Edited by Christopher Preble, Emma Ashford, and Travis Evans

OUR FOREIGN POLICY CHOICES

RETHINKING AMERICA'S GLOBAL ROLE

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Introduction: Why Do We Need Foreign Policy Alternatives?

The end of the Cold War ushered in a unipolar world, cementing U.S. dominance over a generally liberal international order. Yet where once it seemed that U.S. foreign policy would be simpler and easier to manage as a result, the events of the past 15 years—the 9/11 attacks, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arab Spring, and Russia's invasions of Georgia and Ukraine—strongly suggest otherwise. The world today is certainly safer for Americans than it was under the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union. But the world is undoubtedly more complex, as nonstate actors, shifting alliances, and diverse domestic political factors complicate U.S. foreign policy formation and implementation. A robust debate on America's foreign policy choices is urgently needed.

Instead, policymakers and political candidates generally embrace the status quo. Bipartisan support exists for extensive alliance commitments, frequent military intervention, and higher defense spending. Though this orthodoxy is unsurprising since many candidates receive advice from a limited number of sources, it is deeply concerning. Debates tend to focus on *which* specific actions the United States should take, only rarely asking *whether* the United States should be involved, militarily or otherwise, in various global crises.

Even President Barack Obama, elected in large part thanks to his repudiation of the Bush administration's conduct of foreign policy, has failed to alter the underlying bipartisan consensus that America remains the "indispensable nation" whose leadership is required in perpetuity. It is easy to see why this idea persists: America's invaluable and outsized role in protecting the liberal international order during the Cold War was followed by two decades of unipolar primacy, where Washington attempted to exert its influence nearly everywhere.

But, as President Obama has discovered, America's "unipolar moment" is waning. As he told the *Atlantic Monthly*'s Jeffrey Goldberg in April 2016: "Almost every great world power has succumbed"

to overextension. "What I think is not smart is the idea that every time there is a problem, we send in our military to impose order. We just can't do that."

U.S. influence in the world remains preeminent, but with a rising China, a reassertive Russia, and emerging regional rivalries, it is no longer unchallenged. America's foreign policy cannot simply rely on the business-as-usual policies that have sustained us in recent years. Instead, the country must look to alternative approaches to foreign policy, many of which are better suited to dealing with the complexities of the 21st century.

The United States is the richest, most secure, and most powerful country in the world; therefore, the range of possible choices available to American policymakers is extremely broad. That doesn't mean, however, that we can avoid choosing, nor that those choices will be easy. America's foreign policy decisions have an impact on our security, today and in the future, as well as on other nations. In the long term, the lack of debate on foreign policy, by precluding serious consideration of our options, will damage American interests. It will blind us to the changes taking place in the world today and will prevent us from capitalizing on new opportunities to advance U.S. security and prosperity.

This volume seeks to advance this much-needed debate over our country's global choices, presenting solutions to a number of today's top foreign policy concerns. These choices are broadly based on a grand strategy of *restraint*, which emphasizes that America's global influence is strongest when spread by peaceful—rather than military—means. Americans are fortunate enough to enjoy substantial security; we rarely need to use our military might. Yet our current grand strategy—known as primacy or liberal hegemony—demands a massive, forward-deployed military. That strategy tempts policymakers to use force even when U.S. vital interests are not directly threatened.

To conserve American power and security, a strategy of restraint focuses on avoiding distant conflicts that do not threaten American interests. Restraint argues that the U.S. military should be used rarely and only for clearly defined reasons.

Though restraint forms the basis for the chapters included here, our contributors focus on practical, realistic responses to today's top challenges. This volume includes chapters focusing on regional threats, broader challenges to national security, as well as some thoughts on

how to implement the policy proposals presented here. In some policy areas—such as Syria or Afghanistan—authors advocate a continuation of current policies or relatively minor course corrections, whereas in others—for example, our relations with allies such as Taiwan, Japan, or even the countries in NATO—they suggest a more dramatic approach to U.S. foreign policy in the future.

1. The Problem with Primacy

- America's current foreign policy approach—primacy (or global hegemony)—is excessively costly, built on flawed assumptions, and ultimately counterproductive for American safety.
- Primacy increases the likelihood that the United States will be drawn into wars unconnected to our security.
- The United States needs an alternative foreign policy, one that maintains a superior defense capability that focuses on advancing America's security while expecting other countries to take more responsibility for challenges in their respective regions.

U.S. foreign policy should be focused on the goal of keeping America strong and safe. Unfortunately, since World War II, the United States has followed a foreign policy aimed at the quixotic goal of primacy, or global hegemony, which is both difficult and costly to sustain while being frequently disconnected from American security needs. Under primacy, as Barry Posen and Andrew Ross note, "only a preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace. . . . Peace is the result of an imbalance of power in which U.S. capabilities are sufficient, operating on their own, to cow all potential challengers and to comfort all coalition partners." Primacy also assumes that we must secure a broad set of intermediate interests necessary for our ultimate safety, such as global stability, the spread of democracy, and universal human rights.

A foreign policy that emphasizes our safety would concentrate on vital U.S. national interests and maintain the tools necessary to defend them. It also would reject the need for global hegemony and refute the idea that we can only be safe once the world is remade in our image. Moreover, it would take seriously the consequences of our actions abroad and here at home—on our soldiers, our fiscal health, and our principles.

This chapter outlines the basic precepts of current U.S. foreign policy, revealing its flaws and demonstrating the need for an alternative approach. Subsequent chapters will discuss alternative approaches and the military capabilities required.

Primacy aims to preserve and extend America's dominant position in the international system. Primacists argue that this is good not only for America, but also for the world. The strategy hinges on a large, expensive, and globally deployed military designed to stop prospective threats and smother potential peer competitors before they materialize. Primacy also requires a globe-girdling array of allies and the active spread of liberal values. It even means "resisting, and where possible, undermining, rising dictators and hostile ideologies" through frequent military interventions, as primacists Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol have argued. They are comfortable going to war even "when we cannot prove that a narrowly construed 'vital interest' of the United States is at stake."

Primacists hold that it would simply be too dangerous to allow other countries to defend themselves or assert their interests. Some will try but fail, necessitating costly U.S. intervention later. Others will succeed too well, unleashing arms races that would alter the delicate balance of regional or international relations. Thus, primacy attempts to reassure our friends—including longtime U.S. allies such as Germany and Japan—so that they won't feel the need to take on a larger role, while also deterring (or, if necessary, cutting down) potential rivals from challenging American dominance.

Unfortunately—but predictably given what theory and history teach us—primacy has been neither easy to implement nor cheap to sustain. When the U.S. military is called upon to fight wars across the globe, the human toll is considerable. Just within the past 15 years, nearly 7,000 U.S. troops have been killed, 52,000 have been wounded in action, and close to a million veterans have registered disability claims.

The fiscal burdens of primacy are severe as well. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost the United States trillions of dollars, some of which we will be paying long into the future in the form of additional debt servicing and veteran care. And primacy guarantees more fighting in the future—and the bills that come with it.

Of course, we ought to have a strong defense. But under primacy, the U.S. military is expected both to prevent threats from materializing and to stomp out any fires it fails to prevent. That expectation requires us to maintain the world's largest and most active military, which we do. The false claims that the Budget Control Act "gutted" the U.S. military budget have contributed to the widespread belief that the U.S. military has been hollowed out and needs to be "rebuilt." Indeed, a recent Gallup poll found that less than half of Americans think that

the U.S. military is the preeminent fighting force in the world. But the facts show that it clearly is. In 2016 inflation-adjusted dollars, military spending—both war and nonwar—averaged $606 billion per year during President George W. Bush's two terms in office; under President Barack Obama, it has averaged $668 billion. And no state can match U.S. global power projection capabilities.

By the end of this year, the United States will have spent nearly $500 billion more in the period 2009–2016 than in the period 2001–2008. Meanwhile, U.S. debt soars unsustainably toward $20 trillion. The United States spends at least as much on its military as the next 10 countries worldwide, including some U.S. allies, and nearly three times more than China and Russia combined. Although not all of that money is spent wisely, it still buys incomparable capabilities; no sensible American should wish to trade places with any other country on Earth. The U.S. military is second to none, and our massive economy enables us to quickly build an even bigger one should conditions call for it.

The United States could easily spend less and still safeguard America's vital interests. It could do so through smarter spending, eliminating wasteful gold-plated programs such as the F-35, and demanding greater burden sharing from our allies. At present, U.S. security guarantees to wealthy allies cause them to underprovide for their own defense, meaning they have less capacity to help us deal with common security challenges.

Former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen warned that debts and deficits represent threats to not just our fiscal health but our national security as well. Primacy isn't necessary to maintain U.S. security, but its high costs undermine our economic security. Indeed, primacy is doubly harmful because it increases the likelihood that the United States will be drawn into other people's fights and provoke moves by others to counteract U.S. power.

Consider three of primacy's key assumptions: (a) that technology has rendered geography moot, subjecting the United States to more urgent and prevalent threats than ever before; (b) that U.S. security guarantees reassure nervous allies and thus contribute to global peace and stability; and (c) that a large and active U.S. military is essential to the health of the international economy.

Primacists hold that new technologies and geopolitics do not allow the United States to adopt a wait-and-see attitude with respect to distant threats. They believe that "a seamless web of interests" binds the security of all states together and contend that threats to others are

actually threats to the United States. It is also the root of the claim that instability and crises abroad will adversely affect American interests if they are allowed to fester. Because any problem, in any part of the world, could *eventually* threaten U.S. security or U.S. interests, primacy aims to stop all problems before they occur. But this assumption is based on a very selective reading of world history, grossly exaggerates the United States' ability to control outcomes, and underplays the costs. It also miscasts the nature of the threats that are facing us.

Technology has not evaporated the seas, allowing large land armies to march across the ocean floor. Meanwhile, potential challengers like China face more urgent problems that should diminish their desire and ability to project power outside of their neighborhood. China's economic troubles and rising popular unrest, for example, could constrain Chinese military spending increases and focus Beijing's attention at home. Causing problems abroad would threaten critical trading relations that are essential to the health of the Chinese economy.

Primacists argue that we cannot rely on oceans to halt nuclear missiles that fly over them or cyberattacks in the virtual realm. And terrorists could infiltrate by land, sea, or air, or they could be grown right here at home. But our own nuclear weapons provide a powerful deterrent against state actors with return addresses, and a massive, forward-deployed military is not the best tool for dealing with terrorists and hackers. The hard part is finding them and stopping them before they act. That is a job for the intelligence and law enforcement communities, respectively, and for small-footprint military units like special operations forces.

There have always been dangers in the world, and there always will be. To the extent that we can identify myriad threats that our ancestors could not fathom, primacy compounds the problem. By calling on the United States to deal with so many threats, to so many people, in so many places, primacy ensures that even distant problems become our own.

Another key problem is that primacy inadvertently increases the risk of conflict. Allies are more willing to confront powerful rivals, because they are confident that the United States will rescue them if the confrontation turns ugly, a classic case of moral hazard, or what Barry Posen calls "reckless driving."

Restraining our impulse to intervene militarily or diplomatically when our vital national interests are not threatened would reduce the likelihood that our friends and allies will engage in such reckless

behavior in the first place. Libya and Georgia are only two cases of this problem. Plus, a more restrained U.S. foreign policy would provide a powerful incentive for allies to share the burden of defense.

Primacy has not stopped rivals from challenging U.S. power. Russia and China, for example, have resisted the U.S. government's efforts to expand its influence in Europe and Asia. Indeed, by provoking security fears, primacy exacerbates the very sorts of problems that it claims to prevent, including nuclear proliferation. U.S. efforts at regime change and talk of an "axis of evil" that needed to be eliminated certainly provided additional incentives for states to develop nuclear weapons to deter U.S. actions (e.g., North Korea).

Meanwhile, efforts intended to smother security competition or hostile ideologies have destabilized vast regions, undermined our counterterrorism efforts, and even harmed those we were ostensibly trying to help. After U.S. forces deposed the tyrant Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq descended into chaos and has never recovered. The situation in Libya is not much better; the United States helped overthrow Muammar el-Qaddafi in 2011, but violence still rages. The Islamic State, which originated in Iraq, has now established a presence in Libya as well. It is clear that those interventions were counterproductive and have failed to make America safer and more secure.

Lastly, primacists contend that U.S. military power is essential to the functioning of the global economy. The United States sets the rules of the game and punishes those who defy them. They also claim that primacy conveys economic rewards. If the United States were less inclined to intervene in other people's disputes, the primacists say, the risk of war would grow, roiling skittish markets. But such claims exaggerate the role that U.S. ground forces play in facilitating global trade, especially given the resiliency and flexibility of global markets in the face of regional instability. Moreover, primacists ignore the extent to which past U.S. military activism has actually undermined market stability and upset vital regions. Smart alternatives to primacy feature a significant role for the U.S. Navy and Air Force in providing security in the global commons while avoiding the downsides of onshore activism.

In conclusion, America's foreign policy status quo is unnecessarily costly and unnecessarily risky. Its defenders misconstrue the extent to which U.S. military power has contributed to a relatively peaceful international system, and they overestimate our ability to sustain a global military posture indefinitely.

The United States needs an alternative foreign policy, one that focuses on preserving America's strength and advancing its security, and that expects other countries to take primary responsibility for protecting their security and preserving their interests. America's leaders should restrain their impulse to use the U.S. military when our vital interests are not directly threatened and avoid being drawn into distant conflicts that sap our strength and undermine our security and values.

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—By Christopher Preble and William Ruger

2. Restrained Strategy, Lower Military Budgets

- The military's latest five-year spending plan would exceed the Budget Control Act caps by $107 billion between 2017 and 2020.
- Although eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse is an important objective, the Pentagon's efficient pursuit of unwise goals is a far richer target for cuts.
- Restraint-oriented reforms could reduce annual base defense spending by at least 25 percent.

Despite five years of official complaints about "sequestration" budgets, U.S. military spending remains historically high. In 2016, U.S. military spending will be $607 billion, including $59 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), the fund that ostensibly finances wars but goes in about equal measure to nonwar (or base) accounts. In real (inflation-adjusted) dollars, Americans spend more on the military than at any point in the Cold War except the brief peaks during the Korean War and the 1980s. Military spending today is 36 percent higher in real terms than in 2000, with two-thirds of the growth in nonwar spending. We spend more than double what Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea collectively spend on their militaries.

U.S. military spending remains historically high because U.S. military ambitions remain too broad. The strategy of primacy described in Chapter 1 fails to guide choices among military responses to danger. It recommends a large U.S. military, with units permanently deployed in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East and with the capability to quickly strike anywhere with air, naval, or ground forces. It sees threats everywhere and prescribes U.S. forces and promises everywhere to meet them. As such, primacy is less a strategy, which prioritizes resources to achieve specific goals, than a vague invocation to try to use U.S. military forces to manage the world. A strategy of restraint, by contrast, would make more choices, involve the United States in far fewer potential fights, and allow vast savings.

A strategy of restraint would serve the United States better. By narrowing the scope of what U.S. security requires, restraint would establish a true "defense" budget. Though cost savings are secondary to strategic benefits, a military budget premised on restraint would save substantially more than hunting "waste, fraud, and abuse," a common method of finding military savings. Waste hunters implicitly endorse primacy by objecting only to what offends their sense of sound management: overruns in acquisition programs, failed projects in war zones, or research projects with foolish titles. The Pentagon's efficient pursuit of unwise goals is a far richer target for cuts.

The 2011 Budget Control Act theoretically imposed austerity on the Pentagon through caps enforced by across-the-board sequestration. Compliance with those caps would have cut base spending 14 percent by 2021—hardly draconian after a decade where it grew 40 percent. However, three subsequent budget deals raised the caps and reduced cuts to 10 percent. War funds further reduced austerity's bite: because OCO is exempt from caps, Congress let the Pentagon inflate war costs and shift the excess to the base.

Even those attenuated cuts forced some adjustments. Active-duty Army end strength dropped from 570,000 to 475,000 troops over the past five years and is due to hit 450,000 in 2017 (980,000 including the National Guard and reserves). The Navy and Air Force saw delays in the procurement of new aircraft and ships and some orders trimmed. Base construction slowed, and some administrative units shrunk. After years of requests from Pentagon leaders concerned by increases in personnel costs, Congress recently agreed to modest efforts to curtail pay raises and health care and housing benefits.

Still, the Pentagon dodged the hard choices that a real drawdown would have required. No cancellation of a major procurement program has occurred since 2011. More important, the Pentagon essentially avoided strategic adjustment. The much-ballyhooed rebalancing (or pivot) to Asia produced no rebalancing of funds to the Navy and Air Force, which are most relevant to war with China. The fight against the Islamic State kept U.S. forces in the Middle East. In the name of countering Russia, the Pentagon's recent budget proposal for 2017 shifts thousands of U.S. troops back to Europe. The only big change that has a strategic rationale is the Army's shrinkage.

The Pentagon will need to find additional savings in the next several years. The military's latest five-year spending plan would exceed the

caps by $107 billion between 2017 and 2020. Moreover, as the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) notes, the department's plans could cost an additional $57 billion by 2020, with less rosy assumptions about cost control and acquiescence to measures Congress heartily opposes, like another Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round. Congress is likely to raise budget caps but not enough to cover the gap.

Pressure to find military spending cuts will remain after caps expire. The CBO now expects the deficit to grow from 2.9 to 4.9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over 10 years while adding nearly $10 trillion in debt. Even though defense spending should drop to around 2.5 percent of GDP by 2020, it will remain a prime target. Recent experience suggests that Republicans will block tax increases, Democrats will protect entitlements, and deficit-reduction efforts will focus on discretionary spending, more than half of which belongs to the Pentagon.

Restraint-oriented reforms can help, cutting at least 25 percent from the current $600 billion plus defense budget. Savings would arrive gradually, as the United States exited alliances, ended wars, closed facilities, and retired forces. Those cuts would be achieved by reducing commitments and military units. Divesting force structure would allow further savings in personnel, operations and maintenance, intelligence, and lower real estate costs.

A strategy of restraint would take advantage of America's geographic advantages and give the Navy a larger share of the Pentagon's budget. Ships and submarines have access to most of the Earth's surface without needing basing rights. With gains in range and massive increases in missile and bomb accuracy, aircraft can deliver firepower to most targets, even against states with considerable ability to defend their coastlines. The Navy would operate as a surge force that deploys to attack shorelines or open sea lanes, rather than constantly patrolling peaceful areas in the name of presence. Divested of presence-driven requirements, the Navy could reduce the number of carriers and associated air groups it operates, to eight or nine; retire several amphibious assault ships; cancel the littoral combat ship while developing a cheaper frigate alternative; replace the floundering F-35 with F-18s; and accelerate the shrinkage of the attack submarine force.

