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Dilemmas of Strategy

Melvyn P. Leffler
and Jeffrey W. Legro

AMERICA'S CRYSTAL BALL on strategy is murky.¹ Officials in the next administration will face a complex world, will receive conflicting advice, and will need to mobilize domestic support for their policies.² They must nonetheless act, most likely without the convenience of a single threat such as the Soviet Union during the cold war or terrorism in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In this conclusion, our aims are to highlight the decisive issues of consensus and contention that resonate across the chapters. We seek to delineate the trade-offs involved in making choices, and we hope to illuminate the national security dilemmas that any administration must grapple with as the United States helps to shape, and is shaped by, the next stage in world politics.

Foundations of Strategy Consensus

There are certainly important differences among the authors. Yet along very crucial dimensions—perhaps distinctly American dimensions—shared beliefs unite their blueprints. And these ideas appear to accord with American public opinion. Equally notable, they have backing in the broader world. The efficacy of any policy necessarily depends on audiences at home and abroad; therefore, the basis for a feasible strategy may be at hand. The beliefs that seem to be shared by all the authors can be summarized as leadership, preponderance, freedom, economic openness, and collaboration.

The contributors agree that the United States should be a leader in the international system. True, they dispute what kind of leader the country should be and what particular tasks are required in such a role. Yet not a single one of the experts is calling for disengagement from the international arena.

They accept Madeleine Albright's description of the United States as "the indispensable nation." That is, they understand that the world is faced by collective action problems. Such problems take many governments to solve, but all are hesitant to try to do so because the costs are high and the benefits are not easily withheld from those who do nothing. In such situations, it helps to have a lead country to encourage contributions and discourage free riding.³ Were the United States to pull its support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the policing of sea lanes, and the stabilization of Europe and Asia with no replacements at hand, there would be a collapse of, or grievous harm done to, the effective functioning of the international system.

This consensus among experts on U.S. leadership might appear at odds with popular U.S. opinion. By a margin of 75 to 22 percent, polls indicate that the public rejects the United States' playing the role of a "world policeman" that enforces international law and fights aggression.⁴ Only 10 percent of the public accepts the proposition that the United States "should continue to be the preeminent world leader in solving international problems."⁵ Yet U.S. opinion is not isolationist; only 12 percent believe that the country should withdraw from most efforts to address international problems. It appears that Americans do believe (75 percent) that the U.S. should do its share to solve problems (see figure 11.1). They, however, do not want to carry all the costs; Americans want U.S. hegemony to be Dutch treat.

Opinion abroad also does not want the United States to be the sole decider. In fourteen countries surveyed from around the world, minorities of respondents, usually less than 10 percent, believe that the United States "should continue to be the preeminent world leader in solving international problems." Majorities, or near majorities, thought the United States "should do its share in efforts to solve problems in cooperation with other countries."⁶ What is not clear is whether other countries would be willing to assume more of the responsibility and financial burdens of international collective action should the United States step back from a leadership role.⁷

The key unresolved issue, then, is how to reconcile the experts' preference for leadership with the public's hesitancy to get stuck with the bill. Put differently, it remains unclear how much the financial burden of U.S. leadership can

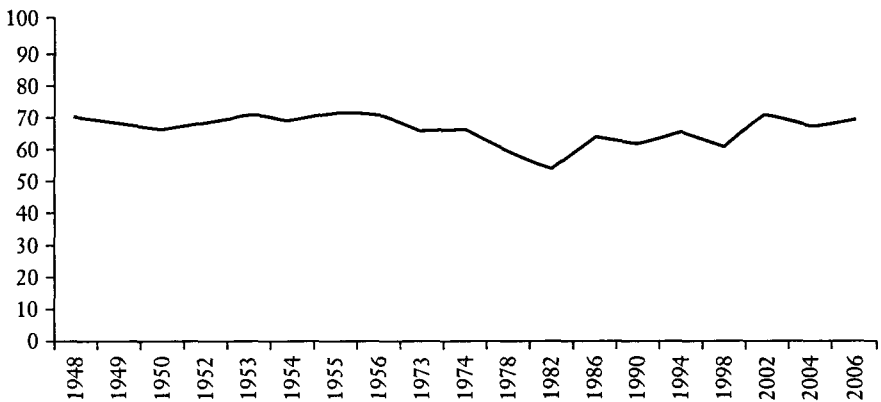


FIGURE 11.1 Percentage of Americans Who Think It Best That the United States Take an Active Part in World Affairs. *Source:* Chicago Council on Global Affairs Public Opinion Study (2006), <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brunitedstatescanadara/256.php?nid=&id=&pnt=256&lb=brusc>.

be shared with others while still avoiding collective action problems in which nothing gets done in such areas as managing debt crises, combating global terrorism, dealing with climate change, protecting sea lanes, and responding to global pandemics.

Preponderance

Our contributors may disagree on how U.S. military capabilities should be configured and how military power should be exercised, but they concur that the United States should retain its military dominance (see figure 11.2). They believe that superior U.S. military power and technology enable the United States to deal with major conflicts should they arise, deter the use of force by others, and buttress U.S. influence in the international system.

None of the contributors proposes to reduce military spending significantly or wants to allow U.S. superiority to erode, even though several of them criticize the degree of U.S. military dominance and wonder about the utility of military force. The use of overwhelming conventional power against insurgents, Francis Fukuyama argues, is almost always counterproductive; overwhelming power, insists David M. Kennedy, tempts the United States to disrespect other nations' sovereignty and alienates public opinion abroad. Likewise, G. John Ikenberry worries that U.S. unipolarity invites unilateral action and discourages participation in a collaborative multinational order. Most of the contributors would agree that even though power is needed, it should be exercised subtly.

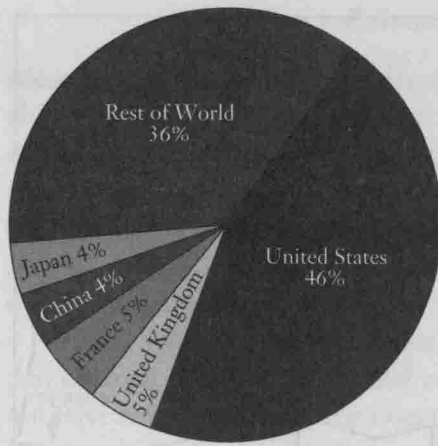


FIGURE 11.2 World Military Expenditure, 2006. Source: "Fifteen Major Spender Countries in 2006," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2007).

