

# Global Political Trends: *Integration or Disintegration?*

**T**oday's international system is in transition, a process that began a decade ago and likely will take several years until a new pattern congeals. A sense of perspective is needed. Compared to the Cold War and earlier periods during this century, the world today is less endangered and more peaceful. Democracy and capitalism have emerged as admired values and serve as a beacon for others to follow. Today, a strong market economy is a better means of gaining national power and prestige than military power and aggression. Current challengers to market democracy are few, disunited, and weak. Above all, no organized global coalition challenges the security of the Western democratic core states. For the United States and its close democratic allies, these are undeniably good times.

Less clear is whether this favorable strategic situation is temporary or permanent. The negative events of the past months are worrisome because they may foretell more dangerous developments. Historically, periods of tranquility have proven ephemeral. Much depends on future major power relations, regional developments, and cross-regional trends in such areas as economics and security affairs.

## Key Trends

### An Amorphous Political System and Greater Uncertainty

The current international system remains dominated by many nation-states. They act primarily on their own interests, albeit within multilateral institutions and transnational trends. These limit their sovereignty in important ways. As countless scholars state, the nation-state system has its own disorder. The Cold War created a sense of order. Much of the world was divided into two competing blocs—democratic and communist. This bipolar order has now disappeared, leaving the still-united Western bloc peering outward at several critical regions that have no apparent order of their own. How these amorphous, often-troubled regions will evolve is the looming issue of the coming two decades.

The future is clouded in part because the global community lacks consensus regarding political values and ideology. Liberal democracy and market capitalism remain the West's dominant values, and their spread is the principal hope for a peaceful 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although prospects are good in many areas, their adoption everywhere is less certain. Many cultures neither

accept Western values nor benefit from the underlying conditions that allow these values to develop. In many places, authoritarianism persists, even though it lacks a compelling rationale. Some fear that raw-boned statism, abusive nationalism, corporate fascism, and anti-Western cultures are gaining strength. The underlying reality is that, for many countries, pursuit of national interests is the primary way to define their identities. Yet, the global community lacks an identity of its own.

How should national interests be interpreted? Some observers judge that, in today's world, economic agendas dominate. They assume that peace and cooperation will emerge, because prosperity in today's global economy depends on countries seeking both. This is a key trend, but whether it is a compelling one is another matter. History shows that economics have caused countries to wage war, not embrace peace. More fundamentally, human beings are influenced by the full range of emotions and pathologies. A vibrant world economy does not resolve many countries' strategic dilemmas that are the result of their geography and neighbors. Indeed, economic progress can exacerbate problems if it enables rogues and troublemakers to gain power. As a result, traditional security interests remain valid.

For many countries, the pursuit of traditional security interests is not inimical to peace.

The Western community discovered that cooperation is the best way to enhance individual as well as collective interests. In the future, other countries in amorphous regions may discover the same. Yet, cooperation and integration are achievable only when countries overcome age-old disputes.

In many of today's amorphous regions, such favorable conditions do not exist. Historical disputes linger and sometimes flare. In some places,

genuine rogues exist, and their conduct fosters war rather than peace. In other places, suspicion prevails rather than trust. Many countries fear that multilateral cooperation means that rival neighbors will gain advantage.

Many countries reside in fast-changing regions. They are hard pressed to handle domestic

agendas, much less the turbulent regional environment around them. For some, change promises progress. But for others it brings uncomfortable uncertainties and new dangers.

Regardless of change or continuity, instability has a variety of origins. Failing states can collapse into ethnic warfare that spreads to neighboring countries, as occurred in the Balkans. Ambitious rogues can aggressively attack neighbors, such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Geopolitical competition unintentionally triggered World War I. No major country wanted war, but short-sighted policies led to it.

Today's world has seen the first two kinds of instability, but not the third. Some claim that major geopolitical rivalry will never occur in an information-age world economy, where military power and diplomatic maneuvering are obsolete. The validity of this judgment has yet to be demonstrated. Geopolitical competition tends to unfold slowly over decades. Although times have changed, the major powers still occupy the same geostrategic positions that produced past rivalries.

The consequence is a mixed setting. The potential for cooperation exists in some places but is lacking in others. Areas are still experiencing ongoing deep-seated conflicts or have the potential for new ones. This checkered pattern, in a fast-changing world that lacks sound security relationships, contributes to a murky international system and uncertain future.

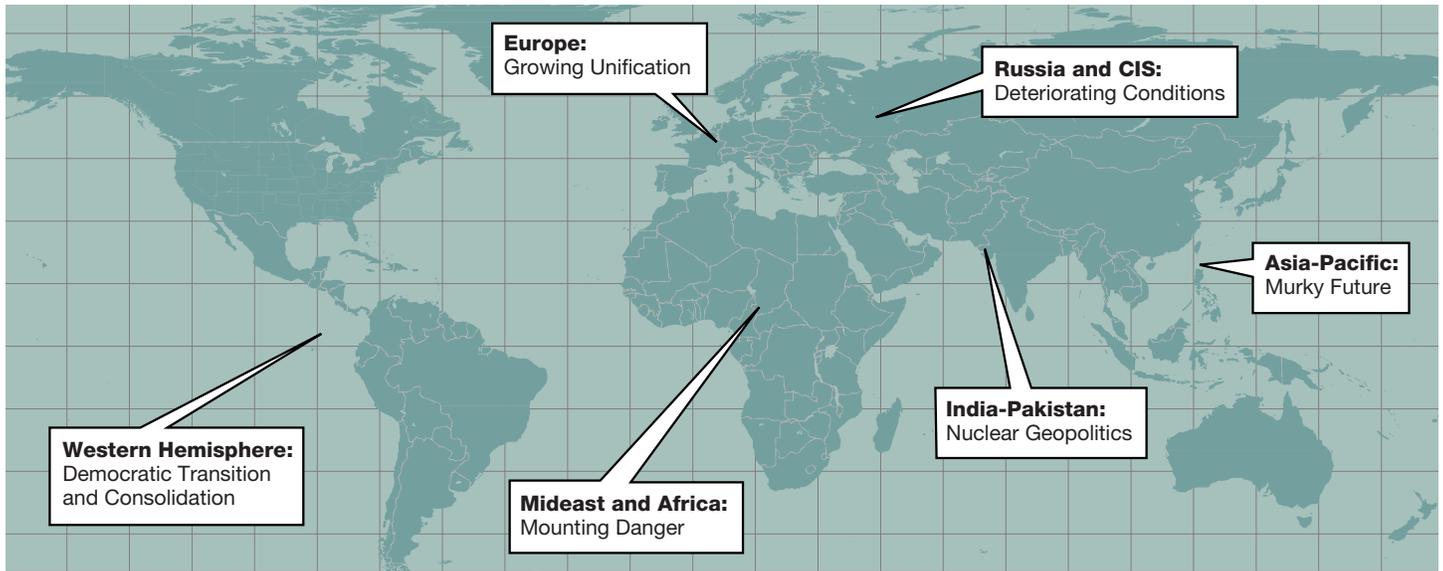
## Clearer Strategic Identities Complicating World Affairs

Principal countries are acquiring clearer strategic identities that will complicate international affairs. Four years ago, *Strategic Assessment 1995* portrayed the global system as divided into four groups of countries: the Western democratic core, transition states, rogue states, and failing states. Although this concept remains valid, its simplicity is being challenged. Several countries are defining their identities in ways that defy categorization. This can be seen within the Western democratic community. By one count, 118 countries have democratic governments. Democracy's rapid expansion in recent years has resulted in a highly differentiated community. The Western industrial countries—roughly twenty in North America, Europe, and Asia—are the "core." As a result of



**Marines enroute to Puerto Rico to provide humanitarian relief in the wake of Hurricane Georges**

## Global Trends



close security and economic ties during the Cold War, these countries are bonded in cooperative relations today, even though they do not always agree on new-era security issues.

