



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

**American Primacy and Major Power Concert:  
A Critique of the 2002  
National Security Strategy**

Brad Roberts

December 2002

Approved for public release;  
distribution unlimited.

IDA Paper P-3751

Log: H 02-002705

**This work was conducted under IDA's independent research program. The publication of this IDA document does not indicate endorsement by the Department of Defense, nor should the contents be construed as reflecting the official position of that Agency.**

**© 2002, 2003 Institute for Defense Analyses, 4850 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22311-1882 • (703) 845-2000.**

**This material may be reproduced by or for the U.S. Government.**

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

IDA Paper P-3751

**American Primacy and Major Power Concert:  
A Critique of the 2002  
National Security Strategy**

Brad Roberts



## PREFACE

The author is indebted to the Institute for Defense Analyses for the internal research grant under which this paper was written. Thanks are also due to the following individuals for comments on earlier drafts of this paper: Therese Delpech of the French Atomic Energy Commission, Lewis Dunn of SAIC, Virginia Monken of IDA, Michael Moodie of the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, and Victor Utgoff of IDA. The paper is the result of a lengthy process that extended over three years and involved multiple individuals and institutions, as further explained in the introduction to this paper. The author is grateful also to those individuals and institutions for their important contributions to the arguments presented here. This assistance notwithstanding, the author remains solely responsible for all views and opinions expressed herein.



## CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	ES-1
I. Introduction .....	1
II. A Dialogue Among the Five: 1999-2001 .....	3
A. Different Worldviews .....	5
<i>Russia</i> .....	5
<i>China</i> .....	6
<i>Europe</i> .....	8
<i>United States</i> .....	9
B. Threats to the Peace .....	11
C. Beyond Different Worldviews: Some Key Themes .....	12
<i>Sovereignty's Contribution to Peace</i> .....	12
<i>The Risks of Nuclear Aristocracy</i> .....	14
<i>The Crisis of Confidence</i> .....	17
<i>Beyond Multipolarity</i> .....	19
D. The Dialogue Process: Conclusions .....	22
III. The Evolution of the Bush Administration "Answer" .....	25
A. Phase One: Pre-September 11 .....	25
B. Phase Two: The September 11 Shock and its Aftermath .....	27
C. Phase Three: On to War Against Saddam .....	29
D. The Strategy's Public Release .....	31
IV. The National Security Strategy and Major Power Concert .....	35
A. Preemption: Evolutionary or Revolutionary? .....	37
B. China: Both Competitor <i>and</i> Partner? .....	40
C. Allies: Lemmings, Millstones, or Partners? .....	44
D. The National Interest: What is it and How do we Know? .....	47
E. A Balance of Power: But Which One? .....	51
F. Strategic Stability Among The Five: Is There a Viable Vision? .....	56
G. Nuclear Order: Still America's Project? .....	60
H. The "Better World:" Order or Justice? .....	65
I. U.S. Leadership: Carry a Big Stick and What Else? .....	68
V. Conclusions .....	79

APPENDIX A: Wilton Park Agendas

APPENDIX B: Participants in One or More of the Meetings with Affiliations  
at Time of Participation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bush administration's National Security Strategy of 2002 has attracted attention and debate largely because of its arguments about the role of preemption. But over the longer term the strategy may prove far more significant in terms of its vision for relations with Russia, China, and the other major powers. As Condoleezza Rice has argued in describing the thinking behind the strategy, "we have an historic opportunity to break the destructive pattern of great power rivalry that has bedeviled the world since the rise of the nation state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century." This is a bold vision. It extends the notion of transformation from defense strategy to geopolitics. But is it viable? What is required to achieve this ambition?

The opportunity is real – this is the conclusion from an informal dialogue among analysts and policymakers from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council that IDA cosponsored between 1999 and 2001. That dialogue explored the differences of worldview, historical perspective, and national interest informing strategy and policy in each capitol. Ranging across such myriad topics as the balance of power, the legitimacy of humanitarian interventions, the impact of ballistic missile defense, and the tensions between multipolarity and unipolarity, that dialogue also gave vent to debates in each country about the requirements of peace and stability in the current era. To the surprise of many, that dialogue extended into a deep exploration of sovereignty's contribution to peace and to the requirements of political legitimacy. Also to a surprising extent, issues related to weapons of mass destruction cut across much of the agenda, and with them, questions about the ability of a "nuclear aristocracy" to provide nuclear order over the long term. For the Americans in the dialogue process, the main message from the others was simply that doubts about American power and purposes on the world stage permeate every aspect of the global security dialogue. In its moment of unprecedented power and dominance, what will America choose to do? What will it do with primacy?

The 2002 National Security Strategy provides one answer. More precisely, it provides a vision, of which the transformation of major power relations – from competition to concert – is one major element. If the 1999-2001 dialogue is an accurate guide, achieving this ambition will require coming to terms with some issues that the strategy seems to deal with in only preliminary fashion. The central dilemma is that primacy and concert do not readily coincide. In cryptic fashion, the key questions are as follows:

1. Preemption: evolutionary or revolutionary?
2. China: both partner *and* competitor?
3. Allies: lemmings, millstones, or partners?
4. The national interest: what is it and how do we know?
5. A balance of power: but which one?
6. Strategic stability among The Five: is there a viable vision?
7. Nuclear order: still America's project?
8. The "better world:" order or justice?
9. U.S. leadership: carry a big stick and what else?

Imagine one set of answers.

- if preemption ends up being a revolutionary embrace of preventive war, such that the United States makes widening war against WMD-armed adversaries disliked by Washington; and
- if China is treated as odd man out, such that Washington seeks to slow its modernization and inhibit its power; and
- if allies are dismissed as unnecessary restraints on the exercise of U.S. power, such that the United States is left repeatedly to act unilaterally; and
- if an ideological crusade becomes the central purpose of American power, such that American values and American interests are conflated; and
- if the United States seeks a complete escape from the balance of power, such that it treats the vital interests of Russia and China and others with disdain or contempt; and
- if stability is abandoned in favor of supremacy, such that the United States gains overt dominance not just in nuclear weapons but in missile defenses and conventional weapons and in outer space; and
- if arms control and disarmament are abandoned as quaint and dangerous, such that the treaty regimes are allowed to wither further and collapse; and
- if America seeks order and not justice, such that other societies cannot prosper and become "great;" and
- if the United States seeks to lead by simply telling others to follow,

...then the present opportunity will be lost. Indeed, one would think it would be lost very quickly. In this scenario, U.S. military power may be unmatched for decades to come, but its political influence will be sharply diminished as it squanders the sources of its legitimacy.

Another set of answers also can be imagined. But answers of any kind remain in fact acts of imagination. Americans must come to hard, real answers to these questions; policy cannot be left simply to instinct or ideology. This is a job for all Americans, not just the present administration – as the president's spokespersons have made clear in welcoming debate on the strategy. It is a job also for those major powers whom the

administration must court if the vision is to be achieved. They must be part of the dialogue and of the effort to construct the foundations of a durable peace that serves the interests of all in stability and justice. “A growing hubris” (in the words of James Schlesinger) at a time of primacy and a renewed sense of American exceptionalism makes this particular task especially difficult. And all the more important.



## I. INTRODUCTION

In his cover letter to the 2002 National Security Strategy, President George W. Bush included the following argument about the possibility of a concert of power among the major powers:

“Today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war. Today, the world’s great powers find ourselves on the same side – united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos. The United States will build on these common interests to promote global security. We are also increasingly united by common values.”<sup>1</sup>

In elaborating the thinking being the strategy, national security advisor Condoleezza Rice three weeks later echoed these views:

“We have an historic opportunity to break the destructive pattern of great power rivalry that has bedeviled the world since rise of the nation state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the world’s great centers of power are united by common interests, common dangers, and – increasingly – common values. The United States will make this a key strategy for preserving the peace for many decades to come.”<sup>2</sup>

This vision of a peaceful competition among the major powers and cooperation in defense of common interests and common values is a radical departure from a tradition of thinking about major power interactions. It is also an ambitious vision – an “opportunity” to be seized. Thus, it invokes a host of questions. Is this vision viable and sustainable? Can the opportunity be seized? Can the major powers be effective partners for preserving the peace in the decades ahead? Has the administration charted a path that is likely to achieve these ambitions?

Debate about the long-term significance of the Bush National Security Strategy has been colored heavily by the timing of its release – in the midst of the intense national and international debate about whether, when, and how to proceed in a way to unseat Saddam Hussein and eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Thus, the provisions of the strategy on preemption and preventive war have attracted the lion’s share of commentary – like a lightning rod.

---

<sup>1</sup> President George W. Bush, cover letter, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 17, 2002. Available at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>2</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom*, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, New York, October 1, 2002.

This assessment utilizes a different context to explore the potential long-term consequences of the strategy. Between July 1999 and October 2001, the Institute for Defense Analyses cosponsored a series of meetings in the United Kingdom that drew together individuals from each of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for in-depth substantive discussions of the evolving international security agenda and the roles of The Five as security guarantors. The Five are the United States, Russia, China, Britain, and France. This spans the period from the conclusion of the war in Kosovo to the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks – a period of dramatically shifting sentiments among The Five.

Accordingly, this paper proceeds as follows. It begins with a review of the scope and content of the U.K. dialogue. This includes a brief summary of the worldviews displayed there as well as a more detailed substantive explication of the debates about key challenges of security cooperation. The paper then briefly chronicles the changing landscape between October 2001 and October 2002 – between the immediate aftermath of the al Qaeda attacks and the commitment to pursue preventive war against Iraq. Here the discussion is limited to the impact of changing factors on major power relations. The core of the paper is an exploration of some of the central tenets of the Bush strategy as they bear on major power cooperation and in the context of what we had learned in the preceding discussions. The paper closes with an exploration of implications for U.S. policy and strategy. A central theme in our discussions among The Five was uncertainty about the intentions of the United States – its intentions vis-à-vis the other major powers, its intentions on the world stage, and its intentions with regard to the use of its unparalleled power in this era of American primacy. The Bush strategy provides an answer. Will the “answer” in fact consolidate major power concert?

## II. A DIALOGUE AMONG THE FIVE: 1999-2001

This dialogue arose out of frustration. With increasing frequency in the mid- and late-1990s, international conferences on topics such as regional security, arms control and disarmament, and humanitarian intervention seemed to end on a sour note about the major powers. If only they were paying more attention, went the argument, or if only one or two would shift to the “right” side, or if only they would compromise a little bit on a short-term interest for some long-term gain, then better results might be possible (whatever that might mean on a specific topic). This disaffection, disinterest, even falling out among the major powers occurred against the background of new expectations formed with the end of the Cold War. With East-West gridlock now a matter of the past, many people hoped that the major powers would finally be able to find sufficiently common interests in the international system to enable them to cooperate to prevent, suppress, or defeat the most egregious acts of aggression. Among American participants there was a particular interest in raising questions of major power relations at a time when they had been driven into the background by other foreign and defense policy challenges of more seeming immediacy. So, rather than talk about topical issues against the backdrop of major power factors, a group of us sought to construct a dialogue about major power relations against the backdrop of the security agenda. That group consisted of the following individuals:

- Therese Delpech, director of strategic affairs for the French Atomic Energy Commission and French Commissioner to UNMOVIC (the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission)
- Richard Latter, director of Wilton Park, a conference center in the United Kingdom affiliated with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Lewis Dunn, vice president at SAIC
- Michael Moodie, president of the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute
- And this author, Brad Roberts, member of the research staff, IDA.

We served as members of the project’s ad hoc steering group.

The project has enjoyed financial support from the following institutions, for which the organizers are heartily grateful:

- Institute for Defense Analyses
- Atomic Energy Commission, France
- Wilton Park Conference Centre
- Strategies Group at SAIC
- Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- W. Alton Jones Foundation

The steering group elaborated agendas for the series of three meetings. These can be found at Appendix A. We also identified participants from each of the five countries in order to ensure a cross-section of thinking, and an encompassing of both governmental and non-governmental expertise. In total, nearly 50 people participated in one or more of these discussions. They are listed at Appendix B. The discussions were substantively rich, extremely wide-ranging, and sometimes emotional. They were also on a not-for-attribution basis. Following the third meeting in July 2000, the steering group decided to await the outcome of the U.S. election to craft a written report. The ensuing months were a roller-coaster ride for major power relations; only in summer 2001 did we begin to formulate a set of findings. The steering group met again three weeks after September 11 to consider how developments might influence our thinking. It seemed wise to be patient in issuing a report, with the hope that time would bring a settling of major power relations and also clearer thinking in the United States about grand strategy. Wilton Park provided short, written reports on each session and an interim report in February 2000.<sup>3</sup> Since autumn 2001, the group has met on an ad hoc basis.

This is the first comprehensive report.<sup>4</sup> It is written with two primary audiences in mind: One is the Washington foreign and defense policy community interested in how to advance the discussion of U.S. grand strategy. The other is the community of foreign policymakers and analysts who participated in the study process and others like them attempting to understand the ideas guiding U.S. policy and the debates that give them shape. These two audiences bring quite different contexts to the discussion; thus this report has erred on the side of comprehensiveness in order to make the internal logic of large ideas as transparent as possible.

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard Latter, *The P5 and International Security*, Wilton Park Paper No. 148 (Sussex, England: Wilton Park, 2000). Available at [www.wiltonpark.org.uk](http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk).

<sup>4</sup> The views expressed here are those of the author alone and should not be attributed to IDA or any of its sponsors. The report is written in solo fashion because the study process was not conceived or conducted as a critique of the Bush National Security Strategy – but it serves as a useful backdrop for this purpose and thus requires some summarizing. The author is grateful to steering group members and also to Virginia Monken and Victor Utgoff for their substantive reactions to earlier drafts of this paper.

## A. Different Worldviews

One of our principal curiosities was about the worldviews of each country. Worldviews often begin with the view each nation has of itself and its current place in history. It is important to start here because, perhaps naturally enough, there is a tendency to project onto the larger world stage the particular experiences and needs of individual actors.<sup>5</sup>

### *Russia*

Russian participants conveyed something of the deep debate within Russia about its present and future world role. Some of them characterized it as a regional power with few global dimensions, compensating for weakness through partnership with India, China, and others. Others described it as a normal power with too little power for its own needs and international behaviors driven by the loss of empire. Yet others described it as a state and a society torn between its Eastern and Western identities – a rift now centuries old, and one which affords it a role, as one Russian put it, as a shield for the West from the Dark Forces of Asia. Cutting across much of this discussion was the tension between a society that seems inherently pessimistic if not actually paranoid, and a sense also that the Russian people are sufficiently resilient to weather the present transition peaceably.

This disparity of views was echoed among participants from other countries. Some saw Russia as a state and a society in rapid decline, on the verge of economic, political, and demographic collapse. Others saw it as a mercenary state, even a criminal one. One European characterized Russia as a nostalgic power, holding on to nuclear weapons as its only meaningful coin of power. Against this background, it is perhaps surprising that quite a few of the non-Russian participants were willing to argue that Russia is in fact a “normal state” pursuing its national interests without ideology and within a system of divided power domestically, generally on the “right path” but stumbling along.

The dialogue conveyed something of the discomfort of Russian elites in a changing world. Change was generally described as negative and dangerous. Most of the Russians perceived America to be exploiting Russian weakness in various ways, not the least of which is through NATO expansion. Some asserted that confrontation can be

---

<sup>5</sup> Recording and describing here the ideas expressed in these dialogues is an enterprise fraught with danger. Readers should understand that the author’s purpose is to convey the substance of these discussions in order to gain some insights into the worldviews reflected in them. It is not to endorse these ideas or worldviews as valid – or even as an accurate reflection of the full body of opinion within each country.

sometimes useful. But there also was a general recognition that globalization and interdependence make cooperation more important and valuable than before. In Russian thinking, there was a strong undercurrent that the demands of stability in the present era cannot be met by institutions and practices crafted in a time when the risk of major war among big states was the central international problem.

### *China*

China's inclusion in the dialogue process was a boon. It provided a remarkable opportunity to probe Chinese thinking about the requirements of peace and stability in the present era. Such stability is seen in China as essential to its ability to transition to a modern, stable state and society.

Chinese participants described a wide-ranging debate in China about the central tenets of its foreign policy, a debate between two primary camps. One holds that former Premier Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy remains valid and with it the belief that the main trends in the present international era are toward peace and development, with little or no risk of major power war. The other camp holds that the main trends today are toward power politics and hegemonism. This latter camp has coalesced around the perception that the United States is exploiting its "unipolar moment" to gain Absolute Security. By this, the Chinese mean that the United States seems to be seeking an escape from the balance of power in the period before a new peer competitor emerges, so that it will be free to use military force even against nuclear-armed adversaries. What worries China particularly is what one participant called "America's Brezhnev doctrine" – its apparent frequent recourse to the use of military force to advance its "ideological" agenda of freedom and liberty. In critiquing the U.S. defense policy of the Clinton era (with its priorities to shape, respond, and prepare), one Chinese participant bristled with the question of why China should tolerate being "shaped" by American power.

The Chinese relationship with the United States seemed central to the Chinese worldview. Indeed, it was the primary preoccupation of the Chinese, and the place of Russia and Europe in their worldview seemed negligible – or limited to that of pawns. But there was more to the Chinese worldview. Looking to its past, Chinese participants frequently returned to the abuse done to it by major foreign powers. Looking to the future, Chinese participants articulated a vision of being a modern, middle-rank power by the year 2049 (the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution). They conveyed confidence that China can be the equal to any major power without needing to compete with it in raw power terms – and certainly without encumbering and crippling itself as the Soviet Union

did. Although virtually every Chinese participant seemed to expect that Chinese passivity on the world stage would wane as its power grows, none anticipated that it would seek a hegemonic position. Most spoke in terms of China regaining its rightful place as the Middle Kingdom and reclaiming also the deference from others that goes with being a civilization three millennia old. Surveying Russia's failed transformation and the shortcomings of Western "libertine capitalism" (as one put it), Chinese participants seemed very confident that their "answer" to the question of how a society should develop and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the only right answer – and one that will be vindicated by China's rise. This sense of China as a pioneering force was striking to Westerners accustomed to thinking of China as stuck with out-dated notions and corrupt leadership.

Of note, our P-5 dialogue came at a time of intense debate within the Chinese Communist Party about whether war with America over Taiwan was inevitable. They offered frequent reminders of their belief that the United States has inserted itself inappropriately and dangerously into a matter of vital interest not just for the Communist Party but for the Chinese people as a whole. Chinese participants speculated openly about the possibility of war under the nuclear shadow. One asserted: "China is not afraid of major war. It fought America in Korea and Vietnam." The consistently bellicose tone offended many of the dialogue participants. That tone was harshly criticized as inconsistent with China's role as a security guarantor on the U.N. Security Council and with the obligation of the Council's members to seek peaceful resolution to conflict.

Also of note were Chinese views of the present historical moment. One Chinese participant expressed the conviction that the major powers should be pleased that "China has essentially emerged as the status quo power everyone asked us to be at the start of the 1990s – with the exception of the Taiwan issue." Others expressed toleration for the U.S. military presence in East Asia, even support for it as a stabilizing force, but on the condition that the United States does not exploit that presence to lay the foundations for a strategy of encirclement and containment of China. But there seemed to be general Chinese concurrence with the proposition of one Chinese participant that "there is no rational international political order in evidence today." On the specific question of China's orientation to existing international rules, the problem seems not to be that they exist or are "wrong," but that China did not participate in creating them. Interdependence is seen as a double-edged sword, offering rising prosperity to many, but in a context in which the strong set the terms. To the person, Chinese participants seemed to see competition in major power relations as a normal state of affairs. Cooperation is also

normal, but especially the major powers must hedge against the possible failure of cooperation.

Other participants came to the following views of China in this process. Many saw China as preoccupied with questions of power and obsessed with questions of sovereignty – indeed, one described this as a fetish. Few were willing to accept the premise that China would be satisfied with economic power alone, and argued that it would inevitably seek a larger military role internationally. Many worried about the flammable role of nationalism as a substitute for the failed ideology of Marxism-Leninism. All agreed that China thinks long term, but most concluded that it is incapable for the moment of elaborating a global vision and of acting proactively to promote it.

### *Europe*

British and French participants offered still different perspectives. Two world wars and the holocaust were defined as profoundly formative. This “orgy of unlimited war and unlimited violations of human rights” led Europeans to reconsider the very nature of power politics. Having “exhausted the pleasures of power politics,” Europeans have preserved their sovereignty in a new context – of relations governed by mutually agreed laws and permitting mutual interference in each others affairs in accordance with those laws. The European experience was described as signaling the ultimately ruinous effects of peace through a raw balance-of-power approach. This precipitated an extended discussion of the role of sovereignty in peace and the transformation of the modern state system (see more below). This experience informs a strong European sense that international problems are not amenable to purely military and technical solutions, which heightens their interest in diplomacy and politics – thus, multilateralism. Europe’s own security was described in historical terms as no longer an issue for the whole world. But European participants also expressed some growing uncertainty about how the game of states will be played in the future. They described a growing new form of anti-Americanism in Europe, one informed not by a resentment of American power but a contempt for the values reflected in regular recourse to military force, continued enforcement of the death penalty, the gun culture, and free market capitalism.

The focus of British and French participants on Europe as such – as opposed to their distinct national roles – was telling. Indeed, Europe’s emergence as an international factor in its own right was much discussed. Europe, as a political entity unto itself and operating as a factor on the global stage, was seen as “in the making.” There are European institutions and processes and sentiments, but also separate states, with only

two that think globally (they argued). Among the Europeans, there was considerable debate about whether a United States of Europe (or a United Europe of States, in the words of one French leader) would ever in fact emerge.

