military forces be measured against a “two- (or three-, or four-) power standard,” analogous to Britain’s two-power standard of old, in which the Royal Navy was meant to be superior to the two next strongest navies in the world combined. This would serve to perpetuate the current disparity in military capabilities between the United States and other powers.⁷⁵ Presumably, the disparity to be maintained is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Military modernization is a high priority for the advocates of primacy. Indeed, if the objective is actually to deter any state from considering a challenge to U.S. preeminence, then it is logical for the United States military to pursue a level of qualitative superiority over potential challengers that would discourage them from entering the competition. That requires higher levels of research and development and procurement funding. The force must also be capable of what the Bush administration termed reconstitution: the ability to expand U.S. military capabilities in order to deter, and if necessary respond to, the rise of a global challenger. Thus the level of defense spending required to support a grand strategy of primacy would likely be greater in the future than it would be now, as a consequence of both modernization and expansion.

American military preeminence should ensure that U.S. forces could be used at will, but would seldom have to be, since threats to U.S. interests would be deterred by overwhelming military capabilities. Advocates of primacy, perhaps in an effort to reassure the rest of the world, have counseled that the United States use force sparingly. They advise against the use of military force on behalf of purely economic interests, or to promote American values, reverse setbacks to democracy, support the United Nations, or resolve civil wars. Protracted military involvement in non-critical regions is to be avoided. Because world order and stability are to be maintained, however, the United

74. Callahan, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 135.

75. Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” p. 26. Similarly, Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, p. 138, calls for defense spending that would be “somewhere around 4 percent of GDP.” Khalilzad, “Losing the Moment,” p. 102, offers a less ambiguous, and less demanding, multipower standard than do Kristol and Kagan. He proposes that U.S. forces be able to defeat simultaneously “the two next most powerful military forces in the world that are not allied with the United States.”

States is to look favorably on the use of force to resist aggression.⁷⁶ Despite the lip service given to restraint, this self-appointed mission could involve a lot of fighting.

CRITIQUE

One of the foremost advocates of primacy has argued that "it matters which state exercises the most power in the international system"; that U.S. primacy is to be preferred to that of another power and is superior to a world in which no one is able to exercise primacy (the balance-of-power world implicitly embraced by selective engagement); and that primacy enables a state to achieve its objectives without resorting to war.⁷⁷ However, although primacy may offer many benefits for the United States and even for the world, the quest for primacy is likely to prove futile for five reasons.

First, the diffusion of economic and technological capabilities—precipitated in part by the open international economic system that the United States supports, in part by the spread of literacy, and in part by the embrace of market economics—suggests that other countries will develop the foundations to compete in international politics. New great powers will rise in the future. Indeed, though there is no recognized rule of thumb that specifies the share of gross world product a state must command in order to bid for hegemony, it seems peculiar to suggest that the situation today is not much different from the end of World War II, when an unbombed United States produced 40 percent of gross world product.⁷⁸

Second, contrary to the expectations of primacy advocates, it is likely that some states will balance against the United States. They will not wish to remain in a permanent position of military inferiority, just as the United States would struggle to reverse the position if it were imposed even by a benevolent state. Primacy underestimates the power of nationalism. Some states, simply out of

76. On these issues see Khalilzad, "Losing the Moment?" pp. 104–105; and Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, pp. 152–170.

77. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," p. 70. Huntington more specifically argues that "power enables an actor to shape his environment so as to reflect his interests. In particular it enables a state to protect its security and prevent, deflect, or defeat threats to that security. It also enables a state to promote its values among other peoples and to shape the international environment so as to reflect its values"; pp. 69–70.

78. Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership*, p. 32: "America is even more powerful today than it was in the immediate aftermath of World War II, although that moment is cited by many heralds of American decline as the apogee of American power."

national pride, may not accept U.S. leadership. States coalesce against hegemons rather than rally around them. Primacy is therefore a virtual invitation to struggle.

Third, American insistence on hegemonic leadership can engender resistance that may undermine the long-term effectiveness of any multilateral mechanisms that the United States may wish to exploit should challengers actually emerge. If a rising power such as China cannot be accommodated, as Britain accommodated the rise of the United States, the collective defense mechanisms of selective engagement or the collective security component of cooperative security would ensure that the United States need not alone bear the burden of taking on those who would undermine international order and stability: primacy may make this remedy unavailable.

