Correspondence

Debating American Engagement: The Future of U.S. Grand Strategy

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To the Editors (Campbell Craig writes):

In making their case for maintaining the United States' policy of "deep engagement," Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth stress that the U.S. security commitment to states in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, together with the formidable specter of American preponderance, stifles regional rivalries and hinders the resurgence of a dangerous era of multipolar power politics. The authors contend that a policy of U.S. retrenchment could spark the "return of insecurity and conflict among Eurasian powers," whereas a continuing policy of deep engagement, by "supplying reassurance, deterrence, and active management . . . lowers security competition in the world's key regions, thereby preventing the emergence of a hothouse atmosphere for growing new military capabilities."[1] In short, they suggest, deep engagement reduces the chances of a major Eurasian war; a new strategy of retrenchment would increase them.

Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth do not acknowledge the possibility that a lack of conventional security competition among large Eurasian states, as well as their disinclination to balance against U.S. preponderance by traditional means,[2] might be explained by the simpler fact that nuclear weapons make such activity both prohibitively danger-

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1. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/13), pp. 37, 39.
2. By "balance by traditional means," I refer to the attempt to match a rival's military power by increasing one's own military capabilities or forging formal alliances (or both), as European states did throughout the modern period and the United States and the Soviet Union did during much of the Cold War. For a recent and powerful critique of the argument that nations are "soft" balancing against the United States, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Assessing the Balance," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 201–219.

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ous and strategically unnecessary.[3] Perhaps would-be great powers in Eurasia would launch belligerent campaigns of expansion upon an American retreat to the Western Hemisphere, but they would have to weigh such policies against the reality that a regional war would quickly run the risk of an apocalyptic nuclear exchange. Britain, China, France, Israel, and Russia, after all, possess large nuclear arsenals, and it is impossible to imagine a war in which they would not use them if it came down to that or surrendering to a conquering aggressor. Under such conditions, nations do not envision waging protracted wars of grand territorial conquest.[4] We are not in 1940 anymore.

Perhaps even more important, nuclear weapons provide states with the kind of protection that even the most formidable conventional forces could not offer before the nuclear era. If the specter of nuclear war dissuades nations from launching wars of conquest, then it also allows those in possession of substantial arsenals to threaten any foe considering an attack with nuclear retaliation. A putative superpower such as China knows that as long as its nuclear arsenal is invulnerable, it can avoid the military conquest of its territory.[5] For what nation, no matter how rapacious, would try to conquer it if there were a good chance that it would suffer the immediate destruction of five or ten of its largest cities, much less total nuclear retaliation?[6] Nations have engaged in balancing behavior for many reasons, but the core purpose has always been to accumulate sufficient power to avoid violent subjugation at the hands of their rivals.[7] Because a secure retaliatory nuclear arsenal provides a uniquely efficient solution to that problem, nations such as China do not have to preoccupy themselves with the military capabilities and shifting allegiances of major rivals in the way that, say, Britain had to do around the turn of the twentieth century.

By making the prospect of major war apocalyptic, and at the same time giving re-

3. For a fuller treatment of the connection between nuclear weapons and the absence of balancing against U.S. preponderance, see Campbell Craig, "American Power Preponderance and the Nuclear Revolution," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 27–44. See also Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12), pp. 9–40.

4. Classic arguments that the nuclear revolution has made major aggressive war irrational include Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (March 1964), pp. 23–35; Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 731–745.

5. See Jeffrey Lewis, *The Minimum Means of Reprisal: China's Search for Security in the Nuclear Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007); and John Lewis and Xue Litai, "Making China's Nuclear War Plan," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (September 2012), pp. 45–65.

6. On the notion that nuclear weapons deter war by their very existence, see McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988); Lawrence Freedman, "I Exist; Therefore I Deter," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Summer 1988), pp. 177–195; Campbell Craig, "The Nuclear Revolution: A Product of the Cold War, or Something More?" in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (July/August 2012) pp. 2–5.

7. This is a foundational premise in the study of international relations, though of course not universally accepted. See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 203–207. For a recent discussion, see Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 31–58.

gional powers an unprecedented ability to deter wholesale military invasion, nuclear weapons account for the absence of both security competition in dangerous regions of the world and attempts to balance against U.S. preponderance in a remarkably parsimonious fashion. This nuclear factor suggests that these regional powers are unlikely to initiate a major war in the foreseeable future regardless of whether the United States maintains its deep engagement or adopts a policy of retrenchment. The avoidance of general war between India and Pakistan, in a region where the United States plays a less preponderant role, would seem to bolster this claim.[8]

The geopolitical stasis created by nuclear weapons does not make the debate between advocates of deep engagement and retrenchment unimportant, however. While nuclear weapons make it unlikely that nations will seek regional domination by means of war or try to match U.S. military power, they do not make war itself impossible. Indeed, as long as international politics remain anarchical and some states possess nuclear weapons, one day a warning system will fail, or an official will panic, or a terrorist attack will be misconstrued, and the missiles will fly.[9] A policy of deep engagement, by locking in a heavily militarized U.S. presence in volatile regions of the world, promises not only to sustain this anarchical and nuclearized international condition; it also ensures that the United States will find itself in the middle of the nuclear war that will someday occur.

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To the Editors (Benjamin H. Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, and Justin Logan write):

Modern advocates of a U.S. grand strategy of restraint have not influenced U.S. policy much, but at least we have now provoked an intellectually impressive response. In attacking the case for restraint, the recent article by Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth (Brooks et al.) strengthens the scholarly footing under the United States' consensus grand strategy of primacy, which the authors refer to as "deep engagement."[1]

8. A key discussion of the role that nuclear deterrence plays in the India-Pakistan standoff can be found in Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
9. For what remains the most powerful expression of this danger, see Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

1. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/13), pp. 7–51. Further references to this article appear parenthetically in the text. Debating terminology is generally futile, but it is necessary here to avoid rigging the debate. "Deep engagement" misleadingly implies that this debate is about engagement with the world. The term conveys little about the core element of the strategy in question: "to maintain security commitments to partners and allies" globally (p. 11). Our disagreement concerns those commitments, not other forms of engagement,

Brooks et al.'s case, however, is flawed. We dissect it in three parts. First, we show that primacy is unlikely to produce the main security benefit they ascribe to it: diminished third-party security competition. Second, Brooks et al. understate primacy's danger—specifically, its tendency to lead the United States into imprudent wars. Third, they misunderstand primacy's nonsecurity consequences.