The support for preponderance reflects a long-standing bipartisan consensus. In his 2002 *National Security Strategy*, President George W. Bush declared, "It is time to reaffirm the essential role of American military strength. We must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge"; and in 2006 he reasserted that "we must maintain a military without peer."⁸ Such claims are not simply limited to the president or to Republicans. Democratic presidents have also consistently asserted that the United States should "remain the strongest of all nations."⁹ Fifty-five percent of Americans today agree that maintaining military superiority is an important goal, and 53 percent believe that the United States should retain the majority of its overseas military bases.¹⁰

Right now the cost of preponderance in terms of military spending and development (as opposed to the growing burden of military operations and casualties) does not appear burdensome to the U.S. economy. Gross domestic product (GDP) has risen at a healthy pace during the defense buildup of the past six years, and military spending as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) is not out of line with historic levels, as seen in figure 11.3.

Yet as Niall Ferguson and Barry Eichengreen and Douglas A. Irwin point out, the United States is increasingly becoming a debtor nation. Debt will squeeze defense spending as the costs of Social Security and Medicare balloon in the years ahead with the aging of the baby boomers. If the ultimate source of U.S. preponderance—that is, the relative strength of the U.S. economy—continues to shrink (see figure 11.4), and if the United States becomes increasingly indebted to creditors abroad, there may be pressure to cut military spending in order to deal with the underlying issues that are eroding the nation's competitive position in the international economy.¹¹

Preponderance is the issue on which international opinion is least supportive, though attitudes vary widely, often depending on whether

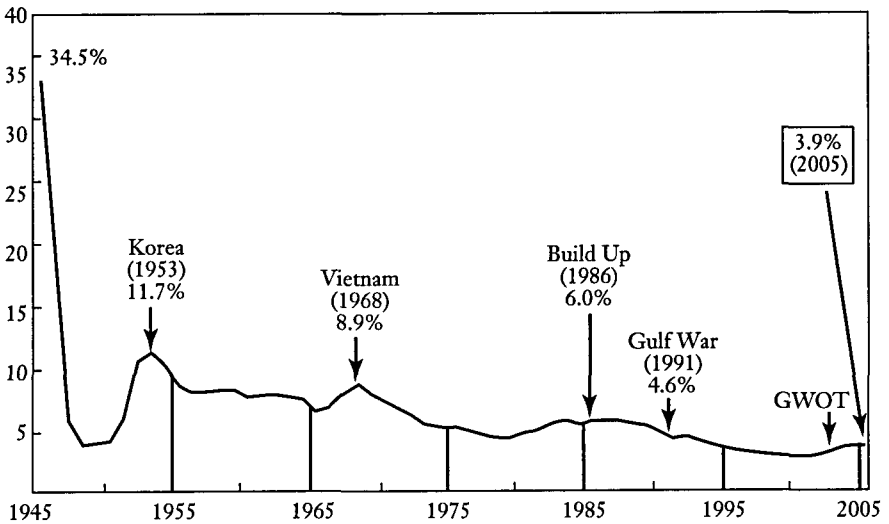
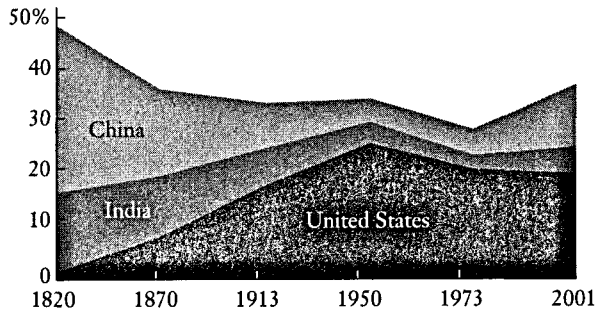


FIGURE 11.3 U.S. Defense Budget as a Percentage of GDP. *Source:* U.S. Department of Defense, “FY 2007 Department of Defense Budget,” briefing slides, February 6, 2006, p. 25, www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2006/d20060206slides.pdf.

FIGURE 11.4 Share of World GDP, 1820–2001. *Source:* Angus Maddison, “The World Economy: Historical Statistics,” OECD, 2003, http://runningofthebulls.typepad.com/toros_running_of_the_bull/images/world_gdp.gif.



a country is closely allied with the United States or not. With regard to whether the United States should have fewer, the same number of, or more long-term overseas military bases, a majority in Argentina, France, Palestine, Ukraine, and China voted for fewer. In Poland, the Philippines, Israel, and Armenia, a majority voted for either the same number or more.¹² In nine of thirteen countries, more people saw the prospect of China’s economy equaling that of the United States as mostly positive than as mostly negative. The four countries in which greater numbers saw it as negative were the United States, France, India, and Russia.¹³ So there is skepticism abroad on U.S. preponderance, but how other countries react to it may also depend on who is rising to eclipse it.

Political Freedom

Most people who live in stable democracies see political freedom as desirable. President Bush has emphasized that human rights, liberty, and justice are protected best in democracies. All our authors would agree—all other things being equal—that promoting democracy and protecting human rights are valued objectives. Even skeptics of democratization, such as James Kurth, see the spread of freedom and the improvement of human rights as goals ultimately worth seeking.

Charles S. Maier, Samantha Power, and Fukuyama, however, are skeptical that electoral democracy is the best means to further U.S. values because it can serve radical ends and often does little to meet the basic needs of people. But they do want to improve human rights, nurture civil society, spread freedom, and reduce poverty and inequality. These goals are not just morally desirable; depending on circumstances, they can also contribute to stability in the international system (“democracies do not fight one another”¹⁴) and enhance U.S. influence (democracies are thought to be more likely to side with the United States than other types of regimes).¹⁵ The authors, of course, do disagree on how best to spread democracy, a topic we will revisit.

Internationally, many countries support democratization in principle. Even some of the most authoritarian opponents of the United States give lip service to democracy. Chinese officials, for example, do not reject political democracy. Their position is quite different from the Soviet Union’s during the cold war (which preferred “economic democracy” and the “dictatorship of the proletariat”). Beijing’s leaders, however, believe that a rapid transition to democracy would destabilize the country. They say they want to liberalize slowly in order to maintain order and expand the economy. There is reason to be skeptical that Chinese Communist officials would ever relinquish power, but it is also true that China has slowly liberalized—with fits and starts—since the beginning of Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in the late 1970s.¹⁶ The norm of democracy has spread internationally, and this should be a welcome development for U.S. foreign policy.

Economic Openness

Most studies of U.S. security policy focus largely on its political-military aspects, not on economic policy. In the preceding chapters, our contributors mainly embrace an open capitalist global economic order. No author champions greater protection for U.S. markets or a withdrawal from the global economic system. Indeed, Ikenberry, Ferguson, and Eichengreen and Irwin identify a liberal or open economic order as one of the United

States' most important interests. Maier and Power thoughtfully criticize the results of globalization, but they still seem to support an open international order with social safeguards that protect the poor and close the income inequality gap.

