

**AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY AFTER 9/11:  
AN ASSESSMENT**

**Stephen D. Biddle**

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## FOREWORD

Grand strategic choices are among the most important decisions senior leaders must make. Getting grand strategy right is fundamental to success in the Global War on Terrorism. This monograph assesses the grand strategic choices presented to the United States since 2001, by evaluating their ability to serve our basic national security interests in a post-September 11, 2001 (9/11), world, and by identifying implications for American policy in the coming years.

The author, Dr. Stephen Biddle, argues that some of the most important of these choices have yet to be made. Policymakers must arrive at a clear definition of the enemy and the aim in the War on Terrorism; to date, American policy has combined ambitious public statements with ambiguity on critical particulars. The ongoing insurgency in Iraq is increasing the costs of grand strategic ambiguity to the point where fundamental choices can no longer be deferred.

The author goes on to present and evaluate two broad alternatives for resolving these ambiguities and creating a coherent and logically sufficient grand strategy: rollback and containment. Rollback would retain the ambitious goals implicit in today's declaratory policy and accept the cost and near-term risk inherent in pursuing them. Containment would settle for more modest goals in exchange for lower costs and lower near-term risks. Neither alternative dominates the other on analytical grounds—both involve serious costs as well as benefits. Most important, the choice between them turns on a series of basic value judgments on the acceptability of risk, the relationship between near-term and long-term risk, and the ultimate degree of security the Nation should seek.

These value judgments are political, not analytical, questions: none can be resolved by analysis alone. Rather than usurping the responsibility of policymakers, the monograph seeks instead to show that a painful choice between competing values is increasingly necessary—to illuminate the respective strengths and weaknesses of the key alternatives for the benefit of those who must choose.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on this important subject.



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STEPHEN D. BIDDLE is Associate Professor of National Security Studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI). Before joining SSI in June 2001, he was a member of the political science faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has held research positions at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) in Alexandria, Virginia; the Harvard University Center for Science and International Affairs (CSIA); and the Kennedy School of Government's Office of National Security Programs; and holds an appointment as Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. Dr. Biddle has presented testimony before congressional committees on Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, conventional net assessment, and arms control; served as U.S. Representative to the NATO Defense Research Group study on Stable Defense; served as a member of the Defense Department Senior Advisory Group on Homeland Defense; and is co-director of the Columbia University Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy (SWAMOS). He is the author of *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, (Princeton University Press, 2004). His other publications include articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *International Security*, *Survival*, *The Journal of Politics*, *Security Studies*, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Defense Analysis*, and *Military Operations Research*; shorter pieces on military topics in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Orbis*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, and *Defense News*; various chapters in edited volumes; and 26 IDA, SSI, and NATO reports. His research has won Barchi, Rist, and Impact Prizes from the Military Operations Research Society. Dr. Biddle holds AB (1981), MPP (1985), and Ph.D. (Public Policy, 1992) degrees, all from Harvard University.

## SUMMARY

“Grand strategy” integrates military, political, and economic means to pursue states’ ultimate objectives in the international system. American grand strategy had been in a state of flux prior to 2001, as containment of the Soviet Union gave way to a wider range of apparently lesser challenges. The 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade towers, however, transformed the grand strategy debate and led to a sweeping reevaluation of American security policy. It may still be too early to expect this reevaluation to have produced a complete or final response to 9/11—policies as complex as national grand strategy do not change overnight. But after 3 years of sustained debate and adaptation, it is reasonable to ask what this process has produced so far, and how well the results to date serve American interests.

The author argues that, heretofore, the grand strategic response to 9/11 has combined ambitious public statements with vague particulars as to the scope of the threat and the end state to be sought. This combination of ambition and ambiguity creates important but unresolved tensions in American strategy. If the costs are low enough, these tensions are tolerable: the United States can avoid making hard choices and instead pursue ill-defined goals with limited penalties. But the higher the cost, the harder this becomes. And the costs are rising rapidly with the ongoing insurgency in Iraq. Eventually something will have to give—the ambiguity in today’s grand strategy is fast becoming intolerable.

There are two broad alternatives for resolving these ambiguities and creating a coherent strategy: rollback and containment. Rollback would retain the ambitious goals implicit in today’s declaratory policy and accept the cost and near-term risk inherent in pursuing them. These costs include a redoubled commitment to nation building in Iraq and elsewhere, accelerated onset of great power competition, heightened incentives for proliferation, and hence an increased risk of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) use by terrorists in the near term. But in exchange, it offers the mid-term possibility of rolling the terrorist threat, and hence the ultimate danger of WMD use, back to a level below the severity of September 10, 2001. By contrast, containment would settle for more modest goals in exchange for lower costs and lower near-term risks. In particular, it would permit America to withdraw from nation building in the Mideast, it would slow the onset of great power competition, and it would moderate the risk of near-term WMD terrorism. But this retrenchment would leave the underlying causes of Islamist terror unassailed, and would therefore accept a persistent risk of major terrorist attack for the indefinite future.

And it could never eliminate entirely the risk of those terrorists acquiring WMD; though it might reduce the probability per unit time, by extending the duration of the conflict indefinitely it could ultimately increase, not decrease, the odds of WMD use on American soil in the longer term.

Neither alternative dominates the other on analytical grounds. Both involve serious costs as well as benefits. And to resolve these costs and benefits requires at least two critical value judgments. Is accepting near-term risk for a long-term payoff preferable to the opposite? Rollback tolerates higher risk in the near term for a possibly lower cumulative risk in the longer term; containment reduces near-term risks but may increase them in the longer term. And is high payoff at high risk preferable to a sure thing for a smaller payoff? Rollback swings for the fences (it pursues something closer to absolute security) at the risk of striking out (catastrophe if we fail); containment ensures contact with the ball (lower risk of catastrophic failure), but promises only singles in return (it cannot eliminate the threat of terror). Neither question is analytically resolvable: the answers turn on value judgments, not analytical findings.

But though neither is analytically superior, either is defensible—either one could, in principle, provide a coherent grand strategy and a sound response to the attacks of 9/11. Today, however, we have neither. And the result is an incoherent—or at best, incomplete—strategy in which the costs of failing to make critical choices are mounting rapidly. The time has come to choose.

## AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY AFTER 9/11: AN ASSESSMENT

“Grand strategy” integrates military, political, and economic means to pursue states’ ultimate objectives in the international system.<sup>1</sup> American grand strategy had been in a state of flux prior to 2001, as containment of the Soviet Union gave way to a wider range of apparently lesser challenges. The September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade towers, however, transformed the grand strategy debate and led to a sweeping reevaluation of American security policy. It may still be too early to expect this reevaluation to have produced a complete or final response to 9/11—policies as complex as national grand strategy do not change overnight. But after 3 years of sustained debate and adaptation, it is reasonable to ask what this process has produced so far, and how well the results to date serve American interests.

One could address this question in many ways. The literature on grand strategy after 9/11 is large and diverse, spanning many positions, critiques, responses, and approaches.<sup>2</sup> The particular approach I adopt below is less to respond to these published critiques in detail than it is to consider grand strategy from the top down as a response to a series of basic questions: What are our interests? What threatens those interests? What end state do we seek against that threat, and how quickly must we attain it? And how do we interrelate military and nonmilitary means to achieve that end state? I then characterize the Government’s answers to those questions to the degree that declaratory policy permits—and I assess those answers (and thus the policy they represent) in terms of how well or badly they address the questions that collectively frame any grand strategy.

I argue below that heretofore the Government’s answers to these questions have combined ambitious public statements with vague particulars as to the scope of the threat and the end state to be sought. This combination of ambition and ambiguity creates important but unresolved tensions in American strategy. If the costs are low enough, these tensions are tolerable: the United States can avoid making hard choices and instead pursue ill-defined goals with limited penalties. But the higher the cost, the harder this becomes. And the costs are rising rapidly with the ongoing insurgency in Iraq. Eventually something will have to give—the ambiguity in today’s grand strategy is fast becoming intolerable.

There are two broad alternatives for resolving these ambiguities and creating a coherent strategy: rollback and containment. Rollback would retain the ambitious goals implicit in today’s declaratory policy and accept the cost and near-term risk inherent in pursuing them. These costs include a redoubled commitment to nation-building in Iraq and elsewhere,

accelerated onset of great power competition, heightened incentives for proliferation, and hence an increased risk of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) use by terrorists in the near term. But in exchange, it offers the mid-term possibility of rolling the terrorist threat, and hence the ultimate danger of WMD use, back to a level below the severity of September 10, 2001. By contrast, containment would settle for more modest goals in exchange for lower costs and lower near-term risks. In particular, it would permit America to withdraw from nation-building in the Mideast, it would slow the onset of great power competition, and it would moderate the risk of near-term WMD terrorism. But this retrenchment would leave the underlying causes of Islamist terror unassailed, and would therefore accept a persistent risk of major terrorist attack for the indefinite future. And it could never eliminate entirely the risk of those terrorists acquiring WMD; though it might reduce the probability per unit time, by extending the duration of the conflict indefinitely it could ultimately increase, not decrease, the odds of WMD use on American soil in the longer term.