The questionable security benefits of primacy

Brooks et al. argue that the specter of U.S. power eliminates some of the most baleful consequences of anarchy, producing a more peaceful world. U.S. security guarantees deter aggressors, reassure allies, and dampen security dilemmas (p. 34). "By supplying reassurance, deterrence, and active management," Brooks et al. write, primacy "reduces security competition and does so in a way that slows the diffusion of power away from the United States" (pp. 39–40). There are three reasons to reject this logic: security competition is declining anyway; if competition increases, primacy will have difficulty stopping it; and even if competition occurred, it would pose little threat to the United States.

An increasingly peaceful world. An array of research, some of which Brooks et al. cite, indicates that factors other than U.S. power are diminishing interstate war and security competition.[2] These factors combine to make the costs of military aggression very high, and its benefits low.[3]

A major reason for peace is that conquest has grown more costly. Nuclear weapons make it nearly suicidal in some cases.[4] Asia, the region where future great power competition is most likely, has a "geography of peace": its maritime and mountainous regions are formidable barriers to conflict.[5]

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such as trade and diplomacy. We call Brooks et al.'s preferred strategy "primacy," a term that has the advantage of seniority and thus a meaning that many readers know. More important, it better describes the logic of a strategy where "peace is the result of an imbalance of power" and where U.S. capabilities are enough "to cow all potential challengers and to comfort all coalition partners." See Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), p. 32. Compare this definition with the logic discussed two paragraphs below. The complaint that primacy describes "not a strategy but an international fact of life" (p. 13) is misplaced. William C. Wohlforth helped popularize the term "unipolarity" to describe the United States' unrivaled power, which is distinct from the strategy aimed at maintaining this condition. See Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5–41. We also retain familiar terminology in calling our preferred strategy "restraint" rather than "retrenchment." Restraint better describes a strategy meant to resist relative power's temptations. See Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), pp. 5–48.

2. A recent, data-rich source on the decline of war is Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011), chap. 5.

3. Theoretical perspectives distinct from ours reach the same conclusion through variables such as liberalism, capitalism, and cognitive adaptations that privilege cooperation and normative change. For discussion, see ibid., pp. 278–288, 569–670.

4. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

5. Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 81–118.

Conquest also yields lower economic returns than in the past. Post-industrial economies that rely heavily on human capital and information are more difficult to exploit.[6] Communications and transport technologies aid nationalism and other identity politics that make foreigners harder to manage. The lowering of trade barriers limits the returns from their forcible opening.[7]

Although states are slow learners, they increasingly appreciate these trends. That should not surprise structural realists. Through two world wars, the international system "selected against" hyperaggressive states and demonstrated even to victors the costs of major war. Others adapt to the changed calculus of military aggression through socialization.[8]

MANAGING REVISIONIST STATES. Brooks et al. caution against betting on these positive trends. They worry that if states behave the way offensive realism predicts, then security competition will be fierce even if its costs are high. Or, if nonsecurity preferences such as prestige, status, or glory motivate states, even secure states may become aggressive (pp. 36–37).[9]

These scenarios, however, are a bigger problem for primacy than for restraint. Offensive realist security paranoia stems from states' uncertainty about intentions; such states see alliances as temporary expedients of last resort, and U.S. military commitments are unlikely to comfort or deter them.[10] Nonsecurity preferences are, by definition, resistant to the security blandishments that the United States can offer under primacy. Brooks et al.'s revisionist actors are unlikely to find additional costs sufficient reason to hold back, or the threat of those costs to be particularly credible.

The literature that Brooks et al. cite in arguing that the United States restrains allies actually suggests that offensive realist and prestige-oriented states will be the most resistant to the restraining effects of U.S. power. These studies suggest that it is most difficult for strong states to prevent conflict between weaker allies and their rivals when the restraining state is defending nonvital interests; when potential adversaries and allies have other alignment options;[11] when the stronger state struggles to mobilize

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6. Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), pp. 42–64; Stephen Van Evera, "A Farewell to Geopolitics," in Melvin P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro, eds., *To Lead the World: American Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 13–14. Even sophisticated proponents of the ability to exploit modern economies suggest that those gains are lessening over time. See Peter Liberman, *Does Conquest Pay? The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

7. See, for example, John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51, No 1 (January 2007), pp. 166–191.

8. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 73–77.

9. Brooks et al. also reference "regional expertise" as leaning toward pessimism about U.S. restraint (pp. 35–36). Given that they provide no citations for these views, and that regional pessimism usually partakes of the theoretical mechanisms they discuss, regional expertise does not add much to the argument.

10. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), chap. 2.

11. Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 36–41.

power domestically[12]; when the stronger state perceives reputational costs for noninvolvement;[13] and when allies have hawkish interests and the stronger state has only moderately dovish interests.[14]

In other words, the cases where it would be most important to restrain U.S. allies are those in which Washington's efforts at restraint would be least effective. Highly motivated actors, by definition, have strong hawkish interests. Primacy puts limits on U.S. dovishness, lest its commitments lack the credibility to deter or reassure. Such credibility concerns create perceived reputational costs for restraining or not bailing out allies. The United States will be defending secondary interests, which will create domestic obstacles to mobilizing power. U.S. allies have other alliance options, especially in Asia. In short, if states are insensitive to the factors incentivizing peace, then the United States' ability to manage global security will be doubtful. Third-party security competition will likely ensue anyway.

COSTS FOR WHOM? Fortunately, foreign security competition poses little risk to the United States. Its wealth and geography create natural security. Historically, the only threats to U.S. sovereignty, territorial integrity, safety, or power position have been potential regional hegemons that could mobilize their resources to project political and military power into the Western Hemisphere. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union arguably posed such threats. None exist today.