The premise of openness is widely shared in U.S. political culture even as Americans sometimes seek protection. It is based on the notion that the country and the world have prospered under an open system; that a closed system led to the collapse of democracies and the onset of World War II; that open trade among Western countries helped them to thrive and succeed in the cold war; and that the emergence of new economies (South Korea, China, India, etc.) has depended on an open system that not only raises U.S. welfare but also enhances global well-being.

It is notable that criticism of the Bush doctrine has largely avoided economic policy; in fact, Bush economic policy has largely been a continuation of the Clinton strategy. As Eichengreen and Irwin point out, it is the same basic policy that has prevailed since at least 1945. Bush has largely followed the multilateral stance of his predecessors, sometimes using bilateral agreements to liberalize further the global regime of openness governed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The next president is likely to pursue a similar course, though he or she may employ a different rhetorical style and implement complementary policies to assist workers hurt by global competition and to protect against damage to the environment.

Openness has a good deal of support internationally, as well. Majorities in many countries around the world believe that increasing global economic ties is desirable (see figure 11.5). The challenge is that open trade may have somewhat less popular support in the United States than elsewhere, as seen in table 11.1 (on page 258).

Americans do support free trade in general, but they have reservations about the distribution of benefits in the United States between rich and poor, and they worry about its implications for the environment. Our contributors, however, barely discuss the potential downside of openness. Openness can erode U.S. global advantages in education and technology, comparative advantages that have long sustained U.S. economic vibrancy. Arthur Stein calls this the "hegemon's dilemma": in order to protect its dominant position in the world order, the United States faces a choice between protectionist practices that could destabilize that very system or openness that may atrophy its leading position in an increasingly competitive international economic order.¹⁷

The experts writing in this volume clearly opt for continuing support of an open world order, but perhaps because they do not see decline as inevitable

Views of Globalization

... Do you believe that globalization, especially the increasing connections of our economy with others around the world, is mostly good or mostly bad for [survey country]?

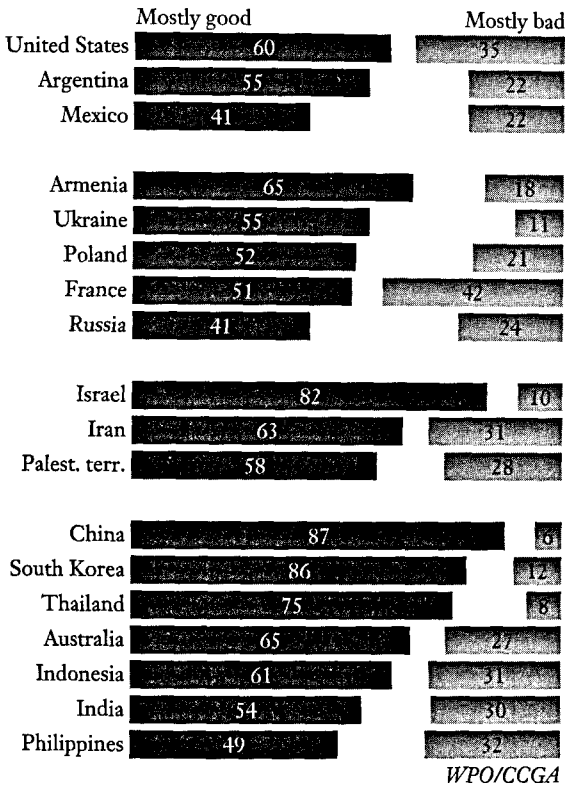


FIGURE 11.5 International Opinion on Globalization and Trade. *Source:* Chicago Council on Global Affairs (April 2007), <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/btglobalizationtradera/349.php?nid=&id=&pnt=349&lb=btgl>.

or even likely. Previous warnings of U.S. decline in the face of a rising Soviet Union or Japan proved wrong, and perhaps the ingenuity of American entrepreneurs, the ambitions of millions of immigrants, and the hardworking ethos of American labor will enable the United States to overcome the challenges that accompany international economic openness. It is significant that all our contributors assume that an open international economic order is a good thing.

International Collaboration

Should the United States pursue the unilateralism that so many attribute to the Bush doctrine or adopt more multilateralism in its foreign affairs? Are “coalitions of the willing” suitable for the future, or should the United States seek more formalized relationships and reinvigorate international institutions?

TABLE 11.1 U.S. Opinion on the Impact of Free Trade Agreements on...

	Sept. 1997	Sept. 2001	Dec. 2003	July 2004	Oct. 2005	Dec. 2006
<i>The country</i>						
Good thing	47	49	34	47	44	44
Bad thing	30	29	33	34	34	35
Don't know	23	22	33	19	22	21
	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Your personal financial situation</i>						
Helped	—	—	27	34	—	35
Hurt	—	—	38	41	—	36
Neither/Don't know	—	—	35	25	—	29
			100	100		100

Source: "Free Trade Agreements Get a Mixed Review," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (December 19, 2006), <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=299>.

One might think that these would be questions of debate among the authors, but they are in remarkable agreement that the United States needs to embrace more multilateral institutionalized cooperation. Their schemes vary significantly in the types of cooperation they propose and the degree to which they want to commit the United States, ranging from Robert Kagan's strengthened traditional alliances to Stephen Van Evera's call for a global concert. We return to these significant disputes on how to pursue collaboration later. But here it is worth underscoring that no one is saying that the United States should go it alone or that it should go about its business without hearing and accommodating the desires of others to a much greater degree than has been the case in recent years. Indeed, they suggest that U.S. leaders should go out of their way to build and solidify relationships, rules, and organizations in a variety of areas, including global order, security, economics, health, and the environment. Almost all believe that greater U.S. respect for international law would serve American interests.

The views of the experts receive strong support from U.S. public opinion. In polls in recent years, majorities of respondents, sometimes often large majorities, think that the United States should work more closely with allies

(91 percent), take into greater account the views and interests of other countries (90 percent), and deal with problems such as terrorism and the environment by working through international institutions (69 percent) and that strengthening the United Nations (UN) should be an important U.S. foreign policy goal (79 percent).¹⁸

Would other countries welcome U.S. cooperative efforts? There is reason here for some concern, as discussed further later. In ten of fourteen countries polled recently, a majority of respondents did not trust the United States to act responsibly. In five out of seven countries they believe that the United States does not take into account their interests in making policy. But in a large number of countries polled, majorities want the United States to cooperate more in dealing with the world's problems.¹⁹ Public opinion is not policy. Yet these numbers suggest some basis for expecting that U.S. efforts at multilateralism could be reciprocated.

