

# Come Home, America

## The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation

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**T**he Cold War lasted so long and grew to be such a comfortable part of everyday life that it is now very difficult to chart a new foreign policy course for the nation. U.S. national strategy is a confusing mix of grand rhetoric, false starts, and well-advised caution. U.S. troops remain forward deployed, but in smaller numbers than they were during the Cold War. The United States intervenes often in the conflicts of others, but without a consistent rationale, without a clear sense of how to advance U.S. interests, and sometimes with unintended and expensive consequences. It is time to choose a new course. Here we advocate a foreign policy of restraint—the disengagement of America’s military forces from the rest of the world. Restraint is a modern form of isolationism: we adopt its military policy of withdrawal, but reject its traditional economic protectionism.

The Cold War was worth fighting and winning. Soviet expansionism threatened vital U.S. interests; it seemed ready to swallow America’s allies in Europe and Asia, who were exhausted by World War II and racked by national self-doubt. After victory over the monumental insanity of Nazism and Japanese militarism, the United States sought the prosperity interrupted by depression and a long war. But full enjoyment of its national wealth was postponed by the need to ward off the Soviet Union.

Despite the collapse of the Soviet threat, American interests have not changed. The United States still seeks peace and prosperity. But now this preferred state is best obtained by restraining America’s great power, a power unmatched by any rival and unchallenged in any important dimension. Rather than lead a new crusade, America should absorb itself in the somewhat delayed task of addressing imperfections in its own society.

The restraint we propose should not be misdescribed as a total withdrawal from the world. On the contrary, we believe in a vigorous trade with other

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nations and the thriving commerce of ideas. Military restraint need not, and will not, bring economic protectionism.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, restraint does not even require unconditional military isolation. Terrorism should still elicit a strong response, and if America's vital interests are challenged, there should be hell to pay. We advocate a strong military, just not a large or busy one. Isolationism in the 1920s was inappropriate, because conquest on a continental scale was then possible. Now, nuclear weapons assure great power sovereignty—and certainly America's defense.

Americans want to enjoy the freedom and opportunity that their forefathers sought and for which many of them fought and died. They can achieve this, if only they restrain the urge to claim interconnectivity in all human conflict. U.S. power may be massive, but it is still limited. To quote a famous, although premature, expression of the policy we advocate: it is time to come home, America. Now that the Cold War is over, George McGovern is right.

This paper has four sections. In the first we present our core argument in favor of restraint. We argue that the highest priorities of American foreign policy are to protect U.S. national security and to promote America's prosperity. A policy of restraint is the best way to satisfy these objectives. In the second section we discuss the details of restraint. We describe how restraint should be implemented around the world, how the United States should extricate itself from its current commitments, and where America should remain engaged. In the third section we rebut six of the primary counterarguments against our position. In the fourth we describe the circumstances that would invalidate our prescriptions. Restraint is not a universally good policy; in fact it has not been an appropriate American strategy until now. It is, however, America's best option today because of the paucity of international threats. In this section we detail the circumstances that would require reengagement—which are very unlikely to be fulfilled anytime soon.

### *The Core Argument for Restraint*

To develop the case for a new American foreign policy, we begin with a discussion of America's foreign policy goals. Those national interests are then considered in light of the post-Cold War security environment.

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1. Daryl G. Press and Eugene Gholz, "Searching for that Vision Thing," *Breakthroughs*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 4–10.

#### MATCHING MILITARY MEANS TO FOREIGN POLICY ENDS

America has many foreign policy goals and two tools with which to achieve them: economic and military power. Some goals are well suited to military means, but for others, military force will be ineffective, too costly, or even counterproductive. In this paper we ask, "when should the United States use, or threaten to use, *military* power to secure its national interests?" This analysis finds that America is in an extremely rare historical position. The United States can achieve its most critical goals without sending its children to fight and without spending great amounts of national wealth on defense.

Most Americans share a global vision in which America has many national interests: ensuring U.S. physical security, facilitating American prosperity, protecting human rights, spreading democracy and market-based economic systems, ending the drug trade, safeguarding the environment, etc. Americans assign various priorities to these interests, but two of them stand out—security and prosperity.<sup>2</sup> Advocates of policies to address the other interests on the list, e.g., protecting the environment, routinely couch their appeals in terms of national security to make their concerns seem urgent to a wider audience.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, however, the environment is important because Americans value the environment. Deforestation in South America may make the world less pleasant for everyone, and policy should address that problem, but deforestation would not undermine America's national security.<sup>4</sup> Once we separate

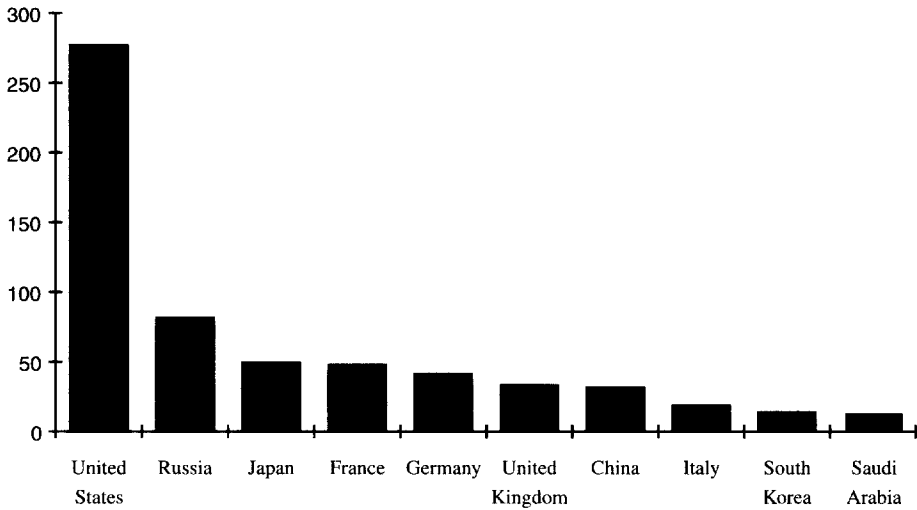
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2. Some analysts suggest that spreading American values is of equal importance in America's national interest. Most of these analysts, however, are actually arguing that engaging in moral crusades is necessary to mobilize Americans to prepare to defend their security. At heart, therefore, these arguments recognize security as the first priority. See, for example, Terry L. Deibel, "Strategies before Containment: Patterns for the Future," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1992), pp. 79–108. See also James Kurth, "America's Grand Strategy," *The National Interest*, No. 43 (Spring 1996), p. 15.

3. Marc A. Levy, "Is the Environment a National Security Issue?" *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Fall 1995), pp. 35–62, and especially p. 53, suggests—and soundly criticizes—this motivation. For examples of advocates of a general link between environmental degradation and national security, see Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 162–177; and Norman Myers, *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), especially pp. 12, 31–34. Better-specified work links the environment to national security by reference to the potential collapse of particular states in the developing world that might be important to U.S. security. See, for example, Norman Myers, *Not Far Afield: U.S. Interests and the Global Environment* (Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1987), p. 13. Below, we argue that there are no such pivotal states to protect.

4. Kenneth Keller, "Environmentalism and Security," presentation in the MIT Defense and Arms Control Studies Program Seminar Series, September 11, 1996. See also Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 18–31, 36–37, for a careful distinction between the effects of environmental collapse on intrastate violence in the developing world and on interstate violence that might affect the United States.

**Figure 1. 1995 Defense Spending in Billions of U.S. Dollars.**



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1996–1997* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), Table 1, pp. 306–308.

America's goals into distinct categories (e.g., security, prosperity, democracy abroad, environmental management), we can assess the critical issue: which of these national goals should be pursued with military power?

Of America's goals, the highest priority is the physical security of the United States—the protection of territory and the ability to make domestic political decisions as free as possible from foreign coercion. The great news is that America faces almost no discernible security threats. To the north and south are weak, friendly neighbors; to the east and west are fish. Nobody can cross the oceans to threaten America at home.<sup>5</sup>

The United States towers over other nations in terms of its current and potential military power. Its defense budget, measuring more than a quarter of a trillion dollars, accounts for about 35 percent of the world's total annual military expenditures. Figure 1 shows the military spending of the ten countries that spend the most on defense. The United States not only leads the pack but out-distances its closest rival by more than a factor of three. Seven of the nine other countries in the top ten are U.S. allies.

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5. Terrorists are an exception and are discussed below.

The result of America's profligate defense spending is that the United States has by far the largest and most capable of the world's air forces and navies; an army that can defeat any other; and a marine corps that has personnel and equipment comparable to the entire armed forces of the United Kingdom, one of America's leading "competitors." The United States can project and sustain military strength further and longer than anyone else.

In the past, the United States feared that a hostile adversary might unite the rest of the world's industrial capacity through conquest, generating enough military and economic power to threaten U.S. security. But unlike the situation during the Cold War, no hostile country now has a chance of conquering Europe or East Asia. Each of the Eurasian great powers (with the exception of Russia) spends about the same amount on its military as the others, which suggests that none could easily overpower the rest. There is a rough balance of power on the continent. Furthermore, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, and China all have nuclear weapons, which provide the ultimate guarantee against conquest. Great power conflict may continue, but Eurasia's industrial resources will stay divided. America's primary national interest, physical security, does not demand much in the way of defense spending or overseas deployment.

The second most fundamental American interest is continued prosperity. Prosperity is both a "means" and an "end." As a means, economic strength is the foundation for long-term security, because wealth can be converted into military power; as an end, prosperity provides a high standard of living. Fortunately, America's prosperity is almost as insulated from hostile foreign actions as its security is. The bulk of America's economic interactions with the world are decentralized, market-based trade and investment decisions that are affected only indirectly by government policy. The exception would be a scenario in which a hostile country in the Persian Gulf gained leverage to hurt America's economy by consolidating the world's major oil reserves. The small populations of the oil-rich Gulf states do not suggest a natural balance of power, and none of the oil-rich states is shielded by nuclear weapons. Consequently, the United States should maintain sufficient military forces in the region to prevent regional conquest.

But the oil scenario aside, other countries have little power over the U.S. economy. Even Japan, America's biggest creditor, would have difficulty exercising leverage against American prosperity. Sophisticated international capital markets adjust rapidly to changes in supply and demand. If Japanese lenders shifted their money to other borrowers, alternate sources would emerge to

satisfy American demand, and the equilibrium world interest rate would not be changed much. The American cost of capital, specifically including the rate of interest on the national debt, would not increase, and American prosperity would not be harmed.<sup>6</sup>

The key to America's economic future lies in maintaining a well-educated workforce and addressing its problems at home, not in stationing troops overseas. America's prospects are quite bright. The greatest foreign policy threat to U.S. prosperity is that America will spend too much on the military.

Unlike security and prosperity, however, America's other foreign policy goals are unlikely to be achieved effortlessly. The questions to address are whether military force is the best means to pursue these goals and whether the costs of these operations are justified by the likely results. We conclude that the answer to each question is "no." First, military organizations are not well suited to spreading democracy, protecting human rights, or stemming drug abuse in America. Militaries' hierarchical design and sophisticated command and control capabilities make them extremely capable in response to intense, short-term problems such as those found on the battlefield. But spreading values, monitoring human rights, or reducing drug abuse require different types of skills than militaries supply. It is no coincidence that military organizations have a very different structure and ethos than aid organizations and humanitarian groups.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the costs of campaigning for democracy or human rights with military force would be staggering. These missions could require tens of billions of dollars each year just to outfit enough troops, in addition to significant financial costs and casualties every time America deployed.<sup>8</sup> Using the military to spread democratic values would likely be costly and bloody and could endanger America's paramount concerns: the physical security and economic strength of the nation.

For the first time in five decades, America's core national interests are easily within reach. Small wars will likely continue to be frequent, but those wars cannot spread easily to U.S. shores, and their results will not shift the global

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6. Even if Japan reacted to American restraint by increasing defense expenditures (increasing Japanese consumption and diverting capital from investment), the effect would be balanced by America's tremendous reduction in defense spending. This is discussed in greater detail below.

7. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1971), p. 15, 33–34, 46–47.