Restraint recommends cuts to ground forces for two reasons. First is the dearth of conventional wars where the United States might play a leading role. In the event of a conventional war on the Korean Peninsula, in the Persian Gulf region, or even in eastern Europe, wealthy U.S. allies should man the frontlines. No modern Wehrmacht is poised to overcome them, and there is time to adjust if circumstances change. Second,

counterterrorism is not best served by manpower-intensive occupational wars, which struggle to produce stability, let alone democracy. Air forces and raids cannot reorder fractious states, but they can deny haven to terrorists and aid local allies, as we see today in the war against ISIS.

U.S. policymakers should cut the active-duty Army's and Marine Corps' end-strength. Because restraint requires less frequent deployments and reduces the emphasis on deployment speed, it would cut a smaller portion of reserve and National Guard forces. Reduced demand for military-to-military training and fewer wars would allow substantial cuts to the size and budget of Special Operations Command.

Restraint also implies cutting the Air Force's air wings across active and reserve forces. Few enemies today challenge U.S. air superiority, which is why so many missions fall to drones and nonstealth aircraft with limited ability to fend off rival aircraft or surface-to-air missiles. Recent advances in aircraft's ability to communicate, surveille targets, and strike them precisely with laser guidance and GPS have made each aircraft and sortie vastly more capable of destroying targets. Naval aviation, which also benefits from these gains, can bear most of the remaining airpower load.

Precision also allows massive savings in the nuclear weapons budget. A credible nuclear deterrent does not require nearly 1,600 nuclear weapons nor a triad of delivery vehicles—bombers, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Even if extended deterrence requires the ability to preempt enemy nuclear forces, which is doubtful, a monad-only nuclear force can achieve it. It is often said that the triad ensures that U.S. nuclear forces survive preemptive attacks and thus deter. But no enemy can reliably track U.S. ballistic missile submarines, let alone do so with the sort of reliability required to attempt a preemptive strike against all of them. Changes in that circumstance would be detectable in time to restore another leg, and air-launched cruise missiles can be stored as a hedge.

Accuracy gains allow even conventional cruise missiles to destroy hardened silos and threaten enemy arsenals, undercutting the rationale for bomber-based and ICBM triad legs. Doing without would save much of the $18 billion that the Pentagon plans to spend annually starting in 2021 on improving nuclear delivery systems, including a new bomber-launched cruise missile or upgrading of B-2 bombers, and Minuteman ICBMs and their warheads.

Three other areas for savings are sensible though not intrinsic to restraint's logic. First, the Pentagon's administrative costs remain excessive

despite repeated pushes to trim them. Greater results will come from consolidating combatant commands, reducing three- and four-star commands, and reducing associated contracting and civilian personnel. The civilian-to-military personnel ratio is roughly five to one, a historic high.

Second, compensation costs, including basic pay, medical costs, housing allowances, and other benefits should be controlled. The cost of enlisted servicemembers has virtually doubled since 2000, with compensation far exceeding comparable private-sector earnings. Service leaders and a bipartisan coterie of defense experts annually beg Congress to adopt cost-controlling reforms. Congress has agreed to slow pay increases and to modest hikes in contributions to Tricare fees and housing, but it should accept the Department of Defense's more aggressive cost-saving proposals in those areas. Congress should also consider reforms to future servicemembers' retirement benefits, such as those recommended by the 2015 Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Third, Congress should authorize another BRAC round. The Pentagon estimates that base capacity exceeds department needs by 20 percent. It estimates that the five rounds between 1988 and 2005 produced $12 billion in recurring annual savings. BRAC is designed to overcome the congressional parochialism that imposes such inefficiency.

Proponents of a strategy of primacy often argue that a restrained military budget will expose us to danger. But the real danger is the idea that our security requires constant global patrolling, alliances, interventions, and annual costs of nearly $600 billion. A strategy of restraint would reduce our profligate military budget, saving us a fortune and keeping us out of needless conflicts.

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—By Benjamin H. Friedman

3. China and East Asia

- The most challenging issue in Asia facing U.S. policymakers in coming years is America's web of interconnecting alliances, a network that is increasingly under strain.
- American commitments will have difficulty keeping pace with developing threats and will impede or delay our allies' ability and inclination to provide for their own defense.
- Dealing with the challenges posed by China requires a greater appreciation for the fact that U.S.-China relations are not a zero-sum game.
- A more restrained posture that emphasizes burden sharing and avoids military commitments to defend disputed territory of limited security significance to Americans will be less costly and less dangerous than attempting to maintain U.S. military dominance in the region indefinitely.

Despite strong media and policymaker focus on the Middle East, America's greatest strategic challenges in coming years will be in Asia. The next president will inherit a world featuring not only a more assertive China with increasing military power and diplomatic influence but also heightened tensions with North Korea and increasing instability in East Asia. America's network of alliances with countries like Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea—the foundation of American military dominance in the region since the end of World War II—faces serious strain as a result.

The Obama administration's response to these challenges, the "pivot to Asia," attempted to shift security and diplomatic resources from a Middle East–centric policy toward Asia, but primarily focused on preserving Washington's traditional regional dominance. This "rebalance" had its own problems: by placing more military assets in the region and increasing American participation in regional institutions, the pivot increased Chinese perceptions that U.S. policy was threatening or focused exclusively on "containment." Instead, U.S. policymakers should focus more on deterring armed conflict with China, encouraging burden

sharing by U.S. allies, and reforming those alliances to keep pace with the changing security environment.

China is often viewed as a direct military competitor to the United States in Asia, and, indeed, a variety of potential flashpoints for conflict exist in the region. They include Taiwan, as well as headline-dominating territorial disputes in the South China Sea (SCS) and the East China Sea (ECS). The Chinese military has fielded increasingly capable weapons systems designed to prevent U.S. forces from operating in those disputed areas, posing a major challenge to the dominant position of the U.S. military in the region. At the same time, the Chinese approach to these territorial disputes, particularly its island building in the SCS, has antagonized many Asian states, including not only nominally unaligned states like Vietnam but also the Philippines and Japan, to which the United States has defense treaty obligations. These disputes thus raise the potential for U.S. entanglement in military conflict with a well-armed and highly motivated adversary. Demonstrations of American military power and resolve, such as the U.S. Navy's freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the SCS, have not caused China to cease its confrontational activities in the region.

Regional states have taken some unilateral steps to improve their positions vis-à-vis China, including formal legal challenges. In late 2015, the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that it has jurisdiction to hear Manila's case against China over territorial claims. The Philippine government has invited American soldiers and ships back to Subic Bay, formerly the site of a large U.S. naval base. Vietnam has taken a more military-centric approach, aided by U.S. financial assistance, by purchasing six *Kilo*-class diesel-electric submarines from Russia and expanding the Vietnamese Coast Guard with indigenously produced vessels. Major legislative reforms in Japan have empowered its military to come to the aid of allies in the event of armed conflict. In addition, various countries have sought to build stronger regional consensus on the SCS, including a joint India-Japan statement calling on countries to "avoid unilateral actions" in the region, and a Vietnam-Philippines joint statement focused on bilateral exchanges.

Yet U.S. allies have little incentive to continue such policies if the United States increases its security commitments to the region. U.S. policymakers should instead plan to reduce America's military presence in East Asia, while providing allies with the necessary time to expand their defenses, and pursue other avenues of military cooperation.

This more restrained posture will be less costly and less dangerous than attempting to maintain U.S. military dominance in the region indefinitely.

The risk of conflict with China over territories in the SCS and ECS should not be taken lightly. China's growing military power has significantly increased the potential costs of such conflict for the United States. At the same time, China's slowing economy could result in a more aggressive military posture, as Beijing seeks to demonstrate strength to a restless domestic audience. U.S. policymakers should tread particularly carefully with respect to the SCS. To avoid a military confrontation with China over contested territory, the United States should take no position on particular claims but should instead emphasize the importance of creative and peaceful resolution of disputes.

U.S. policymakers might provide limited assistance to states like Vietnam and the Philippines to improve their self-defense capabilities, as well as to encourage their increased regional cooperation with nations like Japan and India. However, Washington should not presume to defend these states' claims to contested territories. Policymakers should also adjust course on FONOPs. These demonstrations of military resolve in the SCS have produced backlash and should be used sparingly. Regularly scheduled FONOPs should not be implemented; as with other military approaches, they reduce our allies' incentives to provide for their own defense.

A variety of nonmilitary sources of tension also exists in the U.S.-China relationship. Chief among them is China's push to establish institutions that are viewed as competitors to American institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Fifty-seven countries have signed onto the AIIB, which is often portrayed as an alternative or challenger to the Bretton Woods system. Members include U.S. allies, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and South Korea, while over $100 billion in capital commitments has been raised to fund its activities. Such institutions could amplify Beijing's global influence at the expense of the U.S.-based postwar international order.

Yet addressing the challenges posed by China requires a change in mindset. Ultimately, policymakers must remember that such institutional competition is not a zero-sum game. There is no reason why the AIIB cannot coexist with the Bretton Woods institutions. Although the United States need not join every international financial institution, engaging similar Chinese-created institutions is more likely to yield influence for the United States than would a boycott. Indeed, Jin Liqun,

the president of the AIIB, has been keen to highlight a potential role for the United States in the field of transparency, helping hold the bank to high standards.

Cyber issues also remain a serious point of contention between the United States and China. Well-publicized intrusions into U.S. government and commercial networks have made cyber espionage, especially as it relates to the theft of American intellectual property, a major sticking point in U.S.-China relations. Although many governments engage in espionage for military or political purposes, the United States considers the Chinese theft of intellectual property for commercial gain to be unacceptable. Though progress was made in the second half of 2015 to address this issue—including a U.S.-Chinese agreement to refrain from the theft of intellectual property—there is deep skepticism of China's intentions and willingness to restrain such activities.

Managing the diplomatic problems stemming from Chinese cyber activities is a difficult challenge; Washington and Beijing have very different ideas about what is acceptable in cyberspace, and little room for cooperation exists. However, the threat should be kept in perspective. Obtaining sensitive information is relatively easy compared with the challenge of putting it to use in the economy or military, whereas the threat of any large-scale or devastating cyberattack on infrastructure is overblown, particularly given the military's considerable investments in cyber defense. As with other areas of contention, Chinese activities in cyberspace do pose a threat to U.S. interests. Yet policymakers must avoid overreacting to the threat when formulating responses.

The most challenging issue in Asia facing U.S. policymakers in coming years is America's web of interconnecting alliances, a network that is increasingly under strain. Yet America's presence has often encouraged many of its allies to free-ride on the United States, spending less than necessary for their own defense and relying on American military expenditures to make up the difference. That is true not only in the case of South Korea, addressed in Chapter 4, but also in countries like Japan and Taiwan. These states—with their large, modern economies—can and should take on much of the responsibility for meeting major regional challenges in future years.

Japan is simultaneously the biggest beneficiary of U.S. security commitments and the most capable of defending itself without them. Japan has not only bought some of the United States' best equipment for the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF)—including the F-35 fighter aircraft,

the Aegis naval weapons system, and Global Hawk surveillance drones—but Japan's defense industries also produce state-of-the-art equipment. Yet American taxpayers continue to bear the lion's share of the costs for maintaining Japan's security, and in 2015, the country hosted more than 52,000 U.S. military personnel, the largest contingent outside the United States.

Believing that the United States is unwilling to respond to Chinese behavior in the ECS, Tokyo has started to address this defense imbalance, overcoming traditional domestic opposition to expanding the size and role of the JSDF. As one Japanese official noted, "Unless Japan shows that it is prepared to fight together with the United States when the time comes, the United States will say to Japan . . . OK, sayonara." Legislation permitting Japan's defense forces to come to the aid of allies under attack, slow but steady increases in defense spending, and expanding cooperation with other Asian states are all positive developments.

U.S. policymakers should take steps to encourage Japan's continued defense transformation. Recent reforms are largely a reaction to the perceived Chinese threat, and such behavior is consistent with the pattern of U.S.-Japan relations. The Japanese do more when they must and less when they can. The best way to encourage meaningful reforms and greater burden sharing is to slowly reduce the U.S. military presence in Japan, place greater emphasis on naval and air power, and transfer primary responsibility for Japan's defense to its own forces.

America's commitment to defend Taiwan is set forth in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which requires the president and Congress to determine "appropriate action" in response to "any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan," leaving such action open to interpretation. Its vague nature has deterred Chinese aggression and restrained Taiwanese politicians in the past, but China's growing military power is eroding the credibility of Washington's ambiguous commitment. While the U.S. commitment to Taiwan still factors into Chinese decisionmaking, maintaining it will only become more costly.

Taiwanese domestic politics pose a particular concern. Although recent years have seen some rapprochement across the straits, 2016 saw the Democratic Progressive Party win control of both the Legislative Yuan and the presidency. Those results represent a resounding no from the Taiwanese people to closer ties to mainland China and confirm that a majority of Taiwanese, particularly younger ones, have no interest

in political reunification with the mainland in the foreseeable future. That position is unacceptable for Chinese leaders and will increase tensions between Beijing and Taipei, even if Tsai Ing-wen's administration does not engage in provocative actions.

Unfortunately, though the incoming government has pledged to increase the island's military budget and expand its indigenous defense industry, similar promises by the incumbent government went unfulfilled. U.S. policymakers should push the Taiwanese government to implement these reforms and communicate that the likelihood of American military intervention on Taiwan's behalf is diminishing as China's military capabilities increase. U.S. arms sales emphasizing asymmetric capabilities, such as mobile anti-ship missiles, will be particularly helpful in developing sustainable Taiwanese defense capabilities. Eventually, the U.S. should end any commitment, implicit or otherwise, to use military force to defend Taiwan, though reductions in U.S. military deployments in the region should be incremental to give Taiwan time to prepare its own military deterrent. At the same time, the United States should work diplomatically toward cross-strait peace and stability.

The United States has varied relations with other nations in the region. Washington has long maintained close economic and military ties with Singapore and Australia. The latter has reciprocated by joining America's ill-fated campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S.-Vietnam relationship has grown closer since diplomatic ties were restored in 1995. Military cooperation expanded, especially as China grew more aggressive.

Military ties are also increasing between the United States and the Philippines. In 2014, the two countries approved the Enhanced Military Cooperation Agreement, which authorized an expanded American military presence. Manila has sought U.S. support in its dispute with China over Scarborough Shoal.

But not all countries in the region are seeking closer military ties with the United States. The U.S. relationship with Thailand is moving backward. Washington limited military aid after the 2014 coup; the bilateral relationship grew further strained as the Thai junta improved ties with China.

In general, the United States should avoid new military commitments in the Asia-Pacific, especially over disputed territory of limited significance to Americans. Washington could assist such nations in improving their own defense capabilities but should not allow limited ties to lead to formal or informal security guarantees.

In the coming years, American commitments will have difficulty keeping pace with developing threats, and in many ways will impede or delay our allies' ability and inclination to provide for their own defense. As a result, policymakers should encourage burden sharing by incrementally reducing our high levels of military support for allied states while assisting with the development of their defense capabilities. Competition between the United States and China for power and influence is likely to increase, but it is not a zero-sum game. By undertaking an orderly policy of retrenchment in the region—including adjusting our FONOPs policy, participating in newly created Chinese institutions, and focusing on diplomatic approaches to resolving territorial disputes in the region—America can effectively manage relations with a rising China and contribute to the prospects for peace in the region.

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—By Ted Galen Carpenter and Eric Gomez

4. The Korean Peninsula

- North Korea is primarily a problem for China and America's economically prosperous and militarily capable Asian allies.
- U.S. forces are no longer needed to deter a conventional attack by North Korea against the South, and their presence on the peninsula is counterproductive.
- Although China is uncomfortable with Pyongyang's provocative and destabilizing actions, Beijing's overriding fear is of a U.S.-allied unified Korea, especially one that permits U.S. forces to be stationed on China's border.
- U.S. policymakers need to work with China in order to deal effectively with North Korea.

The reverberations of Pyongyang's erratic behavior make the Korean Peninsula one of the most frustrating problems for U.S. policymakers. Three successive U.S. presidents have insisted, without success, that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) cannot be allowed to become a nuclear weapons state. For its part, the Obama administration has decided that dealing with North Korea is all pain, no gain, and has largely ignored the North. The DPRK has responded with periodic nuclear and missile tests and arbitrary imprisonment of some visiting Americans.

Several factors complicate this issue for U.S. policymakers, two of which are inexorably intertwined: China's support for North Korea and the U.S.–Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance. The U.S.–ROK bilateral security agreement permits the presence of U.S. forces in South Korea. The original purpose of the U.S. "trip wire" force—like that of the alliance itself—was to deter the DPRK from attacking the South at a time when the former posed a serious conventional military threat to the latter. That is no longer the case. Now, the ROK is strong enough to deter a conventional attack and could do so without the assistance of U.S. troops; it is, indeed, substantially stronger than North Korea by nearly every measure, having a 2-to-1 population advantage, a 40-to-1 edge in GDP, and much broader international support.

The DPRK's nuclear weapons capability—which seems to be improving—is the one advantage it holds over the South, and it indeed poses a threat, though primarily to the ROK. But it is the U.S. nuclear umbrella that deters a potential DPRK nuclear strike, not U.S. forces stationed in South Korea. Moreover, maintaining a large military presence on the Korean Peninsula is counterproductive because it exacerbates the fears of China, the primary supporter of the DPRK.

China—like the rest of the world—is uncomfortable with the DPRK's provocative and destabilizing actions. But Beijing's far greater fear of a U.S.-allied unified Korea—especially one that permits U.S. forces to be stationed on China's border—means Beijing will press its client state only so far and at times will actually protect it. For example, China publicly criticized the DPRK for its January 2016 nuclear test and in April 2016 joined the United States in imposing additional trade restrictions on minerals and fuel. But when Washington calls for additional steps to pressure the regime, it has found limited support in Beijing. Congress may move forward with unilateral penalties, but, absent broader Chinese sanctions on Pyongyang, no U.S. sanctions regime is likely to prove effective.

