

# Imperial America

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By Richard N. Haass, *Vice President and Director*,  
Foreign Policy Studies

Richard N. Haass is also the Sydney Stein, Jr., Chair in International Security at the Brookings Institution.

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It is now more than a decade after the end of the cold war, and the post-cold war world is revealing itself. The many attempts by political scientists and journalists to come up with simple or one-dimensional interpretations of contemporary international relations have failed for the simple reason that today's world is multidimensional. It is an era of contradictions: globalization and fragmentation, peace and conflict, prosperity and poverty. Only when one or more of these tendencies win out will the era gain a name of its own.

Amidst this complexity and uncertainty is the reality that the United States is first among unequals. This is and will likely remain a world of distinct American primacy. No country or group of countries will be in a position to balance American economic, military, and cultural power for the foreseeable future. But this is only a description, not a purpose. Still missing is a post-containment foreign policy for the post-cold war world. The fundamental question that continues to confront American foreign policy is what to do with a surplus of power and the many and considerable advantages this surplus confers on the United States.

Moreover, primacy is not to be confused with hegemony. The United States will be unable to realize the bulk of its ambitions without the support or at least tolerance of others. Unilateralism offers little promise; except in rare situations, the United States on its own cannot go to war, curb nuclear proliferation, thwart terrorism, open trade, or prevent genocide. As a result, the real task for American foreign policy is one of promoting effective multilateralism, something that more often than not will demand strong American leadership of (and participation in) regional organizations and less formal coalitions.

Implicit in the above is a recognition that U.S. advantages in economic and military might, while great, are not unqualified. To the contrary, U.S. strengths are limited by the availability of resources, which in turn reflects a lack of domestic political consensus over national priorities and over the U.S. role in the world. In addition, individual countries (or, in the case of Europe, groups of countries) rival the United States in one or more dimensions of power. An effort to assert U.S. hegemony is thus bound to fail: doing so would stimulate international resistance, which in turn would make the costs of hegemony all the greater.

In addition, U.S. advantages are not permanent. For the same reasons that current U.S. advantages are limited, the U.S. position relative to others is eroding. The reality is that other countries and non-state actors (be they Osama Bin Laden, Amnesty International, the International Criminal Court, or George Soros and one of his hedge funds) are accumulating ever more significant amounts of power in one or more forms. In addition, American society and domestic politics will hasten the fading of American primacy. De Tocqueville's judgment that democracy is ill-suited for the conduct of foreign policy goes double for world leadership.

The result will be a world more multipolar than the present one. But here again, multipolarity is simply a description. It tells us about the distribution of power in the world, not about the character or quality of international relations.

Multipolarity can reflect a world in which several hostile but roughly equal states confront one another-or a world in which a number of states, each possessing significant power, work together in common pursuits. The purpose of American foreign policy should not be to resist multipolarity (which in any event would be futile) but to define it. As much as possible, the U.S. objective should be to

persuade other centers of political, economic and military power to see it as their self-interest to support constructive notions of how international society should be organized and operated. The proper goal for American foreign policy, then, is to encourage the emergence of a multipolarity characterized by cooperation and concert rather than competition and conflict. In such a world, order would not be limited to non-belligerence based on a balance of power (or fear of escalation) but rather on something much more broad, reflecting agreement on both global purposes and the means to accomplish them.

This goal is not as far-fetched as it may appear. It is possible even now to discern significant areas of international life characterized by substantial cooperation. This is especially so in the economic realm: the WTO proves a mechanism for resolving trade disputes, finance ministers meet regularly to coordinate monetary policies, and broadly supported conventions exist to ban bribery and corruption. Economic interaction is also regulated by an international marketplace that puts a premium on governments adopting policies and procedures- privatization, reduced government subsidies, bank regulation and accepted accounting practices, bankruptcy proceedings--that encourage investment and a free flow of capital.

Military and political interactions are also regulated, although to a lesser extent in both depth and breadth. There are some accepted grounds for using military force, such as self-defense. Norms (along with treaties or other arrangements to back them up) outlaw the possession of biological and chemical weapons, prohibit the testing of nuclear explosives, and discourage the horizontal as well as vertical proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. In the political domain, formal international agreements promote human rights, outlaw genocide, and safeguard refugees.