Neither alternative dominates the other on analytical grounds. Both involve serious costs as well as benefits. And to resolve these costs and benefits requires at least two critical value judgments. Is accepting near-term risk for a long-term payoff preferable to the opposite? Rollback tolerates higher risk in the near term for a possibly lower cumulative risk in the longer term; containment reduces near-term risks but may increase them in the longer term. And is high payoff at high risk preferable to a sure thing for a smaller payoff? Rollback swings for the fences (it pursues something closer to absolute security) at the risk of striking out (catastrophe if we fail); containment ensures contact with the ball (lower risk of catastrophic failure), but promises only singles in return (it cannot eliminate the threat of terror). Neither question is analytically resolvable: the answers turn on value judgments, not analytical findings.

But though neither is analytically superior, either is defensible—either one could, in principle, provide a coherent grand strategy and a sound response to the attacks of 9/11. Today, however, we have neither. And the result is an incoherent—or at best, incomplete—strategy in which the costs of failing to make critical choices are mounting rapidly.

My purpose here is not, however, to advocate one over the other. The value judgments on which the choice turns are inherently political rather than analytical; analysts cannot establish how much security is enough, or whether it is best to accept higher near-term risks to lower them in the longer term. This is necessarily a responsibility of our elected officials. In fact, it is arguably their highest responsibility. Rather than usurping this responsibility, I seek instead to show that a painful choice between competing values is increasingly necessary, and to illuminate the respective



strengths and weaknesses of the key alternatives for the benefit of those who must choose.

I do this in six steps. First I outline American interests in the post-9/11 world. Second, I sketch the range of possible threats to those interests, with a particular focus on terrorism and great power competition. Third, I address the end state sought with respect to these threats. Fourth, I turn to the means for pursuing that end state; in particular, I assess the tensions created by ambiguities in threat and end-state definitions for the selection of effective means in the War on Terror. I then present rollback and containment as alternative approaches to resolving these tensions. Finally, I discuss the conclusions and implications for American security policy.

## **AMERICAN INTERESTS IN THE POST-9/11 WORLD**

Although the public discussion of American interests changed dramatically with 9/11, the interests themselves have changed little, if at all. In particular, security of the homeland and the safety of the American population were always vital national interests even before the 2001 attacks. As the 1995 *Annual Report* of the Secretary of Defense put it:

Since the founding of the Republic, the U.S. Government has always sought to secure for its people a set of basic objectives:

- The protection of their lives and personal safety, both at home and abroad.
- The maintenance of the nation's sovereignty, political freedoms, and independence with its values, institutions, and territory intact.
- Their material well-being and prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

Similar phrasings can be found in most pre-9/11 American strategic documents; security of the homeland and the population hardly emerged as interests in 2001.

Conversely, the economic interests embodied in the 1995 list have become more muted in the security debate since 2001, as have regional stability and the security of key allies, both of which had played prominent roles in the pre-9/11 debate. Yet they remain important. Even today, an oil embargo, closure of major sea lanes, refugee crises in the Caribbean, or domination of key resources by hostile powers would all pose serious consequences for America in ways that would all but demand the use of American power in response, and none can safely be ruled out as possibilities. Just as some interests that drew less attention before 2001 have now become more salient, so others have become less so—but salience

and importance are not the same thing, and strategists cannot afford to overlook more traditional interests or focus too narrowly on some to the exclusion of others. The freedom and safety of the American people have always been the country’s primary national interests—but they have never been the only ones, nor are they today.

**THREATS TO AMERICAN INTERESTS**

As with American interests, few truly new threats to those interests have appeared in the last decade, and few have disappeared. Their relative severity has changed (certainly their perceived severity), but the list itself has not.

Figure 1 illustrates this point with a comparison of threat lists distilled from five recent strategic documents: the 1996 and 2002 *National Security Strategies* of the United States, the 1997 and 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Reviews*, and the 2005 *National Defense Strategy*.<sup>4</sup> These documents span the pre- and post-9/11 eras, yet present remarkably similar threat enumerations. The 2001 and 2002 articulations merge some previous categories (“rogue states” and “peer competitors” in 1996 and 1997, for example, become “regional powers” in 2001, “rogue states and regional crises” in 2002, and “traditional threats” in 2005), but essentially the same challenges appear in some form in almost all the lists. Priorities, obviously, have changed and, in particular, “non-traditional” threats now receive much more prominent treatment than they did before 2001. But 2001 neither created new threats nor eliminated old ones.

<p><b>1996 National Security Strategy,</b>  <b>1997 Quadrennial Defense Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rogue states</b></li> <li>• <b>Ethnic conflict, state failure</b></li> <li>• <b>Proliferation</b></li> <li>• <b>Peer emergence</b></li> <li>• <b>Terrorism</b></li> <li>• <b>Transnational crime</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>2002 National Security Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Terrorism</b></li> <li>• <b>Rogue States</b></li> <li>• <b>Regional crises</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>2001 Quadrennial Defense Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proliferation</b></li> <li>• <b>Regional powers (esp. Asia)</b></li> <li>• <b>State failure</b></li> <li>• <b>Terrorism</b></li> <li>• <b>Transnational crime</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>2005 National Defense Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Irregular</b></li> <li>• <b>Catastrophic</b></li> <li>• <b>Disruptive</b></li> <li>• <b>Traditional</b></li> </ul>

**Figure 1. Threats.**

These priorities, moreover, have always been closer to assumptions than to analytic findings—both before and after 9/11. A common critique of pre-9/11 strategy (especially by analysts who specialized in terrorism studies before 2001) is that it paid insufficient attention to threats such as terrorism. This critique is less a claim that relative priorities were studied extensively but with unsound findings, and more an argument that terrorism simply was ignored in favor of attention to other things. But a similar critique could now be leveled against *post*-9/11 strategic thought: with some exceptions, the bulk of the *post*-9/11 literature has simply assumed that terrorism is now the nation's first priority.

### **Delimiting the Terrorist Threat.**

As assumptions go, this one is pretty safe. But like many assumptions, it leaves important details unexamined. It is one thing, for example, to hold that countering terrorism is the first priority, with management of great power competition, say, no higher than second. But is it a close second, a distant second, or a truly remote second? The difference matters. If nonterrorist threats pale to insignificance relative to terrorism, then they merit little or no effort in a world of constrained resources—to divert effort toward unimportant threats is to incur needless opportunity costs. But if great power competition is a close second, then it makes sense to accept real cost in the near term as a hedge against its emergence as a priority some time in the future.

Below I outline some of the ways in which the requirements of countering terror and great power competition can conflict with one another. But before that can be developed, another striking feature of the threat lists in Figure 1 warrants note: they are remarkably unspecific.

The lists consist of categories (some quite vague), not names—and certainly not relative priorities or severities for the names one might associate with the categories. This is fairly typical of peacetime strategy, especially in low-threat conditions where war is considered a distant possibility and planning centers on preparing for the unknown.<sup>5</sup> And several of the documents summarized in Figure 1 are of just this nature: in 1996 and 1997, war seemed remote and threats were necessarily cast in generic terms.

In September 2001, however, the President announced that the nation was at war—and public statements since then have repeatedly echoed that formulation.<sup>6</sup> Yet the nation's key strategic documents have continued to treat threats in the same generic, unspecific, peacetime-like sense that they had done prior to 2001.

This lack of threat specificity makes true strategic thought difficult. Wartime strategy is normally concerned with identifying enemy weaknesses or centers of gravity and crafting a design to strike at them. Weaknesses and strengths are specific to the parties, however—no two actors are identical. Sun Tzu’s oft-cited injunction to know one’s enemy is all about the need to fit one’s strategy to the particulars of one’s enemy and his specific vulnerabilities.<sup>7</sup> This is impossible when official strategic documents do not identify the enemy but instead frame policy in terms of broad categories of challenge-types without naming actual challengers.<sup>8</sup> How can one craft a strategy to exploit an enemy’s weaknesses without knowing who the enemy is?<sup>9</sup>

For some of the threat categories in Figure 1, this imprecision is nettlesome but tolerable—the enemy actors are reasonably clear, if implicit. “Rogue states” for example, presumably include the standard list of aggressive regional powers (e.g. Baathist Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya, and so on). But for others, this lack of specificity is more problematic. This is especially true for terrorism and great power competition.