Surprisingly, then, our contributors do possess shared premises that provide a likely basis for future national security strategy. They support U.S. leadership in world affairs, military preponderance, the spread of political freedom, economic openness, and more collaboration and/or multilateral institution building with key partners abroad.

Disagreements over Strategy

Although there is much that the contributors agree on, they part company on a number of key issues that will be central to formulating a coherent foreign policy. They disagree on the landscape of international affairs; they assess threats differently; and they argue over the importance of "legitimacy," the utility of coercive power, the right approach to democratization, and the value and configuration of international institutions.

The Future of World Politics

The starting point of any analysis of foreign policy has to be the landscape of the international system. Will the future be different from the past? Is war obsolete? Are states withering away? Can globalization continue? Our authors sometimes offer sharply different portraits of the evolving world.

This is clear at the outset of the volume when one contrasts the views of Van Evera and Kagan. Van Evera sees a world in which prior U.S. concerns about a dominant power achieving geopolitical hegemony in Eurasia are no longer relevant. China is the most plausible candidate, but even it is an unlikely aggressive expander. China is not going to conquer other major industrial

centers; nationalism and nuclear weapons make territorial aggression less likely than ever before, says Van Evera. He sees a dramatic break with the past: weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, climate change, and global viruses now present a threat to all, and in doing so offer an opportunity for cooperation that is unprecedented in modern history. Kagan, in contrast, predicts “the return of history”—the reemergence of great power competition. In his view, there can be no shared morality among Russia, China, and the United States that would allow for Van Evera’s harmony. Conflict, not collaboration, is the likely scenario.

If Kagan’s view encompasses a world of continuity, other authors portray a radical break in the ordering principles of the international system. They question the longevity of the nation-state and the norm of sovereignty. If the world used to be composed of discrete political units, each controlling its own boundaries and polities, the future may be much messier. Maier, for example, sees a global system that is “a more fluid aggregate of communities, sometimes local, sometimes contained within particular countries, but increasingly transnational and unbordered.” It is a world of interconnected societies not amenable to traditional state-to-state diplomatic actions.

Others see the decline of sovereignty as a defining trait of the emerging international order. For Fukuyama this is occurring not everywhere, but mainly in “a band of instability that runs from North Africa through the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia.” In this region, weak states are the rule and transnational nonstate actors are powerful. Foreign policy, therefore, cannot operate on a “state-to-state” basis; it must reach inside states, argues Kurth. He says that restoring sovereignty is the key to order in such areas. Because empire is no longer a viable option, order requires that states be made viable. Governments must be empowered to assert control over their polities, and they must be held accountable for undesirable behavior within their territorial boundaries and in the global arena.

For Ikenberry, order is also the defining problem of the future, but the issue is less a particular area of the world than it is a deficit in the rules of the international system itself. He sees many challenges ahead for the United States that can be successfully addressed only by a new global compact—a liberal order—that only the United States can lead.

A number of authors share Ikenberry’s premise that the future hinges on what the United States can or cannot do, that the American Goliath will by its very actions define world politics. Kennedy, for example, sees the decline of sovereignty and the prevalence of force in the global arena as (in part) a product of the United States’ own choices—ones that can be reversed. Similarly, Power believes that a defining trait of world politics is the decline of U.S. competence and legitimacy, changes that have affected its ability as the

key global player to provide order. She argues that if the United States makes different choices in the future, legitimacy and order are possible.

Others are skeptical of the possibility for a global order or of the United States' ability to bring it about through its own actions. Kagan allows little room for such a broad community in his portrait of a dog-eat-dog world of competitive states. Eichengreen and Irwin also doubt that the United States will be able to reform old institutions or start new ones, given the constraints on U.S. international economic policy. In effect, Gulliver has already been bound.

Threats and Opportunities

Based on the preceding, it is not surprising that the contributors emphasize different threats and opportunities ahead. And, similarly, they often differ on the appropriate response. Policy makers, however, must assign priorities to the dangers they face. Not all challenges and responses can be fully pursued at the same time without undercutting other efforts or exceeding the organizational and financial capabilities of the nation. And so threats must be ranked in some fashion.

The Bush administration identified terrorism as the overwhelming danger facing the United States and made it the centerpiece of its security strategy, followed by a secondary focus on "rogue states" and the spread of nuclear weapons. The *9/11 Commission Report* confirmed this orientation, stating that "countering terrorism has become, beyond any doubt, the top national security priority for the United States."²⁰

Many of our contributors disagree. Some do view terrorism as a major challenge, though they are quick to specify, as does Van Evera, that it is terrorists with nuclear weapons or, as Kurth argues, those inspired by a noncooperative ideology (i.e., radical Islam) who are the overriding threat to U.S. national security. Ferguson, in contrast, maintains that the United States is being distracted by the possibility of nuclear terrorism, that it is unlikely and that actions taken to prevent it worsen the situation.

As summarized in table 11.2, most other contributors also point to challenges other than terrorism: the return of great power politics, the fragility of the global economic system, the divide between democracies and autocracies, the rise of religious fanaticism, the magnitude of inequality, mounting U.S. debt, the growth of Chinese power, the instability in the periphery, the fragility of the international economy, the erosion of liberal international institutions, and the rogue use of U.S. power and the attendant loss of U.S. legitimacy. Some of these analyses of the threats—and the proposed policies to deal with them—are compatible, but many of them are not.

TABLE 11.2 Threats and Priorities

Author(s)	Main threat	Proposed response
Eichengreen and Irwin	Collapse of the world economic system; U.S. deficits	Hope for the best; restore commitments to international institutions
Ferguson	U.S. debt; Middle East instability; nuclear proliferation; resource competition; crisis of multilateral trade	Abandon Bush doctrine; revive international institutions; avoid focus on another terrorist attack like 9/11
Fukuyama	State failure; rising powers	Focus on state building and international engagement
Ikenberry	Erosion of global order	Restore U.S. legitimacy and rebuild institutions
Kagan	Great power competition; rise of autocracies; radical Islam	Maintain dominance; promote democracy
Kennedy	U.S. disrespect for sovereignty and lack of domestic check on use of force	Return to principle of consent; engage and lead international institutions; draft by lottery
Kurth	Disorder; nuclear terrorism	Form grand coalition with Russia, China, India; impose order
Maier	Inequality and religious zealotry	Increase foreign aid and support of nongovernmental organizations; require an equality check on trade deals; support religious moderates
Power	Decline of U.S. legitimacy and competence	Support intelligence reform; promote social aid; respect international law; apologize; restrict special interests; educate domestic base
Van Evera	Nuclear terrorism; climate change; global health	Build a global concert; redirect resources from old geopolitical scenarios to new threats

For example, if terrorism is *the* challenge to U.S. security, it will mean that Washington will pay less attention to other threats, such as the growth of Chinese power or U.S. domestic economic problems. This inattention to other threats has been one of the criticisms of the Bush doctrine, and U.S. leaders will have to resolve the trade-offs in the future. Obviously, the country will have to deal with all potential menaces, but it will nonetheless face tough choices in terms of allocating resources to deal with different demands. Should the United States fund forces that deter and fight conventional military conflicts, or should it develop conflict-prevention and nation-building capabilities? Should it devote more of its budget to foreign aid or to retraining U.S. workers to compete in the global economy? Should the United States spend more on developing the Chinese-language skills of its intelligence analysts or on Arabic or Persian speakers?

