Beyond bin Laden

Reshaping U.S. Foreign Policy

Stephen M. Walt

The terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center and damaged the Pentagon triggered the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of U.S. foreign policy.[1] On September 10, 2001, there was not the slightest hint that the United States was about to embark on an all-out campaign against "global terrorism." Indeed, apart from an explicit disdain for certain multilateral agreements and a fixation on missile defense, the foreign policy priorities of George W. Bush and his administration were not radically different from those of their predecessors. Bush had already endorsed continued NATO expansion, reluctantly agreed to keep U.S. troops in the Balkans, reaffirmed the existing policy of wary engagement with Russia and China, and called for further efforts to liberalize global markets. The administration's early attention focused primarily on domestic issues, and new international initiatives were notably absent.

This business-as-usual approach to foreign policy vanished on September 11. Instead of education reform and tax cuts, the war on terrorism dominated the administration's agenda. The United States quickly traced the attacks to al-Qaeda—the network of Islamic extremists led by Saudi exile Osama bin Laden—whose leaders had been operating from Afghanistan since 1996. When the Taliban government in Afghanistan rejected a U.S. ultimatum to turn over bin Laden, the United States began military efforts to eradicate al-Qaeda and

Stephen M. Walt is Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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1. Germany's decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917 brought the United States into World War I, but the United States had come close to war the previous year, and the submarine campaign was merely the final straw. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 was as shocking as were the events of September 11, but the United States and Japan were already on a collision course, and the attack merely facilitated President Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to enter the war. The Soviet testing of an atomic bomb in 1949 and the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 combined to trigger U.S. rearmament, but the basic architecture of containment was already in place when the Korean War broke out, and the U.S. response did not involve a complete reversal of policy. The most comparable event is the U.S. response to the fall of France in 1940, which reversed the tide of isolationism and began the movement toward entry into World War II.

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overthrow the Taliban itself.[2] The United States also began a sustained diplomatic campaign to enlist foreign help in rooting out any remaining terrorist organizations "with global reach." U.S. officials emphasized that this campaign would be prolonged and warned that military action against suspected terrorist networks might continue after the initial assault on al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts.[3]

This article analyzes how the campaign against global terrorism alters the broad agenda of U.S. foreign policy. I focus primarily on the diplomatic aspects of this campaign and do not address military strategy, homeland defense, or the need for improved intelligence in much detail. These issues are obviously important but lie outside the bounds this essay.

I proceed in three stages. The first section considers what the events of September 11 tell us about the U.S. position in the world and identifies four lessons that should inform U.S. policy in the future. The second section explores how the campaign on terrorism should alter the foreign policy agenda in the near-to-medium term: What new policies should the United States pursue, and what prior goals should be downgraded or abandoned? The third section addresses the long-term implications, focusing on whether the United States will be willing to accept the increased costs of its current policy of global engagement. I argue that this decision will depend in part on the success of the current campaign, but also on whether the United States can make its dominant global position more palatable to other countries.

What Did We Learn on September 11?

The attack on the United States did not alter every aspect of world politics, but it did underscore several aspects of U.S. foreign policy that have received insufficient attention in recent years. Understanding these lessons will be essential both to the immediate campaign against al-Qaeda and to any subsequent effort to reduce the overall danger from global terrorism.

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2. In an apparent effort to split the Taliban and to accommodate Pakistan's desire that any postwar Afghani regime be friendly to Pakistan, U.S. officials have indicated that "moderate" members of the current regime might be incorporated into a postwar coalition government. See "U.S. and Pakistan 'Share Afghan Goal,'" *BBC News Online/South Asia,* October 16, 2001, http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/english/world/south_asia; and "Afghan King Said to Agree to Role in Kabul for Taliban," *New York Times,* October 19, 2001, p. B4.

3. In a letter to the United Nations Security Council, U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte stated that the U.S. inquiry into the September 11 attacks was "in the early stages" and noted that "we may find that our self-defense requires further actions with respect to other organizations and other states." See Christopher S. Wren, "U.S. Advises U.N. Council More Strikes Could Come," *New York Times,* October 9, 2001, p. B5.

LESSON #1: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT COST-FREE

Since the early 1990s, U.S. leaders have acted as if the United States could pursue ambitious foreign policy goals without having to make significant sacrifices.[4] The public at large seems to have shared this view, to judge by the low importance it has attached to international issues since the 1980s.[5] With an economy that produces one-quarter of gross world product and defense spending equal to the next seven countries combined, and protected by two oceanic moats, it is not surprising that Americans thought they could act with relative impunity.

This sense of hubris grew with the U.S. victory in the Cold War and was reinforced even more by the record of the past ten years. Although U.S. military forces have been remarkably busy, the human and economic costs of these activities to the United States have been extraordinarily low. Casualties in the 1991 Persian Gulf War were far lower than expected, and the U.S. Air Force has patrolled the no-fly zone in Iraq and conducted intermittent bombing raids there for nearly a decade without losing a single plane. Subsequent U.S. interventions in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo led to fewer than fifty U.S. deaths (the greatest number of them in the ill-fated attempt to capture Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed). This record is an admirable military achievement, but it reinforced the belief that the United States could run the world without risking much of its own blood or treasure. Anti-American terrorists did stage several costly attacks on U.S. forces overseas (most recently the bombing of the USS *Cole* in October 2000), but previous attempts on U.S.

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4. Among other things, the United States has taken the following actions: (1) expanded the core alliances created during the Cold War, (2) fought a brief but intense war to liberate Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion of August 1990, (3) sought to compel Iraqi compliance with the UN weapons inspection regime through a combination of economic sanctions and coercive bombings, (4) intervened in civil conflicts in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Somalia, (5) attempted to broker a final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and (6) sought to foster a more liberal world economy through the creation of the World Trade Organization and the negotiation of the North American Free Trade Association.

5. According to a 1998 survey by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Americans did not place any foreign policy issue among the top-seven "biggest problems facing the nation." When Americans were asked to identify "two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today," the most common answer (at 21 percent) was "don't know." See John E. Rielly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1999* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), pp. 7–8; and James M. Lindsay, "The New Apathy," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 79, No. 5 (September/October 2000), pp. 2–8. Ole Holsti recently analyzed a diverse array of survey results and concluded that there is still broad public support for an active U.S. role in the world, but he also found "compelling evidence that foreign and defense policy have lost a good deal of their salience for the general public." See Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," in Robert J. Lieber, ed., *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the Twenty-first Century* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2001), p. 41.

soil failed to do extensive damage and probably contributed to the sense of complacency.[6] The 1990s was also a period of sustained economic growth, which reinforced U.S. self-confidence and made it easier to bear international burdens without feeling a fiscal pinch.[7]

On September 11, however, al-Qaeda demonstrated that the cost of U.S. global engagement was larger than Americans thought. Despite its overwhelming military superiority and robust economic strength, the United States turned out to be vulnerable after all. And the price tag could rise in the future, if al-Qaeda or other equally ruthless groups acquire even more lethal instruments (such as a nuclear weapon) or if the series of anthrax attacks that started in October 2001 are merely the beginning. Even if subsequent terrorist attacks are unsuccessful, the United States will have to pay additional costs to keep the danger at a tolerable level. The first lesson, therefore, is that the United States can no longer assume that it can wield global influence at little or no cost to itself.