The Russian perspective on Europe was a mix of envy and distrust. The envy has its basis in the belief that Europe is seen by Russians as having developed at the expense of Russia (as for example in both World War II and the Cold War). Russians expressed much greater enthusiasm for the European Union than for NATO.

The Chinese perspective on Europe has already been hinted at – as a pawn in PRC-US relations. One Chinese participant described how Beijing so quickly regained international standing after the crackdown at Tiananmen “by playing Airbus against Boeing.” Chinese experts debated whether Europe is simply an extension of the American pole in a multipolar system, generally arguing that Europeans choose to play the role of lackey (a term used particularly to describe the British role). NATO was described simply as a tool of American hegemony. In one of many spirited exchanges over Kosovo in which European participants argued that, contrary to Chinese thinking, America had not inspired the Kosovo operation but had been dragged to it kicking and screaming, one Chinese participant ended the discussion with the assertion that “it’s the job of America’s allies to lie for it.”

The American perspective on the European role in world politics was complex. Generally, Americans perceived a Europe of many tongues and no muscle, of allies who do not do enough and then do too much. Europe seemed both irrelevant and absolutely necessary to the Americans.

### ***United States***

American readers are well versed in the internal U.S. debates about the U.S. world role and the changing requirements of international peace and stability. There is no point in recording them here. American participants spent considerable time and energy explaining and interpreting these various currents and challenging some of the most facile assumptions that seemed to have crept into foreign debates about the United States. We are not persuaded that we changed many minds.

Indeed, a welter of strong and often contradictory views of the U.S. world role infused these dialogues. As argued above, China seemed fixated on the United States and the purported search for Absolute Security. Chinese experts argued further that the United States would inevitably block China’s rise, to which we Americans responded that

the United States has welcomed the emergence of strong and democratic societies – witness its post-war commitments to Germany and Japan. But in a bit of mirror-imaging of their own, the most senior participants on the Chinese side could not accept that a country as powerful as the United States does not have a secret strategy to gain and maintain world domination.

Russians generally argued that the United States does not really need international rules because it has sufficient power to cope with the unpredictability and instability inherent to a system free of rules. They generally sided with the Chinese in arguing that the purpose of the “revolution in military affairs” and “defense transformation” must be to make possible the use of U.S. force against other nuclear powers – i.e., against them. The vision articulated in the Joint Vision 2020 of “freedom from attack and... freedom to attack” was stiffly criticized as sound military planning but un-sound grand strategy.

British participants, while generally more supportive of U.S. positions and thinking, also argued that the United States is aggressively seeking to increase its freedom of maneuver by military and other means. One decried American power as sufficient to say “no” but insufficient to say “yes” to any form of international enterprise. Another decried the seeming inability of Americans to distinguish attacks on its status from complaints by those who doubt that America remains committed to solving some of the big international problems.

French participants reprised the French critique of the American hyperpower. But they also underscored, as did the British, their expectation that they will stand closely with America in time of crisis.

To the extent there was a European view of America, it can be summarized as disquiet and doubt, but not deep concern. Europeans saw the United States as essential to European security and prosperity, and as willing and able to play a constructive role toward those ends. This theme was echoed among Russians and Chinese as well: U.S. engagement in Europe and Asia and on the global policy agenda was welcomed by both. This extended to military engagement as well, as most of the participants argued and accepted that the U.S. guarantor role was a valuable source of stability and security in their particular environment(s). Indeed, U.S. leadership was both desired and expected.

Among the American team, there was a certain tension on the central question of hegemonic ambition. Some Americans embraced the term uncritically – indeed, with gusto, making the case that a benign American hegemony can serve the global interest in peace, stability, and prosperity, and that others need not worry because the American

heart is pure, meaning free of imperial ambition. Others of us were more reticent. Without wanting to fuel the paranoia about American power, we wondered about the viability of a world order based on a simple principle: “trust us.” We were to an extent receptive to the Chinese invocation of Lord Acton (to paraphrase: you Americans constantly preach to us about the virtues of divided power and checks and balances and don’t you any longer believe that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely?). We were also uncomfortable with the vision of America as a status quo power – after all, it is the most revolutionary power in human history with a track record of successfully promoting ambitious change on the world stage. We wondered about the potent effect of American Exceptionalism. And with an inside-the-beltway perspective, we were impressed by how frequently American power seems insufficient to its purpose and unable to accomplish its intended goal, in contrast to the image of an America brimming with excess power. To the person, we believed in the great potential of the United States to do good in the world. But we could not embrace on face value and with gusto the terra incognita of a world order based on “trust us” supremacy.

## **B. Threats to the Peace**

These different worldviews reflected quite different national perspectives on the core threats to peace and stability in the international system. Recall here that the timeframe is the end of the 1990s, looking back on the first post-Cold War decade and not yet having suffered the attacks of September 11.

For Russia, the primary source of instability was seen to be its own decay and the resulting doubts about the longevity of the state and attendant difficulties in maintaining internal stability and security around its periphery. In this regard, the United States may be a help, a hindrance, or simply irrelevant.

For China, the primary source of instability was seen to be the rogue hegemon. In Chinese eyes, the United States appears to be torn between cooperation, containment, and confrontation.

For Europe, the primary source of global instability seemed to be the possibility that Asia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will replace Europe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a source of major wars born of a balance of power approach to security.

In contrast, for the United States the primary source of instability in the international system seemed to be the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to states whose leaders are committed to the use of military force to

conquer others (and repress at home) and by the proliferation of missile delivery systems, thus giving them additional means to coerce Washington. The United States is also worried about the ultimate fate of transitions now under way in Russia and China – and the possibility of reversals and resumed major power hostilities.

One further point on threat perception: Although many Americans seem to make little of this point, there was a wide-spread perception among non-American participants that medium and small powers depend upon international institutions and processes for their security to a much larger degree than do the major powers – and upon the cooperation among major powers essential to their effective functioning.<sup>6</sup> They argued further that the falling out among the major powers has eroded confidence that those powers will be able to cooperate sufficiently to ensure that the institutions and processes provide the necessary level of security for the small and medium powers.

### **C. Beyond Different Worldviews: Some Key Themes**

The preceding summary suggests that our dialogue left us largely divided in terms of competing national perspectives. In fact, we found a good deal to agree about. Moreover, many of the most energetic differences were found within the national groups, as opposed to among them. The following brief survey of some key issues in the discussion is suggestive of these observations.

#### ***Sovereignty's Contribution to Peace***

The timing of our dialogue brought issues related to humanitarian interventions to the fore. Following a series of such interventions by the Clinton administration, the Kosovo operation was then under way. This necessarily provoked loud complaints from Chinese participants about whether Tibet might be next, and from Russians about various forms of U.S. military incursions into their areas of interest. It also provoked a great deal of transatlantic debate about the future of transatlantic security cooperation and the possible emergence of a European defense identity.

After a lot of dialogue, we came to surprising consensus. Wherever humanitarian crises pose a threat to international peace, the Security Council should be prepared to sanction such interventions. Even Chinese participants, with their deep aversion to any transgression of the sovereignty of states, were prepared to support this principle. Of

---

<sup>6</sup> As Kenneth N. Waltz has argued, “The strong have many more ways of coping with adversities than the weak have, and the latter depend on the former much more than the other way around.” Waltz, “Globalization and American Power,” *National Interest*, No. 59 (Spring 2000), p. 54.

course, where such crises do not pose a threat to peaceful relations among states, there was less certainty of the legitimacy of action, at least within a UN context. And there was general consensus that the debate about whether to intervene in such crises had distracted necessary attention from thinking about the before and after – about preventing the eruption of such crisis and about the tasks of post-conflict disarmament and rebuilding.

This discussion of humanitarian interventions led to a much more far-reaching discussion of sovereignty and particularly its contribution to peace among nations and states. The Chinese took us here. In this dialogue, the Chinese emerged as staunch defenders of the principles of non-intervention and the sovereignty of states. They asserted that their views of these principles are shared with “all states of Asia” and with all developing countries. Chinese participants were blunt in arguing that Asia’s view is necessarily different from that of Europe, “as one was the colonizer and the other the colonized.” Globalization has only magnified these concerns, goes their argument, because societal control is passing into the hands of others, whether supranational institutions or simply “the strong.” For China, the Kosovo operation was a gross violation of international law, an act of aggression inflicted on a small country by the American bully.

Europeans described these Chinese views as closer to 19<sup>th</sup> than 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking. Russians joined them in this argument. This was one of many times when Chinese participants seemed just a bit bewildered by the fact that the long-running Sino-American debate on world order didn’t translate well into this pentagonal discussion. Americans said little in this discussion of sovereignty, knowing that the American body politic is rather deeply divided on the extent to which it is permissible to sometimes transgress sovereignty for other purposes. As one European put it: “States should have learned over the last century that putting sovereignty above all else actually makes its achievement harder by destroying the system in which sovereignty is expressed.”

The sense of most of the participants seemed to be that, over the last three centuries, sovereignty has come to be understood as an essential ingredient in a durable order. It is essential because only through the free expression of public will in political systems that protect individual liberty can the justice essential to peace be created and maintained. Sovereignty’s central place as an organizing principle is under continuous and, in the view of this group, growing trial. Ideological movements like fascism, Leninism, and radical Islam seek to subjugate the public will to leadership by a “vanguard” elite. The increasingly interdependent character of the world is also a challenge, as people willingly cede or share sovereignty in the service of some larger

good. And globalization is a challenge, as it seems to deprive states of their ability to control many of the most important socioeconomic forces in their own societies.<sup>7</sup>

As was further argued, the United Nations Charter is in fact a compromise of two principles. One is respect for sovereignty and entails an obligation not to intervene. The other is respect for human rights and entails an obligation to intervene when massive violations of human rights occur. Such violations, it was argued, ought be seen as robbing the people of the sovereignty that is rightly theirs, not the state's. "Sovereignty is too often used as a cover to protect the oppressors rather than the people." It was further argued that a moral obligation to intervene also comes into being when the majority turns from persecution of a minority to genocide – an abuse of sovereignty.

The Chinese complained about the historic Western temptation to gunboat diplomacy. They reiterated their view that states have the right to use force internally to maintain cohesion, and point to the prior history of the other four in doing so. And they argued forcefully that China has not yet fully recovered the sovereignty taken from it during the period of major power occupation and coercion a century and more ago. This was a pointed reference to Taiwan and came at a time when Hong Kong had just been returned to China. They found themselves with little to say in the face of the other four arguing repeatedly "can there be a lasting peace based on injustice?"

This of course brought to the fore the question of the role of the Security Council as a guarantor of peace and stability. It is charged with acting to protect both principles; its members have accepted the responsibility to do so. The others debate and sometimes act, while China follows and/or abstains. This is one of China's fundamental dilemmas: it is torn between the vision of its role as a great power cooperating in the councils of global power to shape events, and the vision of an aggrieved, outside power and not tainted by the corrupt practices of an unjust world.

### ***The Risks of Nuclear Aristocracy***

No international conference on security affairs in this period would have been able to avoid heated debate about the virtues of the U.S. ballistic missile defense project. We managed to penetrate the issue beyond the usual morass in various ways. One was the astute Chinese observation that the international BMD debate is a way to engage Americans in a debate about their feelings about America and its world role. Another was

---

<sup>7</sup> For more on the role of sovereignty in the current interstate system with an argument about modern, post-modern, and pre-modern states, see Robert Cooper, *The Postmodern State and World Order* (London: Demos Foreign Policy Centre, 2000).

the general view that moving away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty might be entirely acceptable but, went the argument, it would be preferable not to move away from it before we know firmly what we are moving toward in the form of new patterns of cooperation and restraint. The closing note in this discussion was common assent to a French comment: “Let’s not overreact to BMD. Its true impact will depend on technical, political, and strategic choices not yet made.”

Just as the discussion of humanitarian intervention opened up the larger discussion of sovereignty’s contribution to peace, this BMD discussion opened up a larger discussion of the future management of nuclear relations among The Five and their mutual obligations to the larger nuclear project. (That “project” is defined here as the political effort to marginalize to the maximum extent possible the role of nuclear weapons in world affairs.)

The Russians led us down this particular path. With a compelling vision of nuclear anarchy and vulnerability crystallized for them by the so-called loose nukes problem, and also of strategic inferiority to the United States, Russian participants raised numerous questions about the future requirements of nuclear security and stability. The Chinese were reluctant to be drawn into this discussion, acknowledging that they are modernizing their forces but arguing that minimum deterrence remains the cornerstone of Chinese strategic policy. Their efforts to blame U.S. BMD for any and all destabilization of the global nuclear order met with little support. The Russians expressed some considerable frustration, echoed also by others, that nuclear weapons translate poorly into political influence.

The Americans were repeatedly called upon to defend the claimed virtues of a move toward defense dominance in the strategic domain. We reiterated Secretary Perry’s call to move from mutual assured destruction to mutual assured security and candidate Bush’s desires to replace MAD with a new strategic framework of deep reductions in offensive forces along with efforts to deploy defenses. But clearly in the United States no consensus had emerged on a model of strategic stability in a mixed offense/defense world. And there was little we could say in response to Chinese queries about how China fits into America’s picture of the strategic future.

The Europeans contributed two key arguments. The first was about the revolutionary effect of nuclear weapons on world politics and the new risks of instability in a more multipolar nuclear era. A British view: “The massive increase in military strength represented by nuclear weapons produced a paradoxical interdependence.

Interdependence among allies is natural but interdependence among enemies is something new.” A French follow-on: “In a bipolar world, nuclear weapons brought us together” [because crisis induces abstention] “but in a multipolar world they may well divide us” because risks are not perceived as common.

The second European argument was about nuclear aristocracy. This is an important argument so it is cited here at length, from the remarks of one of the French presenters:

“We face a potentially damaging dilemma. On the one hand, there is a growing recognition, embodied in the NPT, that nuclear weapons make peace indivisible, that nuclear proliferation is a threat to peace, and that the legitimacy of the UNSC depends in part in its capacity to fulfill its responsibilities in this respect, both collectively and through the actions of its members, in particular those which have nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, we face an institutional impasse that has prevented the adoption according to UN rules of effective measures, thus increasing the risk of unilateral measures damaging to the authority of the Council. The conflict between the legitimacy based on the respect of rules and the legitimacy based on the fulfillment of goals is all the more acute as many states have accepted binding rules that put significant constraints on their sovereignty because they expected those rules to further the agreed goals.

If the rules of the UN are seen by a growing number of states not to further the goals of the UN Charter, the most powerful as well as the least powerful will cease to respect them, the former because they are an obstacle to their power, the latter because they do not adequately compensate for their lack of power.

Our privileged position in the Security Council has not been granted upon us to increase our power at the expense of the goals of the charter, but to put our power at the service of these goals. There is no privilege without duties and no power without responsibilities.”

An aristocracy enjoys power without responsibility, privilege without duty. The guarantor role of The Five is inextricably connected with their nuclear status – not because they have the privilege of having gotten their weapons first but because they have a duty to help the world to escape the risks of Armageddon. In the decade of the 1990s, four of the five acted sometimes unilaterally and sometimes cooperatively to end the nuclear arms race and to reduce nuclear risks and move nuclear weapons further into the background of international politics. At the end of the decade, both Russia and the United States seemed to be flirting with new trajectories: Russia in terms of its re-embrace of nuclear weapons in military doctrine and the United States in terms of the rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the Senate and the calls by many

Clinton administration opponents to refurbish the nuclear deterrent. Moreover, among the representatives we could gather for these proceedings, there was very little thinking about the requirements of nuclear stability and security beyond those of specific nations.

There were even growing fears, even from those who resist Washington's nonproliferation demarches with rhetorical complaints of American hegemony, that the United States may be relinquishing its lead of the nuclear marginalization project. As one British participant argued:

“Although many states gave shape to this nuclear order, it was seen by the United States as peculiarly *its* creation and responsibility, as the product of *its* genius, and with some justification. Throughout the nuclear age...most of the *ordering ideas*, and most of the desire to realize those ideas, came from the United States. The American attitude towards the nuclear order has therefore always been monarchical...[But] U.S. actions called into question the entire order that the US had itself so painstakingly constructed.”<sup>8</sup>

We were thus left with two big questions. Is nuclear order still America's project? And are the other four prepared to join in further efforts to promote global nuclear order?

### ***The Crisis of Confidence***

These questions of nuclear order and of intervention led us down yet another interesting path – the role of the UN Security Council as a guarantor of the global nonproliferation and arms control regimes. Do the requirements of order among the nuclear weapon states extend to securing regional nuclear orders? Should they intervene by military means in cases of proliferation to prevent threats to the peace? There was deep division among participants on this topic, division that spanned the national contingents.

Many of the participants argued that treaty enforcement is primarily the responsibility of the various treaty regimes themselves and especially of states parties – particularly those with special interests or capabilities that might come together in “coalitions of the willing.” This view seemed especially prevalent among those participants most closely associated with the Security Council itself, who reported that issues of nonproliferation, arms control, and disarmament are not high on the list of Security Council concerns – and ought not to be, unless there were some particular crisis

---

<sup>8</sup> William Walker, citing from a published essay, “Nuclear Order and Disorder,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (2000), pp. 703-724.

threatening the peace. Indeed, one official asserted that such issues “were never and would never be discussed” at the Council.

They appeared wholly non-conversant with the following facts. Each of the main treaties – the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) – includes provisions that explicitly oblige the Security Council and its permanent members to deal with problems of noncompliance that cannot be resolved by states’ parties among themselves. Moreover, twice since the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the permanent members have asserted their intention to treat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a threat to the peace, code words for signaling their potential use of military means to redress the non-compliance. The evident falling out over Iraq and the inability to reverse the nuclearization process in South Asia has magnified the perception of unwillingness or inability to perform these obligations. This issue is complicated by the fact that Russia and China are understood to be in violation of certain treaty obligations of their own – especially the BWC. The fact that the United States has in its own ways been a weak custodian or steward of these regimes has only aggravated the problem.

Furthermore, in the immediate aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, the international community – led by the Security Council – committed itself to a major effort to expand and strengthen the global treaty regime against weapons of mass destruction. A decade later, there is little to show for this commitment. The CWC was completed and entered into force but it is troubled, especially by the need to deal with disarmament by the United States and Russia. Elaboration of a compliance protocol for the BWC limped along until finally being killed by the United States in 2001. Members of the International Atomic Energy Agency elaborated enhanced safeguards, but few members have actually signed up to and implemented them.

This is one of many points in our discussion where participation by national representatives beyond The Five would have helped to shed more light on these matters. Recall the argument made earlier about small and medium powers depending much more so than large ones on the effective functioning of multilateral regimes and institutions. Among precisely those states a crisis of confidence has been steadily brewing over the last decade, as they have observed the inability and/or unwillingness of the Security Council to deal effectively with these issues. This crisis of confidence also has been steadily brewing in the United States, where the inability of the treaty regimes to deliver the promised compliance has emerged as the key test of their viability for conservatives.

Here too the arguments about nuclear aristocracy are germane. There is a special complication in the nuclear weapon states having the obligation to prevent others from gaining nuclear capability. As one scholar has put it:

“If the Security Council arrogates to itself the right to judge these [nuclear] matters, the fact that the five permanent members are also the five openly declared nuclear weapon states is not going to be lost on nations seeking to acquire such weapons. From their perspective it will be the verdict of a kangaroo court, however much the Council might invoke noble sounding principles, and the United States, as the leader of an international program of coercive non-proliferation, would be the principal target of their wrath.”<sup>9</sup>

As one of our European participants put it in tying the discussion of treaty enforcement to questions of political legitimacy, “you don’t get it by showing up – legitimacy requires efficiency of result.”

### ***Beyond Multipolarity***

Participants in our dialogue made extensive use of the term “multipolarity.” Indeed, during this period the term was heartily embraced by the governments of Russia, China, and France as a way to foreshadow the end of American hegemony. In fact, our dialogue left us with some considerable skepticism about the utility of the term.

Part of our difficulty with the term had to do with the nature of the power of The Five. In the present international system, the main actors possess very different types of hard and soft power, and different capacities to motivate parts of the international system to do certain things. This is in contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when thinking about multiple independent power centers in an interstate system first developed – a time when those powers were roughly comparable in size, scale, and type of power.

European participants provoked what turned out to be a sharp debate about the nature and sources of power in the current international system. They introduced the arguments noted above about legitimacy: “Our privileged position on the Security Council has not been granted to us to increase our power at the expense of the goals of the Charter but to put our power at the service of these goals.... Power lacking legitimacy tends to erode and may disappear.” The Chinese were especially unsympathetic to this line of argument, except to the extent it proved a useful foil for questioning the U.S. role.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, “A New Proliferation Policy,” *National Interest*, No. 28 (Summer 1992), pp. 63-72.

Russian participants were more sympathetic, perhaps because they look eagerly for potential great power roles.

Another current in this debate highlighted the internal focus of the major power centers throughout the 1990s – Moscow’s focus on domestic prosperity and institution building, Beijing’s focus on domestic reform and cohesion, the European focus on the European project, and Washington’s focus “like a laser” (then-candidate Clinton’s term) on the economy. None seemed entirely confident of its ability to shape its environment in order to be fully secure. In Gerald Segal’s famous words, these are “Lite Powers” unwilling or unable to act in the way of traditional great powers to shape external realities.<sup>10</sup> As another commentator put it, “danger now comes not from areas of strength but weakness.”<sup>11</sup>

What does it mean to be a major power? In the words of one scholar, “Great powers are recognized by others to have, and are conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties. Great powers, for example, assert the right, and are accorded the right to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole. They accept the duty, and are thought by others to have the duty, of modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear.”<sup>12</sup>

This led us to debate the provocative proposition that in today’s world – when numerous states clamor for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council table – there may be too few rather than too many great powers, which is to say states willing and able to share responsibility for international peace and security and the existing norms and regimes.