A second dilemma involves the need to establish order in areas of the world in which there is none versus the need for the United States to show fidelity to its values. In the former case, an emphasis on order may involve cutting deals with unsavory governments (ones that are anything but democratic) or not intervening when groups within other countries maintain order through repressive violence. Or it could involve bending domestic principles of justice to deal with terrorist or other challenges abroad. In this view, rendition or the use of extraordinary prisons (such as those at Guantanamo Bay) may seem necessary.

Kurth favors the maintenance of order and would support at least some of those measures. Power, in contrast, sees the need for the United States to match its deeds to its values in order to reestablish legitimacy. America's rhetorical emphasis on democracy, human rights, and political equality, she insists, must be reflected in action. For her, order follows from influence that is based not on coercion but on legitimacy. For Kurth, coercive control as the "boss of bosses" is more critical.

These are starkly different approaches to security, and they cannot be pursued simultaneously. Which one is best hinges on some judgment of relative efficacy. Could the United States really cooperate effectively with China and Russia to maintain order? Would those countries operate in ways acceptable to the U.S. public? Or would less hypocrisy on the part of the United States by adhering more closely to domestic values lead to a growth of credibility that would make international cooperation easier, as Power asserts? Both argue their positions persuasively, and the trade-offs and judgments are dauntingly difficult to make.

The different plans call for varying types of security investments, not all of which can be accommodated at the same time. For example, the "get your financial house in order" message of Eichengreen and Irwin does not fit easily, as Ferguson suggests, with the military prescriptions of Kagan. In the short

term, so long as foreign purchases of U.S. bonds and securities continue, the trade-offs are less severe, but should investors flee the dollar, the choices will become much more difficult.

Likewise, if the United States is to undertake major initiatives to shore up failed states or to reduce international inequality or to build new international institutions, it will have to allocate significant resources to accomplish these tasks. Such resources will have to come from domestic spending, from new taxes, or, most likely, from the defense budget. Again, it means making choices, assigning priorities, and placing bets on one path or another.

Even rejecting the need to rank threats comes with a significant risk. Ikenberry's suggestion that the United States avoid planning for any specific danger—that is, allowing for many contingencies and responding as events demand—may mean not being well prepared for any challenge, thus allowing them to metastasize into something truly overwhelming. Yet if the United States focuses on a single scenario, it may leave itself unprepared to deal with contingencies outside of its purview, as was the case in the years before the 9/11 attacks when terrorism was pushed to the side by a lingering cold war mentality—if the *9/11 Commission Report* is accurate. The balance must be somewhere between those two extremes: preparing very well for a single threat or being somewhat prepared for many threats. The optimal point is by no means obvious.

Finally, readers should consider the threats that receive little attention in the chapters. Only Van Evera and Power point to global warming as worthy of mention, and they do so only in passing. Aside from the economists (Irwin and Eichengreen) and one of the economic historians (Ferguson), none of the experts points to fading U.S. competitiveness or financial strength or its deficits as a cause for concern. Nuclear proliferation is not seen by anyone—except so far as it involves terrorists—as the most pressing issue. Surprisingly, given the soaring price of petroleum over the past few years, energy is also relatively ignored, except for brief mention in two chapters. Finally, the fraying of transatlantic relations between the United States and Western Europe is not a focus of any analysis (Ikenberry and Maier are partial exceptions) and is disregarded in most of the chapters. Such oversights do not reflect ignorance but, instead, the attempts of contributors to assign priorities in a world of many challenges. That their judgment does not spotlight these last few areas may reflect a collective wisdom or, more worrisome, a blinding bias.

International Legitimacy and Pushback

A significant debate exists among our contributors over the nature and importance of the rise of anti-Americanism and the decline of U.S. legitimacy in world politics. All our authors recognize that world opinion toward the

United States has grown sour since 2002.²¹ What is less clear is whether, how, and how much that affects the efficacy of U.S. actions in the world. Does it impede the American ability to provide for its own well-being?

After 9/11, the attitude of the Bush administration was that world opinion was not crucial to American effectiveness. In an age in which the United States towered over other countries in terms of its combined economic, military, and political capabilities, what others thought of the United States did not seem consequential. Vice President Richard Cheney believed that when other governments recognized that they could not thwart U.S. action, they would rally to the American cause. He believed the United States could create its own realities.²²

Kagan argues that other nations will react negatively to the United States regardless of what it does; this outcome, he claims, is the inevitable result of the preponderance of U.S. power. He stresses, however, that despite U.S. assertiveness in recent years, states have not countered as strongly as expected; there has been no formal “balancing” in terms of alliances with a specifically anti-American purpose or an arms buildup to offset U.S. power. Yes, other powers are hedging against the United States, but that is largely the result of changes in relative international power as they begin to catch up with the hegemon.²³

Other contributors are much less sanguine. They believe that U.S. standing in the world has declined markedly and that it matters. Power, for example, asserts that in waging its war on terrorism the Bush administration has undermined U.S. legitimacy by contradicting U.S. values. Likewise, the advantages derived from the U.S. reputation for competence have been sacrificed in the aftermath of the Bush administration’s performance in Iraq and in dealing with Hurricane Katrina. Kennedy similarly believes that the United States has lost international leverage by violating norms of sovereignty valued by others. Fukuyama also contends that the Bush administration overplayed its hand in Iraq, spoke too arrogantly, and triggered a blowback that has made U.S. diplomacy more difficult than it need be. These authors believe that the United States is losing the advantages it should derive from its attractive standard of living, its democratic values, and its free political system.²⁴

Their advice for restoring U.S. legitimacy follows from these judgments. They suggest strategies that include apologizing for past violations, respecting others’ sovereignty, adhering more closely to international law, lowering the American international profile, and listening to others. Many contributors, including the diverse group of Fukuyama, Ikenberry, Maier, and Power, say that to improve its legitimacy, the United States must do more to meet basic human needs: reducing hunger, providing clean water, mitigating inequality, and enhancing health care. Their plans focus on different aspects of

legitimacy, but they basically assert that it is better to be loved, respected, and competent than it is to be feared.