Fourth, primacy carries the logical implication that the United States should be willing to wage preventive war. For now, such discussions focus on depriving “rogue” states of their nascent capabilities to assemble weapons of mass destruction. However difficult this may be, it is easy compared to the problem of restraining larger states. Will U.S. domestic politics permit a preventive war to forestall the rise of a challenger if other measures have proven insufficient? How will other major powers react to preventive war?

Fifth, the pursuit of primacy poses the constant risk of imperial overstretch. Primacy is inherently open-ended. A little bit more power will always seem better. Selective engagement is vulnerable to this temptation; primacy is even more so. Attempting to sustain an image of such overwhelming power that others will not even think of making the effort to match U.S. capabilities, or challenge U.S. leadership, seems a good recipe for draining the national treasury. Primacy may be affordable today, but it is less likely to be had on the cheap in the future. Ultimately, primacy is probably unsustainable and self-defeating. Primacy is little more than a rationale for the continued pursuit of Cold War policy and strategy in the absence of an enemy.⁷⁹

79. See Christopher Layne and Benjamin Schwarz, “American Hegemony—Without an Enemy,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 92 (Fall 1993), pp. 5–23; and Benjamin Schwarz, “Why America Thinks It Has to Run the World,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1996, pp. 92–102. Layne and Schwarz draw heavily on Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992). More extended critiques of primacy are provided by Callahan, *Between Two Worlds*; Robert Jervis, “International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 52–67; Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion”; and Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, pp. 134–141.

The Clinton Administration's Grand Strategy: Selective (but Cooperative) Primacy

The Clinton administration came to office strongly inclined to pursue a cooperative security policy. Several of its senior national security officials were identified with the development of cooperative security ideas before the 1992 election.⁸⁰ The international and domestic constraints that the administration has encountered in its efforts to execute the strategy have forced both real and rhetorical compromises.

A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (February 1996), the most complete statement of the administration's grand strategy vision, prominently contains within it the language of cooperative security and selective engagement, plus a dash of primacy.⁸¹ The document reveals a curiously dialectical quality, alternating between cooperative security rhetoric and selective engagement rhetoric. The administration has adopted an avowedly internationalist posture founded on a broad conception of national interests. The phrase "engagement and enlargement" conveys both the mode and the purpose, or vision, of the strategy: the United States must be engaged in the world to enlarge the community of democratic free-market countries. Neo-isolationism is explicitly rejected. The repeated calls for U.S. leadership may be interpreted as a bow in the direction of primacy, as is the stress on U.S. unilateral military capabilities.⁸²

The document promotes, on the one hand, "cooperative security measures." On the other hand, it acknowledges "limits to America's involvement in the world—limits imposed by careful evaluation of our fundamental interests and frank assessment of the costs and benefits of possible actions," and notes that

80. Prominent members of the administration who were associated with the theoretical development of cooperative security ideas include Ashton Carter, Morton Halperin, Catherine Kelleher, and William Perry; see works cited in footnote 25. John Deutsch participated in the development of a similar approach to U.S. foreign policy; Commission on America and the New World, *Changing Our Ways*.

81. *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. Since the administration's presentation of its strategy has been more consistent than its actions, we focus here solely on the third version of this Clinton White House document (February 1996).

82. U.S. leadership appears to be necessary in every class of international problem; the word "leadership" appears four times on p. 2 alone. See *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, p. 2. Military requirements are discussed on p. 14, where the language of primacy also emerges: "A strategy for deterring and defeating aggression in more than one theater ensures we maintain the flexibility to meet unknown future threats, while our continued engagement represented by that strategy helps preclude such threats from developing in the first place" (emphasis added).