This brief summary of existing global arrangements also makes the point that important areas of international life remain unregulated, especially in the political and military realms. When is it legitimate to use military force in situations other than self-defense? What more should be done to limit further the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction? What, if any, limits ought to exist on sovereignty and the ability of governments to act as they wish within their own borders? What else can be done to promote open trade? Only when there is consensus among the major powers on these and related issues will it be possible to say that a significant degree of order exists.

#### **Four Fundamentals**

Ideally, post-cold war international society should be built on four foundation stones: a reduction in the use of military force to resolve disputes between states; a reduction in the number of weapons of mass destruction and in the number of states and other groups possessing such weapons; an acceptance of a limited doctrine of humanitarian intervention based on a recognition that people-and not just states-enjoy rights; and economic openness. Such a world would be relatively peaceful, prosperous and just.

The desirability of reducing the role of military force as a legitimate means of resolving disputes is self-evident. Using force is expensive by any and every measure. Moreover, the goal of reducing (if not eliminating) the role of force is not Pollyannaish. Already, the use of force by one major power against another is either unthinkable because of political relations or highly unlikely because of the cost of doing so-a cost that includes the danger of escalation to unconventional weaponry. The challenge is to make any such use of force between major powers even more unlikely-and to forge agreement on other contexts in which using force against a state might be legitimate.

There has been real progress in the effort to reduce the role of weapons of mass destruction. The world has come a long way since nuclear weapons constituted the basic unit of account of great power competition. U.S. and Russia nuclear inventories are slated to decrease to approximately 3500 weapons apiece under the START II accord. Biological and chemical weapons are prohibited, as is all nuclear testing. Although India and Pakistani conducted nuclear tests in 1998, a number of states, including Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina, have voluntarily given up nuclear weapons programs in recent years. The remaining agenda is to bring about further reductions in the arsenals of existing nuclear weapons

states, principally the United States and Russia; provide for the orderly introduction of limited defensive anti-missile systems; discourage the proliferation of nuclear capability to other actors; and introduce enforcement of the ban against possession of chemical and biological weapons.

The third building block of a post-cold war world could well prove the most controversial. For three hundred and fifty years international order has been buttressed by the notion of sovereignty, that what goes on within the borders of a nation-state is its business and its business alone. The notion of sovereignty was itself an advancement that promoted order for it discouraged meddling that could all too easily lead to conflict. But over the past half century, and especially over the past decade, the idea that sovereignty should not be absolute has gained strength. Instead, sovereignty is increasingly judged as conditional, linked to how a government treats its own citizens. When a government is unable or unwilling to safeguard its citizens-when the inherent contract between the government and the governed is violated-the leaderships forfeits its normal rights. It then falls upon the international community to act-be it diplomatically, with sanctions, with aid, or with military force-under the banner of humanitarian intervention. The obvious challenge is to gain broader recognition of this modified view of sovereignty and with it acceptance of (if not support for) humanitarian intervention.

The fourth building block of post-cold war international society is economic openness. Openness is defined not only by the movement of goods, capital, and services across national lines but also by openness within states, i.e., transparent markets that favor private sector activities. Such openness is essential if prosperity is to be sustained; it will also buttress civil society and increase linkages and interdependencies, factors that should constitute something of a bulwark against military conflict. What is needed is not a new international financial architecture or added controls on investment (other than short term money flows) so much as some "interior decorating" that would increase the transparency and efficiency of national economies throughout much of the world.

Some would argue for a fifth building block: democracy. It is true that mature democracies appear to act with relative restraint toward both their own citizens and their neighbors. Alas, the same cannot be said for immature democracies, which are all too prone to being captured by nationalist forces. Still, promoting democracy should be a consideration for foreign policy, but not a fundamental one, given that other vital interests often must take precedence. Also, promoting democracy can be a difficult business given local economic, political, social, and cultural realities; in most instances, it will behoove the United States to proceed modestly and cautiously, helping to build and extend civil societies and markets, both desirable in their own right and possible way stations for societies on the path to greater openness.

### **Empire and its Obstacles**

The world described here will not come about solely from its inherent appeal. To the contrary, building and maintaining such an order would require sustained effort by the world's most powerful actor, the United States. For it to be successful would in turn require that Americans re-conceive their role from one of a traditional nation-state to an imperial power. An imperial foreign policy is not to be confused with imperialism. The latter is a concept that connotes exploitation, normally for commercial ends, often requiring territorial control. It is grounded in a world that no longer exists, one in which a small number of mostly European states dominated a large number of peoples, most of whom lived in colonies that by definition lacked self-rule.