LESSON #2: THE UNITED STATES IS LESS POPULAR THAN IT THINKS

Americans are prone to see their country as a "shining city on a hill" (as President Ronald Reagan liked to say) and often assume that other societies admire the United States and appreciate its global role. Yet both the September 11 attacks and the international response to them underscore the degree to which many people outside the United States are actually ambivalent about the U.S. position in the world. At one extreme, terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda are inspired by an intense antipathy toward the United States and its global dominance. Some of this antipathy arises from a particular vision of the United States as a corrupt and godless society, but it is also fueled by America's close relationship with Israel, its support for several conservative Arab regimes, and its seemingly endless conflict with Iraq. In the eyes of these radical anti-U.S.

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6. The February 1993 attempt to blow up the World Trade Center killed six people but did not bring down the buildings. Elementary blunders led to the rapid apprehension of several of the perpetrators, which may have caused the United States to underestimate the ability of similar groups to stage more sophisticated attacks.

7. Even sophisticated scholars of international politics succumbed to this optimistic vision of U.S. global dominance. Thus William C. Wohlforth argued that U.S. dominance was (1) a major cause of great power peace, (2) unlikely to provoke significant opposition, and (3) relatively easy to maintain. See Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5–41. Similarly, Joseph S. Nye's emphasis on America's "soft power" implied that the U.S. ability to shape the world was even greater than its material preponderance suggested. See Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). The recent growth of anti-U.S. attitudes has led Nye to qualify his views somewhat; see especially Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

extremists, the United States is a global bully whose interference in the Islamic world must be resisted by any means necessary.[8]

Although the vast majority of Arabs and Muslims reject al-Qaeda's methods, hostility toward the United States is widespread in the Arab and Islamic world. This phenomenon explains why Arab support for the war on terrorism has been relatively limited and why Afghanistan's neighbors have been reluctant to give the U.S. military forces unqualified access to their own territory.

Concerns about the U.S. role are not confined to the Arab or Islamic world, however. Throughout the 1990s, Russia, China, and India accused the United States of ignoring their interests and trying to impose its own preferences on the rest of the world.[9] Such worries led Russia and China to negotiate a friendship treaty in July 2001, which one Russian commentator described as an "act of friendship against America."[10] Even traditional U.S. allies have been concerned about the concentration of power in U.S. hands and Washington's penchant for unilateralism, and they have searched for ways to constrain U.S. freedom of action.[11] Although many of these countries appreciate the stabilizing effects of the global presence of the United States, they resent Washington's tendency to impose its will on others and worry that it will use its power unwisely.[12]

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8. See Fareed Zakaria, "Why Do They Hate Us?" *Newsweek,* October 15, 2001, pp. 22–40; Martin Davis, "Bin Laden, the Believer," *National Journal,* September 29, 2001, pp. 2982–2983; Roula Khalaf, "Why They Hate," *Financial Times,* October 5, 2001, p. 20; and David Gardner, "An Eye for an Eye for . . . " *Financial Times,* October 13, 2001, p. 1.

9. For example, the "National Security Blueprint" of the Russian Federation, published in January 2000, warned of "attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries in the international community, under U.S. leadership and designed for unilateral solutions (including the use of military force) to key issues in world politics." See "Russia's National Security Concept," *Arms Control Today,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (January/February 2000), p. 15; and Sergey M. Rogov, *The New Russian National Security Concept* (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, 2000).

10. See Patrick E. Tyler, "Russia and China Sign 'Friendship' Pact," *New York Times,* July 17, 2001, p. A1. For additional background on Russian and Chinese perceptions of the United States prior to September 11, see Celeste A. Wallander, "Wary of the West: Russian Security Policy at the Millennium," *Arms Control Today,* Vol. 30, No. 2 (March 2000), pp. 7–12; and David Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security," *International Security,* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000), pp. 52–79; and Lanxin Xiang, "Washington's Misguided China Policy," *Survival,* Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 7–23.

11. Thus, French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine famously described the United States as a "hyperpower" and stated that the "entire foreign policy of France . . . is aimed at making the world of tomorrow composed of several poles, not just one." German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also warned that the danger of "unilateralism" by the United States was "undeniable." Quoted in Craig R. Whitney, "NATO at Fifty: Is It a Misalliance?" *New York Times,* February 15, 1999, p. A7. See also Suzanne Daley, "Europe's Dim View of U.S. Is Evolving into Frank Hostility," *New York Times,* April 9, 2000, pp. A1, A8.

12. See Hubert Védrine with Dominique Moisi, *France in an Age of Globalization,* trans. Philip H. Gordon (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2001); Martin Walker, "What Europeans Think of America,"

These concerns did not vanish when the twin towers fell. Although the United States has enjoyed considerable international sympathy in the aftermath of the September attacks, international support has not been unconditional, and key U.S. allies have made it clear that they wanted the U.S. response to be restrained. U.S. allies were especially concerned that the United States would seize this opportunity to attack Iraq, and a group of heads of state from the European Union emphasized that the U.S. response would have to be "proportional." Similarly, the NATO decision to invoke Article 5 of the NATO treaty, thereby identifying the September 11 events as an attack on all NATO members, was accompanied by European insistence that the United States consult with its allies before taking action.[13]

This lesson also warns us not to exaggerate the depth of international support that the United States presently enjoys. Other states have backed the United States because they agree that terrorism is a threat and because Washington has made it clear that neutrality is not an option, but also because they see this crisis as an opportunity to advance their own interests. Thus, Russia has sought to strike a deal over missile defense and gain U.S. acquiescence to its own campaign against Islamic "terrorists" in Chechnya, Pakistan has gained important economic concessions, and Uzbekistan has bargained for a security guarantee. But support for U.S. policy in Afghanistan does not mean that other states are comfortable with U.S. power or that they agree with the United States on other issues.[14] If U.S. leaders assume that the current surge in international support will enable them to ignore the interests of other states in the future, they will squander the diplomatic capital that the United States now enjoys and increase the risk of a backlash when the immediate challenge recedes.