Brooks et al. argue that "China's rise puts the possibility of its attaining regional hegemony on the table, at least in the medium to long term" (p. 38). That possibility is remote, even assuming that China sustains its rapid wealth creation. Regional hegemony requires China to develop the capacity to conquer Asia's other regional powers. India lies across the Himalayas and has nuclear weapons. Japan is across a sea and has the wealth to quickly build up its military and develop nuclear weapons. A disengaged United States would have ample warning and time to form alliances or regenerate forces before China realizes such vast ambitions.

Brooks et al. warn that a variety of states would develop nuclear weapons absent U.S. protection. We agree that a proliferation cascade would create danger and that restraint may cause some new states to seek nuclear weapons. Proliferation cascades are nonetheless an unconvincing rationale for primacy. Primacy likely causes more proliferation among adversaries than it prevents among allies. States crosswise with the United States realize that nuclear arsenals deter U.S. attack and diminish its coercive power. U.S. protection, meanwhile, does not reliably stop allied and friendly states from building nuclear weapons. Witness British, French, and Israeli decisionmaking.

Proliferation cascades were frequently predicted but never realized during the Cold War, when security was scarcer.[15] New research argues that security considerations are

12. Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 15–17.
13. Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (July 2011), p. 356.
14. Dominic Tierney, "Does Chain-Ganging Cause the Outbreak of War?" *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 291–295.
15. Francis J. Gavin, "Same As It Ever Was: Nuclear Alarmism, Proliferation, and the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/10), pp. 17–19.

often a secondary factor in the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and that states with the strongest appetites for proliferation often lack the technical and managerial capacities to acquire the bomb.[16] Finally, even if proliferation cascades occur, they do not threaten U.S. security. Few, if any, states would be irrational enough to court destruction at the hands of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, especially if the United States is not enmeshed in their conflicts.

THE COSTS OF PRIMACY: ENTRAPMENT AND TEMPTATION

Brooks et al. argue that primacy's security costs are low; primacy will not entrap the United States into unnecessary wars or tempt it into expanding its interests. They assert that entrapment makes little theoretical sense; it requires a reversal of Thucydides' realist dictum into "the weak do what they can and the strong suffer what they must" (p. 29). Similarly, the costs of past temptation under primacy have been low. Even if primacy enabled the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, sequels are unlikely. The U.S. system is self-correcting. Vietnam taught Americans to avoid similar wars, and Iraq is having an analogous effect (pp. 32–33).

ENTRAPMENT. The fear that U.S. alliances will result in unwanted security costs is sound.[17] Weaker states can implicate stronger allies by virtue of their more intense interests. Intense interests let the weak credibly threaten to make dangerous moves unilaterally; the strong ally's commitment to its partner's survival encourages protecting it from the consequences of its actions. For example, during the Cold War, Washington spent huge amounts of blood and treasure defending a South Vietnamese regime it could not reform, and engaged in dangerous nuclear threats against China in defense of worthless and vulnerable offshore islands controlled by Taiwan.[18]

Credibility concerns enable entrapment. Deterring third-party security competition requires reassuring friends and foes of a willingness to fight. As noted above, this assurance will likely fail to deter highly motivated revisionist actors, vitiating primacy's core goal. Having failed to restrain an ally, U.S. policymakers may decide that future credibility requires participating in the war it could not stop.[19]

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16. Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Jacques E.C. Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians, and Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

17. Brooks et al.'s narrow definition of entrapment lowers its historical incidence. Definitions aside, the authors ignore the broader set of budgetary, diplomatic, military, and even moral costs that alliance commitments impose on the United States even during peace.

18. Good overviews of these dynamics include Douglas Macdonald, *Adventures in Chaos: American Intervention for Reform in the Third World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), chaps. 8–9; and H.W. Brands Jr., "Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 124–151.

19. For example, had Georgia been a NATO member in 2008, as many U.S. leaders advocated, its clash with Russia might have nonetheless occurred. To demonstrate its commitment to Article 5, the United States might have aided Georgia, risking a costly imbroglio for a geopolitically irrelevant ally. Historically, U.S. leaders have thought this way about credibility, though they should not. See Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 2007).

TEMPTATION. Primacy increases motives for military action in two ways. The first is its capacious definition of threats. For example, if proliferation cascades are the looming danger that Brooks et al. say they are, then the strategy can reasonably be interpreted to suggest wars to prevent them.[20] Advocates of the Iraq War and a prospective war on Iran employ similar logic.[21] Second, primacy requires military capacity easily used for other ends. Forces stationed abroad in the name of primacy enable wars justified by humanitarianism, liberalism, and other goals outside primacy's logic.

Brooks et al. agree that primacy "expands opportunities to use force" (p. 31) but deny that the resulting military interventions are costly. Iraq is the exception, they argue, and the relatively cheap 1990s interventions the norm. Those interventions, however, cost something, risked more, and gained little or nothing. The fact that allies contributed more to these actions relative to their gross domestic product is barely relevant. What matters more is that U.S. returns were trivial and the results could have been worse. Why did Slobodan Milošević surrender to NATO rather than force a ground invasion? Why did the Haitian junta not resist in 1994? Political science offers few answers and little basis for concluding that the United States has mastered coercive diplomacy and nation building.[22] Moreover, if Brooks et al. believe these interventions served U.S. strategic interests, then they should not deny that primacy requires a steady stream of military activity (pp. 32–33).

Brooks et al.'s argument that the lessons from expensive wars prevent future disasters concedes a central point: under primacy, the United States will occasionally blunder into foolish wars, avoid them for a time, then eventually forget and blunder again. If this is their argument, then such wars are costs of primacy. Moreover, these lessons seem to need regular repetition. The Korean War's unpopularity was widely thought to have discredited limited war. U.S. forces began deploying to Vietnam just a few years later. President Barack Obama's electoral success in 2003 opposing the Iraq War did not prevent his administration from escalating the war in Afghanistan.