8. On the enormous size of military forces required for stability operations, see James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Winter 1995–96), pp. 59–69.

power balance. Similarly, military threats to America's prosperity are quite low. In fact, the only way the United States could jeopardize its favorable position is to meddle in other nations' affairs, join their wars, and overspend on defense.

#### BALANCING SECURITY AND PROSPERITY

The United States is a very wealthy country and, as Joshua Muravchik argues, America's high per capita gross domestic product (GDP) allows the United States to spend more on defense than its competitors.<sup>9</sup> The right question to ask, however, is, what are Americans getting for that extra investment? The money spent on defense could be used for education, entitlements, private consumption (through tax reductions), or other opportunities. Even during the Cold War, defense spending was constrained by the high value Americans place on freedom from too onerous a military burden.<sup>10</sup> America's interest in prosperity commands attention to "right-sizing" the defense budget.

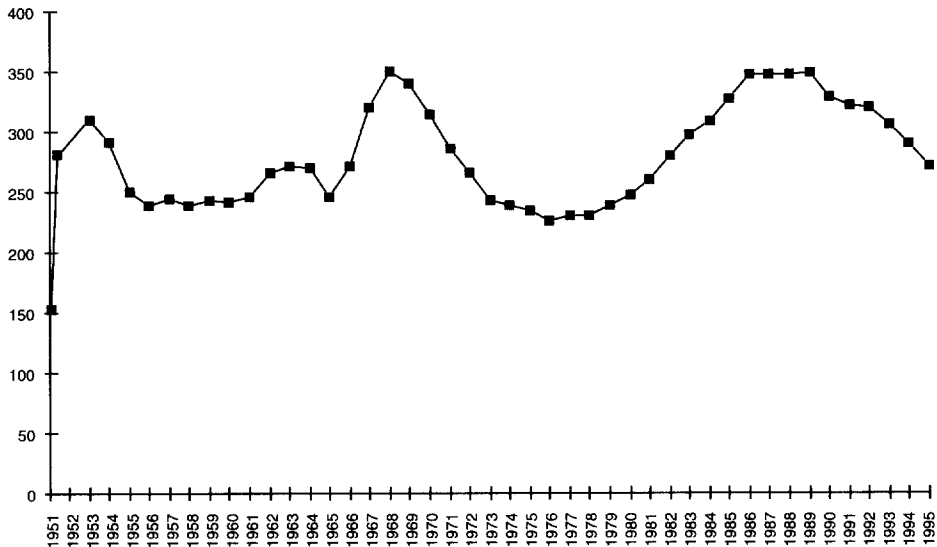
The marginal increment of security that the United States gains from high levels of defense spending is vanishingly small. Security, like most investments, is subject to diminishing returns, even for a country that has as much comparative advantage in defense production as the United States. Capitalizing on the learning effects of the Cold War, the advantages of scale economies, America's wonderful natural resource endowments, and important geographic advantages, the United States is far more capable than any of its competitors of squeezing security from a marginal defense dollar. But once Americans are already quite secure, there is a tremendous cost to incremental additions to their safety.

The rate at which cost and security trade off depends on the technologies available to the offense and the defense, on the geographic relationship between a country and its adversaries, on the type of terrain on which battles might be fought, and on the opportunity cost of devoting resources to defense that could otherwise be employed productively in other ways. The absolute level of security that is purchased for each dollar of investment in the defense budget, however, is largely dependent on the harshness of the threat environment: facing many severe threats, a small defense budget will not buy much security; that same expenditure will buy a great deal of security if most other countries are weak or are supporters of the territorial status quo.

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9. Joshua Muravchik, "Affording Foreign Policy: The Problem Is Not Wallet, But Will," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (March/April 1996), pp. 8-13.

10. Aaron Friedberg, "Why Didn't the United States Become a Garrison State?" *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1992), pp. 109-142.

**Figure 2. U.S. Defense Outlays, 1951 to 1995 (billions of FY95 dollars).**

SOURCE: Carl W. Borklund, *U.S. Defense and Military Fact Book* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1991), pp. 58–61; and U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), *Historical Tables*, annual. The 1995 point is an OMB estimate.

Given its geographical advantages and nuclear arsenal, the United States would be very secure even if Japan, China, and Russia matched its defense expenditures. The fact is that, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, no one else comes close. It is not at all clear what, if anything, Americans are getting for their extra defense dollars. The United States can spend much less than it does today and still be much more secure than it was during the Cold War.

U.S. defense spending has dropped from its Cold War peak, but the budget is still within its Cold War range (see Figure 2). In fact, defense outlays in 1995 were very close to those of an average peaceful year of the Cold War. America has not cashed in a “peace dividend,” but has traded it for a “security dividend,” even as the external threat has disappeared.<sup>11</sup> The United States can cut defense greatly and still enjoy the security that geography and the end of the Cold War provide.

11. Thomas L. McNaughter, “Planning Future Defense: Time to Confront the Cold War Mindset,” *Brookings Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer 1996), p. 27.

Advocates of a larger defense budget often point out that America's defense spending as a share of GDP has dropped to pre-Cold War levels, largely because of the steady growth of the U.S. economy. This statistic indicates a reduction in the defense budget's drain on the economy, but the fact remains that America is buying as much military capability as it bought during typical Cold War years. Unless this military capability is needed, America is wasting valuable resources.

Even for the United States, the cost of keeping armed and involved beyond security needs is large. The United States could pay for a robust defense, fully capable of protecting its security and economic interests anywhere in the world, with a budget of \$120 billion—half the current size but still significantly higher than the world's second biggest defense budget.<sup>12</sup> Spending twice that, as the United States currently does, deprives taxpayers of the fruit of their labor and society of the resources to engage domestic problems.

Advocates of continued military activism argue that their policy is a form of insurance. Insurance is intended to mitigate the costs of unlikely events, but military engagement abroad accomplishes the reverse: it magnifies the costs and risks of faraway wars by involving Americans directly in them. Its hefty premiums sap U.S. prosperity.

#### THE FOUNDATIONS OF RESTRAINT

The case for restraint rests on three theoretical foundations. First, the offense-defense balance influences both the likelihood of war and the mechanisms by which wars start. War begins either when status quo powers fail to deter aggressor states (the "deterrence model") or when a status quo state's defense policies undermine the security of one of its status quo neighbors, precipitating an action-reaction cycle (the "spiral model").<sup>13</sup> Second, when faced with external threats to their security, states tend to balance against the emerging threat, either internally by converting latent military power into deployed forces, or externally by searching for allies.<sup>14</sup> As threats become more intense, govern-

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12. Even \$120 billion would still be generous. If the United States succeeded in reducing the defense budget to that level, it would be in a position to reassess the strategic environment and perhaps pare down the budget further.

13. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167–214; and Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), chap. 3.

14. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 32–33, 263–266.

ments think more seriously about their security and are more likely to use "realist" analysis in designing their defense policy.<sup>15</sup>

Third, nuclear weapons do not make war obsolete, but they make it impossible to conquer a nuclear-armed adversary.<sup>16</sup> Because nuclear weapons explode with far more destructive force than conventional munitions, a devastating strike can be delivered with a handful of ballistic missiles or other delivery vehicles not subject to interception. Even the loser of a war—a country that has completely lost control of its airspace, sea lanes, and strategic, elevated territory—can now fire off a last-ditch punitive strike, devastating the "winner." No conquest would justify the costs of a large nuclear exchange, so no aggressor can conquer a nuclear-armed great power. Wars may still happen; risk-tolerant leaders might still engage in limited wars against nuclear powers.<sup>17</sup> But because of the risk of nuclear escalation, even conventional battles between nuclear powers should be rare.<sup>18</sup> The bottom line on nuclear weapons is that they make the conquest of great powers unthinkable.

#### IS RESTRAINT A BREAK FROM THE PAST?

The policy of restraint advocated here means specifically two things: a significant reduction in the number of active-duty forces and a significant reduction in America's overseas military presence. Spending \$120 billion a year, the United States would still spend more than the second biggest military power, even if that power's budget were to increase in response to America's retrenchment. A \$120 billion budget would buy the capability to deal with one major regional contingency (MRC)—needed to respond to, e.g., a Persian Gulf oil grab.<sup>19</sup>

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15. Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 40, 239–241.

16. By "nuclear armed adversary" we mean an adversary with a secure second-strike force. See Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 5–6, 28; Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't: American Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1990), pp. 4–5.

17. One example of this is the 1973 Middle East War.

18. Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Paper No. 171 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies [IISS], 1981); John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 50–66.

19. It seems quite conservative to assume that the U.S. could maintain a one-MRC force for \$120 billion. The Clinton Bottom-Up Review (BUR) force, designed to conduct two nearly simultaneous MRCs, was estimated to cost approximately \$250 billion (FY97 dollars). See Les Aspin, *The Bottom-Up Review: Forces For A New Era* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [U.S. GPO], 1993). It appears that the United States could get one MRC for less than half of this total.

In the BUR "building block" method, force packages were simply added to an unchanging

Proposing to cut the defense budget by 50 percent and to withdraw from long-standing alliances in Europe and Asia may seem radical, but restraint would bring more continuity than change. During the Cold War the United States sought to ensure its security and prosperity by maintaining the division of Eurasia's industrial might, preserving freedom of the seas, and, since at least the 1970s, preventing the consolidation of Persian Gulf oil. These goals should still be the guiding principles of U.S. foreign policy today and into the future, and a strategy of restraint is explicitly designed to achieve them. Advocates of continued American engagement, however, have created new, revolutionary principles to guide U.S. foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> They propose to take on new overseas tasks like ensuring global "stability." Restraint is the best strategy for achieving America's traditional national interests; it is not a "break from the past" but a continuation of classical goals in a new strategic setting.

#### OTHER BENEFITS OF RESTRAINT

Military restraint has other benefits. First, and perhaps most important, an American withdrawal would force U.S. allies to accept political responsibility for managing their own affairs. Starting in the early days of the Cold War, the United States discouraged initiative on the part of its allies. The British and French concentrated on their economic recovery; America promised to defend them until they got back on their feet. The vanquished World War II enemies were held back for a different reason: they were on probation. But now, fifty years later, America's allies still depend on the United States to solve problems they could tackle themselves. They lack the incentive to act responsibly.

America's NATO allies are among the most powerful countries in the world. But not only did they fail to stop the war in Yugoslavia, they dithered for four years, not even deciding whether to try. President Bill Clinton sent U.S. troops to Bosnia as the next step in the history of America's twentieth-century leadership, but why do 300 million wealthy West Europeans need the United States

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"foundation," which alone costs \$110 billion. But the \$110 billion foundation, according to the Department of Defense analysis, is capable of supporting a two-and-a-half MRC "Base Force." Clearly the United States does not need a Base Force-sized foundation to support a one-MRC force. If America cuts one third out of the defense foundation then it would be left with \$45 billion to buy a single MRC force package. This, incidentally, is twice as much money as it costs, in the BUR metric, to move from a single MRC to a two-MRC force. See Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), Table 2 and notes.

20. Robert W. Tucker, "The Future of a Contradiction," *The National Interest*, No. 43 (Spring 1996), p. 24.

to shake them into action? When will they take these responsibilities upon themselves? America's willingness to provide assistance surely dampens any leadership urges among U.S. allies.

America's alliances reduce the strategic risks that its allies face and, therefore, eliminate their need to engage in internal balancing.<sup>21</sup> In a low-threat environment, bureaucratic politics and domestic political coalitions can replace rational calculation in security policy institutions.<sup>22</sup> On the rare occasions that America's allies do act alone, they act with less caution than they ought to, an example of the classic problem of "moral hazard." When someone else is going to pay the price for an ill-advised action—that is, when the United States is going to come "fix" any predicament that its allies get into—there is little incentive to avoid trouble. It is easy to gamble with someone else's money.<sup>23</sup>

Many foreign policy analysts believe that the Bosnian crisis was exacerbated by German irresponsibility; the German government recognized the secession of parts of the Yugoslav Republic, despite the risk of inciting civil war.<sup>24</sup> A Germany without the United States to guard its interests would be likely to think harder about the effects of such actions. Japan, too, has ducked its responsibilities under the guardianship of the United States. It has not come to terms with its neighbors for its conduct during World War II. A Japan without U.S. protection would likely discover that reconciliation is cheaper and more effective than confrontation.<sup>25</sup> In a multipolar world, it is often easier for states to try to make themselves alliance-worthy than to balance through purely internal means.<sup>26</sup>

It may be that America's allies, left to their own devices, will not choose policies that would have been preferred by an engaged United States. Accepting that reality is the key to the strategy of restraint; the United States need not

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21. Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances, Threats and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufman and Labs," *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1992), p. 458; see also Mancur Olson, Jr., and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (August 1966), pp. 175–198; John R. Oneal, "The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer 1990), pp. 379–402.