World Policy, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 26–38; François Heisbourg, "American Hegemony? Perceptions of the U.S. Abroad," *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Winter 1999–2000), pp. 5–19; Peter W. Rodman, *Drifting Apart? Trends in U.S.-European Relations*, (Washington, D.C.: Nixon Center, June 1999); and Peter W. Rodman, *Uneasy Giant: The Challenges to American Predominance* (Washington, D.C.: Nixon Center, 2000).

13. See Steven Erlanger, "So Far, Europe Breathes Easier over Free Hand Given the United States," *New York Times*, September 29, 2001, pp. B1, B6. Concern that allied participation might constrain its freedom of action led the Bush administration to declare that it welcomed allied support but intended to conduct military operations only in league with Great Britain. As one senior official put it, "The fewer people you have to rely on, the fewer permissions you have to get." Quoted in Elaine Sciolino and Steven Lee Meyers, "Bush Says 'Time Is Running Out'; U.S. Plans to Act Largely Alone," *New York Times*, October 7, 2001, p. A1; and Rebecca Johnson and Micah Zenko, "All Dressed Up and No Place to Go: Why NATO Should Be at the Front Lines of the War against Terrorism," November 2001, p. 3.

14. To note but one example, China remains unwilling to sign an agreement prohibiting the export of missile parts and missile-making technology, despite what one U.S. official called a "full court press" prior to the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference summit in Shanghai in October 2001. See

LESSON #3: FAILED STATES ARE A NATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEM

When governments collapse, the resulting anarchy often triggers large-scale migration, economic chaos, and mass violence. Although these effects often spread to neighboring countries, the challenge of "failed states" such as Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan has usually been seen as a humanitarian issue. As a result, international responses have generally been half-hearted and only partly successful.[15]

The attacks on September 11 demonstrate that failed states are more than a humanitarian tragedy; they can also be a major national security problem.[16] The Taliban government and the al-Qaeda movement arose from the protracted civil conflict within Afghanistan, and bin Laden has used failed states for refuge since the mid-1990s. Indeed, if Afghanistan had been governed by a more capable and moderate regime over the past decade, bin Laden would not have found sanctuary there, and the attacks on the United States might never have occurred.

The danger that some failed states pose also reminds us that unresolved conflicts are always a potential danger. Protracted conflicts generate hatred and the desire for revenge, foster the emergence of groups whose main aim is to wage war, and empower leaders who depend on a climate of fear to justify their own rule. These conditions provide ideal breeding grounds for precisely the sort of people who willingly engage in mass terror. The terrorist network that the United States now seeks to eradicate is a product of the protracted conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The September 11 attacks on the United States might never have occurred had these violent struggles been resolved. Thus, helping to settle protracted civil conflicts is not merely good for the world in general; it can also make the United States safer.[17]

Craig S. Smith, "Frustrating U.S., China Balks at Pact to Stem Missile Sales," *New York Times,* October 20, 2001, p. B4.

15. On the problems of failed states, see Robert I. Rotberg, ed., "Why States Fail (and How to Resuscitate Them)," 2001, unpublished ms.; and I. William Zartman, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

16. Recognizing this problem does not eliminate the need to make judgments about which failed states are potential threats to U.S. interests and which are not. The United States cannot rebuild every failed state, but the attacks on September 11 suggests that doing nothing will sometimes be costly.

17. There are trade-offs here as well, however. Trying to settle bitter civil conflicts is never easy, and getting involved can provoke intense and enduring resentments. A prudential rule would be to remain disengaged unless (1) vital U.S. interests are involved, and (2) U.S. leaders have a clear blueprint for resolving the conflict and restoring a workable government.

LESSON #4: THE UNITED STATES CANNOT "GO IT ALONE"

Finally, the U.S. response to the terrorist attacks is a forceful reminder that even a superpower needs support from other countries. During its first months in office, the Bush administration often acted as if the opinions of other countries did not matter very much, an attitude revealed by its uncompromising pursuit of missile defenses and brusque rejection of several prominent international conventions.[18] Although these policies led to widespread criticism at home and abroad, there was no sign that the Bush administration was rethinking its basic approach prior to September 11.

Once the United States was attacked, however, the Bush administration suddenly discovered that international support was indispensable. The military effort against al-Qaeda requires access to foreign territory and permission to use foreign airspace, and as discussed below, the campaign to dismantle far-flung terrorist networks cannot succeed without extensive and enduring support from many other countries. Broad international support also legitimates the use of force against al-Qaeda and the Taliban and reduces the tendency for others to see the United States as a trigger-happy imperial power.

The irony is obvious: A president whose initial approach to foreign policy was decidedly unilateralist is now being judged in large part on his ability to muster an unprecedented degree of international cooperation.[19] To its credit, the Bush team changed course rapidly and has done an excellent job of rounding up support from a diverse set of foreign powers. That support is likely to wane, however, if the fighting in Afghanistan drags on and if the United States cannot replace the Taliban with a viable ruling coalition. Indeed, keeping the coalition against terrorism intact will be a daunting challenge.

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18. In its first months in office, the Bush administration rejected the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the inspection protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, and forced the other participants to water down a UN agreement to limit the global trade in small arms. The administration also declared that it would not attempt to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty or the treaty to create an international criminal court, and reiterated U.S. opposition to the global ban on land mines.

19. As Secretary of State Colin Powell put it, "Nobody's calling us unilateral anymore. That's kind of gone away for the time being; we're so multilateral it keeps me up 24 hours a day checking on everybody." Quoted in Patrick E. Tyler, "Russia and U.S. Optimistic on Defense Issues," *New York Times,* October 19, 2001, pp. A1, B4. It remains to be seen whether this constitutes a true shift in approach or merely a tactical adjustment; for a skeptical forecast, see Steven E. Miller, "The End of Unilateralism? Or Unilateralism Redux?" *Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2001–2002).

Waging the War on Terrorism: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy

Although tragic in purely human terms, the losses that the United States has suffered to date have not affected its material position or its core national interests. The United States is still the leading economic and military power in the world, and the global consensus that terrorism is a serious problem may have enhanced U.S. influence in the short term. Basic U.S. foreign policy goals are also unaffected: The United States still wants to discourage security competition in Europe and Asia, prevent the emergence of hostile great powers, promote a more open world economy, inhibit the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and expand democracy and respect for human rights.[20] Even the new war on terrorism is not an entirely novel objective, insofar as the United States and al-Qaeda had already attacked each other on several occasions in the past.[21]

What has changed, of course, is the priority attached to these different goals. The campaign against global terrorism is now the central aim of U.S. foreign and defense policy, and other international goals will be subordinated to this broad objective.