Terrorism, after all, is a tactic, not an enemy. Taken literally, a “war on terrorism” is closer to a “war on strategic bombing” or a “war on amphibious assault” than it is to orthodox war aims or wartime grand strategies; one normally makes war on an enemy, not a method. Nor can one simply assume that anyone who uses terrorist tactics is to be the target of American war making. “Terrorism” is a diverse tactic, used by many groups in many ways to serve many different political agendas. Many of these groups and agendas pose no immediate threat to Americans. In fact, prior to 2001, it was rare for Americans to be killed by international terrorists. The most lethal terrorist groups of 1960-97, for example, were Aum Shinrikyo, the Tamil Tigers, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and Islamic Jihad—none of which deliberately targeted Americans.<sup>10</sup> A war that encompassed literally any group using terrorist tactics would be impossibly broad, engulfing a wide range of groups posing no meaningful threat to America.

Terrorism per se thus cannot be the enemy. But it is far from clear exactly who the enemy is. The administration has made some effort to delimit the problem by adding the phrase “of global reach.” This is little help, however. In a globalized world, any terrorist with an airline ticket or an internet service provider has “global reach.”

Official statements do little to narrow the focus. Many suppose that the real enemy is al Qaeda, and that “terrorism” is little more than a rhetorical synonym for Osama bin Laden’s organization. Yet the administration has explicitly, and repeatedly, made clear that this is *not* their view. Though

the details revealed to date are ambiguous, it is clear that the declaratory policy of the U.S. Government defines the enemy more broadly than just al Qaeda.

The September 2002 *National Security Strategy* of the United States, for example, explicitly declines to narrow the definition of the enemy: "The enemy is not a single political regime, or person, or religion, or ideology. The enemy is terrorism."<sup>11</sup> As the Secretary of Defense put it in a formal address to the North Atlantic Council: "al Qaeda is not the only terrorist network that threatens us."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice stated, in remarks to the Conservative Political Action Conference, "[T]here is no such thing as a good terrorist and a bad terrorist. You cannot condemn al Qaeda and hug Hamas."<sup>13</sup> The President himself, in his Address to the Joint Session of Congress in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, said "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated."<sup>14</sup>

Declaratory policy thus establishes a lower bound on the definition of the enemy: it is more than just al Qaeda. The upper bound, however, is much less clear: how many other terrorist groups are included? The United States has already deployed troops and conducted military operations against some other groups, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Afghanistan and Ansar al Islam in Iraq.<sup>15</sup> We have deployed advisors against, but not yet directly engaged, other groups such as Abu Sayaf in the Philippines or the Revolutionary Armed Forces in Columbia (FARC).<sup>16</sup> Still others we have denounced but without, to date, deploying advisors or initiating hostilities, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, or the IRA; the National Security Advisor has explicitly put Hamas in the same threat category as al Qaeda, though without, to date, accompanying this with direct military action.<sup>17</sup> And there are many that we have officially designated as terrorists but which seem more distant still from American use of force, such as the Israeli militant group, Kahane Chai, the Greek November 17 Organization, the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, or the Peruvian *Sendero Luminoso*.<sup>18</sup> While some groups are clearly targets and others seem unlikely to be, many fall in a broad grey zone in between, where they are neither clearly within nor clearly outside the definition of our enemy in the War on Terror.<sup>19</sup>

The unbounded, expansive quality of the threat definition in declaratory policy does have certain advantages. The linkages and interconnections among shadowy terrorist groups are unclear. Casting the net broadly makes it less likely that our war effort will inadvertently exclude important allies of al Qaeda whose connection to bin Laden was ambiguous or unknown to us. The broader the definition of the enemy, the lower is the

risk of excluding a real threat in an inherently murky domain. A broad definition could in principle create common cause with American allies facing terror threats of their own (though the exigencies of counterterror warfare can also drive wedges between potential state allies: see below). And, of course, a broad definition of the enemy is rhetorically helpful: a war ostensibly against terrorism at large affords a moral clarity and normative power that helps marshal public support for the war effort. Conversely, a more discriminating threat definition means accepting or deliberately overlooking some terror activity; this could be difficult to justify to the public who ultimately must authorize any American war effort. Sound grand strategy must provide for public support; an articulation of the threat that undermines this is problematic.

An unbounded threat definition can also pose serious problems, however. Perhaps most important, it risks making unnecessary enemies, and unnecessarily expanding the hostile coalition. It does this by creating common cause among disparate terrorists and driving together groups with very different interests and agendas. Historically, terrorists have had great difficulty working together. As illegal organizations, terrorist groups are necessarily suspicious of outsiders, and their primary aims are normally local and immediate in nature: the IRA wants a Catholic government for Northern Ireland; the ETA (the Basque Fatherland and Liberty group) wants a separate Basque state on the Iberian peninsula; and Hamas and Hezbollah want the establishment of a Palestinian state and the destruction of Israel.<sup>20</sup> Heretofore, Hamas, the IRA, or the ETA have rarely targeted Americans, and have rarely coordinated their actions.<sup>21</sup> An American declaration of war on "terror," however, could provide just the common cause these (and other) groups have historically lacked. The ETA might normally see no reason to risk interaction with al Qaeda, which creates a danger of compromise and risks attracting the enmity of al Qaeda's enemies in return for limited benefits in changing Spanish government policy. But if America announces to all such groups that the only difference we see among them is the order in which we mean to destroy them, then we give them a powerful reason to cooperate. Especially for groups with greater natural overlap in aims and culture—such as Hamas and al Qaeda, for example—repeated American insistence that all are in the cross hairs must surely provide an important counterweight to the disincentives they would otherwise face for joint action against us. Among the most important responsibilities of the grand strategist is to create allies for oneself and deny them to one's opponent. Perhaps the greatest failing of German grand strategy in two world wars, for example, was the repeated failure to do this, with the result that they twice created hostile coalitions too great

for German power to overcome.<sup>22</sup> In a world where the interconnections among terrorist groups are ambiguous, a central aim of American strategy ought thus to be to drive wedges between these groups wherever possible—to *reduce*, not increase, their marginal proclivity for cooperation and joint action against us. A broad but unspecific definition of the enemy that refuses to exclude any meaningful terror group could easily do just the opposite, unifying a polyglot terrorist alliance, and risking self-fulfilling prophecy by driving together groups who would otherwise have sat on the sidelines rather than making war on distant America.<sup>23</sup>

### **Clarifying the Threat of Great Power Competition.**

The threat of great power competition shares some of these difficulties. Setting aside the question of which powers may become threats, American policy is ambiguous on the nature of the problem itself.

*Military and Nonmilitary Competition.* Great power competition, for example, can span both military and nonmilitary domains. Military competition attracts the most attention, but seems the most remote as a threat: few see much danger that a competitor could match U.S. military power head-on any time soon.<sup>24</sup> Others focus on military challenges but emphasize “asymmetric” threats in which competitors (even great powers) seek to offset U.S. advantages in conventional mechanized warfare with WMD, terrorist attacks, or selected strikes against weak points such as ports.<sup>25</sup> Yet military competition is only a part of the problem.<sup>26</sup>

Diplomacy, for example, offers great powers an important opportunity to counter American preponderance. Opposition to U.S. policies in the United Nations (UN) can deny America the power of legitimacy in the eyes of foreign publics and other world actors. A “legitimacy deficit” is often cited as a major challenge to U.S. policy success in Iraq; like it or not, the views of transnational institutions such as the UN play a significant role in global perceptions of legitimacy, and diplomatic action by other great powers can shape such institutions’ policies in ways that can deny the United States an important political asset.<sup>27</sup> Even without an institution, great powers can always deny the United States their bilateral cooperation or assistance, making it harder to shift burdens, share costs, or even conduct military operations (for example by denying overflight rights to American aircraft, transit to American troops, or basing to American forces).