22. See Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, pp. 130–135, 164–167.

23. Steven Shavell, "On Moral Hazard and Insurance," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (November 1979), pp. 541–562. We owe the idea of applying the concept of moral hazard to alliances to Kenneth Oye.

24. Beverly Crawford, "Explaining Defection from International Cooperation: Germany's Unilateral Recognition of Croatia," *World Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (July 1996), pp. 482–521, is a good, detailed summary of the diplomatic and German domestic political history; John Zametica, *The Yugoslav Conflict*, Adelphi Paper No. 270 (London: IISS, Summer 1992), pp. 64, 69–70.

25. Robert A. Manning, "Future Shock or Renewed Partnership? The U.S.-Japan Alliance Facing the Millennium," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Autumn 1995), p. 88.

26. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 165, 168–170; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, p. 65.

manage every crisis in the world. America's preferences should not dictate its allies' affairs. As long as no outcome can threaten the core American interests of security and prosperity, the United States can afford to accept the solutions of powers whose interests are directly engaged.

A second subsidiary benefit to restraint comes on the economic front. For fifty years, America encouraged its allies to concentrate on economic development while it carried most of the defense burden. Today, the United States subsidizes Japan's defense,<sup>27</sup> which allows Japanese industry to compete "unfairly": Japanese firms pay lower taxes than they otherwise would. The Cold War did not bankrupt America, but it did have economic and social costs. The allies, now in the same economic league as America, should discover the full cost of their defense while the United States turns to long-avoided problems with its infrastructure, education system, budget deficit, and race relations.

### *Implementing a Policy of Restraint*

Shifting to a restrained military policy will require major changes to America's alliance commitments, regional crisis planning, and force structure. This section reviews the steps required to withdraw from strategic commitments. It is organized geographically to cover the world's key regions: Europe, the Pacific Rim, and the Middle East.

#### PULLING OUT OF EUROPE

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the United States has expanded its security commitments, sending troops into the Balkans and pledging to admit Eastern Europe's newly democratized countries into NATO. NATO has been trying to make it appear that its European members are now less dependent on America, but its reforms have not changed America's role as the heavyweight military backstop to the alliance. Due to America's near monopoly in logistics and mobility resources, the United States will be centrally involved in any future NATO operation.<sup>28</sup>

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27. Proponents of U.S. engagement in Asia argue that the Japanese pay "Host Nation Support," which covers the costs of America's forward deployment. Their calculations, however, neglect the \$60 billion that the United States spends each year to equip and train the forces to fight an Asian MRC.

28. Charles Barry, "NATO's Combined Joint Task Forces in Theory and Practice," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 81-97. Also, Rick Atkinson and Bradley Graham, "As Europe Seeks Wider NATO Role, Its Armies Shrink," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1996, p. 1.

To implement a policy of restraint, the United States should reverse course on NATO policy. The threat that NATO was created to deter disappeared when the Soviet Union collapsed. Consequently, NATO should be dismantled. In an orderly fashion, America should withdraw the 100,000 soldiers currently stationed in Europe, demobilize most of them, and bring home the equipment currently strewn around Europe as POMCUS sets;<sup>29</sup> this would be a clear signal that America would not return U.S. forces to the continent at the drop of a hat. It would take time, perhaps a year or two, for the U.S. military to pack up its units and for America's allies to acquire equipment to replace that currently provided by the United States. If the allies decide to purchase new equipment, America should eagerly sell it to them; if they insist on supporting their own domestic defense industries, America should license its designs to get their production capability up to speed.<sup>30</sup> In the interim, the United States should honor its commitments to provide the conventional capabilities that the European powers lack.<sup>31</sup> The key to the transition to a restrained national security policy is quick reduction of the exposure of American forces to overseas conflicts without opening "windows of vulnerability" for current allies.

NATO's European members are wealthy, and they will be able to provide for their own conventional defense without American help. In an extreme scenario, if Russia were to elect a hyper-nationalist leader, he could not magically restore the power of the Warsaw Pact. Germany's economy is nearly twice the size of Russia's.<sup>32</sup> Even if Russia's GDP were to double in the next ten years, Germany *alone* should be able to match Russian military spending. Furthermore, unified Germany's eastern border is far shorter than the Inter-German Border that NATO patrolled during the Cold War. It is hard to believe that prosperous, technologically sophisticated Germany—let alone the combined

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29. POMCUS sets are "prepositioned overseas materiel, configured in unit sets," storehouses of military equipment in regions to which the United States may want to quickly deploy. In times of crisis, units can travel without carrying their equipment, "marrying up" with the weapons waiting at the POMCUS site.

30. Faced with the need to provide for their own defense for the first time in decades, the European allies are likely to realize that they have an immediate need for first-rate weapons that cannot currently be produced by their own industries. They may import American designs, at least until their industries catch up. Eugene Gholz, "Defense Industry Export Opportunities," Presentation at the DACS/Women in International Security Conference on the Arms Trade, Washington, D.C., October 1996.

31. For example, the United States should fulfill its promise to help if the French need logistics and mobility assets to evacuate their citizens from Algeria but should not provide ground troops for that mission, because the French have plenty of ground troops of their own.

32. IISS estimates Germany's GDP is 1.7 times that of Russia. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1996-97* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 56, 113.

European force that would likely evolve if there were a serious threat of Russian hegemony—would be unable to stop a resurgent Russian invasion.<sup>33</sup>

Potentially the most complicated transition issue resulting from America's withdrawal from NATO would be the closure of America's nuclear umbrella over Germany. The other major European powers—France, the United Kingdom, and Russia—have their own nuclear arsenals, but Germany would be left exposed by an American withdrawal. For many years Germany has had the capability to build nuclear weapons almost instantly, but has chosen not to, because the United States provided nuclear cover; if America were to withdraw, Germany would be unlikely to deny itself the protection that nuclear weapons afford.

The primary danger associated with German nuclear proliferation is transition instability. Russia or another current nuclear power might have an interest in preventive war or at least in applying nuclear coercion to keep Germany non-nuclear. Facing such a threat, the most dangerous time for Germany to go nuclear would be during a crisis, but that is a danger that the United States can address directly by helping Germany develop a secure nuclear deterrent now, in a time of relatively low tension. If the United States maintains its current nuclear guarantee during the German weaponization program, Germany can develop nuclear weapons without opening a window of vulnerability.<sup>34</sup>

#### MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM ASIA

American foreign policy in Asia, too, has been captured by Cold War alliances, although in this region the formal institutions are less developed than the European NATO structure. The United States has already pulled out of its largest overseas bases, the facilities at Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines, but has reinvigorated the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and reaffirmed the "tripwire" deployment in Korea.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, one of the principal architects of the Clinton administration's Asia strategy, Joseph S. Nye, Jr.,

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33. This picture of German strength need not worry Americans. The Russian defense against an invasion from the West retains its traditional bastions of strength: strategic depth, cold winters, and, ultimately, nuclear weapons.

34. Peter D. Feaver and Emerson M.S. Niou, "Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Condemn, Strike, or Assault?" *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 1996), pp. 212–214 and 218–222; Steven E. Miller, "Assistance to Newly Proliferating Nations," in Robert D. Blackwill and Albert Carnesale, eds., *The New Nuclear Nations: Consequences for U.S. Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 103–105.

35. Chalmers Johnson and E.B. Keehn, "The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (July/August 1995), pp. 103–114.

has suggested that the United States remain engaged in the Pacific Rim with the specific intent of slowly developing formal institutions of regional integration.<sup>36</sup> We argue, however, that this forward presence in Asia has lost its Cold War security rationale, exposes American soldiers to risk, costs Americans money, and artificially reduces the defense burden on America's leading economic competitors, helping them compete against U.S. companies.

As in Europe, the United States currently has about 100,000 military personnel stationed in Asia, all of whom should be brought home and demobilized. The United States should end its commitments to Japan and South Korea, cease military cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), withdraw from the Australia, New Zealand, United States Pact (ANZUS), and terminate the implicit guarantee to Taiwan, giving those nations new incentives to take care of themselves.

No Asian ally of the United States faces an overwhelming conventional threat. It requires astounding assumptions about the relative fighting strength of North and South Korean soldiers to develop a military balance requirement for U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula.<sup>37</sup> South Korea may want to improve its defenses further to replace capabilities that the United States is expected to supply—e.g., build a larger air force—but it is difficult to understand how a country with twice the population and twenty times the economic power of its primary competitor, not to mention a substantial technological lead, cannot find the resources to defend itself.<sup>38</sup>

Current U.S. strategy implicitly assumes that America must remain engaged because of the Asian countries' failure to balance against Chinese strength.<sup>39</sup> But Japan and Taiwan, the two plausible targets for Chinese aggression, are more than capable of defending themselves from conventional attack. Both enjoy the geographic advantage of being islands. The surrounding oceans ensure a defense dominance that could only be overcome with enormous material or technological advantages.

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36. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (July / August 1995), pp. 90–102.

37. Nick Beldecos and Eric Heginbotham, "The Conventional Military Balance in Korea," *Breakthroughs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 1–8. The analysis focuses on the ability of a joint U.S.–South Korean force to stop an attack, but in sensitivity analyses they confirm that the current South Korean force could provide a robust defense without American assistance.

38. North Korean GDP is approximately \$21 billion, compared with \$422 billion for South Korea. IISS, *Military Balance*, pp. 186–188.

39. Gerald Segal, "East Asia and the 'Constraint' of China," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), p. 124.

The amphibious operations required for a Chinese invasion of Taiwan or Japan would be extremely difficult and at a minimum would require substantial investment in amphibious warfare capability.<sup>40</sup> Taiwan could extract a withering toll on invading forces. Its air force is large, sophisticated, and growing; its navy has deadly missile boats; and it produces anti-ship cruise missiles. The same Taiwanese forces would make a Chinese blockade of Taiwan even harder. China would find it difficult to harass Taiwanese ports on the eastern side of the island with ground-launched anti-ship cruise missiles.<sup>41</sup> Chinese attacks on shipping would be blocked by Taiwan's air superiority and sea control, and Chinese blockading forces would find it difficult to cover the wide swath of ocean around Taiwan. China could use its ballistic missile force to conduct terror attacks against Taiwanese targets, but terror attacks have negligible military or long-run political effects—witness the failures of the German Blitz and of the sustained IRA bombing campaign against the United Kingdom.<sup>42</sup> As long as Taiwan has access to advanced Western weapons, it will be able to defend itself.

Japan's threat environment is even more benign. Its "moat" is wider than the Taiwan Strait. Japan's large, sophisticated air and naval forces give it great defensive capabilities, and air and naval warfare play directly to Japan's technological advantage.<sup>43</sup> The side with the best sensors can target the enemy first, gaining an enormous advantage; empirical evidence suggests that a better-trained or technologically superior air force can achieve favorable exchange ratios of 10:1 or greater.<sup>44</sup> Japan's east-coast ports would make a blockade with

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40. Gary Klintworth, *New Taiwan, New China: Taiwan's Changing Role in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 206–207.

41. One of Taiwan's largest ports, Keelung, is on the northeastern tip of the island. It is shielded from the Chinese mainland by a twenty-mile long peninsula that juts out to the north. Keelung handles a full range of port cargo, including petroleum. Taiwan has two other major ports on the eastern side of the island, one of which handles petroleum. See *Lloyd's Maritime Atlas of World Ports and Shipping Places* (London: Lloyd's Publishing Company, 1995); and *Guide to Port Entry, 1995/6* (London: Shipping Guides Limited, 1995), pp. 1899–1907.

42. For an excellent analysis of the history of strategic coercion, see Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996). See especially pp. 343–346 on the Blitz and pp. 314–316 on the difficulty of strategic coercion in general.

43. Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Mercantile Realism and Japanese Foreign Policy," MIT Japan Program Working Paper No. 96–22, pp. 30–31, 36, suggest that Japanese economic policy is aimed at maintaining just such an advantage. Also, Mark Z. Taylor, "Dominance Through Technology," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 6 (November/December 1995), pp. 14–20; and Eiichi Katahara, "Japan's Concept of Comprehensive Security in the Post-Cold War World," in Susan L. Shirk and Christopher P. Twomey, eds., *Power and Prosperity: Economics and Security Linkages in Asia-Pacific* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996), pp. 213–232.

44. In the 1973 Middle East War, Israel achieved a 14:1 air exchange ratio against the Arab air forces; in 1982, Israel did even better, shooting down 87 Syrian planes and losing no aircraft in

ground-launched anti-ship cruise missiles technically impossible and would increase the area of coverage for blockading forces beyond the reasonable limits of any non-American navy's sustainment capability. Finally, anti-submarine warfare capability is a particular strength of the Japanese armed forces because of the Cold War mission for which they were designed.

This sanguine analysis of the Asian military balances has not yet considered a last defensive advantage: the ability of defenders to seek balancing alliances. In a 1994 article, Gerald Segal argues that continued American military engagement in Asia is necessary because Asian nations have failed to balance Chinese power. Segal's conclusions, however, are inconsistent with the details he recounts of balancing by Asian countries whenever American military protection is absent. He reports that Vietnam has made enough progress at internal balancing to restrict the Chinese military actions in the South China Sea, and that Australia and Indonesia have made new commitments, jointly and separately, to oppose Chinese expansionism.<sup>45</sup> If China sought to acquire significant power projection assets, U.S. allies could no longer afford to voice their minor disputes with each other; they would work together to contain Chinese threats.

Despite the favorable Asian conventional balances, some Asian powers might feel pressure at the nuclear level from an American withdrawal. Japan and South Korea currently enjoy the security of the American nuclear umbrella, and some of their neighbors, with whom they share a history of conflict, already have nuclear arsenals.<sup>46</sup> It would not be surprising if South Korea and Japan wished to replace the American nuclear commitment with their own deterrent forces. On the other hand, they might be restrained by the chance that proliferation would scare their neighbors; the Japanese are at least officially sensitive to the "fallacy of the last move."<sup>47</sup> Fortunately, if they do decide to develop nuclear weapons, Japan and South Korea are good candidates for safe

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air-air duels and only one airplane and two helicopters to ground fire. In the 1990-91 Gulf War, the U.S.-led Coalition shot down 36 Iraqi aircraft against only one probable Coalition loss from aerial combat. See Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Fairfax, Va.: Hero Books, 1986), pp. 144-145; Dupuy, *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars, 1947-1974* (Fairfax, Va.: Hero Books, 1984), p. 609, Table E on the 1973 air war; and James A. Winnefeld et al., *A League of Airmen: U.S. Airpower in the Gulf War* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1994), Table A-13, on the war against Iraq.

45. Segal, "East Asia and the 'Constraint' of China," pp. 123, 127, 131. For a consideration of the South China Sea military balance, see Michael G. Gallagher, "China's Illusory Threat to the South China Sea," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 169-194.

46. China, of course, has nuclear weapons. North Korea is also rumored to have a small nuclear capability.

47. Christopher W. Hughes, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and Japanese Security," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 82.

proliferation.<sup>48</sup> Both countries have the military power to protect their nuclear forces from conventional attack, mitigating fears of inadvertent escalation,<sup>49</sup> and both possess the technological prowess to develop secure, second-strike arsenals. The only proliferation danger lies in transition. The United States, therefore, should maintain its current nuclear commitments while it pulls out of Asia. During that time America should offer assistance on nuclear technology issues to the South Koreans and Japanese if they decide to pursue their own deterrent forces.

Taiwan is a less likely candidate for nuclear proliferation. America's withdrawal from Asia would not deprive Taiwan of an American nuclear commitment, because Taiwan never had one. Even with the United States engaged in Asia, Taiwan is vulnerable to a nuclear first strike from China; restraint will do nothing to change this. Taiwan seems to have concluded that the risks of a Chinese nuclear strike do not require a nuclear deterrent. Many analysts have long doubted the utility of nuclear weapons in civil wars, and if China really believes it "owns" Taiwan, then a nuclear attack would be like an attack on itself.<sup>50</sup> The bottom line for American defense policy is that, while the issue of Taiwan's nuclear vulnerability is tricky, America's current military posture in Asia does little to relieve any nuclear tension there. With or without American power in the region, Taiwan will do what it has to do to defend itself.

The final issue to be considered regarding America's withdrawal from Asia is the possibility of economic retaliation by U.S. allies. Japan might retaliate for an American withdrawal from the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty by escalating its export competition with American industry or by raising the interest rates at which it is willing to loan money to the United States.<sup>51</sup> Although neither of these alternatives would threaten American security, both could attack the other core American goal: prosperity.

These concerns are unfounded. First, a significant fraction of Japanese politicians favor a transition to a "normal" international role, including expanded attention to self-defense. The political ramifications of the rape of a twelve-year-old Japanese girl by U.S. Marines on Okinawa revealed considerable

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48. Christopher Layne, "Less Is More: Minimal Realism in East Asia," *The National Interest*, No. 43 (Spring 1996), p. 73.

49. Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 12-23.

50. Thomas Christensen, "Chinese Realpolitik," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (September/October 1996), pp. 37-52.

51. Hans Binnendijk, "U.S. Strategic Objectives in East Asia," *National Defense University Strategic Forum*, No. 68 (March 1996), pp. 2-3.

popular support for American disengagement.<sup>52</sup> If American military withdrawal were greeted with a favorable response from the electorate, even leaders who favor America's presence might not retaliate.

Second, the Japanese have few levers to inflict additional economic pain on America. In the trade case, it is hard to imagine how the Japanese could compete more intensively than they already do or how they could more decisively stonewall American market-opening initiatives. In fact, one of the benefits of a policy of restraint might come in the realm of international trade, if the reduction in American resources spent on the military resulted in better American industrial competitiveness, or if the reduction in U.S. defense spending led to a higher domestic savings rate. Restraint could promote a macroeconomic environment better suited to reducing America's trade deficit.<sup>53</sup>

These sanguine observations aside, it is possible to envision new Japanese financial regulations or nationalist choices by Japanese banks to discourage lending to the United States. Many have observed that America has imported massive sums of Japanese capital each year for more than a decade, implying that the United States would be vulnerable to a reduction or cutoff in that flow. But that vulnerability is exaggerated, because international capital flows freely and non-Japanese sources could readily substitute for restricted Japanese investment in the United States.<sup>54</sup> The only route whereby Japanese reactions to U.S. withdrawal might hurt U.S. prosperity is if Japanese defense expenditures increased substantially, consuming Japanese investment dollars that would otherwise have gone to international capital markets. But the reduction in the supply of global capital would be compensated by a reduction in worldwide demand for borrowing, because the U.S. defense budget burden would be substantially lightened. Furthermore, if investors fear international instability in the wake of U.S. military retrenchment, it is likely that more money would flow to the United States seeking a "safe haven," potentially reduc-

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52. Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon, "The Marines Should Come Home: Adapting the U.S.-Japan Alliance to a New Security Era," *Brookings Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring 1996), pp. 10-13, and Chalmers Johnson, "Go-banken-sama, go home!" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (July/August 1996), pp. 22-29.

53. Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 370-371.

54. Michael C. Webb, "International Economic Structure, Government Interests, and International Coordination of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies," *International Organization*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 309-342; and Jeffrey A. Frieden, "Invested Interests: Politics of National Economic Policies in a World of Global Finance," *International Organization*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Autumn 1991), pp. 425-452.

ing American interest rates further and faster than those of the rest of the world.<sup>55</sup>

For many years now America's allies in Asia have been getting a cheap ride in the security realm. In the past, facing the Soviet threat, the United States had good reason to provide the public good of Pacific defense; now, however, America's allies are wealthy and its interests are less threatened, so the United States should come home. Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Nye has explained the political difficulties faced by the Japanese faction that advocates an expanded military and diplomatic role for Japan as a result of the substantial cost involved in building up the required capabilities, inadvertently confirming that the Japanese government and people understand the economic benefit that U.S.-supplied security has conferred on them.<sup>56</sup> But the U.S. government is not in the business of providing for Japanese security and prosperity; instead, America's core foreign policy interests are its own security and prosperity, which can best be served in the Pacific by a policy of restraint.

#### A LIMITED PULLBACK FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

The strategic environment in the Middle East is significantly different than in either Asia or Europe. America's allies elsewhere are more than capable of defending themselves, guaranteeing the continued division of global industrial might. But many countries in the Middle East, particularly in the Persian Gulf, are incapable of developing a robust defense capability. Without American military power to defend them, a regional aggressor could consolidate Persian Gulf oil, threatening one of America's core interests, prosperity. The strategic realities of the Middle East, therefore, require a different policy than is appropriate for Asia or Europe. The United States should maintain sufficient forces in the Persian Gulf to prevent any country from monopolizing control over significant amounts of the region's oil.

Several thousand American soldiers are stationed in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. An additional 3,000 marines and 1,300 air force personnel have been stationed in Jordan on "temporary" duty. Still more troops service American aircraft in Qatar and Bahrain, where the U.S. presence is augmented by the headquarters of the Navy's Fifth Fleet. The Navy's forward deployment is completed by the nearly year-round patrol of an aircraft carrier battle group in

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55. Jeffrey A. Frankel, "Still the Lingua Franca: The Exaggerated Death of the Dollar," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (July/August 1995), pp. 9-16.

56. Nye, "The Case for Deep Engagement," p. 96.

Persian Gulf waters, whose aircraft supplement the Air Force's land-based planes in the Southern Watch "no-fly zone" over Iraq. None of these deployments is required by a formal treaty, and in fact the United States goes to great lengths to move its forces around regularly, supposedly reducing the visibility of the American military to the populace of each Middle Eastern country.

Defending American interests in the Gulf requires the United States to balance two conflicting concerns. The United States needs to maintain sufficient forces to prevent cross-border attacks that could conquer significant oil fields. At the same time, the U.S. military presence must be minimized to avoid heightening religious or nationalist pressures that destabilize the regimes of friendly Gulf countries. Balancing the "external" and "internal" threats to U.S. allies should be the principal concern of American military policy in the Gulf.

Specifically, the United States should withdraw its ground forces from the Persian Gulf, leaving behind POMCUS serviced by civilian contractors. Maintaining approximately 100 air superiority aircraft and 100 attack aircraft at remote Saudi air bases would ensure a robust ability to protect U.S. allies from external attack.<sup>57</sup> The no-fly zone over Iraq would be terminated, but if Iraq moved ground forces toward the borders of America's allies, the United States should strike first, not allowing Iraq to pull back and repeat the process later.<sup>58</sup>

The reason that the United States needs to prevent the consolidation of Persian Gulf oil has changed since the end of the Cold War, but preventing consolidation is still critical. During the Cold War, the United States feared Soviet conquest of the region, which would have strengthened the Soviet military machine and offered new political leverage against America's European and Asian allies.<sup>59</sup> Now that the Soviet threat is gone, the threat of future changes to the territorial status quo in the Gulf would come from a regional hegemon, who would not add the oil reserves to nearly as formidable a base as the Soviets would have. Even if the GDPs of all of the Gulf oil states were combined, the total would pale in comparison to the GDP of the United States.<sup>60</sup> Consolidation of Gulf oil would no longer create a security threat.

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57. For an earlier consideration of the effects of tactical air power against a hegemonic bid in the Gulf, see Daryl G. Press, "What If Saddam Hadn't Stopped?" *Breakthroughs*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 5–11.

58. This "no-drive" zone is already in effect.

59. Robert H. Johnson, "The Persian Gulf in U.S. Strategy: A Skeptical View," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Summer 1989), pp. 126–160, raises some well-reasoned objections to this logic, both with respect to Soviet capabilities and with respect to the political ramifications of a Soviet move.