In the short term, the campaign has two main objectives. The first goal is to eradicate al-Qaeda, both by attacking it in Afghanistan and by eliminating its cells in other countries. The second goal is to replace the Taliban government in Afghanistan, both to deny al-Qaeda a safe haven and to demonstrate to other governments what will happen to them if they permit attacks on the United States to be organized from their territory.[22]

Over the longer term, the United States must also take steps to ensure that new al-Qaedas do not emerge and make it more difficult for potential enemies to acquire even more lethal means (such as nuclear weapons). To achieve these

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20. These goals are enunciated in numerous official and unofficial statements, including William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 1997); *America's National Interests* (Cambridge, Mass.: Commission on America's National Interests, 2000); and George W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism," speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, November 19, 1999, http://www.georgewbush.com.

21. Al-Qaeda has been linked to the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the June 1996 bombing of a U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia, the August 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the October 2000 assault on USS *Cole.* The United States bombed al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan in August 1998 and has undertaken a host of other measures against al-Qaeda over the past five years. See Kenneth Katzman, *Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2001* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2001).

22. As of this writing, there is no convincing evidence linking any other governments to the September 11 attacks or the subsequent anthrax attacks in several U.S. cities. Obviously, if other states are found to have been involved in these operations, the focus of the U.S. campaign would shift.

ends, U.S. foreign policy must focus on (1) managing the antiterrorist coalition, (2) enhancing control over weapons of mass destruction, (3) reconstructing Afghanistan, and (4) rebuilding relations with the Arab and Islamic world.

MANAGING THE COALITION

As suggested above, the key to victory against global terrorism lies in the U.S. ability to create and sustain a broad international coalition. International support has been a prerequisite for military action against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but cooperation from other states is even more crucial to the effort to dismantle al-Qaeda's far-flung network of terrorist cells. Other states must be willing to share intelligence information with the United States; cooperate in exposing the covert money flows that nourish terrorist networks; and invest the time, resources, and political capital to suppress anti-American extremists within their own societies.

Unfortunately, keeping this coalition together will not be easy. Some Arab and Muslim states are already reluctant to cooperate with Washington, given their fears of domestic instability and the popular belief that the United States is insensitive to Arab and Muslim concerns. There are also serious rifts between some of the putative allies of the United States (most obviously in the simmering conflict between India and Pakistan), and these conflicts are certain to regain their salience as time goes on. History also warns that support for the campaign against terrorism is likely to fade with time, once the shock of the initial attacks wears off and as the costs of the campaign become more apparent. Even close U.S. allies may be tempted to pass the buck in the months ahead, especially if full compliance with U.S. requests requires real sacrifices.[23]

Given the importance of maintaining broad international support, the United States is likely to subordinate other foreign policy goals to the broader task of keeping its coalition intact. In the short-to-medium term, therefore, the following adjustments are in order.

First, the United States must continue its efforts to support Pervez Musharraf and his regime in Pakistan. This policy is necessary to facilitate the

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23. For example, some states will be unable or unwilling to comply fully with U.S. requests to clean up the secret bank accounts and covert money flows that nurture global terrorist networks, especially if this involves significant economic costs. On the difficulty of controlling these flows, see Tim Weiner and David Cay Johnston, "Roadblocks Cited in Effort to Trace Bin Laden's Money," *New York Times,* September 20, 2001, pp. A1, B2; Robert M. Morgenthau, "Cutting Off the Funds for Terror," *New York Times,* October 22, 2001, p. A21; Jimmy Burns, William Hall, Harvey Morris, and Richard Wolffe, "Huge Obstacles in Global Search for Terrorist Paper Trail," *Financial Times,* September 24, 2001, p. 6; and Hugh Williamson, "Global Financial Taskforce Needs Overhaul to Fight Terrorism," *Financial Times,* October 3, 2001, p. 4.

military campaign in Afghanistan, prepare the way for a successor regime in Kabul, and make sure that Islamic extremists do not overthrow Musharraf and gain access to Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Lifting sanctions and pledging new economic aid (including debt relief) was a good first step, but the United States should also take immediate action to open the U.S. market to Pakistani exports.[24] Pressing India to begin meaningful negotiations on Kashmir would also give Musharraf an immediate political boost and reduce Pakistan's interest in maintaining close ties with various Islamic extremists.[25]

Second, because the United States needs help from a number of states and groups with poor human rights records, including Uzbekistan and the Afghan Northern Alliance, the war on terrorism will require it to downgrade its concern for human rights temporarily. But Washington should make it clear to its new partners that it does not condone their past behavior and encourage them to improve these policies over time.

Third, this crisis also provides an ideal opportunity to improve relations with Russia. The United States has behaved with scant regard for Russia's concerns over the past decade, but it now needs Russian support on a variety of fronts. To get it, the Bush administration should either abandon the process of NATO expansion or pursue it in a way that is acceptable to Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently indicated that expansion might be acceptable under certain conditions, but it is still a red flag to many Russians and does little to further the antiterrorist campaign. At the very least, expansion should be conducted in a manner that takes due account of Russian sensitivities, possibly by opening the door to Russia's entry into NATO sooner rather than later. The United States should also follow a similar policy toward missile defense and move ahead only in the context of a mutually acceptable revision of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty. Improved relations with Moscow would also be furthered by continued efforts to stabilize the Russian economy and more generous support for cooperative denuclearization programs in Russia. The United States must also recognize that Russia is likely to regard a U.S. military presence in Central Asia with some misgivings, and reassure Moscow that it is not seeking a new sphere of influence in Russia's backyard.

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24. See Helene Cooper, "Pakistan's Textile Bind Presents Bush Team with a Tough Choice," *Wall Street Journal,* October 29, 2001, pp. A1, A8.

25. Pakistan has used Islamic guerrillas (including some Afghan *mujahideen*) to conduct an insurgency against Indian control of Kashmir. For background on this conflict, see Šumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," *International Security,* Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 76–107; and Raju G.C. Thomas, ed., *Perspectives on Kashmir: Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992).

Fourth, this crisis behooves the United States to keep relations with other major powers tranquil. China has tacitly supported the antiterrorist campaign (in part because it faces the threat of Islamic unrest in its western provinces) and has not tried to exploit the situation by raising other issues (such as Taiwan). Here the proper U.S. course is quiet diplomacy in Beijing and Taiwan, letting both parties know that any provocations would jeopardize future relations with the United States.