“we cannot become involved in every problem.” The array of transnational threats and challenges confronting the post-Cold War world “demand cooperative, multilateral solutions.” Arms control is unequivocally embraced as “an integral part of our national security strategy” and seen as becoming increasingly multilateral. But the country’s force structure must enable the United States to deal with threats not just multilaterally but unilaterally. “Our leadership must stress preventive diplomacy . . . in order to help resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they become crises,” yet “our engagement must be selective, focusing on the challenges that are most important [to] our own interests and focusing our resources where we can make the most difference.”⁸³

While the document issues calls for strengthening the United Nations, and for the United States to be prepared to participate in a wide variety of multilateral peace operations, that participation is nevertheless subject to a restrictive set of conditions that, if taken at face value, would ensure that the United States is seldom actually engaged in such operations. Economic multilateralism too is championed, but a self-regarding emphasis on “enhancing American competitiveness,” which might be expected of selective engagement or primacy, is present as well.⁸⁴ Democracy must be promoted, but a selective approach prevails: some parts of the world and some countries, particularly the states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe, matter more than others. The United States will intervene in the morass of ethnic and other intra-state conflicts only if there is an exit strategy. Humanitarian interventions too will occur under the strategy, but only under “certain conditions.”⁸⁵ More generally, decisions on whether, when, and how to use military force are subject to stringent guidelines that, if consistently adhered to, ensure that it will be used quite selectively. The administration’s highest-priority regions—the two ends of Eurasia—are the same as those of selective engagement and primacy.

The Clinton administration has been forced to water down a commitment to cooperative security because its purposes proved too grand and its premises faulty; the U.S. power necessary to pursue the strategy proved greater than expected. The liberal internationalist rhetoric that accompanies cooperative security generates a long agenda and great expectations for action. But to succeed without the commitment of substantial U.S. power, both international

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 9–12, 21.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

and multilateral institutions need to be strong and cohesive. And, more generally, very extensive international cooperation would be required. Both assumptions were flawed.

The UN remains a weak institution. Though it has been remarkably busy at peacekeeping over the last five or six years, it has proven ineffectual wherever the local parties have been even moderately resistant. Regional institutions did not do much better: the European Union and to a lesser extent the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe made attempts to help manage the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but they were unable to produce any results. The UN was able to organize some humanitarian relief in Yugoslavia, but was unable to bring about a settlement, or even to ameliorate the brutality of the fighting. Moreover, all three of these institutions contained ample numbers of democratic, peace-loving states. The EU is made up entirely of such states. Democracies may not fight one another, but this does not mean that they will always cooperate to settle disputes at the margins of traditional national interests.

The Clinton administration discovered that although international institutions are weak, the forces of U.S. domestic politics are not particularly supportive of strengthening them. The rhetoric of U.S. “leadership” that both the Democrats and the Republicans have adopted in their foreign policy statements is as much an expression of what the U.S. public seems to be against in international affairs as what it is for. It is against giving up much U.S. autonomy. As several observers have noted, the freshmen Republicans elected in 1994 are not so much isolationist as “unilateralist.”⁸⁶ This means that the United States is in no position to strengthen weak international institutions. The only multilateral organization that is loved across the U.S. political spectrum seems to be NATO, which is why it is carrying so much U.S. foreign policy weight.

The Clinton administration also discovered that international cooperation is not so easy to arrange. Even the good guys can conceptualize their national interests in opposition to one another. Three conflicts with liberal democratic allies have surfaced during the Clinton administration. While all of these conflicts cannot be attributed to cooperative security projects, they nevertheless illustrate the broader problem: democracies can be “uncooperative.” First, the

86. Dick Kirschten, “Mixed Signals,” *National Journal*, May 27, 1995, pp. 1274–1277; see also Robert Greenberger, “Dateline Capitol Hill: The New Majority’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 101 (Winter 1995–96), pp. 159–169.

Clinton administration itself pursued a strangely “non-cooperative” economic policy with the Japanese for most of 1993–96. This caused many in Asia to wonder if the United States was abandoning its commitment to a multilateral trading system.⁸⁷ Second, the United States vehemently disagreed with the policy pursued in Bosnia by Britain and France. U.S. policymakers believed that there was some way to produce a unified, pluralist, democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina. The British and French believed that once the war got going, some variant of a partition solution was the right answer. Privately, both British and U.S. officials admit that differences over Bosnia brought U.S.-British relations to their lowest point since the 1956 Suez crisis. In the end, the United States and the allies compromised on a Bosnia settlement: the United States agreed to commit troops to support an effort to achieve a Bosnia settlement more to its liking, while the allies agreed to support such a settlement so long as it included a very high level of autonomy for the three communities of Bosnia. Finally, in August 1996 the United States initiated a dispute with its allies and trading partners over their economic relations with countries that the United States intended to sanction economically. The U.S. proposed unilaterally to punish the citizens of countries who do business with Cuba, Iran, and Libya. While in the latter two cases the allies may broadly agree with the anti-terrorism principles that motivate U.S. actions, they do not consider these actions to be commensurate with their own national interests. More importantly, they recoil from what they perceive as the arrogance of U.S. policy.