Inevitably this discussion brought us to the topic of unipolarity – to the question of the singular American role in the present international system. Many of the key themes were already summarized in the preceding discussion of worldviews. There was resentment of American power but also a desire for U.S. leadership. U.S. military engagement was welcomed but in the context of institutional forms permitting some form of joint decision-making. One of the Americans recalled a quote from James Schlesinger:

---

<sup>10</sup> Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, “The Rise of ‘Lite’ Powers,” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Fall 1996), pp. 1-10.

<sup>11</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “New Dangers Amid the Ruins,” *Newsweek*, March 5, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 202. See also Robert A. Pastor, ed., *A Century’s Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

“We have increasingly tended to alienate others and seem scarcely cognizant of their growing annoyance.”<sup>13</sup>

In this discussion of multipolarity, the central question under debate was America’s record in promoting the common interests of The Five. Here the sharpest critique came from China: the argument, already noted, that the United States is exploiting its unipolar moment for hegemonic purposes, seeking to replace the UN Security Council as the world’s policeman (backed by NATO), thus marginalizing the non-European Council members, and interjecting its value agenda into the sovereign affairs of others. Thus there was a deep Chinese debate about whether cooperating with the United States buys peace for China or merely subservience – and a war precipitated by Washington over Taiwanese independence.

The Russians were of two minds. On the one hand, they criticized Washington for many actions that maliciously or unwittingly compromised Russian interests. On the other hand, they offered a stiff rejoinder to China, with the argument that U.S. assertiveness reflects in fact the rising role of the community of democracies more generally. Some Russians argued that unipolarity potentially serves common interests if it is the only viable alternative to chaos.

The Europeans tended to focus on U.S. will, not capability. They described an America largely unwilling to play its role as a leading power on major issues and negligent in reshaping the international political landscape after the Cold War. They also described an America fixated on military means and tone deaf about politics. In the words of one, “money and power make America stupid.”

We Americans were critical of the Chinese views and more sympathetic to the frustrations expressed by the others. But we also sought to defend the U.S. role on three grounds. One, others have not done a superior job of respecting American interests. Two, America is generally damned if it does and damned if it doesn’t in world affairs – no policy escapes criticism. Three, America has not abandoned its traditional effort to construct a liberal global order in the interests of all.

We tried to shift the debate from the past to the future. With an eye in that direction, the key issue is what America does with its hegemony. What intentions will form and how will it act to fulfill them? There was a generally shared perception that the United States plays by the rules only when it suits it to do so, along with a general

---

<sup>13</sup> James Schlesinger, “Fragmentation and Hubris: A Shaky Basis for American Leadership,” *National Interest*, No. 49 (Fall 1997), p. 4.

perception that their room for maneuver is shrinking while America's expands. The chief concern of the other major powers is that the United States may act in ways that damage their vital interests.

#### **D. The Dialogue Process: Conclusions**

After approximately two years of wide-ranging dialogue, we did not try to compel 50 or so people to come to an agreed set of conclusions. But some stand out.

First, in major power relations this is a moment of opportunity at least as much as it is a moment of challenge. That opportunity stems in part from the absence of high expectations of major war involving two or more of these powers. To be sure, Taiwan provides an important flashpoint, but it does not hold out for either China or the United States the prospect of a war of occupation and national survival.

The opportunity stems also in part from the existence of some important shared interests among the major powers.

1. At the most crude level, The Five have a shared interest in maintaining their status as major powers in the international system.
2. They also have a common interest in the preservation of the interstate system, given their leading place in it. And in integrating rising powers as status quo powers.
3. The Five have a common interest in sustaining an international order that allows themselves and others to focus on internal challenges of political reform and economic growth. America is no more able to prosper in a chaotic world than Russia or China.
4. Common economic interests are best advanced by expanding mutual trade and investment. This requires a healthy international economy and associated institutions.
5. The Five have a common interest in promoting security in the subregions – and especially so in those subregions with energy resources and/or major WMD proliferation potential.
6. They also have a common interest in ensuring that regional wars with a WMD aspect do not end up raising questions about their legitimacy or viability as nuclear guarantors. A regional war that invokes questions of U.S. nuclear use would create generally unexpected new and common interests in securing the post-war nuclear peace.

Second, a moment of opportunity is often a moment of risk – and this one certainly is. There is the risk that domestic transitions in Russia or China may falter, with a return to more adversarial forms of competition, and a projection of that competition into subregions where energy or WMD risks exists. Another way to put this is that there

is a risk that the wide-ranging debates sketched above may be “won” internally by political forces antithetical to cooperative approaches.

But the big risk would seem to be a WMD regional war that changes the world. Such a war may be in the offing in the ambition to unseat Saddam, now hotly debated at this writing. Such a war could change the world by somehow proving weapons of mass destruction as useful for blackmailing major powers or for gaining operational advantages in battle. Or it could change the world by somehow casting the United States and/or the Security Council as a nuclear-armed bully. It is a shame that ten years were largely lost that could have been used to prepare the Council and the larger community to come to terms with the risks and potential consequences of a regional WMD war that goes wrong from the perspective of its lessons for the order to follow.

Indeed, a striking conclusion to this process of dialogue is the extent to which issues related to weapons of mass destruction cut across the major power agenda. They are central to the regional peace enforcement responsibility of the Security Council, to the relations among The Five, to the “nuclear project,” to questions of legitimacy and effectiveness. Yet in our experience we find that there is relatively little expertise that cuts across the political issues of major power cooperation and the WMD issues – there are too many specialists and not enough generalists to knit together a coherent view of these cross-cutting agendas. For most of the Cold War and to an increasing extent in the first half of the 1990s, the major powers seemed to be more or less on the same sheet of music in this regard. They cooperated to promote nonproliferation and nuclear stability, even in periods of intense competition among them. Today, the consensus seems far less robust. This could cripple the role of the Security Council as an enforcer in a WMD world. And it could shatter the project to marginalize nuclear weapons.

A third conclusion is that seizing opportunities and avoiding risks requires something more than business as usual in U.S. foreign policy and in its relations with the major powers. There has been enough drift. Now is a time for boldness.

A fourth conclusion is that any bold actions will be taken against a background of deep suspicion about strategic intentions. The major powers are, to varying degrees, suspicious of the intentions of the others. Middle and small powers are uncertain about the intentions of the major powers to get along in ways that preclude dramatic, unexpected changes to their security environments.

Boldness is, of course, most likely from the United States. It has the clearest capacity to shape the larger international system. Will it be able to act purposefully so

that its power is used to address common interests – and reliably so – for the foreseeable future? Will it choose to reassure other major powers that its power will not be exploited to affect changes at their expense? And to what extent might its interests be seen by the United States to require such changes?

### **III. THE EVOLUTION OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION “ANSWER”**

Between the swearing in of George W. Bush in January 2001 and the release of the National Security Strategy (NSS) in September 2002, 20 months passed. These were an eventful 20 months in the national life, and apparently also in the president’s own thinking about the U.S. world role. As it bears on the topic of American primacy and major power relations, the period can be characterized in three main phases.

#### **A. Phase One: Pre-September 11**

The first phase encompassed the period up to September 11. In this period, the administration elaborated its desire to move toward a “new strategic framework” with Russia, one based not on the principles of mutual assured destruction of old, but on “common interests and common responsibilities.”<sup>14</sup> Toward that end, it signaled clearly its antipathy to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

Early in this period, the president signaled also a new tough line on Taiwan. This followed his campaign criticism of the Clinton administration’s pursuit of strategic partnership with China and his vision of China as a strategic competitor. He did so with a statement to the press that seemed to move away from the posture of strategic ambiguity about whether the United States would protect Taiwan from mainland aggression in any and all circumstances. Ever since the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, U.S. presidents had held to the position that the United States would defend Taiwan from wars initiated by Beijing, but likely would not defend Taiwan if the war commenced as a result of a Taiwanese initiative to move away from the framework reflected in the communiqué by declaring independence. President Bush shifted from this position, putting his administration on record as defending Taiwan in any circumstance, although subsequent “clarifications” restored some of the ambiguity. This brouhaha was followed immediately by the EP-3 incident. This crisis seemed to leave leaders in both Washington and Beijing nervous about a rapid deterioration of the bilateral relationship and about the potential of a crisis to flare into a war that neither country anticipates nor seeks.

Also in this period the administration took a number of acts to distance the United States from some of the projects most favored by its European allies – from the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court, for example. Some Europeans perceived an alarming contempt for traditional American allies among the administration’s new

---

<sup>14</sup> White House papers on ballistic missile defense as briefed to the media July 11, 2001.

appointees. A broad transatlantic debate ensued about the new theme of unilateralism in American foreign policy and the administration's seeming disdain for multilateralism.<sup>15</sup>

Though published shortly after the attacks of September 11, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) was the first comprehensive administration statement of the nature of the new security environment and the place of the major powers in it.<sup>16</sup> Russia was flagged as presenting “an opportunity for cooperation...[because] it shares some important security concerns with the United States... Yet, at the same time, Russia pursues a number of policy objectives contrary to U.S. interests.” Although China is not mentioned by name, the QDR argues: “Asia is gradually emerging as a region susceptible to large-scale military competition.... The possibility exists that a military competitor with a formidable resource base will emerge in the region.” Europe was seen as “largely at peace” and although U.S. alliances “are a centerpiece of American security,” the analysis of regional security strongly emphasized coalitions of states to confront particular challenges. The absence of a peer competitor was a prominent theme in the QDR. But as already suggested, the QDR strongly suggested the likely return of a peer adversary in the medium to long term.

The QDR also expressed an overriding concern with the possibility – indeed, the certainty – of strategic surprise. “The international system... has become more fluid and unpredictable.” Although it dropped the vocabulary of the Clinton administration's defense strategy (“shape, respond, prepare”), the QDR conveyed some confidence in the ability of the United States to utilize its power to shape the international system – through heavy emphasis on the principles of assurance, dissuasion, deterrence, and defeat. The prominent place given assurance is particularly striking in a document infused with a sense that the United States would be victimized by surprise.

From the perspective of the questions raised in the preceding section of this paper, this first phase in the Bush administration's thinking seemed to offer some very pointed answers. Little deference was being shown to the interests of the other major powers. Indeed, there was a new assertiveness, a push toward unilateralism, and an embrace of American exceptionalism. The new strategic framework would be pursued with or without Moscow's support or perhaps even participation. Questions about the legitimacy

---

<sup>15</sup> For a defense of the administration's strategy as reflecting “hard-headed multilateralism,” see Richard N. Haass, Speech to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Center on International Cooperation, November 14, 2001, available at [www.ceip.org](http://www.ceip.org). See also Richard N. Haass, “What to Do With American Primacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 5 (September-October 1999).

<sup>16</sup> *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, September 30, 2001. The citations contained here are from the discussion of “A Changed Security Environment” on pages 3-5.

of U.S. power seemed to attract little or no interest – the fact of preeminence seemed clear enough, after all. The international community seemed treated as an obstacle to American initiatives. There would be little or no peace-keeping or nation-building, and reduced use of military force. U.S. dues to the United Nations remained unpaid.

## **B. Phase Two: The September 11 Shock and its Aftermath**

From the perspective of major power relations, the initial impact of September 11 was – as in every other aspect – dramatic.<sup>17</sup> From a preoccupation in Moscow, Beijing, and elsewhere with American preeminence, there was a sudden new vision – of an America victimized by a surge of fanatic mass casualty terrorism. The vision of an America made powerless in a prolonged intifada waged by terrorists with weapons of mass destruction was deeply troubling. This vision was a sharp reminder to the critics of U.S. power in places like Moscow and Beijing of the valuable role of the United States as a guarantor of security in regions of their vital interest. They now had to contemplate the possibility of its sudden withdrawal from these regional roles.

Neither Moscow nor Beijing could afford to see the United States lose the war on terror. But nor could they afford to see the United States succeed without them. If they came to be seen by Washington as irrelevant to that effort, they would be left powerless to shape outcomes to the conflict in ways that suit their interests. They also recognized the potential that irrelevance would increase contempt in the United States for their claims as major powers who can ask and expect deference from Washington for their vital interests. Russian President Vladimir Putin clearly saw a strategic opportunity post-9/11 to shift the terms of debate both internally and externally about Russia's role in the world, and he found a willing partner in George W. Bush. The Chinese leadership saw a tactical opportunity as opposed to a strategic one. Here was a chance to shift the terms of debate within the Bush administration about the balance between cooperation and competition in the bilateral US-PRC relationship. But embracing the robust U.S. military response to the war on terror meant acquiescing to U.S. military encroachment in Central Asia, as well as a broader Japanese military role. Thus, both Moscow and Beijing abandoned their decade-old effort to counterbalance America (even as they signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation) and embraced instead a “bandwagoning” approach, aligning themselves to the extent possible with the preferences and initiatives of the Bush

---

<sup>17</sup> The perspectives recorded here are were collected in a series of Track 2 meetings involving European, Asian, and Russian experts and sometimes also governmental officials participating in their private capacities.

administration and choosing not to contest its policies or press competing interests at this time.

Of course, September 11 did not signal the collapse of American power. Indeed, America's ability to absorb such a punishing blow and to go on to quick victory over the Taliban and to pursue a wider global confrontation in "a war on terrorists of global reach" (the president's characterization) were very impressive to foreign observers. These events signaled not only American vulnerability but also tremendous American strength and a "characteristic dynamism"<sup>18</sup> to which the others would have to respond.

From the perspective of the questions raised in the preceding section of this paper, this second phase in the Bush administration's evolving thinking seemed to offer some strikingly different answers. The "shared interests" in the envisioned "new strategic framework" had become dramatically real. The major powers rediscovered their common interest in sustaining an international order that allows themselves and others to focus on internal challenges of political reform and economic growth. They rediscovered their common interest in the preservation of the interstate system and their leading roles in it. They rediscovered their shared interest in being seen to count as major powers – in not being cast as paper tigers. And mostly behind the scenes they rediscovered their common interest in avoiding a world in which weapons of mass destruction are somehow "regularized" as instruments of war and used to sweep aside current state and regional structures. Washington embraced cooperation with Moscow and Beijing. It also rushed to pay its UN dues.

September 11 had some additional impacts on the questions raised in the preceding section. Recall the argument about too few rather than too many major powers in the international system today to fulfill the vision of international cooperation to secure the peace. The war on terror may ultimately change the cast of major powers. India may yet prove to be a winner here. Its chronic failure to fulfill its major power aspirations is often chalked up to an under-performing economy. A better answer may be that it has so far at least been irrelevant to the solution of any of the broad problems of international peace and security (and conversely it hasn't been a source of such problems for others). In the unfolding war it may prove essential to the "solution" if it involves a profound remaking of the political map in Central Asia. Or it may prove to be part of the problem if crisis leads to nuclear war. Thus it is not surprising to find in the NSS: "The

---

<sup>18</sup> Therese Delpech, "Four Views of 9/11," *Transatlantic Internationale Politik* Transatlantic Edition, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Fall 2002), p. 3.

administration sees India's potential to become one of the great democratic powers of the twenty-first century."<sup>19</sup>

Recall also the argument about sovereignty's contribution to peace. Bin Laden's aspiration to overthrow the existing state structures in the Islamic world may yet prove to be a profound new challenge to sovereignty's place as an organizing principle of the global political system. His ambition seems to portend the emergence of a theocracy that affords at best limited democracy in which the sovereignty of the people is again co-opted by a vanguard element claiming again to be acting in their "best" interests by pursuing a "higher good."

This challenge to sovereignty has helped to reinvigorate an American commitment to advancing the values of freedom and liberty, as prominently indicated in the NSS. This reinvigoration casts a long shadow over the debate about whether the United States will act as a status quo power in its so-called unipolar moment. As one historian of international relations has argued, "a determination to get at the root of an evil and destroy it is the precise definition of radicalism, not conservatism."<sup>20</sup> As a nation with a special vision of the role of values in foreign policy and a special commitment to sovereignty of the people rather than sovereignty of the state, the United States has usually chosen in time of international crisis to play a revolutionary role, to seek the "right" outcome rather than restoration of the status quo ante, and to do so by aligning itself with the aspirations of people for control of their own destiny. As the president argued in spring 2001, "George Marshall knew that our military victory against enemies in World War II had to be followed by a moral victory that resulted in better lives for individual human beings."<sup>21</sup> The search for a moral victory in the war on global terror may yet lead to U.S. policy preferences that others will find deeply unsettling. Nation-building became an urgent priority.

### **C. Phase Three: On to War Against Saddam**

The April 17 speech by the president to the George C. Marshall Foundation ushered in the third phase of the administration's thinking about American primary and major power concert. That speech demonstrated the president's emerging conviction that the essential next phase in the war on terror is the removal of Saddam Hussein from

---

<sup>19</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "The Risks of Victory: An Historian's Provocation," *National Interest* (Winter 2001/02), p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Mike Allen, "Bush Resumes Case Against Iraq," *Washington Post*, April 18, 2001, p. A-13.

power. Elaborating on the term “axis of evil” first used in his State of the Union address, the president argued that “in their threat to peace, in their mad ambitions, in their destructive potential, and in the repression of their own people, these regimes constitute an axis of evil and the world must confront them.”<sup>22</sup> The associated reporting included statements from senior administration officials indicating that the administration was planning an offensive against Hussein. Bush stated that “we’ll be deliberate and we will work with our friends and allies. As we do so, we will uphold our duty to defend freedom.”<sup>23</sup>

In taking his case to the United Nations on September 12, the president dramatically posed the central questions of credibility and effectiveness flagged in the preceding section of this paper. “All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment. Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?”<sup>24</sup> The administration’s doggedness in pursuing consensus at the Security Council around a tough new resolution on Iraq suggested something of its willingness to seek the cooperation of the other major powers in addressing the Iraqi threat; its clear readiness to proceed alone and in the absence of such consensus suggested something of its unwillingness to allow the desire to cooperate to interfere with the need to act. Also, its doggedness in pursuing a war resolution from Congress in a way that gave it open-ended authority to use force for any ends in the region suggests something about the open-ended thinking within the administration about how American purposes might evolve in an unfolding war against Saddam.

In this sense the administration has greatly amplified the concerns expressed in the previous section about the “true ambition” of America in its unipolar moment. Is it simply to be secure? Is it to advance its own hegemonic position through consolidation of a global military posture and the imposition of regimes friendly to Washington? Is it to remake the world so that peoples everywhere – and especially throughout the Middle East – are able to enjoy the fruits of democracy? At this writing, doubts about nation-building have resurfaced as Afghanistan struggles without strong U.S. engagement to its rebuilding, as magnified by the debate about what might result from a successful effort to oust Saddam. And UN dues are again in arrears.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Karen DeYoung, “Bush Tells United Nations It Must Stand Up to Hussein, Or U.S. Will,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 2002.

#### D. The Strategy's Public Release

The National Security Strategy was released barely a week after the President's speech to the United Nations. Its main contours had evidently come together some months earlier, as the president previewed some of the main arguments in his June 2002 speech at the graduation exercise at West Point.<sup>25</sup> The strategy reflects the best effort of the administration's national security team, but also clearly the president himself to present a coherent vision of the means and ends of American power, one that incorporates lessons from the administration's first 20 months.

Before considering its substantive and strategic implications, it is useful to remember that the exercise in strategy-writing first legislated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was intended in part to compel each new administration to come to terms with different currents of thinking among its own members. In preparing the current strategy, the Bush administration has had to integrate multiple and sometimes opposing currents of thinking. Understanding these currents can help to shed some light on how the implication of the strategy may proceed. These currents include the following.

- *The "Vulcans:"* This is the group that formed in support of George Bush's candidacy to demonstrate, in the words of one report, "that Mr. Bush has enough global brainpower to be president."<sup>26</sup> [The term is taken from the ancient god of the forge.] Led by Condoleezza Rice, the group included Richard Armitage, Steven Hadley, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Robert Zoellick, among others. Its views were characterized by one reporter as reflecting "a balance-of-power, realist Republican approach that is generally short on details and might be summed up like this: strengthen America's military, scale back military commitments abroad, and focus on the big powers."<sup>27</sup> A subsequent *Foreign Affairs* article by Condoleezza Rice elaborated the virtues of "a disciplined and consistent foreign policy that separates the important from the trivial" and emphasizing the national interest as a guide to shaping power relationships and especially great-power politics.<sup>28</sup> In a separate essay, she also attacked Clinton-vintage strategies toward Russia as nothing more than "happy talk."<sup>29</sup> Fellow

---

<sup>25</sup> George W. Bush, Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy at West Point, June 1, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Elaine Sciolino, "Bush's Foreign Policy Tutor: An Academic in the Public Eye," *New York Times*, June 16, 2000, p. 1. For more on the worldview of Condoleezza Rice, see Nicholas Lemann, "Without a Doubt: Has Condoleezza Rice changed George W. Bush, or has he changed her?" *New Yorker*, October 12-21, 2002, pp. 164-179.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January/February, 2000), pp. 45-62.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Lemann, "Without a Doubt," p. 173.

