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## THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS: THE CLASSICAL PARADIGM REVISITED

"IN DEFENSE OF THE CLASSICAL VIEW"

*Peter W. Rodman\**

There is a story that they used to tell in the old Soviet Union about Brezhnev, who once gave a talk that went on for six hours. Even by his standards this was excessive and he did what a lot of big shots do when they are unhappy; he chewed out his staff afterwards. He said: "What is going on here? I thought this was just a three hour speech. What is going on?" His staff aide replied, quaking in his shoes, "But Comrade, just to be safe, we gave you an extra copy of the text." So if I start sounding repetitive in this, I need to be given a good kick.

I will tell one more story that should get us in the spirit of the discussion. This is another old Soviet story about the zoo in Moscow. It seems the Moscow Zoo advertised one day that it had a lion and a

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\* The following biographical material is contained in MICHAEL A. MOSHER, *GLOBAL PARADIGMS: THE IMPACT OF CULTURES ON TRADE AND DIPLOMACY — SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS* (Univ. of Tulsa 1995):

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For a complete summary of the Global Paradigms proceedings, see MOSHER, *supra*.

lamb living together in the same cage. People came from miles around to see this extraordinary thing. Sure enough, there they were — a lion and a lamb lying down, side by side in the same cage, apparently in a state of harmony. Someone asked the zoo keeper how they had accomplished this miracle and the zoo keeper said: "No problem. Of course, we have to put a new lamb in several times a day."

That reflects the spirit of my approach, at least, to international relations. That approach, the classical view, is the subject of our discussion here. You will hear at this conference a lot, and if you read the literature that the community of foreign policy experts is producing, you will see a lot about a new proposition — that with the Cold War over we live in an era of unprecedented novelty and radically new challenges. I will just give you a few examples.

Leslie Gelb wrote a very interesting piece in *Foreign Affairs* a few months ago about what he called the "Tea Cup Wars". He was talking about the scourge of civil strife and ethnic violence that is tearing many societies apart. He called it "the wars of national debilitation". He said that these civil wars are fragmenting the international community. More explicitly, he argued that these issues were much more important than the traditional relations among the major powers, which he thought were in pretty good shape.

There was another article in the *Washington Post* in December. As a surveyor of a number of leading experts, who all agree that there is something very profound going on, the *Post* stated that there was a basic challenge to the 20th century notion of state power. There are centrifugal forces in many societies, including some of the larger powers like Russia, India, and China, not just in the lesser ones, such as the new nations of Africa.

Let me give you another example. A Counsel on Foreign Relations scholar was doing a review of my book a few months ago in the *New York Times*. He was convinced that the traditional analysis of power politics was totally obsolete. He thought that it did not do justice to all the transformations underway in communications, demographics, economics, technology, values, and what he called "individual identities", although I am not sure what that means. He was also convinced that the lives of most Americans would be much less likely to be affected by issues of power in the traditional sense than by developments in economics, immigration, or international health policy.

There is another body of writing, for instance Robert Kaplan or James Goldsmith, that sees a world spinning out of control amid technological change, the impoverishment of the middle classes, overpopulation, environmental degradation, tribalism, disease, and so forth. I think we are all familiar with this literature. I have to say that there is a lot of wisdom in this, but among the things that are out of control is

the cliché that things are out of control.

I think all of the challenges described here are real. Some of them are profound. These challenges weaken traditional political structures. They constitute a new variety of problems on the foreign policy agenda. Many of them have no precedent, but, the idea that these challenges have replaced classical notions of security as the core issue on the international agenda is absurd. That idea is proclaimed with a kind of triumphant finality more than it is analyzed. I concede that one cannot understand much of what is going on in the world without understanding cultural trends, economics, and social forces. However, the question is still open — how much of this can foreign policy usefully address? Important as most of these issues are, let me offer a few heretical thoughts.

First of all, the United States government does not have a clue of how to solve most of these ethnic problems and will never have a clue of how to deal with them. The expertise does not exist. The leverage does not exist. The political will does not exist. No matter how many study groups the Council on Foreign Relations sets up to study Nagorno-Karabakh, it is absurd to think that the United States' foreign policy has any ability to resolve most of these ethnic conflicts.

Second, if relations among the major powers go sour, the world community's ability to collaborate on any of these more exhaustive challenges, like international health policy, will evaporate immediately. If we take for granted today's relatively benign constellation of relations among the major powers, we may lose it.