60. According to IISS figures, the U.S. GDP is roughly \$7.5 trillion. If Iran conquered all of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates and consolidated these economies into its

However, allowing a regional hegemon to seize significant quantities of Gulf oil would constitute a threat to America's prosperity. Some analysts disagree. Even if all of the oil reserves were united under a hostile leader, they argue, oil would still be available because its value comes from its sale, not from keeping it in the ground. Past price shocks have come from overreactions rather than from real supply-demand imbalances, suggesting that the ideal oil policy is to improve market efficiency rather than to use the military to prevent attempts at price hikes. Furthermore, these analysts observe, Western Europe and Japan import more oil from the Gulf than the United States does, hence they should bear the cost of preserving its free flow.<sup>61</sup> Each of these arguments is unfortunately wrong.

The risk to U.S. prosperity in the Gulf is that a regional hegemon could manipulate supply as a method of economic coercion. In the past, the Saudis have adjusted their production levels to preserve price stability in the face of accelerations and cutbacks by other Gulf states.<sup>62</sup> When Iranian production ceased after the overthrow of the shah, Saudi Arabia made up for most of the production shortfall. When 4 million barrels per day of Iraqi and Kuwaiti output suddenly disappeared from the world market in August 1990, the Saudis rapidly expanded their production to make up the difference, minimizing the effects of the Gulf War on the world price of oil.<sup>63</sup> But if Saudi production capacity were conquered, damaged, or politically neutralized (in the case of a hostile Saudi Arabia), the global economy would be vulnerable to manipulations in supply. American military policy in the Gulf must be designed to ensure that significant amounts of Saudi, Kuwaiti, Iraqi, and other Middle Eastern oil are not monopolized by a regional hegemon.

Even a Middle Eastern oil monopoly might not raise oil prices, some would argue, because to do so would not increase the regional hegemon's long-run

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own without any loss, its new GDP would still be only approximately 4 percent of the American GDP. See *The Military Balance 1996-97*, pp. 22, 131, 133, 137, 145, and 148.

61. David Henderson, "Sorry Saddam, Oil Embargoes Don't Hurt the U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, August 29, 1990, p. A10, argues that the price of a barrel of oil would only rise to \$30 if all Middle Eastern production were consolidated and the output quantity were reduced to the monopoly level, for a loss of only \$20.5 billion to the U.S. economy. Henderson claims to be making extremely unfavorable estimates of the price elasticity and demand response to the price shock. Earl C. Ravenall, *Designing Defense for a New World Order: The Military Budget in 1992 and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: CATO Institute, 1991), pp. 43-59, suggests that the cost of committing troops to the Gulf is quite high in terms of peacetime yearly funding and the risk-adjusted cost of wars—higher than the cost to the United States of foregoing Middle Eastern oil.

62. Michael Sterner, "Navigating the Gulf," *Foreign Policy*, No. 81 (Winter 1990-91), pp. 39-52.

63. Robert J. Lieber, "Oil and Power after the Gulf War," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 155-175.

GDP. Higher oil prices just encourage more exploration in other parts of the world and a shift to other sources of fuel. Furthermore, Middle Eastern countries remain trade-interdependent and vulnerable to embargo.<sup>64</sup> But these arguments are unconvincing: a fresh regional hegemon, anxious to enjoy the fruits of conquest, might seek high short-run profits from oil price manipulation rather than long-term returns.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, a new hegemonic leader might just be vindictive or anti-Western. Saddam Hussein has been insensitive to the harsh economic sanctions imposed on Iraq since the Gulf War; he or another Gulf dictator could be indifferent to the economic effects of Western retaliation for an oil shock.

Finally, contrary to conventional wisdom, the American economy is *more* vulnerable to shocks in oil prices than are the industrialized countries of Europe and Asia. At present the United States imports very little Middle Eastern oil, and the Europeans and Japanese import a considerably greater portion of their consumption from the Gulf. But oil is a fungible resource, meaning that all oil of equivalent quality sells for a single world price. If the price of Middle Eastern oil rises, so will the price of oil consumed in the United States from non-Gulf sources. And U.S. energy demand is a higher share of GDP than comparable European or Japanese consumption.<sup>66</sup> So in reality, the U.S. economy would pay a greater prosperity price in a future oil shock.

All of the usual arguments about adopting an American economic policy to limit the effects of a future surge in the price of oil remain true under a policy of restraint. Use of alternate sources of energy, renewed conservation efforts, and more responsive operation of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would help insulate the American economy from oil shocks and reduce the need for American engagement in the Persian Gulf. But all of these responses have costs, and at the current price of oil it has not been worthwhile to invest a great deal in reducing short-term dependence on oil. An American military policy of restraint would highlight the defense budget costs of its lone remaining overseas military engagement, help Americans recognize the true costs of "cheap" oil, and spur the United States to find ways to reduce this vulnerability.

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64. Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 83–88.

65. See M.A. Adelman, "Oil Fallacies," *Foreign Policy*, No. 82 (Spring 1991), pp. 3–16. Adelman notes that unstable political regimes, dominated by minority elites, might rationally emphasize short-term interests in their oil pricing strategies.

66. Sterner, "Navigating the Gulf," p. 41.

In the meantime, America must be prepared to defend its Middle Eastern oil interests. Luckily, this is not a very demanding job. To conquer the majority of territory containing Gulf oil, an aggressor's army would have to cover a vast area. Even modern, mechanized armies do not move very fast, and two hundred American aircraft stationed in Saudi Arabia should take the steam out of a ground advance. The aircraft would harass enemy forces and drop air-deployed minefields along their route of advance. American reinforcements would begin to flow into the theater in less than 48 hours.<sup>67</sup> Within a week, ground units could begin to marry up with POMCUS equipment, blocking the aggressor's advance entirely.

The security environment with respect to America's other Middle Eastern ally is quite different. Israel, like U.S. allies in Europe and Asia, is quite capable of defending itself. No American forces need to be earmarked for its defense. Analysis of the military capabilities of the Arab ring states (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt) suggests that Israel's conventional defenses are in little danger.<sup>68</sup> Israel continues to field the best conventional military in the region. As a last resort, Israel's territorial integrity is guaranteed by a nuclear arsenal.

For decades America has been a close friend of Israel, and a policy of restraint would not change this. The United States is better off when its friends are safe and secure, even if their safety has no effect on American security or prosperity. Surrounded by enemies, Israel has always fought its own battles, never requiring American troops to protect its borders. Israel's determination to defend itself without American troops should embarrass America's allies in Europe and Asia. As long as Americans feel strongly about Israel's well-being, loan guarantees, direct economic aid, and military sales will continue. But Israeli security makes no demands on American force structure and in no way justifies American military engagement.

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67. In both the 1990 and 1994 American deployments to the Persian Gulf, the first squadron of American combat aircraft (approximately 24 planes) arrived in the theater in 48 hours; for the next two weeks, U.S. ground attack planes arrived at roughly ten per day. See Press, "What If Saddam Hadn't Stopped," pp. 5-11.

68. Anthony H. Cordesman, *Perilous Prospects: The Peace Process and the Arab-Israeli Military Balance*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996). Cordesman concludes that Israel can defend itself conventionally from attack by any of its neighbors. A combined Egyptian-Jordanian-Syrian attack would push Israel to its limits, but the timing of this attack would be difficult to work out because Egyptian forces would need many weeks to cross the Sinai and establish logistics depots for an attack on Israel. This would give Israel the chance to fight its adversaries piecemeal. For an analysis of the military balance on the Golan Heights, see Aryeh Shalev, *Israel and Syria: Peace and Security on the Golan* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994). For an excellent analysis of the military effectiveness of Arab countries over the past fifty years, see Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, June, 1996.

#### THE LIMITS OF RESTRAINT: CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT IN WORLD AFFAIRS

American military restraint does not imply a total withdrawal from the world. The U.S. economy will remain open, and the United States will participate in international economic, environmental, and humanitarian agreements. America will help allies in need with financial support and will use its great economic might to sanction aggressive countries.

The United States should continue its efforts to prevent and respond to terrorism. Restraint should reduce the incentive of terrorists to attack the United States, and it will minimize the vulnerability of American forces to overseas bombings, but it will not stop all attacks against U.S. targets. The United States should redouble its intelligence efforts against terrorists, and their sponsors should feel America's wrath. Restraint should not be confused with pacifism; America will no longer meddle in other countries' disputes, but it should respond with force when its citizens are attacked.

Finally, the United States should continue in its traditional role of cooperating with allies to maintain freedom of the seas. Stopping interference with seaborne trade has always been a mission of the world's navies, and continuing that mission would enhance America's wealth. Some of America's allies have sizable navies and will see cooperation with the United States against pirates to be in their interest.<sup>69</sup>

### *Counterarguments and Rebuttal*

Six main arguments are raised against proposals for American military disengagement. In the following six subsections, they are addressed in turn.

#### THE INCREASED CHANCE OF GREAT POWER WAR

Several prominent analysts favor a policy of selective engagement.<sup>70</sup> These analysts fear that American military retrenchment would increase the risk of

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69. "Stalking Modern Pirates," *Boston Globe*, May 10, 1993, p. A14.

70. See Robert J. Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 1991), pp. 5-53; Art, "Why Western Europe Needs the United States and NATO," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 1-39; Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War," and John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," which can both be found in Sean M. Lynn-Jones, ed., *The Cold War and After: Prospects For Peace* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991). Van Evera and Art believe that great power war is relatively unlikely today, and would be even less likely with continued American military presence overseas. They advocate continued engagement as a form of insurance. See Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 10, 46-47 and Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," pp. 195-218. Mearsheimer, on the other hand, is less optimistic and suggests that without American engagement the likelihood of future great power war is quite significant.

great power war. A great power war today would be a calamity, even for those countries that manage to stay out of the fighting. The best way to prevent great power war, according to these analysts, is to remain engaged in Europe and East Asia. Twice in this century the United States has pulled out of Europe, and both times great power war followed. Then America chose to stay engaged, and the longest period of European great power peace ensued. In sum, selective engagers point to the costs of others' great power wars and the relative ease of preventing them.

The selective engagers' strategy is wrong for two reasons. First, selective engagers overstate the effect of U.S. military presence as a positive force for great power peace. In today's world, disengagement will not cause great power war, and continued engagement will not reliably prevent it. In some circumstances, engagement may actually increase the likelihood of conflict. Second, selective engagers overstate the costs of distant wars and seriously understate the costs and risks of their strategies. Overseas deployments require a large force structure. Even worse, selective engagement will ensure that when a future great power war erupts, the United States will be in the thick of things. Although distant great power wars are bad for America, the only sure path to ruin is to step in the middle of a faraway fight.

Selective engagers overstate America's effect on the likelihood of future great power wars. There is little reason to believe that withdrawal from Europe or Asia would lead to deterrence failures. With or without a forward U.S. presence, America's major allies have sufficient military strength to deter any potential aggressors. Conflict is far more likely to erupt from a sequence described in the spiral model.

The danger of spirals leading to war in East Asia is remote. Spirals happen when states, seeking security, frighten their neighbors. The risk of spirals is great when offense is easier than defense, because any country's attempt to achieve security will give it an offensive capability against its neighbors. The neighbors' attempts to eliminate the vulnerability give them fleeting offensive capabilities and tempt them to launch preventive war.<sup>71</sup> But Asia, as discussed earlier, is blessed with inherent defensive advantages. Japan and Taiwan are islands, which makes them very difficult to invade. China has a long land border with Russia, but enjoys the protection of the East China Sea, which stands between it and Japan. The expanse of Siberia gives Russia, its ever-trusted ally, strategic depth. South Korea benefits from mountainous terrain

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71. Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War*, Volume I: *The Structure of Power and the Roots of War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming), chap. 5.

which would channel an attacking force from the north. Offense is difficult in East Asia, so spirals should not be acute. In fact, no other region in which great powers interact offers more defensive advantage than East Asia.

The prospect for spirals is greater in Europe, but continued U.S. engagement does not reduce that danger; rather, it exacerbates the risk. A West European military union, controlling more than 21 percent of the world's GDP, may worry Russia. But NATO, with 44 percent of the world's GDP, is far more threatening, especially if it expands eastward. The more NATO frightens Russia, the more likely it is that Russia will turn dangerously nationalist, redirect its economy toward the military, and try to re-absorb its old buffer states.<sup>72</sup> But if the U.S. military were to withdraw from Europe, even Germany, Europe's strongest advocate for NATO expansion, might become less enthusiastic, because it would be German rather than American troops standing guard on the new borders.