Vulcan Zoellick published a companion *Foreign Affairs* essay also emphasizing the matching of power to interest: “America needs a strategy that blends traditional truths with the opportunities of a networked market-place and a modernized army.”<sup>30</sup>

- “*Conservative Internationalists:*” An overlapping but somewhat different group takes as its mission the formulation of a “neo-Reaganite foreign policy,” one which hearkens back to the worldview embodied in the Cold War-vintage Committee on the Present Danger, while looking forward to the new opportunities of benevolent global hegemony. Formed in the 1970s as a response to the detentist agenda of Nixon/Kissinger years, the Committee on the Present Danger was a bipartisan group of neoconservatives bound together by the view that the Soviet Union posed a clear and present danger and had to be confronted and not merely contained. Surveying the present situation, they see that “there is today a ‘present danger.’ It has no name. It is not to be found in any single strategic adversary.... Rather, the present danger is that the United States.... will shrink its responsibilities – in a fit of absentmindedness, or parsimony, or indifference – [and] allow the international order that it created and sustains to collapse.”<sup>31</sup> Robert Kagan and William Kristol play leading roles here and assert three basic imperatives for U.S. foreign policy: dramatic increases in the defense budget, citizen involvement through military service, and moral clarity. Additional imperatives include regime change for the rogue states, a rejection of appeasement strategies vis-à-vis a rising China, and missile defense of the strongest possible kind. On Russian policy in particular, Peter Rodman argued that the Clinton administration had shown too much deference to the interests of a weak Russia.<sup>32</sup>
- *Veterans of the first Bush administration:* Especially in its thinking about how to approach the relationship with Russia, the administration of George W. Bush seems to have been influenced by the experiences of individuals who served in his father’s administration. The belief in the possibility of a “new strategic framework” that would transform the US-Russian relationship had its roots in the belief that the untimely removal of the first Bush administration interrupted a process of transformation that would have accelerated quickly had it not been for the Clinton interlude. That earlier experience has also had an obvious – and hotly contested – impact on the debate within the administration about whether, when,

---

<sup>30</sup> Robert Zoellick, “A Republican Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January/February, 2000), pp. 63-78.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Kagan and William Kristol, *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (San Francisco, Calif.: Encounter Books, 2000), p. 4. See also William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (July/August 1996), pp. 18-32.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Rodman, “Russia: The Challenge of a Failing Power,” in Kagan and Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers*, pp. 75-98. See also Rodman, “The World’s Resentment: Anti-Americanism as a Global Phenomenon,” *National Interest* (Summer 2000), pp. 33-41, in which he expresses the conviction that “the world’s other major powers – even our friends – have made it a central theme of their foreign policies to build counterweights to American power” (p. 33).

and how to press for war to oust Saddam, in a kind of replaying out of difficult internal debates of ten years ago.

- *The Populist Instinct*: But there are also currents of thinking with antecedents that pre-date the Cold War. As Tocqueville argued in his famous study of American democracy, one of the most important strains of political energy is populism, as derived from the needs, instincts, and perspectives of what were then described as “the common people.” The populist tradition in U.S. foreign policy has been thoroughly described in a recent historical analysis of foreign policy traditions in the United States. As the author, Walter Russell Mead, characterizes it, the populist tradition is “an instinct rather than an ideology – a culturally shaped set of beliefs and emotions rather than a set of ideas.”<sup>33</sup> He attaches the name “Jacksonian” to this tradition, arguing that many of its central tenets first took political shape in the administration of President Andrew Jackson. With a devotion to realism, individualism, and freedom, this tradition generates (argues Mead) foreign policies “in which honor, concern for reputation, and faith in military institutions play a much greater role.”<sup>34</sup> The tradition encompasses “a deep apprehension about the rise of an evil world order.”<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, “the United States must be vigilant, strongly armed. Our diplomacy must be cunning, forceful, and no more scrupulous than any other country’s... Jacksonians have the least regard for international law and international practice.”<sup>36</sup> When it comes to war, ruthlessness is a virtue and the pursuit of unconditional surrender is the only way to vanquish a hated evil. In Mead’s words, this is part of where the reputation for “crude cowboy diplomacy” comes from.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of these four camps can be overstated, along with the perceived conflicts among them. To a significant extent, they overlap.<sup>38</sup> But as one commentator has argued, “the GOP’s big tent in foreign policy had to be pitched wide enough to shelter everyone from Patrick Buchanan to John McCain.”<sup>39</sup> Writing in 1999, that same commentator went on to argue that “the depth of the Republican rift on foreign affairs is...in part a function of their being in the opposition.”<sup>40</sup> Because these four camps

---

<sup>33</sup> Walter Russell Mead, “The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy,” *National Interest* (Winter 1999/2000), p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2002), p. 245.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>38</sup> For a valuable reference, see Norman Podhoretz, “Strange Bedfellows: A Guide to the New Foreign-Policy Debates,” *Commentary* (December 1999).

<sup>39</sup> James W. Ceasar, “The Great Divide: American Interventionism and its Opponents,” in Kagan and Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers*, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

coexist within the current administration, their thinking has presumably had some impact on the president's views of grand strategy.

Thus it should hardly be surprising that it took 20 months for the Bush administration to put together a coherent intellectual construct for its national security strategy. Nor should it be surprising that some of its earliest instincts and positions have evolved in response to internal debate and external requirements.

It would seem logical also to expect that debate will continue both within the administration, and certainly outside it, about the ideas reflected in the present National Security Strategy. Indeed, the administration has signaled that it anticipates and even welcomes that debate. In a not-for-attribution workshop a month after the release of the report, one of the principals involved in its preparation stated that "we welcome the criticism and see it as part of the process." The document was defended as the clearest answer yet on what to do with American primacy and as reflecting not only the president's personal vision, but also his desire to shift the American debate onto a new basis, one reflecting the very different world we entered following an era of transition from the fall of the Berlin Wall to 9/11. Against the backdrop of the dialogue process described in the preceding section of this paper, how good an "answer" is it?

#### IV. THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND MAJOR POWER CONCERT

From the perspective of this inquiry, the essential measure of merit for the strategy is simply: Is it likely to prove successful in seizing “the historic opportunity to break the destructive pattern of great power rivalry”?

There are many reasons to think so. Central to the strategy is a vision of common values and common interests among the great powers.

“We are attentive to the possible renewal of old patterns of great power competition. Several potential great powers are now in the midst of internal transitions – most importantly Russia, India, and China. In all three cases, recent developments have encouraged our hope that a truly global consensus about basic principles is slowly taking shape. . . . The events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the context for relations between the United States and the other main centers of global power, and opened vast, new opportunities.”<sup>41</sup>

The president’s cover letter elaborates in more depth.

“Today, the world’s great powers find ourselves on the same side – united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos. The United States will build on these common interests to promote global security. We are also increasingly united by common values. Russia is in the midst of a hopeful transition, reaching for its democratic future and a partner in the war on terror. Chinese leaders are discovering that economic freedom is the only source of national wealth. In time, they will find that social and political freedom is the only source of national greatness.”<sup>42</sup>

The strategy commits the U.S. government to “develop active agendas of cooperation lest these relationships become routine and unproductive.”<sup>43</sup> In a security strategy built around the concepts of defending, preserving, and extending the peace, building good relations among the great powers is defined as the cornerstone of the effort to preserve the peace.

Clearly this vision matches well the findings of our own international working group about the unprecedented moment of opportunity in relations among the major powers – as well as our finding that seizing that opportunity by taking major power relations as a serious topic is central to securing the long-term peace.

---

<sup>41</sup> *National Security Strategy*, pp. 26, 28.

<sup>42</sup> George W. Bush, cover letter, September 17, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 28.

Another reason to think that the strategy will be effective is the vision it offers of U.S. partnership with others. From the cover letter:

“We are also guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations. The United States is committed to lasting institutions like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization of American States, and NATO as well as other long-standing alliances. Coalitions of the willing can augment these permanent institutions.”<sup>44</sup>

From the strategy: “We are forging new, productive international relationships and redefining existing ones in ways that meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.”<sup>45</sup>

There is also a positive vision of the use of American power for common purpose and not merely national gain. From the cover letter:

“In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.”<sup>46</sup>

From the strategy:

“The United States possesses unprecedented – and unequalled – strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity.... We build a world of justice, or we will live in a world of coercion.”<sup>47</sup>

These notions of responsibility and the pursuit of a world of justice, not coercion, must send reassuring messages to those concerned with the intended uses of American power in this moment of primacy.

If these are good reasons to think that the strategy will prove effective at seizing the moment of opportunity for great power concert, there are also reasons to think that success may prove elusive. A second cut in this assessment surfaces some potential trouble spots in the strategy. Indeed, the dialogue process points to nine key questions

---

<sup>44</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 3

<sup>45</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *National Security Strategy*, pp. 1, 9.

about the national security strategy and its vision of American primacy and major power concert.

1. Preemption: evolutionary or revolutionary?
2. China: both competitor *and* partner?
3. Allies: lemmings, millstones, or partners?
4. The national interest: what is it and how do we know?
5. A balance of power: but which one?
6. Strategic stability among The Five: is there a viable vision?
7. Nuclear order: still America's project?
8. The "better world:" order or justice?
9. U.S. leadership: carry a big stick and what else?

#### **A. Preemption: Evolutionary or Revolutionary?**

Release of the National Security Strategy has generated intense domestic and international interest in the provisions related to preemption. This would not seem of central relevance to the major power relationships that are the focus of this inquiry. But in fact the debate about preemption goes to the core of the concern of the other major powers that the United States is a rogue hegemon or cowboy-on-the-loose, willing to exploit the military advantages now available to it to advance its own interests at the expense of others, even if this puts it above or outside the law. Recall that both Moscow and Beijing saw the Kosovo operation as an illegal act of war because it was waged against a sovereign nation that was not posing a threat to *international* peace, was not clearly in self defense, and was not authorized by the Security Council.

A good case can be made that the emphasis in the strategy on preemption is not a major departure in U.S. strategy or in the norms of international behavior. Condoleezza Rice has made this case as follows:

“The National Security Strategy does not overturn five decades of doctrine and jettison either containment or deterrence...But some threats are so potentially catastrophic – and can arrive with so little warning, by means that are untraceable – that they cannot be contained...Preemption is not a new concept. There has never been a moral or legal requirement that a country wait to be attacked before it can address existential threats....The United States has long affirmed the right to anticipatory self-defense....But this approach must be treated with great caution. The number of cases in which it might be justified will always be small. It does not give a green light – to the United States or any other nation – to act first without exhausting other means, including diplomacy. Preemptive action does not come at the beginning

of a long chain of effort. The threat must be very grave. And the risks of waiting must far outweigh the risks of action.”<sup>48</sup>

The emphasis on preemption may simply be a reflection of the widespread conviction that, in the president’s words, “the war on terror cannot be won on the defensive.”<sup>49</sup> In making a case for preemption against WMD proliferators, the administration is also following clearly in a tradition of debate occasioned by the arrival of each new nuclear-armed state. Recall, for example, the preparations for preventive war narrowly averted by President Jimmy Carter’s interposition in the North Korean nuclear issue; or the near-war in the Cuban missile crisis; or the quiet debate inside the Kennedy and Johnson administrations about whether or not to strike the nascent Chinese nuclear capability.<sup>50</sup>

But others in the administration have struck a rather different note. Vice President Cheney, for example, has argued that “old doctrines of security do not apply...deterrence and containment.”<sup>51</sup>

There are at least two ways in which the preemption doctrine falls somewhere between business as usual and a radical rejection of old approaches. One of these relates to the distinction between a clear-and-present threat and a gathering threat. The right to self defense includes a right to preemptive attack against a clear and present threat. The NSS makes the case that in an era of WMD terrorism, including that particular variety associated with covert attacks on civilians by WMD-armed rogues, waiting until a threat is clear and present is waiting too long. In the words of the NSS, “We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.... the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.”<sup>52</sup> Given the difficulty of precisely seeing and knowing when the threat has gathered, the first unmistakable signs of its existence “may be the mushroom cloud.” As one NSC principal put it in a not-for-attribution session, “the rules of evidence aren’t what they used to be.”

The other way in which the preemption doctrine falls between business as usual and a radical departure relates to the distinction between preemption and preventive wars

---

<sup>48</sup> Rice, “A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom.”

<sup>49</sup> George W. Bush, Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy at West Point, June 1, 2001.

<sup>50</sup> On the latter, see William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle:’ The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64, *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/01), pp. 54-99.

<sup>51</sup> Richard B. Cheney, Remarks to Veterans of the Korean War, San Antonio, Texas, August 29, 2002.

<sup>52</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 15.

of regime change. Preemptive attack adheres most strictly to traditional notions of self defense. But self defense also encompasses a right to preventive war when attack on discrete targets is not sufficient to eliminate the threat. International law and moral philosophy have not gone as far, however, in establishing a right to preventive wars of regime change.

Yet the necessity and virtues of preventive wars of regime change have been argued by numerous influential Republicans. In recent years, Kagan and Kristol have repeatedly made the case that regime change in undemocratic countries should be a principal aim of U.S. military strategy.<sup>53</sup> Writing in 1999, Paul Wolfowitz offered similar arguments.<sup>54</sup> Here the sentiments of the “populists” may also account for something significant. In Mead’s assessment, “Jacksonian realism is based on the very sharp distinction in popular feeling between the inside of the folk community and the dark world without. Jacksonian patriotism is an emotion, like love of one’s family, not a doctrine....Death to the Enemies of the Community!”<sup>55</sup>

International debate on this question has of course been highly colored by the timing of the release of the strategy – just a week after the president’s speech to the UN in which he indicated the intent of the United States to pursue military means to remove Saddam from power and to destroy his WMD capabilities, with or without approval of the UN Security Council. And the decision of the administration to seek from the Congress a very open-ended resolution for supporting the use of force seemed to suggest that the administration has in mind not just removal of the Saddam Hussein regime but also a potentially wider conflict, reaching into other states in the region and putting other regimes at risk. Richard Perle among other influential advisors has pressed for such a strategy.<sup>56</sup>

For these reasons among others, Security Council negotiations over a new resolution on Iraq proved contentious and difficult. From the perspective of the other major powers, most conspicuously Russia and France, the negotiation has been as much

---

<sup>53</sup> Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy.” See also Kagan and Kristol, “The Present Danger,” *National Interest* (Spring 2000).

<sup>54</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, “Statesmanship in the New Century,” in Kagan and Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers*, p. 333.

<sup>55</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, pp. 245, 233.

<sup>56</sup> Richard N. Perle, “Next Stop, Iraq,” remarks to the Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 14, 2001, available at [www.aei.org](http://www.aei.org). More precisely, Perle has argued that a wider war ought not be necessary to achieve desired changes among many countries so long as a good example is made of one or two countries. See also Perle, “Iraq: Saddam Unbound,” in Kagan and Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers*, pp. 99-110.

about resolving ambiguities over Washington's strategic intentions as about resolving the Iraqi situation. The urgency to resolve those ambiguities stems not just from the past interactions of Washington and Baghdad but from the broader strategic concern about just how far Washington intends to push the doctrine of self defense... all the way to what one critic has called "armed evangelism?"<sup>57</sup> Is the war to come a war to remove Saddam and Iraqi WMD or does the Bush administration intend a wider war, one in which U.S. military power is used to reshape the Middle East and without some sanctioning of those actions by the Security Council? These questions have generated a level of anxiety among foreign powers for precisely the reasons elaborated in the opening section of this paper – a decade of heavy reliance on the use of force and uncertainty about the American commitment to acting within previously agreed institutions and norms and for common purposes and interests. Chinese experts are intensely interested in whether the doctrine of preventive war might be turned against them, an American effort to forestall the rise of a peer through preemptive attack on China's modernizing nuclear force, or to precipitate a crisis in Taiwan that turns into a challenge to the control of mainland China by the Chinese Communist Party.

In sum, if the Bush administration's embrace of preemption proves to be little more than a modest evolution in U.S. strategy, one that leads to preemptive attacks on WMD targets in Iraq and a war of limited means and ends against Saddam, then the other major powers seem likely to sustain the necessary degree of cooperation at the Security Council to support U.S. actions. But if preemption turns out to be a more radical departure in U.S. strategy, one that leads to a prolonged military campaign against regimes beyond Saddam and without approval of the Security Council, then the other major powers seem likely to conclude that their worst fears about the American rogue hegemon are in fact true – and to anticipate the time when U.S. military power will be used to infringe their vital interests.

## **B. China: Both Competitor *and* Partner?**

The contrast between China's treatment in the NSS and in the QDR could hardly be more striking. In the QDR, China is the unmentionable rising peer adversary in Asia, one with which large-scale military competition seems fated.<sup>58</sup> In the NSS, China is a partner in common action founded on common interests and, to an extent, values.

---

<sup>57</sup> Michael Kelly, "A Doctrine of Armed Evangelism," *Washington Post*, October 9, 2002.

<sup>58</sup> For more on this theme, see Michael McDevitt, "The Quadrennial Defense Review and East Asia," PacNet 43, October 26, 2001, available at the website of Pacific Forum/CSIS at [www.csis.org](http://www.csis.org).

“The United States relationship with China is an important part of our strategy to promote a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region. We welcome the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China....The United States seeks a constructive relationship with a changing China. We already cooperate where our interests overlap.”<sup>59</sup>

This seems a long way from the campaign-vintage attacks on the Clinton administration’s strategy to seek strategic partnership with China, with preference instead to deem China a strategic competitor. How should we understand this contrast?

Part of the answer must have to do with the president himself and his blunt statement to the world following the September 11 attacks that “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.” He demanded of the world that it choose, and China chose “with us.” Chinese President Jiang Zemin seized this tactical opportunity, as described above, and the two countries moved to a new agenda of collaboration on countering terrorism.

Part of the answer must also have to do with the role of the National Security Advisor. Her *Foreign Affairs* article gave a central place to the management of major power relationships:

“The most daunting task is to find the right balance in our policy toward Russia and China....China is not a status quo power....Some things take time. U.S. policy toward China requires nuance and balance. It is important to promote China’s internal transition through economic interaction while containing Chinese power and security ambitions. Cooperation should be pursued, but we should never be afraid to confront Beijing when our interests collide.”<sup>60</sup>

Rice also argued that “our differences with Beijing should be put ‘in a larger context’.”<sup>61</sup> She also appears to be the promulgator of the notion that great-power rivalry is a thing of the past, a theme evident in the work of the Vulcans<sup>62</sup> and first embraced by the president in his June 2002 remarks at West Point.

The analogy above about the very large Republican foreign policy tent fits the China topic better than any other topic here. The diversity of opinion among the various camps about how to deal with China is dramatic, and in the past has often bedeviled the

---

<sup>59</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

<sup>61</sup> “Bush, Rice Optimistic on China,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 2001, p. A-22.

<sup>62</sup> Discussed in Lemann, “Without a Doubt,” p. 175.

efforts of presidents to chart a stable and consistent path in the bilateral relationship. Many of the conservative internationalists see China as the acid test of American power and also as the latest example of the ways in which appeasement generates threat. Ross Munro, for example, has argued that China constitutes “a danger...[that] is here and now, real and present.”<sup>63</sup> He characterizes China’s entry into the World Trade Organization as “a trap” because it will ultimately endow China with the technology and wealth to challenge American interests in hard power terms.<sup>64</sup> In making these arguments, he echoes the concerns of some “realist” political scientists who see the competition for power and advantage as the enduring theme of interstate relations. John Mearsheimer, for example, has argued that we should

“expect China to attempt to dominate Japan and Korea, as well as other regional actors...[and] to develop its own version of the Monroe Doctrine, directed at the United States.... This analysis suggests that the United States has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth slow considerably in the years ahead.... Structural imperatives of the international system, which are powerful, will probably force the United States to abandon its policy of constructive engagement in the near future.”<sup>65</sup>

This thinking dovetails closely with that of the so-called Blue Team. This group has been described as “a loose alliance of members of Congress, congressional staff, think tank fellows, Republican political operatives, conservative journalists, lobbyists for Taiwan, former intelligence officers and a handful of academics, all united in the view that a rising China poses great risks to America's vital interests.”<sup>66</sup> Frank Gaffney speaks for the group in arguing that “Where the relationship is going is, frankly, toward conflict.... In many ways this is a time not dissimilar to...the 1930s.”<sup>67</sup>

Robert Kagan has expressed frustration over another China camp in the Republican Party: “You can’t block business interests and free-trade ideology in the Republican Party short of war.”<sup>68</sup> For this camp, China’s entry into the World Trade

---

<sup>63</sup> Ross H. Munro, “China: The Challenge of a Rising Power,” in Kagan and Kristol, eds., *Present Dangers*, pp. 47-73. Also in that volume, see also Wolfowitz, “Statesmanship in the New Century,” especially pp. 324-332, “Applying the Principles: The Case of China.”

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>65</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (London: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp. 401-402. See also Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Robert G. Kaiser and Steven Mufson, “‘Blue Team’ Draws a Hard Line on Beijing,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2000, p. A-1. See also “The Pillsbury Factor,” *Oriental Economist*, August 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

Organization is an obvious good for the United States – and a hoped-for accelerator of change in China.

Henry Kissinger remains active in the China policy debate even three decades after participating in the opening to China and helping to formulate what remains the governing framework of US-China relations, the Shanghai Communiqué. He has recently argued that:

“I am uneasy about our tendency in much of our debate to treat China as our next enemy and slide it into the spot vacated by the Soviet Union. It is a totally different phenomenon. When China challenges us, we should resist, but we should not gear our policy to make opposition to China an inherent, congenital characteristic of our foreign policy.”<sup>69</sup>

This does not appear to exhaust the full spectrum of opinion under the tent. In not-for-attribution sessions in Washington during the 1990s, it was not uncommon to hear policymakers involved in the Reagan administration’s confrontation with the Soviet Union speak hopefully about the precarious nature of communist rule in China and the possibility of pushing the Communist Party over the brink with a Star Wars-like strategy employing ballistic missile defenses to force China to choose between an arms race it cannot win and reform. And a recent statement by Secretary of State Colin Powell suggested one further body of opinion: “We are not working to convert China into an enemy. We do not need another Soviet Union in order to give us a sense of purpose.”<sup>70</sup>

The analysis to this point suggests that the fate of the US-PRC relationship is largely in the hands of the United States. Of course, Beijing has just as much responsibility for successful management of the relationship, despite the fact that it sometimes looks to its more powerful neighbor to take the upper hand in shaping events and managing crises. China’s capacity to generate instability among its neighbors and threats of a broader nature is considerable. But so too is its potential to serve as a stabilizing force in the international system. But the focus here is on U.S. strategy, not China’s.