By contrast, the “outer core” is composed of the remaining democracies. They have varying degrees of closeness with the core states and show varying degrees of constitutional practice. Some countries may join the democratic core in the near to long term. Others may not join at all, cooperating with the democratic core only in limited circumstances. Still others distrust the democratic core and may oppose it. This does not reduce the importance of democracy’s enlargement, but it does mean that some states will not easily support cooperative efforts regarding global security and economic issues.

A similar trend is occurring in the “transition states”—Russia, China, and India. A few years ago, these were seen as moving toward market democracies and participating in the Western community. This category also included a number of other countries. They were not democracies, but they were not rogues or failing states, either.

Today, the strategic identities of the three key transition countries have become clearer than before. Russia is a struggling democracy. India is a full democracy. China still has an authoritarian regime. However, each pursues foreign policies anchored in national interests. None is a rogue, but none seems likely to join the Western democratic core anytime soon. All three seem willing to oppose some U.S. policies occasionally,

while cooperating on others. The same applies to many other countries undergoing transition. The rise of genuinely neutral but internationally active states, capable of moving in one direction or the other, may become a feature on the international terrain.

The category of “rogues” seems clear and enduring. While the definition of a rogue state is difficult to pin down, it correlates closely to those states that support aggression and terrorism. A rogue state is an outlaw country capable of instigating conflict with the United States and its allies. Iraq and North Korea are examples. Just as common criminals vary in degree of unlawful conduct, rogues do also. Serbia seems to be a part-time rogue, and Iran may be moving from full-time to part-time rogue. The future may witness more gray-area rogues, making them harder to deal with.

A similar conclusion applies to “failing states.” A few years ago, many worried that other countries might go the way of Bosnia and Rwanda, consumed by ethnic violence that weak governments cannot control. This fear has not been fully realized, although many candidates exist. Yet, many countries clearly fall into a new category of “troubled and not succeeding.” They have weak governments and societies and cannot compete in the global economy. They are vulnerable to the kind of internal disorders that could have a destabilizing impact on regional security affairs.

These clearer but more diverse strategic identities are contributing to a more complicated world. This prospect could mean an international security environment that is less reassuring than today and harder to manage.

Key functional trends are both integrative and disintegrative, and, while international institutions can moderate global political strife, they cannot eliminate it.

A “functional trend” cuts across several regions, affecting all of them. Two such trends are the spread of information technology and the growth of the world economy. They reflect growing globalization, whereby all regions and countries are being drawn into closer relations and interdependency. Previously, the principal hope was that these functional trends would lead to closer cooperation among countries. Recent experience suggests a more guarded appraisal. In some ways, these trends are having an integrative effect. But many of the same trends are also having disintegrative effects.

The countervailing effects of functional trends are already evident. The information era makes communications global and nearly instantaneous. Consequently, cultures and regions are more aware of each other, but local crises can quickly become global in this environment. Modern communications speed global finances, but they can quickly exacerbate the impact of local bank failures and loan defaults. Economic globalization can increase trade and produce greater prosperity for countries, but as the Asian economic crisis shows, globalization can quickly transmit economic troubles from a few countries to many. The dynamic world economy creates losers as well as winners in ways that can motivate the losers to act disruptively in security affairs. Likewise, the need for access to oil, gas, and other resources creates reasons for countries to cooperate in order to gain adequate supplies for all. But it can also give rise to serious conflicts when resources are scarce, or when a few countries control supplies and are unwilling to share them fairly with other users.

Global military trends are similarly complicated. Widespread military downsizing is enhancing stability. So are existing multilateral arms control agreements. Yet, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is having the opposite effect. Conventional force modernization may give rogues broader latitude for aggression. Transnational trends have the same dual effect. The need to control global warming

and environmental erosion gives many countries a reason to work together. But the growing menace posed by transnational terrorism, drugs, and organized crime enhances the dangers and turbulence of the modern era.

Today’s multilateral institutions produce stabilizing and integrative effects, but they do not fully eliminate the anarchy of the nation-state system. Multilateral institutions, such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization, and the ASEAN Regional Forum, help countries coordinate their economic policies, but do not forestall conflicts when recessions occur or trade barriers cannot be eliminated. Today’s arms control accords, like the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, have a moderating effect but are not producing global disarmament or denying rogues the weapons they seek.

## Accelerating WMD Proliferation

The proliferation of WMD has always been a threat, but for a long time it occurred more slowly than many expected. Now it is accelerating. India and Pakistan’s nuclear detonations were the most dramatic events. North Korea has launched extended-range missiles. Iraq may be hiding WMD systems, and Iran is assembling weapons and delivery vehicles. Previously, many believed that rogues would acquire WMD systems and delivery vehicles after 2010. Now this seems likely within the coming decade.

The Western community is attempting to stem the tide and may succeed. But if it fails, the consequences could be incalculable. Rogues with WMD systems will be emboldened, perhaps committing aggression under the guise of deterring a Western response. Endangered countries may seek their own WMD systems. The United States and its key allies will face pressures to protect themselves, along with other countries and regions. Regional affairs will become less stable, and a climate of fear and uncertainty will emerge. South Asia is one obvious example, but other regions may be affected as well.

## Evolving Key Regions

The key regions are evolving in different ways, and the interrelations between them are becoming more pronounced. Europe is headed toward stability and unity. NATO and the EU are enlarging eastward, while Russia struggles to influence the process in ways reflecting its interests.

The greatest dangers to Europe likely will come from the south, in the Balkans and the geostrategic arc stretching from North Africa, through Turkey, to the Persian Gulf. The central question facing Europe is whether it will focus only on its consolidation, or look outward to regions where common Western interests are endangered.

In Eurasia, the struggle to build democracy and market economies continues toward an unclear destination. Despite the gains since 1992, progress has slowed and Russia seems to be losing its grip on its own evolution. Whether Russia is finished as a great power is yet to be seen, but it is unlikely to regain its major power status in the coming years. A weak Russia poses no major conventional military threat to Europe. However, Russian power has always held much of Eurasia together. Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States could become a geopolitical ghetto marked by economic turmoil, weak governments, organized crime, social instability, and residual military power. Such regional chaos may be a new menace to Europe, as it would be a natural breeding ground for authoritarianism, even fascism.

In Asia, the only near-term threat of war is on the Korean peninsula. Elsewhere, Asia's strength is growing, even though its economic prospects are cloudy. Democracy has a firmer foothold in Asia owing to changes in such key countries as South Korea and Taiwan. The current economic crisis could mean more democracy and market economies in Southeast Asia. What Asia lacks is collective security mechanisms. Today, security is achieved through a network of bilateral ties between Asian countries and the United States. The Asian countries themselves are cooperating in economic but not security affairs.

Asia is a classic multipolar system, but does not appear to mirror the traditionally troubled history of such systems. The Korean peninsula aside, Asia lacks the inflamed animosities and widespread rivalries that create imminent explosiveness. Although many countries distrust each other, they are not preparing for war, and their information-age economies are slowly drawing them together. In the future, China's evolution will be key. Its power grows even as it clings to authoritarian rule. If China becomes a cooperative partner of the West, Asia's future will likely be stable. If it emerges as an intimidating country with assertive geopolitical aims, growing instability could be the result. China and Japan could become rivals, making Northeast Asia more tense. A struggle could ensue over control of critical sea lines of communication along the Asian crescent

from Southeast Asia to Japan. This negative development may not be likely, but it is possible, if security affairs are mishandled. Today, Asia is capable of moving in several directions.