Some advocates of selective engagement point to the past fifty years as evidence that America's forward military presence reduces the chance of war. The Cold War's great power peace, however, was overdetermined. Nuclear weapons brought a powerful restraining influence.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, throughout the Cold War, European and Asian powers had a common foe which encouraged them to cooperate. After an American withdrawal, the Japanese, Koreans, and Russians would still have to worry about China; the Europeans would still need to keep an eye on Russia. These threats can be managed without U.S. assistance, and the challenge will encourage European and Asian regional cooperation.

In fact, some evidence suggests that America's overseas presence was not the principal cause of great power peace during the Cold War; nuclear weapons and the presence of a unifying threat played a greater role. The Sino-Soviet dispute has been one of the bitterest in the world since the 1960s. The Soviets and Chinese have had all the ingredients for a great power war—border disputes, hostile ideologies, and occasional military clashes along their frontier—yet they managed to keep things from getting out of hand. Maybe the presence of nuclear weapons damped the conflict; maybe having a common foe (the United States) tempered their hostility toward each other. But it is clear

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72. Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (January/February 1996), pp. 31–32.

73. Most of the members of the "selective engagement" camp agree that nuclear weapons are a significant cause of peace. See, for example, Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," pp. 155–156; Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," pp. 198–200.

that U.S. engagement was not necessary for peaceful great power relations during the Cold War.

Some analysts agree that the probability of great power wars stemming from American withdrawal is very low, but they still advocate engagement because they fear low-probability, high-cost events. A war would be a human tragedy, the environment would suffer, and international trade would be disrupted. But the costs of distant great power wars must be compared to the costs of the strategy intended to prevent them.

Advocates of selective engagement argue that their policy's costs are small.<sup>74</sup> We disagree with this assessment. Two costs are associated with selective engagement and both are high: the cost of maintaining forces in Europe and Asia and the risk that, with engagement, the United States will have to fight a war. Maintaining substantial military power in Europe and Asia and the capability to surge forces to the Persian Gulf will require most of America's current military assets, a two-MRC force. Any savings from force cuts will be marginal.<sup>75</sup>

The larger long-term cost of selective engagement is the risk of involvement in faraway great power wars. Great power conflicts will continue to be a rare occurrence, but when they happen, the United States is much better off staying as far away from the combatants as possible. World War II resulted in the deaths of 400,000 Americans, many times that number wounded, and nearly 40 percent of GDP devoted to defense (compared to 4 percent today).<sup>76</sup> A new great power conflict, with the possibility of nuclear use, might exact even higher costs from the participants. World War II was fought to prevent the consolidation of Europe and Asia by hostile, fanatical adversaries, but a new great power war would not raise that specter. The biggest cost of selective

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74. Art, "Defensible Defense," p. 51.

75. Posen and Ross estimate that a force structure adequate for selective engagement might cost between \$246 and \$270 billion in FY97 dollars, or roughly comparable to what the United States spends today. See Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," p. 21 and Table 2. Suggestions that America could save by shifting to small, "tripwire" forces are exaggerated (e.g., Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 39-42, 51-53, and footnote 94). Tripwires are unlikely to deter aggressors or reassure allies. First, potential aggressors may not be deterred. Recent adversaries appear to believe that early American casualties will force a withdrawal, but unless aggressors believe that causing American casualties will bring dramatic escalation, token forces will not reliably strengthen deterrence. Second, allies will be unlikely to depend on tripwires for their defense; they will not be comforted by America's pledge to reconquer them after the tripwire is brushed aside. Instead they will build up their own defenses, and potentially trigger the spirals that the tripwire was supposed to prevent.

76. See Harvey M. Sapolsky, "War Without Killing," in S. Sarkesian and J. Flanagan, eds., *U.S. Domestic and National Security Agendas* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 34 and Table 2.2. In World War II, 292,000 American military personnel died in combat; another 114,000 were non-combat fatalities.

engagement is the risk of being drawn into someone else's faraway great power war.

The global economy may be disrupted by war, depending on who is involved, but even in the worst case, the costs would be manageable. Trade accounts for roughly 20 percent of the American economy,<sup>77</sup> and sudden, forced autarky would be devastating for American prosperity. But no great power war could come close to forcing American autarky: essentially all goods have substitute sources of supply at varying marginal increases in cost. Furthermore, wars never isolate the fighting countries completely from external trade. Some dislocation is a real possibility, but these short-term costs would not justify the risks of fighting a great power war.

The risk of nuclear escalation is a reason to worry about great power war, but it is a highly suspect reason to favor a military policy that puts U.S. forces between feuding great powers. Nuclear weapons may not be used in a future great power war; the fear of retaliation should breed great caution on the part of the belligerents.<sup>78</sup> But the larger point is that the *possibility* of a faraway nuclear exchange is precisely the reason that America should keep its military forces out of other country's disputes.<sup>79</sup> An Indo-Pakistani nuclear war would be a terrible thing, but it makes no sense to get in the middle. Distant wars would be costly, but not nearly as costly as the solution that selective engagers propose.

Five decades ago, America's leaders asked the people to defend the world from Soviet military power. Admirably, Americans rose to the occasion. But now they are being asked to shoulder a dangerous new burden: to protect the great powers from themselves. Before undertaking this costly and dangerous "social science experiment," Americans should look closely at the costs of engagement, the prospects for success, and the risks if things go awry. Careful comparison shows restraint to be the better strategy.

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77. Paul Krugman, "Competitiveness: A Dangerous Obsession," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994), p. 34.

78. There have been many wars involving nuclear armed countries since World War II, and none has resulted in nuclear use. Note also that Nazi Germany, a country obviously willing to take risks, never used its arsenal of chemical weapons against the Allies during World War II because it feared retaliation. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare*, Volume I: *The Rise of CB Weapons* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), pp. 314, 324-328.

79. Layne, "Less Is More," pp. 71-72.

## THE VALUE OF AMERICAN PRIMACY

A second argument against restraint says that the United States should exploit its huge advantages as the world's sole superpower to prevent any country from becoming a new rival. Advocates of primacy feel that the United States should lock in America's current hegemonic position by keeping down any prospective "number two."<sup>80</sup> They do not simply want the United States to maintain the world's biggest armed forces; this could be accomplished with half the current defense budget. Rather, they want to ensure that no country is even in the same league.<sup>81</sup> The United States should have the military power to go anywhere in the world and beat any army quickly and decisively. America should be so strong that neither its allies nor its adversaries even try to compete.<sup>82</sup> And it should exercise political leadership to enhance its current global hegemony and prevent the emergence of any challenger.<sup>83</sup>

We raise four major objections to primacy. First, America should try to avoid a new bipolar confrontation, but the simplest and surest way to do this is to come home. No aggressor can conquer America's allies and consolidate global industrial might, so the United States does not need to balance emerging

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80. See, for example, Samuel P. Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests," *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January/February 1991), pp. 3-17; Zalmay Khalilzad, "Losing the Moment? The United States and the World After the Cold War," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 87-107; Joshua Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership: A Challenge to Neo-isolationism* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1996); William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (July/August 1996), pp. 18-32; Charles Lane, "Habsburgism," *New Republic*, No. 4229 (February 5, 1996), p. 10. A draft of the Pentagon's Defense Planning Guidance for Fiscal Years 1994-99 echoed these views. See "Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: Prevent Re-Emergence of a New Rival," *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, p. 14.

81. One advocate even implies that the United States should annex Europe in order to deter or win a new Cold War with an Asian superpower. See Michael Lind, "Pax Atlantica: The Case for Euramerica," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 1-7.

82. Khalilzad, "Losing the Moment," pp. 101-103; Kristol and Kagan, "Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," p. 26.

83. This paper is about American military policy, so the group of primacy advocates to whom we respond are those who advocate military policies to counter the emergence of a new rival. On the other hand, Samuel Huntington proposes an economic strategy to maintain American primacy by spurring domestic savings and investment. We favor these policies because they would increase America's long-term prosperity, but we do not fear the security consequences of a united Europe or a richer Japan. Furthermore, we argue that the best way to implement Huntington's plan for economic growth would be to adopt a military policy of restraint. See Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests"; and Huntington, "Why Primacy Matters," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 68-83. For a lucid analysis of the exaggerated concerns of "primacists," see Robert Jervis, "International Primacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?" *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 52-67.

powers. America should “just say no” to future bipolar confrontations by adopting a policy of restraint.

Second, the general prescriptions of primacy are likely to cause the problems they are supposed to avoid. Primacy is designed to prevent the costs of a future bipolar confrontation, but primacy’s prescription is to pay those costs today.<sup>84</sup> America spends more today on defense than it did during most peacetime years of the Cold War, yet many advocates of primacy want to increase defense spending toward its Cold War peak.<sup>85</sup> Primacy advocates remember the military casualties of the Cold War’s confrontations, but their strategy would immediately involve the United States in disputes in the South China Sea, Eastern Ukraine, and Chechnya. It makes no sense to pay the costs of a new Cold War today—and into the indefinite future—to avoid the possibility of incurring these costs later.

Furthermore, primacy increases the chances of a full-fledged confrontation with a new rival. As things stand now, all of America’s potential competitors have other countries to worry about; they all live near one another and far from the United States. Number two, no matter who it is, has plenty of problems without American engagement. But by adopting a policy of confrontation, attempting to limit the economic and military power of Russia, China, Japan, and perhaps a united Europe, the United States would make itself these countries’ biggest problem—more powerful and threatening than their natural, geographic adversaries. Primacy is the surest recipe for starting bipolar military confrontation.

Our third objection to primacy has to do with the unspecified details of the policy. How, exactly, do advocates of primacy plan to use the military to prevent the growth of Chinese, Japanese, or European power? Recent changes in relative power have not resulted from military conquest but from domestic economic development. It is China’s high economic growth rate that suggests its potential as a twenty-first century superpower.<sup>86</sup> How will redoubled American defense spending prevent Chinese ascendance? Do advocates of

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84. Ronald Steel, “The Hard Questions: We’re Number One,” *New Republic*, No. 4260 (September 9, 1996), p. 35.

85. William Kristol and Robert Kagan assert that “no serious analyst of American military capabilities today doubts that the defense budget has been cut much too far,” but this overstates the case. Is it really self-evident that spending more than twice as much on defense as the Russians and the Chinese combined is inadequate? Kristol and Kagan, “Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” pp. 23–24.

86. James Shinn, “Introduction,” in James Shinn, ed., *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), pp. 7–8.

primacy intend to launch a preventive war against China, Japan, or Europe? If this is the plan, would the moral, human, and financial costs be justified by the desire to be number one? If this is not the plan, advocates of primacy should be more specific about which steps the United States should take to keep down number two.

Fourth, a policy of primacy, even without a preventive war, will breed anger and resentment around the world. It will turn allies into neutrals and neutrals into enemies. American culture, prominently represented by movies and television programs, is already eating away at traditional cultures around the world. English has become the universal language of business, science, entertainment, and diplomacy. American consumer products have become a part of daily life around the world, and high product standards, regulations, civil liberties, and political styles beckon all.<sup>87</sup> Even without a foreign policy of hegemony, the United States threatens those who hold power in much of the world.<sup>88</sup>

It is quite surprising that no coalition has banded together to balance against America's overwhelming power—a testimony to the trust that its defense-oriented foreign policy engendered among its Cold War allies.<sup>89</sup> A decision to consolidate American hegemony would undo that good will. Americans wonder today who the next threat to great power security may be. To the rest of the world, it may be becoming clear: the only country capable of threatening them is the United States.

#### THE DANGERS OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Some advocates of continued engagement argue that America should use its military to prevent hostile countries (e.g., Iran, Syria, and Libya) from developing nuclear weapons. These critics of restraint argue that, due to the nuclear revolution, the oceans grant less security than ever before; even poor faraway countries can do serious harm.<sup>90</sup> Counterproliferators conclude that today more than ever America needs to discourage proliferation by allies and adversaries.<sup>91</sup>

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87. David Vogel, *Trading Up: Consumer and Environmental Regulation in a Global Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

88. Ronald Steel, "When Worlds Collide," *New York Times*, July 21, 1996, Sec. 4, p. 15.

89. Christopher Layne describes what he sees as the beginning of coalitions to balance American military preponderance. See Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 33–39.

