

Introduction

HOW TO MAKE AMERICA SAFE:
NEW POLICIES FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

In order to win the war on terror and make America as safe as it can be, a new national security strategy is required. The seeds of such a strategy are evident in the latest works of eleven of the nation's most eminent national security scholars. They envision a broader war, which combats terrorism on all fronts—not just with military force—and directs our resources and energy toward the gravest threat we face: nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. As our experiences in Iraq have shown, our current strategy is fundamentally ill-suited to fighting the type of conflict in which we find ourselves.



Addressing a nation at war in January, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt declared, “This war must be waged—it is being waged with the greatest and most persistent intensity. Everything we are and have is at stake. Everything we are and have will be given.”

Five years after 9/11, Americans need little reminding of what is at stake in today's struggle against terrorism: There remains today the significant possibility of catastrophic destruction—even a nuclear attack—on American soil, which could leave hundreds of thousands of Americans dead, many more injured, and literally billions around the world vulnerable to the global economic meltdown that would likely ensue.

Americans understand the gravity of the terrorist threat we face. They are right to wonder, “Is everything we have being given?” Amidst reports of porous ports, loose nukes, a nascent civil war in Iraq, rising incidence of global terrorism, and nuclear saber rattling in Iran and North Korea, it is no surprise that they are asking whether our current national security strategy is really up to the monumental task of making America safe.

We posed this question to eleven American scholars of national security. Although they do not agree on every point, their responses point toward a clear conclusion—that a new plan of action is urgently needed to protect Americans from the historically unique threat posed by international terrorism. All eleven scholars suggest that the assumptions underlying the current strategy are, by and large, relics from a bygone era, poorly suited for the purpose of defeating terrorism.

The old model, in which our current national security strategy is rooted, focuses mainly on states, which field standing armies that can be defeated on the battlefield. It presumes that the greatest threats to America will come primarily from two sources: rogue states, including those that support terrorism, and potential competitors among rising great powers, most notably China. The current strategy emphasizes regime change as a solution to the threat posed by the former; and to deter the latter, it insists upon dedicating the vast majority of America's national security resources to defense systems used for conventional combat between states, not hunting down terrorists.

Of course, the possibility of a hostile great power threatening America in the future cannot be ruled out, and rogue states do present a real danger. But today, most rogue actors are not states. Our most deadly foes now are stateless terrorists, and the gravest threat we face is the possibility that weapons of mass destruction might fall into their hands. Indeed, there is a remarkable degree of consensus among national security scholars concerning the primacy of this specific threat. What is needed is a national security strategy that acknowledges the rise of non-state actors and that unleashes the totality of American assets—military, intelligence, domestic security, diplomatic, economic, and ideological—in our defense. Any such strategy must pass a simple test: Does it minimize the possibility that a catastrophic attack will occur on American soil?

By that standard, our current national security strategy is both inadequate and misguided. Nothing illustrates its deficiency better than the defining foreign policy event of the current administration: the war in Iraq. Opponents of the war often describe it as a distraction from the war on terror. But more than that, our strategy in Iraq is a microcosm of the limitations of the current approach to national security as a whole.

Rather than standing out merely as an isolated, unfortunate blemish on the administration's national security record, our failures in Iraq illustrate why the current approach is fundamentally incapable of winning

the war on terror. As several of the papers in this volume suggest, the overarching fault with the war in Iraq has been the administration's conviction that our most important national security objectives require little more than crushing the armies of opposing states on the battlefield—that once conventional victory is won, all else falls into place.

That mindset has contributed significantly to most of our problems in Iraq—from the inability to police the country, to the inadequate economic reconstruction effort, to the ongoing insurgency, to the dearth of competent administrators, to the lack of support for our mission among Iraqis and others around the world. Our Iraq experience shows that defeating opposing armies, no matter how swiftly and decisively, will not by itself produce overall victory. In order to win the war on terror, we must also succeed in precisely those areas in which we have failed in Iraq: public diplomacy, economic development, building local political institutions, strengthening local security institutions, developing good intelligence on adversaries, waging counter-insurgency. Sadly, those are tasks our current approach to national security quite deliberately relegates to the periphery.

When our presence in Iraq comes to an end, it would be a major mistake to blame our difficulties there solely on incompetence or bad planning. The lessons we should learn from Iraq are ones of strategy, not merely of execution. Unless we adopt a fresh strategy in the broad struggle against terrorism, it is likely to end up resembling the war in Iraq. And with the lives of 300 million Americans at stake, that is a frightening prospect.