Economic means can impose punitive costs on America for short-term coercive ends, and weaken America’s long-term competitive position over time. Economic issues play an important role in U.S. national security interests. Commerce, however, is a two-way street. The same openness and

economic interdependence that America promotes as major foreign policy goals also expose the United States to manipulation. Trade partners can reduce access to foreign markets. Exchange rates and capital flows can be manipulated for coercive ends, or to limit American freedom of maneuver internationally. Many, for example, fear that the European Union may become an exclusionary trading bloc in a way that would limit American access.<sup>28</sup> A world of competing regional trade systems would reduce U.S. growth and prosperity relative to an open world economy, and this prospect could be used strategically to manipulate American policy choices or to balance American power. Foreign direct investment and foreign ownership of American debt total trillions of dollars: Japan and China alone now hold over \$870 billion in U.S. Treasury Bonds, and almost 40 percent of the American national debt is now held by foreign bond holders.<sup>29</sup> Were other great powers to use strategically their position as central underwriters of U.S. Government debt, the result could be important coercive leverage on the United States. The U.S. dollar historically has been the world reserve currency, a status that has afforded the United States major economic advantages; a strategic shift to the Euro could reduce America's ability to transfer the costs of economic adjustment onto others, and constrain the American economy in the long term.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, economic coercion imposes costs on both the target and the coercer; none of these balancing options are painless for their users. Yet the costs are rarely equal, and differences in incurred costs offer important leverage for states, both in threatening and in using economic coercion against other states.<sup>31</sup> In fact, such strategies are extremely common in the international system: since 1960, for example, not a single day has passed in which the United States has not enforced economic sanctions against some other state; between 1980 and 1997, American sanction targets included Iraq, Libya, Cuba, Haiti, Yugoslavia, El Salvador, Iran, Panama, Poland, and Suriname, among others; sanction threats were used coercively against states as powerful as China and Japan.<sup>32</sup> In the past year, a coalition of European powers used economic coercion to pressure the United States into abandoning protections for American steel producers that the administration clearly felt were critical politically.<sup>33</sup> The West used trade restrictions imposed over a generation to constrain Soviet economic growth and undermine the long-term economic foundations of Soviet power.<sup>34</sup> More broadly, the entire mercantilist school of international political economy centers on the strategic use of trade to advance state power and undermine rivals; there is a long tradition of strategic manipulation of trade relationships in international politics.<sup>35</sup> The effectiveness of mercantilist trade manipulation is controversial—but it is widely used, and it can



impose serious costs on target states. These costs may not equal Islamist terrorism's, but they are real, they are commonly invoked, and they should not be ignored in the grand strategy debate.<sup>36</sup>

*Internal and External Balancing.* A second distinction that tends to blur in official statements of grand strategy is between internal and external balancing as vehicles for great power competition. *Internal* balancing occurs when a state strengthens itself via greater mobilization of resources within its own borders, for example, by spending more on defense, improving the quality of the materiel purchased through that spending, or fielding a larger military. But states can also balance *externally*, by forming coalitions with allies to pool resources against a common enemy.<sup>37</sup>

The policy debate tends to focus on internal balancing, and especially the prospects for China's emergence as a peer, "near-peer," or niche competitor of the United States.<sup>38</sup> Yet this overlooks the problem of external balancing. Not only are the two challenges very different, but the external challenge may well be the more threatening to the United States—and especially in the near- to mid-term.

Internal balancing is, at most, a long-term prospect: no conceivable challenger is going to emerge as a peer competitor to the United States any time soon. Even for China, few projections see it approaching American economic or military power for decades at the soonest, and many see either slower growth or diminishing returns as the Chinese economy matures.<sup>39</sup> Japan and Germany were once seen as prospective challengers to American preeminence; their recent economic and demographic stagnation have stilled most such projections. Other candidates for peer status, such as India or Brazil, are considerably more distant prospects than China. By contrast, external balancing could produce a meaningful challenge much more quickly. Even today, a grand coalition of the European Union, Russia, and China would command a combined economy larger than America's, and a population more than six times the size of ours. Although its total defense expenditure would still be inferior to America's, China's combined current spending would still be within about 20 percent of ours.<sup>40</sup> As China develops and as Russia recovers, the potential strength of such a coalition could grow over time. But the scale of internal growth needed is much smaller—and achievable much more quickly—if such powers are balancing externally via coalition rather than internally via domestic mobilization alone.

Strategic warning is also more available for internal than for external balancing threats. Any great power's transition to peer status produces a variety of easily detected long-lead indicators, ranging from economic growth to military spending to weapon acquisition to assertive international

behavior. Any of these can be observed well in advance, and would surely be noted by American intelligence and the larger foreign policy community. Coalition formation, by contrast, can occur quickly and with much less warning. The speed of the downward spiral in U.S.-German relations in the months prior to the Iraq War in 2003, for example, stunned many observers. A historically close U.S. ally became an active opponent of central U.S. strategic policy in less than a year; together with similar opposition from much of Western Europe, this led to widespread predictions of the “end of the West” and anguished reassessments of the future of the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>41</sup> There is reason to expect this relationship to improve in coming years, but the history of pre-Iraq diplomacy in 2003 illustrates the speed with which great power realignment can occur, and the degree to which such shifts can surprise intelligence services and policymakers.

Internal balancing is both expensive and risky for challengers. Not only would China need to invest massively in military power for it to achieve peer status, the very act of doing so risks bringing on a preventive war. Historically, power transitions brought on by the rapid growth of a challenger have often spurred threatened hegemony to strike before the challenger becomes too strong. In fact, many theorists see this as one of the most common causes of great power warfare.<sup>42</sup> Even given a benign America, arms-racing creates instabilities that raise tensions and could trigger war.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, external balancing is lower cost and may not require balancers to initiate an open arms race with the United States.

Finally, internal balancing is chiefly a military challenge. By its own efforts, a single challenger can pose a military threat to another; it can even threaten some forms of limited economic coercion by holding bilateral trade relationships hostage. Either would challenge America where we are strongest: our military power is preeminent, and the diversity of our trading partners makes us less vulnerable to bilateral coercion than smaller or more specialized economies would be. External balancing by coalition formation, on the other hand, makes nonmilitary balancing much more effective, and could challenge American interests in places of greater American vulnerability. Diplomatic pressure, for example, is much more powerful if exerted by a united front. Trade restraint or financial manipulation is much more painful if a coalition of economies act in concert to reduce the target’s access to alternative markets or sources of supply.<sup>44</sup> The sheer size of the American economy and polity makes us less vulnerable to diplomatic or economic pressure than are smaller or poorer states, but we are not invulnerable—and our exposure to economic or diplomatic coercion may well exceed our military vulnerability for a long time to come. For such challenges, external balancing constitutes a

different—and in many ways more demanding—threat than the internal balancing that attracts most attention in today’s debate.

## END-STATE AMBITIONS

What are our aims with respect to these threats? One could imagine a spectrum of possibilities from least to most ambitious.

### **Terrorism End States.**

For terrorism, the least ambitious aim might be just to maintain the 2005 status quo for attacks against Americans—that is, to avoid letting the problem get any worse than it is already, and with little focus on non-American victims. In particular, a minimalist aim might merely seek to avoid WMD attacks on the continental United States or a succession of 9/11 scale events while tolerating any lesser forms of terrorism. At the opposite extreme, one could posit a maximalist aim of eliminating all terrorism, of any kind, anywhere, against anyone. Between these polar opposites, one could then array a variety of intermediate possibilities, such as a global return to the low-casualty symbolic terrorism of the 1970s, or any of a variety of other points between the bookend extremes of global abolition and the 2005 U.S. status quo.

Where, within this spectrum, is current American grand strategy? No explicit or specific position has been laid down in declaratory policy. Yet official statements, where offered to date, have implied extremely ambitious goals.

The 2003 *National Strategy on Combating Terrorism*, for example, states: “Our goal will be reached when Americans and other civilized people around the world can lead their lives free of fear from terrorist attacks.”<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere it defines “victory against terrorism” as the attainment of “a world in which our children can live free from fear.”<sup>46</sup> As Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz put it: “For too many years, the international community treated terrorism as an ugly fact of international life, [as] something we had to live with . . . We were far from a policy of *zero tolerance* for terrorism. September 11th changed all of that.”<sup>47</sup> Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith has argued that terrorism should be eradicated by rendering it illegitimate as an undertaking, following the model of “piracy, slave trading, and genocide.”<sup>48</sup> At face value, such statements imply a war aim very close to worldwide eradication of any form of terror—which would approach the maximum conceivable end of the spectrum of possible ambitions for the War on Terror.

Yet such statements leave much unsaid. What does “zero tolerance” or a life “free of fear” mean in operational terms? Literal eradication of a tactic as ancient and widespread as terrorism is surely unlikely. Even for the analogies sometimes used to claim that abolition is possible, true eradication has been elusive: piracy and slave trading persist in some parts of the world, and genocide is practiced all too widely, as Cambodians, Rwandans, and Sudanese can attest.<sup>49</sup> But if some degree of tolerance is inevitable, how much terrorism will the U.S. Government accept? At what level can we declare ourselves no longer a “nation at war,” at what level can we stand down from \$400 billion annual defense budgets, and (perhaps most important) how great a reduction in terrorist violence must we design our strategy to achieve?

These particulars are critical to the formulation of sound strategy (see below), but official strategic documents made public to date offer little guidance. They are clear in rejecting a minimalist conception; they imply great ambition; but they do not delimit that ambition in any way that would permit one to know when victory had been achieved, or to exclude any given goal as beyond the nation’s war aims.