NONSECURITY CONSEQUENCES

Brooks et al. claim that primacy produces security benefits with comparatively few budgetary costs, while providing additional economic and institutional gains. These arguments omit costs to welfare and liberal values, while overstating primacy's non-

20. Counterproliferation wars may be a general feature of a primacy strategy. See Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12), pp. 9–40.

21. See, for example, Eric S. Edelman, Andrew F. Krepinevich, and Evan Braden Montgomery, "The Dangers of a Nuclear Iran: The Limits of Containment," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (January/February 2011), p. 66; and Matthew Kroenig, "Time to Attack Iran: Why a Strike Is the Least Bad Option," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (January/February 2012), p. 76.

22. Works stressing the difficulty of 1990s style military interventions and the possibility of their failure include David M. Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards: Success and Failure in Military Occupation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011); Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994); and Daniel R. Lake, "The Limits of Coercive Airpower: NATO's 'Victory' in Kosovo Revisited," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Summer 2009), pp. 83–112.

security benefits. The United States can afford primacy, but its nonsecurity costs are substantial.

BUDGETARY COST. Brooks et al. argue that the military spending required by primacy is only marginally more expensive than restraint and is economically sustainable. They support the first point with an article by two of us, taking its outlined $900 billion in military cuts over ten years as a ceiling for the savings from restraint.[23] They then argue that those are the savings from a radical version of restraint: what they call a "pre–World War II strategy . . . with limited reach beyond the Western Hemisphere" requiring confidence "that no such overseas interventions will ever be necessary." More moderate positions would yield an economically irrelevant pittance (pp. 15–16).

Brooks et al. simultaneously exaggerate that article's radicalism and understate the savings its logic allows. The article proposes a U.S. military with global reach far exceeding any rival: roughly 230 ships, including 8 full-sized aircraft carriers and 40 attack submarines; roughly 1,400 fighter and bomber aircraft aided by airborne refueling tankers; the bulk of the Army, Marines, Special Operations forces; and 500-plus nuclear warheads deliverable by submarine- or land-based ballistic missiles.[24] The portrayal of such a U.S. military by leading scholars as a provincial weakling indicates how militarized U.S. foreign policy has become. Nor does the article argue against all intervention. It suggests taking advantage of "geopolitical fortune" by adopting a "wait-and-see approach to distant threats" and planning for "fewer" wars, not none.[25] As the article notes, another take on restraint could save far more.[26]

As for Brooks et al.'s point that primacy's costs are sustainable, we agree. History suggests that the United States could indefinitely spend much more on the military without catastrophic results. Primacy need not cause military or economic cataclysm, however, to be a bad investment. A state as rich and safe from danger as the United States can afford to make all sorts of bad decisions without ruin.[27]

Brooks et al.'s claim that there is "no evidence" that primacy "imposes growth-sapping opportunity costs" (p. 26) bears little on the above argument. The literature on the subject, including what the authors reference, is a contradictory muddle.[28] Econom-

23. Benjamin H. Friedman and Justin Logan, "Why the U.S. Military Budget Is 'Foolish and Sustainable,'" *Orbis*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 177–191.
24. Ibid., pp. 186–187. These are the forces left once one subtracts what the article recommends cutting.
25. Ibid., pp. 180, 185–186.
26. Ibid., p. 186.
27. Ibid., pp. 186–189. Brooks et al.'s sustainability argument refutes realists who see "the current grand strategy [as] so patently suboptimal that its persistence after the Soviet Union's demise can be explained only by domestic political pathologies or the pernicious influence of America's liberal ideology" (p. 51). We instead see structure—relative U.S. power—as the main cause of persistently suboptimal U.S. foreign policy, ideology's prominence in it, and those pathologies. For similar takes, see Arnold Wolfers, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (December 1952), pp. 481–502; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 5–41; and Robert Jervis, "Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective," *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 188–213.
28. A good summary is Steve Chan, "Defense, Welfare, and Growth: Introduction" in Chan and Alex Mintz, eds., *Defense, Welfare, and Growth: Perspectives and Evidence* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1–20.

ics does not know what amount of military spending harms growth. That is a nonanswer, not a negative one.

More important, Brooks et al. turn what should be a discussion of welfare into a discussion of economic growth.[29] They entertain the argument that the money the United States spends on its military to support primacy might be "unavailable for other, possibly more productive purposes—infrastructure, education, civilian research and development, innovation, and so on," but assume that the only relevant consequence is lost growth or competitiveness (p. 24). Misplaced investment, however, sacrifices people's welfare—their ability to realize their preferences. That is a major cost of primacy, even if gross domestic product is unhampered.

LIBERAL VALUES. Brooks et al. also ignore primacy's tendency to erode liberal governance and harm public policy. Primacy harms liberal values in three ways. First, the prospect or realization of wars that a restraint strategy would avoid justifies state restriction of various individual freedoms.[30] Second, the supposed requirement for presidential dispatch resulting from security danger boosts presidential power and saps that of Congress, the most democratically responsive branch.[31] Third, primacy encourages the growth of a large national security bureaucracy shrouded in secrecy, which retards oversight and debate.

Secrecy and the erosion of checks and balances among the branches of government harm policy. Separation of powers produces conflict, generating information about policy that empowers oversight and interest groups to police risky and extreme policies.[32] That moderating process generally produces policies more attuned to the national interest than those made by an unchecked executive.[33]

MACRO-/MICROLEVEL STRUCTURING. One reason primacy pays, according to Brooks et al., is that threatening to abolish or diminish U.S. military alliances allows U.S. policymakers to extract economic reward from its clients.[34] In "microlevel structuring,"

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29. On the distinction, see, for example, Richard Easterlin, "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence," in Paul A. David and Mel W. Reder, eds., *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); and Moses Abramovitz, *Thinking About Growth and Other Essays on Economic Growth and Welfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

30. See, for example, Louis Fisher, *The Constitution and 9/11: Recurring Threats to America's Freedoms* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008).