U.S. policymakers should understand that they need China in order to deal effectively with North Korea. Fortunately, China shares many of the same concerns, both about North Korea's erratic behavior and the dangers of regime collapse. Although the DPRK's odd system of monarchical communism—ruled by the Kim dynasty—has proved quite resilient, its demise would only increase U.S. and Chinese problems. Forced into a corner, Pyongyang might strike out militarily, perhaps even with nuclear weapons. Violence, refugees, and nuclear materials could overflow the North's borders. Beijing might decide to occupy the North and install a friendly regime. Or armed forces from China, South Korea, and the United States might come into direct contact, which would increase the risk of a wider regional conflagration.

Meanwhile, changes are occurring in Pyongyang. Kim Jong-un has been forced to tolerate limited private economic activity. The effort seems serious, despite the oppression resulting from government control of national life. Markets first arose in North Korea two decades ago during a debilitating famine. As the government lost its ability to feed its people, it turned to private action. Although the Kim Jong-il regime was uneasy with this manifestation of capitalism, its tolerance for such activities waxed and waned.

Today, North Korea has more than 400 official markets and another 1,000 unofficial ones. Vendors can request licenses, price controls are rarely enforced, and sellers travel in search of new buyers. Unofficial auto and property markets have developed, state-run factories rent out space to private businesses, and private financing is available for these new capitalists. The DPRK regime under Kim Jong-un has so far resisted the impulse to strangle the nascent private sector and has even established an agency to collect taxes.

The economic benefit for some North Koreans is apparent, reports James Pearson of *Reuters*: "People are spending money they once hid in their homes on mobile phones, electric bicycles and baby carriers." But there is still a long way to go. Most North Koreans remain trapped in desperate poverty.

An expanding private sector could be attractive to the rest of the world. Goods from abroad are increasingly available. The regime has been pushing creation of a rudimentary "knowledge economy" and encouraging cyber education (and initiating cyberattacks). Private business has created a way around the old *songbun*, or political caste system, which penalized those of dubious political loyalty or family background. According to a former North Korean psychological warfare officer who defected, "The key to change lies outside the sway of the regime—in the flourishing underground economy." He added that "all of North Korea has come to rely on a market economy, and no place in the country is untouched by it," including the party and military.

So what should the United States do with a North Korea that might end up simultaneously arming and modestly reforming economically, though not politically?

First, U.S. policymakers should recognize that engagement is the only option that hasn't been seriously attempted. Although expectations should be low, negotiation offers a possibility of moderating the current threat environment on the peninsula where nothing else has worked. Rather than starting with nuclear disarmament, talks could cover such issues as communication channels; diplomatic relations; economic sanctions; a peace treaty to formally end the frozen conflict; reduced conventional threats; academic, cultural, and educational exchanges; and human rights.

Second, enhanced U.S. and United Nations sanctions are unlikely to achieve much. Even if enforced, they may have no effect on the decisions of a dynasty that has survived economic privation, mass starvation,

hereditary political transition, and diminished international support for decades. Moreover, China, despite evident displeasure with its neighbor, has refused to cut off energy and food shipments, the most potent economic penalty available. Although Beijing has shown some willingness to pressure Pyongyang economically, it hasn't wanted to push too far; the cure of violent collapse could prove worse than the disease.

Third, the United States should prepare to disengage militarily from the peninsula, not only because U.S. forces are no longer needed but also because their presence is counterproductive. However, U.S. policymakers should leverage the possibility of a troop reduction to spur negotiations with China and the DPRK. In exchange for cooperation and concessions from Beijing and Pyongyang, U.S. ground forces would be withdrawn in a gradual process to allow the ROK sufficient time to adjust. U.S. air assets should be withdrawn more slowly.

Such a dramatic shift in policy, backing away militarily while advancing diplomatically, offers possibilities, not certainties. And nothing would likely develop quickly. However, even if little practical develops, negotiations offer two other benefits. In the past, the DPRK has been less confrontational when engaged in a diplomatic process. Moreover, China has indicated that its assistance essentially depends on Washington's willingness to ameliorate North Korea's security fears. Convincing Beijing to take a tougher stand requires addressing China's understandable concerns about the possibility of a North Korean collapse and a reunited Korea.

Any policy toward the North should be adopted without illusion. No approach guarantees success. But it has been said that evidence of insanity is doing the same thing while expecting a different result. Such is the current policy of isolating North Korea. Embarking upon a sustained policy of dialogue and engagement offers at least a hope of a different, and more positive, outcome.

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—By Doug Bandow

5. The Islamic State (ISIS)

- U.S. military intervention against ISIS in Syria and Iraq is unlikely to create a stable postconflict environment.
- The prerequisite to a successful military campaign against ISIS is a coherent political solution for Syria and political stability in Iraq.
- U.S. policymakers should therefore focus on containing ISIS, encourage local and regional actors to fight it on the ground, and engage in active diplomacy focused on ending the Syrian civil war.

Since August 2014, the United States and a coalition of more than 60 countries have been engaged in an open-ended military campaign against the self-proclaimed Islamic State inside Iraq and Syria. The United States has borne the brunt of this effort, launching over 9,600 airstrikes, at a cost of more than $7.5 billion to U.S. taxpayers. In addition, the United States has at least 5,000 troops on the ground in Iraq and a smaller number of special operations forces in Syria, training Iraqi government and Syrian rebel forces to more effectively fight ISIS and coordinating airstrikes.

Progress against ISIS has been mixed. Though the group has lost a substantial amount of territory—including the key city of Ramadi—the estimated number of ISIS fighters has remained relatively constant, implying that the group recruits fast enough to offset its losses from the U.S.-led campaign. ISIS's use of innocent civilians as human shields has constrained the U.S. air campaign. Gains on the ground by U.S. coalition partners have been limited, with Kurdish forces acting as the only effective ground force in Syria. Iraqi forces have made slow but steady progress after the army's humiliating 2014 defeat by ISIS, retaking several key towns, but much of that progress can be attributed to independent sectarian militias rather than official government forces, a factor that will substantially complicate postconflict stabilization. Meanwhile, the March 2016 Brussels attacks highlight the fact that ISIS can inspire terrorist attacks well outside its own territorial holdings.

Yet ISIS itself does not pose a major threat to the United States. As a protostate, the group is unable to carry out any form of conventional

military attack against the United States. And as Chapter 13 notes, as a terrorist group, ISIS's ability to hurt Americans is small. Unlike those of al Qaeda, many of the attacks attributed to ISIS, including the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015, can best be considered as "inspired" by ISIS, rather than directed by it. The sudden mushrooming of ISIS affiliates around the globe in the past year is similar: most of these groups already existed as local or regional terrorist groups. The ISIS affiliate credited with bringing down a Russian airliner in Egypt began life as the separatist group Province of Sinai, and Nigeria's Boko Haram was active more than a decade before the rise of ISIS. Most of these groups have limited, local aims and pose little threat to the United States.

Certainly, other strategic concerns are involved: though ISIS poses only a small risk to the United States, it does threaten the stability of various Middle Eastern states. In addition to its role in violent insurgencies in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, ISIS has also claimed responsibility for bombings and attacks throughout the Middle East, including targeting tourists in Tunisia and Egypt, and bombing mosques and other public areas in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and elsewhere. Though not entirely attributable to ISIS, the Syrian civil war has created the worst refugee crisis since World War II, and though much of the attention has focused on Europe, most refugees are fleeing to nearby countries. The resources of many of the region's poorest countries are being stretched by this mass influx: 20 percent of Lebanon's current population are Syrian refugees.

Given the predominantly local threat of ISIS, it is perhaps surprising how little effort regional states have so far committed to the fight against it. Progress has been impeded by some participants' insistence that Syria's Bashar al-Assad must go, which would likely only empower ISIS in the near term. Many of America's partners, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar, were heavily involved in funding and arming anti-Assad rebels inside Syria and have proved reluctant to shift their focus to ISIS. Indeed, Turkey has been simultaneously bombing ISIS and various Kurdish groups inside Syria, undermining some of the most effective anti-ISIS fighters on the ground.

Some have suggested that regional states' apathy should be offset by increased American military involvement in Syria and Iraq. But even ignoring the fact that this is not a proportional response to the limited threat ISIS poses to the United States, such intervention is no substitute

for the involvement of local and regional actors in the fight against ISIS. The lessons of the 2003 invasion of Iraq are clear: the United States can achieve military victory with ease, but creating lasting stability is far more difficult. In the case of Syria, the U.S. military could undoubtedly defeat ISIS with a large conventional ground force, though it would be costly. However, the withdrawal of U.S. forces afterward would leave a vacuum, offering the prospect of a resurgent ISIS, or similar groups rising to take its place. The necessary postconflict stabilization after such an intervention would entail a potentially decades-long peacekeeping operation by U.S. forces. The recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have reaffirmed that such long-term nation-building missions are likely to fail; they are deeply unpopular among the Americans who will be paying the costs and are resented by the local actors who object to outsiders meddling in their political affairs.

Similar problems would plague many of the proposed incremental solutions to the Syrian problem. No-fly zones and so-called humanitarian zones may seem relatively costless and worthy humanitarian goals. But they require a substantial commitment of both air and ground forces to maintain. In Syria, the creation of such zones would bring U.S. forces into direct military confrontation with the Assad regime and its Russian backers. Related proposals—such as committing many more special operations forces inside Syria—have comparable problems. And all these incremental options are prone to mission creep.

Ultimately, a policy something like the Obama administration's current strategy—containing ISIS with airpower, while encouraging local and regional partners to roll back the group on the ground—remains the best approach. Chaos is possible even if regional players are involved. But multilateral coordination would improve prospects for eventual stability if all stakeholders in the process—including Russia, regional states like Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Assad regime, and more moderate Syrian rebel groups and Kurdish factions—play an active role not just in fighting ISIS but also in the political debates on Syria's future. ISIS is widely despised, and though historical enmity, regional rivalries, and distrust all impede more effective cooperation between these parties, the bigger obstacles are the Syrian civil war and continued political dysfunction in Iraq. The prerequisite to a successful military campaign against ISIS is therefore a coherent political solution for both Syria and Iraq.

There are several possible diplomatic paths to ending the Syrian civil war, based on the United Nations' Geneva process, which seeks

to create a new governing structure for Syria. Certainly, it will be difficult to overcome the differences between states that support the Assad regime and those that oppose it. A deal will likely require unpleasant compromises, such as a lengthy transition period that initially leaves Assad in power. And implementation will rest on the ability of external actors—chiefly the Saudis, Russians, Iranians, Turks, and Qataris—to force their proxies inside Syria to comply, which is no simple feat. But the basic shape of a deal that once seemed unthinkable has already been hammered out in negotiations, and the successful implementation of an agreement on cessation of hostilities in March 2016 implies that such a deal could be achieved. With U.S. support and initiative on the diplomatic front, a successful transition is possible in Syria.

Another option that may emerge from Geneva is some form of federalism, or even de facto partition, creating an Alawite rump state around Damascus, a Kurdish region in the country's north, and a Sunni majority zone elsewhere. Even partition without an overarching peace settlement would lower the overall levels of violence and refugee flows and would create time to conduct broader negotiations on the future of the Syrian state. Though probably easier to achieve than a full peace deal or federalism, partition wouldn't necessarily give all parties inside Syria a stake in seeing ISIS destroyed: the Assad regime, far from ISIS-controlled territory, would probably prefer to sit out the fight, hoping ISIS weakens other groups enough for the regime to regain territory. Yet even partition is preferable to the status quo.

All roads to successfully defeating ISIS begin with a solution to Syria's appallingly violent civil war. In addition to the current U.S. role in containing ISIS militarily, U.S. policymakers should focus their efforts on diplomacy, and on building the domestic support and regional coalition necessary to destroy ISIS in the long term. This level of U.S. involvement is greater than required for U.S. security, given the minimal risk that ISIS poses to Americans here. But some U.S. involvement is warranted in the interest of resolving a deeply destabilizing conflict, one that the United States is at least partly responsible for starting. Policymakers should refrain from further U.S. military intervention—whether in the form of troops on the ground, humanitarian safe zones, or no-fly zones—as such involvement has substantial risks. The limited military action proposed here will not produce results overnight. But this restrained approach is far more likely to ensure a stable postconflict environment in Syria and Iraq.

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—By Emma Ashford

6. Iran

- Although the Iran nuclear accord is imperfect, the United States should focus on ensuring the implementation of its key provisions, which impose significant restrictions on Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon.
- A strategy of pressure is unlikely to dissuade Iran from supporting militant Shiite organizations throughout the Middle East and would likely strengthen hardliners within Iran.
- A policy of sustained engagement with Iran could foster increasing trust and yield compromise solutions to ongoing crises throughout the Middle East.

The Iran Nuclear Accord

For the past couple years, negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for Iran's nuclear program has dominated U.S.-Iranian relations. Within the United States, the JCPOA has proved to be extremely divisive. The Obama administration and its supporters have championed the agreement as a landmark accord, which will prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. Critics, however, have charged that the JCPOA is fundamentally flawed insofar as it permits Iran to become a threshold nuclear power. Many have insisted that the next president should either tear up or renegotiate the agreement.

There is no denying that the JCPOA is imperfect in a number of respects. Although it limits Iran's capacity to enrich uranium, the agreement permits continuing research and development of gas centrifuge enrichment technology. That is particularly troublesome since the physical constraints on Iranian fissile material production (as well as a number of verification provisions) expire in 10–15 years. It is therefore conceivable that Iran could continue conducting research on uranium enrichment over the next decade and subsequently go nuclear in fairly short order as the JCPOA restrictions expire.

Such concerns should not prompt U.S. policymakers to either abrogate or attempt to renegotiate the JCPOA, however. The agreement

places significant restrictions on Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon. Withdrawing from the agreement would be particularly counterproductive. If the United States were to tear up the JCPOA and reimpose sanctions, Iran would no longer be bound by the agreement. And the United States' principal allies would likely refuse to follow the U.S. lead in renewing sanctions. By renouncing the JCPOA, the United States would consequently forfeit strict limits on Iran's nuclear program, including one of the most intrusive and thoroughgoing inspection and verification regimes on record, in exchange for leaky, unilateral sanctions.

Even attempting to renegotiate the JCPOA would be unwise. Neither Iran nor America's European allies would have much (if any) incentive for doing so. Moreover, attempting to reopen negotiations would undermine Iran's confidence in the United States as a negotiating partner. If Tehran concluded that Washington could not be trusted to accept and abide by settled agreements, Iranian officials would be even less likely to seek solutions to outstanding issues of mutual concern—such as the ongoing civil wars in Syria and Yemen.

Rather than attempting to replace the JCPOA, U.S. policymakers should focus on ensuring its implementation and eventually negotiating the extension of its restrictions on Iranian fissile material production. By fulfilling their respective obligations under the agreement, the United States and Iran can potentially begin to build mutual confidence and chip away at the mistrust that has built up over the past 35 years. And that confidence can serve as the foundation for future cooperation on nuclear issues. The primary weakness of the JCPOA is that it permits Iran to increase uranium enrichment using more advanced centrifuges as the agreement's provisions expire, which will reduce the breakout time to develop a nuclear weapon. However, even after the agreement expires, Iran will still be subject to monitoring and verification under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Pressure vs. Engagement

In addition to assuming responsibility for the JCPOA, the next U.S. administration will need to decide how to address Iranian actions throughout the Middle East. Iran continues to pursue policies that American policymakers consider counter to U.S. interests. Tehran's support for Shiite factions throughout the Middle East is a source for instability in the region. And there is no sign that such support is abating. Iran

is supporting the Houthi rebel campaign against the American- and Saudi-backed government in Yemen. Throughout the ongoing Syrian civil war, Iran has provided crucial backing to the Assad regime. Perhaps most worryingly, Tehran continues to espouse the destruction of Israel and, toward that end, supports both Hezbollah and Hamas, two groups that the United States has designated as terrorist organizations.

Some in Washington would counter Iran's ongoing provocations by getting tough with Tehran. As they point out, although the JCPOA requires the repeal of sanctions imposed in response to Iran's nuclear activities, it does not prohibit the United States from imposing new sanctions in response to other Iranian policies—most notably, Tehran's sponsorship of international terrorism. In addition to the imposition of new punitive sanctions, some have also argued that the United States should launch a political warfare campaign to undermine the ruling Iranian theocracy. In their view, the United States could sow disenchantment amongst the Iranian people and political establishment by inundating Iran with television, radio, and social media broadcasts highlighting the perverse consequences of the policies the Iranian regime has pursued since the 1979 revolution.

There is little reason to believe, however, that pressuring Iran in such a manner would advance American interests. First and foremost, imposing new sanctions would be unlikely to dissuade Tehran from supporting militant groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, or even the Houthis in Yemen. After all, U.S. sanctions on Iran, in place since 1996, failed to temper Iran's support for Shiite militants throughout the Middle East. Iran did eventually accede to restrictions on its nuclear program, but that was likely due to the fact that the United States was able to enlist the participation of much of the international community in a comprehensive sanctions regime, which crucially cut Iran's oil exports by approximately 50 percent. Now that the United States' principal European allies have already begun to strike new trade deals with Iran, it is highly unlikely that the United States would be able to drum up much international support for new trade restrictions. It would thus be extremely difficult for the United States to impose new sanctions that would dissuade Iran from supporting Shiite proxies throughout the Middle East.

Imposing new sanctions or attempting to sow dissension within Iran would in all likelihood militate against the United States' regional objectives. The United States would be unable to broker mutually acceptable resolutions to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, or to defeat the

Islamic State, without Iranian cooperation. Securing such cooperation would be much more difficult if Washington were to impose a series of new sanctions. Since Iranian leaders would surely interpret such sanctions as a violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the JCPOA, they would grow even more skeptical that the United States can be trusted to abide by negotiated compromises.

Launching a political warfare campaign would likely be even more counterproductive. Such a campaign would confirm the suspicion espoused by Iranian hardliners that the United States is intent upon catalyzing regime change in Iran. In all likelihood, those hardliners would respond by intensifying their suppression of domestic dissent and freezing more moderate officials out of government. By attempting to subvert the Iranian regime, the United States would thus undermine the very reformers it would like to empower.

Since getting tough with Iran is unlikely to yield positive results, the United States should instead pursue a policy of engagement. Washington should attempt to build on the recent nuclear negotiations by continuing to actively engage Tehran in negotiations over ongoing (and future) regional crises—most notably the wars in Syria and Yemen. In the wake of the JCPOA, Iranian leaders are probably more disposed than at any point since 1979 to engage with the West. For instance, although Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei issued a dictum in October 2015 asserting that further negotiations with the United States were forbidden, Iran accepted an invitation later that month to join the United States in multinational negotiations on Syria. The time is thus ripe to explore additional areas of common interest. To the extent that negotiations eventually yield positive results, they can bolster more moderate Iranian officials, such as President Hassan Rouhani, by demonstrating that Iran has more to gain through engagement than through confrontation.