Third, it is obvious that economics are vitally important. Economic trends are a major factor in politics. America and the world are far more interdependent. If economic relations among the major economic powers are not guided by an over-riding political and strategic judgment, they will indeed unravel the international order.

Fourth, and finally, the present administration has experimented in, or has indulged in, a lot of this "New Age" agenda. I think that this has already produced a backlash in the United States. After Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and even Haiti — to judge from the reaction and certainly the Congressional temper — the American people have lost their eagerness for humanitarian intervention in the absence of a showing of concrete national interest.

There is an isolationist mood in this country that I find very disturbing. It is in no small part a reaction to the misadventures of a liberal internationalist administration. A series of bungled humanitarian interventions have come close to discrediting intervention. A naive multilateralism has come close to discrediting U.S involvement in international institutions. It is now a cliché of our domestic debate that the American people will not sustain or risk major sacrifices without a

showing that a national interest is at stake.

So, there is this problem of potential isolationism in this country. This problem will not be solved by a more eager embrace of the new paradigm in foreign policy. In fact, this problem was in part caused by the flight from evaluation on the basis of national interest that the new paradigm represents. At bottom, there is an extraordinary disconnection between our foreign policy elite and the mood of the country. I will speak from my own church here, but I think that the conservative internationalists, the Republican internationalists, who I think are a loyal part of the internationalist fraternity, have inherited this problem. It falls to us to try to preserve the basis of American engagement in the world. In order to do that, we must restore some perspective, some balance, and some common sense to the present discussion of our foreign policy. The American people need to be reassured that their leaders know the difference between what is important to the United States and what is not. If we are going to get the American people to continue to care about what is important, we have to reassure them that there are some strategic priorities and that their leaders have some sense of what those strategic priorities are. I think the present administration has failed to provide these reassurances.

I think it is time to go back to basics. All the democratic nations have many lofty goals in the world, like many of the issues that I mentioned in the beginning. But I think the very clamor and violence that you see in the headlines reinforces the view that security is the prerequisite for the achievement of any of these other goals. The prevalence of military conflicts is the most important problem with the international order. In fact, some of the New Age issues go to the heart of the international structure, a structure that is in a state of transformation following the end of the Cold War. It is on the structural issue, this structural problem, that I think we should focus. We should not be surprised that the collapse of an empire produces a time of turbulence. I think this is natural. It may take decades to play itself out, but the American body politic cannot be strained without limit. We cannot intervene everywhere. We cannot solve every problem.

So, what are the criteria of selection? If we are evaluating on the basis of our strategic priorities, the questions ought to be "What are the main elements of international stability and how do we reinforce them?" and "What are the main pillars of the international system and how do we and our allies shore them up?" I think that much of the turmoil that is going on in the world cannot be solved and cannot be ended by the United States, even by a United States that did not have the preoccupations of today. It is too much to ask of any country's foreign policy. However, if the international system is able to strengthen itself, to the point of stabilizing the relations among major powers

and deterring the most dangerous regional threats, the world will be spared a major cataclysm. I think that is a more modest and sustainable mission for the United States, and it is a good definition of what is really our most important responsibility.

One of the problems is that there is not only turmoil at the local level, and even the main level, but the main elements of the international system, as I will define them, are themselves in a state of flux. This is why we need to think hard about this problem. The structure of the international system is going through several revolutions at the same time. The first is in what we call East-West relations. Russia is back, and we need to think about how we accommodate or deal with it in the international system. Second is what we used to call West-West relations. These are the relations among the industrialized democracies, which are in the process of great adjustment and change. Last is the Third World, where there are some positive trends, some very negative trends, and some issues that rise to the level of strategic challenges. So let me talk briefly about each of these.

First is Russia and what we used to call East-West relations. Churchill, we all know, used to say, "Russia is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside of an enigma." Bismarck used to say, or supposedly once said, "Russia is never as strong, or as weak, as it appears." I think that those are good assessments. I think we are now seeing a Russia that is getting back on its feet geopolitically, even before it gets back on its feet economically.

The summit meetings with Mr. Yeltsin that used to be sentimental occasions where we pledged we would try to help them back on their feet economically are no longer. Now these meetings are of a more classical kind between two major powers, and there are a lot of contentious issues. I mean Bosnia, Chechnya, the Russians selling nuclear reactors to Iran, and trying to help out Iraq. There is some kind of classical "great power" relationship between us now. For the United States, one lesson can be distilled from all of this, and that is that the balance of power in Europe still needs us and still needs our attention. I think it is a permanent responsibility of the United States to be there.