Such relationships are neither desirable nor sustainable in today's world. To advocate an imperial foreign policy is to call for a foreign policy that attempts to organize the world along certain principles affecting relations between states and conditions within them. The U.S. role would resemble 19th century Great Britain. Influence would reflect the appeal of American culture, the strength of the American economy, and the attractiveness of the norms being promoted as much as any conscious action of U.S. foreign policy. Coercion and the use of force would normally be a last resort; what was written by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson about Britain a century and a half ago, that "The British policy followed the principle of extending control informally if possible and formally if

necessary," could be applied to the American role at the start of the new century. Indeed, an American empire would have to be informal if it were to succeed if only because American democracy could not underwrite an imperial order that required constant, costly applications of military power.

Undoubtedly, the United States would find a world premised on peaceful relations, non-proliferation, respect for human rights and economic openness to its liking. In addition, a world in which the other principal centers of power were willing to work with the United States in promoting these ends would reduce the foreign policy burden on the United States. Still, there would be a cost to consider. The United States would need to relinquish some freedom of action; imperial America is not to be confused with either hegemonic America or unilateral America. Sanctions would become less a staple of policy, to be replaced by incentives (including sanctions reduction) in exchange for behavioral improvements, much as has been done by the United States in an apparently successful effort to curb North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. (This may not prove to be much of a compromise in that unilateral sanctions are of limited utility at best and cannot be counted on to achieve ambitious goals such as regime change even when supported internationally.) It would be more difficult to carry out preventive or preemptive strikes on suspect military facilities as was done by the United States in Sudan in the summer of 1998. The barrier against intervening in internal conflicts would be higher. The United States would probably have to accept some limits on the deployment of anti-missile defenses. The question is whether the benefits would outweigh such costs. In principle, they could and should.

But bringing about such a world will be difficult regardless of U.S. restraint. In fact, there are three principal obstacles that lie in the path of the establishment and maintenance of an international society of America's liking. All three need to be dealt with lest they frustrate the goal of building international order.

The first and most obvious is the opposition of other power centers, major and minor alike. Some resistance is inevitable, at times from France or other European states or Japan, more often from China and Russia. China in particular will oppose any limitation on its ability to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue. China is also determined to increase the size and capability of its own strategic arsenal. China for sure and probably Russia will see the viability of their own nuclear forces threatened by American deployment of defensive systems. In selected instances, they may transfer technology that could bolster an unconventional weapons program of another state. Russia to some extent and China in particular will view an expansive notion of humanitarian intervention as little more than a pretext for unwelcome interference in what they view as their own internal affairs. Japan holds to a more closed view of the ideal economy. Few if any of the major powers would support preventive attacks on fledgling unconventional weapons programs of what the United States might view as a rogue state; as a rule, the United States tends to find itself isolated when emphasizing sanctions and military attacks as opposed to commerce and other forms of largely unconditional engagement. A host of smaller but still considerable powers—including India, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, Iraq and others—are likely to view an American-led empire as discriminatory, threatening, or both.

How might the United States persuade the other major powers of the desirability of such a world? The operative word is persuade. Areas of consensus will only begin to emerge following strategic dialogues, intense conversations with other governments and opinion leaders in those societies. If negotiations were at the center of cold war diplomacy, consultations will form the core of post-cold war foreign policy. The goal is to build or strengthen global institutions and arrangements that are able to buttress the basic principles of order. Optimally, this would result in a UN Security Council willing and able to counter aggression, be it by one state against another or by a government against its own people; a more comprehensive WTO better able to promote open trade; supplier clubs that are more restrictive in the proliferation-relevant technologies that would be made available; and a stronger IAEA to police nuclear nonproliferation and similar organizations to verify chemical and biological weapons bans.

Why might other states go along with American preferences? In some cases, they will see the same inherent benefits. Economic openness tends to be its

own reward. Most of the major powers also have a stake in avoiding major conflicts, in slowing the spread of technologies that could one day threaten them, in maintaining a free flow of oil and gas. The United States could be more forthcoming in the technology it is willing to share and in the capital it is willing to provide. At least as important is the status the United States can confer. Both Russia and China clearly want to be seen as great powers, as members of the inner circle of those shaping international relations. Only by working with the United States can they avoid the emergence of a pattern in which they and the UN Security Council are bypassed.