The next administration should certainly not be overly optimistic that a policy of engagement will yield immediate benefits. Since Iranian and U.S. policymakers hold competing visions for the future of the Middle East—particularly concerning Syria, Yemen, and Israel—negotiating compromises that are acceptable to both countries will be exceedingly difficult. Nevertheless, by engaging in sustained negotiations on a number of different issues, Iranian and U.S. officials can gradually develop trust and mutual respect. In other words, the process of negotiations can lay the foundation upon which major compromises can be constructed years from now.

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—By Bradford Stapleton

7. Afghanistan

- Escalating U.S. involvement in Afghanistan would be unlikely to defeat either the Taliban or al Qaeda decisively.
- If the United States withdrew from Afghanistan too quickly, there would be a risk that the Taliban could seize control of large swaths of territory and once again offer sanctuary to al Qaeda.
- The United States should maintain 5,000–10,000 troops in Afghanistan to train, advise, and assist Afghan forces, but it should negotiate a timetable for the withdrawal of those troops by the end of 2020.

Since President Obama announced the end of the United States' combat mission in Afghanistan at the close of 2014, U.S. troops in Afghanistan have assumed two, more limited, responsibilities: counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda and now the Islamic State–Khorasan Province (ISKP); and a mission to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Although Obama had pledged to withdraw the United States' remaining troops by the end of his presidency, the resurgence of the Taliban prompted him to announce in October 2015 that at least 5,500 U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan through 2016. In essence, Obama ceded responsibility for the ongoing Afghanistan challenge to his successor. The next president will therefore have to choose among three broad options: (a) complete the military withdrawal that Obama halted, (b) escalate U.S. involvement in the ongoing Afghan conflict, or (c) maintain 5,000–10,000 U.S. troops in a train, advise, and assist role for some period.

Withdrawal

U.S. forces have successfully degraded the al Qaeda threat emanating from Afghanistan. That is not to say al Qaeda has been defeated, but the threat the organization poses to the international community now comes primarily from outside Afghanistan. In the wake of the U.S.-led invasion, al Qaeda has sought refuge in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Meanwhile, numerous affiliated groups have sprung up

throughout the greater Middle East, primarily in opposition to the so-called near enemy—apostate regimes in the Muslim world. Afghanistan is not currently a central front in the global war on terror.

Withdrawing all U.S. forces from Afghanistan would entail risks, however. Over the past few years, Afghan forces have struggled to suppress a resurgent Taliban. In 2015, the Taliban was able to concentrate large forces over more territory than at any time since 2001. Most ominously, in September 2015, Taliban fighters temporarily seized control of Kunduz, Afghanistan's fifth-largest city. Thus, it appears that Afghan forces are currently incapable of preventing the Taliban from reasserting its authority over large swaths of the country without ongoing support from a U.S. residual force.

Proponents of U.S. withdrawal might argue that the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan is essentially a civil war whose outcome is inconsequential to the United States. After all, the Taliban has been actively combating the emergence of ISKP, a group composed largely of disaffected former members of the Taliban. And the Taliban's focus is on imposing an extreme version of Sharia law within Afghanistan, not striking foreign enemies abroad. The organization thus does not pose a direct threat to the United States.

The continuing resurgence of the Taliban could present an indirect threat to the United States, however, by permitting al Qaeda to ensconce and revitalize itself in Taliban-controlled areas. As U.S. troops have gradually withdrawn from Afghanistan, al Qaeda has moved back into territory beyond central government control. In late 2014, a Pakistani military offensive prompted al Qaeda militants to migrate from sanctuaries in North Waziristan into Afghanistan's Helmand and Kandahar provinces. In both southern and eastern Afghanistan, al Qaeda is reconstituting the type of training camps that it operated with impunity prior to 2001. In October 2014, the United States discovered and then destroyed a training camp in southern Afghanistan, which military officials described as one of the largest they had ever encountered. Unfortunately, although the Taliban has actively (and quite successfully) fought the spread of ISKP, it has evinced much more willingness to tolerate and even support al Qaeda.

Although the U.S.-led coalition clearly degraded al Qaeda's operations in Afghanistan, there are signs that the organization is poised to reconstruct its support networks and infrastructure in the country. Hastily completing the phased withdrawal of U.S. troops would

consequently entail a risk that the Taliban could regain control over parts of Afghanistan and could once again make the country a safe haven for anti-American terrorists, though there are reasons to doubt that the Taliban will do so.

Escalation

Some observers have suggested that rather than withdrawing, the United States should reinforce Afghan forces. That could be accomplished in two different ways. The Pentagon could either deploy additional ground troops to resume combat operations in Afghanistan or ease restrictions that currently limit U.S. airstrikes in support of Afghan forces.

Deploying more U.S. troops to Afghanistan is politically unpopular and perhaps impossible. The announcement of the end of the United States' combat mission in Afghanistan in 2014 led most Americans to believe that our longest war would soon be at an end. It is unlikely that the resumption of combat operations would engender much public enthusiasm.

Moreover, it is doubtful whether another infusion of U.S. troops would do much good. After all, the troop surge that Obama launched in 2009 proved at best a temporary success. Though U.S. forces successfully suppressed the Taliban insurgency throughout much of southern Afghanistan, insurgents reasserted themselves following the U.S. withdrawal. There is no reason to expect that additional U.S. troops would now be able to impose a more durable peace.

Policymakers might be equally tempted to expand U.S. airstrikes in support of Afghan forces instead. In addition to striking validated al Qaeda targets, U.S. air assets could target Taliban fighters—a practice that President Obama has stringently circumscribed. An escalation of airpower could seriously hamper the Taliban's ability to seize government-controlled territory and could prevent the Taliban from launching massed attacks against Afghan cities. But airstrikes are not a long-term solution. They would merely enable Afghan forces to keep the Taliban at bay for as long as the United States remains willing to provide air support.

Maintenance of a Residual Force

Since withdrawing all U.S. forces from Afghanistan increases the risk that al Qaeda would reestablish a safe haven in the country, and

escalating the U.S. role in countering the Taliban would likely fail to resolve the conflict decisively, a strong case can be made that the next president should maintain a residual force of 5,000–10,000 troops in Afghanistan. Although the United States could attempt to deny al Qaeda sanctuary in Afghanistan by prosecuting an ongoing drone campaign, maintaining a residual force in Afghanistan is preferable in that it will help Afghan forces build the capacity to eventually keep the Taliban, ISKP, and al Qaeda at bay without continuing U.S. assistance. But to ensure that such a commitment is not indefinite, the United States should negotiate a binding agreement to withdraw all U.S. forces by the end of 2020.

Although Afghan forces have gained tactical competency, a number of key capability shortfalls continue to undermine their overall effectiveness. Most notably, they lack the full range of airpower capabilities: mobility; resupply; aerial fire; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. In addition, because they have relied on the United States for supplies for so long, Afghan forces have failed to gain competency in logistics and sustainment. By helping Afghan forces build capacity in those key areas, the United States can improve Afghan forces' ability to execute combined arms operations and hold territory that has been cleared of insurgent fighters.

The repeated extension of the U.S. train, advise, and assist mission risks establishing a de facto permanent commitment to Afghanistan, however. Though U.S. troops can certainly help improve their capacity, Afghan forces will in all likelihood remain incapable of decisively defeating the Taliban insurgency. Reasons not to withdraw will consequently present themselves to U.S. policymakers again and again. The Taliban's resurgence even convinced President Obama to abandon his withdrawal plan.

Unfortunately, maintaining a residual force of 5,000–10,000 U.S. troops to train, advise, and assist Afghan forces is probably the best among bad options. Withdrawing from Afghanistan too hastily would entail a risk that al Qaeda could once again carve out safe havens within Afghan territory from which it could orchestrate attacks against the United States. Conversely, escalating U.S. involvement in the ongoing conflict would entail significant costs but would likely fail to eradicate either the Taliban or al Qaeda. Washington should therefore focus on improving the capacity of Afghan forces to wage an ongoing campaign to suppress the Taliban and deny al Qaeda sanctuary.

In extending the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan, however, the next president should negotiate with Ashraf Ghani's government in Kabul to establish a clear timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of 2020—an agreement than can be ratified by the U.S. Congress. The virtue of such an agreement is that U.S. policymakers, by tying their hands, would inoculate themselves from the temptation to extend the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan in response to events on the battlefield—whether the situation has improved or not. Moreover, by signaling to Afghan forces that they will not be able to depend on U.S. advisers indefinitely, a timetable would provide a much-needed impetus to address key deficiencies in their forces. The United States could thus augment the ability of native Afghan forces to keep the Taliban at bay while finally extricating itself from Afghanistan.

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—By Bradford Stapleton

8. Russia

- Russia's aggression in Eastern Europe is concerning, but it is not a major threat to the United States, while a working relationship with Russia remains necessary for the achievement of U.S. diplomatic goals elsewhere.
- Though current sanctions have been largely ineffectual in altering the Kremlin's calculus on Ukraine, sanctions focused on impeding military modernization could weaken Russia's ability to engage in future aggression.
- Policymakers should seek broad-based diplomatic engagement with Russia where possible, including to resolve the Ukraine crisis and to contain Russia's aggressive impulses elsewhere.

The U.S.-Russia relationship has never been without controversy, even during the brief period of the 1990s when Russia seemed poised to make a peaceful transition to democracy and become a part of the wider European community. Yet the past two years have arguably seen a more adversarial relationship than at any point since the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its heavy involvement in eastern Ukraine's civil war rekindled its Soviet pariah-state status and resulted in heavy U.S. and European sanctions. More recently, the Russian intervention in Syria complicated the U.S. campaign against ISIS. But while Russia's aggression in both places is concerning, it does not pose a direct threat to the United States. At the same time, there are a variety of ways in which Russian diplomatic and even military involvement remains useful to the United States.

Russia's military incursions into Ukraine—only six years after similar incursions into neighboring Georgia—have worsened the already-troubled U.S.-Russian relationship during the past two years. Many date the start of the conflict to Russia's March 2014 seizure of the autonomous Ukrainian province of Crimea, home to the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. But the conflict's roots are much older: given Kiev's role as the cradle of Russian civilization, many Russians never fully accepted the country's independence following the collapse

of the Soviet Union. Since independence, Ukraine's ethnic divide has produced confrontational and corrupt domestic politics that have alternated between Western-leaning and pro-Russian positions.

The Maidan Revolution of early 2014 grew out of those frustrations. When Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, under pressure from Moscow, refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union, it prompted street protests that soon turned violent. Yanukovych fled to Russia and a new pro-Western government was inaugurated. The violence was new, but the political divisions were not; indeed, Yanukovych himself had been previously displaced by pro-Western politicians in the 2004 Orange Revolution, only to be reelected president in 2010.

Although Yanukovych's ouster was consistent with the pattern of Ukrainian politics, Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea—followed by its aggressive involvement in arming and funding pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine—was unprecedented and presented a significant dilemma for American policymakers. Russian aggression did not pose a direct threat to U.S. interests, yet the move was a clear violation of international norms and raised the possibility that Russia might try something similar in NATO member states. The issue was further complicated by Ukraine's corrosive culture of political corruption, the genuine—if small—support for the insurgency in the Donbas by some locals, and Russian insistence (despite evidence to the contrary) that they weren't actually engaged in destabilizing behavior. There were also more subtle protestations within the Russian establishment that its actions in Ukraine were justified by NATO "encirclement," specifically the violation of Cold War–era promises that NATO would not expand to the east.

After deliberation—and substantial public debate on the issue—the Obama administration ultimately decided against intervention and against arming Ukraine—policies that the next administration should continue. Two key factors militated against providing arms to Ukraine: (a) concerns about escalating the conflict and (b) concerns that Ukraine's armed forces were too inefficient and corrupt to effectively use them. The past year has largely proved the wisdom of that choice: rather than escalating, the conflict has stagnated, and a ceasefire created by the second round of Minsk talks has generally held since March 2015.

Instead of providing arms, the Obama administration pursued a compartmentalized approach. Outside of Europe, the administration

continued a pragmatic policy of working with Russia diplomatically on issues like the Iranian nuclear deal. On European issues, in contrast, the administration made heavy use of sanctions. The targeted sanctions made it difficult for various companies linked to the Russian government or to Kremlin cronies to raise money in international capital markets, to conduct joint ventures with U.S. energy and finance companies, and to access technology used for unconventional drilling projects. Yet the sanctions—even in conjunction with the crippling drop in global oil prices—have been largely ineffectual in altering the Kremlin's calculus on Ukraine. Worse, though they were designed to specifically target elites close to Russia's decisionmakers, the burden of sanctions has fallen most heavily on the Russian population. The past two years have in many ways simply confirmed long-standing research on sanctions: they are rarely successful on issues important to the target nation.

The difficult truth is that this failure leaves few good policy options. Moreover, any strategy that relies on coercion or threats—such as placing large numbers of troops in Europe or further punitive sanctions—is unlikely to ratchet down tensions. Russian foreign policy decisions reflect Vladimir Putin's own insecurities, both international and domestic. The Kremlin fears looking weak to domestic audiences and has stoked nationalist and pro-Soviet sentiments in recent years to compensate for poor economic performance. In many ways, Russia fears being treated as if it is no longer a "great power," a point of view that is only confirmed by NATO expansion. Increasing the Kremlin's perception of external threat is likely only to result in intransigence and further saber rattling.

As a result, finding a practical policy response to Russian aggression in Georgia and Ukraine—or to actions like the assassination of Aleksandr Litvinenko on British soil—is challenging for Western policymakers. Ultimately, Moscow's behavior carries no major cost for the United States. In contrast, any cost–benefit analysis would argue strongly that the risk and potential costs of a conflict with Russia dramatically outweigh the possible benefits of drawing Ukraine closer to the West. But the risks for Russia are great as well; Moscow is unlikely to expand its aggression to any NATO member state. It is one thing to foment chaos in a neighboring state. It is entirely another to intervene in a NATO member state, where U.S. treaty obligations would compel a strong military response.

For all these reasons, diplomacy remains the best approach to resolving the many challenges posed by Russia, including the Ukraine crisis. The Minsk process has been slow but relatively fruitful, driven in part by the willingness of French and German diplomats to take the lead. Offering sanctions relief in exchange for successful implementation of the Minsk process could contribute to diplomatic success. But it is also important to be realistic about what can be achieved through diplomacy and sanctions. Crimea is lost to Ukraine, and although the Minsk process can likely stabilize the rest of the country, Ukraine will have to weigh for itself the costs and risks of future conflict with Russia against the benefits of joining either NATO or the European Union (EU). Neither Crimea nor a neutral Ukraine presents a major loss for U.S. interests; yet accepting these unpleasant realities is likely to be unpopular, particularly among those who see NATO less as a mutual defense pact and more as a mechanism for incorporating and socializing democratizing states in Eastern Europe into the transatlantic community.

Some other concrete policy solutions may also prove useful. Though current sanctions have been largely ineffectual, sanctions that focus on impeding military modernization may be more useful than those aimed directly at Russia's leaders. By making it harder to obtain arms and military technology, military-industrial sanctions can weaken Russia's ability to intervene aggressively in the future. And continuing diplomatic work with Russia independent of ongoing events in Ukraine has the potential to yield agreements that likely couldn't be achieved otherwise—as the Iranian nuclear deal highlighted. Russian diplomatic support will be particularly valuable in pursuing a solution to the crisis in Syria, given Moscow's strong influence over the Assad regime.

Russia's behavior in Ukraine has been deplorable. Yet it is also a striking illustration that—however we may pretend otherwise—U.S. foreign policy tools cannot always force other states, particularly major powers, to act as we wish. When the benefits of increased U.S. intervention in Ukraine are compared with the costs of a potential conflict with Russia, it is clear that military solutions to the conflict are not viable. Policymakers should instead pursue a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine, focus on inhibiting Russia's military modernization where possible, and seek a constructive working relationship with Russia on non-European diplomatic issues, such as nonproliferation and ending the Syrian civil war.

Suggested Readings

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Mary Elise Sarotte, "A Broken Promise: What the West Really Told Russia about NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September–October 2014): 90–97.

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Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

—By Emma Ashford

9. NATO Policy

- The European countries in NATO have a population and a combined economic output larger than those of the United States and are capable of defending themselves.
- U.S. pledges of support to weak countries on Russia's border undermine our security, and our relations with authoritarian NATO members conflict with our values.
- U.S. policymakers should take meaningful steps to ensure that all NATO members meet both mandated military spending levels: 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on defense and 20 percent of defense spending on major equipment.
- U.S. policymakers should oppose further NATO expansion.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization as currently constituted is an obsolete security arrangement created in a vastly different era to meet an entirely different threat. Yet NATO partisans act as though the date on the calendar reads 1950. They see Russia as identical to the Soviet Union at the zenith of its military power and global ideological influence and regard democratic Europe as a helpless protectorate. Today, however, Russia is little more than a regional actor with limited ability to project power. And far from helpless, democratic Europe knowingly relies on America's military and its security guarantees to pursue their preferred domestic welfare priorities.

A striking feature of analysts who echo former secretary of state Madeleine Albright's contention that the United States is the "indispensable nation" is the bland assumption that America must take primary (and often exclusive) responsibility for the defense of other regions. One popular proposal is to reverse the post–Cold War drawdown of U.S. forces stationed in Europe and to pre-position large quantities of sophisticated weaponry in the Baltic republics and along other points on Russia's western frontier so that the American military can ride to the rescue if Moscow engages in threatening behavior.