The most explosive region is the vast zone encompassing the Middle East, Persian Gulf, and South Asia. The principal democracies are Israel and Turkey in the Middle East, and India and Pakistan in South Asia. Elsewhere, democracy is not developing, nor are market economies taking hold. Danger lies in polarized politics, rampant poverty, fundamentalism, terrorism, WMD proliferation, and the potential vulnerability of pro-Western governments, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The region contains three dangerous rogue states: Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Iran shows signs of diplomatic moderation. Iraq remains defiant to the West, which continues to have vital interests at stake in the Persian Gulf, including access to 40 percent of the world's oil supplies.

If WMD proliferation accelerates, Iraq and Iran could be more troublesome. Israel and other pro-Western countries would be less secure than now. India and Pakistan could move closer to nuclear confrontation. What occurs in this region will depend heavily on three issues: the Arab-Israeli peace process, Gulf security affairs, and the India-Pakistan standoff. Most seasoned observers are more pessimistic than hopeful.

Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have been regarded as the backwaters of global security affairs, yet both are large and important regions, and Western interests are at stake in both regions. Sub-Saharan Africa is progressing toward democracy and economic improvement. Yet, some governments behave as rogues, poverty dominates, and the potential for savage ethnic violence exists. Africa will make slow progress, but with numerous setbacks. Central and South America are advancing toward democracy and multinational cooperation. But, some countries are vulnerable to political instability and social strife. Mexico and Cuba are especially important to U.S. interests.

Recent experience suggests that these key regions are affecting each other. For example, Europe's enlargement closer to Russia and Eurasia will eliminate the "neutral" zone between them. Europe and the Greater Middle East are interacting in ways suggesting that they are becoming closely connected. Russia and China are pursuing cooperation. Both are asserting



**President Clinton issuing a warning to Saddam Hussein, flanked by Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Henry Shelton**

themselves in Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf affairs to counter U.S. policies. Oil and gas in the Caspian basin are entangling the interests of many powerful actors—Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, India, Europe, and the United States. Big power relations in Asia are being influenced by the political climate in other regions, including the Greater Middle East. Asia will influence the political climate in Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East.

A new global geostrategic dynamic is emerging. It suggests the need for a global focus in U.S. strategy, rather than maintaining a regional focus. After all, globalization is making the world a single entity.

The world could become more stable and peaceful, if today's integrative trends succeed. This does not mean that conflict and strife will disappear everywhere. It does mean that the level of danger will decline appreciably. For example, Europe may unify, Eurasia may become fully democratic, and Asia may become stable. The West's strategic dilemmas would be eased, allowing it to focus on a still-troubled Greater

Middle East. Such an outcome is not foreordained, and it may no longer be probable. The central challenge lies in getting it to take hold and grow in a troubled setting.

Unfavorable scenarios should also be considered. A highly unlikely one is a new superpower challenging a unified military alliance in the West. The second possible scenario might be more failed states, local violence, and organized crime. It could also include the emergence of more regional rogue states armed with WMD. A third possible scenario would be geopolitical conflict with Russia and/or China. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could alternate over time.

A major concern would be coalitions composed of disaffected groups, regional rogues, and major power rivals united by common interests rather than ideology. Previously, such a coalition seemed improbable. Signs indicate it may be emerging. Some big powers have already supported regional rogues. This trend could gain

momentum, as recalcitrant groups and states realize that they can better advance common interests through a cooperative effort, rather than separately. This also may be a natural geostrategic dynamic. Historically, international security systems typically began as loose, amorphous, and multipolar. But they often have coalesced into two opposing camps that become susceptible to war and other political conflicts.

Today's global security structure could follow this trend. It is characterized by a large U.S.-led Western community facing numerous regions lacking order and structure. It may enlarge, incorporating more countries and isolating others. Those countries that do not join the Western community could form an opposing order. This development is far from inevitable, but its occurrence would not defy history or logic.

Probabilities cannot be assigned to these futures. They will be the result of multiple, interacting events that include the choices of key countries and how they decide to interact with each other. The question is, how will these countries decide to act?

## Potential Dangers and Threats

Previously, popular opinion held that the leading democracies control the future shape of the international system. However, the world is stubbornly resistant to any overall design. Yet the opposite conclusion—of Western impotency and irrelevancy—is equally wrong. The United States and its allies are not canoeists caught in a raging global torrent, with only tiny paddles to keep them from capsizing and drowning. Their democratic values and strategic assets can substantially influence economic and security trends. They cannot dictate how the world evolves, but they can steer themselves in the right directions, in ways that support their economic and security interests.

Influencing the future requires sustained allied and U.S. engagement. Although the United States is a superpower, it is not capable of managing all the security requirements for the major regions. However, the task becomes more manageable with allied participation. The likely consequences of U.S. and allied isolationism illustrate the importance of engagement. Rogues would have greater latitude to commit aggression. Threatened countries would feel compelled to build military forces and be more assertive of their interests. The spirit of cooperation that is prevalent among many nations today would diminish. Global tensions would

increase. The world economy would become less prosperous. Democracy would become endangered in many places.

Effective engagement requires policies aimed at promoting integration and peaceful cooperation. It also requires policies aimed at preventing disintegration, conflict, and other negative trends. Both are equally important. Negative events over the past few months underscore the importance of preventive measures. If this trend continues, the United States and its allies will have compelling reasons to forge integrated strategies to prevent them. In fact, preventing negative trends may be a prerequisite for promoting integration and cooperation. More specifically, maintaining a climate of stability and security will be needed, if the Western allies are to continue spreading democracy, building a prosperous world economy and encouraging peaceful multilateralism. As a result, emerging conditions support the judgment that realism and idealism are becoming two sides of the same coin, rather than opposing approaches for making policies.

Preventive measures must consider those developments that could have destabilizing effects. The following is a list of potential threats and dangers:

- Aggression by current rogues, and emergence of new rogues
- Increasing ethnic warfare and violence from failed states
- Accelerating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles
- Spreading terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking
- Military developments that erode U.S. superiority and encourage regional aggression
- Authoritarian rule in Russia or other major countries, coupled with militarism and imperialism
- An anti-Western global coalition of rogues and malcontents
- Clashes over resources, or a global economic collapse that produces widespread frustration and less political cooperation
- Geopolitical rivalry with Russia and/or China
- Emergence of a strong Islamic alliance in the Greater Middle East that seriously challenges Western interests
- Disintegration of the Western Alliance system and renewed nationalism.

How serious are these dangers and threats? The first five already exist and may be intensifying. The remainder are not imminent, but they would be likely if global events take a downturn. The past century has demonstrated that the United States has interests that demand sustained peacetime engagement. In the first half of the century, the United States remained aloof

## The World Order

A decade after the Berlin Wall was torn down and a new international system was born, the nature of that new system is not yet clear. It is a fluid and complex system in evolution. But evolution toward what? History shows that the fluidity in today's world has precedents in the early stages of each of the past five international systems. Each of those previous systems had a life cycle: there was a tendency for fluidity and multipolarity to turn into rigidity and bipolarity, with that bipolarity in turn resulting in large-scale conflict (or a Cold War) and the demise of the existing international system. There are signs that history may repeat itself and that our current international system may be moving into a more bipolar and more dangerous stage. It is the role of the statesman to recognize this potential danger and deal with it in a timely fashion.