Russia is a disproportionate factor on the continent. It has always been a clumsy factor in European politics, long before Marxism added its very destructive element to Russian policy. Particularly in the age of nuclear weapons, there was no counterpart to Russian power in Europe unless the United States stayed there. Today, I think we can have a very benign relationship with Russia, as long as it accepts the status quo in Europe, because there are no basic conflicts between it and the West. But I think the American presence cannot be just an American economic presence but must also be an American military presence.

There is this fashionable view that security concerns are obsolete or have been replaced by economic concerns. However, if you ask anybody in Central Europe, a region that has just come out of a sixty year nightmare, they will say that their national survival depends on the notion of how they ensure their security. They have lived between Russia and Germany, and they are not persuaded that saving the ozone layer is their main national security problem. The bottom line is that they see NATO and the West as their guarantee of freedom of action. That is why they are desperate to join the European Union for their economic future, but they are also desperate to have the West embrace them in the security dimension as well.

You will remember that Valclaw Havel, when he was just a playwright and intellectual, adopted all of the fashionable anti-NATO rhetoric, even after 1989. But as soon as he got in to a position of responsibility, he changed his tune. The American presence in Europe is an equalizing and stabilizing factor. It is not an accident, to use an old Marxist phrase, that the new democracies in Central Europe see their future as very much dependent on the American presence maintaining the balance of power. History teaches all of us that the vulnerability of these states of Central Europe is a vulnerability of European peace. Taking it for granted is very dangerous.

Let me turn now to West-West relations, the relations among the western democracies. I include Japan here. In my view, there are many things going on here, but to me the most interesting development, or geopolitically interesting, is the new power of Germany and Japan. At the moment, they are absorbed in themselves. At the moment they have some economic problems, so they do not look as ferocious as they did a few years ago, but I think the problems are temporary. These are two very dynamic societies with a reassertive nationalism just below the surface. Their international role is bound to grow. Already they are both throwing off their legal inhibitions about the use of military power overseas. Germany has been more assertive on some issues, like Yugoslavia. Japan has been flirting with the idea of an East Asian economic grouping that leaves out the United States. This is interesting.

Throughout history economic power has sooner or later translated into military power. Germany and Japan in the post-war period are exceptions. Here are two dynamic societies whose economic strengths have created economic disputes with them, but there has not been any sense of military insecurity about this because both countries' military policies are tied to the United States. German military power is embedded in NATO's integrated command. That means the German army is commanded by Americans. Japan is in a different situation. Japan is not part of an integrated command, but under the U.S.-Japan Security

Treaty there is a division of labor between us in procurement and strategy. The Japanese deny themselves all of the elements of an offensive military capability. I think this is good. This American security with these countries, which rests on a political tie, anchors these countries very securely in the international system. This has been a tremendous success, and I think it is even more necessary now that these two countries are perhaps coming into their own. Even without the Soviet threat, which was part of the justification for it, these relationships are a success.

Now, we all know what strains these political ties are being subjected to. With Japan we have this colossal trade quarrel. We also have disputes with Europe. In both Europe and Japan there are some people questioning why the Americans are still there. In our own country, the Ross Perot-Pat Buchanan view is that the allies are a bunch of dead beats. We should bring the boys home and we do not need to protect our allies, who are actually our biggest enemies now. So, we have all of these pressures in Congress to pull our troops out for budgetary reasons. If we are looking around the world for potential upheavals of a magnitude to undermine America's strategic position, this could be one of them.

The most destabilizing development of all in the coming decade could be this weakening of the American security link to Germany and Japan. If this should come about, it would lead to more independent-mindedness on the part of these countries. Germany and Japan would start conducting an independent defense policy. They might think about nuclear weapons. Should this happen, I think all hell would break loose. It would be tremendously destabilizing to everyone else who lived in their neighborhood. It is a powerful American interest to maintain this link. The trade quarrels are important, and I do not mean to defend the Japanese in any way, but I think it is important to resolve the trade quarrels in a framework where there is an overriding political aim to continue our alliance.

I will tell you another story. This is about Gorbachev. He was reviewing a military parade in Red Square, in the old days when they had military parades. He watched the missiles roll by, and the tanks roll by, and then there was a group of civilians — men marching in suits, carrying briefcases. He turned to his Defense Minister and said, "What the hell is this?" The Defense Minister says, "Oh, they are the economists. They do not look like much, but you would be amazed at the damage they can do." So that is my answer to the new paradigm.