The *National Strategy on Combating Terrorism* comes closest, holding that the desired end state is to reduce terror from a severe, global threat to an “unorganized, localized, nonsponsored, rare” phenomenon, restricted to particular states and returned exclusively to the “criminal domain.”<sup>50</sup> But even this guidance remains critically ambiguous. How rare is rare? Even in 2001, death by terrorism could be considered extremely “rare” as a source of morbidity or mortality in the population as a whole: more Americans died of peptic ulcers than were killed by terrorists in history’s worst year for terrorism against Americans.<sup>51</sup> This is still too many deaths, but by how many? And what would constitute a terrorism restricted to the “criminal domain?” Many, after all, argued that terrorism should be treated as a crime rather than an act of war even for the 9/11 attacks; by what standard should terror be judged as within or beyond the category of crime? What probability of a truck bombing is low enough? Even at the peak of the Iraqi insurgency, the odds that any given individual would be killed by a truck bomb were vastly lower than the odds that they would not—in terror’s worst moments, the objective probability of such events is low by many standards. Again, this is not low enough, but what is? In particular, is the September 10, 2001, status quo acceptable? Declaratory policy can be read to imply that it is not. Pre-9/11 terrorism, after all, was clearly state-sponsored, international, and organized, and had been so for decades.<sup>52</sup> If our aim is as the *National Strategy* presents it, then the pre-9/11 status quo is clearly no longer acceptable, and our policy is to roll this threat back to

a level much lower than obtained well before we declared war on terror in 2001. But just how far is unclear.

### **Great Power Competition End States.**

For great power competition, one could imagine a similar spectrum of possible end states. Here, however, the *ultimate* end state is presumably the loss of American unipolar preeminence—the key issue is when and how this comes about. Historically, all great powers—even superpowers—have eventually declined. No unipolar system has ever been permanent, not the Roman Empire, not the Spanish Hapsburgs, not the British Empire. This eventual decline may not happen quickly, but sooner or later, one must assume that the United States, too, will lose its current predominance. The key issue for grand strategy is how quickly this inevitable end is to occur, and whether it will be replaced with a bipolar, multipolar, or unipolar successor.

In these terms, the least ambitious goal for American grand strategy today would merely be to ensure that no hostile military superpower emerges any time soon. The sheer scale of America's current advantage makes this highly unlikely in any event; to prevent the unlikely and affect indifference to the rest would be a plausible and undemanding ambition.

At the opposite extreme would be to delay as long as possible even the long-term development of any power or potential coalition of powers that could challenge any important U.S. interest. Such an ambition has several dimensions. Not only must the growth of challengers' power and influence be slowed, but one's own strength must be maintained (or increased) as long as possible. Even without others' growth, one's own decline can eventually bring about a multipolar end state, as a weakened hegemon declines into the range of other great powers. As economic strength is a function of domestic as well as international factors, so extending preeminence thus involves both domestic and foreign policy considerations, ranging from the domestic tax rate to international trade practices. In addition, a wider range of interests is potentially involved. Just as great power competition can be conducted in the military and the nonmilitary domains, so the preservation of unipolar status can involve both military and nonmilitary dimensions: if a hostile coalition can exert economic or diplomatic pressures that constrain American freedom of action even without threatening American military defeat, this would imply an erosion of influence relative to the unipolar extreme.

U.S. declaratory policy is nearly silent on the desired end state for great power competition. Both the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review* and the 2002

*National Security Strategy* imply a concern with the preservation of U.S. primacy by averting challenges. But this concern is even less explicitly or systematically developed than for the terrorist threat, and there is no explicit discussion of long-term goals with respect to great power competition.

## **MEANS: COPING WITH AMBIGUOUS ENDS**

These ambiguities reflect a failure to make critical choices on the basics of national grand strategy. This failure would be tolerable if the same means served regardless, or if one could pursue multiple ends simultaneously at modest cost. But in fact, different ends imply different means, and their costs are rising rapidly. We are reaching the point where we can no longer afford this degree of ambiguity on our basic strategic purposes.

### **Implications of Ambiguity on the Relative Importance of Terrorism and Great Power Competition.**

The means one would choose to maximize counterterror effectiveness, for example, tend to aggravate great power competition. This is particularly problematic for the threat of preemptive war to change the regimes of state supporters of terrorism. This threat plays a prominent role in the administration's approach to the War on Terror; the more energetic the campaign against terror, the more salient such threats are likely to be, and the more such wars are likely to be fought.<sup>53</sup> Yet warfare against state sponsors of terror can accelerate great power balancing in at least two ways: by affecting others' perceptions of our intent, and by elevating American defense expenditure in ways that retard American economic growth.

To date, American preponderance has stimulated little real balancing from other great powers. Most analysts attribute this to benign perceptions of American intent: since others have seen us as a status quo power with strongly multilateralist impulses, our strength has been no threat to them, and need not be balanced.<sup>54</sup> Yet maximum effort against terrorism requires American uses of force that have already had major negative effects on others' perceptions of our intent, and more is likely if America continues to act as energetically as it has. If the chief determinant of balancing is perception of others' intent, then continued erosion of world perception of American intentions can be an important stimulus to great power competition, and energetic American use of force against terror has proven to be an important catalyst for negative perceptions of American intentions.

The war in Iraq, for example, had a major effect on world opinion of America. Polling data in every major power turned sharply against American

policy with the invasion decision, and has rebounded only slightly since. In France, 63 percent of respondents viewed America favorably before the invasion of Iraq, but only 31 percent did afterwards. In Germany, a 61 percent favorable rate dropped to 25; in Britain, 75 fell to 48; in Russia, 61 fell to 28.<sup>55</sup> Elite perceptions are harder to track systematically, but leaders whose policies fail to reflect views held as widely (and deeply) as these risk replacement: in Spain, for example, the incumbent Aznar government fell due in no small part to its unpopular support for American policy in Iraq.<sup>56</sup> America's first counterterror war in Afghanistan proved less damaging for popular opinion overseas, but it is unlikely that further invasions would enjoy Afghanistan's level of worldwide support—the clarity of Afghanistan's connection to 9/11, and the war's proximity to the terror attacks themselves are unlikely to be equaled elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>

Preemptive warfare also imposes major economic costs. Through November 2003, the war in Iraq had been costing an average of around \$4 billion a month; congressional staff now estimate that recent increases in combat intensity have increased that figure by 50 percent or more, yielding a cost of over \$70 billion for the year for Iraq alone.<sup>58</sup> The war in Afghanistan is projected to add another \$8.5 billion for 2004.<sup>59</sup> The Congressional Budget Office now estimates that the cost of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan could total \$179 to nearly \$400 billion for the years 2005-14, in addition to the \$100 billion already spent, and the \$26 billion they expect to be spent in the remainder of 2004, for a total projected cost of up to half-a-trillion dollars between 2002 and 2014, and this figure excludes reconstruction aid for either country—or the potential cost of any other campaigns fought elsewhere between now and 2014.<sup>60</sup>

In principle, an economy the size of America's could accommodate such costs. The roughly \$80 billion the United States will spend this year for warfighting in Iraq and Afghanistan is less than 1 percent of the year's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>61</sup> The entire defense budget now comprises less than 5 percent of GDP, or a figure comparable to the late-Cold War norm, and well below its Cold War peaks during Korea or Vietnam.<sup>62</sup> Sound fiscal policy could surely provide this level of expenditure without crippling economic consequences—in principle.

Principle and practice can be very different things, however. Since 2001 the government has systematically failed to provide revenues sufficient to cover its costs. The projected U.S. federal budget deficit for FY 2004 exceeds \$470 billion; for the 5 years ending in FY 2009, the cumulative projection exceeds \$1.4 trillion.<sup>63</sup> Neither figure includes likely spending for contingencies in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere. These wars are being funded by spending without corresponding taxation. Barring major changes in American fiscal policy, large, sustained expenditures for ongoing

preemptive warfare can be expected to create corresponding increases in federal budget deficits.

Orthodox macroeconomic theory would expect sustained deficits on this scale eventually to retard American economic growth.<sup>64</sup> Worse, the financing for these deficits now comes predominantly from foreign lenders. Once the world's greatest net creditor, the United States is now its greatest net debtor.<sup>65</sup> As noted above, America's increasing dependence on foreign creditors to fund its deficit spending creates coercive exposure: how would America fund its deficit if overseas lenders stopped buying Treasury Bonds? Overseas financing of U.S. Government debt also adds to a serious balance of payments deficit. Americans import far more goods and services than we export, and more capital leaves the country every year than enters it.<sup>66</sup> This represents an ongoing net shift of wealth overseas. In the short run, this enables Americans to enjoy a higher standard of living than our own production can sustain. But in the longer run, it transfers capital, and thus productive resources, from America to other great powers.