### Five Previous International Systems

- The international system of 1776 had been multipolar for decades, but the American Revolution was part of a broader process that eventually formed loose bipolar arrangements focused on Great Britain and France.

As Napoleon's power grew at the turn of the century, he was still able to form fluid alliances on the Continent to isolate and defeat his enemies. The system became tightly bipolar when Britain, Russia, and their allies united against an aggressive and republican France. This clash culminated in the battles of Borodino, Leipzig, and Waterloo, where the first system ended.

- A new Concert of Europe was born in Vienna in 1815 ushering in the second international system, which was based upon a balance of power designed to prevent a hegemon from arising again on the continent. Great Britain acted independently as the balancer, contributing to the fluidity of the system. The Concert system kept the peace for much of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with most of the conflict recorded between Russia and Turkey on the periphery. The Revolutions of 1848, however, began to erode legitimacy and the antihegemonic cohesion that made the system work. Conservative Russia's interference in the internal affairs of Balkan states proved unacceptable to liberal Britain and France. The second system thus ended with the Crimean War.

- The period between the Crimean War and World War I best illustrates the turn toward bipolarity in the evolution of an international system. This third system also began in a multipolar and very fluid fashion. Prussia's Otto von Bismarck was a master manipulator and used the diplomatic freedom allowed by the new system to unify Germany. In preparing for war with Denmark over Schleswig and Holstein, Bismarck first secured the support of Austria. In preparing for war with Austria, he secured France's neutrality. In preparing for war with France, he convinced Russia to deploy forces in such a way as to insure Austria's neutrality. Bismarck's successful "realpolitik" continued until 1890, when Kaiser Wilhelm II replaced him. Without Bismarck, Germany was unable to manage the informal and complex alliance system. The formation of the Triple Entente and the Central Powers Alliance in the early 1900s created a more rigid bipolar system, in which each cluster of allies drew closer together for fear of isolation. Commitments were reinforced, armies were strengthened, war plans were made more automatic, and conflict became almost inevitable.

- World War I and the collapse of monarchies throughout much of Europe led the Allies to create in 1919 a more formal, global version of a

basic collective security structure that had brought a degree of peace to Europe in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of an informal Concert system with a semi-independent balancer, they created a League of Nations under which states agreed to provide for collective security by aligning themselves against a potential aggressor. The point is that a fluid arrangement was created which sought to provide security without rigid alliances. The League experiment with collective security failed because countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, and, until 1926, Germany were not members, and because strict enforcement measures proposed by the French were not adopted. During the 1930s, the world polarized into two rigid camps of Axis dictatorships and Allied democracies. Weakness in the Allied camp plus a shift in the bipolar balance due to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact were enough to convince Hitler that achieving victory through aggression would work. World War II ended the fourth system.

- The postwar security system, formed in part at the Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco Conferences, was the creation of the United States and its Allies, who were determined to use their "second chance" to get it right. They created a new global collective security system embodied in the United Nations that once again relied for the maintenance of security not on rigid alliances but on the fluid alignment of nations in the Security Council. Its failing was the requirement for Big Five unanimity for any military action, and its saving grace was Article 51 of the Charter, which reinforced the right to individual and collective self-defense. The early multipolarity of this fifth system lasted only a few years as the United States moved to counter Soviet aggression. By April 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created consistent with Article 51. Bipolarity was formalized in 1955 with West Germany's incorporation into NATO and the formation of the Warsaw Pact. It lasted until 1989.

### Lessons from this History

Some lessons from this history may provide guidance for diplomacy today. International systems tend to last two to three generations. They are both created and destroyed by large-scale conflict. Like complex biological systems, international systems appear to go through life cycles with birth, flexibility in youth, more rigidity as the system matures, and demise. Each of these five systems was initially multipolar rather than bipolar. Multipolarity made them more complex; movement in the system was relatively fluid, and state diplomacy could be flexible. As each of the five previous systems matured, a degree of bipolarity set in. This was most prominent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rigid sets of alignments that eventually resulted in World Wars I and II and with the bipolarity of the Cold War. But a similar phenomenon occurred when major powers aligned against France early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and again against Russia at midcentury.

In at least four of the five systems, bipolarity had ideological underpinnings. Common interests and common fears bound the parties in all cases. The systems became more rigid either as a result of political turmoil or because of the use of force by either alliance.

In some cases, the rigidly bipolar phase occurred late in the system's life cycle. That was particularly true for the first two historical systems. In the case of the Cold War, it occurred early and lasted for decades. In every case it led to confrontation, and in all but the last it resulted in a system-changing war. Bipolarity was not the only factor that

produced major conflict, but it provided a structure for it and appears to have made conflict more likely.

### Back to Bipolarity?

The first decade of the sixth system repeats the early pattern in which relations among the major actors are once again more fluid. Its characteristics have been difficult to describe simply, and so far it still bears the title “post-Cold War era.” Indeed, it will be difficult to give our current system a proper title until the system matures and its longer term characteristics become evident.

This sixth system has had five categories of actors and at least four dominant trends, with each trend affecting these actors in different ways. This accounts for much of the complexity apparent in the new system. The most dominant actors are the *market democracies*. Their ideology has become the global model, and by the end of the decade more than half the world’s nations are characterized as democracies. States in *transition* constitute a second group that hopefully are moving toward market democracies. The most important of these transition states are China, Russia, and India. Their ultimate orientation may be the most important determinant of how the more mature system will look.

The third category of states consists of the so-called *rogues* or rejectionist states: notably Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, the Sudan, Cuba, and now Serbia. Containing their activities became the prime focus of U.S. defense policy for most of the sixth system’s first decade, and defeating two of them nearly simultaneously became the sizing function for U.S. military forces. A fourth category includes the *failing states*: Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Algeria, Somalia, and Haiti, to name just a few. Managing humanitarian disasters inherent in their failure has occupied most of America’s foreign policy attention during the decade. Finally, nonstate actors have begun to take on many state characteristics. Some support the market democracies, such as global companies; some prey on them, like international crime syndicates; and some seek to bring the market democracies down, for example terrorist organizations. The last two might be called *transnational outlaws*.

Four worldwide trends have had both positive and negative effects on these five categories of actors. The effect has been to pull some together and push others apart. The net result has been increasing polarization in international politics, which is leading to a degree of systemic bipolarity.

Rapid *globalization*, the first of these worldwide trends, is based on new information technology and has increased the pace of events in economics, politics, military affairs, and communications. Economic globalization has brought unprecedented wealth to most market democracies (the Asian downturn notwithstanding). It attracts the transition states and can empower transnational outlaws. Rogue states tend to reject the political, cultural, and some economic aspects of globalization, while the failing states are not reaping its benefits at all and are falling further behind.

*Democratization*, the second trend, has had a similar effect. It can provide for peaceful transfers of power and attracts transition states, such as India, Russia, and South Africa. But it has deepened fissures within many failing states as ethnic, tribal, or religious groups simply vote with their group.