Finally, the United States would be wise to reciprocate the foreign support that it has recently sought by making some concessions of its own. Committing itself to a serious effort to negotiate a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol on global warming would be an ideal first step and would go a long way toward defusing lingering fears of U.S. unilateralism. Similarly, the United States could accelerate preparations for a new global trade round and declare that it was especially interested in lowering its barriers against exports from the developing world, even if this hurt some special interests at home. Such a step may be difficult to take in the midst of a global recession, but that is precisely when reducing obstacles to trade is most needed.

controlling weapons of mass destruction

The events of September 11 showed that international terrorists are more capable and ruthless than many experts had believed. Given their willingness to sacrifice themselves and their indifference to the killing of innocent people, the most ominous danger is the possibility that al-Qaeda or some like-minded group might acquire a weapon of mass destruction and use it to full effect.[26] Who can seriously doubt that bin Laden would love to get his hands on such a weapon, or that he would use it if he did?[27]

Reducing this threat requires a new effort to bring existing stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons under reliable control.[28] The most im-

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26. By confirming that some groups are willing and able to use biological agents, the series of anthrax attacks in several U.S. cities that started in October 2001 underscores the potential danger of this new form of terrorism. For background, see Jonathan B. Tucker, *Toxic Terror: Assessing the Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

27. In a 1999 interview, bin Laden stated that "it would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims. Hostility towards America is a religious duty and we hope to be rewarded for it by God." See "Interview with Bin Laden," *Time*, January 11, 1999. There is unconfirmed testimony from former bin Laden associates regarding his efforts to obtain nuclear materials. See Kimberly McCloud and Matthew Osborne, "Osama Bin Laden and WMD Terrorism," *CNS Reports* (Monterey, Calif.: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies, 2001), http://ww.cns.miis.edu/pub/reports/binladen.htm.

28. According to former Senator Sam Nunn, "our number one national security priority is to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorist groups." Quoted in Albert R. Hunt, "An

mediate and obvious risk is in Russia, whose vast arsenal of WMD remains under unacceptably loose supervision. There are also potentially dangerous stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological materials in many other countries, and some of these supplies are poorly monitored or protected. Thus, the effort to control Russia's "loose nukes" must be accompanied by a global campaign to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction from any other source.

To accomplish this vital task, the Bush administration should move swiftly to implement the recommendations of the January 2001 Baker-Cutler report on nonproliferation programs in Russia, and encourage Congress to fund the necessary programs much more generously than it has in the past.[29] Earlier efforts to denuclearize several post-Soviet republics and to establish reliable control over Russia's loose nukes did make real progress, but the overall effort has been hobbled by mismanagement, bureaucratic infighting, pork-barrel politics, and presidential and congressional fecklessness. Given the potential danger that these weapons would pose in the wrong hands, this half-hearted effort constitutes a dramatic policy failure.[30] Yet neither the Bush administration nor the U.S. Congress has yet shown that it appreciates the seriousness of this problem, despite the promises made during the 2000 presidential campaign and the wake-up call the United States received on September 11.[31] The administration should also help the Pakistanis secure their nuclear arsenal more reli-

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Accelerated Agenda for the Terrorism Threat," *Wall Street Journal,* October 25, 2001, p. A21. See also Graham T. Allison, "Could Worse Be Yet to Come?" *Economist,* November 1, 2001, pp. 19–21.

29. Among other things, the report recommends that the United States and Russia develop a strategic plan to "secure and/or neutralize in the next eight to ten years all nuclear weapons-usable material located in Russia"; appoint a senior official to manage the various programs; and accelerate joint efforts to manage, control, and account for nuclear materials. See Howard Baker and Lloyd Cutler, cochairs, *A Report Card on the Department of Energy's Nonproliferation Programs with Russia* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Energy, Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, January 10, 2001), http://www.hr.doe.gov/seab/rusrpt.pdf. For additional recommendations, see Matthew Bunn, *The Next Wave: Urgently Needed New Steps to Control Warheads and Fissile Material* (Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Managing the Atom Project, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2000).

30. Assessments of the various cooperative threat reduction efforts within the former Soviet Union include Matthew Bunn, Oleg Bukharin, and Kenneth Luongo, *Renewing the Partnership: Recommendations for Accelerated Action to Secure Nuclear Material in the Former Soviet Union* (Princeton, N.J.: Russian-American Nuclear Security Advisory Council, 2000); "Special Report: Assessing U.S. Non-Proliferation Assistance to the NIS," *Nonproliferation Review,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 55–124; Jason D. Ellis, *Defense by Other Means: The Politics of U.S.-NIS Threat Reduction and Nuclear Security Cooperation* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001); and Sam Nunn, chairman, *Managing the Global Nuclear Materials Threat: Policy Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000).

31. The Bush administration's initial list of priorities for spending the $40 billion in emergency funding authorized by Congress after the September 11 attacks did not include any money for ad-

ably, possibly by providing them with permissive action links and other technical measures to prevent unauthorized use.[32]

At the same time, the United States should recommit itself to the difficult but essential business of multilateral arms control. Other states will not accept new restrictions on their own conduct and new monitoring procedures over their stockpiles if the United States refuses to constrain its own behavior. The Bush administration should therefore reconsider its opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the inspections protocol of the Biological Weapons Convention, and immediately announce its desire to negotiate new arrangements to deny potential terrorists access to WMD materials.

Needless to say, this approach will require the Bush administration to abandon its aversion to arms control. But the administration has already shown an admirable ability to change course in other areas, and a direct attack on U.S. soil is the sort of event that inspires fresh thinking. Al-Qaeda's attack suggests that the threat of catastrophic terrorism is more serious than previously believed, which makes this an ideal time to launch a major effort to limit the danger from weapons of mass destruction. If the United States is serious about reducing the threat from global terrorism, a sustained effort to deny such groups access to truly fearsome weapons should be a key element of its strategy.

FIXING A FAILED STATE

As a candidate for president, George W. Bush repeatedly criticized the Clinton administration for its attempts at "nation building." Within a month of the attacks on the United States, however, the Bush administration was openly acknowledging that its campaign to topple the Taliban would have to be accompanied by a serious effort to create a viable Afghan government and rebuild this war-torn country.[33] Nation building, it seems, is not such a bad idea after all.

As discussed above, this shift in policy reflects both the lesson that failed states such as Afghanistan have been breeding grounds and safe havens for anti-American extremists and the knowledge that the United States is partly

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ditional WMD control efforts overseas. See *Supplemental Appropriations: How the Money Is Allocated* (Washington, D.C.: Council for a Livable World, 2001), http://www.clw.org/sept11/suppanalysis.html.