31. A recent review of works on this point is Bryan W. Marshall and Patrick J. Haney, "Aiding and Abetting: Congressional Complicity in the Rise of the Unitary Executive," in Ryan J. Barilleaux and Christopher S. Kelley, eds., *The Unitary Executive and the Modern Presidency* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), pp. 188–216.

32. Jon Western, *Selling Intervention and War: The Presidency, the Media, and the American Public* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 15–20.

33. See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 297–311. A more skeptical but not inconsistent take is A. Trevor Thrall, "A Bear in the Woods? Threat Framing and the Marketplace of Values," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (July–September 2007), pp. 452–488.

34. Another reason is that primacy, by policing sea lanes, aids trade. We leave this claim aside for reasons of space and because articles that Brooks et al. cite upend it, showing that market integration has made the policing of sea lanes less necessary to trade. See Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, "The Effects of Wars on Neutral Countries: Why It Doesn't Pay to Preserve the Peace," *Security Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Summer 2001), pp. 1–57; and Eugene Gholz and Daryl G. Press, "Pro-

allies make economic concessions to the United States in exchange for military commitments. In "macrolevel structuring," those commitments yield allied support for international economic institutions (pp. 40–46).

There are several reasons to doubt that military alliances produce significant economic returns. First, U.S. negotiators might win the same concessions by offering allies economic and diplomatic inducements, such as reduced tariffs.[35] Second, U.S. threats to exit alliances will rarely be credible. Neither the ritual pronouncements about alliances' importance nor the domestic support those statements create will conveniently disappear or escape the notice of U.S. negotiating partners.[36] Third, the conditions that recommend an alliance often encourage economic concessions to the ally.

Macrolevel structuring in the Cold War bears this out. The United States, by accepting discrimination against its goods and capital, and threats to its currency, was essentially paying its allies for the privilege of defending them. Brooks et al. cite Francis Gavin's work on the balance of payments crisis of the 1960s, which actually finds that U.S. policy in Europe in this period showed "a repeated pattern of sacrificing economic for geopolitical interests."[37] The concessions Washington did extract were mostly to fix problems, such as balance of payments imbalances, created by U.S. overseas military commitments.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. Finally, Brooks et al. argue that U.S. military alliances are useful for dealing with problems such as tsunamis, pandemics, terrorism, piracy, and organized crime (pp. 46–49). Military alliances, however, may undercut more effective domestic or international responses to such dangers. Nonmilitary instruments are better-suited to combating disease and storm damage and would likely get more resources under restraint. And when states perceive a need, new cooperative efforts typically form, as with terrorism and piracy lately.[38]

We should also be wary of inflating threats to protect security alliances. Brooks et al.'s "newly emerging" (p. 46), "nontraditional, transnational," "diffuse and shifting" (p. 47) threats are mostly symptoms of security that gain attention once bigger threats

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tecting 'The Prize': Oil and the U.S. National Interest," *Security Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Fall 2010), pp. 453–485. On the scant economic virtues of primacy, see also Daniel W. Drezner, "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)," *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Summer 2013), pp. 52–79.

35. Brooks et al.'s only evidence that U.S. security commitments produced recent free-trade deals with South Korea and Australia is what mysterious "current and past U.S. administration officials" said in interviews (p. 43). It is unsurprising that U.S. officials, who might not have reached their station if they questioned U.S. alliances, did not do so in interviews where they were essentially grading their own work.

36. A powerful recent example is then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's argument that alliances "need to be embedded in the DNA of American foreign policy." Clinton, "Remarks on the Obama Administration's National Security Strategy," Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., May 27, 2010. On overselling policy to overcome domestic resistance, see Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the States*, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), chap. 6.

37. Francis J. Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958–1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 12.

38. On recent counterterrorism cooperation, see James Igoe Walsh, *The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), chap. 5. On piracy, see Robin Geiss and Anna Petrig, *Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea: The Legal Framework for Counter-Piracy in Somalia and the Gulf of Aden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), chap. 2.

disappear.[39] Terrorism is an old form of violence, has been declining in lethality and frequency of late, and kills fewer Americans than lightning in most years.[40] Piracy's threat to shipping has waxed and waned for centuries, and is now a nuisance cost.[41] Brooks et al.'s worries notwithstanding, "the ability of the United States and Europe to talk to each other and do business" (p. 48) does not depend on NATO or the Atlantic Council.

CONCLUSION

Brooks et al. frame their argument as a choice between "the devil we know"—a globe-girdling grand strategy—and "a massive experiment": restraint (p. 10). One cannot assess the devil we know, however, without including its horns, pitchfork, and tail. Brooks et al. leave out alliance risks, inflated fears, misguided wars justified by primacy's logic, historically enormous defense budgets that sap U.S. welfare, and the erosion of checks and balances protective of liberties, democratic debate, and wise policy.

Devils we don't know lurk on both sides. As with most complex choices, the status quo has no a priori claim to predictability and safety. In this sense, all grand strategy is a social science experiment. Brooks et al.'s recommendations, like ours, are based on theories and counterfactuals. They warn us not to gamble on trends suggesting that global security is plentiful. Yet they would have us gamble all the same: on the proposition that U.S. power can control revisionist actors; on the plausibility of catastrophic security dominoes somehow falling on U.S. shores; on the likelihood of Bismarckian leaders, reinforced by a wise public, judiciously directing U.S. power.

We think the best evidence and theories point to different conclusions. The United States enjoys great safety. Big potential threats to the Western Hemisphere, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, are more unlikely now than ever. The troubles that might emerge in the absence of U.S. military commitments will remain remote, if policymakers let them. The biggest security threat that U.S. citizens face is the myth that the pursuit of global dominance is worth blood and treasure, rather than a burden the United States need not bear.

—Benjamin H. Friedman
Washington, D.C.

—Brendan Rittenhouse Green
Williamstown, Massachusetts

—Justin Logan
Washington, D.C.