The third trend, *fragmentation*, ironically has been stimulated by globalization as groups seek to differentiate themselves in a globalized world and to maximize power at the local level. This devolution of power is

a phenomenon found nearly everywhere in the world today, but it has a very different impact on different actors. In market democracies, it has led to generally positive outcomes, such as greater power sharing with state governments in the United States and the concept of “subsidiarity” (decisions made at the lowest possible level) in the European Union. In some market democracies with particularly difficult ethnic balances—Canada, Belgium, and Spain—the democratic process has provided safeguards for minorities and the means to resolve disputes. However, in the most important transition states—Russia, China, and India—fragmentation has led to armed conflict, as in Chechnya, Xinjiang, and Kashmir. These conflicts have in turn led to additional political problems between these transition states and the market democracies. Fragmentation along ethnic lines is now the leading cause of state failure. It provides new opportunities for transnational criminal and terrorist organizations.

Preventing and countering the fourth trend, *proliferation* of weapons of mass destruction, has been a national priority for the United States throughout the early years of this sixth international system. Many of the other market democracies are only now awakening to its serious dangers. Proliferation gives rogue states and even some non-governmental groups the potential to threaten and undermine U.S. policies. It is no surprise that the issue has dominated U.S. relations with North Korea and Iraq. The impact of proliferation on the large transition states has been mixed, because China and Russia both supply technology and are also threatened by it.

A look at recent relations among the major powers tends to confirm a trend toward bipolarity.

The United States is successfully adapting and reinforcing its security alliances with Europe and Japan. At the same time, U.S. security relations with both Russia and China have been badly frayed during the past year. There are major differences with Russia over NATO enlargement, missile defense, WMD proliferation, and Caspian Sea oil. There are also major differences with China over Taiwan, Tibet, human rights, theater missile defense, espionage, and economic policy. The war between NATO and Serbia, the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the concept of “humanitarian intervention” significantly increased these tensions earlier this year.

As a result, China and Russia are strengthening their security relationship with each other in spite of strong countervailing factors which might otherwise prevent a closer collaboration. The attraction of globalization that draws both states to the West risks being overwhelmed by policy differences with the West. Strengthened Sino-Russian ties are based on growing suspicions of the West, increasingly common interests, a natural arms sales relationship, and resolution of most of their Cold War ideological and border differences. Former Russian Prime Minister Primakov even conceived of a somewhat fanciful Russian-Chinese-Indian alliance directed against Western dominance. At the same time, rogue states like Iraq, Serbia, Iran, and North Korea are cooperating with each other through technology transfers and tactics that try to thwart the market democracies. There are also indications of increased Russian and Chinese cooperation with the rogue states.

The concern is that nations that have strong policy differences with the West will form informal cooperative relationships that eventually will lead to a new and dangerous bipolarity.

See also Hans Binnendijk, “Back to Bipolarity?” *Washington Quarterly*, 22, no. 4.

from international affairs. In its absence, the world degenerated into global conflicts that eventually involved the United States. During the Cold War, the United States became engaged on the world scene. As a result, Western interests were protected, global war was avoided, and democracy emerged triumphant. Since then, the United States has remained engaged, containing new dangers while promoting peace, prosperity, and democracy.

Continued engagement is imperative in the future. U.S. interests are being affected by the integrative and disintegrative trends abroad. Engagement is especially needed to keep emerging threats and dangers under control.

### **Globalization—Enlarging U.S. Interests and Complicating U.S. Policies**

During the Cold War, the United States had interests in the defense of Western Europe, North-east Asia, and the Greater Middle East. The rest of the Eurasian landmass lay beyond Western influence. Globalization is changing that. It is compelling the United States and its allies to look beyond old geostrategic perimeters. The spread of democracy, the information age, and the global economy are expanding Western interests into new regions.

Today, the United States and its allies have critical interests in Eastern Europe, Russia and its neighbors, and the Asian mainland, especially China. Their interests in the Greater Middle East, Persian Gulf, and South Asia are also enlarging. The menace of WMD proliferation requires them to deter rogues. The dynamic world economy also requires a broad perspective. Economic crisis in Asia affects not only global prosperity, but also U.S. and Western economies. Such transnational threats as terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and environmental erosion cross all international boundaries.

Protecting Western interests and achieving goals is more complicated than before. Although it required great resources, protecting Western interests during the Cold War was a straightforward task that required persistence rather than strategic agility. This simplicity is gone. The challenge now is how to effectively pursue multiple goals. Although the world is now less dangerous than during the Cold War, devising a U.S. national security strategy for it has become more complicated.

## **U.S. Interests**

Only a few years ago, U.S. overseas interests seemed largely intact. Many believed that global security affairs had stabilized, and dangers and threats were mostly peripheral to order. This situation appears to be changing. Although disintegrative trends are not yet overcoming integrative trends, they are no longer marginal. They directly threaten global stability and security, today and tomorrow.

Recent negative events have challenged U.S. policies. In a period of only a few months, they dealt setbacks to all three key U.S. strategic goals—democratic enlargement, economic prosperity, and global stability. To date, the setbacks are not severe, and some are being corrected. The greater concern is that they may be forerunners of more serious things to come. Building a peaceful security environment will likely be more difficult than was previously expected.

As the world's sole superpower, the United States has great assets, but it also has global involvements, including those in new places that stretch it thin. While it leads large alliances in Europe and Asia, it continually must exert leadership to energize them, further stressing its resources. Additionally, a growing number of countries outside its alliances are showing resentment of the United States for its superpower status, especially when it asserts power for humanitarian intervention. This makes it harder for the United States to protect its interests and leaves them more vulnerable to the menacing trends now underway.

## **Rogues**

Previously, many hoped that rogues would become weaker, and more isolated. However, they are showing surprising endurance. Iraq, North Korea, and Serbia have demonstrated an ability to manipulate Western policy and achieve their ends. Iraq and North Korea will gain greater advantage if they succeed at developing weapons of mass destruction and delivery vehicles. The internal stability of all three countries is uncertain. However, as long as they are led by aggressive and militarized regimes, they will be problematic for the United States and its allies.

Current rogues could become more active and menacing. In recent years, Iran and Syria have refrained from asserting their military power



**The amphibious assault ship U.S.S. Belleau Wood (foreground) and the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Carl Vinson in the Persian Gulf**

in the Greater Middle East. If they become stronger militarily, their conduct could become more aggressive. They will be a key variable in how the Greater Middle East evolves. Other rogues may not directly confront Western interests militarily, but they might seek to engage in terrorism, organized crime, and related activities. Also, they may receive help from other countries, thereby making them more difficult to manage.

## WMD Proliferation

Various conditions are enabling the acceleration of WMD proliferation. Even though Western policies seek to prevent it, the outcome remains uncertain. If WMD proliferation accelerates, it will pose serious threats to U.S. and Western interests, directly endangering U.S. and allied homelands. Additionally, key regions where U.S. and allied interests are at stake could become more unstable.

WMD proliferation could be racing democratic integration. Many observers had hoped that by 2010 democratization and integration would have spread and reduced the likelihood of proliferation and its risks. However, proliferation in an unstable political setting is likely to have grave consequences.

## Key Transition States

Transition countries are unlikely to advance U.S. interests and goals in the coming years. Russia, China, and India are unlikely to become adversaries of the United States. Each will have its

own economic and security agendas and will focus primarily on its surrounding regions. Sometimes their agendas will serve U.S. interests, but not always. If U.S. interests are to be advanced, it will require interacting with these countries on equitable terms.

## Failed States and Transnational Threats

Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda will not be the last failing states; the conditions exist for more. These include growing populations, immigration, and economic stagnation. Likewise, transnational threats can be expected to continue. Terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking may even grow.

Failed states and transnational threats will menace U.S. and Western interests. This will be the case even if they remain confined to their local regions and functional areas. If they become instruments of rogue states, they could be even greater threats.