Other things being equal, these economic consequences will hasten the loss of American primacy. The macroeconomic effects of large, sustained federal deficits can be expected to reduce American growth; together with the debt's effect on a chronic balance of payments deficit, this slowing of American growth and accelerated transfer of American resources overseas will accelerate the eventual decline of the American economy relative to competing great powers'. And America's growing dependence on foreign creditors to fund these deficits creates increasing exposure to economic coercion. Robust American growth in the short run may mask these effects, and concern with immediate threats may make a focus on the long term harder. But near-term policies have long-term consequences, and a central responsibility of grand strategy is a concern with the long term rather than merely the immediate. In the long term, the economic requirements of energetic counterterrorism thus conflict with the needs of averting great power competition.

Conversely, the policies one would adopt to minimize the risk of great power competition tend to conflict with the requirements of energetic counterterrorism. A principal means of assuring others of one's benign intent (and thus, of forestalling great power balancing) is multilateralism: voluntarily constraining oneself to act within a consensus of other states' views. This voluntary acceptance of constraint signals other powers that their interests will be reflected in one's own behavior, and this, in turn, implies that one's intentions are not fundamentally opposed to others' interests. Even an overwhelmingly powerful state—a hegemon—need not be balanced if its use of that power is likely to be consistent with one's own



interests; multilateralism provides assurances of this via the voluntary acceptance of constraint, and thus retards great power balancing.<sup>67</sup>

To be meaningful, however, such constraint has to accept real costs—talk is cheap, and real assessments of intent thus turn on hard decisions where actual self-interest must be sacrificed if consensus is to be maintained.<sup>68</sup> This in turn means that meaningful multilateralism requires that the United States periodically act in ways that accept real costs to America in order to accommodate other great powers' interests. And the most important interests at stake in the international system are the security interests embodied in decisions over war and peace. If the United States declines to compromise with other great powers over decisions to wage war, this is a powerful signal that when push comes to shove, America cannot be relied upon to serve interests beyond its own. And if others see their interests and America's as inconsistent, this creates an incentive to balance American power as a means of protecting those interests in the clinch.<sup>69</sup>

Multilateral restraint in the waging of war can clearly interfere with effectiveness of any given counterterror campaign. The administration saw the invasion of Iraq as central to its design for the War on Terror; its preferences were clearly at odds with those of most other great powers. To have compromised in a way that would have signaled others that American intentions were not fundamentally in conflict with their own would have been to accept a major diversion from what the administration saw as the requirements of countering terrorism. More broadly, any requirement to incur otherwise unnecessary cost in order to signal benign intent necessarily reduces effectiveness in countering terror. In fact, cooperation that does *not* reduce effectiveness does not provide a meaningful signal. Even hostile powers can cooperate tactically when it advances their own goals; cooperation per se tells one nothing about a state's intent. Hitler found it tactically advantageous to cooperate with Stalin over the division of Poland just before invading the Soviet Union—Hitler's cooperation over Poland hardly proved benign intent toward the Soviets. Only cooperation that imposes real costs—and thus, cooperation that a hostile state would reject—sends meaningful signals of benign intent.<sup>70</sup> And by definition, to accept costs in the conduct of the War on Terror as a means of signaling benign intent to other great powers is to reduce American effectiveness in countering terrorism.

Similarly, to husband American economic strength for the long-term competition with other great powers can impose costs on near-term effectiveness against terror. To live within today's tax revenue would require a major reduction in expenditures for the War on Terror.<sup>71</sup> But even if the administration reversed its fiscal philosophy and raised taxes

to fund its current expenditures, the result would still depress American economic growth at the margin in the long term. Defense expenditure is less productive economically than other uses of capital: its multiplier effects are smaller, and its overseas focus tends to aggravate balance of payments deficits.<sup>72</sup> A policy aimed at retaining or expanding American economic strength for the longest time possible would need to hold defense spending down to the lowest level consistent with international stability. Ambitious wars of counterterror preemption necessarily impose expenses that come at the cost of long-term economic performance.

The net result is tension between the requirements of countering terrorism and great power competition. The preemptive warfare required by energetic counterterrorism along the lines the administration has laid out both stimulates balancing behavior and degrades American economic performance. In the long run, this hastens the eventual loss of American primacy and the eventual arrival of bi- or multi-polarity.

By contrast, some may argue that terrorism does so much damage to economies, and creates such communities of interest among great powers, that these tensions are more apparent than real. After all, the 9/11 attackers claim to have inflicted \$1 trillion in economic damage on the United States;<sup>73</sup> if so, a series of such attacks (or worse) could do greater damage to American economic growth than would the elevated defense expenditures needed to prevent them. And terrorism threatens every great power; this common threat could in theory drive the great powers together in opposition to Islamist fundamentalism, rather than driving them apart or spurring competition among them.

While there is some truth in this, both counterarguments have limitations. As for terrorist economic damage, it is hard to assess its sensitivity to counterterrorist expenditure; much depends on unknowable details of al Qaeda's operations and methods, and the degree to which particular U.S. countermeasures have affected these. But most human undertakings display diminishing marginal returns to scale. And today's scale of counterterrorist effort is very ambitious. It would be surprising if the last \$100 billion of counterterror expenditure were as productive as the first, yet its effect on American economic growth is the same (or worse). And it is easy to overestimate the real *economic* damage of terrorism. Its human toll is terrible, but its ability to damage an economy as large, as resilient, and as adaptive as ours has real limits. The actual economic damage attributable to the 9/11 attacks, for example, now appears to have been far smaller than that claimed by al Qaeda. As the Congressional Research Service put it:

9/11 is more appropriately viewed as a human tragedy than as an economic calamity. Notwithstanding their dire costs in human life, the direct effects of the attacks were too small and too geographically concentrated to make a significant dent in the nation's economic output. September 11 did not trip a fragile economy into recession.<sup>74</sup>

To do serious, long-term damage to the American economy would thus require far worse than the 9/11 attacks. This is not impossible—if we did nothing at all to counter terror, then massive, sustained attacks on a scale needed to depress the American economy might well ensue.<sup>75</sup> But doing nothing is not the real alternative to today's heavy expenditures for preemptive counterterror warfighting: there are many less expensive intermediate steps between nothing and an expenditure of nearly \$100 billion a year to wage concurrent wars in multiple theaters. And these intermediate steps would presumably have some value in constraining al Qaeda's ability to exceed their 9/11 toll by a margin great enough to induce serious long-term economic effects.

As for the unifying effect of terrorism on great power foreign policies, though all great powers face terrorism, opinions differ widely on this threat's severity. And America's allies tend to see the threat in far less apocalyptic terms than has the current administration.<sup>76</sup> There are also many ways to respond to any given terrorist threat, and America's allies have mostly chosen far less ambitious approaches.<sup>77</sup> Clearly the administration's position that an invasion of Iraq was required to confront the terrorist threat is opposed strenuously by most other great powers. It is possible that future attacks may change other great powers' assessment of the terror threat and its required responses. But there is no evidence of this yet. And it is at least as possible that the current, deep, division between America and the other great powers on counterterrorist policy could continue or even deepen—especially if terrorists seek to exploit this division by focusing on Americans and avoiding attacks on other great powers.

### **Implications of Ambiguity in Counterterrorist End States.**

Our end-state ambitions are another area where strategic ambiguity creates important tensions. Do we seek something close to the end of terrorism, or do we aim only to cap the threat at levels near today's? The means needed for the first require an acceptance of risks unnecessary for the second—and extended pursuit of the first can undermine our ability to fall back to the second later.

This is because any realistic prospect of reducing the terror threat to levels much below that of 9/11 requires regime change on a regional scale

in the Middle East and perhaps elsewhere as well. Regime change, however, is a high-risk undertaking. If it succeeds, it could produce a dramatic reduction in the threat of Islamist terror. But if it fails, it can make the same threat radically worse. By contrast, more modest goals—such as capping the danger of nuclear terror in the near- to mid-term—can be achieved with much less risky means. These means cannot end the terror threat, however. And because they leave the wellspring of Islamist terror unaddressed, such means allow this threat to fester for perhaps a generation or more. This in turn creates a long-term risk of WMD terror that may ultimately exceed the short-term risks embodied in a more ambitious approach, even with careful efforts in the meantime to limit terrorist access to WMD.

The key issue here is the relative importance of eliminating the underlying causes of Islamist terror. Maximalist ends require this: as long as terrorism's original motivations remain, we will never be able to do more than suppress the threat at a still-virulent level. Espionage, police work, and special forces raids can suppress terrorist networks, but cannot eliminate them outright. If the underlying incentive for terrorist action remains, the same social and political processes that created al Qaeda in the first place will replace its losses as we inflict them. New recruits will replenish depleted ranks; new leaders will emerge to take the place of those killed or captured; and resourceful people will find new funding pathways to replace those blocked by Western intelligence. Just such a process now seems to be underway with al Qaeda.<sup>78</sup> To do more than slow this process requires action to eliminate the wellsprings of terrorist recruitment.