39. A good explanation for this phenomenon is John A. Thompson, "The Exaggeration of American Vulnerability: The Anatomy of a Tradition," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 23–43.
40. John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflates National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2009).
41. John Patch, "An Overstated Threat," *Proceedings Magazine*, Vol. 134, No. 12 (December 2008), pp. 34–39.

Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth Reply:

The responses by Campbell Craig and Benjamin Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, and Justin Logan to our recent article advance the debate on U.S. grand strategy, and not only in the usual way—by highlighting contending claims and assessments—but also by revealing areas of agreement.[1] Given their support for "a U.S. military with global reach far exceeding any rival," it is clear that both we and Friedman et al. are "primacists." Like us, they do not expect the rise of peer competitors or U.S. relative decline to erode the position of the United States as the world's number one military power, nor do they favor defense cuts sufficient to restrict U.S. military action to its own region. Both we and Friedman et al. are also in favor of "restraint" in the use of American power. Like us, they see military interventions in places such as Haiti and Kosovo as optional choices that are outside our preferred grand strategy's logic. The debate is clearly not about primacy or restraint as these terms are conventionally understood. It is about whether the United States should remain deeply engaged in the security affairs of East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe or should instead retrench, abrogating its alliances with its security partners.

For his part, Craig agrees with our reading of the copious research casting doubt on the expectation that governments can be relied on to create secure and controlled nuclear forces. His warning that "one day a warning system will fail, or an official will panic, or a terrorist attack will be misconstrued, and the missiles will fly" captures in stark terms some of our reasons for doubting the unbridled nuclear optimism that pervades arguments for retrenchment, including Friedman et al.'s contribution to this exchange.

These responses also usefully highlight important issues for further research. Craig is right that we need to pay more explicit attention to the implications of the nuclear revolution. And Friedman et al. helpfully put arguments on the table that we did not address (such as the grand strategy's implications for domestic liberty), even as they establish the need for more analysis of some potential risks of deep engagement—most notably, the enhanced temptation to use military power.

Stark disagreement looms large, however. We do not agree with Friedman et al. that our analysis is "flawed." The sources they cite to try to make this case are embedded in larger literatures whose net findings we reported accurately. Acknowledging that grand strategic choice is always a bet, and that more work needs to be done to assess various costs and benefits, we showed that the balance of what scholars know about international relations casts doubt on the wisdom of retrenchment. And we do not agree with Craig that the nuclear revolution overturns the logic of deep engagement. That revolution leaves in its wake important purposes for U.S. security guarantees; nuclear weapons are indeed transformational, but they transform only a slice of the stuff of international politics, and only for states that have them.

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1. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/13), pp. 7–51. Further references to this article appear parenthetically in the text.

Given space constraints, a fully satisfactory response to these challenges will have to appear in forthcoming work.[2] Here, the best we can do is to clarify the main reasons for continued disagreement to better inform subsequent analysis. These reasons fall into two general categories: (1) the substantive divergence in our respective estimates of the security problem; and (2) a set of basic problems with how retrenchment advocates, in general, and our critics here, in particular, conceptualize the debate.

How bad would a post-American world be?

At the root of much of our disagreement with our critics are divergent estimates of the security problem. Craig thinks that nuclear weapons render U.S. security provision redundant. Friedman et al. agree, adding other factors that conspire to make the world more peaceful by reducing the net benefits of territorial conquest. Needless to say, we are acutely aware of scholarship analyzing these shifts. John Ikenberry has developed a theory of the contemporary world order in which liberal rules and institutions constrain the unilateral use of force, including by the United States.[3] Stephen Brooks has extensively analyzed the very factor on which Friedman et al. focus: the declining benefits of conquest in contemporary conditions.[4] Yet Brooks stresses that although the prospect of seizing benefits from conquered territory is now attenuated as a cause of conflict, there have always been other drivers of conflict, and many of them have hardly been swept away.[5]

Why we can't all just get along. If wars of territorial conquest were the only security problem that mattered, then nuclear weapons would indeed have the wondrous qualities Craig assigns to them, and the optimistic conclusions Friedman et al. derive from the literature they cite would be valid. But if that were true, then much of the conflict that has bedeviled statesmen for centuries would not have happened, and the Cold War would have ended very soon after it began: every single argument Craig enlists to explain why major powers of contemporary Eurasia would not compete military if America "came home" could be applied to United States itself and the Soviet Union after the early years of the Cold War. In addition, none of the factors that Fried-

2. Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century," forthcoming; and G. John Ikenberry, "The Rise of China and the Future of Liberal International Order," forthcoming.

3. G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

4. See Stephen G. Brooks "The Globalization of Production and the Changing Benefits of Conquest," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (October 1999), pp. 646–670; Stephen G. Brooks, *Producing Security: Multinational Corporations, Globalization, and the Changing Calculus of Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 57–71, 161–206, 208–210; and Stephen G. Brooks, "Reflections on *Producing Security*," *Security Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter 2008), pp. 644–649, 659–665.

5. Stephen G. Brooks also underscores that the declining benefits of conquest reduce the likelihood, and especially the severity, of the most dangerous kinds of wars, but only in those areas of the world that have undergone the economic transformations that reduce the ability of a conqueror to seize gains from vanquished territory; many parts of the world, including all of the Middle East and much of East Asia, remain unaffected by the changed calculus of conquest. See Brooks, *Producing Security*, especially pp. 208–210; and Brooks, "Reflections on *Producing Security*," p. 643.

man et al. cite as reducing the benefits of conquest vitiate other reasons for which states use force. Unfortunately, states that are bullish on their prospects for territorial survival as sovereign units still have plenty of security concerns and often find plenty of reasons to use force, as well as plenty of ways to use force other than by conquering other states.