## Democracy and Economic Prosperity

Democratic enlargement and a prosperous world economy represent the principal hopes for a stable, peaceful world in the long term. But the near term is another matter. Democratic enlargement appears to be slowing and encountering difficulty in places where it already has been attempted. Likewise, the world economy has suffered at least a temporary setback, and recovery may require time. In the Middle East and other turbulent regions, democratization and economic globalization are not even taking hold.

Consequently, unstable internal situations and precarious external relations dictate the situation in many countries and regions. The security issues will have to be resolved before democracy and economic prosperity can be pursued. Additionally, energetic security policies will be required to protect U.S. and allied interests in the years ahead.

## Key Regions

Key regions are evolving in ways that pose differing implications for U.S. and Western interests.

The quest for democratic unity in Europe serves U.S. interests. The situation in Russia and

## Current U.S. National Security Strategy

Current U.S. strategy has these features:

**Strategy's Title:** *Engagement—To Handle Challenges and Capitalize on Opportunities*

**Core Goals:** *Promoting Security, Prosperity, Spread of Democracy*

**Key Security Concepts:** *Shape the International Environment, Respond to Threats and Crises, Prepare Now for an Uncertain Future*

**Regional Policies:** *Integrated Regional Approaches Composed of Multiple Policy Instruments*

**Defense Dimension:** *Overseas Presence and Power Projection, plus Alliances, Coalitions, and Partnerships*

**Defense Program:** *Balanced Transformation that Preserves Readiness While Modernizing With New Doctrine*

Eurasia is precarious in the near term, albeit hopeful in the long term. In Asia, basic U.S. and Western interests are currently being safeguarded, but the future is murky. Even though market democracy is gaining hold, core security relationships have not yet been stabilized. In the Greater Middle East, U.S. and Western interests are seriously endangered, and may be even more so in the future.

These regions have varying impacts on U.S. and Western interests. In some areas, U.S. interests are being significantly advanced while undergoing damage in others. This differs sharply from only a decade ago, when all three regions faced major military threats. If the past decade could produce changes of such startling magnitude, the coming decade could produce other surprises as well. Regardless of the outcome, these regions will likely continue affecting U.S. and Western interests in dissimilar ways. Specially tailored policies and priorities will be required for each.

for an uncertain future. The overall strategy relies on military forces, as well as diplomacy, economic assistance, alliances, and other instruments. It maintains a global network of institutions and arrangements that advance U.S. interests and goals, and an integrated strategy tailored to each region is employed. For example, U.S. strategy relies on NATO enlargement in Europe, dual containment of Iraq and Iran in the Persian Gulf, and engagement plus bilateral alliances in Asia.

This framework reflects the maturing of U.S. strategy in recent years. As this strategy matured, it has become more sophisticated. Although its guiding theme is global engagement, it is a combination of multiple goals, multiple instruments, for multiple regions. Yet, its strategic purpose is clear: to consolidate democracy's victory in the Cold War by creating a peaceful and prosperous global environment in which U.S. and allied interests are fully safeguarded.

Overall, the emerging international trends do not make this strategy invalid. In many ways, they reaffirm it. Yet, these trends affect how this strategy will be implemented in the coming years. They demand continued evolution of the strategy to meet the near- and long-term effects of these trends.

This section further analyzes how newly emerging U.S. strategy challenges can be approached. Its intent is not to be critical. Several of its proposals are already being contemplated or carried out. Nor does it try to create a fixed blueprint for future policies. Instead, its aim is to identify broad issues and alternatives that likely will shape U.S. strategy in the coming era of international change and turbulence.

## Constraints on the Democratic Core

The democratic core could possibly weaken, with negative consequences for the international security environment. This development is highly improbable, but could occur with flawed policies. Any decision by Germany and Japan to break loose from alliance frameworks could result in a multipolar system and geopolitical maneuvering that destroyed global order early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The more realistic concern is that the democratic core states might not muster the consensus and combined policies needed to meet the dangerous security problems outside their borders, especially in the Greater Middle East.

## Consequences for U.S. Policy

The current U.S. national security strategy pursues three strategic goals: international security and stability, U.S. economic prosperity anchored in a growing world economy, and democratic enlargement. The security component of this strategy seeks to shape the global environment, respond to crises and wars, and prepare

## Portraying Engagement

U.S. strategy continues to be one of "engagement." It implies a rejection of isolationism. This concept is now almost commonplace. However, the term alone does not indicate how this strategy will be conducted. A "U.S. engagement strategy of leadership and multilateral response" might be more illuminating. This suggests that the United States intends to continue engaging as a superpower leader and work closely with other countries and institutions, whenever possible.

The question is not whether to stay engaged but how to do so effectively. As the engagement strategy matures, it must address this issue in ways that respond to the changing environment.

Today, the United States is required to exercise its leadership and power, not only to ensure that U.S. interests and goals are served, but also to mobilize cooperation from allies, partners, and friends. U.S. leadership must also be inclusive. The most effective policies will be the ones that enjoy wide support. Superpower leadership and multilateralism work in tandem in U.S. strategy.

## Establishing Strategic Priorities

Of the three U.S. strategic goals—security, economic prosperity, and democracy—the last two have received considerable emphasis in recent years. This pattern reflects a belief that global security affairs have been stable enough to permit an emphasis on the world economy and democratic enlargement. Dangerous international trends now suggest that managing security affairs will need to be given attention and priority in the coming years. Pursuing economic progress and democracy will be difficult, unless security goals are first attained.

These international trends call for new approaches to shaping, responding, and preparing. While “environment shaping” properly focuses on achieving favorable outcomes, emerging trends create reasons for preventing and deterring unfavorable outcomes. Whereas the “respond” component focuses on likely near-term missions and crises, emerging trends suggest U.S. strategy must focus on a wide range of contingencies in the long term. While the “prepare” concept primarily means military modernization and related force developments, emerging trends imply preparing all U.S. policy instruments for a different strategic environment. These trends also imply that that U.S. forces and other assets should have the flexibility and adaptiveness to react swiftly to fast-moving global changes.

If a stronger U.S. security effort proves necessary, determining the level of resources needed would be a critical issue. Already, near-term readiness and long-term modernization are stretching the U.S. defense budget, and as modernization intensifies, the budget will be stretched even more. A more dangerous world could create added pressures, increasing the need for readiness, high operational tempo, and regular crisis missions in the coming years. The same applies to areas of U.S. diplomacy that are underfunded and face serious shortfalls if global conditions worsen. The U.S. defense budget already is rising, but how far is uncertain, as is the

level of resources devoted to other policy instruments. Determining the proper response—whether more resources, or different priorities, or a combination of the two—lies beyond the scope of this analysis. The point here is that the issue will have to be addressed.

## Preparing for Several Futures

The United States cannot assume that international affairs are heading in only one direction. The future’s uncertainty requires a strategic focus that can influence determinants of several scenarios. U.S. policy should address the challenges and opportunities posed by the current global system, while preparing to handle likely changes. It should encourage factors contributing to a favorable scenario, while not assuming that it is a predestined outcome. Likewise, it should endeavor to prevent unfavorable outcomes from evolving, especially a steep descent into chaos and instability.

The emerging dangers of today’s world emphasize the need for prevention. Promoting a prosperous world economy and democratic enlargement is important, but it mostly capitalizes on the opportunities ahead, rather than directly counters dangers and threats.