Which view, then, is right? Kagan points to the electoral victories of conservative pro-American governments as evidence that U.S. deeds have produced no lasting harm. It seems, however, that those same governments were elected less on the basis of opinion about the United States than on other issues more closely related to their domestic economic and social affairs.

The critics, on the other hand, seem correct in arguing that legitimacy is an issue in international politics and that the United States has lost prestige as a result of its violating its own principles, as well as its callous indifference to the opinions of others, at least in the 2001–2004 period. What is needed, however, are clearer illustrations of how precisely lack of legitimacy and anti-Americanism have hurt U.S. diplomacy and how rectifying past mistakes in these matters would produce more good than harm.

The Uses of Hard Power

All of the chapters agree on the desirability of a general American preponderance of power, as long as that preponderance is not so great as to invite self-intoxication. The authors disagree, however, on how useful hard power is for achieving political aims and on how it should be composed and wielded. Can military power still buy influence in international relations? If so, how should it be configured and deployed, and how, specifically, can it serve U.S. interests?

In Kagan's world, conventional military conflicts among great powers are possible at any time. Little has changed since the cold war in terms of the focus on conventional military needs except that the country must also deal with terrorism. Hard power retains significant currency. Kurth is more focused on terrorism, but he also argues that the United States should maintain its traditional focus on dominant conventional war-making capabilities. He expressly warns against diverting resources to counterinsurgency strategies; at most, he insists, the United States should help train and arm local indigenous forces.

Fukuyama starkly disagrees, arguing that the Bush administration vastly overplayed "big stick" coercive diplomacy. America needs "a much greater sense of the limits of American power, and particularly conventional military force, in shaping outcomes around the world." He sees large-scale conventional military conflicts as a thing of the past. The real challenge stems from internal conflict and terrorism. In contrast to Kurth, Fukuyama recommends a "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency campaign to combat terrorism, a strategy that should be "more like a police and intelligence operation... than a war." Fukuyama would restructure the U.S. government to further enhance its soft-power capabilities by creating a department of international

development and a revamped program to foster civil society abroad, mainly with the funds saved from ending the Iraq war.

Like Fukuyama, Van Evera argues that great power conflict is unlikely, but he also agrees with Kurth that counterinsurgency is not the direction the United States should take as it develops its military power. For him, counterinsurgency is undesirable because it sucks America into “brutal police work that presents an ugly face to the world.” Van Evera instead calls for the country to avoid aggressive war and to refrain from violent coercion. He wants to direct national security resources toward enhancing intelligence capabilities, securing loose nukes, disseminating antiradical propaganda, modulating indigenous and regional conflicts, and dealing with failed states.

Kennedy makes this argument more forcefully than other contributors, claiming that “conventional military force may have outlived its usefulness altogether.” Van Evera would seem to agree with Kennedy, with two notable exceptions: conventional military power is still needed to deter countries from giving safe havens to terrorists and to deal with “states that have violated important international norms.” The rub is that these tasks would seem to require substantial conventional forces.

These debates foreshadow difficult choices in the development of military strategy and weapons and the configuration of forces in the years ahead. The United States will need to layer the challenges of Iraq onto its experiences in the cold war and in the Balkans in the 1990s in order to understand how, if it all, military power can be used. And, if such power is usable, it will need to determine how best to configure it to deal with the most dangerous threats.

The Spread of Democracy

Does the nature of foreign regimes really matter for U.S. strategy? The authors agree that the spread of political freedom is good in itself—and good for U.S. foreign policy. Wilson’s legacy is alive. That general consensus quickly falls apart, however, in terms of operational strategy. What priority should democracy promotion have in U.S. strategy, and how is political freedom in the world best expanded?

Several contributors seem to agree that democracy should come into play only if there are no other significant costs. Kurth is most explicit when he says that the United States needs to emphasize security over regime type and that this may require making common cause with autocracies. If the United States needs to cut deals with Russia or China or Saudi Arabia in order to make progress on other goals, such as the stability of failing states and societies, the control of nuclear proliferation, the end to internal conflicts, and so on, then it should do so. Democracy can wait.

In part, this calculation acknowledges reality in terms of assigning priorities to the challenges facing the United States. Yet it may also reflect a calculation of what is possible politically. Kennedy places respect for sovereignty ahead of democracy promotion. One cannot force democracy where conditions prevent its success. States may have to pass through particular stages before they are ready for democracy. If Fukuyama is right, democracy is more likely to emerge after state building and the rule of law have taken root. And these, in turn, are more likely after basic social needs, infrastructure development, and economic ties to the global economy have been established. Free trade leads to political liberalization in Eichengreen and Irwin's formulation, as well as in Fukuyama's; hence "liberal authoritarianism" may make sense.

Other contributors, however, see more utility in emphasizing democracy and liberal values regardless of local conditions. In odd ways, this emphasis joins the right end of the political spectrum to the left. Kagan is the most ardent supporter of democracy promotion in the volume, yet even he recognizes that there are times when it "will have to take a backseat to other objectives." But he does not envision this as a frequent occurrence. Unlike Kurth, he advocates democracy in the Middle East and beyond, even if it initially favors radical forces ("illiberal democracies"), because, ultimately, Kagan believes it will help to resolve the clash between modernity and tradition in those countries.

The logic of Power's argument points in the same direction. The United States has to reduce the hypocrisy in its foreign policy; it must stop publicizing one set of values and acting according to another. Loyalty to liberal values may preclude the types of deals with illiberal states that scholars such as Kurth and Fukuyama deem necessary. Power, however, shies away from advocating democracy promotion; instead she focuses on how the United States can improve its own democracy at home. She, like Maier and Fukuyama, decries a focus on elections at the expense of attention to human security—that is, basic needs and political freedoms. Yet Kagan's stance on democracy would seem to match Power's advice in terms of "walking the talk" of human rights and democracy.