32. See Bruce G. Blair, "The Ultimate Hatred Is Nuclear," *New York Times,* October 22, 2001, p. A21.

33. See Robert Cottrell, Stephen Fidler, Richard McGregor, and Andrew Parker, "U.S. Expects Long-Term Role in Afghanistan," *Financial Times,* October 11, 2001, p. 1; and David E. Sanger, "A New, Uneasy Burden," *New York Times,* October 12, 2001, pp. A1, B2.

responsible for Afghanistan's current condition. The U.S. failure to rebuild Afghanistan after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal led to the progressive radicalization of Afghan society and the ultimate triumph of the Taliban.[34] If the United States repeats this error once the Taliban are defeated, new bin Ladens are more likely to emerge. To reduce the long-term threat from terrorism, in short, nation building in Afghanistan is an unavoidable responsibility.

rebuilding relations with the arab and islamic world

Arab and Islamic reaction to al-Qaeda's attack and to the initial U.S. military response highlights the degree to which the United States has become estranged from these societies. Although many Arab and Islamic leaders were quick to condemn the attack and to reject bin Laden's call for a new *jihad*, or holy war, Arab and Muslim opinion remains sharply critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East.[35] These attitudes make it more difficult for moderate Arab governments to support the war on terrorism and make it more likely that the U.S. campaign against al-Qaeda will create new sympathizers.

To make it less risky for Arab and Islamic governments to back the U.S. effort and to isolate anti-American extremists within the Islamic world, the United States will have to rebuild its relations with these societies. Over the long term, the United States cannot rely solely on the friendship of Arab governments; it must also improve its image with the broader population.

The obvious first step—which the Bush administration has been inching toward—is to take a less one-sided approach to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The United States is not as reflexively pro-Israel as many Arabs believe, but its policies in the past have not been evenhanded. While reaffirming its unshakable commitment to Israel's security within its pre-1967 borders, therefore, the United States should make it clear that it is dead-set against Israel's expansionist settlements policy and does not think that this

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34. As Ahmed Rashid wrote well before the September 11 attacks: "By walking away from Afghanistan as early as it did, the USA faced within a few years dead diplomats, destroyed embassies, bombs in New York and cheap heroin on its streets. . . . In the 1980s the USA was prepared 'to fight to the last Afghan' to get even with the Soviet Union, but when the Soviets left, Washington was not prepared to help bring peace or feed a hungry people." See Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 209 and chap. 13.

35. Meeting in Qatar on October 10, 2001, the Organization of the Islamic Conference "strongly condemned the brutal terror and expressed its condolences to the U.S. people and the families of the victims." But it also declared that "international initiative toward achieving security and stability . . . must include the achievement of security and justice for the Palestinian people." See "Final Communiqué of the Ninth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference and Foreign Ministers," Doha, Qatar, October 10, 2001, http://www.oic-oci.org.

policy is in the long-term interests of the United States or Israel.[36] The United States should also clarify its position on the requirements for a Palestinian state and emphasize that a viable state will require Israel to offer more generous terms than it proposed at Camp David in September 2000. Specifically, Israel should offer to withdraw from virtually all territories it occupied in June 1967 in exchange for full peace.[37] The aborted Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Taba in January 2001 showed that there was still some chance for a final deal, but the progress achieved there proved to be tragically late.[38]

Adjusting the U.S. position will require careful and deft diplomacy, so that Washington does not appear to be backing down to terrorist pressure and does not sacrifice important national values. Among other things, the United States should point out that U.S. leaders supported the creation of a Palestinian state

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36. Israel is far more secure now than it was when it occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967, and its continued occupation of these territories is the primary source of the lingering dangers that it faces. In 1967 Israel's defense spending was less than half the combined defense expenditures of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria; today Israel's defense expenditures are 30 percent larger than the combined defense spending of these four Arab states. Several of Israel's adversaries had strong support from the Soviet Union in 1967, but the Soviet Union no longer exists, and Israel's ties to the United States are far more extensive today. Israel had no nuclear weapons in 1967 but has a substantial (albeit undeclared) nuclear arsenal today. Within its pre-1967 borders, in short, Israel is more secure than it has ever been. By continuing to occupy the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, however, Israel further inflames Arab opinion and forces Israelis and Palestinians to live together, thereby facilitating the low-level violence that has been occurring since the collapse of the Oslo peace process. In short, Israel's presence outside the Green Line now reduces its security, and the costs of denying the Palestinians a viable state of their own have never been greater. The above figures on defense spending are drawn from *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1966–1975* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1976); and *The Military Balance, 2000–2001* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001). See also Shai Feldman, "Middle East Strategic Assessment," in Feldman and Yiftah Shapir, eds., *The Middle East Military Balance, 2000–2001* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 15–79, especially pp. 63–71.

37. Israel did make important concessions at Camp David, but their actual significance depends on the baseline from which they are compared. Israel's final offer would have entailed the annexation of 8–9 percent of the occupied territories (mostly to accommodate its illegal settlements), and the Palestinians would have ended up with only some 22 percent of the territory of pre-1947 Palestine—hardly a generous outcome. Furthermore, the Israeli proposals would have created a Palestinian state that was bisected by several Israeli-controlled corridors. These arrangements would have left the new state in a condition of permanent vulnerability and forced Palestinians to endure the humiliation of passing through Israeli checkpoints in order to travel within their own country. The failure of the post-Oslo peace process is not due solely to Israeli intransigence, however; for an evenhanded analysis by an Israeli participant, see Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?" *Survival,* Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 31–45.

38. For a summary of these negotiations, see "Deconstructing the Taba Talks," *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories,* Vol. 11, No. 2 (March/April 2001), pp. 4, 7, published by the Foundation for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C. As Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba," pp. 44–45, observes, "The Taba negotiations . . . proved that a Permanent Status Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was within reach. The distance between the two sides narrowed during the last week at Taba, and the climate of the discussions was reminiscent of the approach adopted during the Oslo talks. This led to dramatic progress on almost all the most important issues."

well before the September 11 attacks and emphasize that the Clinton administration went to considerable effort to bring such a state into existence. To restart the peace process itself, the United States should press Israel to accept the recommendations of the Mitchell Commission (including a complete halt to additional Israeli settlements), and encourage both sides to resume talks at the point where they were broken off in January 2001.[39]

Given the recent violence and especially the reciprocal assassinations of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in the fall of 2001, these measures are unlikely to yield an immediate agreement by themselves. But they would remove a major irritant between the United States and the Arab world and dilute one of the extremists' main charges against the United States.[40] And because it will take time to erase the negative image that is now deeply etched in the minds of Arabs and Muslims, the United States cannot simply issue a few presidential statements and then revert to its previous policies. Rather, it will have to take a principled position and stick with it through what is likely to be a long and contentious process.