## Shaping the Environment

In U.S. strategy, environment shaping involves three activities: (1) promoting stability, integration, and cooperation; (2) preventing instability, geopolitical competition, coercion, and conflict; and (3) deterring aggressive behavior. During periods of regional stability, environment shaping can focus primarily on the first activity. For example, today’s situation in Europe permits U.S. policy to emphasize such integrative measures as NATO enlargement, Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and the Permanent Joint Council relationship with Russia. These steps are aimed at promoting peaceful unification rather than containing dangerous conflicts. But when key regions are unstable, policy emphasis shifts to preventing conflict and deterring aggression. Such is the case in the Persian Gulf, where U.S. policy is mostly focused on preventing conflict and deterring rogues from committing aggression.

If dangerous trends intensify, U.S. policy must shift toward preventing and deterring in affected regions. Such activities are aimed at rogues, but they can also be aimed at controlling regional rivalries between countries intent on protecting themselves and intimidating neighbors through military buildups. When China

## Role of Overseas Military Presence in U.S. National Security Strategy

The military component of U.S. national security strategy is carried out through a combination of power projection forces based in the continental United States and overseas military presence. Today's overseas presence totals about 230,000 troops, plus additional forces that rotate overseas temporarily. This amounts roughly to 17 percent of the active U.S. force posture. The various U.S. regional postures are about as follows: 109,000 troops in Europe; 93,000 in Asia; 15,000 in the Persian Gulf; and 12,000 in the Western Hemisphere.

In all three major theaters, the United States maintains a joint posture of ground, air, and naval forces. Maritime assets in each theater routinely include a carrier battle group and an amphibious ready group. In Europe, U.S. forces include 4 brigades and 2.3 fighter wing equivalents (FWEs). In Asia, U.S. forces include 4 brigades and 3.2 FWEs. In addition to these combat forces, the U.S. overseas presence also includes important C<sup>4</sup>I units, logistic support assets, bases and facilities, and pre-positioned stocks. Security assistance and foreign military interactions (FMI, including training, visitations, and partnership activities), also are important parts of overseas presence.

During the Cold War, the primary mission of overseas forces was defense against major threats. Today, U.S. forces still defend in places where threats remain, such as Korea. But they also are performing the new missions of shaping the peacetime environment and responding to a wide spectrum of contingencies short of major war, including peacekeeping and crisis interventions. The importance of these missions seems likely to grow in future years and to create new challenges for the U.S. overseas presence. In each theater, accordingly, the Department of Defense is developing a "theater engagement plan" to determine how assets can best be employed to help attain U.S. objectives.

launched missiles in the vicinity of Taiwan in 1996, U.S. naval forces were deployed to the region. This was an exercise in traditional U.S. defense diplomacy aimed at stabilizing a delicate geopolitical situation. The future may witness more activities aimed at deterring rogues and preventing regional rivalries.

## A Widening Range of Military Operations

In recent years, U.S. defense strategy has emphasized preparing for a broad spectrum of conflicts. It warrants added emphasis because of emerging international trends. If these trends intensify, conflicts at the low end of the spectrum may multiply. Peacekeeping operations and interventions in low-level crises are likely to increase. Rogue states may cause regional crises more often. Enemies may employ asymmetric strategies aimed at disrupting U.S. military operations. The risk of major theater wars overlapping will increase. Some conflicts may involve weapons of mass destruction.

Theoretically, U.S. forces can handle a wide spectrum of future operations. Yet, the need to perform multiple peacekeeping operations and low-level crises, while remaining prepared for two major theater wars, is already straining our force level of 1.3 million active-duty personnel. Demands on U.S. forces will intensify if low-level operations increase.

## Broadening the "Prepare" Concept

Compared to shaping and responding, the "prepare" concept has received less attention. It has been defined mostly in terms of modernization, the revolution in military affairs, and *Joint Vision 2010*. If dangerous trends intensify, they will create greater emphasis on elaborating this concept.

Preparing for greater and more diverse dangers will require more than military modernization. The full spectrum of policy instruments will require revision; this includes the interagency process, the conduct of diplomacy, the pursuit of economic goals, the distribution of security assistance, and the formation of alliances. It will also require new approaches to integrated regional strategies.

U.S. forces and other assets must be as flexible and adaptive as possible so that they can handle ever-changing challenges and opportunities. U.S. military forces are already flexible and adaptive. However, future defense requirements may necessitate a more modular posture, capable of being assembled and reassembled to respond to changing situations.

## Doctrines for WMD Proliferation

Rogue states, coupled with accelerating proliferation of WMD, could produce a very dangerous future for the United States and its allies. Within a few years, the United States may face the worrisome dilemma of rogue states armed with conventional forces and WMD, plus a willingness to use them.

Preventing this development will remain a top strategic priority, but how will the United States and its allies respond if it occurs? Will old doctrines of nuclear containment, extended deterrence, forward defense, and flexible response work in dealing with rogue regimes as compared to the Soviet Union during the Cold War? Should the United States and its allies militarily intervene before aspiring rogues actually acquire

Secretary of State  
Madeleine Albright at  
Tuzla Air Base, Bosnia



## Role of Alliances and Partnerships in U.S. National Security Strategy

As was true during the Cold War, alliances continue to play an important role in U.S. national security strategy. They are instrumental not only in providing local defense against aggression, but also in shaping the peacetime environment. Without them, the United States would be hard pressed to achieve its core security goals.

In Europe, NATO has existed since 1949, and it recently has been enlarged to 19 countries by adding Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. The Washington Summit of 1999 not only marked enlargement, but also adopted a new strategic concept and defense capability initiative aimed at improving NATO forces for new missions. In Asia, the United States has major security alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea, plus bilateral security treaties with other countries, including Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand. In the Persian Gulf, the United States primarily relies on coalition arrangements with such friendly countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Recent years have seen the rapid growth of partnership activities with new nations. This trend is true especially in Europe, where the NATO "Partnership for Peace" includes a large number of countries not belonging to NATO. U.S. forces carry on important partnership activities with Russia, Ukraine, and China. This is also true across Asia, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf, where bilateral military relations with numerous countries are key to pursuing U.S. security goals. The coming years likely will witness growing roles for partnerships and coalition activities in U.S. strategy.

weapons of mass destruction? Or should diplomatic engagement be attempted with these countries? Is engagement possible without sacrificing U.S. and allied interests? Should a combination of these measures be employed as U.S. doctrine?

These questions must be addressed in forging U.S. strategy for the future. They already are being addressed regarding North Korea and Iraq. Sooner or later, broadening their scope may be necessary. The problem of proliferation may be here to stay. Irrespective of specific policy choices for each proliferating rogue, the United States will need a coherent overall doctrine for the full spectrum of situations. Without such a doctrine, the United States will rely on ad hoc approaches in situations where improvisation may be the biggest danger of all.

## Russia, China, and Democratic Enlargement

In these arenas, recent U.S. policy has been influenced by a large dose of idealism. Many hoped that Russia and China could become close partners of the United States, and that democratic enlargement would sweep away security problems in turbulent regions. This may be achievable in the long term, but recent events suggest that pragmatic approaches may be needed in the near term.

Russia and China present different strategic challenges and opportunities. Russia's strategic power is declining, while China's is growing. Inevitably, the two countries will act differently. A democratizing Russia will seek to prevent decline. A still authoritarian China may seek to expand its influence beyond its borders. The United States has pragmatic reasons for establishing limited partnerships with these countries in areas of mutual interest, while using diplomacy to ensure their legitimate interests are respected. Such engagement will help reduce the risks of these countries becoming adversaries. At the same time, the United States must safeguard the interests of allies and friends that feel threatened by Russia and China. Striking this balance will be a principal challenge confronting U.S. policy.