As the NSS argues, “effective coalition leadership requires clear priorities, an appreciation of others’ interests, and consistent consultations among partners with a spirit

---

<sup>69</sup> Remarks to a meeting of former secretaries of state, Council on Foreign Relations, May 24, 2001, as reported in the Council’s *Calendar and Chronicle*, June 2001, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> “Excerpts of Powell Interview,” *Washington Post*, July 14, 2001, P. A-16.

of humility.”<sup>71</sup> When it comes to China policy, this has not been easy for any recent American president and it promises to be no easier for this one when and if some crisis erupts to bring the cacophony of voices to full volume. The ambition to nurture China’s “national greatness” is a bold one requiring consistent success in “finding the balance” between competition and partnership.

### **C. Allies: Lemmings, Millstones, or Partners?**

This question of the place of partnership in the administration’s national security strategy extends also to U.S. allies. What role is envisioned for those allies? The strategy provides a very clear answer:

“Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations. The United States is committed to lasting institutions like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization of American States, and NATO as well as other long-standing alliances. . . . There is little of lasting consequence that the United States can accomplish without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe.”<sup>72</sup>

Allies in East Asia come in for a subsequent mention – along with Russia, India, and China, as important cooperation partners. All of these relationships are deemed to be essential to success in a prolonged campaign against terrorism of global reach. The QDR also attaches considerable importance to U.S. allies. Indeed, it has put assurance of those allies of the steadiness of American purpose ahead of dissuasion, deterrence, and defeat in its list of strategic goals. The Nuclear Posture Review was also formulated explicitly around these central tenets, with assurance in the forefront.

But both the NSS and QDR look well beyond traditional patterns of close cooperation with traditional allies. In addition to alliances, “coalitions of the willing” play an increasingly important role. To be sure, traditional allies are expected to play an important role in such coalitions – but not all of them, and arguably not traditional alliances as such. Moreover, both documents also convey some limits to the desire to work within such coalitions. As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has argued, “The mission must determine the coalition; the coalition must not determine the mission. If it does, the mission will be dumbed down to the lowest common denominator, and we can’t afford

---

<sup>71</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 25.

<sup>72</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 3, and then full text, p. 25.

that.”<sup>73</sup> The NSS echoes this sentiment, with clear indicators that the United States will act alone if efforts to build coalitions of the willing on its terms prove unsuccessful. In a certain sense, it may simply be that the inherited alliances are seen as not well suited to the current challenge. As the strategy argues, “we are forging new, productive international relationships and redefining existing ones in ways that meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that while the NSS and QDR flag the role of alliances and multilateral security institutions, neither offers a vision of how to make them stronger and more effective.

Here as on the China issue, the president’s vision appears to be built upon a foundation of many and sometimes competing pieces. This again raises questions about the viability and durability of this component of the strategy.

Secretary Rumsfeld’s concerns about the “dumbing down” of strategy and tactics reflect the concerns of others about the potentially restraining influence of allies on the exercise of American power. In Robert Kagan’s assessment,

“The Bush administration came into office with a chip on its shoulder. It was hostile to the new Europe – as to a lesser extent was the Clinton administration – seeing it not so much as an ally but as an albatross. Even after September 11, when the Europeans offered their very limited military capabilities in the fight in Afghanistan, the United States resisted, fearing that European cooperation was a ruse to tie America down. The Bush administration viewed NATO’s historic decision to aid the United States under Article V less as a boon than as a booby trap.”<sup>75</sup>

Kagan argues further that transatlantic “rancor is an unavoidable by-product of hegemony” and that European weakness consigns European allies to a place of increasing irrelevance in the American worldview.

Richard Perle expressed concerns about the potentially bad precedent set by invoking the international authority of NATO as follows:

---

<sup>73</sup> Cited in G. John Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 44-62.

<sup>74</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review*, No. 113 (June 2002).

“One of the sources of enthusiasm for the coalition I suspect is a strong desire on the part of those who are promoting the coalition to see the United States restrained – to submit judgments about what we should do to a larger collective. I think we should reject that.”<sup>76</sup>

There are still other perspectives on the role of U.S. allies in American security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some perceive U.S. allies not as millstones holding America down but as unreliable lemmings likely to fly away at the first hint of real trouble.<sup>77</sup> Others see Europe as a rising counterweight to U.S. influence, one that will inevitably rise to challenge *Pax Americana*.<sup>78</sup> And the populist camp generally puts self-reliance high on its list of national virtues, with occasional reference to George Washington’s famous injunction to “steer clear of permanent alliances” and Thomas Jefferson’s warnings against “entangling alliances.”

The autumn 2002 Prague summit and the transformation of NATO it was intended to set in motion were conceived in Washington in part to address the challenges of making America’s allies relevant to the new and emerging challenges to common security, as Washington perceives them. A central theme for Washington was the old theme of alliance under-funding of defense. If allies fail to make themselves relevant to the new threats to peace by creating the forces necessary to deal with them, then they cannot expect Washington to rely on them as essential partners.

How is this discussion of allies relevant to the major power issue? Some of those allies are major powers, though the vast majority of them are not. Britain and France are formally recognized as such in their permanent status as members of the UN Security Council, and Germany and Japan are sometimes recognized as future claimants. Europe as such may yet emerge in some fashion as a major power in its own right on the world stage. Ensuring concert among these present and prospective major powers on the basis of common interests and common values requires translating rhetoric into reality – translating the desire for partnership into the reality of cooperative action. Few doubt the virtues of going it alone when circumstances require it, but the presumption ought be for coalitions whenever possible. A central question in coalition building will inevitably be

---

<sup>76</sup> Perle, “Next Stop, Iraq.” See also his remarks in “After September 11: A Conversation,” *National Interest* (Thanksgiving 2001), p. 85.

<sup>77</sup> The term is Jeremy Pressman’s. See Jeremy Pressman, “Leashes or Lemmings? Alliances as Restraining Devices,” paper prepared for the 2001 meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, California, August 28, 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2002).

how much restraint the United States is willing to accept in its effort to create as broad as possible a “willing” group.

Russia and China are not of course U.S. allies (though some see Russia as “on the road to alliance”) but they are nonetheless intensely interested in U.S. relations with its allies. Indeed, there is a marked ambivalence. On the one hand, they see the present U.S. military involvement in Eurasia as contributing to stability in their own environment and they value the role of U.S. allies in constraining what they perceive to be the worst impulses in American policy. On the other hand, they do not want to be encircled and contained and thus work to drive wedges in U.S. alliance relations. Moreover, they see U.S. treatment of its traditional allies as a test of its willingness to harness its power to common purposes. On all these counts, the message of the National Security Strategy is decidedly mixed.

#### **D. The National Interest: What is it and How do we Know?**

As our 1999-2001 dialogue suggested, the other major powers are keenly interested in the “true strategic intentions” guiding U.S. policy. The preceding sections have focused on what the Bush administration intends vis-à-vis some other important actors in the international system. Another way to come at this question, however, is through an exploration of national interests and how they are perceived by the current administration. On the face of it, these interests ought be relatively straightforward to catalogue. As Condoleezza Rice argued in her *Foreign Affairs* article, the United States must pursue

“a favorable and consistent foreign policy that separates the important from the trivial. The Clinton administration has assiduously avoided implementing such an agenda....American foreign policy cannot be all things to all people – or rather, to all interest groups. The Clinton administration’s approach has its advantages: if priorities and intent are not clear, they cannot be criticized. But there is a high price to pay for this approach. In a democracy as pluralistic as ours, the absence of an articulated “national interest” either produces a fertile ground for those wishing to withdraw from the world or creates a vacuum to be filled by parochial groups and transitory pressures.”<sup>79</sup>

Recall that the title of her essay was “Promoting the National Interest.” In it she proceeds to prioritize U.S. interests with a focus on power relationship and great-power politics, moving through arguments about dealing with a weak Russia, a rising China, and WMD-

---

<sup>79</sup> Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

armed rogue challengers. She includes the tart observation that “Great powers do not just mind their own business.”

This paean to power politics realism is entirely consistent with a tradition of thinking about the national interest firmly rooted in the work of Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, and others, who with almost messianic zeal have sought to convert American strategic culture from what at least one of them perceived as excessively sentimental.<sup>80</sup> Writing in 1950, Hans Morgenthau argued as follows:

“It is often said that the foreign policy of the United States needs to mature and that the American people and their government must grow up if they want to emerge victorious from the trials of our age. . . . Until very recently the American people have appeared content to live in a political desert whose intellectual barrenness and aridity was relieved only by some sparse and neglected oases of insight and wisdom. What passed for foreign policy was either improvisation or – especially in our century – the invocation of some abstract moral principle in whose image the world was to be made over. Improvisation was largely successful, for in the past the margin of American and allied power has generally exceeded the degree to which American improvidence had failed the demands of the hour. The invocation of abstract moral principles was in part hardly more than an innocuous pastime; embracing everything, it came to grips with nothing. In part, however, it was a magnificent instrument for marshaling public opinion in support of war and warlike policies – and for losing the peace. The intoxication with moral abstractions, which as a mass phenomenon started with the Spanish-American War and which in our time has become the prevailing substitute for political thought, is indeed one of the great sources of weakness and failure in American foreign policy.”<sup>81</sup>

His book closes with the following injunction: “Above all, remember always that it is not only a political necessity but also a moral duty for a nation to follow in its dealing with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest.”<sup>82</sup> Rice has described this body of thinking as influential in the development of her own.<sup>83</sup>

As Morgenthau has suggested, a strategy guided by national interest is typically juxtaposed with a strategy guided by values. In the eyes of the realist camp, such a

---

<sup>80</sup> This group is described by Mead in some length and labeled by him the continental realists. See Mead, *Special Providence*, chapter 3, “Changing the Paradigm.”

<sup>81</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 3-4.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>83</sup> Lemann, “Without a Doubt,” p. 179.

strategy is doomed to failure, as it ignores the realities of power and leads to initiatives of great folly.

Yet in George Bush we have a president for whom “moral clarity” is an absolutely central preoccupation. “My job isn’t nuance. My job is to say what I think. I think moral clarity is important.”<sup>84</sup> In the words of the National Security Strategy,

“The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better. Our goals on the path to progress are clear: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity....Our principles will guide our government’s decision...they will guide our actions and our words.”<sup>85</sup>

The strategy itself is striking for its effort to fuse the lexicon of interest with the lexicon of values. The two terms appear as frequently together in the strategy as apart. In her Manhattan Institute address subsequent to the release of the strategy, Rice argued that “power and values are married completely.”<sup>86</sup> This has led one journalist to question “has Condoleezza Rice changed George W. Bush or has he changed her?”<sup>87</sup>

Precisely which national interests will guide U.S. foreign and defense policy is of course a topic of central concern to the other major powers. A strategy guided by national interest is understandable to them and suggests a certain predictability and consistency to U.S. policy that they deem desirable. A strategy guided by U.S. values is threatening to them, in part because it suggests unpredictability and in part because it suggests confrontation with America whenever and wherever values differ. The discussion of preemption above has already foreshadowed this point: the perception of an America driven by a vision of Armed Evangelism, willing to use force above or outside the law to advance and protect the democratic revolution in world politics echoes too closely for them the now-failed Brezhnev Doctrine.

Condoleezza Rice has offered some reassurance on this score, arguing in her Manhattan Institute address that “we do not seek to impose democracy.”<sup>88</sup> The president too has offered some reassurance on this score: “In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead

---

<sup>84</sup> Cited in Michael Hirsch, “Bush and the World: the Need for a New Wilsonianism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 18-45.

<sup>85</sup> *National Security Strategy*, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>86</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom,” remarks to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, New York, October 1, 2002.

<sup>87</sup> Lemann, “Without a Doubt,” p. 164.

<sup>88</sup> Rice, “A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom.”

to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.”<sup>89</sup> But Rice goes on to argue that “American values are universal.”<sup>90</sup> And the president has spoken forcefully about the “non-negotiable demands of human dignity.”<sup>91</sup> These arguments invoke the concerns elaborated in the preceding section about the place of sovereignty in world politics and whether a revolutionary America will re-commit itself to an energetic remaking of international political life in the service of a vision of sovereignty born of its own national experience and values.

This discussion of the types of interests that will guide U.S. foreign and defense policy begs a separate question about how those interests come to be defined. Condoleezza Rice’s article seemed to imply that separating the important from the trivial was only a matter of good effort. History would seem to suggest that this is no straightforward matter. As one diplomat has argued, national interests are rarely straightforward. Invoking the recent Supreme Court decision on community standards for pornography, he argues about national interests that we “don’t know them when we see them.”<sup>92</sup> National interests often take clear shape only as a result of a long process of learning and debate. “Determining what is in America’s national interest is an art, not a science,” argue Kristol and Kagan.<sup>93</sup> “Vital interests do not become less vital merely by our failure to articulate them,” argues Paul Wolfowitz.<sup>94</sup> Mead’s core argument about American foreign policy is that it is the most successful foreign policy of any major country over the last two centuries precisely for the reasons that dialogue among different schools of thought has been possible and that democratic processes have compelled a sufficient measure of consensus on core principles to sustain strategy.<sup>95</sup>

From the perspective of the other major powers, there are two central questions about how the United States defines its national interests. First, will the dialogue include them? Of late there have been many references in the scholarly literature to Thomas Jefferson’s statement in the Declaration of Independence that America ought show “a decent respect for the opinions of mankind,” as a way to express the concerns of many

---

<sup>89</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

<sup>91</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Daniel Russel, *America’s Place in the World* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Wolfowitz, “Statesmanship in the New Century,” in Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, p. 322.

<sup>95</sup> Mead, chapter one, “The American Foreign Policy Tradition,” in *Special Providence*.

that the Bush administration seems to convey little or no regard for those opinions in formulating its policies or communicating them to the world. On this score, President Bush has offered important reassurance with his emphasis on the elaboration of cooperative agendas and the promise to “respect the values, judgment, and interests of our friends and partners.”<sup>96</sup> This sets a high standard, however, and one that is difficult to deliver in a highly politicized and bureaucratic process.

The second central question posed by the other major powers is whether Washington intends an expansive definition of national interest, one that encompasses the shared interests of others, or does it intend a narrower one? Some administration figures have signaled the latter approach. For example, in a statement that alarmed many foreign capitals, John Bolton, in describing the administration’s approach to multilateral arms control, has asserted that “our policy is, quite simply, pro-American.”<sup>97</sup> As the German commentator Josef Joffe has argued,

“The first moves of the new administration were marked by obliviousness bordering on orneriness....Power...exacts responsibility, hence a vision that transcends narrow self-interest....Here is the proper maxim:...pursue your own interests by pursuing the interests of others.”<sup>98</sup>

The seeming disregard for multilateral approaches is tied inextricably to this question. As Robert Tucker has argued:

“If we were truly acting in the interests of others as well as our own, we would presumably accord to others a substantive role and, by doing so, end up embracing some form of multilateralism. Others, after all, must be supposed to know their interests better than we can know them.”<sup>99</sup>

#### **E. A Balance of Power: But Which One?**

The NSS invokes the balance of power as a central U.S. goal. To quote: “Through our willingness to use force in our own defense and in defense of others, the United States demonstrates its resolve to maintain a balance of power that favors freedom.”<sup>100</sup> But what sort of balance of power does the administration have in mind?

---

<sup>96</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 31.

<sup>97</sup> John R. Bolton, Statement to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, January 24, 2002.

<sup>98</sup> Josef Joffe, “Who’s Afraid of Mr. Big?” *National Interest* (Summer 2001), p. 52.

<sup>99</sup> Robert W. Tucker in *Commentary* (January 2000). P. 46.

<sup>100</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 29.

The president himself argues that “we seek...to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.”<sup>101</sup> On one side of the scale are “terrorists and tyrants” who threaten the peace. On the other side are the great powers whose good relations help preserve the peace. Tilting the balance occurs through “encouraging free and open societies on every continent.” In other words, in the president’s vision, the major powers are aligned on the same side, in a battle pitching civilization against the forces of terror and their allies. By this view, the September 11 attacks entirely changed the context for relations among the main centers of global power.

This is not a balance of power in the classic sense, in which the major powers engage in both competitive and cooperative relations in an informal system of checks-and-balances. Indeed, the strategy is an explicit rejection of traditional notions. “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in the hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.”<sup>102</sup> This echoes the president’s argument at West Point in June that “America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge.”<sup>103</sup> And this echoes one of the central arguments of the QDR – that the United States has an “enduring national interest” in “ensuring...freedom of action.”<sup>104</sup> Indeed, a central strategic tenet of the QDR is that defense transformation is essential if the United States is not to “forfeit many of the opportunities available to the United States today.”<sup>105</sup> The strategy seems vindication of the oft-expressed Chinese fear that the United States seeks a form of Absolute Security through an escape from the balance of power, one that affords the United States a future opportunity to use military means against a (re)emerged peer adversary – even despite the nuclear shadow. What thinking lies behind this vision of the balance of power?

In making its case about a posture second to none, the administration has emphasized its hope of dissuading potential challengers and not, more generally, rising powers of all kinds. In the president’s words, “we will strongly resist aggression from other great powers.”<sup>106</sup> This appears to be an attempt to sidestep an issue that flared up a decade ago. In 1992, Paul Wolfowitz’s office in the Pentagon drafted a planning

---

<sup>101</sup> This and the following citations in this paragraph are from the Bush cover letter, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 30.

<sup>103</sup> Bush, Remarks at West Point, June 1, 2001.

<sup>104</sup> *Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2001*, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 2.

document that was widely read to suggest that Washington was planning to counterbalance even the rise of friendly powers, including its allies. Senator Alan Cranston is quoted as arguing at the time that the Wolfowitz plan was aimed at making the United States “the only main honcho on the world block, the global big Enchilada.”<sup>107</sup>

Then-Secretary of Defense Cheney provided an important insight into the thinking that informed the ‘Big Enchilada’ strategy. Speaking in November 1991, he argued as followed:

“Unfortunately, if you look at the historic record, we have never, ever gone through one of these periods and gotten it right. We’ve always screwed it up. Every single time when it’s happened previously we’ve been so quick to cash in the peace dividend, to demobilize the force, that within a very short period of time we find that our weakness in and of itself becomes provocative and tempts others to do things they shouldn’t attempt; that we always end up...not prepared to go to war.”<sup>108</sup>

According to this view, a robust defense budget is needed now to insure that an imbalance of power does not emerge as a result of the historic American temptation to pack up and go home at the end of each episode of major international war. In other words, by remaining strong and engaged and by preparing for the next war we can hope to prevent the emergence of future war through a mix of deterrence and dissuasion.

There are certainly additional sources of thinking about how to approach the current balance of power that have informed administration strategy. Another such source can be found within the camp of conservative internationalists. Here it was common to find arguments – prior to September 11 – that U.S. defense spending was not merely inadequate to existing investment objectives but constituted a dangerously skewed allocation of national resources. Kristol and Kagan equate the decline in the proportion of Gross National Product devoted to military affairs over the last decade with a retreat from global responsibility and argue for a dramatic increase essentially independent of the international context:

“Americans should be glad that their defense capabilities are as great as the next six powers combined. Indeed, they may even want to enshrine this disparity in U.S. defense strategy. Great Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century maintained a “two-power standard” for its navy, insisting that at all times the British navy should be as large as the next two naval powers combined, whoever they may be. Perhaps the United

---

<sup>107</sup> Max Boot, “Doctrine of the ‘Big Enchilada’,” *Washington Post*, October 14, 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Remarks by Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney to the editorial board of the San Diego Union, reported November 12, 1991.

States should inaugurate such a two- (or three-, or four-) power standard of its own, which would preserve its military supremacy regardless of near-term global threats.”<sup>109</sup>

This vision seems to be nourished by a sense that the present moment provides a window of opportunity to accelerate the drive of supremacy. As another Kagan (this one, Frederick W. Kagan) has argued: “Students of history also know...that the current epoch of relative peace is but an interlude between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the next major conflict.”<sup>110</sup> In this interlude, he argues, military spending must be dramatically increased so as to increase America’s power position relative to its own prior position (not the power position of any other entity). And despite the interlude, this is a matter of utmost urgency. In the words of yet another Kagan (Donald Kagan), “there is no ‘strategic pause.’ In international relations and military affairs, change can come with lightning speed.”<sup>111</sup> It is, after all, a clear and *present* danger.

The populist camp pushes still further in this direction, in Walter Russell Mead’s assessment. Explaining a key aspect of the populist worldview and the appeal of ballistic missile defense, he invokes an 1895 statement made by a U.S. secretary of state, Richard Olney, who at the height of the Monroe Doctrine argued that “today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition.”<sup>112</sup>

“The idea of a global Olney Doctrine is such a glittering prize that no effort should be spared to achieve it. It is the Holy Grail of Jacksonian foreign policy: a weapons system that defends this nation while intimidating all others, and that would allow the United States to control events around the world without risking the lives of its citizens. This vision, more sweeping even than the vision of an umbrella in space protecting us from hostile missiles, lies just under the surface of the national missile defense debate, and it is one reason for the continuing and, to many, deeply and painfully surprising ability of the passion for missile defense to survive the repeated disappointments that the technologies proposed to implement it have so far consistently delivered....This is the hour, these [Bush administration] Jacksonians believed [in 2001], in which the United States could and should make its bid for true global supremacy.”<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” p. 26. See also their “Introduction: National Interest and Global Responsibility,” in Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, pp. 3-24.