What would a fresh strategy look like? To fully address the menacing threat currently being neglected, a new foreign policy must accomplish five key objectives:

I. Prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons. In the long term, America's goals must be to kill or capture the terrorists who are committed to attacking America and to dry up the sources of recruitment for terrorist groups. But that objective will take years to achieve. In the short term, we must do everything in our power to make it impossible for terrorists to gain possession of nuclear weapons. As **Graham Allison** explains, the continued failure to do so constitutes the single greatest and most alarming defect in our current national security strategy. It is also a somewhat perplexing problem to have: the steps needed to secure nuclear

weapons and fissile material from terrorists are affordable and attainable ones. Moreover, there seems to be virtual unanimity among U.S. leaders that nuclear terrorism is the greatest threat currently facing the nation.

Part of the difficulty is a lack of funding, but according to **Matthew Bunn**, a more serious problem is a lack of leadership on the issue. Due to the political and bureaucratic hurdles associated with securing nuclear material, little is likely to be achieved without sustained attention to the problem from the highest levels of government. What is required of America's leaders, therefore, is a dogged determination to make combating nuclear terrorism their number one national security priority—period.

Allison's framework of No Loose Nukes, No New Nascent Nukes, and No New Nuclear Weapons States is a useful guide for policymakers. We must speed up the process of locking up nuclear weapons and fissile material in Russia and elsewhere so that this goal is achieved swiftly. In addition, we must renew our commitment to supplementing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty with new measures that broaden IAEA inspections and close the existing treaty's loopholes.

Similarly, **Robert Gallucci** argues that the primary objective of our Iran and North Korea policies must be to prevent them from developing fissile material that, given their respective histories, could potentially fall into the hands of terrorists. To achieve this end, we must be willing to enter into direct negotiations with both of these states. The Bush administration's ambiguous, incoherent stances toward Iran and North Korea are inexcusable. Its preoccupation with regime change—in Vice President Cheney's words, "We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it"—reflects its belief that the Cold War proved that odious regimes can and must be defeated, not merely contained. This is, however, precisely the wrong lesson to draw from the past sixty years of American foreign policy. Negotiations can indeed be a legitimate and effective means of keeping America safe, if we enter with a clear stance and both carrots and sticks, including a credible military option. Had President Kennedy insisted on regime change as our only option during the Cuban Missile Crisis, one shudders to think what might have happened. As repugnant as these states' leaders are, our long-term desire for regime change must yield to our overarching goal of preventing the annihilation of an American city.

II. Arrive at an endgame in Iraq. The sad fact is that there are no appealing options for solving the problems facing Iraq. Yet, given the immense continuing cost in lives and dollars that the U.S. is incurring there, any

honest national security strategy must give a clear account of what one proposes to do in Iraq. Simply asserting that we will stay the course until victory is not an answer. Victory is defined vaguely at best, and, in light of the armed conflict erupting between Iraqi Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds, is likely not achievable militarily no matter how effectively our troops fight.

Barry Posen, who was among the prescient few to note in Fall 2005 that a civil war was already brewing in Iraq, recommends that the U.S. publicly commit to a withdrawal date in mid-2007. Doing so would give Iraqis both the time and the incentive to prepare themselves for the transition, forcing Iraqi factional leaders either to reach a power-sharing agreement (likely devolving the bulk of power upon regional governments) or, tragically, to face an escalating civil war. In the long term, the U.S. should maintain a meaningful military presence in the region to combat any al-Qaeda operatives remaining in Iraq and to ensure that any conflict there does not spread outside Iraq's borders. When one weighs the immense cost of the ongoing deployment in Iraq, the significant harm being done to the morale and fighting capability of our armed forces, and the public relations boon our presence there gives to our enemies in the fight for hearts and minds in the Islamic world, maintaining current troop levels in Iraq for the indefinite future is simply unacceptable.

The deliberate disengagement of U.S. ground forces from Iraq, though the best of the available options, is admittedly less than satisfactory. The reason, it should be made clear, is that the administration's handling of Iraq over the past three-plus years has brought us to such a point. We find ourselves boxed into a corner in Iraq because our current national security strategy is simply ill-suited to the current world in which we live. The only way to succeed, in Iraq and elsewhere, is to recognize that it is time to implement a new strategy.