A similar pragmatism will be needed in democratic enlargement. Democratic enlargement may be slowing as it confronts tougher challenges. Some recently created democracies are faltering and may suffer temporary reversals. Other democracies are demonstrating illiberal internal and external conduct. Still others are not enthused about joining the Western democratic core states and supporting U.S. policies. These developments do not mean that the United States should abandon democratic enlargement. They do mean that democratic enlargement should be seen as producing important but checkered progress that does not immediately cure all international security problems.

### Creating a "Southern Strategy"

One of the principal challenges facing the United States will be to create a "southern strategy" for handling the mounting global dangers ahead. During the Cold War and immediately afterward, U.S. strategy had a "northern" emphasis largely focused on the geostrategic arc stretching from Central Europe, across Russia, and into Northeast Asia. Korea aside, this arc is now becoming more stable and is now no longer threatened by major war. By contrast, new dangers are arising in the vast southern arc stretching from the Balkans, across the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, through South Asia, and along the Asian crescent from Southeast Asia to Japan. The dangers in this arc are multiple, interactive, and growing. If unchecked, they have the potential to cause great global instability and to inflict serious damage on Western interests.

Developing a coherent southern strategy for this arc promises to be challenging for reasons that go beyond the complexity of the problems being encountered. In contrast to Europe and Northeast Asia, the United States does not have large military forces stationed there, nor does it benefit from established military alliances. Local political conditions, coupled with the absence of large resources for diplomacy and aid, limit the instruments at the disposal of U.S. policy.

Preserving maritime control of the seas clearly will be a key feature of future U.S. military strategy for the southern arc. Maritime control will be needed not only to defend U.S. interests, but also to ensure speedy access to troubled zones. Provided this is the case, future U.S. strategy likely will continue being one of power projection while working with coalitions of the willing. Perhaps improved capabilities can be developed by transforming U.S. bases in Europe and Northeast Asia into hubs for southward power projection, while encouraging Alliance partners to develop similar assets of their own. Meanwhile, diplomacy and other instruments can be employed to build better partnership relations with friendly countries in the southern arc, while ameliorating troubled conditions there. Changes like these can help, but even so, handling southern dangers promises to be a difficult task. The outcome will heavily determine the stability, or instability, of the coming era.

### Developing a Global Strategy

U.S. policy already pursues integrated regional strategies tailored to Europe, Asia, and the Greater Middle East. Recent trends indicate that all three regions will likely experience great change, and the differences between regions may widen. If so, the challenge will be to forge new integrated strategies.

A decade from now, U.S. policy in Europe may be faced with orchestrating a united Europe's relationship with a decaying Eurasia and an unstable Middle East. In Asia, U.S. policy may no longer be fixated on Korean defense issues, but on establishing regional security frameworks for all of Asia, including protecting vital sea lines of communication. In the Greater Middle East and Persian Gulf, U.S. policy may be contending with hostile fundamentalist regimes and rogues armed with WMD, while protecting friends and its own access to Gulf oil. If these or other changes occur, they will demand different U.S. regional policies, as well as different approaches in implementation.

A global perspective will be needed. Previously, many believed that with the Cold War over, U.S. strategy should adopt a more regional focus. To a degree, this still holds true. No global threat to U.S. interests is on the horizon. Yet, in a period of globalization, a purely regional strategy could cause the United States to view the world in segments rather than as a whole. The emerging reality is that the whole will be greater than the sum of its parts. These regions will be interacting. Developments within one region will affect the other regions. Additionally, the United States will have global interests and involvements. Policies in one region will be affected by policies in others. The United States will be unable to establish priorities in any single region without an overall sense of priorities for all. Even though a global military threat no longer exists, the need for a global U.S. strategy has not gone away. Indeed, it is growing stronger because of globalization.

## Greater Contributions from Allies

The need to reform U.S. military alliances was identified in the President's strategy report for 1998. It points out the U.S. efforts to encourage NATO to develop new military capabilities for new missions, and also to adjust the U.S.-Japanese alliance for new responsibilities in Asia. Efforts also are underway to develop new partners in Europe and elsewhere that can contribute to common missions. The process of alliance reform thus has begun. The question is, where should it be headed and how fast?

Emerging international trends provide an answer. The central strategic challenge ahead will be to protect common interests against threats beyond the borders of allies and friends and in distant regions. Alliance reform should consider developing better power projection capabilities.

Threats are developing faster than expected. Alliance efforts should be accelerated so that new capabilities and effective strategies can meet new threats, which include stronger conventional forces and WMD. Additionally, allied forces must remain interoperable with U.S. forces, which are pursuing the revolution in military affairs and *Joint Vision 2010*.

A case can be made for a multitiered U.S. strategy. The first tier involves creating common strategic motives and operational visions for

using military forces in the coming era. The second tier would involve allied forces capable of rapid power projection and working closely with U.S. forces in decisive operations, including strike missions. The third tier would ensure that U.S. and allied forces acquire the sophisticated information systems, sensors, and munitions needed in future combined operations. The fourth tier would require the government and defense industry, to include the information industry, to coordinate the development of these capabilities.

These four tiers would be a demanding but feasible strategic agenda for alliance reform. Most allies already possess the necessary combat forces. This strategy does not require quantity but rather quality in such areas as mobility, logistic support, communications systems, sensors, and smart munitions. Most allied budgets are large enough to afford qualitative improvements, if savings are generated by eliminating unnecessary forces. The Western Alliance system has overcome more demanding challenges. The question is, can it do so in the absence of military threats to common borders, but when threats to common interests are emerging? To some degree, the future of U.S. strategy and allied interests hangs in the balance.

## Organizing for National Security

Because the international system is already in the midst of a fast-paced transition whose outcome could produce growing instability and conflict, the United States may have a short window of opportunity to make a difference in the ultimate outcome. Creating effective response mechanisms within the U.S. Government, especially in the executive branch, will be key. The future will require strategic vision and sound assessments, coupled with an interagency process that can implement these policies effectively. Moreover, many U.S. policy actions will need to be merged with those of other countries and international institutions.

Whether the current policymaking process is capable of handling the future is an issue meriting careful thought. This process was originally created to handle the Cold War and has been altered only marginally since then. The danger ahead lies not only in the adverse international trends that are unfolding, but also in the risk that the U.S. Government may not understand them. It might not be able to perceive them or react fast enough to make a difference.

The coming challenges will be too complex and interconnected to be separated into different clusters that can be handled by individual government agencies acting on their own. For example, international economic policy and security policy will be too intertwined to be separated into different domains. Regional military threats will merge with destabilizing transnational trends and larger global changes in hardware and doctrine. Individual nation-states will act in fluid settings that affect their priorities and freedom of choice. Their challenges will mandate a greater degree of governmentwide policy coordination than in the past, and they may also require new kinds of people, with new skills. Prescribing a solution lies beyond the scope this analysis, but recognizing the problem can be the first step toward creating a solution.

## Net Assessment

The future is “up for grabs.” Recent negative events are warning of future possibilities. They do not necessarily presage a steep slide into global chaos, yet they do indicate how the underlying international structure is being buffeted by integrative and disintegrative forces. These dynamics threaten not only stability and progress, but ultimately U.S. and allied interests. They validate the current U.S. strategy of engagement, but they also create reasons for new, strong policies that will ensure effective continued engagement. Meeting this challenge will likely dominate the U.S. national security agenda in the coming years.