90. Adam Garfinkle, "Road Hogs," *The National Interest*, No. 44 (Summer 1996), p. 103.

91. U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Proliferation: Threat and Response* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, April, 1996), pp. 48–50, 52–54.

The spread of nuclear weapons to hostile countries is not good news. Certain countries may use nuclear weapons in irrational attacks on Americans or their friends. Accidental nuclear wars are not likely but are possible, especially if new nuclear states lack technical safeguards for their weapons. Continued military engagement, however, will not help stop proliferation to America's enemies.

In 1981 Israel attacked the Iraqi nuclear facilities near the city of Osirak, setting back the Iraqi nuclear program by at least a decade. The raid taught Iraq and other countries with nuclear ambitions an important lesson: nuclear weapons facilities must be hidden and dispersed. In the decade following the Israeli attack, Iraq rebuilt its nuclear weapons program, and efforts to hide its size and progress were very effective. In 1990, as American military planners designed the Gulf War air campaign, they knew of only two major Iraqi nuclear weapons facilities. In the months following the war, UN inspectors on the ground discovered sixteen additional major sites.<sup>92</sup> Until troops and inspectors were on the ground and searching warehouses, factories, and military installations for clandestine nuclear facilities, the world was almost completely in the dark about Iraq's weapons program.<sup>93</sup>

A military counterproliferation operation against a regional power with a dispersed, concealed weapons program would require weeks or months of ground operations. Stopping an Iranian weapons program, for example, would not be a precision strike. Iran's armed forces would have to be neutralized and its major military and industrial areas occupied. In other words, Iran would have to be conquered.

Counterproliferation operations would be long, complex, and costly, but more to the point, these operations would multiply, not reduce, the risk that America will be the target of nuclear attacks. The reason to attack an Iranian nuclear program is that Iran might, in some fit of irrationality, use nuclear weapons against the United States. But during an attack, Iran would be forced to defend itself. It would not face the difficulty of delivering a warhead against a distant U.S. homeland, because American troops would be on its shore. Even worse, the Iranian government might believe it had little to lose.

Nuclear proliferation among hostile states would not be a pleasant development, but an activist security policy does not reduce the danger. To the contrary,

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92. Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey: Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1993), p. 79.

93. David A. Kay, "Denial and Deception Practices of WMD Proliferators: Iraq and Beyond," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 85–106.

the best the United States may be able to do is to stay out of hostile countries' disputes and maintain a powerful nuclear deterrent. Fortunately, that is probably good enough. Military restraint would not increase the danger of rogue states developing nuclear weapons, because even an activist policy could not halt their efforts.

#### THE CHANCE TO SPREAD AMERICA'S VALUES

Another set of criticisms emphasizes less the problems restraint would create than the opportunities it would miss. Advocates of a "Wilsonian" foreign policy argue that the United States has a historic opportunity to make the world a better place.<sup>94</sup> Never before has the international environment been more conducive to an American foreign policy to promote democracy, end war, and reduce human suffering. The end of the Cold War has freed America of the constraints which, for fifty years, forced the choice of security over morality. Now, finally, the United States can refashion a better world.<sup>95</sup>

We agree with the premise of this argument: we would like democracy to flourish overseas, we prefer peace abroad to war, and we support human rights. Furthermore, we agree that U.S. foreign policy should promote these values. But we diverge from advocates of a Wilsonian foreign policy on the role of military force in achieving these objectives. The United States should reward liberal democracies with trade opportunities and sanction countries

94. Tony Smith, "A Wilsonian World," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 62-66.

95. According to Secretary of Defense William Perry, one of the foundations of U.S. national security strategy is to spread and consolidate democracy abroad. See William Perry, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1996), p. 2. For other supporters of spreading democracy, see Strobe Talbott, "Democracy and the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 6 (November/December 1996); Chester A. Crocker, "All Aid Is Political," *New York Times*, November 21, 1996, p. 29; J. Brian Atwood, "On the Right Path in Haiti," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1994, p. A27. For advocates of collective security, see Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 114-161; Kupchan and Kupchan, "The Promise of Collective Security," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 52-61; Carl Kaysen and George Rathjens, *Peace Operations by the United Nations: The Case for a Volunteer U.N. Military Force*, (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995); Morton H. Halperin and David J. Scheffer, *Self-Determination in the New World Order* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992), pp. 105-111. For advocates of interventions for humanitarian reasons, see James Turner Johnson, "Just War I: The Broken Tradition," *The National Interest*, No. 45 (Fall 1996), pp. 35-36; J. Bryan Hehir, "World of Fault Lines: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, Intervention," *Commonwealth*, Vol. 119 (September 25, 1992), pp. 8-9; Fouad Ajami, "Beyond Words: History Rewards the Aggressors," *New Republic*, No. 4203 (August 7, 1995), pp. 15-17; Charles A. Kupchan, "Reclaiming the Moral High Ground: What Does the West Stand for If It Does Nothing?" *Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 1995, p. M1; James A. Barry, "President Who 'Feels Others' Pain' Should Take Steps to Help Burundi," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 1996, p. 19.

that attack their neighbors or brutalize their citizens. But fighting overseas in the name of democracy, peace, and an end to human suffering would be dangerous and counterproductive.

Spreading liberal values abroad is an interest that many Americans share, but it is not a national security interest. We insist on maintaining the distinction between America's security at home and its values abroad for the same reason that advocates try to link them: genuine security concerns justify the sacrifice of many lives and much money. However, America's freedom from physical attack or coercion does not depend on peace in Africa, democracy in Latin America, or human rights in Cambodia. Advocates of "enlargement" who want to spread democracy connect their policy with security by noting that democracies tend not to fight each other.<sup>96</sup> More democracies means fewer potential adversaries. Supporters of collective security point out that an indivisible peace, by definition, leaves everyone safe. But while democracies are unlikely to fight the United States, even non-democracies tend not to be crazy enough to attack it. And while global peace would, by definition, mean peace for America, wars on distant continents will only threaten U.S. security if the United States travels overseas to join in. America's interest in democracy and peace is real, but it is unrelated to national security.

Even if democracy, peace, and human rights are not security interests of the United States, America should still use military force to achieve them if the costs were low, the gains were significant, and the alternatives were unsatisfying. However, none of these conditions is met. Spreading democracy will undermine local elites.<sup>97</sup> They will impugn America's global political ideals by attributing old imperialist motives. When they choose to fight back, the cost of combat may be horrendous.<sup>98</sup> Even very low levels of resistance might require

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96. For example, see Talbott, "Democracy and the National Interest," pp. 48–49.

97. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 7, 28–30; Anna Simons, "Shades of Somalia," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1996, p. C7. In Somalia, America's decision to impose democracy threatened the local warlords and encouraged them to resist.

98. See Michael T. Klare and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency, and Antiterrorism in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), especially chaps. 2, 5, 8, and 9, for a description of the difficulties of counterinsurgency operations. The case of Vietnam might overstate the damage that a weak country could inflict on the United States if America tried to force its social system on them, because the PRC and the Soviet Union played roles in the Vietnam War. But the point is that small countries do have the power to resist, and this resistance can be fierce and costly. See Alistair Horne, *Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), p. 538, for the costs of the Algerian civil war.

large peacekeeping forces and surprising financial expense.<sup>99</sup> Spreading democracy by military force would be very costly.

Even worse, there are good reasons to believe that a military crusade for democracy would fail. American wars in Southeast Asia turned out badly, and the United States could not bring democracy to the Somalis. Over the next few years we will know whether the operation in Haiti stabilized its electoral system, but the prospects are not bright.<sup>100</sup> Where democracy was successfully created—in Germany, Japan, and Italy—the United States had to conquer and occupy foreign territory, grant generous economic assistance, and defend the new governments from external threats.<sup>101</sup> Even American democracy took time to form, required a civil war to confirm, has involved much learning, and after two hundred years is still not perfect. The 10th Mountain Division could not have rewritten that American history, nor can it force the pace of other countries' evolution.

A minimalist version of enlargement does not seek to *expand* the reach of democracy forcibly but instead would defend those democracies that emerged on their own. This is the Brezhnev Doctrine in reverse: states that are authoritarian may become democratic, but democracies will not be allowed to go back. There are two problems with this doctrine. First, the distinction between creating democracies and defending them is more subtle than it might appear. Young democracies often face authoritarian coups.<sup>102</sup> Distinguishing between internal opposition and foreign subversion is not easy. Second, U.S. security guarantees might embolden new democracies to provoke their non-democratic neighbors. Liberalization in the Baltic states has not caused them to be cautious in their treatment of ethnic Russian nationals; a defense commitment from NATO, which some "enlargers" suggest, might further embolden them. The Bosnian Muslims hardened their demands toward their enemies as the United

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99. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements for Stability Operations." See Barry R. Posen, "A Balkan Vietnam Awaits 'Peacekeepers,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1993, p. B7, for an application of Quinlivan's force sizing methods to Bosnia. The cost of operations, even ones in which there is almost no resistance, can be substantial. Keeping twenty thousand troops in Bosnia for the past year had a price tag of more than \$3.5 billion. John Hillen, "Having It Both Ways on Defense," *Investors' Business Daily*, September 25, 1996, p. A2. Had there been resistance, the costs would have gone up substantially.

100. Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," p. 21.

101. Stephen Van Evera, presentation at the Joint MIT Defense and Arms Control Studies-Harvard Olin Institute for Strategic Studies Conference on Force Projection and Sustainment, March 23–24, 1995, summarized by Richard Wilcox, *Force Projection and Sustainment*, MIT DACS Working Paper, pp. 19–20.

102. Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," pp. 18–19, 34–35.

States became more committed to their side.<sup>103</sup> Pledging to support nascent democracies will not diffuse local tensions, but it may embroil the United States in guerrilla war.

Promoting global peace, like encouraging democracy, is a worthy goal for American foreign policy; unfortunately, a military policy to prevent wars, usually called collective security, would be too costly and too ineffective. A force structure that can back up a threat to oppose any aggression would have to be very large. The United States would need to prepare to fight many enemies at once, all around the world. Advocates of this policy might argue that prospective aggressors will soon abandon any expansive intentions, but no one knows how long this would take, how long it would last, and how many wars the United States would have to fight to establish and maintain its credibility. Committing the United States to oppose all aggression would require a force structure significantly bigger than the current one. The cost of this force has been estimated to be \$250–300 billion (in 1997 dollars), approximately \$150 billion higher per year than the cost of restraint.<sup>104</sup> That extra money simply equips U.S. forces and does not include the cost of operations.

The potential achievements of such a tremendous undertaking are easy to exaggerate. One benefit of collective security is that it would, if successful, reduce the number of wars in the third world where weak states are easy marks for their larger neighbors. Preventing these wars is simply a means toward achieving America's humanitarian goals and, as we argue below, is not worth the cost. The establishment of collective security arrangements to prevent wars in the first world might be more dependable than simply relying on balance of power,<sup>105</sup> but it does not require that the United States be part of those arrangements. As we argued above, no one can consolidate Eurasia, and America's allies can defend themselves. If they believe that the best way to protect themselves is to band together in a concert, then they should do so. But there is no reason that the United States should be involved in their collective security agreements, any more than it needs to be part of their balancing alliances.

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103. Walter Russell Mead, "On Bosnia—Don't Let Lloyd George Be a Guide," *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1995, p. M2; Ian Traynor, "Muslims Proffer Olive Branch to Avert Bloodshed in Serb Bastion," *The Guardian*, September 19, 1995, p. 2; Elaine Sciolino, Roger Cohen, and Stephen Engelberg, "In U.S. Eyes, 'Good' Muslims and 'Bad' Serbs Did a Switch," *New York Times*, November 23, 1995, p. A1.

104. Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," p. 30 and Table 2.