III. Spread democracy and win the war of ideas. The current administration deserves credit for certain elements of its assault on terrorism: it has pursued al-Qaeda leaders, deprived them of their valuable operations base in Afghanistan, and taken out much of their command-and-control structures. Such successes have likely played a critical role in preventing another terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11.

But attacking the terrorists directly is only part of the strategy necessary for ultimate victory in the war on terror. We must also deprive terrorists of their ideological sympathizers by aggressively combating the jihadist narrative and improving our standing in the Islamic world.

As **Stephen Van Evera** points out, the administration has evinced almost no interest in bolstering America's public diplomacy effort. Al-Qaeda's propaganda trumpeting a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West cries out for a response, yet often goes unchallenged. The war in Iraq has certainly done harm to our ability to convince mainstream Muslims to join the fight against fundamentalist terrorism. America's failure to push strongly for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, as well as other conflicts in places like Chechnya and Kashmir, allows al-Qaeda to continue feeding off of wars between Muslims and non-Muslims. No one denies that drying up al-Qaeda's recruitment and sympathy is a key component of the war on terror—yet our current national security strategy places surprisingly little emphasis on it.

Daryl Press and **Benjamin Valentino** second the call for improved public diplomacy, and argue more generally that America is using the wrong mix of tools to counter the new challenges from non-state and weak-state actors. In the long run, they assert, ensuring American security in an age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction requires a new grand strategy to help restore America's image abroad. This strategy uses military power when necessary—for example, to target terrorists who seek to harm Americans—but it relies on non-military tools to achieve America's other important foreign policy goals, such as spreading democracy and encouraging free markets. They advocate reducing U.S. military presence in hostile regions like the Persian Gulf because those deployments provoke attacks against the United States by disaffected groups or governments and make the U.S. the central target for the rage of Islamic militants and other extremist groups.

In addition, the U.S. should follow up on the Bush administration's rhetorical commitment to spread democracy by increasing aid for building democratic institutions—including a free press, an independent judiciary, and a vibrant civil society—as well as promoting free markets and responsible governance. In a war in which failed states and social disorder pose at least as great a threat as dictators and tyrants do, we must pay as much attention to helping societies develop as we do to defeating our enemies on the battlefield.

IV. Finance and fight a broader War on Terror. Over the past five years, national security spending has increased by more than 50 percent in real terms. Unfortunately, as **Cindy Williams** documents, much of that is

being spent on the equipment used to fight yesterday's wars—ships, fighter planes, and missile defense technology helpful in a war with the Soviet Union but of limited use in the fight against al-Qaeda. Despite some institutional shifting, funding for homeland security, diplomacy, and international economic and military aid is still dwarfed by massive new defense spending, much of it for Cold War-type defense systems and the war in Iraq. Astonishingly, the 2006 budget spends more on missile defense than on port security, anti-biowarfare medical research, and first responders combined. Appropriations for research into new technologies that might be better suited to the war on terror have not been increased, and the administration's widely touted Millennium Challenge Account to promote economic growth in the developing world remains underfunded. Van Evera notes that the problem is getting worse: the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, apparently eyeing potential future conflicts against well-armed state powers, called once again for spending huge sums on equipment designed primarily for organized combat on the battlefield.

While it is essential that the United States retain its decisive conventional military superiority, our national security budget must be brought in line with our priorities: no expense must be spared in the struggle against al-Qaeda and its allies, even if it means building marginally fewer new-generation submarines or tactical fighters. If the war on terror is to be fought on all fronts, our national security budget must reflect that reality. Fortunately, relatively small reallocations of funds, if spent wisely, can go a long way toward making America safer by improving homeland security and striking at the roots of terrorism—politically, economically, and militarily.

Dan Byman lays out a plan for fighting a more effective war on terror. He commends the current administration for scoring several important successes, especially in terms of its military and intelligence efforts against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but argues that in terms of diplomacy, homeland security, and especially the war of ideas, more needs to be done. Byman recognizes that there are trade-offs between some of our goals—for instance, strengthening the counterterrorism capacity of certain states may hamper democratic reform there—but suggests that the war on terror should at times take precedence, even as we strive to build democratic institutions and strengthen pro-U.S. voices in the Islamic world.