And this, in turn, would almost certainly require radical political reform in the Mideast. Many now see the roots of Islamist terrorism as a liberty deficit in the Arab mideast. In this view, corrupt Arab autocrats value loyalty from palace guards and key elites over economic opportunity or political participation for the population. This elite loyalty is purchased by extracting public resources for private gain, and enforced by repression that squelches innovation or public sector efficiency. Meanwhile growing populations fight economic stagnation and often grinding poverty, while supporting a bloated bureaucracy that demands bribery for its minimal services. Into this mix, rising Islamic fundamentalism creates a rallying point for political and economic frustration, yielding rage and Islamist militancy attributable ultimately to local misgovernance. Though this anger's real source is thus local, its only feasible outlet is foreign. Arab autocrats have proven willing to crush Islamist rebellions by force, but they quietly encourage campaigns of anti-Israeli, anti-U.S. protest as means of redirecting Muslim rage at safer targets abroad. These safety valves enable successful domestic repression by venting its resistance outward toward

foreigners. Of course this is dangerous to the foreigners—and especially so once Osama bin Laden learned to weaponize Islamist resentment and harness it to a sweeping anti-Western terrorist program. Before bin Laden, the costs of tolerating autocratic misgovernance and the frustration-fueled, state-sanctioned anti-Americanism it bred were relatively modest. But after bin Laden, its costs are much higher. Without fundamental political reforms that would replace dysfunctional autocracy with legitimate governments able to meet the needs of their own people, the ultimate wellspring of Islamist terror would thus remain unmolested by even the most aggressive counterterrorist espionage or military campaign. If Islamist terror is to be ended, rather than merely managed or contained, then its political roots in Arab autocracy will almost certainly need removal, and this requires radical political change in the region.<sup>79</sup>

How is such change to be obtained? The administration's approach has been to rely on the catalytic effect of creating an exemplar democracy in the region itself: they argue that the presence of a true democracy in the heart of Arabia will compel other regimes to reform or be overthrown themselves. And the exemplar the administration has chosen is Iraq. By overthrowing Saddam and replacing him with a functioning democracy, they see the beginnings of a political reconstruction of the region that could end Islamist terror at its source.<sup>80</sup>

The problem is thus broader than just Iraq: the main purpose of creating a democracy in Iraq is to shape politics elsewhere in the region. Al Qaeda's strength comes chiefly from Saudis, Egyptians, Moroccans, and other non-Iraqi Arabs. If Islamist terror is to be eliminated at its source, it can only be via political reform in states other than just Iraq. An Iraqi example may lead spontaneously to peaceful reform elsewhere in the region—but it may not. And if not, then U.S. policy intervention elsewhere may be needed, too: success may ultimately require coercive regime change in other states.

Political engineering on this scale could easily go awry. It is far from clear whether stable democracy can be built from the ruins of a Ba'athist police state in Iraq, even with all the money and soldiers we can provide. And if democratization fails, the result could be dangerous instability. Historically, the most war-prone states are not autocracies—they are regimes in the early stages of transition from autocracy to democracy.<sup>81</sup> To multiply the opportunities for such unstable transitions across the region is to create a serious risk of major war. And internal conflict is an even greater danger: the removal of police-state autocracy also removes the repression that has kept internal ethnic conflict under control in much of the region. Chronic civil warfare amid the wreckage of overturned autocracies could derail democratization and substitute a region-wide version of Lebanon

or Somalia: if a democratic Iraq can catalyze reform elsewhere, so a failed Iraq could presumably export chaos to its neighbors. A region-wide Lebanon might well prove beyond our capacity to police, regardless of effort expended. And if so, then we will have replaced a region of police states with a region of warlords and chronic instability. This could easily prove to be an easier operating environment for terrorism than the police states it replaces. And the misery and resentment produced by anything like this outcome could accelerate, not retard, recruitment for al Qaeda or its successors.

Not only would this be risky, it would also surely be expensive. Any meaningful chance of success would require major American assistance. Not only would economic aid be needed on a massive scale, but American peacekeepers and warfighters would probably also be required. Iraq obviously is requiring much higher troop levels than the administration had projected before the war, and Iraqi oil wealth is providing less of the reconstruction expenditure than had been expected.<sup>82</sup> But Iraq is only a part of the real problem. If civil or cross-border warfare should accompany any of the other democratic transitions needed to erase the region's liberty deficit, then American troops could well be needed to quell the instability there, too. And to provide the needed troops and aid will be difficult with a chronic American federal budget deficit.

None of this is to suggest that success is impossible. But neither is it guaranteed—even if we mount the effort and spend the money needed to have a chance. Regime change on this scale is inherently risky and expensive.

But it is also necessary if the terror threat is to be rolled back to anywhere near elimination. A serious effort to reach goals at the ambitious end of the objectives spectrum requires political change in the Mideast—and to provide this on the needed scale is to accept major near-term risks and costs.

By contrast, much more limited means could suffice if our aims are limited to capping the terrorist threat at levels closer to today's. The key here is WMD acquisition, and especially the prospect of terrorists getting nuclear weapons. If al Qaeda got nuclear weapons, the terrorist threat would be radically worse than either today or September 10, 2001. A plausible goal for American grand strategy might be merely to prevent this—but without necessarily doing the things needed to eliminate al Qaeda altogether by removing its root causes.

Such a strategy might entail significant increases in funding for controlling fissile material and completed weapons (especially in the former Soviet Union); expanded use of permissive action links (PALs)

or other access controls on existing weapons (especially in new nuclear states); strengthened nonproliferation regimes; more aggressive monitoring of reactors; covert action to disrupt proliferation programs; and much more ambitious efforts to expand counter-biological weapon (BW) vaccine production and public health infrastructure. It might also use a combination of security guarantees, strengthened formal alliances, and economic incentives to discourage states from pursuing WMD programs whose products might be transferred to nonstate terrorists.<sup>83</sup>

The cost of such a strategy would be much lower than that of forcible regime change in a single state, much less across a region. Even a tripling of current expenditures for the Nunn-Lugar program of nuclear weapon control in the former Soviet Union, for example, would still cost less than 2 weeks of current operations in Iraq alone.<sup>84</sup> And unlike preemptive warfare, a strategy aimed at capping the terrorist threat by limiting WMD access would pose little downside risk of political instability or state failure via unsuccessful efforts at nation-building.

Prospects for success in this narrower mission are enhanced by the inherent difficulty of WMD acquisition. For nuclear weapons in particular, the relative scarcity of fissile material and extant weapons pose major hurdles to would-be WMD terrorists, and this scarcity facilitates control efforts by their opponents. The binding constraint for nuclear bomb construction is normally the material, which requires specialized facilities to produce and is held in comparatively modest quantities around the world. Aggressive efforts to bring the production facilities and existing stocks under tighter control can increase significantly the barriers to terrorists obtaining such material and fashioning a weapon from it. And today's completed nuclear weapons can, in principle, be accounted for and secured in ways that would make terrorist capture or illicit smuggling very difficult. As Ashton Carter recently put it:

To make a nuclear weapon, terrorists must get fissile materials, either plutonium or enriched uranium. But these materials do not occur in nature, and because they require building and operating uranium enrichment facilities or plutonium production reactors and reprocessing facilities, making them will remain beyond the reach of even large and well-organized terrorist groups for the foreseeable future. Therefore, terrorists must obtain fissile materials from governments, and relatively few governments have made such materials thus far . . . Nuclear terrorism, accordingly, must be stopped at the source, and the formula for doing so is simple and clear . . . No material. No bomb. No nuclear terrorism.<sup>85</sup>

BW proliferation could prove to be the greater challenge—especially if bioengineering techniques using recombinant DNA are directed at the

creation of new pathogens. Unlike nuclear weapons, BW can be produced using low-profile, dual-use technologies that are hard to distinguish from civilian pharmaceutical or food production, and are difficult to detect or interdict. And their low cost of production (by comparison with nuclear weapons) means that a wider range of actors could undertake such proliferation, at a much wider range of sites.<sup>86</sup>