So even though factors other than U.S. grand strategy render the security problem less severe than in previous eras, there is little reason to believe that they eliminate it. One does not have to be an offensive realist to share this assessment. For example, Charles Glaser uses the theory developed in his *Rational Theory of International Politics* to carefully model hypothetical post-American security settings in Northeast Asia and Europe. "U.S. security guarantees reduce incentives for competition in both regions," he finds.[6] In a counterfactual post-American Northeast Asia, Glaser's theory predicts that "the most likely outcome would be a competitive peace supported by defensive advantages and strained by unresolved territorial disputes possibly resembling the dangerous major-power relations of the Cold War."[7] Glaser's assessment is derived from a strictly rational theory that assumes territorial security as the overriding state preference. Because U.S. alliances prevent that more competitive security situation from emerging without themselves generating additional insecurity, the net effect is to drive the likelihood of conflict lower than it would otherwise be. In sum, states whose security is supported by the United States would be relatively less secure if that support is removed. The result would be a net decrease in security globally.

Even under the unrealistic assumption that protection from territorial conquest is the sole relevant security problem, the only way to get from the current world to the benign post-American world Craig imagines is for all current U.S. allies—and all their prospective rivals—to acquire nuclear forces. The import of his letter is that if the United States comes home, there will be lots (and lots) of new nuclear powers. Not only big states such as Japan will seek nuclear weapons, but also smaller ones such as Saudi Arabia. Needless to say, the risk of nuclear war rises with the number of nuclear states, as does the risk of nuclear leakage to undeterrable nonstate actors (a key concern Craig fails to mention). By Craig's own logic, nuclear weapons will be appealing as a substitute for U.S. security guarantees, which means that the retrenchment strategy he advocates increases the very risk of nuclear war he fears. Indeed, abrogating alliance commitments not only removes the security provision that arguably keeps a number of states from seeking nuclear weapons now, but it also vitiates the leverage the United States now possesses for sanctions and other disincentives to would-be proliferators.

WE ARE NOT IN 1940 ANYMORE. Our assessment is that the more militarized, competitive, and conflict-prone world that would result from U.S. retrenchment would be worse for U.S. core interests than the one we now inhabit. Our critics disagree that a more conflict-prone world would actually be a problem for the United States. In their view, either the United States can ride out the storm, or it can intervene later and mitigate any widespread damage to its interests after a war occurs.

The problem here is that our critics recognize only some of the transformations that

6. Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 213.
7. Ibid., p. 231.

have occurred in world politics and not others. Craig's claim that "we are not in 1940 anymore" plays both ways. Although great power wars of territorial conquest may be less likely, global economic interdependence—and the U.S. link to the global economy specifically—is now far greater; the financial markets and global production networks the United States depends on would almost certainly be disrupted by significant wars elsewhere. Environmental interdependence also matters: even a "small" regional nuclear war could disrupt global temperatures and rainfall patterns, potentially crippling global agriculture over a sustained period.[8] At least for the foreseeable future, moreover, the United States will be reliant on importing a large amount of its energy from other parts of the world. Additionally, higher levels of security competition would be added to the existing set of security challenges such as terrorism. As strong supporters of restraint in the use of military power, we agree with Friedman et al. that many U.S. responses to these threats have been overwrought; however, a world that contains novel forms of terrorism and new technologies for wreaking violence against a backdrop of significantly increased interstate military competition in important regions is one we would prefer to avoid. We share Friedman et al.'s concern for domestic liberal values today, but we fear even more for their fate in the world retrenchment might bring.

In short, if the world were exactly as it was in 1940 but major power wars of territorial conquest were as unlikely as they are today, retrenchment would be far more appealing. But you do not get to cherry-pick your global transformations. Other deep changes have raised the risks of coming home. If in previous centuries it was possible to sit out foreign wars, picking the opportune moment to engage and build up the required capabilities, in today's much more interdependent world, that period of assessment and preparation could be massively costly to the United States.[9]

Getting the debate right

Like many scholarly debates, this one has a frustrating quality. Our article cited almost all of the scholarly research that Friedman et al. invoke to make their case. Why do we so often reach diametrically opposed readings of the same sources? One problem is differing ways of interpreting findings. For example, we think economists' failure to find a relationship between military spending and growth is meaningful for a debate in which critics long highlighted just such a relationship. In contrast, Friedman et al. dismiss this as a "muddle." If there were no space constraints, we could walk through all of the issues where we and they diverge and show how our reading of each source is correct and theirs is not. There is, however, a deeper explanation in play that lies in the way they frame the analysis. Three general problems stand out; if these can be avoided, subsequent exchanges may be more productive.

Avoid observational bias. Observable, experienced costs and risks are much more vivid than counterfactual ones. It is much easier to identify in the literature salient examples of the costs of an existing strategy than to probe that literature's implications for a hypothetical strategy. We attempted to do both, creating a more level analytical play-

8. Owen B. Toon et al., "Consequences of Regional-Scale Nuclear Conflicts," *Science*, March 2007, pp. 1224–1225.
9. For further discussion, see Brooks and Wohlforth, "America Abroad."

ing field for the two grand strategies and so yielding a different net assessment than Friedman et al. reach. In describing deep engagement as "the devil we know" and directly addressing risks such as temptation, we grappled with the fact that it, like all grand strategies, has costs and risks. It is time for retrenchment advocates to follow suit and stop portraying their strategy as one where all good things go together. An inability to directly observe retrenchment in action does not mean that it lacks horns, pitchfork, and tail.

For example, Friedman et al. write as if retrenchment solves the problem of temptation. Given their endorsement of a "military with global reach far exceeding any rival," it is unclear how this is so. A postretrenchment America will still have people who care about the plight of others, will still be governed by leaders who are human beings with human flaws who can make mistakes, and, it is clear, will still have the capacity to intervene in far-flung regions of the world. Retrenchment might reduce the temptation risk but certainly does not eliminate it. Indeed, retrenchment might even increase the risk of temptation: if the United States were to retain as robust a military capacity as Friedman et al. favor even after it abandons its current security commitments, it would likely have more available military resources for humanitarian interventions than it does now, given that so much of its current military capacity must remain tied down to defend its current security commitments.