If friends and allies have their own interpretations of U.S. actions, “rivals” are even more likely to be suspicious, and less likely to prove cooperative. Though the Clinton administration has gone to great lengths to portray NATO expansion in cooperative security terms, Russian political figures and policymakers do not seem to accept the notion that NATO expansion is good for their country. Clinton administration officials remain optimistic that the Russians will accommodate themselves to NATO expansion. This is probably true in the sense that since there is nothing they can do about it, at some point they have nothing to gain by opposition. This does not mean, however, that a positive Russian consensus will develop around the project. Indeed, it seems equally

87. Jeffrey Garten, “Is America Abandoning Multilateral Trade?” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 6 (November/December 1995), pp. 50–62. For the most part, economic tensions did not directly affect the security relationship, but former Ambassador to Japan Michael H. Armacost suggests that “trade frictions generated mistrust and resentment that threatened to contaminate our security relations.” Armacost, *Friends or Rivals? The Insider’s Account of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 194.

plausible that the fact of NATO expansion will be a continuing sore point in Russian domestic politics. Similarly, the United States initially pursued a very energetic policy of "engagement" with the People's Republic of China, "engaging" the Chinese simultaneously on their domestic politics, their economic policies, and several aspects of their foreign policy. Engagement usually took the form of the United States explaining to Chinese officials how they should change their behavior, and ignoring Chinese sensitivities about interference in their internal affairs, and the status of Taiwan. The result was a generally non-cooperative China.

Because international and regional security institutions are weak, more U.S. leadership is required to make things happen than cooperative security advocates had hoped. Resources are necessary to supply this leadership, and resources for international affairs have become more scarce than they were during the Cold War. In particular, foreign aid and the State Department budget have been cut in half since 1984, largely at the instigation of the Congress, and are destined to fall another 20 per cent by 2002.⁸⁸ The defense budget remains large, even by Cold War standards; real defense spending nearly equals the outlays of the 1970s, and is roughly 80 percent of what it was in the early 1960s. It is also very large relative to the rest of the world, equaling the total defense spending of the next five major military powers in 1994 (Russia, China, Japan, France, and Germany).⁸⁹ Yet these resources, which would be more than adequate to support a policy of selective engagement, seem to produce a military that is not quite capable of the range of projects that it now faces.

The Clinton administration's defense program faces persistent tensions among force size, activity, readiness, and modernization. Most observers believe that the force structure cannot be funded for the level of resources planned after the turn of the century. The "Bottom-Up Review" avowedly sized the military for two nearly simultaneous Major Regional Contingencies (MRCs), and then added extra capabilities to support a vigorous forward presence. The quest for permanent military-technological dominance has proven expensive. In contrast to many doubters, it does seem to us that the force structure may well be able to deal with two simultaneous MRC's today, but it appears that both "Major" and "Minor" Regional Contingencies (MaRCs and MiRCs?) are difficult to end definitively. This high level of activity seems to have imposed

88. Casimir Yost and Mary Locke, "The Raid on Aid," *Washington Post*, July 28, 1996, p. C1.

89. See Congressional Budget Office, *Reducing the Deficit: Spending and Revenue Options* (Washington, D.C.: CBO, August 1996), Figure 3-1, p. 98; U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, 1995 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1996), Figure 4, p. 4.

stresses and strains on the organization that may require additional resources to resolve. The United States today deals with two simultaneous MiRCs on a daily basis: the military containment of Iraq, including protection of the Kurds, and the combined ground, naval, and air operation in Bosnia. For a brief period, the U.S. military was also simultaneously involved in Haiti. Calls are occasionally heard for forcible intervention in Rwanda and Burundi; humanitarian military assistance was provided in Rwanda; and logistical military support has been offered for multilateral military interventions in both places. The U.S. military presence in the Republic of Korea has an edgy quality to it that makes the mission anything but garrison duty, arguably a "MiRC" that could quickly turn into a "MaRC." The U.S. military is busy, and new missions are suggested daily. Finally, resources that were expected from the "downsizing" of the U.S. military have not materialized. Cuts in the infrastructure that supported the Cold War effort have not been proportional to the cuts in the divisions, wings, and warships that are the "business end" of the force. Neither the Congress nor the executive have shown much discipline in this matter. Thus, though the financial resources to remedy many problems may be present within the defense budget, they are fenced off politically. In sum, pursuit of the objectives of cooperative security, with weak or non-existent cooperative security institutions, probably requires more U.S. resources than advocates projected.