V. Manage the rise of great powers. In order to keep America safe for decades to come, a new national security strategy must include a blueprint for managing relations with established great powers and incorporating ascending ones—most notably China and India—as responsible leaders of the global community. Rapid growth in these two countries has the potential to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. At the same time, there is the possibility that the rise of these powers—particularly China, which shows few signs of improving its human rights record and liberalizing its political system—could pose a threat to international peace and stability.

To bring China and India successfully into the liberal world order, we must steer clear of both premature confrontation on the one hand and shortsighted accommodation on the other. **Joseph Nye** contends that those who are determined to treat China as a likely adversary run the risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophesy that could have painful consequences for all parties. Our own history clearly illustrates that the emergence of a new power need not result in conflict, particularly if the potential rivals share a commitment to common principles. Certainly, America’s rise to world power status at the close of the nineteenth century did not prompt war with Britain or France. Although the historical and philosophical ties between the U.S. and China are not as deep as those we had with Britain and France, it would be short-sighted and counterproductive to sow the seeds of enmity simply out of a belief in the inevitability of future conflict. Nye warns against exaggerating the Chinese threat, suggesting instead that we maintain our policy of engagement while prudently hedging against the possibility that China’s re-emergence on the world stage might not go as smoothly as we would like.

In a similar vein, **Edward Steinfeld** dispels some of the popular myths surrounding China’s rapid economic growth in recent years. He notes that China is not the controlled, well-organized mercantilist machine it is often described as. China’s growth has not been the product of strategic top-down policies implemented by the government in Beijing; instead, it has been driven largely by foreign (especially American) investment, decentralized entrepreneurs, and local government officials operating outside the country’s legal framework. The result has been uneven growth—spectacular in some areas, dismal in others—that has caused massive disruptions in Chinese society, which officials in the central government are only now starting to recognize. Steinfeld contends that rather than decrying China as an economic threat, we should

work with the Chinese when possible to smooth the global economic, environmental, and geopolitical consequences of the country's frenzied development.

In the case of India, Gallucci identifies a rather different problem: giving too much deference to a rising power with little benefit in return. The deal reached earlier this year between the U.S. and India threatens to undermine the credibility of the international nonproliferation regime, which has served as a cornerstone of global security for decades. In our quest for better relations with rising powers, the U.S. cannot abandon key components of the international system we have helped build up over the course of the past sixty years. Instead, we should chart a consistent, principled middle course that seeks to engage China and India without appeasing them. Doing so will minimize the potential for future conflict and allow the U.S. to focus on the more immediate and dire threat—terrorism—while enlisting the aid of as many states as possible in that struggle.

Today's new dangers pose a common threat to all major powers, and they cannot be defeated without common action among them. **Stephen Van Evera** calls for a new concert of cooperation reminiscent of the Concert of Europe, when in 1815 Europe's powers worked together to fight what they perceived as a common threat. Van Evera suggests that such cooperation is possible in our own era. Nuclear weapons have made conquest among great powers impossible, and the competition for security that fueled intense conflict among them has abated. Far less dangerous to each other, today's great powers can and must make common cause to address the most pressing global threats.

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The current administration would have us believe that we are fighting the war on terror as vigilantly and aggressively as possible. It is becoming increasingly clear that that is not the case. Though we have achieved several notable successes, we are fighting the war with one hand tied behind our back. Some of our greatest resources—international legitimacy, democratic ideals, economic assistance, national security spending, technological innovation—are not being sufficiently leveraged. Some of the gravest threats we face—the spread of fissile material, proliferation among rogue states, inadequate port security, the drain on our resources caused by the ongoing conflict in Iraq—are not being addressed adequately.

In this new struggle, we must appreciate and implement the real lessons of the Cold War: military might is a critical and necessary key to victory, but not a sufficient one. The Cold War could not have been prosecuted nearly as effectively without the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the United Nations. It was won in large part because the U.S. presented the world with a far more attractive set of ideals than the Soviet Union did. Military force was always an option and was used when needed, but in tandem with the other elements of American power.

What the U.S. needs now to win the war on terror is an all-fronts, more-urgent-than-ever plan to defeat our enemies, secure the homeland, and win hearts and minds. That is, unfortunately, something that our current national security strategy, which makes outdated assumptions, spends money inefficiently, and incorporates the wrong lessons from America's past, can never be. The new paradigm suggested by these papers is one that is tough, intelligent, comprehensive, and forward-looking. It recognizes that the threats we face today are so severe that they must be met, as FDR promised, with everything we have and everything we are.

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