Retrenchment also generates new risks—notably, that coming home would lead to a major deterioration of the security environment. To their credit, Friedman et al. recognize that a postretrenchment America might, for example, face sound realist reasons to reengage in Asia, but they fail to address the expected costs and difficulty of such an eventuality. This, in turn, encourages an inaccurately rose-tinted view of retrenchment, for there is little if any scholarly debate on one of deep engagement's basic propositions: it is much easier to deter threats to a status quo than to compel a reversal after the fact.[10]

Friedman et al.'s observational bias is also present on the benefits side. As we stressed, "The United States' security leverage over its allies matters even if it is not used actively to garner support for its conception of the global economy and other economic issues" (p. 45). It is incorrect to assess the upsides of deep engagement solely on the basis of direct observable actions that states take in response to pressure or pleas from Washington. America's security-providing role fosters many favorable economic actions from other states without Washington ever having to ask. Further, there is a range of actions that would harm U.S. interests that states have not taken, and are also less likely to take in the future, because of the provision of security by the United States.[11]

ESCHEW REDUCTIONISM. It is vital to consider the interaction between the military and nonmilitary aspects of the strategy, particularly with regard to the institutional order. Retrenchment advocates up to now have invariably focused on the military element of deep engagement in isolation, without examining how it fits within the larger

10. See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 69–75; and the subsequent literature discussed in Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (London: Polity, 2004), chap. 7.
11. Brooks and Wohlforth, "America Abroad."

strategy. Our critics in this exchange also suffer from this problem of reductionism. A major thrust of our article was that security provision enables U.S. leadership to address a wide range of nonsecurity challenges by giving it mechanisms for forging bargains and overcoming collective action problems that it would lack if the United States retrenched. Friedman et al. respond by arguing that military force is a poor way to address nonsecurity issues, completely missing the interaction we contend lies at the core of the strategy. Ignoring this logic, they have nothing to say about our arguments and findings in this area.

Fixing this problem is important, because it can lead to serious misunderstanding of the terms of debate. It is true that some analysts and policymakers highlight the value of actively using military power and see U.S. commitments as facilitating this. Actively using military force is not an inherent feature of deep engagement, however; many proponents of the strategy are highly skeptical of the utility of military force for coercing desired outcomes, and instead stress the indirect, facilitating role of U.S. security commitments. In our case, we have all stressed that military commitments are important in enabling U.S. institutional leadership, but this is not to say that military force itself is the answer to America's immediate policy problems.[12] For example, on nuclear proliferation, for us the key significance of the military ties that bind the United States to its partners lies in the way these ties facilitate cooperation against potential proliferators. These commitments may also limit the downstream consequences of such proliferation as occurs when reassuring neighboring states.

AVOID DICHOTOMIES, ESTIMATE PROBABILITIES. This "all-or-nothing" problem lies at the center our diverging assessments of the security problem. For our critics, once Nazi-style wars of conquest are off the table, we can pack up our kit and come home. For us, relative reduction in nascent security competition can be worth the investment if it comes at a reasonable cost. A deeper look, however, reveals this problem of dichotomous thinking throughout Friedman et al.'s analysis, helping to explain why we read the same sources and literatures differently. Take the issue of nonsecurity preferences. Friedman et al. seem to be saying that states are either security maximizers or pursue other preferences such as prestige; if the latter is the case, then improving the security setting does nothing to reduce militarized competition. We, by contrast, assume that states pursue multiple preferences that interact. Just because a state may care about prestige does not mean that it must stop caring about security or that it suddenly becomes insensitive to costs. So, if by "coming home," the United States lowers the costs of prestige-driven rivalries, the probability of their occurring rises.

12. See, for example, Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 214–218; and G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 44–60. Indeed, in a series of works, Ikenberry argues that deep engagement, which involves the United States tying itself in various ways to other liberal democratic states and an array of multilateral institutions, is a vehicle for the United States to exercise restraint; institutional ties provide constraints and obligations that at least partially inhibit American unilateralism. See Ikenberry, "The Case for Restraint," *American Interest*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (November/December 2007), pp. 23–24. For the theoretical foundations for this claim, see Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

LOOKING FORWARD: FOCUS ON THE CORE

Debates about grand strategy are about the future, but scholars must try to advance them by looking to the past—a past that has led many on all sides to be frustrated with aspects of U.S. foreign policy. All who would contribute to this debate must come to terms with the fact that we have no past with a grand strategy of retrenchment. If the debate were reversed, if the United States had "come home" after the Cold War, how confident are we that there would have not been major departures, flaws, mistakes, or even major and costly decisions to fully or partially reengage in that period? How sure can Friedman et al. and Craig be that they would endorse every action taken by this counterfactual retrenched America?

Our endorsement of deep engagement is hardly an unqualified one; we would not have described it as "the devil we know" otherwise. Although deep engagement is hardly perfect and could undoubtedly be implemented more judiciously, after carefully reviewing the relevant evidence and scholarship, we determined that it is preferable to retrenchment. We first showed that advocates of retrenchment radically overestimate the potential costs of deep engagement and also underestimate its security benefits. We then showed that retrenchment proponents miss the wider payoffs of the United States' security role for sustaining the global economy and for shaping the character of the wider liberal order in ways that protect and advance U.S. interests by allowing it to secure necessary interstate cooperation on favorable terms.

Our endorsement concerns the core of the strategy, not every action undertaken by Washington over the last twenty-five years. The scholarship and evidence we reviewed cannot tell us about the optimality of decisions outside the strategy's core logic, such as Haiti, Panama, Bosnia, Somalia, or Kosovo. Our critics perform the signal service of focusing attention on the key question of whether this core logic remains compelling or whether America's interests would be better served by ending its commitments to its security partners abroad and to its leadership of the global liberal order. In short, this is a debate about fundamentals, not optional choices. The choice is whether to refocus on America's core commitments or to give them up. Our analysis supports our recommendation of a future focus on these core commitments as consistent with our reading of the state of scholarly knowledge and the strategic environment. Nothing in the responses by Craig and Friedman et al. reverses that.

—Stephen G. Brooks
Hanover, New Hampshire

—G. John Ikenberry
Princeton, New Jersey

—William C. Wohlforth
Hanover, New Hampshire