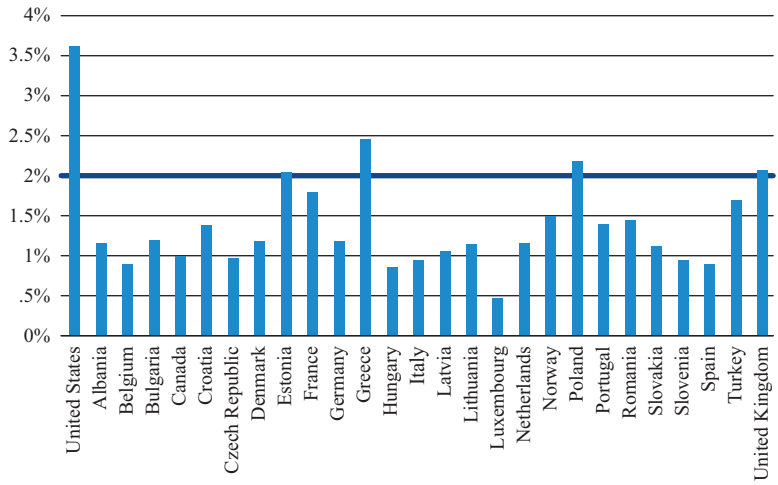
The notion of the United States as the indispensable nation is obsolete, particularly with regard to Europe. The European Union countries

can defend themselves and deal with security issues in their neighborhood. The EU now has both a population and an economy larger than the United States. Equally pertinent, the EU has three times the population and a GDP some 10 times that of Russia.

Clearly, the EU is capable of building whatever defenses might be necessary to deter Russian aggression—even granting the questionable assumption that Vladimir Putin harbors large-scale expansionist ambitions. The European nations have not done more to counter Russia because they have been able to free-ride on America's security efforts.

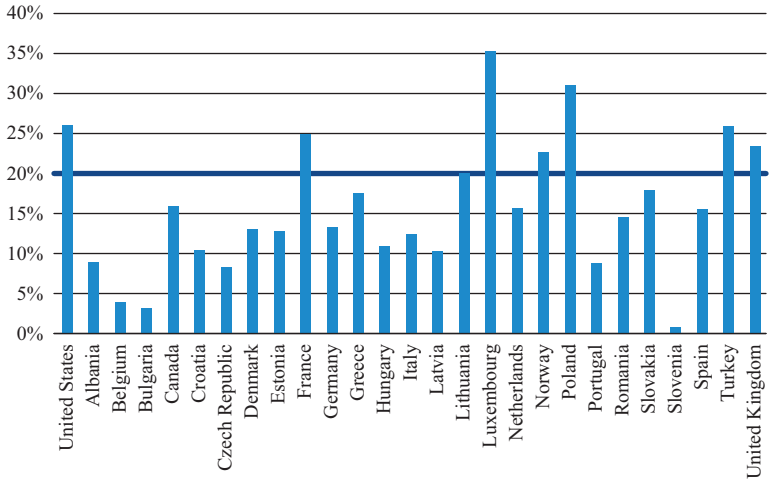
The degree of allied free riding is breathtaking. At the NATO summit in 2006, the members committed to spending a minimum of 2 percent of GDP on the military and 20 percent of that spending on major equipment, including related research and development. But only the United States, Britain, Greece, Poland, and Estonia spent at least 2 percent of annual GDP on defense prior to 2015—and Greece did so because of a perceived threat from fellow NATO member Turkey and a collapsing GDP. Moreover, only the United States, Britain, and Poland met both spending mandates in 2015 (see Figures 9.1 and 9.2). What is especially worrisome

Figure 9.1
NATO Country Defense Spending
as a Percentage of GDP, 2015



Source: NATO Secretary General's Annual Report, 2015.

Figure 9.2
NATO Country Defense Spending on Equipment, 2015



Source: NATO Secretary General's Annual Report, 2015.

and frustrating is that several major NATO powers, including Germany, Italy, and Spain, have spending levels far below the 2 percent threshold. By comparison, the U.S. military's budget, as defined by NATO, including the cost for supposed emergency missions (like the ongoing wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan) exceeds 3.5 percent.

U.S. concern about a lack of NATO burden sharing is nothing new. In 1954, for example, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles warned that the United States might have to conduct an "agonizing reappraisal" of Washington's European security commitment if the allies didn't make a more serious effort.

But Washington's frustration has become more noticeable in the years since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. U.S. military spending nearly doubled during the following decade, whereas the outlays of NATO's European members continued the downward trajectory that has existed since the end of the Cold War. The global Great Recession in 2007–2008 led to even sharper reductions in European defense efforts.

At a meeting of NATO defense ministers in February 2014, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel warned his European counterparts that they must step up their commitment to the alliance or watch it

become irrelevant. Declining European defense budgets, he emphasized, are "not sustainable. Our alliance can endure only as long as we are willing to fight for it, and invest in it." Rebalancing NATO's "burden-sharing and capabilities," Hagel stressed, "is mandatory—not elective." The tone of his message was firm. "America's contributions in NATO remain starkly disproportionate, so adjustments in the U.S. defense budget cannot become an excuse for further cuts in European defense spending."

Hagel's warning did little more than inspire yawns in response. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support of secessionist forces in eastern Ukraine, however, have generated greater agitation among NATO's European members. The creation of a new rapid-response force, with significant European participation, underscored growing worries about security—especially in Eastern Europe.

Yet even in that region, the military actions have been relatively modest. Warsaw's defense budget just now reached the 2 percent level that it promised to achieve following the 2006 summit—some 10 years ago. A great deal of self-congratulatory fanfare accompanied Lithuania's announcement that it was increasing its military spending by nearly one-third. However, that change would bring the country's military budget barely up to 1 percent of GDP—still far below the long-standing 2 percent pledge.

The reality is that for all the professed concern (especially among NATO's Eastern European members) about possible Russian aggression, political leaders on the Continent show few signs they are willing to back up their rhetoric with meaningful action. Until European alliance members dramatically increase their defense spending, it is difficult to take their expressions of alarm about the supposed Russian threat seriously. If the NATO powers will not significantly boost their military outlays given the current, troubled regional security environment, one would be hard-pressed to imagine a circumstance in which they would willingly do so.

It is time for the United States finally to conduct Dulles's agonizing reappraisal. The only way to change the long-standing, frustrating dynamic is for the United States to make clear by actions—not just words—that it will no longer tolerate free riding within NATO on America's military posture. That means, at the very least, gradually withdrawing all U.S. ground forces from the Continent and drastically downsizing the presence of air and naval forces. It also means ending Washington's insistence on U.S. domination of collective defense efforts through its

leadership in NATO. Indeed, the United States needs to abandon its myopic opposition to the European Union's developing an independent security capability.

Policymakers need to take a hard look at NATO for two other reasons. First, allies are supposed to enhance America's security, but recent additions to NATO have done the opposite. Most of the newer members fall into two categories—the irrelevant and the dangerous. In the former category are countries like Montenegro, with a tiny population and economy and a minuscule military. How Montenegro is supposed to help the United States in the event of a military crisis is truly a mystery.

But at least Montenegro has few enemies, and no great power enemies. The same cannot be said of the three Baltic republics, which are on bad terms with Russia. The only thing worse than committing the United States to defend a small, weak, largely useless ally is doing so when that ally is highly vulnerable to another major power. Yet that is what Washington has foolishly done with the Baltic republics, and it continues to flirt with adopting a similar policy toward Georgia. Alliances with such client states are perfect transmission belts to transform a local, limited conflict into a global showdown between nuclear-armed powers.

Second, although the United States likes to portray NATO as an alliance of liberal democracies, the reality is more troubling. There are disturbingly authoritarian, even neofascist, trends in several NATO countries. Those trends are most pronounced in Turkey and Hungary, where popularly elected leaders are now cracking down on democracy. Does America really want to risk its security to protect such allies?

The world has changed a great deal since the stark days of the early Cold War, when Washington felt compelled to defend a weak, demoralized democratic Europe from a powerful, menacing totalitarian adversary. It is long past time for European countries to take responsibility for their own defense—and for the overall security of their region. In the long term, the United States should consider significant dilution or even elimination of the Article V provision that an attack on one NATO member constitutes an attack on all. Policymakers should likewise consider whether U.S. interests are actually best served by remaining within the alliance. In the near term, policymakers should focus less on the futile rhetorical quest for burden sharing and more on the substantive steps that can be taken toward burden shifting, reducing America's military presence in the region, and preventing any further ill-considered expansion of the alliance.

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—By Ted Galen Carpenter

10. The Western Hemisphere

- The major foreign policy challenges in the Western Hemisphere include the rise of criminal syndicates and the unregulated movement of people and goods.
- The United States cannot be indifferent to ongoing violence and unrest in Mexico and much of Central America.
- U.S. officials must recognize that America's counterdrug strategy has not worked and should lead the effort to develop a more enlightened, harm-reduction strategy.
- Washington should adjust to the fact that its regional influence, although still impressive, is not as dominant as in previous eras.

The incoming administration faces a number of foreign policy challenges and opportunities in the Western Hemisphere, including the rise of criminal syndicates; the movement of populations, goods, and services through both legal and illegal channels; and the emergence of populist "Bolivarian" adversaries in such countries as Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Washington should adopt a more nuanced approach in its relations to its neighbors in this hemisphere given that its influence in hemispheric affairs, although still impressive, is not as dominant as in previous eras. A U.S. policy that shows greater respect for neighboring societies is also more consistent with professed American values.

Drug Trafficking and the Power of Criminal Syndicates

Drug-trafficking organizations have long been major players in both the United States and the nations of Latin America. Today, trafficking organizations challenge the Mexican government for control of some areas of the country, giving rise to vigilantism. The United States does not have the luxury of being an indifferent spectator as this new surge of violence in Mexico signals a growing lack of public confidence in Mexico's police and criminal justice system. Instability on the southern border is obviously a national security issue. U.S. officials would be wise to pay more attention to troubling developments in America's

own neighborhood instead of trying to micromanage situations and dictate outcomes in distant locales.

The cartels are a menace not only in Mexico but also in much of Central America. Throughout the Obama years, they have expanded their operations into the weaker societies of that region, becoming especially prominent forces in Honduras and Guatemala and a significant factor in other countries.

Throughout the hemisphere, U.S. counterdrug strategy has not worked. Strenuous efforts to dampen the supply of illicit drugs in one locale simply cause traffickers to move their production to other locations where the pressure is weaker for the moment.

Some Latin American governments have begun to balk at Washington's heavy-handed insistence that they eradicate the drug trade. Uruguay even passed legislation that eliminated criminal penalties for possession of marijuana and was the first nation in the hemisphere to fully legalize commerce in the drug. Indications are mounting that the hard-line prohibitionist strategy no longer commands the automatic allegiance of governments in the region. Instead of fighting this trend, U.S. officials should lead the effort to develop a more enlightened, harm-reduction strategy that incorporates decriminalization and legalization.

Human Trafficking and Immigration

Each year, thousands of Central American adults and children make the perilous journey northward hoping to find a better life in the United States. Although the immigration flow is partially a product of the violence and destabilization that the drug cartels have caused, other important factors are also at play. Many of the immigrants simply seek better economic opportunities for themselves and their families. Those individuals, especially young males, who are able to acquire steady, financially rewarding jobs in the United States, frequently send a portion of their earnings to relatives remaining in Mexico or Central America. Those remittances often enable a tolerable standard of living in such impoverished societies.

The topic of illegal immigration is, of course, a hot-button political issue in the United States. Despite the sometimes inflammatory rhetoric about "securing the border," many federal and state policymakers are more than a little hypocritical in adopting that stance. The reality is that some industries in the United States would slow to a crawl or cease to function without immigrants willing to work under often-difficult

conditions and for modest compensation. The challenge for U.S. political leaders is to finally align the law with the underlying economic realities by greatly expanding the quota for legal immigrants.

The Challenge of Bolivarian Populism

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a surge of support for so-called Bolivarian populism, beginning with the election of Venezuela's bombastic Hugo Chávez in 1998, followed by the election of new, radical leaders in Ecuador and Bolivia, and Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega's return to power in Nicaragua in 2007. Chávez and his allies quickly became a thorn in the side of the United States and other powers.

Those governments tend to engage in shrill anti-U.S. rhetoric reminiscent of Fidel Castro's communist regime during the Cold War. Beyond engaging in verbal bashing of the United States, Bolivarian regimes have been openly hostile to Washington's political and economic values and objectives.

Equally unsettling, the left-wing rulers have employed increasingly authoritarian tactics to consolidate their domestic power and weaken political opponents, including bypassing the legislative branch, ruling by decree, closing or taking over critical media outlets, and harassing political opponents and leaders of the business community.

Perhaps most troubling from Washington's standpoint are the close ties the Bolivarian governments have developed with radical armed insurgent groups in neighboring countries and with countries such as Russia, China, and Iran. The connections that the leftist governments developed with Moscow and Beijing have even raised concerns about peer competitors of the United States gaining economic, political, and perhaps even military footholds in the Western Hemisphere. The onset of ties with Iran added worries about state-sponsored terrorism.

Washington especially needs to keep a wary eye on China's relationship with the populist regimes, including Beijing's multibillion-dollar loans to Caracas and its involvement in the proposed construction of a $50 billion interoceanic canal across Nicaragua that would compete with the Panama Canal. Wang Jing, the shadowy Hong Kong billionaire behind the funding of the project, has close ties to the Beijing regime.

As China's economic and diplomatic ties with Latin American countries expand, so too might security ties. Beijing might even try to develop a strategic presence in the region. If China does take that step,

Washington would confront the first serious geopolitical competition in the Western Hemisphere that it has faced in decades.

Although the behavior of the Bolivarian governments merits continued monitoring, it is important not to overreact. The strength of populism in Latin America appears to have peaked during Obama's first years in the White House. Nicolás Maduro (Chávez's successor), for example, has found it challenging just to hold on to political power rather than to export revolutionary fervor. Relatively moderate regimes in Colombia and Chile now seem to be the types of governments that a majority of Latin Americans favor.

An Opportunity in the Caribbean

President Obama's decision in December 2014 to defy the powerful Cuban-American lobby and normalize relations with Havana was a crucial move toward ending a quarrel that has lasted some 55 years and benefited neither country. Without the arbitrary interference resulting from the diplomatic feud and the accompanying U.S. embargo, the two countries are natural economic partners. Ending the embargo will create substantial pressure on the Castro regime to loosen the economic constraints, and that in turn can help open up that entire repressed society.

Although Cuba would benefit greatly from the end of the bilateral cold war with Washington, the United States would also benefit. The economic gains to America, although relatively modest in the context of a $17 trillion annual economy, would still be significant. More important, though, normalizing relations with Havana is an important step in ending a counterproductive aspect of U.S. foreign policy, generally: trying to isolate regimes with which Washington disagrees.

Dealing with Rising Powers in the Hemisphere

The United States remains the leading power in the Western Hemisphere by a wide margin. Nevertheless, the current positions of such countries as Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and even Mexico are a far cry from their positions as third- or fourth-rate powers a few generations ago. Mexico is now the United States' third-largest trading partner, and Brazil has risen to number nine. U.S. policies need to catch up to that new reality. Washington must more seriously address those topics that key hemispheric neighbors deem important. Above all, U.S. officials need to accept that Latin American countries are no longer as willing as they once were to defer to Washington's policy preferences. That is

especially true with respect to Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and other potential rising midsize powers.

It is not enough for Washington to pay more attention to its neighbors, however; it needs to be the right kind of attention. Washington should deemphasize the war on drugs and cease pressuring Caribbean and Latin American countries to persist in that futile crusade. Indeed, U.S. officials need to be more receptive to legalization and harm-reduction initiatives.

On another emotional issue, policymakers must give higher priority to adopting an effective immigration policy. Reaching a worthwhile compromise on comprehensive immigration legislation will not be easy but is imperative. The current system ignores powerful economic realities, criminalizes the behavior of millions of immigrants who merely seek better opportunities for themselves and their families, and empowers criminal gangs that make a fortune.

U.S. officials will need to exercise political courage as well to expand the system of free trade throughout the Western Hemisphere. The biggest diplomatic adjustment required is a willingness to show greater respect for rising hemispheric powers. It may be possible to be brusque and dismissive with small, weak countries (although it is seldom wise to do so), but it is folly to behave that way toward serious midsize powers—especially important neighbors.

At a minimum, Washington needs to treat such rising powers with greater consideration. It could even go beyond that and take additional steps to support those countries' key diplomatic objectives. One example would be to push for a permanent "South American" seat (with veto power) on the United Nations Security Council.

The decision to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba demonstrated that a president can muster the necessary political courage to defy entrenched constituencies to achieve a beneficial policy breakthrough. The same kind of vision and political courage will be required with regard to a range of other important issues, including the drug war, immigration, and a new relationship with rising hemispheric powers.

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—By Ted Galen Carpenter

11. Balancing Privacy and Security: Cyber Policy

- The U.S. government's desire for easy access to commercially encrypted data is not new.
- Policymakers should treat with great skepticism claims that changing technology requires new assistance for the exercise of government's vast authority, or even special new powers.
- Deliberately creating vulnerabilities in commercial encryption erodes privacy and endangers the use of the Internet for commerce.
- Law enforcement and national security agencies clearly possess considerable capabilities for carrying out their missions, and there is no cause to believe that the liberty benefits of strong encryption come at much cost to security.

It has become common to claim that cyberthreats, in the words of President Obama, "pose one of the most serious economic and national security challenges to the United States." At the same time, concerns about the ability of terrorists and criminals to exploit encrypted communications have proliferated, leading to numerous calls to require "backdoors" in such communications to enable easy access by governments. The contradictory impulses in these positions—one seeking to limit cyber vulnerabilities, the other mandating the deliberate creation of new potential vulnerabilities—highlight the incoherence and overreaction of much of the conventional wisdom on cyber issues.

The polarization of the debate underscores its high stakes for American liberties and constitutional government. Tens of millions of Americans conduct much of their individual and collective lives online, and government interference with strong encryption threatens their rights to privacy, speech, and assembly. It also threatens to restrict the operation of the free market: the vast benefits stemming from the Internet's commercial boom may rapidly diminish if weaknesses are deliberately hardwired into the Web's financial security apparatus. Further, if American-made technology is perceived to be vulnerable to government intrusion, the risk that U.S.-based technology firms will move

abroad, or that consumers will look to non-American providers to purchase technology, increases. Policymakers should treat with great skepticism claims that changing technology requires new assistance for the exercise of government's vast authority, or even special new powers.

At the same time, the Constitution delegates a number of core functions to the federal government that are essential to the protection of American liberties. Chief among them is "provid[ing] for the common defence," which includes collecting intelligence on America's foreign enemies and enforcing the rule of law. Though we must always monitor national security and law enforcement agencies, demanding that they preemptively tie their own hands in the face of changing technology accomplishes little and costs much.

In sum, policymakers should take a twofold, mostly hands-off, approach to cyber policy. First, citizens should be able to use strong encryption to protect their privacy. Second, the citizenry, oversight bodies, and media must be able to monitor national security bureaucracies for their compliance with the rule of law. However, oversight efforts must not unnecessarily restrict efforts to use technology to enhance legitimate intelligence and law enforcement functions.