<sup>110</sup> Frederick W. Kagan, “The Decline of America’s Armed Forces,” in *ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>111</sup> Donald Kagan, “Strength and Will: A Historical Perspective,” in *ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>112</sup> Cited in Mead, *Special Providence*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 303, 307.

The National Security Strategy seems also to reflect the view that no major power balance can possibly exist in a world in which values matter so much. By this view, history is shaped not simply by a balance of hard power. Ideas matter too, ideas closely attached to the deepest human aspirations. These shape events and drive history at least as much as military power. By this view, so long as only the Western powers embrace the values of liberty and freedom, and so long as Russia and China make their claims to power on the currencies of hard power, they are doomed to near irrelevance to the larger currents of history. They will not count as major powers until they are great countries, meaning they are fulfilling the aspirations of their peoples for civilization and liberty; once they become great countries, the values that infuse their “greatness” will be shared by others and thus there will be no hard power clashes among the major powers. Here is the special boldness of the Bush vision. Moreover, this vision of an America made strong by its value orientation and made stronger by the attacks of September 11 must be a profound challenge to policymakers in Moscow and Beijing accustomed to thinking of power in more traditional terms.

In fact, this vision of an imbalance of power among the major powers comes rather close to the strategy of preponderance that has guided much of U.S. strategy in recent decades. In the words of one analyst, “the strategy of preponderance rests on the assumption that states gain security not through a balance of power but by creating a power imbalance in their favor.”<sup>114</sup> The claimed virtue of such a strategy of preponderance is that it allows states in regions under the influence of the preponderant power to escape the classic security dilemma. That dilemma derives from fact that the actions of individual states to enhance their security through improved military capability typically generated efforts by others to match those improvements, leading to a reduction in the security of all. By this argument, the current administration seeks to extend this concept of preponderance from its traditional applications within regions to the global level, in pursuit of a preponderance of power that through its dissuasive and deterrent effects precludes challenges to the status quo.

The central concern for Russia and China must be about how to induce what they might view to be the necessary restraint of U.S. ambition in the absence of a functioning balance of power in the classic sense. For the moment, their political answer appears to

---

<sup>114</sup> Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 8-28. Layne acknowledges the following work as the genesis of some of his arguments on preponderance: Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992).

be bandwagoning rather than balancing behaviors, with the hope that having a friendly ear in Washington may produce more impact on U.S. policy and action than harsh rhetoric from abroad. They also appear beholden to preservation of some form of mutual strategic vulnerability, to be discussed in further detail below. In China, the belief that the United States is pressing to escape the balance of power has fueled a deep and wide debate about whether it is necessary to exert military influence across the Taiwan strait sooner rather than later, on the argument that power differentials are certain to grow even more pronounced the longer Beijing waits.

The Bush administration's "answer" to these concerns seems to be that September 11 changed everything – that American restraint cannot possibly be the focus of concern when the interests of the major powers in the war on terror so clearly coincide and when their values also increasingly converge in a shared civilization being tested by terrorists.<sup>115</sup> But these rather dramatic departures from past practices and concepts reflected in the administration's thinking come at a time of unprecedented concern in Moscow and Beijing about America's "true strategic intentions" and the implications of unipolarity for their own peace, stability, and development. The on-going strategic dialogues between Washington and Moscow and Washington and Beijing provide an opportunity for full and careful exploration of these matters. If the Bush administration is able to persuade them that something revolutionary has occurred, and that its strategy promises cooperation with Washington will be to their benefit, then the Bush vision of major power concert may be fully achieved. But if it fails to so persuade them, the United States must expect that their acquiescence to the intended imbalance will be at best temporary. More than that, it may be deeply resented. If our 1999-2001 dialogue is any guide, Moscow and Beijing will experience being consigned by Washington to second-tier status in perpetuity as itself a form of coercion.

#### **F. Strategic Stability Among The Five: Is There a Viable Vision?**

This discussion of the balance of power and the potential place of ballistic missile defense in an American strategy to attain that "glittering prize" of dominance brings us back to the extended discussions of strategic stability in our 1999-2001 dialogue. *Vis-à-*

---

<sup>115</sup> Given the current chilling of relations between the United States and Germany, there is a certain irony in the fact that the president seems to have embraced the vision of international order advanced by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. Speaking on May 12, 2000 in Berlin, he argued that "The core concept of Europe since 1945 was and still is a rejection of the European balance-of-power principle and the hegemonic ambitions of individual states that had emerged following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648." Cited in Kagan, "Power and Weakness."

vis the other major powers, what does America intend with BMD and its evolving strategic posture more generally? Will the Bush administration's vision of the strategic future prove viable in the light of choices not yet made by Washington and others? Reference here is to relations of military power, principally but not exclusively nuclear and long-range capabilities. The focus here is necessarily on relations among the United States, Russia, and China, as the French and British nuclear postures have sharply contracted and seem not to influence the balance among the others. The principal question is whether strategic military relations among the three will evolve in ways that serve the president's stated interest in great power concert.<sup>116</sup>

The National Security Strategy has little to say on this subject – but what it has to say is important. “We are attentive to the possible renewal of patterns of great power competition.”<sup>117</sup> And later, “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.”<sup>118</sup>

More detailed thinking can be found in previous administration statements on the new strategic framework with Russia and also in the leaked Nuclear Posture Review.<sup>119</sup> The new framework envisions the transformation of the US-Russian relationship from one based on the principles of mutual assured destruction and as codified in the ABM Treaty to one based on common interests and common responsibilities. As the NSS notes:

“Having moved from confrontation to cooperation as the hallmark of our relationship with Russia, the dividends are evident: an end to the balance of terror that divided us; an historic reduction in the nuclear arsenals of both sides; and cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism and missile defense that until recently were inconceivable.”<sup>120</sup>

At first unilaterally and then in partnership with Moscow, Washington has pursued reductions in deployed nuclear forces to levels below what has been considered

---

<sup>116</sup> The analysis in this section draws substantially on Brad Roberts, *Tripolar Stability: The Future of Nuclear Relations Among the United States, Russia, and China*, IDA Paper No. P-3727 (Alexandria, Va.: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>119</sup> On the new strategic framework, see principally the White House papers on ballistic missile defense briefed to the media July 11, 2001. On the Nuclear Posture Review, see Hearings, Senate Armed Services Committee, February 14, 2002, and the briefing on “Findings of the Nuclear Posture Review,” January 9, 2002, available at [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil).

<sup>120</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 13.

necessary for the Cold War-vintage SIOP (single integrated operational plan [for waging nuclear war]). It is understood that the ballistic missile defenses now being pursued by the United States will not be deployed in a way that threatens the perceived viability of the Russian deterrent – at least, not before 2012. This is the date that the Moscow Treaty expires.

With its success in moving out of the ABM Treaty and securing Russia's commitment to the new strategic framework, the administration appears to be confident that relations between the two countries are firmly launched on this new trajectory. Let us hope that this proves to be the case. But certainly a number of concerns still resonate in Moscow and to a certain extent have simply been deferred by the Moscow Treaty. One relates to the choice not yet made in Washington about whether improving BMD technology becoming available in the next decade ought be exploited to posture a stronger defense vis-à-vis Russia. As one analyst has argued:

“The dream that propels many missile-defence proponents is not a limited missile shield that might stop an errant missile launched by a rogue state, but a national shield that will abolish the post-war system of nuclear deterrence – based as it is on the ugly logic of mutual assured destruction.”<sup>121</sup>

This dream and the “glittering prize” of hegemony fuel a Russian perception that the Moscow Treaty has simply deferred the inevitable – or simply provides cover for the fact that the technology is not yet ready. Thus they worry about a grab by the United States for defense dominance as they also worry about the possibility of a grab for offense dominance in 2012, not least because of their own inability to fund a large posture.

These worries and perceptions fuel the view of many in Russia that the United States is exploiting Russian weakness to gain precisely those new forms of strategic leverage that will be most useful to the United States when and if Russia reemerges as a peer power. Defense transformation through aggressive pursuit of the revolution in military affairs is seen by some Russians as central to a bid by the United States to gain the ability to fight and win conventional wars against nuclear-armed major powers, thereby escaping the balance of nuclear terror. Sergey Rogov among others has argued that the Joint Vision 2020 ambition to gain for the United States “freedom from

---

<sup>121</sup> G. John Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror,” *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter 2001-02), p. 27.

attack...and freedom to attack” may make splendid military planning sense but is strategic folly for the United States, as it generates a backlash from others.<sup>122</sup>

For China, the NPR seems much more ambiguous. Indeed, China has featured far less prominently than Russia in Washington’s thinking about the new strategic environment and framework. With its emphasis on retention of a substantial standing force and also a large force of non-deployed weapons, the administration is operationalizing a strategy encompassing both deterrence and dissuasion. China’s small intercontinental nuclear force remains vulnerable to nuclear preemption and increasingly so to conventional preemption, though it is modernizing those forces in ways that it sees as necessary to preserve some survivable retaliatory capability. For China, the central question in the U.S. strategic posture remains unanswered: will the emerging U.S. ballistic missile defense system be so constructed as to clearly blunt the Chinese force and also to expand so as to capture an expansion and improvement of Chinese forces to compete with the deploying defense. A U.S. decision to tolerate continued mutual, albeit limited vulnerability in the strategic relationship with China would be anathema to many of the most active promoters of BMD. A decision to seek to trump Chinese modernization with an expanded and China-focused BMD would lead to arms-race-like effects in the bilateral relationship. A US-PRC defense/offense competition would seem likely to have a chilling effect on the political relationship. Its very prospect would seem likely to have a chilling effect also on U.S. relations with its East Asian allies, who are not eager to be drawn into a tightening US-PRC strategic competition. And it could also lead Russia to conclude that improving Chinese capabilities require adjustments to its offense and defense posture that lead it to abandon the reductions envisioned in the Moscow Treaty.

The new strategic framework with Russia emphasizes common responsibilities and common interests and a respect for Russia’s interests in continued mutual vulnerability. Moving aggressively in the strategic dialogue and in multilateral institutions to build the envisioned agenda of cooperative action would seem essential to address Russian concerns about the strategic balance. A similar project with China is equally important to continued progress toward major power concert. But it is also a much more difficult task, given the important conflicts of interests and values that fester

---

<sup>122</sup> For some of these arguments, see Sergey Rogov, “The Bush Doctrine and the Prospects of Russo-American Relations: Washington is Endeavoring to Prevent the Appearance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of an Adversary Equal in Strength to the United States,” original in Russian in *Yadernyy Kontrol*, April 3, 2002, FBIS Document ID CEP20020403000075.

in the US-PRC relationship, the absence of a tradition of dialogue about strategic matters, and the likelihood that developments in the military balance will generate further political frictions. But arriving at the desired goals of strategic stability and major power comity seems likely to require some difficult trade-offs in U.S. policy.

### **G. Nuclear Order: Still America's Project?**

This discussion of nuclear stability among the nuclear weapon states begs the larger question recounted in the opening section of this paper. Recall the argument:

“Although many states gave shape to this nuclear order, it was seen by the United States as peculiarly *its* creation and responsibility, as the product of *its* genius, and with some justification. Throughout the nuclear age...most of the *ordering ideas*, and most of the desire to realize those ideas, came from the United States. The American attitude towards the nuclear order has therefore always been monarchical...[But] U.S. actions called into question the entire order that the US had itself so painstakingly constructed.”<sup>123</sup>

Is nuclear order still America's project? Does its strategy remain motivated by a vision of the continued marginalization of nuclear weapons among the politics of nations?

As already noted, the NSS has relatively little to say about nuclear relations among the nuclear weapons states, though what it has to say is striking. It says more about the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to combat proliferation. The strategy is centrally concerned with the efforts of “a small number of rogue states” determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, “to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes.”<sup>124</sup> It is equally concerned with the possibility that terrorists will gain access to these weapons by virtue of the relationships they enjoy with rogue sponsors. The NSS elaborates a comprehensive strategy to combat WMD encompassing “proactive counterproliferation efforts” (including detection, active and passive defenses, and counterforce capabilities) and strengthened nonproliferation efforts and effective consequence management. This prominent commitment to address proliferation threats is echoed in the NPR and QDR. In each, the vision is strikingly broad – not just the deterrence and defeat of WMD-armed rogues but also assurance of friends and allies and dissuasion of potential challengers.

---

<sup>123</sup> Walker, “Nuclear Order and Disorder.”

<sup>124</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 14.

Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton has carried this argument one step further. He has stated that “our commitment to multilateral regimes to promote nonproliferation and international security never has been as strong as it is today.”<sup>125</sup> Bolton’s argument has met with substantial skepticism, however. The “orneriness” commented upon by one author above has been reflected in a series of steps by the administration to distance the United States from arms control and treaty regimes, including withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the “un-signing” of the Kyoto Protocol, and the rejection of the protocol to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, among many other steps. As one influential observer has argued, “The revolution in nuclear disarmament started by Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev in the mid-1980s has long since ground to a halt. In fact, it could be argued that the counterrevolution has begun.”<sup>126</sup> Is it possible to square administration rhetoric with the administration’s record?

As in many of the nine topical issues being explored here, the NSS seems to mask a much wider and deeper debate within the administration and among the body politic about core tenets. Within the administration there is certainly a camp that sees nonproliferation as a failed enterprise and more proliferation as inevitable. In myriad not-for-attribution sessions in recent years the argument has been made that the battle against proliferation has been lost. This appeared to be a way of thinking shared by many administration figures, who envision a race now under way between a United States rushing to deploy ballistic missile defense and rogue adversaries rushing to deploy and use nuclear-tipped missiles. With September 11, the balance of opinion on this matter seemed to shift. It became impossible to accept that undeterrable rogues would have these weapons and use them against the United States.

A small handful of thinkers associated with the administration have gone one step further in the argument about the failure of nonproliferation. Observing that the next wave of nuclearization may well be among states friendly to, and even allied with, the United States, they look for opportunity. They have found consolation in the notion that additions to the number of nuclear-armed democracies would strengthen the forces of freedom worldwide, while also serving as new nuclear bulwarks in what they believe to be the coming containment of China. This proposition is not widely held but it is deeply

---

<sup>125</sup> Bolton, Statement to the Conference on Disarmament, January 2002.

<sup>126</sup> James Goodby, “The Major Powers and Arms Control,” paper delivered to the 1999 Nobel Symposium on the Future Arms Control Agenda,” Stockholm, September 30, 1999.

embedded in a tradition of thinking in the United States that more proliferation may actually serve certain U.S. interests.

Another camp tends to see the proliferation battle as still winnable – but is deeply skeptical of the tools that have so far been used for nonproliferation. As Defense Science Board chairman William Schneider has argued, “the Clinton administration is fighting the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction with the tools of a bygone strategic era.”<sup>127</sup>

This debate about the role of political measures in dealing with the nuclear problem invokes a much older debate about the role of arms control in U.S. national security strategy. In its original attacks on the policy of US-Soviet détente, the Committee on the Present Danger made a forceful case that arms control was an unreliable tool for managing the Soviet threat, not least because it signaled a certain appeasement of Soviet ambitions for equal status. Of course, President Reagan ended up abandoning this view of arms control and ushered in what some have deemed a golden age of nuclear arms control. In fact, many opponents of arms control argue that it is a dangerous folly in any context, not just the Cold War. As one analyst has argued, the alleged virtues of arms control and disarmament derive in fact from historically flawed lessons about the role of the arms trade in precipitating World War I – and constitute a dangerous acquiescence to populist moral sentiment that puts national security at risk.<sup>128</sup> Frank Gaffney has argued simply that “treaties cannot protect America.”<sup>129</sup> Former Congressman Newt Gingrich, explaining his commitment to national missile defense, argued that “it is the difference between those who would rely on lawyers to defend America and those who rely on engineers and scientists.”<sup>130</sup>

The fact that so many incoming members of the Bush administration held to the view that the ABM Treaty was a dangerous obstacle to what the United States needed to do for U.S. national security nearly ensured the end of arms control in its historic guise as a tool for managing the bilateral US-Russian relationship. But their instincts on this question seemed not to answer the separate question about whether multilateral arms

---

<sup>127</sup> William Schneider, “Weapons Proliferation and Missile Defense: The Strategic Case,” in Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, p. 269. He goes on to argue that “there is no simple antidote for a decade of misdirected national effort” (p. 281).

<sup>128</sup> Patrick Glynn, *Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

<sup>129</sup> Frank Gaffney, Decision Brief, “Let them Eat ‘Lemons’: Bush Should Resist, Not Rehabilitate, Those on the Wrong Side of History and the War on Terror,” Center for Security Policy, Washington, D.C., September 24, 2001.

<sup>130</sup> Cited in Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror,” p. 27.

control could serve U.S. interests even if bilateral arms control might not. So far, the record suggests that even multilateral arms control is seen as unhelpful. One recent and highly influential report on nuclear matters has argued in straightforward fashion that “arms control is incompatible with U.S. security requirements.”<sup>131</sup> For those who envisage the United States as a kind of global Gulliver tied down and restrained by myriad petty obligations, the restraints of arms control are but one more improper inhibition on the exercise of American power in its hegemonic moment. Again in the words of Kristol and Kagan, “American dominance can be sustained for many decades to come, not by arms control agreements, but by augmenting America’s power and, therefore, its ability to lead.”<sup>132</sup>

Given the tradition of arms control in both the Reagan and Nixon eras, there is also of course a pro-arms control camp “under the tent.” To be sure, it is not well represented in the administration. In facing the reality of proliferation in North Korea, Iraq, and India and Pakistan, they have had to contend with the clear underperformance of arms control mechanisms in dealing with problems of noncompliance. In the words of one critic, arms controllers have depended on “a doctrine of immaculate enforcement” rather than deal in straightforward fashion with the challenge.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, these very shortcomings of enforcement policy were a central concern in the 1999-2001 dialogue described above. That dialogue pointed to the fact that the underperformance of arms control was not the underperformance of the regimes as such but the failures of the UN Security Council and especially its permanent members to take steps to address egregious violations – and also to remedy their own under-performance and even outright non-compliance.

The Bush administration’s vision of how to win the proliferation battle seems to rest largely on achievement of a structure of power in the world that disincentivizes further proliferation. That structure apparently has two basic elements. One is the unchallengeable strategic posture of the United States. The other is not accepting a mutual deterrence relationship with the rogues. Indeed, the vision encompasses a direct military challenge to Saddam Hussein, with the expectation that this will not only remove the Iraqi WMD threat but teach a lesson more generally about the disutility of WMD as tools for blackmailing the United States.

---

<sup>131</sup> See *Rationale and Requirements for Nuclear Forces and Arms Control* (Fairfax, Va.: National Institute for Public Policy, 2001).

<sup>132</sup> Kristol and Kagan, “Introduction,” in Kagan and Kristol, *Present Dangers*, p. 26.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

Whether such a structure of power will prove sufficient to the requirements of nonproliferation in the period ahead remains to be seen. Whether the challenge to Iraq will “prove” the desired lessons is also an open question – and an extremely high stakes one. There is a tradition of thinking in the United States and elsewhere, however, that power structures alone cannot provide the necessary consensus and assurance for global nuclear order. William Walker has argued,

“There has to be a nuclear order, but that order is much more than a structure of power and a set of deterrent relations, just as it is much more than a security regime rooted in international law. It is a complex edifice of instruments of both power and law which is held together by mutual interest and obligation.”<sup>134</sup>

One important manifestation of the historic U.S. commitment to such a “complex edifice” is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the larger nuclear nonproliferation regime of which it is a part (including the International Atomic Energy Agency and various supplier groups). Conspicuous so far by its absence from administration strategy documents and statements is any effort to square the initiatives embodied in the Nuclear Posture Review, the QDR, and the NSS with U.S. obligations to the NPT regime. Indeed, there seems to be little thinking about how what happens in the new US-Russian strategic framework somehow links to what happens to the global nonproliferation effort, and to capitalize on the threat-reduction aspects of the framework to advance the nonproliferation regime. This is an urgent task prior to the 2005 NPT review conference.

The absence of thinking here is not solely Washington’s responsibility, however. As our 1999-2001 dialogue suggested, all five nuclear weapon states need to be willing and able to think more globally about the requirements of nuclear order and stability.

In sum, if nuclear order is indeed still America’s project, the United States has some important opportunities to work in partnership with the other major powers to strengthen nuclear order. This would appear to be an agenda redolent in precisely those “common interests and common responsibilities” that the administration has said it seeks. But the cooperation of Russia and China is likely to be more productive if they are asked to do more than acquiesce to a structure of power founded on U.S. supremacy. The political component of nonproliferation is also a promising mechanism for major power concert. But embracing that agenda seems to require a substantial effort by the administration to overcome some significant internal obstacles.

---

<sup>134</sup> Walker, “Nuclear Order and Disorder,” p. 722.

If on the other hand the United States has given up on nuclear order, and focuses its energies instead on self defense and escaping the nuclear balance of terror, then we should expect Russia and China to be even less responsive to Washington's requests that they bring their proliferation behaviors into accord with its preferences. Although both could do a better job of bringing their behaviors into such accord, it is important to recognize that they could also be much worse.