Still, consultations or even consultations buttressed by incentives will not be enough to bring about consensus in every area. Persuasion has its limits; some disagreements are based on different understandings, not misunderstandings. The major powers may not be able to agree on general rules; even when they can, they may not be able to agree on whether and how they should be applied in a particular situation. Take China, fast on its way to becoming the most difficult bilateral relationship for the United States. Areas of bilateral cooperation, including trade and promoting stability in Korea, risk being overwhelmed by differences over Taiwan, human rights, Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile programs, U.S. plans for both theater and national missile defense, and humanitarian intervention. Adding to the challenge is the political reality that in both countries there are those who see the other as the principal obstacle to a successful foreign policy and who see a competitive if not adversarial relationship as all but inevitable.

Such differences cannot be negotiated away; instead, what is required are regular consultations and attempts to cooperate in selected areas, resisting the tendency to allow areas of disagreement to spill over and affect the entire relationship. Taiwan should be singled out, however, as the one issue that could bring the United States and China into direct military confrontation. It is particularly important for China to understand that the United States will not idly stand aside if China coerces or uses military force against Taiwan. This posture needs to be balanced, however, by diplomacy directed toward both encouraging a mainland-Taiwan "cross straits" dialogue and discouraging any unilateral declaration of independence by Taiwan.

Russia also poses a difficult challenge for U.S. foreign policy, if for different reasons. Russia is a power in decline, a reflection of the poor state of its economy and domestic political turmoil, including but not limited to Chechnya. It is clearly the objective of Russia's new President, Vladimir Putin, to reverse this decline and restore stability and a measure of economic growth at home as well as respect abroad. It is also important not to lose sight of the reality that, for all its weaknesses, Russia remains a major power, one that still possesses an enormous nuclear arsenal and vast natural resources, occupies a seat on the UN Security Council, and through its diplomacy and arms and technology exports, can either be a force in the world for stability or not.

The challenge is to deal with the potential problems posed by Russia's external behavior while giving it time to try to get its political and economic house in order. As is the case with China, the United States cannot afford to rule out cooperating where it proves possible (in the Balkans, conceivably arms control) simply because in some areas (Chechnya, for example) we disagree. Similarly, economic assistance-including new IMF loans and debt relief-should be conditioned on sound economic reforms rather than linked to unrelated political disputes; any such linkage would provide us with little leverage but could block cooperation where it might be fruitful and erect additional obstacles to the establishment of a more market-oriented and liberal Russia. Most important might be a willingness to accord Russia the attention and respect it craves; this requires only a commitment to consulting regularly and going the extra mile to take Russia's interests into account.

There are limits, however, to what the United States can do to assuage Russian concerns. No administration can effectively hand Russia a veto over U.S. initiatives, such as missile defense or further enlargement of NATO. In the latter case, the United States ought not move the goalposts; NATO membership should be available to candidate states if the alliance's stated criteria for admission are met. To do otherwise would remove a useful incentive that stimulates reform and risk re-dividing Europe. What can make this less objectionable to Russia (and less likely to trigger a nationalist reaction there

that would jeopardize cooperation) is a policy that would condition NATO membership on protection of Russian minorities, a pledge to avoid stationing any non-national military forces on the territory of new members, and reiterating that Russian membership in NATO remains possible.

Japan poses a fundamentally different challenge. It was not all that long ago that Japan was seen as an alternative model for much of the world and the principal economic competitor of the United States. Nowadays, one is more likely to encounter frustration with the slow pace of deregulation in Japan and with monetary and trade policies that get in the way of Japan contributing more to regional or global economic growth. Japanese politics and the difficulty in building a consensus in favor of a more active role for Japan in the region and even globally is an additional source of frustration for many in the United States. This frustration should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Japan remains a critical force in the world economy and a valued ally, one that provides a foundation for U.S. efforts to promote stability in the Asia-Pacific.

The United States can do little to affect internal Japanese deliberations or decisions in important areas; what it can do, though, is encourage Japan to assume a broader (and more "normal") economic, political and strategic role in the region and beyond, one more commensurate with its absolute and relative strengths. More regular, high-level consultations on such subjects as Japan's role in a range of scenarios (including but not limited to Korea) and the design of new institutional frameworks to promote stability in the Asia-Pacific would help. Facilitating this shift in the content of consultations would be a de-emphasis on the U.S. military presence in Japan and bilateral trade remedies, focusing instead on liberalizing trade at the regional or global level.