The other category I mentioned, the Third World, is where I think that somehow I am going to squeeze in China and say something about the Far East. The Far East poses somewhat of a structural problem similar to Europe. China and Japan do have a deep-seated fear of each



other. Both of them are building up their military budgets. China has more than doubled its military spending since Tiannemen. Japan has been building up very steadily. North and South Korea still fear each other; we all know that. There is a deep-seated antagonism between Korea and Japan, between Japan and Russia, and between Russia and China. In Europe there is the European Union, which provides us a partial framework for some political harmony. There is no such framework in Asia.

America's bilateral relationships with each of these countries is one of the crucial stabilizers. A lot of the countries look to us as some reassurance against the others. They all value our presence as a security factor. This is one of our great advantages, to have been put in this pivotal position, but it is also a responsibility. Everybody talks about the economic triumph of the Far East. Less commented upon, however, is the degree to which this extraordinary prosperity is predicated upon the sort of benign political and security environment that is today being called into question as never before in the post-war period. I am just saying that you cannot take things for granted.

Now, the Third World obviously includes the Third World as we normally conceive of it. It covers many other parts of the globe that have been the scene of a lot of instability since the Cold War ended. Not every conflict here is an American problem, but there are some issues that do rise to the level of being a strategic problem that the United States cannot walk away from. One of them is what Charles Kruthammer has called the "radical weapons states". These are a very small number of rogue states, such as North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and maybe some others, pursuing weapons of mass destruction. And they are pursuing them with an ideology of hostile intent. These are countries that hate our guts. Therefore, I am particularly nervous when they are going after weapons of mass destruction.

The Middle East is a strategic place for obvious reasons. The Arab-Israeli peace process is part of it. The American role in that has been pivotal. Desert Storm showed that if there is going to be any international response to a threat, we have to be a part of it. Obviously, there are social and economic factors. Islam is a complicated dimension, but there is a geopolitical dimension that again I think the United States has to deal with. It is our job to provide a sense of security for this region in order to enable the people who are trying to make peace to do so. To conclude all of this, this definition of our strategic responsibility is not a big job. It is not a great burden. It is not an exhaustive burden. When President Bush was in office, he and Dick Cheney came up with a five-year defense plan. They projected a decline in our military spending, down to about three point nine percent of our GDP on defense after five years. This is the lowest figure

since before Pearl Harbor, since the 1930s — three point nine percent of the GDP. Now President Clinton has taken that down to closer to the three percent figure, three point one percent, and I am getting a little bit nervous. Foreign aid is even a testimony. I am in favor of, and I think we need, foreign assistance. I do not like to see it cut. What I am saying is the job that I was describing is something that does not exhaust us. This is not imperial overstretch. A sort of sensible, balanced view of our basic requirements is not going to kill us. If we focus on the essentials, it should not exhaust us even psychologically, let alone financially.

The issues on the “New Age agenda” are the electives. They are important, and they are even desirable, but the structural issues are the required courses. There is no possibility of a sensible international policy to protect the environment, or human rights, or peacekeeping, or anything else, if relations among the major powers go haywire, or if there is some Third World thug throwing nuclear missiles around.

I will just make an ironic comment here, a somewhat self-serving comment. I worked for Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, and they were much criticized for trying to ground foreign policy in this hard-nosed notion of strategic interest, and what seemed like Woodrow Wilson won out. America does seem to need a moral commitment to democracy and so on. The irony is that what Nixon and Kissinger tried to do, Bill Clinton has unintentionally done. I think he has discredited Wilsonianism. A multilateralism that he advertised as a way of sharing our burdens, that is through the United Nations, began to look like an indiscriminate universalism. Even worse, it began to look like we needed permission from the UN before we did anything. Legitimacy would come to our foreign policy only with the blessings of others. When Americans were killed in that terrible accident in Iraq, you know the helicopter that was shot down, the Vice President paid tribute to those who died in the service of the United Nations. There was a reaction. The Congressional mood is very sour in all of this. In fact, national interest is now the buzz word.

I do not think the Wilsonian impulse in our foreign policy is dead. On the contrary, I think the pendulum is going to swing back a little bit to a more self-confident American engagement in the world, something that is sustained, like Ronald Reagan’s engagement was, by a deep faith in America and its democratic mission. But for now, the public seems to be very mistrustful of where Mr. Clinton’s brand of internationalism is taking them. So, I think that before America can regain its self-confidence, the people’s trust has to be rebuilt. America’s leaders, maybe in both parties, need to reassure the American public that their leaders know what is important, what is not, and have some sense of strategic priorities. Only if they do that will there

be any chance of an enlightened and continuing American role in the world on any of the kind of problems that we are talking about.