The U.S. government's desire for easy access to commercially encrypted data is not new. In the 1990s, the government sought to mandate a system, the Clipper chip, which used a key escrow. Each chip would have a cryptographic key held by the government in a secure database. If the government demonstrated a legal need to access the communications encrypted by a specific Clipper chip (e.g., it obtained a warrant for a wiretap), it could then retrieve the key from the database. Supporters of the system argued that without it, the monitoring of many communications might become impossible. Clipper (and similar proposed systems) was widely opposed by computer scientists and privacy advocates, who noted that such systems created new risks and vulnerabilities to commercial encryption. Fortunately, Clipper was never adopted, and for the next two decades, the Internet continued to develop along with strong encryption protocols, such as the Secure Sockets Layer (SSL).

The November 2015 attacks in Paris, combined with the leaks from former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden, have reignited the debate about the appropriateness of mandating backdoors in commercial encryption. Partially in response to the Snowden revelations, companies like Apple have increasingly moved to

encryption protocols for devices that do not allow the company to break the encryption (including so-called end-to-end encryption). That shift has prompted an outcry from law enforcement officials, from Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director James Comey to local police officers: one Chicago detective pungently remarked, "The average pedophile at this point is probably thinking, I've got to get an Apple phone."

This kind of overheated rhetoric notwithstanding, the arguments that carried the debate during the 1990s are even weightier today. Deliberately creating vulnerabilities in commercial encryption still endangers the use of the Internet for commerce, although the Internet is vastly more important to the economy than it was in the 1990s. The average cost to a U.S. business of a breach in cybersecurity has been estimated at $6.5 million; so making such penetrations easier by weakening encryption could be very costly.

Tellingly, Admiral Michael Rogers—the current head of the NSA and no shrinking violet when it comes to national security concerns—has come out as a proponent of maintaining the strength of commercial encryption. His position has been supported by two other former NSA heads, General Michael Hayden and Vice Admiral Mike McConnell. This division between law enforcement and the intelligence community is on the surface surprising but probably reflects the difference in resources and capabilities. According to public reports, the NSA has devoted vast resources to generating a variety of means to defeat or circumvent commercial encryption and may have achieved remarkable success. Yet even law enforcement has a variety of means other than backdoors to circumvent encryption. As an example, despite the use of the Tor program, which is designed to mask the user's location and identity, the FBI was able to find and arrest the operator of Silk Road, a major online site for trade in illicit goods. More recently, the FBI was able to use a zero day vulnerability purchased from a vendor to hack the iPhone of Syed Farook, one of the shooters in the 2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, something it previously stated it would be unable to do without help from Apple. Law enforcement and national security agencies clearly possess considerable capabilities for carrying out their missions, and there is no cause to believe that the liberty benefits of strong encryption come at much cost to security.

Policymakers should therefore resist calls to limit or weaken commercial encryption. Yet they must also recognize that intelligence and law enforcement capabilities to circumvent encryption rest in large part

on exploiting vulnerabilities in software and hardware. That requires intelligence and law enforcement to find vulnerabilities and, in many cases, keep them secret for exploitation.

Privacy advocates would prefer the government, in the words of Bruce Schneier, "to err on the side of security and fix almost all the vulnerabilities we find." Although the NSA has publicly claimed it discloses about 91 percent of the vulnerabilities it finds, it may do so only after exploiting those vulnerabilities for some time. Moreover, the 91 percent may be qualitatively different from the 9 percent that are not disclosed and could include much more serious vulnerabilities. While this reality may be disturbing to privacy advocates, it is likely necessary if government-mandated backdoors are to be avoided.

Although it is sometimes appropriate for agencies to delay disclosure of vulnerabilities for their own use, it can be difficult to define at a high level of generality when that should be the case, since numerous factors weigh in to the determination of when it makes sense to withhold knowledge of a particular vulnerability, including whether the software is used widely by U.S. companies or the government, and the ease with which the vulnerability can be exploited. At present, the U.S. government maintains an interagency Vulnerability Equities Process to determine which vulnerabilities to disclose and which to withhold. This process was reportedly revitalized in the spring of 2014 under National Security Council auspices. Policymakers should maintain this process and ensure that it appropriately balances the tradeoffs discussed here rather than becoming focused solely on vulnerability disclosure.

In 2013, for example, the president's Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies recommended: "U.S. policy should generally move to ensure that Zero Days [vulnerabilities] are quickly blocked, so that the underlying vulnerabilities are patched on U.S. Government and other networks. In rare instances, U.S. policy may briefly authorize using a Zero Day for high priority intelligence collection." That advice, though understandable, does not seem to have been adopted by the current administration and should likewise be rejected in the future.

The analytic framework known as NOBUS (no one but us) offers another way to approach this dilemma. As explained by former NSA director Hayden:

> You look at a vulnerability through a different lens if even with the vulnerability it requires substantial computational power or substantial other attributes and you have to make

> the judgment who else can do this? If there's a vulnerability in here that weakens encryption but you still need four acres of Cray computers in the basement in order to work it, you kind of think "NOBUS" and that's a vulnerability we are not ethically or legally compelled to try to patch—it's one that ethically and legally we could try to exploit in order to keep Americans safe from others.

This is not a perfect framework, as vulnerabilities that are NOBUS at one time may not be in a few years as technologies change. Hayden's reference to Cray computers is telling, as many portable electronic devices in 2016 have more processing power than a 1988 Cray supercomputer. Therefore, as Stanford professor Herb Lin has argued, a central question for disclosure is how long a given vulnerability will remain NOBUS. Nor is the NOBUS standard directly applicable to all discovered vulnerabilities. Nonetheless, policymakers should encourage the refinement of decisionmaking about disclosure along these lines rather than those suggested by privacy advocates.

This policy prescription will please neither FBI director Comey nor privacy advocates. Yet it avoids excesses in favor of either side, while keeping its eye on the liberty interests of the American people. Government should allow strong encryption even if it makes lawful surveillance more difficult. At the same time, it must strive to retain an edge in exploiting cyber vulnerabilities in order to protect intelligence access to adversary systems and the constitutionally legitimate pursuit of law enforcement and national security.

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—By Austin Long and Brendan Rittenhouse Green

12. Maintaining U.S. Energy Security

- Contrary to popular belief, efficient markets ensure that Americans already enjoy a high measure of energy security.
- No country or nonstate actor has the ability to blockade the United States and cut off all U.S. oil imports.
- In the modern global oil market, supply disruptions have only temporary effects.
- Thus, substantive changes to U.S. energy security policy are unnecessary; however, the metric by which the United States determines the appropriate size of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is outdated and should be revised.

Presidential candidates have publicly called for measures to protect Americans' energy security since the oil crises of the 1970s. Some policies—such as establishing the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR)—have contributed to energy security, whereas others—such as price controls—hurt Americans. Today, though, policymakers must recognize that Americans already enjoy a very high level of energy security, principally because of the flexibility and resilience of the modern energy market, not because of the recent increase in U.S. production of oil and natural gas through the so-called shale revolution. Today, justifying foreign policy decisions by citing a commitment to energy security is far more likely to hurt the national interest than to help. On energy security, the best policy requires no change from policymakers.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) provides the standard definition of energy security: "the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price." It is no surprise that an organization created in the aftermath of the 1973 oil shock to prepare governments to provide emergency oil in case of major supply disruption focuses primarily on oil. It is also no surprise that, as a consumers' club, the IEA sneaks in the subjective phrase "affordable price," though the phrase is perhaps more aspirational than practical. In fact, the IEA and other energy security initiatives are powerless to affect long-term changes in oil prices because of events like rising Chinese demand.

A better definition would be more focused: energy security insulates against sudden, temporary oil supply disruptions. And although hurricanes, earthquakes, and accidents might cause sudden, temporary supply disruptions, the IEA and American energy security policies are really designed to counter political-military disruptions, whether interstate wars (the public and some national security analysts worried about a Soviet attack in the Cold War), civil wars (especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution), or a repeat of the 1973 Arab oil embargo (the founding crisis that set the initial organizational culture of the IEA). That makes sense, given our normal emphasis on foreign threats and adversaries in our discussions of national security and foreign policy.

That emphasis also explains why the shale revolution's expansion of the potential global energy supply has not changed American energy security much. The innovations certainly affect the baseline price of oil. Tight oil producers' profits contribute to U.S. economic growth, and their output puts downward pressure on the equilibrium price of oil, benefiting American consumers. Despite that, a sudden political-military shock to oil production anywhere on the globe would still cause a surge in oil prices, which would hurt consumers everywhere.

Fortunately, in the modern global oil market, supply disruptions have only temporary effects. When a problem in one part of the world takes barrels off the market, suppliers elsewhere can profitably increase their output to compensate, replacing the "missing barrels," satisfying consumer needs, assuaging fears, and ultimately sending prices back to their predisruption equilibrium. Historically, that kind of adjustment took adroit decisions from political leaders and their counterparts at the major international oil companies. Over time, robust financial markets developed to trade oil supplies and futures, and decentralized activity now enables the market adjustments. The market has worked with shorter and shorter response times in each of the major supply disruptions since 1973 (with the partial exception of the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution), including the volatility of Libyan exports during the current civil war and the tightening of sanctions on Iranian oil exports and Russian oil investment. Oil inventories owned by private firms and by governments can serve as a bridge for consumers, temporarily providing the oil that they need while alternative producers ramp up output.

This understanding of the modern global oil market should direct policymakers' attention to decisions regarding the SPR. In 2015,

congressional agreement on a two-year budget deal included a provision that has a negative effect on SPR policy. The deal broke the Budget Control Act's spending caps but avoided increasing the deficit by the full amount of its spending increase by authorizing oil sales from the SPR to bolster government revenue. Legislators struggle with budget discipline, and their ardor to increase spending, notably on transportation and defense, led them to violate their longtime policy commitment that created the SPR as a tool for energy security. That bad choice should not be repeated; policymakers should be prohibited from using America's *strategic* oil inventory as a slush fund.

Instead, they should consider an adjustment to the volume of oil held in the SPR on energy security grounds alone. The SPR's size was set years ago, using an ill-conceived metric to decide how much oil to store to protect against supply shocks. As part of the agreement to form the IEA, the United States (and other member governments) committed to hold stocks equal to at least 90 days of oil imports.

But holding enough oil to make up for a cutoff of all imports does not protect the United States against any realistic threat: no country or nonstate actor has the ability to blockade the United States and cut off all U.S. oil imports. In fact, no country or nonstate actor can completely blockade *any* country in the world without the acquiescence (or participation) of the U.S. Navy. U.S. oil imports also include a substantial overland flow from Canada and, to a lesser extent, Mexico, imports that no foreign power could prevent, short of an attack with nuclear-tipped ICBMs.

The actual disruption scenarios that might call for SPR oil or oil from other IEA members' stockpiles are much smaller than these cutoffs: an attack on a particular oil field, tanker terminal, or other transportation link might conceivably sever up to a maximum of a couple of million barrels a day of supply in a particular part of the world, in an extreme case. That is the scale of the biggest political-military disruptions to global markets in recent years, including cases like the civil wars in Libya and the Niger Delta and the economic sanctions against Iran. And those disruptions are also about the size for which government reserves can practically compensate, because regardless of the total amount of oil in the inventory, the maximum flow rate at which oil can be taken out is physically limited, in the U.S. case to a peak of about four million barrels per day.

The United States, in cooperation with its IEA partners, should reconsider the standard used to determine how much oil to hold in government stockpiles. Policymakers may determine that the current standard of 90 days' worth of imports is the correct amount of oil to respond to a disruption. But following technical analysis of how "spare capacity" in oil markets actually works, the right total amount to hold in the SPR may differ. For example, on the one hand, it is possible that the innovations of the shale revolution add flexibility to the market, so more oil can come on stream faster than conventional fields have been able to surge in the past. On the other hand, it is also possible that responsible, risk-averse decisionmakers would prefer bigger strategic reserves able to compensate for two simultaneous oil supply disruptions.

If the reevaluation results in a smaller size requirement for the SPR than the current 727 million barrels, then the United States can profitably sell some government-owned oil. But that decision should be based on a careful analysis of threats and responses—that is, on an analysis of energy security. Policymakers need not invest political capital in an energy security initiative at all, but if they choose to do so, it should be a prudent one, based on a realistic appraisal of the energy security situation facing the United States.

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—By Eugene Gholz

13. Evaluating the Terrorism Threat to the United States

- Despite widespread fears, al Qaeda has failed to carry out a successful terrorist attack within the United States since 9/11.
- The amount of damage inflicted by homegrown Islamist terrorists within the United States has been limited.
- The chance of an American perishing at the hands of such a terrorist since 2001 is about 1 in 45 million per year.
- Although ISIS may inspire occasional attacks by homegrown sympathizers, the amount of damage they can accomplish, while tragic, is likely to be quite limited.

In the wake of 9/11, the intelligence community was certain that an even more destructive "second-wave" attack was imminent, and reporters were soon being told that between 2,000 and 5,000 trained al Qaeda operatives were on the loose in the United States.

In the ensuing 15 years, not only has no second wave taken place, but also no one at all in the United States has perished at the hands of an al Qaeda attack, whether planned domestically or abroad. And not only have those thousands of trained operatives never materialized, but al Qaeda appears to have been substantially unable to infiltrate any operatives into the United States, even by smuggling them in among the more than 173 million foreigners who are admitted into the country legally each year. The pattern isn't much different in Europe, where entry is easier.

There have been several dozen disconnected plots by homegrown would-be terrorists in the United States since 9/11, some of them inspired by al Qaeda. However, few of them have been carried out, and the damage they have inflicted, although tragic, has been very limited. When those cases are examined, the vast majority of the participants turn out to be naive, amateurish, inept, and gullible. In most instances, they have allowed an FBI operative into the plot, facilitating its disruption. But even if they had been allowed to proceed further, it seems clear that most of them would never have had the ability to do much damage.

The new demon is the Islamic State, or ISIS, the vicious insurgent group in Iraq and Syria. Alarmed exaggeration is again both rampant and unwise. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) has insisted that "the threat ISIS poses cannot be overstated"—effectively proclaiming hyperbole on the subject to be impossible. And Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), born before World War II, has claimed that "we're in the most dangerous position we've ever been in" and that ISIS is "rapidly developing a method of blowing up a major U.S. city."

Outrage at the tactics of ISIS is certainly justified, as is concern about the menace it presents in the Middle East. But fear that it is much of a security threat to the United States is not. The terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino in 2015 and Brussels and Orlando in 2016 should not be taken to suggest that the numbers and lethality of attacks outside of war zones—and particularly in the developed world—will greatly and permanently rise.

In fact, its numbers are small, and ISIS has differentiated itself from al Qaeda in that it does not seek primarily to target the "far enemy," preferring instead to carve out a state in the Middle East for itself, mostly killing fellow Muslims—particularly Shiites—who stand in its way. In the process, it has alienated virtually all outside support and, by holding territory, presents an obvious and clear military target to its adversaries.

ISIS does not deserve credit for great military prowess even in its own area. Its ability to behead defenseless hostages certainly should not be taken to suggest that. And the unique circumstances that contributed to its one major military advance, the conquest of the city of Mosul in Iraq in 2014, are unlikely to be repeated. Its idea was to hold part of the city for a while in an effort, it seems, to free some prisoners. The defending Iraqi army, trained by the American military at enormous cost to U.S. taxpayers, simply fell apart, abandoning weaponry, and the city, to the tiny group of seeming invaders.

After its fortuitous advances of 2014, the vicious group's momentum has been substantially halted, indeed reversed, and its empire, mostly built on desert sand, is currently under siege. It has made enemies of just about everybody, and its once highly vaunted economic capacity—particularly that involving selling a lot of oil and antiquities—may end up proving to be as illusory as its military prowess. It has recently cut the pay for its fighters in half, and it has to work hard to keep people from fleeing its lumpen caliphate.

This degradation will likely continue. The best approach may be to facilitate the group's self-destruction through harassment and by helping people flee its grasp rather than to rely too heavily on direct, and often excessive and therefore counterproductive, military measures.

ISIS has two avenues by which, it is commonly argued, it will be able to inflict damage within the United States. The first is that foreign militants who had gone to fight with ISIS would be trained and then sent back to do damage in their own countries. However, very little of that has occurred so far, and essentially none at all in the United States.

The reason is, in part, because foreign fighters tend to be killed early (they are common picks for suicide missions); often become disillusioned, especially by infighting in the ranks; and receive little in the way of useful training for terrorist exercises back home. Moreover, ISIS videos exultantly show foreign fighters burning their passports to demonstrate their terminal commitment to the cause—hardly a good idea if they want to return.

Although there has been a trendy concern about the way ISIS recruits using social media, the foolish willingness of would-be terrorists to spill their aspirations and their often childish fantasies on social media has been, on balance, much to the advantage of the law enforcement officials seeking to track them.

The second avenue involves the possibility that potential homegrown terrorists will become inspired by ISIS's propaganda or example. In a reactive pose that has become routine for it, the group has claimed responsibility for—or, more accurately, has boorishly celebrated—such distant ventures. However, as terrorism specialist Max Abrahms notes, isolated homegrown offenders have carried out only a few of the world's 1,900 most deadly terrorist attacks over the past four decades.

Indeed, as with earlier homegrown terrorists, almost all of those picked up in the United States who seem to have been inspired at least in part by ISIS not only have demonstrated a pathetic absence of capacity but also, in many cases, have suffered from mental illness. In addition, although ISIS could still provide inspiration to death cult sycophants in the United States and elsewhere, this is already clearly in decline as the group's military progress in the Middle East, once so exhilarating to would-be jihadists, is stifled.

Since 9/11, fewer than 100 people in the United States—about six a year—have been killed by Islamist terrorists of all sorts, meaning that an American's chance of perishing at their hands in a given year is

about 1 in 45 million. Indeed, the number of people killed by such terrorists in the entire world outside war zones for most of that period has been some 200–400 per year. That's 200–400 too many, of course, but it scarcely presents a challenge that is existential.

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—By John Mueller

14. Rethinking Drone Warfare

- The United States has launched drone strikes in at least seven countries, some of which America would likely not be involved in militarily if not for drones.
- Drones are a valuable military and intelligence tool, but they also erode norms of sovereignty and generate resentment and possible retaliation.
- The current U.S. drone program therefore requires greater checks, balances, and considerations of costs.