Europe remains the greatest actual and potential partner of the United States as it seeks to shape the post-Cold War world. There is, for example, considerable agreement on humanitarian intervention, be it in the Balkans or beyond. But there are also significant differences, including over trade, American plans for missile defense, the sharing of the burdens of military commitments, and the U.S. tendency (at least until recently) to define difficult states as "rogues" and emphasize the application of economic sanctions. Europeans also resent American unilateralism and dominance, while American officials are often uncomfortable with the reality of a stronger and more independent Europe.

These and other differences ought not be exaggerated. They are, however, real, and what is essential is that differences over style and substance do not interfere with the need to work together on shared concerns, concerns that often involve issues far removed from the continent of Europe. Just as important, it is critical that Europeans follow through on their pledge to devote the resources needed to develop a greater capacity to act militarily-and that the United States not resist a more capable and more independent Europe. In the end, a weak and divided Europe that is either unable or unwilling to act as a true partner of the United States constitutes a far greater threat to transatlantic ties than a Europe that sometimes resists American preferences.

India is the newest addition to the world's list of principal power centers. Despite the burden of an enormous population and widespread poverty, India is a thriving democracy that enjoys increasingly strong, market-driven economic growth. India represents a relatively modest but potentially significant trading partner for the United States. Just as important, and depending on how it acts, India can affect U.S. strategic interests in Asia and beyond.

The good news is that there exists an opportunity for Washington and New Delhi to forge a new relationship of real economic and strategic value to each country. But this will only happen if each side is prepared to devote more attention to developing this relationship and to let go of past stereotypes. In addition, the United States will need to both accept the reality that India's nuclear weapons capability is here to stay and emphasize measures to decrease the chance that it will ever be used; for its part, India needs to demonstrate more flexibility and creativity over both Kashmir and its relationship with its neighbor but all-too-often rival Pakistan. A failed Pakistan and a successful India are unlikely to go hand in hand.

### **The Core of Consultations**

Several themes show up with some frequency in U.S. relationships with these major countries. One is the centrality of ballistic missile defense. This results from several changes. A number of countries, including but not limited to North Korea, Iraq, and Iran, are developing ballistic missiles and possibly nuclear weapons. Depending on their range, these missiles could threaten U.S. troops in critical regions, American allies, and/or U.S. territory. A separate but equally important development in this realm involves the emergence (and promise) of new technologies that make the prospect of intercepting ballistic missiles at one or another stage of their flight-hitting a bullet with a bullet-more real than ever before. A number of major questions must be resolved, however, in order for a new administration and Congress to determine whether and how to proceed with missile defense.

A good start is the place of missile defense in over all U.S. strategy. A realistic and reasonable goal is for robust missile defenses at the theater level and a level of national missile defense that complements (rather than replaces) deterrence. The former would allow the United States to continue to contemplate intervening militarily on behalf of vital national interests and major allies in the Persian Gulf and Northeast Asia. Without theater defenses, deployed American forces and local U.S. allies would be highly vulnerable to intimidation and attack in any armed confrontation. A modest national missile defense, meanwhile, would allow the United States to better contend with the sort of small threats posed by the long-range missile programs of several "states of concern" and by small-scale accidental or unauthorized launches that in principle could emanate from Russia or China. Such a limited capability would reduce U.S. physical vulnerability and again make it a less probable target of blackmail.

A modest national missile defense has other virtues. In particular, the level of missile defense would not be so great that it would constitute a threat to Russia's deterrent and eliminate any prospect for substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals. With the end of the Cold War, it no longer makes sense (leaving aside the issue of whether it ever did) for the United States and Russia to maintain massive nuclear arsenals capable of destroying one another many times over. Moreover, maintaining large inventories of missiles is dangerous-the chance of accidental or unauthorized launches can never be eliminated-and expensive. Reducing inventories substantially, say to 1000-1500 warheads apiece, appears to be both possible and desirable, as does reducing the alert status of systems so as to further reduce the chance of accidental conflict.

Persuading Russia to renegotiate the 1972 ABM Treaty to allow for a modest increase in missile defenses is not out of the question. If Russia can be brought around, European resistance to U.S. missile defense plans would largely fade. If, however, Russia cannot be persuaded to participate in a cooperative transition to a somewhat revised offense/defense balance, then the United States should proceed unilaterally but transparently, making clear both the schedule for deployments and the limits to what it will do.