The Clinton administration's grand strategy is the result, therefore, of four conflicting sets of pressures. Its own ambitious purposes impel considerable activism. The constraints presented by the current realities of international politics make these purposes difficult to achieve without the exercise of U.S. leadership and power. A substantial portion of the U.S. political elite, in particular congressional Republicans, displays an erratic impulse toward unilateral U.S. actions on selected issues, particularly those that have to do with perceived unfinished Cold War business, such as national ballistic missile defense, Cuba, and Taiwan's independence. The general public is far from isolationist, but is nevertheless not particularly interested in foreign affairs. The Clinton administration has moved toward a grand strategy that tries to address these conflicting pressures. The accommodations that the Clinton administration strategy has made with the obstacles it has encountered have been incremental, rhetorical, disjointed, and incomplete. In theory, the incoherence of the current strategy could produce a series of new difficulties for the administration, and conceivably a disaster. In practice, the Clinton administration may succeed in avoiding a disaster through its well-known skills at "triangulation."

At the first sign of serious resistance on the domestic or international front, it adapts or backs away in order to keep costs under control. The second Clinton administration may muddle through.

LONG TERM PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE

What is the longer-term prognosis for U.S. grand strategy? What could cause this strategy to change and in what direction might it change? The answer depends upon a number of contingencies.

Ironically, the Clinton administration grand strategy has already evolved to a point where it has many of the trappings of primacy. Indeed, Clinton's foreign and defense policy team has discovered that considerable U.S. leadership and major commitments of U.S. power are necessary for the pursuit of the transformed world order they seek. The Republicans would probably follow a somewhat purer version of primacy, and move even further away from cooperative security than the Clinton administration already has, if they could take back the presidency.⁹⁰ What might cause U.S. foreign policy makers in both parties to abandon primacy?

One likely source of a major change in U.S. grand strategy is change in U.S. domestic politics. The aging of the "baby boomers" will put substantial pressure on the federal budget after the turn of the century. An increasing portion of the politically active adult population will have dim memories of the Cold War. Even the Persian Gulf War is beginning to fade into the past. The combination of these developments could produce decreasing budgetary and political support for an activist U.S. foreign policy. U.S. leaders will have to husband these scarce resources; selective engagement may become the U.S. grand strategy by default.

Primacy could die the death of a thousand cuts. The overall U.S. share of global power will decline a little. Scientific, technological, and productive capacities will spread across the world. Niche players will develop in economics, warfare, and even ideology. Close allies will grow tired of incessant U.S. demands. Traditional adversaries will balk as the United States tries to set the criteria for responsible membership in the "international community." A series of not very costly but ultimately indecisive interventions could exhaust the

90. See Bob Dole, "Shaping America's Global Future," *Foreign Policy*, No. 98 (Spring 1995), pp. 29-43. One quotation reveals much: "From Bosnia to China, from North Korea to Poland, our allies and our adversaries doubt our resolve and question our commitment"; p. 31. See also "Remarks by Senate Majority Leader Dole, March 1, 1995," *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 6 (May/June 1995), pp. 33-35; and Baker, "Selective Engagement."

patience of the U.S. public. Selective engagement again could be the default strategy, but retreat to isolationism is also possible.

Alternatively, the U.S. share of gross world power could decline significantly. Though some skepticism is in order on this score, the prospect ought not to be ruled out entirely. Russia may recover economically and politically; the Japanese economy could improve, the Chinese economy might continue to enjoy very high growth rates. Global statistical comparisons may increasingly conform to the description “multipolar world.” In such a world the United States would be constrained by other powers. Selective engagement, again, seems a plausible fall-back position.