105. See Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "The Promise of Collective Security," pp. 52–61.

Finally, fighting to alleviate human suffering is a worthy but misguided goal. America should use some of its considerable power to make people around the world better off. But money spent for humanitarian missions will do far less good if it is spent on the military than if it is used for food, medicine, and disaster relief. Natural disasters do not fight back or interdict U.S. aid. Directing U.S. humanitarian aid efforts away from civil wars and toward combating disease and malnutrition will help people without challenging the power of foreign elites. Sometimes, the local elites will block even this type of aid,<sup>106</sup> but the United States will not soon run out of places in which aid would be welcomed.

In sum, there is no surer way to turn millions of America's admirers into America's opponents than to force an unfamiliar social system on them. The United States would be blamed if things went badly and resented even if they did not. Fighting against war everywhere makes no sense in the third world, and is unnecessary in the advanced industrial world where the other great powers are strong enough to defend themselves. Relieving human suffering with military interventions wastes dollars and lives; more good can be done with vaccines than bullets.

#### THE END OF ECONOMIC OPENNESS

A fifth notable argument against restraint is raised by those who believe that a military withdrawal from Europe and Asia would threaten American prosperity more than its security. Even if great power wars are unlikely, without a stabilizing American military presence other great powers may eye each other suspiciously, concern themselves with relative economic gains, and close off the free international flow of goods and capital.<sup>107</sup> This argument draws its roots from the literature on hegemonic stability, in which the reigning hegemon (i.e., the United States) must provide international collective goods in order to maintain an open international economic environment.<sup>108</sup> If the United States

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106. For example, in Bosnia the combatants blocked aid supplies to facilitate ethnic cleansing.

107. Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 30-42. Richard Rosecrance, "Post-Cold War U.S. National Interests and Priorities," in L. Benjamin Ederington and Michael J. Mazarr, eds., *Turning Point: The Gulf War and U.S. Military Strategy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 23-37, combines the argument linking American engagement and global economic growth with advocacy of American leadership of a collective security regime.

108. A classic statement is in Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939*, revised and enlarged edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Of course, many hegemonic stability theories have a declinist undertone—the hegemon suffers over time under the burden of providing the collective goods; however, others believe that the selective benefits that the hegemon derives from the open international economic environment are quite large. For example, Webb, "International Economic Structure," p. 342.

ceases to provide those collective goods, huge prosperity benefits might be at risk.

This line of argument is wrong for two reasons: multipolar security competition does not require a focus on relative gains in purely economic affairs, and international economic openness has not historically been maintained by the actions of hegemonies. First, among powers of approximately equal strength (as would be the case in Europe after an American withdrawal), the size of the relative economic gains from trade tends to be small compared to the size of the great power economies in question. Consequently, it would take a long time of static trade and alliance relationships for the relative economic gains to translate into a dangerous strategic imbalance. Meanwhile, there is no reason to believe that the trade and alliance relationships would remain static.<sup>109</sup> In fact, balance-of-threat theory suggests that, if an imbalance were to emerge, alliance relationships would change in response to the danger.

Furthermore, if great powers became concerned by their neighbors' military strength, they could not afford to waste national resources by distorting their pattern of trade. Protectionism costs money, and high levels of international threat tend to highlight wasteful policies whose reversal might lead to a greater power-generation capability.<sup>110</sup> Even if threatened states felt the need for economic closure with respect to a particular, threatening adversary for relative gains reasons, none would feel the need for protectionism *vis-à-vis* the United States. America would be likely to benefit from other countries' heightened desire to trade with the United States.

Finally, history does not confirm the hegemonic stability interpretation of the international economy. Most of the benefits of international openness are selective goods which the United States can capture through bilateral economic policies. For example, the spillover benefits of bilateral trade relationships helped reverse the worldwide economic decline of the 1930s—which the hegemonic stability theorists tend to cite as a crucial case for their theory.<sup>111</sup> The bottom line is that it is not American troops deployed overseas that make American products and services attractive to foreign consumers; it is the quality of American goods, the image of America's prosperity, and the productivity

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109. Peter Liberman, "Trading with the Enemy: Security and Relative Economic Gains," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Summer 1996), pp. 147–175.

110. For example, Joanne Gowa, *Closing the Gold Window* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 172 and 192, argues that Europeans' monetary policy in the 1960s was influenced by the Soviet threat, and the American decision to end the gold standard in the early 1970s was an effort to generate power.

111. Kenneth Oye, *Economic Discrimination and Political Exchange* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

of American workers. None of those factors would be affected by a policy of military restraint.

#### THE FUTILITY OF DISENGAGEMENT

The last major criticism of American military restraint denies that restraint is possible. According to this argument, big wars suck in powerful nations.<sup>112</sup> Twice in this century the United States tried to stay out of great power war in Europe, and both times it was pulled in. Trying to tie policymakers' hands by weakening U.S. military capabilities will only put America's eventual involvement on less favorable military terms.<sup>113</sup> The United States fielded small, unprepared armed forces in 1916, 1940, and 1950, but its weakness did not prevent its entrance into two world wars and the Korean conflict. History suggests that withdrawing from alliances and cutting forces will not keep the United States out of war; it will make these wars more likely and keep America ill prepared to fight.

This argument, however, relies on a selective view of history. Great power wars do not always suck in powerful countries. Neither the British nor the French were dragged into the Russo-Japanese War. The British stayed out of the Franco-Prussian War, and both the British and French stayed out of the Austro-Prussian war. The United States is not doomed by the laws of nature to go overseas and fight. In fact, the United States probably has more choice about the wars it fights than any other nation, because it does not share borders with other great powers.

Furthermore, it will be much easier to stay out of distant great power wars than it was in the past. First, the fact that no country can possibly unite the industrial resources of Eurasia eliminates America's traditional concern about the outcome of foreign wars.<sup>114</sup> Second, the potential costs of American intervention in an ongoing great power war have never been higher. Great power war has always been extremely costly, but nuclear weapons raise the potential costs of intervention immeasurably. A new war between Russia and Germany would be a tragedy, but the possibility of nuclear escalation would cool the enthusiasm of even the most committed American interventionists. Critics say that the United States is unable to stay out of big wars, but a thought experiment may shed a different light on this assertion. Would President Wilson have brought America into World War I if Germany had possessed a large nuclear

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112. See, for example, Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't," p. 9.

113. Mark Helprin, "Mr. Clinton's Foreign Policy," *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 1996, p. A10.

114. Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't," p. 9.

arsenal? Recall how hard it was to get America involved in World War II. The American people have a sense of the risks.

In sum, the United States is not inevitably drawn into foreign wars. If a future great power war erupts, there will be many powerful reasons to stay out. Rather than accept today's internationalist worldview as an unchangeable fact of life, Americans should reeducate themselves to the new strategic reality. In the late 1940s, America's leaders struggled to turn the American people away from their isolationist predispositions and contain Soviet expansionism. Today the challenge is to demonstrate that the world is safe for restraint.

### *When to Reengage*

Adopting a foreign policy of restraint should not commit the United States to isolation for all time. Just as it was right for America to defend its allies during the Cold War, it may eventually be right for the United States to seek new overseas alliances. Although the conditions are not likely to be realized any time soon, it is important to consider when the United States should reengage militarily.

Before America's core national interests can be threatened, three stringent conditions must be satisfied. First, an aggressive state must develop the conventional capabilities for rapid conquest of its neighbors. A slow conquest, even if successful, would tend to destroy many of the conquered states' economic assets<sup>115</sup> and impose high costs on the aggressor, ending its hegemonic aspirations.<sup>116</sup> Second, the aggressor state must threaten to bring together enough power after its conquests to either mount an attack across the oceans or threaten U.S. prosperity by denying America access to the global economy. At present, only Western Europe or East Asia united with Russia's resource wealth constitutes a sufficiently dangerous union to satisfy this condition.<sup>117</sup> That these are the same regions that George Kennan identified fifty years ago as the key to global power speaks volumes about the real pace of change in the international threat environment.

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115. Peter Liberman, "The Spoils of Conquest," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 125-153.

116. John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 63-66, 203, 208-212.

117. Although it is difficult to imagine the mechanics, an empire or alliance linking Western Europe and East Asia but excluding Russia would also consolidate dangerous quantities of industrial might.

Finally, any potential aggressor must solve the “nuclear problem.” In order to agglomerate the world’s power under one empire, a challenger would have to overcome the nuclear capabilities of other great powers: Russia would have to neutralize the British and French nuclear arsenals, if not a German arsenal as well; the Western European countries would face the overwhelming Russian nuclear force in addition to each other’s second-strike capabilities. If China were to develop power-projection forces, it would drive its powerful neighbors to nuclearize. The regions of the world that boast significant industrial potential are inhabited by nuclear and potentially nuclear regional powers. In the unlikely event that a potential hegemon solved the nuclear problem and returned the world to pre-World War II conditions in which hostile states could accumulate significant power through rapid conquest, the United States should not stand idly by. Then, it would be time to reengage.

An astute observer might notice that the stringent conditions we set for American engagement were not satisfied in the later years of the Cold War. Eric Nordlinger’s recent work, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, advances the classical isolationist view that America should not have engaged during the Cold War and did not even need to fight the Nazis in World War II.<sup>118</sup> Robert Art observes that by the 1970s, Western Europe had developed a secure nuclear second-strike capability in the form of French and British ballistic missile submarines; therefore, the “geostrategic logic” of accumulating power by conventional conquest no longer applied.<sup>119</sup> Why, then, was American engagement critical during the Cold War? It is here that our advocacy of “restraint” explicitly differs from the old isolationist logic.

First, we believe that had the United States left its NATO allies to defend themselves, the Soviet Union could have driven them into bankruptcy. The Soviets bankrupted themselves by trading long-run economic strength for short-run military power. Post-World War II Soviet military policy could only be sustained, it turned out, for about fifty years, after which time the resource allocation imbalance brought the economic system crashing down, destabilizing the political structure. In the meantime, however, even though the Western Europeans and Japanese were wealthier than the Soviets, they may not have been capable of generating enough short-term military power without exhausting themselves. U.S. withdrawal would have forced Western Europe and Japan

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118. Nordlinger does allow that there may have been a brief period just after World War II when limited aid to Western Europe was appropriate, but that window closed during the 1950s with European economic reconstruction.

119. See Art, “Defensible Defense.” We responded to Art’s specific security and non-security arguments for engagement in earlier sections.

to choose between accepting a dangerous military imbalance or matching the Soviets' reckless levels of defense spending and bankrupting themselves.

Second, we believe that a transition out of NATO during the Cold War would have been dangerous. Although now it makes sense to help Germany acquire nuclear weapons as the United States pulls out of NATO, such a move during the Cold War would have run the risks associated with proliferation during crisis.

Restraint is a robust policy. China can rise and fall; Russia can create and break alliances; Europe could unite or the EU could disintegrate—and still restraint would be best. Until three unlikely conditions are met—the growth of a regional power capable of quickly overwhelming its adversaries, the possibility that an aggressor could consolidate a large fraction of the world's industrial might, and the discovery of a solution to the nuclear problem—the United States need not re-engage.

### *Conclusion*

During the height of the Cold War, an admiral briefed the Army's War Plans Directorate on the strategic value of a big, powerful navy. After viewing slides depicting new Soviet warships, and hearing grave descriptions of the threats that the Soviet Navy posed to America's global interests, the admiral asked if there were any comments on the presentation. "Very interesting," one general told the Navy briefer, "but what you've just said is that if the Soviet navy sank tomorrow, we could do away with the U.S. Navy." The admiral disagreed. "If the Soviet navy sank tomorrow, I'd get me a new set of slides."<sup>120</sup>

Well, soon after this discussion the entire Soviet Union sank, and for the past six years the U.S. Armed Forces and the American foreign policy establishment have been scrambling to put together a new set of slides. The admiral was correct—if he is to justify America's continued role of global engagement, and argue for a defense budget three times as big as America's closest competitor, he will need a new threat or a fresh mission. Americans will have to be sold on some new, ambitious strategy—to prevent war everywhere, to make everyone democratic, or to keep everyone else down. But if Americans simply want to be free, enjoy peace, and concentrate more on the problems closer to home, the choice is clear: it is time to come home, America.

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120. Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., "A Bankrupt Military Strategy," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 263 (June 1989), p. 34.