China, however, promises to be a far more difficult case, as even a modest amount of missile defense could pose a threat to the far smaller Chinese arsenal. In addition, theater missile defense inevitably becomes entangled with the Taiwan issue, as China is sure to view U.S. missile defense plans for northeast Asia as providing Taiwan the ability to declare independence with impunity. There is no way to eliminate these Chinese concerns, and probably no way to avoid a decision by China to increase the size and capability of its nuclear arsenal, something likely to happen to some degree regardless of U.S. missile defense plans. But the United States can alleviate the fallout, both by making clear that any national missile defense is limited (and not designed to offset China's deterrent) and by working to discourage a declaration of independence by Taiwan.

Almost all of the above is premature, however, as it is predicated on the United States developing a missile defense that is worth deploying. What is needed is an aggressive testing and development program, one that is not limited to any particular architecture. In this regard, the United States ought to explore the potential for boost or "ascent" phase intercepts, which (and unlike defenses based on other approaches) have the advantages of a larger, slower-moving target and of not having to contend with decoys.

A second issue affecting all major U.S. relationships is humanitarian intervention, in some ways the emblematic problem of the first post-Cold War decade. The United States should be prepared to intervene militarily on a selective basis for humanitarian purposes. American foreign policy must have a moral component if it is to enjoy the support of the American people and the respect of the world. At the same time, the United States cannot intervene everywhere human rights or lives are threatened lest it exhaust itself and leave itself unable to cope with contingencies involving vital national interests in the Persian Gulf or Northeast Asia.

There is no all-purpose set of guidelines that will determine policy in all situations. As a rule, however, U.S. willingness to intervene militarily should reflect the potential or actual scale of the violence (fortunately, genocide remains relative rare); the impact of acting (or not acting) on more important national interests; and the potential for designing an operation (with others) that will accomplish considerable good at modest financial, human, and military cost to the United States.

How military force is employed can be as important as whether. If force is to be used, it is normally best that it not be limited to air power, that it be used early on in a crisis, and that it be employed decisively rather than incrementally. Humanitarian interventions, precisely because they do not involve the vital national interests of the country, should be designed to fulfill their basic requirement of saving lives. Separation of warring populations, partitions, and the creation of humanitarian zones or safe havens are all approaches that deserve serious consideration. More ambitious objectives, such as promoting multi-ethnic societies or democracy, should normally be avoided; so, too, should be nation-building, which requires prolonged occupation and disarming of a society and tends to be both expensive and difficult to do. To further reduce costs, the United States should work to train and equip others so that they can carry out humanitarian operations. A priority should be placed on the development of a regional force for Africa (along the lines of the Africa Crisis Response Initiative). Allies in Europe and Asia should also be encouraged to develop forces suitable for intervention. The United States should resist, however, establishing exit dates in advance of interventions; a decision to remain should reflect the costs and benefits of so doing rather than anything arbitrary. The United States should also avoid seeking to create a "UN army" given the expense as well as the reality that United Nations cannot be counted on to carry out missions more demanding than consensual peacekeeping given the difficulty of bringing about consensus in light of the bias against humanitarian intervention on the part of China, Russia, India and others.

A third issue central to post-Cold War international relations is trade. Trade has been and remains an engine of economic growth, one that often works to reduce inflation, create jobs, increase choice, and stimulate innovation. Trade can also discourage conflict, i.e., why risk a war that it turn would risk profitable arrangements? Still, promoting trade is never easy, as advocates must always struggle against those who would restrict access to their markets using both tariff and non-tariff barriers in order to protect domestic producers and workers against foreign competition.

There are steps that could be taken to increase domestic political support for open trade. Trade liberalization would receive a boost if more were done to assist workers cope with the inevitable stresses that stem from both trade and technological change. Providing tax breaks and soft loans for life-long education and training would help, as would ensuring that safety nets were fully portable so that workers would not undergo additional hardship if particular jobs were lost. But there needs to be limits to how much trade arrangements must establish uniform standards for labor and the environment. Negotiating and building support for trade accords is difficult enough without adding this burden. This is not an argument for ignoring these concerns, only to deal with them separately, such as through a reinvigorated ILO or specific environmental accords.