Giving up on the nuclear order project could also have a major implication for U.S. allies – especially Germany and Japan. Both countries have foresworn nuclear weapons in the context of the general structure of arms control elaborated in the first couple of decades after World War II, and the expectation that the world would make slow but steady progress toward ultimate disarmament put them on the side of future history. But if that structure were to collapse, the pressures on them to remain non-nuclear would seem to them to flow largely from their past transgressions as states. Think of this as a modern variant of the old NATO concern about singularization. If they were to opt to turn their latent nuclear potential into actual operational forces, expect also Washington to be blamed for both the crisis of confidence in extended deterrence that gave rise to their decision and for having helped to shield them as they engage in what would be seen to be an illicit weapons program.

#### **H. The “Better World:” Order or Justice?**

“The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better.”<sup>135</sup> This too is a radical proposition – or at least a uniquely American one, a reflection of the sense of exceptionalism that often grips U.S. foreign policy. How should the other major powers understand the better world that Washington wants to bring into being? The answer embodied in the strategy is rather different from what the other major powers have heard previously from Washington.

There is no call for collective security or an explicit vision of cooperation among the Four or Five or however many Policemen to address threats to international peace and stability. Indeed, the prolonged wrangling over a new Security Council resolution on Iraq seems only to have reinforced the perception that “the bigger the role for the UN Security Council, the worse it is...Once you get down in the weeds you never get out.”<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Ryan Lizza, “White House Watch: Double Speak,” *New Republic*, October 14, 2002.

There is no appeal to international law. Robert Kagan has suggested that the tilt away from international law is an inevitable part of becoming a mature great power.<sup>137</sup>

There is no stout defense of the so-called liberal international order and the institutions, processes, and norms of international society that the United States took a leading role in putting in place. As John Ikenberry has argued, “in the shadows of the Cold War, a distinctive and durable political order was being assembled...this order might be called the American system.”<sup>138</sup>

There is no re-embrace of the “new world order” promoted by George Bush Sr. The populist camp saw “distinctly Orwellian overtones” in this notion, envisioning “moral and political dangers in the concept of world order itself, a concept that threatened to undermine American sovereignty in various ways.”<sup>139</sup>

But nor is there benign indifference or a firm embrace of the status quo distribution of power internationally. Instead, the administration’s notion of the “better world” seems to embrace a mix of concepts.

It envisions a land of opportunity for those wishing to put themselves on “the path to progress” – political and economic freedom and respect for human dignity. In Condoleezza Rice’s words, “we seek only to help create conditions in which people can claim a freer future for themselves.”<sup>140</sup>

It envisions a “just peace.” As the president has stated, “we live in a world of justice or we live in a world of coercion.”<sup>141</sup> To escape a world of coercion means to stand up now to WMD-armed rogues and terrorists. Not to do so is to commit the sin of appeasement, which only promises more terrible wars to come.

It envisions a world in which the other major powers are not motivated to compete in classic military terms, in which their aspirations to be major power counterbalancers are turned into aspirations to be great powers, made great by their values and culture and the power of example. Rising powers are welcomed, though challengers are not.

---

<sup>137</sup> Kagan, “Power and Weakness.”

<sup>138</sup> Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror,” *Survival*. See also John Ruggie, *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>139</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, pp. 250, 297.

<sup>140</sup> Rice, remarks to the Manhattan Institute.

<sup>141</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 9.

It envisions also a world of benign hegemony. The word is used nowhere in the National Security Strategy but it seems self-evidently a part of the vision of the necessary balance of power, of strategic stability, and of how to manage China's rise. To again cite Kristol and Kagan:

“Conservatives will not be able to govern America over the long term if they fail to offer a more elevated vision of America's international role. What should that role be? Benevolent global hegemony....The aspiration to benevolent hegemony might strike some as either hubristic or morally suspect. But a hegemon is nothing more or less than a leader with preponderant influence and authority over all others in its domain. That is America's position in the world today....Conservatives...hark back...to the admonition of John Quincy Adams that America ought not go “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” But why not? The Alternative is to leave monsters on the loose, ravaging and pillaging to their heart's content, as Americans stand by and watch....America has the capacity to contain or destroy many of the world's monsters.”<sup>142</sup>

Whether a world order characterized above all by U.S. hegemony is viable is hotly contested in the academic world.

- “Benign hegemony is something of a contradiction in terms,” argues Kenneth N. Waltz, a theorist of international relations.<sup>143</sup>
- “Hegemony does not only or even mainly bring security, power, and glory, but difficulty, responsibility, and burden. The hegemon may or may not have to defend his leading position against challenges, but he surely will have to deal with all of the quarrels,” argues Paul Schroeder, an historian of international relations.<sup>144</sup>
- “Nascent neo-imperial grand strategy will trigger antagonism and resistance that will leave America in a more hostile and divided world,” argues John Ikenberry, a professor of geopolitics.<sup>145</sup>
- “An order in which the vast majority of members have no stake and see no justice is ultimately unviable,” wrote Hedley Bull in a treatise on world order 25 years ago.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” pp. 20-31. See also Robert Kagan, “The Benevolent Empire,” *Foreign Policy* No. 111 (Summer 1998).

<sup>143</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “Globalization and American Power,” *National Interest*. Cite is from the back cover.

<sup>144</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, “The Risks of Victory,” *National Interest* (Winter 2001/02), p. 38.

<sup>145</sup> Ikenberry, “America's Imperial Ambition.”

<sup>146</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 228.

The hegemonic position of the United States may in fact not be a matter of general concern. Kristol and Kagan may be right that “most of the world’s major powers welcome U.S. global involvement and prefer America’s benevolent hegemony to the alternatives,”<sup>147</sup> although the cacophony of critics from abroad suggests that persuading friends and allies of the virtues of an overtly hegemonic strategy remains a large challenge. The justice that the current order is intended to produce may have a significant palliative effect – assuming it is in fact delivered.

From the perspective of Russia and China, however, the vision of an overtly hegemonic America must be considerably more troubling. To be sure, the Bush administration has expressed its desire to see their transitions result in countries that are strong and great. It has professed a desire for concerted action. But these countries seem to come across as mere pieces in America’s global puzzle, not global partners with global perspectives. They must play by America’s rules – or else. Especially from their perspective, “making the United States the judge, jury, and executioner...[is a] dangerous step.”<sup>148</sup> And unlike most other countries, they have great power potential and the ability, sooner or later, to do something about their grudges.

## **I. U.S. Leadership: Carry a Big Stick and What Else?**

As John Ikenberry has argued, “To the rest of the world, neoimperial thinking has more to do with exercising power than with exercising leadership.”<sup>149</sup> Does the Bush administration in fact have a clear notion of leadership? The National Security Strategy uses the term extremely rarely, essentially only in the penultimate paragraph: “in exercising our leadership, we will respect the values, judgments, and interests of our friends and partners. Still, we will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require it.”<sup>150</sup> The QDR offers a somewhat more detailed notion:

“America’s goals are to promote peace, sustain freedom, and encourage prosperity. U.S. leadership is premised on sustaining an international system that is respectful of the rule of law. America’s political, diplomatic, and economic leadership contributes directly to global peace, freedom, and prosperity. U.S. military strength is essential to achieving these goals, as it assures friends and allies of an unwavering U.S. commitment to common interests.”<sup>151</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> Kristol and Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” pp. 21-22.

<sup>148</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, pp. 291-292.

<sup>149</sup> Ikenberry, “America’s Imperial Ambition.”

<sup>150</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 31.

<sup>151</sup> *Quadrennial Defense Review, 2001*, p. 1.

The president's cover letter to the NSS does not use the word. Instead, it talks repeatedly about responsibility. The only reference to leadership is in the closing argument:

“Freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person – in every civilization. Throughout history, freedom has been threatened by war and terror; it has been challenged by the clashing wills of powerful states and the evil designs of tyrants; and it has been tested by widespread poverty and disease. Today, humanity holds in its hands the opportunity to further freedom's triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes the opportunity to lead in this great mission.”<sup>152</sup>

A certain vision of leadership is implicit in the three-fold agenda of defending the peace, preserving the peace, and extending the peace. Condoleezza Rice's Foreign Affairs article speaks repeatedly about exercising power but does not mention exercising leadership.<sup>153</sup>

The aphorism that success has many fathers is oft heard in discussions with administration figures these days. Especially in this era of American primacy, it is argued, leadership comes from acting boldly. Others will follow as soon as the United States begins to succeed. The carping from our allies will wither away, the grumbling about unipolarity from the other major powers will subside, and the naysayers will be put in their place once America chooses a course and acts upon it. As Peter Rodman has argued, in leadership “it's reputation that matters.”<sup>154</sup>

This vision of bold action clearly motivates the president and those close to him. In the president's words, “we cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best....In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action.”<sup>155</sup> This is an argument he develops in the context of “the crossroads of radicalism and technology” and he uses it to bridge the discussion of the war on terror, rogue aggressors, and great power “competition in peace.” Condoleezza Rice has been a bit more expansive on this point.

---

<sup>152</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 3.

<sup>153</sup> Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

<sup>154</sup> Peter Rodman, “the World's Resentment: Anti-Americanism as a Global Phenomenon,” *National Interest*, p. 46.

<sup>155</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 2.

“It is important in statecraft to always be aware of the downside of action, and to try to mitigate any downsides that might come into being. Everyone understands that there are unanticipated consequences. But I think if you go through history you can make a very strong argument that it was not acting, or acting too late, that had the greatest consequences for international politics – not the other way around.”<sup>156</sup>

These perspectives seem to have been crystallized by the events of September 11 and reflect the sense of urgency about taking the war to the terrorists before the terrorists again bring it to us. But they seem also to have a deeper source – a vision of the moral use of American power. That power exists not just to make us safe but to make the world better. To conserve that power rather than to exploit it constitutes an abandonment of responsibility. In this moment of preeminence America must use its unparalleled power to shape the world in ways that advance its interests and values. And if the QDR is any indication, the United States must move boldly to ensure that its freedom of maneuver is sustained and even widened in the face of rising counterbalancers. As George Bush argued while campaigning for the presidency,

“Our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power. And that’s why we’ve got to be humble and yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom. If we are an arrogant nation, they’ll view us that way, but if we’re a humble nation, they’ll respect us.”<sup>157</sup>

Balancing the twin obligations of purposefulness in U.S. action with humility in the exercise of responsibility is no small challenge. And as James Schlesinger has observed, “humility is not our national style.”<sup>158</sup> Indeed, writing in 1997, he noted

“a growing hubris, reflecting the weakening restraints and the absence of a serious challenge...and a naïve belief that assertiveness is now cost-free and does not entail serious consequences. Unless we are able to acknowledge and confront these weaknesses, our ability both to lead and to achieve the international goals we seriously pursue will increasingly be eroded.”<sup>159</sup>

The dilemma of major power concert in an era of American primacy is that it requires of the United States not merely the absence of arrogance in style but in substance. Humility is more than an attitude, it is an ethic, a guide to action. Our 1999-

---

<sup>156</sup> Lemann, “Without a Doubt,” p. 178.

<sup>157</sup> George W. Bush, *A Distinctly American Internationalism*, remarks to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, Calif., November 19, 1999. Available at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>158</sup> Schlesinger, “Fragmentation and Hubris,” p. 7.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

2001 dialogue suggests that there are three central questions that the United States must answer if it is to meet this dilemma. What restraint is it prepared to accept? What deference is it prepared to show to the other major powers? What reassurance can it offer that American power will not have a corrupting influence on American intent (to invoke Lord Acton's famous aphorism)?

What restraint is the United States prepared to accept? The apparent absence of such restraint is certainly a matter of concern to the other major powers. In the words of a senior Chinese: "The unilateralism that troubles us is not the pursuit of national policies different from others or the decision to act independently in the face of threats but the reluctance to receive restraint in any form." The antipathy to arms control, the drift away from international law, the reluctance to embrace allies in the war on terror because of their potentially restraining influence, the withdrawal from the bilateral arms control construct, and the movement away from the multilateral one all suggest an America that is reluctant to be restrained. Indeed, as John Bolton has argued (writing just prior to his service in the new administration), the United States should "emphatically reject the loss of national autonomy" associated with such mechanisms and should be "unhindered by long-term restraints."<sup>160</sup> This devotion to sovereignty is a key source of the reluctance to receive restraint. Bolton's line of argument clearly suggests that the Bush administration is not prepared to see restraints imposed on the exercise of American power. There is nothing in the principal documents under review here to suggest otherwise.

What deference is the United States prepared to show to the other major powers? The NSS promises "respect" – for the values, judgments, and interests of our friends and partners. It goes on to argue:

"We will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require. When we disagree on particulars, we will explain forthrightly the grounds for our concerns and strive to forge viable alternatives. We will not allow such disagreements to obscure our determination to secure together, with our allies and our friends, our shared fundamental interests and values."<sup>161</sup>

Our 1999-2001 dialogue suggested that it is important to separate the wheat from the chaff in this discussion. Deference cannot be expected in conflicts among major powers over vital interests. At the other extreme, deference is simple to offer when

---

<sup>160</sup> John R. Bolton, "Unilateralism is Not Isolationism," in Gwynn Prins, ed., *Understanding Unilateralism in American Foreign Relations* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), pp. 51 and 81-82.

<sup>161</sup> *National Security Strategy*, p. 31.

interests do not conflict but coincide. The middle ground is where the challenge lies – where other major powers have interests at stake and the United States has few or none, or alternatively, where U.S. interests may be important in a conflict of interest with another power that considers its interests vital. The Bolton argument that America ought take a narrowly self-interested view of its interests (“pro-American”) suggests that it will always press its advantage in conflicts of interest in this middle ground, and that it will not play the role that it has sought to play in recent decades in trying to identify those common interests that can be mutually advanced through common action.

Here the issue is not one of sovereignty – it is appeasement. The argument runs roughly as follows. As Tocqueville noted, a key potential deficiency of democracy is in its conduct of foreign policy; democracies are responsive to public instinct and except in moments of populist passion the instinct is for peace and domestic tranquility; thus democracies are war averse, except when utterly compelled by circumstance.<sup>162</sup> One result is that rising challengers are not met until much too late in the game, when the challenger’s ambitions have been fully nourished by the feckless procrastinations of democratic powers. If democracies are to succeed in the game of power politics, goes the argument, they must see clearly their temptation to appease and resist it diligently at every turn. As Kristol and Kagan have argued, “it is the appeasers who wind up leading us into war.”<sup>163</sup> Deference to the interests of other powers is often seen as a form of appeasement and an abandonment of the responsibility to use power to shape the international system. “Compromise is treated as a hostile act.”<sup>164</sup>

In fact, the Bush administration has demonstrated one form of deference to Moscow and Beijing that seems at striking odds with the rest of its rhetorical posture. In trying to come to terms with the problem of arms control noncompliance, the administration has adopted a program of naming names – of being explicit in treaty

---

<sup>162</sup> “It is especially in the conduct of their foreign relations that democracies appear to me decidedly inferior to other governments....Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to a democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all of those in which it is deficient.” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 234.

<sup>163</sup> William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “A National Humiliation,” *Weekly Standard*, April 16, 2001. The context was their critique of the administration’s handling of the EP-3 incident with China. Their core argument: “As the Chinese understand better than American leaders, President Bush has revealed weakness. And he has revealed fear: fear of the political, strategic, and economic consequences of meeting a Chinese challenge. Having exposed this weakness and fear, the Chinese will try to exploit it again and again...The American capitulation will also embolden others around the world who have watched this crisis carefully to see the new administration’s mettle tested....Needless to say, we do not seek war with China. That is what the advocates of appeasement always say about those who argue for standing up to an international bully. But it is the appeasers who wind up leading us into war.”

<sup>164</sup> Hirsch, “Bush and the World.”

review conferences and elsewhere about treaty violators. Apparently out of deference to sentiments in Moscow and Beijing, it has abandoned the practice of its predecessors of also including Russia and China on the list of those about whom it has compliance concerns vis-à-vis biological weapons (and perhaps also chemical weapons). When pressed on this seeming disparity between the commitment to moral clarity and selective naming, in a not-for-attribution symposium a senior administration figure argued that the questioner simply did not understand political reality.

This brings us to the third question: What reassurance can the United States offer that American power will not have a corrupting influence on American intent?

Historically, the best American answer to this question seemed to be that the nation firmly attached itself to the rule of law and adhered to the highest norms of the international community. Indeed, historically, the United States has often seen an expansion of international law and the normative framework as central to its exercise of power. Condoleezza Rice has suggested an important potential departure from this tradition, in her Foreign Affairs essay.

“Many in the United States are...uncomfortable with the notions of power politics, great powers, and power balances. In an extreme form, this discomfort leads to a reflexive appeal instead to notions of international law and norms, and the belief that the support of many states – or better, of institutions like the United Nations – is essential to the legitimate exercise of power. The “national interest” is replaced with “humanitarian interests” or the interests of “the international community.” The belief that the United States is exercising power legitimately only when it is doing so on behalf of someone or something else was deeply rooted in Wilsonian thought and there are strong echoes of it in the Clinton administration.”<sup>165</sup>

By this logic, norms are not an enabling force for American power but an obstructive one. Perhaps this perspective accounts for the near absence of discussion about the role of norms in international politics in any of the documents under review here.

The advocates of hegemony offer a different answer to the question of assurance: “just trust us.” American values are so obviously global values, goes the argument, and American interests so unmistakably the common interests of humanity, that there can be no doubt but that American power is a Force for Good on the world stage.

---

<sup>165</sup> Rice, “Promoting the National Interest.”

Of course, this argument rests poorly with others – as our 1999-2001 dialogue amply demonstrated. China is perhaps the least disposed to accept this argument, given what it perceives to be its long history of being victimized by the “good intentions” and “gunboat diplomacy” of other major powers. U.S. allies are also ill-disposed to just trust America. Allied leaders point out that sustaining alliance relations requires continued public belief that U.S. power is being used for common purposes, and the “just trust us” message has a poisonous effect on this political linkage. Moreover, American friends and allies abroad see the United States as a country with a capacity to do great good in the world, but also as a country with the capacity to commit tragic mistakes and great acts of folly. Some recognize also the ruthless side of American power as well, what Walter Russell Mead has characterized as “the most dangerous military power in the history of the world.”<sup>166</sup>

This argument suggests that the dilemma of great power concert in an era of American supremacy – that American power be used purposefully but with humility – will not easily be overcome by a decision in Washington to accept new forms of restraint, show new forms of deference to the interests of others, or offer meaningful forms of reassurance. If there is an answer, it is in the phrase “common interests and common responsibilities” elaborated as part of the new strategic framework with Russia.

The Bush administration has pressed its partners in Moscow and Beijing with a vision of *their* responsibilities. In strategic dialogues and other venues, it has pressed upon them the responsibility to stand up to Iraq, to bring their proliferation behaviors into compliance with self-accepted obligations (and Washington’s preferences), and to do those things in the intelligence, law enforcement, and financial realms essential to success in the war on terror. To be sure, Washington sees these as common responsibilities. Are there other common responsibilities? What are the *particular* responsibilities of the United States?

This question of American responsibilities is key. As Josef Joffe has argued, “Primacy does not come cheap and the price is measured in the currency of obligation.”<sup>167</sup> The National Security Strategy and the intellectual framework from which it emerged are not explicit about the responsibilities concerning the use of American power, beyond the responsibility to exercise it. The president *is* explicit about

---

<sup>166</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 219.

<sup>167</sup> Joffe, “Who’s Afraid of Mr. Big?” p. 52.

“the conviction that all nations have important responsibilities. Nations that enjoy freedom must actively fight terror. Nations that depend on international stability must help prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Nations that seek international aid must govern themselves wisely, so that aid is well spent. For freedom to thrive, accountability must be expected and required.”<sup>168</sup>

The president then points to the role of alliances and multilateral institutions as a way to “multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.” The strategy goes on to praise the potential contributions of such institutions to the effort to constrain the WMD threat, to ignite a new era of global economic growth,<sup>169</sup> to build the infrastructure of democracy, and to develop agendas for cooperative action with the other main centers of global power. These institutions offer a place to exercise American power, to pursue common interests, and to honor common responsibilities. It is the place where common interests have already been formalized in common responsibilities.

But the preceding analysis suggests a deep ambivalence within the administration about the role of these institutions, about the norms they embody, about their efficacy in ensuring compliance, about the necessity of compromise, about the ability of such mechanisms to offer anything more than lowest-common-denominator answers to big problems, about the restraining effect on American power and their infringement of American sovereignty. The responsibility to lead *is* a form of restraint. As Hedley Bull has argued, major power “freedom of maneuver is circumscribed by responsibility.”<sup>169</sup> Peering beyond all of these signs of disaffection, some commentators have interpreted the Bush National Security Strategy as an affirmation of some deeply held American aspirations for multilateralism. Walter Russell Mead, for one, has argued that “the Bush administration, like its predecessors, rejects the Wilsonian approach to supranational institutions but supports the remaining core principles of liberal internationalism.”<sup>170</sup> If this is so, then there appears to be some possibility that the ambivalence can be overcome and that, with forceful leadership from the president and national security advisor, the United States will renew its leadership of alliances and multilateral institutions and reinvigorate them for the challenges ahead.<sup>171</sup>

The United States may find, moreover, that its freedom for maneuver actually increases rather than decreases as it exerts leadership in these multilateral fora. As Joshua

---

<sup>168</sup> Bush cover letter, p. 3.

<sup>169</sup> Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 229.

<sup>170</sup> Walter Mead, “Misunderstanding the Rice Doctrine,” *Financial Times*, October 2, 2002.

<sup>171</sup> For further discussion of these themes, see Henry Kissinger, “America at the Apex: Empire or Leader?” *National Interest* (Summer 2001), pp. 9-17.