If this emphasis demands confrontation with regimes that are nondemocratic or that violate human rights, this orientation might have dramatically negative effects in other crucial areas. The Bush administration has pursued an alliance with nondemocratic Pakistan specifically because it felt the country was exceedingly important yet too fragile to alter its regime type. Or consider the case of China, in which assigning priority to democracy promotion over other U.S. interests may lead to the decline of one of the central economic relationships in the world economy. On this matter, Fukuyama would disagree with Kagan, arguing that excessive emphasis on democracy progress

will lead to the alienation of China. Fukuyama contends that the integration of China into the global market economy could, over time, lead to the liberalization of Chinese politics and society.

In sum, both sides of the democratization debate face trade-offs in pursuing their preferred options. Values and interests are not easily reconciled, even if we accept the claim by Power that the protection of values can lead to influence that helps protect interests.

International Cooperation and Institutions

The contributors agree that the United States must seek more cooperation, but they differ on how and how much to do that. Is it possible and desirable to move beyond traditional alliances? Can the United States usefully engage international institutions in a way that serves U.S. interests, or do the latter simply bind the U.S. Goliath? What types of institutions are desirable, and can they be realized?

The chapters in this volume offer different schemes for working with other countries. Kurth suggests that the United States should collaborate with China and Russia in order to preserve stability in their respective spheres of influence and to strangle transnational terrorism. It is a Machiavellian twist to Roosevelt's "four policemen" idea. But in principle and operation, it would not be far removed from the Concert of Europe following the Napoleonic wars, when different types of regimes also collaborated to provide order.

Kagan sees limited room for collaborative deals of the sort Kurth advocates. For Kagan, the notion of an international community is a chimera; multilateral institutions cannot be designed to serve everybody's interests. He sees international-governance deals with authoritarian China and Russia as virtually unthinkable. Kagan, however, does believe that a Concert of Democracies is desirable and possible—a type of enduring subcommunity within the international system that is shaped not just by power but also by ideologies of domestic governance.

The position in starkest contrast to Kagan's is Ikenberry's argument that *the* central interest of the United States is to lead a restructuring of an international system that is falling apart. For Ikenberry, international institutions are not just a tool in the national security toolbox; they are the master means for securing U.S. interests over the long run. He proposes an ambitious agenda for "liberal order building" that would involve global social services, rebuilt alliances with Europe and Japan, reform of the UN, a new Concert of Democracies, and reconfigured institutions in Asia to embed China and other rising powers. He faults the Bush administration for squandering the opportunity to rebuild such institutions—indeed contributing to their decline—in the years after 9/11.

Other authors in the volume echo that critique. As noted earlier, many believe that the United States has to respect, and indeed expand, international law. Power, Kurth, Kennedy, and Van Evera call for the United States to comply with international norms and U.S. legal practices. Thus Power recommends closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay, restoring habeas corpus, prohibiting evidence obtained through torture, and ending extraordinary rendition. Van Evera believes that U.S. rejections of institutions aimed at the common good—such as the UN accord on small arms traffic, the Kyoto treaty, and the International Criminal Court—were mistakes. Some provisions of these treaties may have been flawed, he argues, but the United States should not have rejected the efforts altogether but should have collaborated on their improvement. Kennedy similarly sees the need to return to engagement with, and leadership of, multilateral institutions.

A central challenge, however, in pursuing new institutions is how the United States can get others to join its lead given a perceived decline in U.S. leverage and legitimacy abroad. Does America still have the political and financial capital to cut big deals in the international arena? Although there is an emerging consensus across the U.S. political spectrum (witness the views of both Kagan and Ikenberry in this volume) on a Concert of Democracies, this concept has not been embraced even by America's closest friends, suggesting how difficult it will be to configure a new institutional order. Of course, Power believes that once U.S. legitimacy is restored, it will be considerably easier to revitalize multilateralism.

Eichengreen and Irwin are not so certain. They present a fine-grained picture of the return to multilateral practices in the economic realm in Bush's second term, but they envision formidable challenges ahead. They stress that progress in the Doha Round of the world trade talks and in the reform of the IMF and the World Bank has been hamstrung not only by a clash of interests with other countries (illustrated in the contentious debates over reducing European Union agricultural subsidies) but also by domestic politics. If the United States wants to develop international institutions, it may have to accept more limits on its own actions than it has in the past, for example, with regard to its agricultural subsidies or its claim that the head of the World Bank must be a U.S. citizen. Overall, Eichengreen and Irwin believe that new administrations will have little latitude to act in constructive ways, and Ferguson warns that this could have grave repercussions.

Fukuyama maintains that the way to make progress is to focus on regional arrangements, particularly in Asia. For example, he shows that the United States has a choice between two alternative approaches to handle the rise of China. One scheme would focus on containing China; the other would seek to enmesh and socialize China into acceptable international practices

and norms. Like Van Evera, Fukuyama wants the United States to follow the latter path, capitalizing on the experiences of working with China in dealing with North Korea's nuclear ambitions. He believes the United States should strengthen multilateral organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Yet implementing such regional-based schemes in Asia and elsewhere would not address global concerns such as climate change or nuclear proliferation or the decline of the WTO. Fukuyama's is a bottom-up approach to international standards, but the transition from the regional to the global level is unclear.

In general, the trade-offs of pursuing international institutions have to do with the feasibility and costs of their creation, the uncertain prospects that they will be effective, and the limitations they entail for U.S. freedom of action and for the achievement of domestic priorities.

The Dilemmas of Domestic Support

There is no doubt that U.S. leaders face significant international challenges and strategic choices in the years ahead. Yet if history is any guide, one of the most difficult tasks will be the generation of domestic support for a consistent foreign policy while at the same time avoiding entrapment in a particular worldview that does not fit international circumstances. A fundamental principle of effective *grand strategy* is having strong unity of purpose behind it.²⁵ Popular support for national strategy sends stronger external signals, allows countries to generate more resources and manpower, and limits attention-diverting internal disputes.

The chapters in this volume mainly focus on how to respond optimally to the world of the future. The authors pay less attention to selling their plans at home, although some of them do illuminate the domestic hurdles that will challenge effective strategy making. Eichengreen and Irwin foresee significant domestic constraints on trade policy emanating from popular opinion and from institutional devices such as the (non)renewal of fast-track executive trade authority. Power claims that strong domestic lobbies distort U.S. policy. Van Evera agrees, worrying that lobbies associated with defense contractors and with foreign governments will block his preferred concert strategy.

Both Van Evera and Power allude to an American public that is often uninformed and insulated from U.S. strategy. Americans do not appreciate how much U.S. success in the past—such as victory in both world wars—was dependent on cooperation with others. Most important, they feel little direct connection with fundamental elements of U.S. foreign policy. This is one of Kennedy's central points. He shows that although U.S. troops are frequently

deployed abroad, the decisions have a direct effect on only a small part of the population. Having a professional volunteer army, therefore, has made interventions much easier. In effect, Kennedy sees the restoration of the draft as a vehicle for ensuring popular engagement with key foreign policy decisions. People need to be engaged because the separation of foreign and domestic policy is increasingly outmoded; in a world of rapid communication, porous borders, and high mobility, it is essential to involve the American electorate in issues such as global warming and disease control that will invariably affect their lives and the lives of their children.