The creation of the WTO constituted a major milestone in the quest to open trade in that it established rules to govern trade as well as a mechanism to resolve disputes. More needs to be done, however. Expanding the WTO to embrace a wider range of goods, services, and countries is one thing, as would be a decision to open up its decision-making process to allow a broader range



of actors (including NGOs) to make their views known. Ideally, all this would be accomplished through a new global trade round. But if for political reasons this proves infeasible, open trade should be promoted through a mix of bilateral free trade agreements and regional arrangements. Such limited approaches lack some of the impact of a global system and run some risk of establishing zones that discriminate against non-members, but they can be a boon to trade (as proven by both the EU and NAFTA), can become something of a laboratory for new ideas (as shown by APEC), and are certainly preferable to the alternative of doing nothing, something that would set the stage for renewed protectionism.

The three issues just discussed-building theater missile defenses, strengthening local mechanisms to deter or deal with humanitarian crises, developing complements to a global trading system-suggest a fourth theme, one of promoting regional arrangements. This is not a rejection of globalism, but rather a reflection of the reality that the major powers do not agree on what to do about many of the major challenges facing them. By contrast, states of the same region often see things more similarly and share an incentive to deal with problems before they are directly affected.

Regionalism is not to be confused with turning the task of promoting order to regional hegemony, however. The former involves the building of consensus and capacity on a regional scale; the latter the assertion of primacy in a given part of the world by a single actor over its neighbors.

The problem with regionalism as an ordering mechanism is that in many regions the principal states do not share views on what would constitute regional order. This is clearly the case in northeast Asia. The same applies to South Asia, where India and Pakistan are at loggerheads, as well as to the Middle East and Persian Gulf. In other regions, such as Europe, the problem is more one of capacity. Europe would need far more military capability-and the ability to speak with a common voice-to play an effective role on the continent or beyond. The same holds for Latin America. Africa is a part of the world where disagreement and a lack of consensus limit what the principal regional organization (the OAU) can do, although sub-regional organizations have accomplished some good in limited cases such as Liberia.

The principal alternative to promoting order on either a regional or global scale would be the organization of coalitions of the able and willing, normally with the United States in the lead. As I argued in *The Reluctant Sheriff*, such groupings are not ideal-they are inevitably ad hoc and reactive and lack the legitimacy inherent in UN or formal regional undertakings-but they do appear to be consistent with a world in which its relationships are situational, that is, where the willingness of governments to cooperate varies from crisis to crisis and situation to situation. Palmerston's dictum-"We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow"-applies in spades to the post-cold war world. Regionalism appears to be especially relevant for both Africa and Latin America. Africa is ravaged by humanitarian crises, some man-made, some natural. It is apparent that the international community, while willing to assist in some ways (providing military assistance and training, offering cheaper drugs to combat AIDS, forgiving debt) is not prepared to intervene militarily or send resources on the required scale. This points to the need to strengthen African capabilities and mechanisms, most importantly in the realm of peacekeeping and its more demanding offshoots.

Latin America (like the Asia-Pacific) is also relatively weak in regional institutions other than in the economic area where both NAFTA and Mercosur provide important frameworks for trade. This weakness is less obvious than in Africa given the prevalence of democratic, market-oriented societies. But there are disquieting trends toward populism in both Peru and Venezuela, and even more troubling evidence that the government of Colombia is losing ground in its struggle with left wing guerillas, drug traffickers, and paramilitaries. A failed Colombia would have serious regional consequences; as a result, it is essential that regional states including the United States assist Colombia by providing military and police training and equipment, economic assistance, and diplomatic support in trying to reach a political settlement.



### **Imperialism Begins at Home**

One thing these discussions have in common is the reality that the ability of the next President and those around him to succeed will require ample resources. Some of these resources are financial, such as money for military, intelligence, diplomacy, and assistance programs. The good news is that the United States can afford to do all that it should in the world without endangering its economic situation at home. But these resources will only be made available by Congress-and their use will only be supported by it-if the incoming administration makes foreign policy a priority. To be sure, there is always the risk that a great power will exhaust itself by doing too much. The greater risk facing the United States at this juncture, however, is that it will squander the opportunity to bring about a world supportive of its core interests by doing too little. Imperial understretch, not overstretch, appears the greater danger of the two.

As this last point suggests, the other resource required for a successful foreign policy is time and effort. High-level consultations with other major powers must be held regularly. Simultaneously, the President and those around him must take the case for a new nuclear balance, for humanitarian intervention, and open trade to the Congress and the American people. This is easier called for than carried out, and will require that a new president act in the absence of public pressure or even interest; indeed, indifference, not isolationism, is the present political reality. But presidents do enjoy considerable discretion in what they choose to emphasize, and there is opportunity for the leader who chooses to focus on national security-and risk for the country if he does not.

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The Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036  
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