Armed drones, known officially as unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned aerial systems, or remotely piloted vehicles, are such a good technology that they encourage bad policy. By making war seem cheap, they heighten the American tendency to make war rashly, with insufficient checks, balances, and consideration of cost. Policymakers should take a more cautious approach to drone warfare and restrict presidents' abilities to unilaterally wage it.

Drone strikes are made possible by several technological advancements. Autonomous, satellite-based flight control systems allow pilotless flight. The global positioning system (GPS) and various sensors allow aircraft to precisely locate objects on the ground. Processing and communications systems allow nearly instant transfer of imagery to distant observers. Laser designation or GPS precisely guides missiles or bombs to targets. Strikes can occur at considerable range from takeoff—over 1,000 miles, in the case of the most advanced hunter-killer drone, the MQ-9 Reaper. And, of course, drones are relatively cheap. They can loiter at length above areas where one might not want to risk a pilot. Their procurement and operational costs are lower than manned alternatives, although the difference is smaller than often advertised.

Those attributes make drones especially useful in surveillance missions. Most of the approximately 10,000 drones in the U.S. military inventory are small surveillance drones used for aerial scouting by ground forces. In combat zones like Syria and Afghanistan, drones are often used to locate targets and cue other platforms to attack them.

Only around 400 U.S. drones are equipped to strike ground targets with missiles or bombs, including MQ-1C Gray Eagles and the longer-range MQ-1 Predators and Reapers.

Most U.S. drone strikes occur during broader wars. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the United States conducted 145 drone strikes in Libya during the 2011 bombing campaign there and nearly 1,100 drone strikes in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2008 to 2012. The focus here is on the minority of drone strikes that occur outside traditional war zones. According to the New America Foundation, since 2002, the United States has launched 401 drone strikes in Pakistan, 140 in Yemen, and 27 in Somalia. In 2015, two U.S. drone strikes in Libya targeted the self-proclaimed Islamic State offshoot, and more strikes are likely there. Without drones, the United States would not likely make war in those places or would do so at a far lesser scale using manned aircraft or raids.

Drone warfare is the nearly quintessential exemplar of the old American tendency to seek technological shortcuts that win wars without shedding U.S. blood. The nation's relative abundance of capital compared with labor has long encouraged the U.S. military to build technology to deliver firepower and limit risk to troops. Also, the United States' geographic security has meant that it tends to fight wars at distances that make ships, aircraft, and missiles especially valuable. That remote relationship between U.S. wars and its citizens' safety also makes it hard to request massive sacrifice of lives at war.

Drones also serve the U.S. tendency to limit damage to foreign civilians. Because their safety is so remotely connected to most recent wars, U.S. citizens have limited tolerance for slaughtering enemies. U.S. liberalism meanwhile encourages U.S. leaders to justify wars as a way to advance liberal values. That typically involves casting foreign leaders as oppressors of otherwise democratic people, who should be spared. Drones, like any other form of warfare, kill the innocent, but they are precise compared with other lethal means.

This promise of relatively bloodless victory from the air is what Eliot Cohen calls the "mystique of American airpower": the hope that airstrikes will win wars without much risk to our troops or even foreign civilians. Airpower seduces by claiming to reconcile war and liberal values. Recent events have reinvigorated this mystique. Advances in precision targeting in the 1990s helped renew the U.S. infatuation with strategic airpower. Indeed, the Clinton administration's high-altitude

bombing campaigns over Iraq and the Balkans anticipated today's drone campaigns in their reliance on airstrikes.

Although the 9/11 terrorist attacks increased the U.S. public's risk tolerance, the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan restored casualty aversion. The Obama administration responded less by narrowing security objectives than by risking less for them. That is evident not only in drone warfare but in the administration's hopes that airstrikes or other limited military options, such as training by special operations forces, can produce order or even democracy in places like Libya, Syria, and Central Africa. This administration will leave the country at war, in various, limited ways, in seven nations. This combination of eagerness to make war and reluctance to spill blood is probably unprecedented.

Drone strikes provide a cheap way to achieve military results. Without endangering airmen or ground forces, the strikes appear to deliver immediate benefits. By killing purported terrorists, drone strikes also show the public that the commander in chief is protecting them.

The problem is that drone strikes are riskier than they seem. They create three underappreciated dangers. First, they erode norms of sovereignty in ways potentially harmful to U.S. interests, as American violations of sovereign airspace over nations without their consent may encourage other nations to follow suit with their own military platforms.

A second danger is blowback, as strikes produce resentment and eventual retaliation. Those angered by strikes can become or support terrorists, and thus drone strikes generate ever more targets and endless warfare. Blowback can also mean popular support for anti-U.S. insurgents, like al-Shabaab or the Taliban.

Blowback also creates a danger of self-fulfilling prophecies. Fears that Islamist insurgents will sooner or later attack Americans might lead to drone strikes that create what they aimed to kill. That process has likely occurred in Yemen, Somalia, or Pakistan, where strikes have targeted an amorphous mix of terrorists and Islamist insurgents initially focused on closer enemies than the United States.

Blowback is slow to manifest and tough to measure, but terrorists arrested in the United States frequently cite anger about U.S. wars and drone strikes as a motive. Studies of past bombing campaigns, like the World War II Strategic Bombing Survey, also suggest that airstrikes often increase resistance against attackers.

The least appreciated danger of drone strikes is escalation. As is often the case with strategic airpower, drone strikes get the United States into wars without winning them. By killing terrorists or insurgents without settling the underlying conflicts that produce them, drone strikes lead to a sense of failure. That sense can create domestic pressure to escalate, including with ground troops. Today's drone campaigns have obviously not escalated in that way. But the next president, empowered by fears of the Islamic State and eager to correct the Obama administration's perceived failings, especially its inability to eliminate the ISIS threat, might widen the wars in Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. Drone strikes' initially low price tag might turn out to be a down payment.

Defenders of drones typically make the opposite argument—that drones obviate more costly military action. It is certainly possible that U.S. forces would have conducted more special operations raids or conventional airstrikes in Pakistan, for example, absent a drone strike option. But given the greater risks those options entail, the number of strikes would likely have been far lower.

Because the benefits of drone strikes quickly manifest and costs are gradual and uncertain, drone strikes are speciously attractive and conducive to poor decisionmaking. Policymakers are encouraged to focus on the near term and undervalue distant dangers. There is little public demand for oversight and debate. Better debate and decisionmaking about drone strikes are likely only if their immediate cost to Americans seems to mount. That is unlikely, given the United States' good fortune—our safety and military prowess.

Drones pose other potential challenges. Some experts doubt that the United States will maintain this unilateral ability to conduct drone strikes. They expect rapid proliferation of advanced sensors, precision targeting, long-range missiles, and drones. As more states develop the capability to defend their airspace or shoot back at the United States, they might restrain U.S. drone strikes. That is unlikely, however, given the slow pace at which those technologies have proliferated. Also U.S. drone strikes occur in states that tacitly invite them, like Pakistan, or states ill-suited to harness advanced technology, like Somalia, Libya, and Yemen. And because drones are vulnerable to air defenses, and limited in destructive punch, target states' possession of them would not deter U.S. action.

The United States seems likely to remain safe, rich, technologically proficient, and militarily superior to rivals in the near future.

Unfortunately, that means limited wars will remain possible and appear less costly. That is a recipe for continual, ill-considered air campaigns, especially the use of drones over disordered states.

One partial remedy is for the government to undertake major public studies of the long-term impact of drone strikes, which could heighten appreciation of costs. Another is to concentrate the direct costs of war through a war tax or offset requirement. Even cheap wars would require some immediate tradeoffs that spark debate.

Congress should also restrict the use of covert action, which today serve mostly to limit oversight. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15, Congress should replace the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force with a new AUMF containing strict temporal and geographic restrictions. If the executive branch wants to attack a new group or country, it will require new authorization. The most powerful way to restrain feckless wars is to restore the old-fashioned mistrust of promises that technology can deliver cheap military victories. Bombing people, even precisely, tends to produce unanticipated trouble. Those unwilling to sacrifice much for U.S. wars should avoid starting them.

Suggested Readings

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—By Benjamin H. Friedman

15. Reclaiming the War Power

- The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) has served to underwrite a set of far-flung conflicts against a shifting succession of jihadist groups with ever more tenuous connections to the resolution's language and original purpose.
- The 114th Congress introduced a number of unsuccessful proposals to rein in the expansive war powers the president claims.
- Any new AUMF should be carefully crafted to reduce the potential for presidential abuse and should repeal the 2001 and the 2002 (Iraq War) AUMFs.

"The Constitution supposes, what the History of all Governments demonstrates," James Madison wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1798, "that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war. . . . It has accordingly with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislature." As James Wilson had earlier explained to the delegates at the Pennsylvania ratifying convention, "This system will not hurry us into war; it is calculated to guard against it."

In the post-9/11 era, the United States has drifted toward a radically different regime. Two successive presidents have treated the 2001 AUMF as a wholesale, potentially permanent delegation of congressional war powers—a writ for war without temporal or geographic limits.

The 2001 AUMF, passed by the 107th Congress three days after the 9/11 attacks, targeted those who "planned, authorized, [or] committed" the attacks (al Qaeda) and those who "aided" or "harbored" them (principally, the Taliban). Judging by what they said at the time, the legislators who passed the resolution didn't imagine that they had sanctioned an open-ended, multigenerational war. This AUMF was nothing like the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that authorized the Vietnam War, then senator Joe Biden insisted after the vote. This authorization was limited: "We do not say pell-mell, 'Go do anything, any time, any place.'"

The post-9/11 AUMF has now been in effect over twice as long as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and our two post-9/11 presidents have

stretched it into the boundless grant of power Biden disclaimed. Over the past decade and a half, the 2001 AUMF has served to underwrite a set of far-flung conflicts against a shifting succession of jihadist groups with ever more tenuous connections to the resolution's language and original purpose. Lately, the Obama administration has invoked the 2001 AUMF as legal cover for war with ISIS—a conflict that the army chief of staff has said will last some "10 to 20 years" more. *This* system will not hurry us into peace.

Even as the Obama administration relentlessly expanded its interpretation of the 2001 AUMF, the specific terrorist threat it was passed to combat dramatically receded. In the summer of 2011, shortly after U.S. Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden, then defense secretary Leon Panetta announced that the United States was "within reach" of "crippl[ing] al-Qaeda as a threat to this country." By March 2013, Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper confirmed that "core" al Qaeda had been "degraded . . . to a point that the group is probably unable to carry out complex, large-scale attacks in the West."

That same month found senior Obama administration officials admitting to the *Washington Post* that they were "increasingly concerned that the law is being stretched to its legal breaking point." That was before the administration stretched the AUMF still further, to provide legal cover for the war against ISIS that President Obama launched in August 2014.

"We have not yet detected specific plotting against our homeland," Obama explained in his September 10, 2014, speech on U.S. war aims, but "if left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat" beyond the Middle East. "I have the authority to address the threat," he insisted, while declining to identify any particular source.

It soon emerged that the president planned to rely, once again, on the 2001 AUMF. At first, the administration seemed reluctant to outline exactly how the post-9/11 authorization could be stretched to cover a new war against a new enemy, nearly a decade and a half after its passage. But as the mission expanded, the president's spokespeople grew bolder. Last fall, as the administration deployed "boots on the ground" to fight ISIS in Syria, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest insisted: "Congress in 2001 did give the executive branch the authority to take this action. There's no debating that."

The administration's current legal theory appears to be that ISIS basically *is* al Qaeda—or *an* al Qaeda—based on its predecessor

organization's past connections to the group targeted by the 2001 AUMF and on ISIS's current claims that it is "the rightful successor to bin Laden's legacy." That bin Laden's actual, designated successor, Ayman al-Zawihiri, has repudiated and excommunicated ISIS presents something of a problem for that theory, as does the fact that the two groups are engaged in open warfare against each other. Indeed, headlines like "ISIS Beheads Leader of Al Qaeda Offshoot Nusra Front" or "Petraeus: Use Al Qaeda Fighters to Beat ISIS" might give one cause to wonder—or even *debate*—whether ISIS is the same enemy Congress authorized President George W. Bush to wage war against, back before Steve Jobs unveiled the first iPod.

Thus far, however, there's been all too little debate over our continuing drift toward the normalization of perpetual presidential war. In his 2016 State of the Union address, President Obama practically taunted Congress over its lethargy and irrelevance: "Authorize the use of military force against ISIL. Take a vote," he demanded—while making clear in the very next sentence that "with or without congressional action," the war would continue.

The 114th Congress has seen the introduction of a number of proposals to rein in the expansive war powers the president claims. Bills drafted by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) would attack the source of those claims directly, sunsetting and repealing the 2001 AUMF. But a stand-alone repeal is unlikely; a package deal retroactively authorizing the war that the president's been waging without Congress may be a necessary precondition for war powers reform. That's the theory behind proposals introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) and Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ).

Given the history of past AUMFs—which suggests that presidents will stretch the authority they grant as far as language will allow, and possibly further—Congress should reject any new authorization unless it is carefully crafted to reduce the potential for presidential abuse. Any new AUMF should, at a minimum, include the following provisions:

- **Repeal prior AUMFs.** Unless a new AUMF clearly supersedes past authorizations, the next president will remain free to flout its restrictions by claiming that his or her actions are being carried out under prior authorizations for different wars. Thus, any new AUMF should repeal the 2001 authorization and the 2002 Iraq

War AUMF, which the Obama administration has invoked as an alternative legal basis for the fight against ISIS.

- **Impose time limits.** Any new AUMF should also include an expiration date, preventing future presidents from claiming authorization-in-perpetuity. The Schiff bill and the Kaine-Flake AUMF both impose a three-year sunset provision that, as in the PATRIOT Act context, could force Congress to regularly deliberate on whether the authority granted continues to be necessary.
- **Impose geographic limitations.** A new AUMF should also guard against "mission creep" to new theaters of war. Sending U.S. troops to Libya to combat ISIS elements was not on the president's "horizon at the moment," Secretary of State John Kerry said in February 2016, but "the president will never eliminate every option forever," if things change. (Indeed, three weeks later, the administration ordered airstrikes on an ISIS camp in Libya, invoking the 2001 AUMF as authorization.) Congress should restrict those options for him, requiring the president to seek authorization for any new expedition beyond Iraq and Syria.
- **Restrict ground combat operations.** Tactical mission creep has already occurred with U.S. special forces' growing combat role in Iraq and Syria. Ideally, a new AUMF would address that problem directly, but a proposal drafted by Representative Schiff in late 2015 offers a compromise that would require the president to notify Congress of the use of ground forces and fast-track member action to restrict their use.
- **Mandate transparency.** Most important, any new authorization must remove the veil of secrecy that has allowed 15 years of mission creep under the 2001 AUMF. As law professors Jack Goldsmith, Ryan Goodman, and Steve Vladeck have argued, "Any new AUMF should require the president to identify the groups against which force is used, along with related details, regularly in a report to Congress."

In a May 2013 speech, President Obama expressed misgivings—however obliquely—about the aggressive interpretations of presidential authority he'd advanced. "The AUMF is now nearly 12 years old," he intoned. "Unless we discipline our thinking, our definitions, [and] our actions, we may be drawn into more wars we don't need to fight, or continue to grant Presidents unbound powers." He quoted James

Madison's warning, "No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."

We've been testing Madison's proposition for going on 15 years now. A new president and a new Congress can and should bring this dangerous experiment to an end.

Suggested Readings

Jennifer Daskal and Stephen I. Vladeck, "After the AUMF," *Harvard National Security Journal* 5, no. 1 (2014): 115–46.

Jack Goldsmith, Ryan Goodman, and Steve Vladeck, "Five Principles That Should Govern Any U.S. Authorization of Force," *Washington Post* (Online), November 14, 2014.

Gene Healy, *The Cult of the Presidency* (Washington: Cato Institute, 2008).

Matthew C. Weed, "A New Authorization for Use of Military Force against the Islamic State: Issues and Current Proposals," Congressional Research Service, January 15, 2016.

—By Gene Healy

16. The Restraint Constituency and U.S. Foreign Policy

- Leaders' bipartisan support for intervention obscures the existence of a strong restraint-minded constituency in the United States.
- Fears about terrorism and humanitarian concerns remain pertinent for restraint-minded policymakers.
- Effective issue framing can help policymakers build support for a more restrained foreign policy.

This volume has highlighted a variety of alternative foreign policy approaches to key problems, but it has said little about how policymakers can reconcile competing views of national security here in the United States. Even President Obama, who came into office calling for greater restraint than his predecessor, expanded the "war on terror" and engaged in regime change in Libya. With strong bipartisan support for intervention among elites, and vocal critics who seek to increase American intervention not just in the Middle East but in conflicts throughout the world, President Obama was unable to implement many of the more restrained policies he advocated.

Given this, a critical task for the next president will be to navigate between the interventionist tendencies of the right and the left and embrace the "restraint constituency." This constituency—cutting across party lines and representing roughly 38 percent of the public—can be defined by a more restrained set of core attitudes toward the role of the United States in the world and how Washington can best pursue national interests. That contrasts with an "interventionist constituency" that also crosses party lines and represents about a quarter of the public. Since neither constituency's core followers represent a majority, the deciding voice between intervention and restraint in foreign policy debates belongs to the 40 percent of the public that falls somewhere between the two camps.

Though the restraint constituency has the advantage on many important foreign policy issues, public fears about terrorism and other global conflicts will continue to be a significant challenge for

restraint-minded policymakers. Framing world events as "other people's business," reminding the public of the costs of major war, and pursuing an active noninterventionist counterterrorism strategy can help policymakers encourage public support for a more restrained foreign policy.

A Restraint Constituency

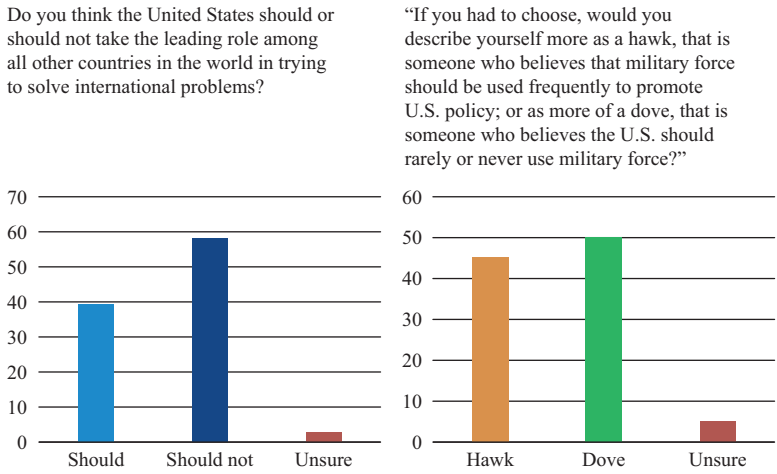
At the most basic level, most Americans agree that the United States should play an active role in world affairs. The best-known poll question on this topic asks whether the United States should "take an active part" or "stay out" of world affairs. The proportion of respondents who say "take an active part" has ranged between 60 and 70 percent since the mid-1980s. What this question fails to reveal, however, is what exactly people mean when they answer it. Taking an "active part" could mean anything from cooperation on free trade to full-scale war, while "stay out" could mean anything from economic isolationism to simply avoiding military intervention.