The temptations of U.S. power could prove too strong in the short term. Many Democrats and many Republicans believe that democratic principles and liberal values are universal, or should be, and that this country should act to spread them. Moreover, the end of the Cold War left a lot of foreign policy and security specialists without much to do; they will find new dragons to slay. Thus, it is plausible that the United States will get itself into a major war over these values and principles. The United States is quite powerful militarily, and it is possible that the war would be another Desert Storm. On the other hand, it is just as likely, given the kind of world we face and beliefs we carry, that the war will be a Vietnam, or Boer War, or Algeria, or “the troubles” of Northern Ireland. Such a war could easily produce a retreat to neo-isolationism. This is no great insight, and responsible foreign policy professionals will try to avoid this war, because they understand its risks. But blunders are possible.

Finally, a change in a more ambitious direction would result if an aspiring peer competitor jumped the gun, like Saddam Hussein did, challenging the United States before its power was adequate. The behavior of such a state could create threats to many while the United States is still strong and active, and the challenger is still too weak. Such a threat could permit primacy to evolve into “containment.” The fearful would once again be eager to embrace U.S. leadership. The people of the United States would allocate plenty to military preparedness and to foreign aid. In a host of small and large ways, medium and great powers would encourage and subsidize U.S. leadership.

Conclusions

This brief overview cannot do justice to the full range of argumentation about which the advocates of neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative

security, primacy, and engagement and enlargement disagree. But it is a start. By way of conclusion we offer three general points.

First, it should be clear that these strategic alternatives produce different advice about when the United States should use force abroad, and the advice is not equally explicit. The new isolationism suggests "almost never." Cooperative security could imply "frequently." Selective engagement advises "it all depends," but suggests some rough criteria for judgment. Primacy implies the employment of force whenever it is necessary to secure or improve the U.S. relative power position, but permits it whenever the United States is moved to do so. An understandable desire for clear decision rules on when to use force should not, however, outweigh the more fundamental concerns that ought to drive the U.S. choice of strategy.

Second, these alternative strategies generate different force structures, two of which may prove attractive because of the money they save. But leaders should understand that these force structures constrain future political leaders—or ought to constrain them. A neo-isolationist force structure cannot quickly be recast for cooperative security or humanitarian intervention. A force structure designed for selective engagement may prove inadequate for the full range of cooperative security missions. A true cooperative security force structure may include more intervention capabilities than needed for strategic weight in great power wars, perhaps at some cost to the ability of the United States to wage high intensity warfare, unless the defense budget grows accordingly. A force structure tailored for primacy permits most kinds of military operations but may be so imposing that it causes some states to compete more rather than less with the United States.

Finally, although the alternatives are not entirely mutually exclusive, for the most part one cannot indiscriminately mix and match across strategies (as both post-Cold War administrations have attempted to do) without running into trouble. They contain fundamental disagreements about strategic objectives and priorities, the extent to which the United States should be engaged in international affairs, the form that engagement should assume, the means that should be employed, the degree of autonomy that must be maintained, and when and under what conditions military force should be employed. Some combinations just do not go together. One cannot expect to reap the rewards of isolationism if one still intends to engage on behalf of friends such as Israel. One cannot wage war in the name of cooperative security in Bosnia-Herzegovina, fail to do the same if Russia helps destabilize the Georgian Republic, and still expect to establish a well-founded fear of international reaction on the

part of aggressors everywhere. Selective engagement may ultimately draw the United States into strategically unimportant conflicts if its leaders consistently try to wrap their actions in the rhetoric and institutions of cooperative security. Those who dream of cooperative security, but practice primacy, must understand that they may gradually erode the international institutions upon which their dream depends, postponing it to an ever more distant future. And the rhetoric and diplomacy of a new containment strategy, even if it is only a convenient vehicle for the pursuit of primacy, probably does not permit, as the advocates would claim, particularly friendly relations with the objects of the policy. The Clinton administration has found it expedient to draw opportunistically from three grand strategies. It seems plausible that a future Republican administration would succumb to the same temptations, and for similar reasons. Though primacy figures prominently in the strategic inclinations of both parties, elements of other strategies pop up as needed. Given the realities of U.S. politics, such an *ad hoc* approach is probably inevitable until a crisis impels a choice. And the failure to develop a clearer consensus on grand strategy may hasten the arrival of that crisis. Perhaps the best we can do now is to lay out those choices.