Accordingly, Power calls for a broad-based effort to “thicken” the “domestic base for foreign policy.” In the past, however, when presidents have tried to do this, they have exaggerated challenges and overpromised. The outcome of this dynamic has often had a deleterious effect on strategy. Woodrow Wilson, for example, promised that intervention in World War I would promote reform at home, end European imperialism, and spur democracy. The United States did intervene and helped to defeat Germany, a country that challenged U.S. interests. Yet people’s expectations went unfulfilled; the world was not made safe for democracy. Disillusionment set in, internationalism suffered, and throughout the interwar years the United States was constrained from playing a constructive role in the international system. Likewise, after World War II, President Truman oversold the Soviet threat in order to mobilize a war-fatigued American public. The result was that many Americans did not distinguish Soviet Communism from Chinese Communism—or from revolutionary nationalism. Although the Communist movement was not a monolithic threat, the rhetorical trope that Communism was a unified challenge to the American way of life, as had been Nazism, was a simple message that engendered a domestic bipartisan consensus but often distorted policy toward such countries as China and Vietnam. After the 9/11 attacks, President Bush also sought to galvanize Americans’ attention around a terrorist threat of global reach.²⁶ That focus mobilized a consensus behind military intervention in Afghanistan and then in Iraq, but the rhetoric also may have obfuscated critical distinctions and nurtured fuzzy thinking that has actually impaired progress not only in those two places but also in the overall effort to defeat al Qaeda.

Partisan and ideological splits in the American electorate make it difficult today to forge a domestic consensus. Growing media partisanship, religious mobilization, immigration, and generational change complicate policy making.²⁷ America’s future leaders face the formidable task of generating domestic bipartisan support behind policies that can match the complexity of international relations. They must do so without creating popular fears that lead to pathologies of strategy; they must do so without engendering unrealizable

expectations; and they must do so without blinding the American people to other threats that they will have to manage in the years ahead.

Conclusion

U.S. leaders must think about the unthinkable—be it terrorist nuclear attacks, the possibility of a global economic meltdown, or the rapid transmission of a deadly virus. They know that they cannot fully prepare to meet all contingencies. In a bewilderingly complicated world, they must assign priorities to the threats they face, plan for action, and rally the support of the American people. Passing the buck cannot help but be a great temptation.

This seems especially true as we look forward to a more complex and dynamic period in global politics. The cold war is long gone, new borderless dangers have emerged, and the world is difficult to understand simply through the lens of state-versus-state competition. The future appears more likely to resemble times in which there was little consensus on the threat—for example, the 1920s or the 1990s. Terrorism, of course, retains an important hold in American thinking. But the urgency of that challenge has faded since 9/11, perhaps because of the absence of attacks on the United States or perhaps because Americans have become more aware of other challenges that might be even more portentous, including a nuclear Iran, a Middle East engulfed by war, the rise of China, the revanchism of Russia, the warming of the planet, and the spread of disease. It is daunting to understand and to deal with any of these threats individually, let alone compare and rank them.

But decisions must be made, and the contributors have offered a series of provocative and insightful analyses. They disagree on many things: the nature of world politics, the main threats to U.S. security, and the best ways to restore American legitimacy, apply coercive power, promote democratization, and configure international institutions. Collectively, however, their disagreements are useful in clarifying the trade-offs that are inevitable in policy making. Readers may not agree with the conclusions of individual authors, but their insights and arguments should provoke deeper thinking about critically important matters. Collectively, they offer hope that American leaders can seize the initiative, overcome the reactive mode in which they have been operating since the attacks on 9/11, and tackle age-old problems that are more frightening than ever before: preventing war, feeding hungry people, improving human rights, reducing inequality, creating international community, protecting the global environment, and advancing the well-being of the Republic itself.

In order to make progress on such matters, the authors agree that the United States must retain a position of leadership in world affairs. They

concur that the United States must retain its military preponderance, pursue economic openness, collaborate more closely with other nations, and nurture the rule of law, the growth of civil societies, and the spread of freedom. Moreover, these goals not only appear to have the support of much of the American citizenry but also seem to accord favorably with extant world opinion.

Such goals, of course, constitute a starting point for future action. They in no way mitigate the controversies that will arise over the implementation of a robust foreign policy. What follows the Bush doctrine, moreover, may be shaped by the unknowable and perhaps by the unthinkable. The problem of conjecture, as Ferguson aptly stresses, is forever with decision makers. But U.S. leaders and citizens will need to make sense of the world, to identify threats, to engage in agonizing trade-offs, and to plan accordingly. We hope the chapters in this volume will assist them in the ordeal and opportunity of making the United States more secure and fashioning a more peaceful, stable, just, and prosperous world.

Notes

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3. See Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–39* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).
4. WorldPublicOpinion.org, "U.S. Role in the World," http://www.americans-world.org/digest/overview/us_role/hegemonic_role.cfm.
5. WorldPublicOpinion.org, "World Publics Reject U.S. Role as the World Leader" (April 17, 2007), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/345.php?nid=&id=&pnt=345&lb=hmpgr1.
6. Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Views of the United States" (April 2007), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apro7/CCGA+_ViewsUS_quaire.pdf.
7. Ibid.
8. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2002); *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006).

9. Jimmy Carter, "The State of the Union Address Delivered before a Joint Session of the Congress" (January 23, 1980), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=33079>.
10. Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Americans Continue to Support International Engagement Despite Frustration over the War in Iraq" (October 11, 2006), <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brunitedstatescanadara/256.php?nid=&id=&pnt=256&lb=brusc>.
11. See Andrew Gamble, "Hegemony and Decline: Britain and the United States," in *Two Hegemonies: Britain 1846-1914 and the United States 1941-2001*, ed. Patrick Karl O'Brien and Armand Clesse (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 127-140.
12. "Views of the United States."
13. Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, "The Rise of China" (May 2007), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/mayo7/CCGA+_RiseChina_quaire.pdf.
14. See Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1151-1169.
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18. See WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Comprehensive Analysis of Polls Reveals Americans' Attitudes on U.S. Role in the World" (August 3, 2007), http://www.americans-world.org/digest/overview/us_role/multilateralism.cfm; as well as "United Nations," *ibid.*, http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/un/uni.cfm.
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