Muravchik has argued, “by resting our actions on a legal basis (and accepting the correlative constraints), we can make the continued exercise of our disproportionate power easier for others to accept.”<sup>172</sup> As John Ikenberry has argued, “the United States obtains the cooperation of other states by offering to restrain and commit itself in return. . . . It may give up some discretion but gains partners.”<sup>173</sup> As Robert Kagan has argued, “If the United States could move past the anxiety engendered by this inaccurate sense of restraint [by its allies], it could begin to show more understanding for the sensibilities of others, a little generosity of spirit. It could pay its respects to multilateralism and the rule of law and try to build some international political capital for those moments when multilateralism is impossible and unilateral action unavoidable.”<sup>174</sup> Kagan and Joseph Nye seem to think alike on this: “At times, we will have to go it alone. When we do so in pursuit of public goods, the nature of our ends may substitute for the means in legitimizing our power in the eyes of others.”<sup>175</sup>

As already noted, however, the strategy seems very short on prescriptions for doing so. In recent years, the United States has done a better job of saying “no” than “yes” within these multilateral processes. It seems so far at least not to have lived up to the president’s aspiration to respect the judgment of others and to forge viable alternatives where there is disagreement on particulars.

Moreover, as the 1999-2001 dialogue highlighted, the major powers have a common responsibility to the so-called nuclear marginalization project. To lead in the Security Council, to combat WMD proliferation, to serve as a guarantor of the international treaty regimes is to commit to the disarmament project. In the chemical and biological realms, the United States has done so essentially without reservation – indeed, it committed itself to the abandonment of such weapons prior to joining the treaty regimes. In the nuclear realm, the United States has done so in the convoluted context of the NPT. The apparent disinterest in linking the effects of the Nuclear Posture Review to the principles and purposes of the NPT suggests that the United States is abandoning the effort to move the world, in however slow and indirect a way, in the direction of a world in which such weapons could be relinquished because they are seen as unnecessary. The major powers cannot lead if they come to be seen as a nuclear aristocracy, and they

---

<sup>172</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *Commentary*, January 2000, p. 41.

<sup>173</sup> Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror,” pp. 29-30.

<sup>174</sup> Kagan, “Power and Weakness.”

<sup>175</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Seven Tests: Between Concert and Unilateralism,” *National Interest* (Winter 2001/02), p. 13.

cannot escape that negative image if they abandon the nuclear project. The United States seems to have been much clearer about its nuclear rights than its nuclear responsibilities in recent years. But it seems that no country other than the United States can tackle this big problem and provide some roadmap for the path ahead.

There is a good argument, however, that circumstances will propel the administration along the multilateral path indicated by the president. To a certain extent, it has learned the age-old lesson that it is easier for an out-of-office party to criticize than for an in-party office to govern. There is also the adage that policymakers generally prefer more policy tools rather than few and come to tolerate the short-comings of each so long as it makes some useful contribution to strategy. Furthermore, the need to solve certain kinds of problems puts it into a problem-solving mode and, as Ikenberry has argued, “the simple logic of problem-solving moves the United States into the realm of multilateral, rule-based foreign policy.”<sup>176</sup> Moreover, in exercising certain responsibilities, the United States may well find that its individual power is simply inadequate or its hard power simply irrelevant to certain types of challenges. Michael Mandelbaum for one has argued that U.S. power is likely to be insufficient to secure the effective functioning of multilateral mechanisms in the absence of consensus among the members of those regimes about American purposes.<sup>177</sup>

Exercising power is not the same as exercising leadership, but the two are closely intertwined. The exercise of leadership and power through common institutions in the context of agreed norms increases the likelihood that American power will be tolerated by others and indeed appreciated in the pursuit of common interests and common responsibilities. Attaching American purposes firmly to the success of those institutions and norms can help to substitute for the fact that primacy makes it difficult for America to offer more traditional forms of restraint, deference, and assurance.

Let us consider also the consequences of a failure to exercise leadership and power in this fashion. A visible collapse of the present international order seems unlikely, though a cataclysmic war with Iraq and/or a wider war in the region involving the campaign-style use of weapons of mass destruction is not entirely inconceivable and could have wide-ranging repercussions. The prospect that China, Russia, or others might

---

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>177</sup> Michael Mandelbaum has argued that “all of the vast military and economic might of the United States cannot secure what lies beyond the power of guns to compel and money to buy.” See Mandelbaum, “The Inadequacy of American Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 61-75.

soon actually rise to peer adversary status with the United States seems very remote and indeed increasingly so. Nor does there appear to be any potential coalition of foreign powers, even major ones, that could encircle and contain America. Unipolar preponderance seems likely to prove rather durable.<sup>178</sup> But as Peter Rodman has argued,

“America’s predominance may not last forever. This is not because our physical power will be matched anytime soon. . . . the problem is rather that policy ineptitude could render that predominant power less impressive. Whether our physical predominance translates into actual influence over events will depend on intangibles such as our political will and staying power, the credibility of our commitments, our perceived willingness or unwillingness to take risks and bear costs, our reputation for reliability and competence. All these depend on our performance over time.”<sup>179</sup>

This points to the potential eclipse of American power, not its defeat. That eclipse will be accelerated if, through its seeming disengagement from the institutions of cooperation among the major powers, the United States signals its unwillingness to tie its power to common purposes, its reluctance to defend norms, its resistance to run risks on behalf of others. Moreover, we can only wonder at the damage done to the reputation for reliability and competence by the apparent temptation to disengage from those very institutions that the United States was so instrumental in creating. In that kind of world, “anti-Americanism will become the global language of political protest.”<sup>180</sup> This would seem only to inflame the risks of WMD terrorism against America. It would seem also to ensure that when and if a truly multipolar world does reemerge, one of its central organizing principles will be disdain and contempt for the opportunity for peace seemingly squandered in this moment of opportunity.

In conjecturing about the potential negative consequences of a failure to lead in the fashion described above, Americans must look beyond the potential foreign consequences to the domestic ones. The loss of American credibility and the eclipse of American power would not settle well with a body politic motivated by a vision of the *Special Providence* of America and its mission to re-make the world in the American image. For decades the American public has resonated with division and recrimination about the Vietnam war. One can only speculate about how the public would react to a loss of faith in the American ability to shape the world to American interests and values.

---

<sup>178</sup> William Wohlforth, “The Stability of a Unipolar World,” *International Security* (Summer 1999).

<sup>179</sup> Rodman, “The World’s Resentment,” p. 40.

<sup>180</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Our Way: The Trouble With Being the World’s Only Superpower,” *New Yorker*, October 14-21, 2002, p 81.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Let us return to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper. Is the Bush vision (of major power concert in an era of American primacy) viable and sustainable? Can the opportunity be seized? Can the major powers be effective partners for preserving the peace in the decades ahead? Has the administration charted a path that is likely to achieve these ambitions?

The 1999-2001 strategic dialogue painted an elaborate picture of the different worldviews, perceptions, beliefs, and interests informing policy and strategy in the capitals of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. It highlighted also the seeming preoccupation of the Chinese, Russian, French, and British with the role of the United States and the propensity in many quarters to look for motivations in American policy for unilateral advantage. Many Americans are tempted to dismiss their concerns as mere carping and to reject out of hand questions about American intentions. In describing the populist Jacksonian worldview, Walter Russell Mead has noted their “belief that while problems are complicated, solutions are simple. False idols are many; the true God is one....Gordian knots are there to be cut.”<sup>181</sup> Tempting though it might have been to cut the Gordian knot with a vision devoid of major power concert, the Bush administration has faced the challenges and complexities head on. The result is a strategy that, in terms of what it says about the major powers, is surprisingly bold and ambitious, not least for the very clear assessment that the major powers can be effective partners for peace. But is it also viable and sustainable?

Conceivably, the efficacy of the strategy in terms of great power concert may prove irrelevant. What happens in the relations among the major powers is hardly up to America alone, however great the power differentials seem to be. The transitions under way in both Russia and China are by no means certain of resulting in countries imbued with greatness but geopolitical modesty, with interests and values closely bound to those of the United States. Those transitions may falter or they may lurch in a new direction that puts those countries on a new trajectory of confrontation with the world. There is much that the United States can do to facilitate the desired transitions and emergence of more clearly cooperative interests, but ultimately the fate of those transitions is up to the peoples of Russia and China themselves.

Also conceivably, the eruption of a much more violent phase in the conflict between radical Islamist forces and the West could sweep away much of the American

---

<sup>181</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 240.

concern to structure an international order conducive to common interests of states. If al Qaeda resorts to weapons of mass destruction and especially if it seeks to reap the full lethal potential of those weapons in an orchestrated campaign of violence aimed at crippling American society and eliminating American power, then the concern about major power concert will give way to the concerns of a life and death struggle. This too is a possibility that cannot be lightly dismissed.

So to the extent it is within the American reach to create the conditions for major power concert, how should the administration's strategy be weighed? As already argued, on the central concerns of opportunity and boldness, the thinking reflected in our 1999-2001 dialogue and in the National Security Strategy clearly converge. Participants in the dialogue find this somewhat surprising, in fact, as our picture of rising common interests among the major powers and of the possibilities for boldness to transform relations among them seemed at sharp odds with prevailing wisdom in Washington, to the effect that major powers simply don't matter much in the moment of American preeminence and in any case seem interested in little more than counterbalancing. Indeed, the Bush/Rice vision goes quite far with its belief that the time is now "to break the destructive pattern of great power rivalry."

But the 1999-2001 dialogue also suggests that the common interests among the major powers are more numerous and far-reaching than those so far enumerated by the administration. The events of September 11 had not occurred to crystallize thinking about shared major power interests in meeting the challenge of terrorism of global reach. Instead, we saw common interests as encompassing status, credibility, an international order sufficient to internal needs, and survival of the inter-state system. This suggests that Bush and Putin were right to seize what proved to be a strategic opportunity to shift the entire debate (and that Jiang Zemin missed an opportunity by treating it as more tactical).

But the viability of the strategy cannot be gauged simply in terms of its objectives. It is a question of both ends and means. Here the strategy presents a more complex picture, at least when considered against the backdrop of the 1999-2001 dialogue. The administration is left with some important challenges.

Some of these are essentially challenges of persuasion. The Bush administration must persuade doubters that the preemption doctrine is an evolutionary development in the U.S. posture, not a revolutionary one – and then its practices must follow its policy. It must persuade China that the professed commitment to China's emergence as a great country is real and that China's own choices about the use of its power will determine

much of how the United States acts to shape the bilateral relationship – and then exercise restraint where it has been promised. It must persuade the allies that they have a constructive role to play – and then demonstrate that commitment by giving them constructive roles. It must persuade the world more generally that the marriage of American interests and values is not a prescription for an American Brezhnev doctrine but instead a commitment to the pursuit of a genuinely just peace based on sovereign power – and then be actively interested in the requirements of just peace. It must also persuade the world that the balance of power it intends is a balance that serves the interests of all and not just the most powerful actor – and then honor the commitment to agendas of cooperation with concrete steps. In an era of such profound suspicion among the major powers about the true intentions of the other(s), the work of diplomacy and dialogue can ultimately have a powerful effect of consolidating the perception of common interest.

But some of the challenges are more conceptual in nature, requiring the United States to think its way into some difficult problems – and to do so in partnership with others. The Bush administration must further elaborate its vision of strategic stability so that China’s place in it is clear and so that choices about the U.S. strategic posture can be made that serve the U.S. interest in stability. It must explore how to square the initiatives generated by the Nuclear Posture Review with U.S. obligations to the nuclear nonproliferation regime and to answer whether and how the nuclear project remains the American project. It must elaborate an answer to how American hegemony can bring into being a world order that others consider just. And it must think through how to balance the need to act purposefully on the world stage with the need to act with humility. Toward that end, a more careful consideration than so far evident of the means and ends of American leadership of the multilateral mechanisms deserves high priority.

The central questions raised in the 1999-2001 dialogue were about American intentions vis-à-vis American power in its moment of primacy. For many observers of America, it seemed that it was toying with the following basic answer – that the purpose of American power is self-aggrandizement and/or disengagement. The Bush “answer” ought to shift thinking on this matter. But for those same observers, it seems to hint of some dangerously different notions – that the best use of American supremacy is to boldly remake the world now while maximizing power advantages in anticipation of a more competitive world to come. This seems a mis-reading of the strategy – at least, of the central intentions presented there. But until the United States begins to come to terms

with some of the issues and dilemmas evident in that dialogue, it won't have confronted very many of the toughest choices and trade-offs.

How are the other major powers likely to receive the main messages in the NNS? In fact, the main messages may not have been crafted for major powers. Condoleezza Rice reports that the president was concerned that "the boys in Lubbock ought to be able to read it."<sup>182</sup> Given the preoccupation with U.S. military power and the "rogue hegemon" in Moscow, Beijing, and elsewhere, it is hardly surprising that so far much of the public commentary in those locales has focused on the preemption question and its salience to Iraq. There is much in the document that also strikes foreign observers as typically high-handed American myopia – the assertion that American values are global values, the belief that American interests in the war on terror are the interests of all of the major powers, the offer to cooperate but only on American terms, and the intention to maintain military power second to none – more than that, to dissuade even the pretenders to being second. There has already been some chuckling about reports that the president had to edit the draft document "because he thought there were sections where we sounded overbearing and arrogant" – and about why he didn't go just a bit further.<sup>183</sup>

Seeing much to dislike, these foreign readers may well miss some of the positive aspects highlighted in this paper. Moreover, as veteran observers of the Washington political scene, many of these readers will simply wait for the next turn of the wheel. Indeed, analysts and policymakers in both Russia and China are much impressed by the seeming inability of the United States to chart a steady course through international waters, while they also lament the vagaries and inconsistencies of U.S. policy. But they would be ill advised to dismiss the Bush vision out of hand. It is rich in precisely the opportunities and vision for great power concert that they have constantly asked of Washington. They must recognize their potential to turn the American debate more fully in their direction by contributing the same measure of cooperation that they have long asked of Washington. As Therese Delpech has argued, "The Four would not have to complain so much about U.S. unilateralism if they were more committed themselves."

Above all, foreign readers cannot help but be struck by the optimism reflected in the strategy. September 11 might well have induced Americans to give in to a kind of paranoia and defeatism about world affairs. Condoleezza Rice has summed this up best. "We have the ability to forge a 21<sup>st</sup> century that lives up to our hopes and not down to our

---

<sup>182</sup> Cited in Rice, "A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom."

<sup>183</sup> Cited in David E. Sanger, "Bush to Outline Doctrine of Striking Foes First," *New York Times*, September 20, 2002, p. 1.

fears.”<sup>184</sup> To absorb the blow of September 11 and emerge optimistic one year later must be read in Moscow, Beijing, and elsewhere as a profound sign of the resilience of American power and the complex vision of interests and values that motivate the U.S. world role.

---

<sup>184</sup> Rice, “A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom.”



## **APPENDIX A: WILTON PARK AGENDAS**

**JULY 9-11, 1999**

### **THE P-5: RECOVERING FROM THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE**

- Session 1:** Ten Years After the Cold War: the Looming Crisis of Confidence in the P-5  
Presentations by Brad Roberts (USA) and Yuri Fedorov (Russia)
- Session 2:** The P-5 and Collective Security in the Post-Cold War Era  
Therese Delpech (France) and Robert Cooper (UK)
- Session 3:** The Politics of P-5 Relations  
Vladimir Baranovsky (Russia) and Shi Chunlai (China)
- Session 4:** Overcoming Constraints on Leadership and the Future of World Order  
Marrack Goulding (UK), Shen Dingli (China), and Jean Marie Guehenno (France)

**FEBRUARY 4-6, 2000**

### **THE P-5 AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY**

- Session 1:** Legitimacy, Responsibility, and the Use of Force  
Jean-Marie Guehenno (France) and Vladimir Baranovsky (Russia)
- Session 2:** Sovereignty, Interdependence, and Security  
Robert Cooper (UK) and Pan Zhenqiang (China)
- Session 3:** Humanitarian Interventions: Situations, Principles, and Rules  
Pan Zhenqiang (China) and Edward Mortimer (UK)
- Session 4:** The UN Security Council and the Nonproliferation Challenge  
Dmitri Trenin (Russia) and Lewis Dunn (USA)
- Session 5:** P-5 Nuclear Relations: Managing Change, Avoiding Confrontation  
Michael Nacht (USA) and Therese Delpech (France)

**JULY 21-23, 2000**

### **THE MAJOR POWERS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

- Session 1:** Dealing with P-5 Dissensus  
Robert Cooper (UK)
- Session 2:** Security Stability in a Multipolar world  
Shi Chunlai (China)
- Session 3:** The Nuclear Weapon States and Nuclear Multipolarity  
Vladimir Varanovsky (Russia)
- Session 4:** Dealing with the Consequences of National Missile Defense  
Therese Delpech (France)
- Session 5:** The UN Security Council and the First Regional WMD War  
Michael Moodie (USA)
- Session 6:** Policy Implications: Cooperating to Promote Peace and Stability  
Yuri Fedorov (Russia), Gwyn Prins (UK), Shen Dingli (PRC), Bruno Tertrais (France)



**APPENDIX B:  
PARTICIPANTS IN ONE OR MORE OF THE MEETINGS WITH  
AFFILIATIONS AT TIME OF PARTICIPATION**

**China**

- Cheung, Tai Ming, senior director, Kroll Associates, Hong Kong
- Chen, Weixiong, head, United Nations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing
- Chu Shulong, senior fellow, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Beijing
- Pan Zhenqiang, former director, Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Beijing
- Shen Dingli, professor, deputy director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai
- Shi Chunlai, ambassador, secretary general of the China Committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
- Xu Hui, Institute for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Beijing
- Yang Mingjie, deputy director, world politics division, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Beijing
- Zhang Yebai, Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing

**France**

- Therese Delpech, Director of Strategic Affairs, Atomy Energy Commission, Paris
- Jean-Marie Guehenno, Chef de Service Relations Internationales, Court de Comptes, Paris
- Jean-Felix Paganon, political director for UN and international organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris
- Bruno Racine, director, French Academy, Rome
- Bruno Tertrais, special assistant to the director for strategic affairs, Ministry of Defense, Paris
- Daniel Vernet, head of international relations, Journal Le Monde, Paris
- Salome Zourabichivili, deputy director for strategic affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris

## **Russia**

- Vladimir Baranovsky, deputy director, IMEMO, Moscow
- Yuri Fedorov, professor, Moscow State Institute for International Relations
- Yuri Fedotov, director, International Relations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow
- Evgeny Kozhokin, director, Russia's Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow
- Andrei Piontkovsky, executive director, Strategic Studies Center, Moscow
- Dmitri Trenin, deputy director, Carnegie Center Moscow
- Ivan Zolotov, department of international organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow

## **United Kingdom**

- Tony Brenton, director of global issues, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London
- Robert Cooper, Cabinet Office, London
- Stuart Eldon, deputy permanent representative, UK Mission to the United Nations, New York
- Sir Marrack Goudling, warden, St. Antony's College, Oxford
- Alastair Harrison, member, U.K. Mission to the United Nations, New York
- Richard Latter, director, Wilton Park, Steyning
- Gwyn Prins, senior research fellow, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London
- William Walker, professor, University of Saint Andrews, Fife

## **United States**

- Lewis Dunn, corporate vice president, SAIC, McLean, VA
- Frank Jenkins, senior vice president, SAIC, McLean, VA
- Mark Minton, minister counselor for political affairs, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY
- Michael Moodie, president, Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, Alexandria, VA
- Michael Nacht, dean, Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, CA
- Brad Roberts, research staff member, Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, VA

**Other**

- Katherine Magraw, program officer, W. Alton Jones Foundation, Charlottesville, VA
- Edward Mortimer, chief speechwriter, Executive Office of the UN Secretary General, New York
- David Speedie, program chair, Carnegie Corporation of New York



**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

*Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YY)</b> December 2002			<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Final		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b>	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> American Primacy and Major Power Concert: A Critique of the 2002 National Security Strategy					<b>5a. CONTRACT NO.</b> Independent Research, C6124	
					<b>5b. GRANT NO.</b>	
					<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NO(S).</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Brad Roberts					<b>5d. PROJECT NO.</b>	
					<b>5e. TASK NO.</b> Independent Research	
					<b>5f. WORK UNIT NO.</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Institute for Defense Analyses 4850 Mark Center Drive Alexandria, VA 22311-1882					<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NO.</b> IDA Paper P-3751	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Institute for Defense Analyses 4850 Mark Center Drive Alexandria, VA 22311-1882					<b>10. SPONSOR'S / MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> IDA	
					<b>11. SPONSOR'S / MONITOR'S REPORT NO(S).</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.						
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>						
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The 2002 National Security Strategy sets out a bold vision of the possible transformation of relations among the United States, Russia, China, and the rest of the major powers—a vision that has attracted little attention amidst the discussion of the place of preemption in the strategy. The opportunity to transform major power relations is real. But consolidating the move to more cooperative relations is easier said than done. The Strategy sets out many of the right themes but fulfilling the vision will require addressing in more depth a set of at least nine fundamental questions. Answering those questions requires an understanding of the currents of thinking within the United States and among the other major powers on how to promote peace and stability in the current era.						
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> balance of power, Britain, China, disarmament, France, leadership, major powers, multipolarity, national interest, National Security Strategy, nuclear order, nuclear weapons, preemption, primacy, proliferation, Russia, sovereignty, strategic stability, unipolar, weapons of mass destruction						
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  UU	<b>18. NO. OF PAGES</b>  96	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> Brad Roberts	
<b>a. REPORT</b>  U	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>  U	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>  U			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include Area Code)</b> (703) 845-2489	