Adjusting the U.S. stance in the Middle East should also include a reassessment of U.S. relations with certain Arab governments. To preserve access to oil at affordable prices, the United States has long supported traditional monarchies such as Saudi Arabia despite their financial support to Islamic radicals, their domestic fragility, and their reluctance to support U.S. diplomatic efforts openly. Concern for oil supplies has also made the United States reluctant to encourage greater pluralism within these societies, thereby increasing the danger that these societies will turn against the United States should the existing order collapse. Over time, the United States should strive to reduce its military presence in the Persian Gulf and encourage these regimes to open the doors to greater political participation. The United States should also stop regarding the Islamic world as a "democracy-free zone" where Islamist movements are consistently barred from meaningful political participation. If Islamist groups can-

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39. Israel and the Palestinians will also have to reach an agreement on the right of displaced Palestinians to return to their homes. Allowing this right to be exercised in its entirety would threaten Israel's viability and is obviously infeasible, but the Palestinians have made it clear that the basic principle is an essential issue of justice. A possible solution would be for the two sides to acknowledge the "right" of return, while the Palestinians agree to forgo exercising that right in exchange for compensation. The United States could then organize and help finance a generous program of reconstruction assistance, which would be understood to end all subsequent claims for the physical return of Palestinians to what is now Israeli territory.

40. Such a shift will undoubtedly make U.S. supporters of Israel uneasy. But the time has come to recognize that it is in neither Israel's nor America's interest for the United States to be estranged from the Arab and Islamic worlds. Americans and Israelis should also recognize that denying the Palestinians their legitimate rights has not made Israel safer.

not participate openly in politics, they will be driven to adopt violent and radical methods. If allowed to participate along with other social groups, however, they are more likely to become a constructive force within these societies.[41] Such a policy has risks, of course, but so does U.S. single-minded dependence on a set of fragile and unreliable autocrats.

Finally, the United States needs to enhance its ability to communicate directly with Arab and Muslim communities around the world. Arab and Islamic hatred is partly a reaction to specific U.S. actions, but it is also fueled by a combination of myths and accusations promoted by anti-American groups and governments.[42] For example, many Arabs believe that U.S. sanctions against Iraq are responsible for the deaths of thousands of Iraqis (many of them children), unaware that these deaths are actually due to Saddam Hussein's ruthless refusal to use the UN oil-for-food program from 1991 to 1996 and his subsequent abuses of that program. Similarly, the United States gets little credit for its efforts to help the Muslim populations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, and northern Iraq, or for its stewardship of the peace process between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians. It will do little good to adjust U.S. policies in this region if these shifts are ignored or misunderstood by the hearts and minds that the United States is trying to reach.

To overcome this problem, the United States must launch a broad-based public information campaign, using every instrument and channel at its disposal.[43] It must train a cadre of diplomats and spokespeople who can speak to these societies effectively, and make them readily available to media outlets such as al-Jazeera (the Qatari-based news network that reaches 35 million viewers in the Arab world).[44] The United States should also expand its own Arabic-language broadcast activities in this region, so that local populations

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41. On this point, see Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 373–387; and Yaroslav Trofimov, "Bahrain's Bold Rebuff to Its Islamic Rebels: Democracy and Rights," *Wall Street Journal*, October 25, 2001, pp. A1, A10.

42. See Roula Khalaf and Gerard Baker, "A Different Script," *Financial Times*, October 13–14, 2001, p. 9.

43. As former UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke recently put it, "Incredible as it seems, . . . a mass murderer seems to be winning the fight for the hearts and minds of the Muslim world." If this persists, he warned, the United States could "win the battle but lose the war." See Hunt, "An Accelerated Agenda for the Terrorism Threat."

44. In the first months after the September 11 attacks, only two U.S. officials (Secretary of State Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice) gave interviews to al-Jazeera. Given the critical importance of persuading the Arab world that the U.S. cause is just, this minimal effort testifies to the low priority that the United States has attached to public diplomacy in this region. The U.S. government has recently increased its efforts in this regard, but has a long period of neglect to overcome.

are not as dependent on official sources, and develop Arabic-language web sites to reach the growing internet-savvy populations in these countries. This does not mean simply purveying pro-U.S. propaganda (which would probably be discounted); it means monitoring what foreign populations are being told and providing them with the information they need to form accurate judgments for themselves.

A FINAL RISK

The agenda outlined above is obviously ambitious. To support its military operations in Afghanistan (and possibly elsewhere), the United States has taken on new security obligations in Pakistan and Uzbekistan. To keep the coalition together and rebuild relations with the Arab world, the United States will have to convince both Israel and the Palestinians to make additional concessions after a year of bloody violence. To stabilize the Musharraf government and encourage it to sever its ties to Islamic extremists, Washington will have to provide it with economic aid and press for genuine negotiations on Kashmir, a dispute that has defied resolution for more than half a century. Once its efforts to topple the Taliban succeed, the United States must then take on the challenge of nation building in an impoverished region where it has little background or prior experience. Efforts to cut off the financial flows that sustain terrorism will require continued pressure on other governments and overseas financial institutions. Keeping weapons of mass destruction out of terrorist hands will take a protracted diplomatic campaign and many difficult compromises. Accomplishing any one of these goals would be difficult, and to advocate the entire agenda may seem wildly utopian. Yet these measures are all consistent with the stated aim of reducing the danger from global terrorism, and they provide a set of benchmarks by which to judge the U.S. performance in the future.

There is a final danger, however. By requiring the United States to become even more forcefully engaged around the world, and especially in the Middle East and Central Asia, the effort to combat global terrorism is likely to reinforce the fears and resentment that gave rise to al-Qaeda in the first place. The longer this effort takes, and the more it requires the United States to interfere in other countries' business, the greater the chance of a hostile backlash later on.[45] This risk raises the final issue: Can these policies be sustained over the longer term?

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45. For an insightful and provocative analysis of this phenomenon, see Chalmers A. Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan, 2000).

The Next Debate: Engagement or Retrenchment?

Public debate on the central principles of U.S. foreign policy has been muted since September 11. Disagreements have emerged over the best way to respond to the immediate threat, but few Americans have questioned the need for a vigorous response or called for a more far-reaching reassessment of the U.S. role in the world. As the campaign proceeds, however, these more fundamental issues are likely to resurface and could rekindle a long-dormant debate on U.S. grand strategy.