To get a sense of the size and shape of the restraint constituency and its counterpart, the interventionist constituency, we need to be more specific about how exactly they differ. Two essential beliefs underpin the restraint worldview that distinguish it from the interventionist worldview. The first is that the United States should not seek to solve all of the world's problems. The second is that the United States should only rarely turn to military force to promote U.S. policies around the world. Though polling data paint a somewhat simplistic picture of complex worldviews, Figure 16.1 provides a useful snapshot of Americans' underlying attitudes along these two dimensions. Figure 16.2 combines responses to both questions, helping identify and measure four distinct postures toward foreign affairs.

The American public is divided over the fundamental questions facing the nation regarding foreign policy. The restraint constituency is the largest single bloc at around 37 percent, whereas the interventionist constituency comprises a smaller but still significant 24 percent of Americans. The remainder of the population holds views that are neither consistently restrained nor interventionist.

These predispositions toward restraint and intervention are just that—under certain conditions, even restrainers will support intervention and interventionists will not. At any particular moment, Americans' opinions reflect not only these predispositions but also information com-

Figure 16.1
FOUNDATIONS OF RESTRAINT



SOURCE: CNN/ORC poll, September 11–14, 2014.

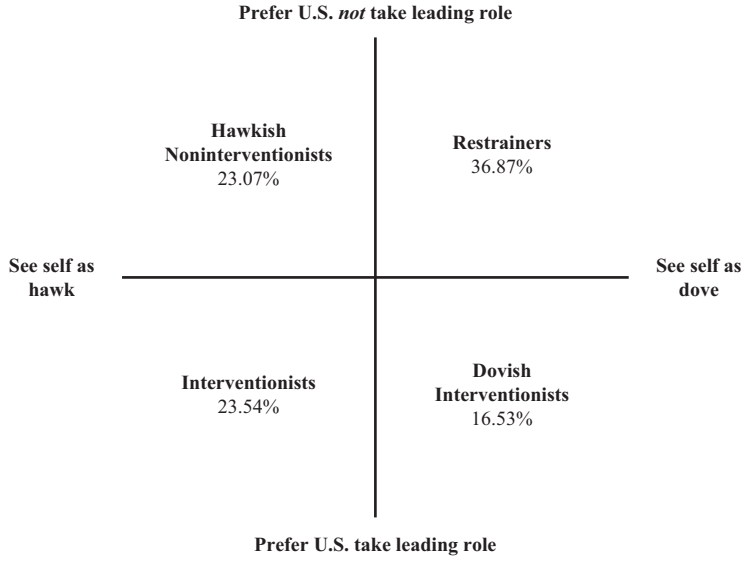
ing from political leaders and the news media about the world. More recent polling on the Islamic State, for example, illustrates that support for an aggressive response has risen considerably across all groups as concerns about the threat posed by ISIS have grown.

The Politics of Restraint Today

The shifting context of international security and domestic politics provides both opportunities and challenges to policymakers trying to chart a restrained path in foreign policy.

Today, two major factors work in favor of restraint. First, Americans remain extremely wary of major war in the Middle East. The 2014 survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, for example, revealed that over 70 percent of Americans are convinced that neither Iraq nor Afghanistan were worth the costs. That viewpoint establishes a high burden of proof for future intervention. Those seeking to repeat a troop-intensive intervention in the Middle East not only will have to explain why the security risk justifies such an action but also must reassure the public that the next ISIS will not emerge in its aftermath.

Figure 16.2
The Restraint Matrix

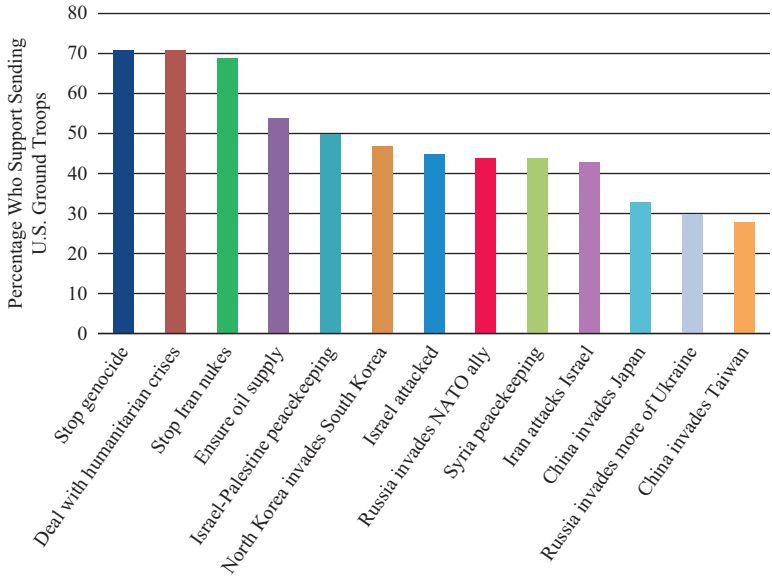


Source: CNN/ORC poll, September 11–14, 2014.

Second, the American public continues to find military intervention justified in relatively few situations. As Figure 16.3 shows, a majority of the public opposes most potential uses of force, with two key exceptions: humanitarian intervention (including preventing genocide) and preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Taken together, these two factors suggest that a president advocating a restraint-based foreign policy is likely to enjoy substantial popular support.

At the same time, however, the emergence of ISIS clearly represents a significant challenge to such a president. The group's barbarism and military success, along with the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, have driven public support for an aggressive response to levels not seen since the early days after 9/11. Drawing on the Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2015 survey, Figure 16.4 reveals public support across party lines for a host of counterterrorism activities.

Figure 16.3
WHAT ISSUES JUSTIFY SENDING U.S. GROUND TROOPS?



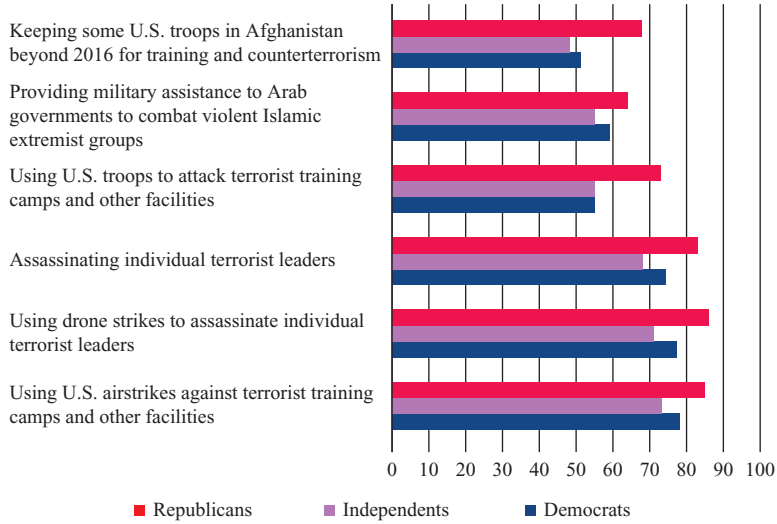
SOURCE: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2014.

The Road Ahead: Priming the Restraint Constituency

Continued clashes between the restraint and interventionist constituencies are inevitable. Both camps can rely on a core of followers to support their positions and both have illustrated the ability—on different issues—to command majority support. The key questions thus become under what conditions will the restraint constituency win the day, and how can policymakers help make that happen? Restraint-minded policymakers can make the strongest case possible in various ways.

Most important, policymakers should assert a "civil conflict" frame when discussing the situation in places like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and any future failed or troubled state. Historically, the restraint position has been most compelling when Americans believe they are being asked to intervene to resolve other nations' internal problems, while interventionist arguments have been strongest when Americans are asked to take action against a group or nation that poses a direct threat to the United States. In reality, of course, public perception often depends in

Figure 16.4
Support for Counterterrorism Intervention



Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2015.

large part on how the president, other political leaders, and the media frame that issue in the first place.

The Syrian civil war provides an excellent illustration of this dynamic. In 2013, the popular perception was that, although tragic, the situation was above all a civil war and primarily Syria's problem. As a result, 68 percent of the public told pollsters that the United States did not bear responsibility for Syria, and a similar majority opposed sending troops or even providing aid to the rebels fighting Assad. Yet a large percentage of the public now sees Syria not as a civil war but as a battlefield on which to confront the threat of terrorism, largely thanks to the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino.

Restraint-minded policymakers should also invoke the length and cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the chaos that both created, including the birth of ISIS. Even as Americans indicate a desire to move more aggressively against ISIS, they remain extremely wary of a full-scale ground war. To the extent that political leaders can keep the public focused on the dangers of any military engagement, they can reduce the appeal of calls for more intervention.

Finally, policymakers, especially the president, should emphasize noninterventionist strategies for counterterrorism. It is clear that the fear of terrorism is the most likely cause of future American intervention abroad in the near to medium term. And though nothing can completely eliminate calls from the interventionist constituency to play whack-a-mole abroad in order to combat terrorist groups, the majority of the public traditionally prefers exploring nonmilitary means of solving problems over the use of force. Highlighting active nonmilitary counterterrorism efforts is likely to reduce public support for military intervention.

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A. Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, *Millennials and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Next Generation's Attitudes toward Foreign Policy and War (and Why They Matter)* (Washington: Cato Institute, June 2015).

—By A. Trevor Thrall

17. Practical Rules for U.S. Military Intervention Abroad

- The effectiveness and strength of the U.S. military tempts policymakers to use force abroad even when U.S. vital interests are not at stake.
- Force should be used only when vital national security interests are at stake, when a clear national consensus exists, when the costs of conflict have been thoroughly considered, and when military objectives are well articulated and realistic.
- Even when these conditions are met, policymakers should carefully weigh the costs and risks of conflict against alternative policies.

Any nation with vast power will be tempted to use it, and the United States is exceptional because its power is so vast. Small, weak countries avoid fighting in distant disputes that do not affect their security. The risk that assets directed elsewhere might be unavailable for defense generally keeps them focused on more proximate dangers. The U.S. government, by contrast, doesn't have to worry that sending U.S. troops abroad might leave America more vulnerable to attack by powerful adversaries.

Americans have often responded favorably when other peoples in need have appealed to us for assistance. We are a generous people, and we want to be able to help others. But our willingness to do so has often undermined our security by involving us in disputes that we don't understand and rarely can control. In effect, Washington has created an entire class of dependent states that are disinclined to do more to defend themselves and their interests. Their inability to address local threats invites U.S. intervention and the vicious cycle continues.

Policymakers in Washington generally ignore these problems, believing instead that U.S. military intervention advances global security. This study of foreign policy alternatives documents the many reasons why that might not be true. The authors here urge policymakers to consider other ways for the United States to remain engaged globally, ways

that do not obligate the American people to bear all the costs and that do not obligate U.S. troops to bear all the risks.

This chapter focuses on the use of force. It provides specific guidelines that policymakers should keep in mind before supporting military intervention, especially the use of ground troops. These criteria would discipline our choices, clearly signal when the U.S. military is likely to be deployed abroad, and could empower others to act when the United States does not.

Vital U.S. National Security Interest at Stake

The United States should not send U.S. troops into harm's way unless *a vital U.S. national security interest is at stake*. Unfortunately, the consensus in Washington defines U.S. national security interests too broadly. Protecting the physical security of the territory of the United States and ensuring the safety of its people are vital national security interests. Advancing U.S. prosperity is an important goal, but it is best achieved by peaceful means, most importantly through trade and other forms of voluntary exchange. Similarly, the U.S. military should generally not be used to spread U.S. values, such as liberal democracy and human rights. It should be focused on defending this country from physical threats. The military should be poised to deter attacks and to fight and win the nation's wars if deterrence fails.

This criterion is more stringent, for example, than the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, which held that U.S. troops should not be sent overseas "unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies." By effectively equating U.S. national interests with those of our allies, it allowed for a range of interventions that would not be considered automatically valid under the criterion spelled out here. Policymakers should not risk the lives of U.S. troops to protect others' interests as though they were our own.

Clear National Consensus

The American people must understand why they are being asked to risk blood and treasure and, crucially, must have a say in whether to do so. The U.S. military should not be engaged in combat operations overseas unless *a clear national consensus* is behind the mission.

Although modern technology allows constituents to easily communicate their policy preferences, traditional methods are just as effective in ascertaining whether the American people support the use of force.

We should rely on the tool written into the Constitution: the stipulation that Congress alone, not the president, possesses the power to take the country to war.

As noted in Chapter 15, Congress has regularly evaded its obligations. Although the U.S. military has been in a continuous state of war over the past 15 years, few in Congress have ever weighed in publicly on the wisdom or folly of any particular foreign conflict. Some now interpret Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, or United Nations Security Council resolutions, as obligating the United States to wage war without explicit authorization from Congress. This is unacceptable. The president retains the authority to repel attacks against the United States, but the authority to deploy U.S. forces abroad, and to engage in preemptive or preventive wars of choice, resides with the Congress—and by extension the people—of the United States.

Understanding of the Costs—and How to Pay Them

We must also *understand the costs of war and know how we will pay them* before we choose to go down that path. We cannot accurately gauge popular support for a given military intervention overseas if the case for war is built on unrealistic expectations and best-case scenarios. There is no such thing as a free lunch, and there is certainly no such thing as a free war.

Deficit spending allows the federal government to pretend otherwise. Politicians make promises, with the bills coming due long after they've left office. Advocates for a military intervention should be forced to frame their solution in relation to costs—including the long-term costs to care for the veterans of the conflict—as well as to explain what government expenditures should be cut, or taxes increased, to pay for their war. The American people should have the final say in choosing whether additional military spending to prosecute minor, distant conflicts is worth the cost, including the opportunity costs: the crucial domestic priorities that must be forgone or future taxes paid.

Clear and Obtainable Military Objectives

We cannot compare the costs or wisdom of going to war if we do not know what our troops will be asked to do. The U.S. military should never be sent into harm's way without a set of *clear and obtainable military objectives*.

Such considerations do not apply when a country's survival is at stake. But wars of choice—the types of wars that the United States has fought in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere—are different. Advocates for such wars must demonstrate not only that the fight is necessary to secure vital U.S. interests, that it has public support, and that it is paid for, but also that the military's mission is defined and attainable.

Military victory is rarely sufficient, however, as our recent wars and interventions demonstrate. In the case of regime-change wars, ensuring that a successful transition to a stable, friendly government occurs, and that no vacuum is left behind, can take a considerable amount of time and resources. Whatever replaces the defeated forces must represent a marked improvement in order for the war to advance U.S. vital interests. Policymakers, therefore, must not only define the military objective but also detail what the resultant peace looks like and how we will know the mission is complete.

It is easy for Washington to start wars, but policymakers cannot leave U.S. troops on the hook for ending them. They must account for the tendency of war to drag on for years or more, and plan for an acceptable exit strategy before committing troops.

Use of Force as a Last Resort

The four criteria above are not enough to establish a war's legitimacy, or the wisdom of waging it. After all, modern nation-states have the ability to wreak unimaginable horror on a massive scale. That obviously doesn't imply that they should. Thus, the fifth and final rule concerning military intervention is force should be *used only as a last resort*, after we have exhausted other means for resolving a foreign policy challenge that threatens vital U.S. national security interests.

This point is informed by centuries-old concepts of justice. Civilized societies abhor war, even those waged for the right reasons and that adhere to widely respected norms, such as proportionality and reasonable protections for noncombatants. War, given its uncertainty and destructiveness, should never be entered into lightly or for trivial reasons.

America has an exceptional capacity for waging war. U.S. policymakers therefore have a particular obligation to remember that war is a last resort. Precisely because no one else is likely to constrain them, they must constrain themselves.

Conclusion

U.S. foreign policy should contain a built-in presumption against the use of force. That does not mean that war is never the answer, rather that it is rarely the best answer. Americans today enjoy a measure of safety that our ancestors would envy and that our contemporaries do envy. We generally do not need to wage war to keep it that way. On the contrary, recent wars have degraded the U.S. military and undermined our security. Policymakers should be extremely reluctant to risk American lives abroad, particularly when the criteria outlined here are not met.

The U.S. military is the finest fighting force in the world; it comprises dedicated professionals who are willing and able to fight almost anywhere, practically on a moment's notice. Any military large enough to defend our vital national security interests will always be capable of intervening in distant disputes. But that does not mean that it should. Policymakers have an obligation to carefully weigh the most momentous decision that they are ever asked to make. These criteria can help.

Suggested Readings

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—By Christopher Preble

Contributors

Emma Ashford is a research fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and was a special assistant to President Ronald Reagan.

Ted Galen Carpenter is senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, and is the author of 10 books.

Travis Evans is the external relations manager for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and is a graduate of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

Benjamin H. Friedman is a research fellow in defense and homeland security studies at the Cato Institute and an adjunct lecturer at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.

Eugene Gholz is the Stanley Kaplan Visiting Professor of American Foreign Policy at Williams College (2015–16), an associate professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, and an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute.

Eric Gomez is a research associate for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

Brendan Rittenhouse Green is an assistant professor at the University of Cincinnati.

Gene Healy is a vice president at the Cato Institute, and author of *The Cult of the Presidency*.

Austin Long is an associate professor at the School of International and Public Affairs and a member of the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University.

John Mueller is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a senior research scientist at the Mershon Center, and a member of the political science department at the Ohio State University. He is the author or co-author of 14 books.

Christopher Preble is the vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and an instructor at the University of California, Washington Center.

William Ruger is vice president for research and policy at the Charles Koch Institute, vice president for research at the Charles Koch Foundation, and a research fellow in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute. He is also an officer in the Reserve Component of the U.S. Navy and a veteran of the Afghanistan War.

Bradford Stapleton is a visiting research fellow in defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

A. Trevor Thrall is a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and an associate professor at George Mason University's School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs.

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