The central issue is whether the United States should continue to maintain its current array of global military commitments—and especially its large forward military presence—or move back to its earlier position as an "offshore balancer."[46] For the past fifty years, the United States has maintained large military forces in Europe and Asia and been actively engaged in virtually every corner of the world. This policy originated in the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union, and it has been sustained by the belief that U.S. engagement helps keep the peace in Europe and Asia, encourages the spread of liberal values, and facilitates the maintenance of an open world economy. This belief explains why the United States did not liquidate its Cold War alliances after the Soviet Union collapsed, and eventually took on additional commitments in Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Persian Gulf.

As already discussed, it is increasingly clear that this policy entails significantly greater costs than Americans have thought. In addition to the lives already lost and the need to devote greater resources to homeland defense, the international campaign against global terrorism is forcing the United States to shoulder a breathtaking array of international burdens. As the campaign against terrorism unfolds, Americans are likely to ask whether all this effort is really worth it. And if the threat from global terrorism is at least partly a reaction to the looming global presence of the United States, then some Americans are likely to ask if the danger might also be reduced if it were not as visibly and actively engaged in trying to run the world. These voices will be muted if the current campaign continues to go well, and if the short-term costs

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46. For representative statements of these two positions, see Robert J. Art, *Selective Engagement: American Grand Strategy and World Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming); Nye, *Bound to Lead;* Nye, *Paradox of American Power;* John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security,* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1997), pp. 86–124; and Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security,* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), pp. 5–48.

are not too great. If it goes poorly, however, and if groups such as al-Qaeda prove to be more resilient and effective than expected, pressure to retrench is likely to increase.

What does this mean for U.S. foreign policy? It means that the ability of the United States to remain actively engaged at an acceptable cost will depend in large part on whether it can reduce these costs by making its dominant position more acceptable to the rest of the world. Over the long term, what changes in policy and attitude does this imply?

First, the United States should rely more heavily on multilateral institutions, even if this policy reduces its freedom of action in the short term. Institutions are useful not because they are powerful restraints on state behavior (they are not), but because they diffuse responsibility for international intervention and thus reduce the risk of an anti-American backlash. U.S. critics of the UN and other multilateral institutions have mistakenly focused on the restrictions that these institutions might impose, and they have ignored how these institutions make it easier for the United States to achieve its goals without provoking unnecessary foreign resentment.

Second, the United States must act with greater forbearance and generosity in its dealings with other states. The United States enjoys enormous wealth and power and a favorable geopolitical position. It is only natural that other states resent its good fortune, and especially when it appears overweening, self-congratulatory, or selfish. When President Bush explains his rejection of the Kyoto Protocol by saying he was not going to do anything that might hurt American workers, or when the United States rejects useful arms control treaties to appease special interests at home, the United States appears both selfish and short-sighted. When Washington caves in to domestic lobbies and reneges on its earlier pledges to phase out restrictions on textile imports (which make it more difficult for poor countries to develop), it is being both fickle and irresponsible. If the United States wants to make its position of primacy more palatable to others, in short, it will have to use its wealth and power in ways that serve the interests of others as well as its own.[47]

Finally, the United States should begin to devolve responsibility for regional security onto other countries or regional associations and gradually reduce its

47. The obvious precedent is U.S. behavior after World War II, when the United States helped rebuild Europe and Asia (including its former enemies) and worked to create a number of enduring international institutions. These steps were clearly in the U.S. national interest, but they were also farsighted and generous acts. On the historical precedent, see John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace: America and World Order in the New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), especially chap. 2.

forward military presence. There were some indications that the Bush administration intended to move in this direction before September 11, and there have been a few hints that it will resume this course once the current crisis is over.[48] For example, the demands of the war in Afghanistan may provide the pretext for removing U.S. troops from the Balkans, and they are unlikely to go back when the crisis is over. In effect, this step means that the United States will be turning responsibility for Europe's security back to the Europeans.[49] The United States will not retreat into isolationism but will try to reduce global resentment by shrinking its forward military presence and allowing other states greater freedom to chart their own course. This process will be a gradual one, but it is a logical long-term response to the new structure of world politics.

Conclusion

Dealing with the world in the manner just described will require a level of foresight, restraint, and maturity that has rarely been evident in the recent conduct of U.S. foreign policy.[50] If the United States wants to make its privileged position palatable to others, the American body politic must acquire a more serious and disciplined attitude toward the management of international affairs. In the past, seemingly secure behind its nuclear deterrent and oceanic moats, and possessing unmatched economic and military power, the United States has allowed its foreign policy to be distorted by partisan sniping, hijacked by foreign lobbyists and narrow domestic special interests, and held hostage by irresponsible and xenophobic members of Congress. Despite its pretensions as the world's only superpower, the United States has starved its intelligence services, gutted its international affairs budget, done little to attract the ablest members of its society to government service, neglected the study of foreign

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48. See Greg Jaffe, "Rumsfeld Aides Seek Deep Personnel Cuts in Armed Forces to Pay for New Weaponry," *Wall Street Journal,* August 8, 2001, p. A3; Lisa Burgess, "Review Suggests Making Military Leaner, More Mobile to Face Changing Threats," *Stars and Stripes,* June 24, 2001; and James Dao, "Americans Plead to Remain in Bosnia," *New York Times,* October 22, 2001, p. B3.

49. Indeed, the administration's decision to minimize NATO's role in the war in Afghanistan suggests that NATO is continuing to evolve from a military alliance into a loose political association. This process will also make it easier to accommodate Russia in the future, which may explain why President Putin no longer opposes NATO expansion strenuously. See James Kurth, "The Next NATO: Building an American Commonwealth of Nations," *National Interest,* No. 65 (Fall 2001), pp. 5–16.

50. For an extended argument along similar lines, see Henry A. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

languages and cultures, and basically behaved as though it simply did not matter if U.S. foreign policy were well run or not.[51] If al-Qaeda's horrible act convinces the United States that it is finally time to grow up and take the business of being a great power seriously, then the people bin Laden's minions killed will not have died in vain.

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51. By way of illustration, nonmilitary spending on international affairs (State Department, foreign aid, United Nations, information programs, etc.) has declined 20 percent in real terms since 1986. The United States spent 1.0 percent of gross domestic product on these programs in 1962, but only 0.2 percent of GDP in 2000. These are not the budgetary priorities of a great power that is really serious about how it conducts diplomacy. See Robert J. Lieber, "Three Propositions About America's World Role," in Lieber, *Eagle Rules,* p. 10.