Even BW, however, poses challenges to would-be proliferators. In practice, nonstate actors have to date had considerable difficulty fashioning and using such agents. In 1984 the Bagwan Shree Rajneesh cult poisoned a reservoir and restaurant salad bars in rural Oregon with salmonella bacteria; though several hundred were sickened, none were killed.<sup>87</sup> Aum Shinrikyo, probably the most successful WMD terrorist group to date, failed in at least three known attempts to cause casualties with botulinus toxin in Tokyo in April to June 1990.<sup>88</sup> With assets exceeding \$1 billion, a membership of over 40,000 which included accomplished Japanese and Russian scientists, contacts with the Russian KGB and Spetsnaz special forces, and access to a network of private laboratories, Aum Shinrikyo far exceeded the sophistication and resources of most nonstate terrorist groups.<sup>89</sup> Yet they still failed to induce mass casualties on a scale anything like what al Qaeda produced using hijacked airliners. In 2001, an unknown assailant killed five people and sickened 23 by impregnating letters with anthrax spores; although the perpetrator has not been identified, the extreme sophistication required to produce spores milled finely enough to produce airborne contamination by this means has led many investigators to believe that the agent could not have been produced outside a government weapons lab, whether in America or abroad.<sup>90</sup> Even so, the attacks caused only a handful of casualties. States, by contrast with nonstate terrorists, clearly can develop the needed expertise and production capability. But states are subject to some of the same coercive and persuasive levers that the international community can in principle bring to bear on nuclear proliferators: unlike terrorists, states can be deterred, inspected, induced, or coerced. And BW's effects are easier to defend against than are nuclear weapons'—vaccination programs and public health system mobilization can make an important difference in limiting the spread and virulence of BW releases. An aggressive effort to dissuade states from assisting terrorists in BW use, coupled with greatly expanded homeland defenses against BW attack, might reduce the danger of BW terrorism significantly.<sup>91</sup>

None of these methods are fool-proof; while they would reduce the odds of terrorists obtaining WMD, they would not eliminate them. But a strategy built around capping the threat via such means would probably yield a lower risk of terrorist WMD use in any given year, than a strategy



that sought to end the threat via forcible regime change across the Mideast. If the latter succeeded, it would radically reduce the danger of subsequent WMD use by terrorists. But if it failed, it would make the problem worse rather than better. A Mideast of failed states and chronic instability would be a proliferation nightmare. Not only would it provide a vast haven for terrorist planning cells and a massive recruitment base for al Qaeda, but it could engulf a number of active WMD sites and extant WMD weapon inventories. It is widely suspected that Iran and Syria have active biological and/or nuclear weapons programs. And Pakistan is a declared nuclear weapons state with an unquestionable inventory of actual weapons. Instability stemming from failed nation-building efforts elsewhere in the Mideast could easily spill over into Pakistan, whose stability is itself questionable under the best of conditions. And if so, then the odds of terrorists obtaining WMD would skyrocket.

The means required to pursue these contrasting goals of capping the terrorist threat, as opposed to eliminating it, are thus quite different. They are also mutually inconsistent—it is difficult to pursue them both at once and succeed. In particular, active pursuit of near-elimination undermines the means needed for suppression.

In part, this is because the anti-proliferation measures emphasized in suppression require multilateral action—yet the preemptive warfare needed to cut more deeply into the terrorist threat makes multilateral cooperation harder, for the reasons discussed in the previous section. A control regime for restricting nuclear material transfers, for example, is of no use if key suppliers opt out—to be effective, export controls must include all exporters. More broadly, a suppression strategy centered on antiproliferation depends on cooperation from other great powers, yet a deep-cut strategy built around preemptive regime change tends to reduce such cooperation.

Perhaps more important, preemptive regime change's failure modes make it difficult to change strategies in midstream and retreat to suppression if political reengineering fails. An antiproliferation approach would be much more effective with a Mideast of stable states; if regime change fails and key states collapse into chaos, then multilateral export controls, for example, could become irrelevant—if Pakistan collapses and its nuclear weapons disperse, then terrorists will have all the materials they need without importing them from the former Soviet Union. The further we travel down the road of preemptive regime change, the harder it becomes to retreat to suppression if things go awry—the more regimes we change, the greater the risk of instability if regime-change fails, and instability promotes WMD proliferation.

## The Costs of Strategic Ambiguity.

Ambiguous goals never promote strategic coherence. But heretofore, the costs of ambiguity have been relatively manageable. In effect, we could simply take aim at terrorism broadly and go as far as we could get toward eliminating it without ever setting a specific goal. If we fell short of complete elimination, then at least we would diminish terror as much as we could in the process. But a serious pursuit of near-elimination eventually requires the political reconstruction of the entire Mideast—and this reconstruction effort eventually imposes major costs that other plausible goals would not require, and which increasingly foreclose other goals as options.

The war in Iraq is quickly moving us to this point of decision. If regime change were cheap, easy, or low risk, then we could afford to pursue ambitious deep cuts in the terrorist threat without incurring heavy opportunity costs against other options, and without seriously aggravating nonterror threats—and thus, we could safely muddle through without ever really deciding on a specific strategy. Before the invasion of Iraq, it might have been possible to defend a supposition that regime change could be this easy. It is certainly not now. Regime change may yet succeed in Iraq, but if so, it will not be without major costs—and risks. And the longer we pursue this goal—even in Iraq, much less elsewhere in the region—the greater the cost, the greater the risk, and the harder it will become to change direction if we ultimately decide to settle for less ambitious ends.<sup>92</sup> The time has come to decide.

## RESOLVING THE AMBIGUITIES IN AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY

Two broad alternatives exist for resolving the ambiguities sketched above: rollback and containment.<sup>93</sup>

Rollback would make explicit the vague but bold ambition of current declaratory policy, *and accept the associated costs*. In particular, it would entail a continued—indeed increased—commitment to democratic nation-building in Iraq, and would follow this with muscular efforts to promote democracy elsewhere in the region—at the cost of further warfare elsewhere if necessary. The goal would be to reduce Islamist terrorism to negligible levels: to a severity or frequency no greater than that of pre-9/11 groups such as the ETA or Black September that few Americans thought worthy of a wartime footing. To do this would require a preclusive focus on terrorism, and would relegate the challenge of great power competition to a distant second place in which no significant opportunity costs against counterterror effectiveness would be accepted.

Containment would settle for more modest goals. It would aim at capping the terrorist threat at a painful but tolerable level while awaiting an eventual internal collapse of the Islamist terror movement. The key here would be combating WMD proliferation via concerted multilateral efforts to control existing materials, to prevent transfer of production technology, and to improve defenses against biological agents in particular. With no requirement to reconstruct the Mideast politically, this strategy would permit the United States to settle for stability in the region rather than true democracy. This in turn would permit an earlier withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, and would reduce the odds of other deployments or invasions elsewhere in the region. These steps would in turn tend to retard great power competition: the need for multilateral action to enforce nonproliferation regimes would encourage more benign interpretations of American intent; *ceteris paribus*, reduced expenditures for nation-building and warfighting would conduce to economic growth and prolong American economic predominance. Although the primary focus would still be Islamist terrorism, the means adopted to counter it would be less prone to worsen other threats, and could more easily accommodate institutionalist hedging strategies aimed at nonterror challenges.

Either alternative would provide an internally consistent resolution to the ambiguity of today's declaratory policy. Neither, however, is without serious disadvantages as well as important strengths—and neither can guarantee success.<sup>94</sup>

For rollback, the central disadvantages are its greater near-term risks and the higher costs needed to do it right. These risks are grave, and the costs are ultimately much higher than we now seem willing to bear.

Containment, by contrast, entails a cynicism that is distasteful at best, and poses domestic political management challenges regardless. A policy of stability in the Mideast aligns us with dictatorship and puts American power behind the preservation of police states whose inability to meet their peoples' legitimate needs gave rise to al Qaeda in the first place. A retreat to autocratic stability in Iraq would be particularly hard to defend, given our public commitment to democracy as a rationale for invasion, and the inevitable suffering our invasion imposed. To impose this suffering merely to replace one tyrant with another would be hard to justify. One could argue that overthrowing tyrants is properly their own people's job and not America's; we can usually decline tyrannicide as others' responsibility. But not in Iraq. By invading the country, we have taken responsibility for its governance. We may share that responsibility with the Iraqis, but to abdicate it altogether would incur an important moral cost in America's standing in the world, and in our ability to sustain domestic political consensus behind a strategy.

A second major disadvantage of containment is its inability to end the war. Eventually, it is likely that the internal contradictions of Islamist ideology (to borrow Kennan's phrase) will cause the movement to collapse on its own—the recent stirrings of democratic dissent in Iran, for example, suggest the possible long-term trajectory for Islamism elsewhere.<sup>95</sup> Islamist theocracy, especially on the medievalist lines advocated by Osama bin Laden, is not an ideology that can answer in the long run the political needs that have stimulated it in the short run. So it is reasonable to suppose that, if contained, our Islamist enemy will eventually collapse of its own weight, as the Soviet Union did in the Cold War. But there is no reason to expect this to happen soon, and containment offers little means of hastening this *denouement*. In Iran, Islamist theocracy has lasted a quarter-century already, and though the beginnings of an end may be discernable, it is debatable how successful this democratic resistance will be. Either way, Iranian theocracy is unlikely to be overthrown in the immediate future, and Iran is much further down this road than any other society in the region. If anything, containment's tolerance of secular autocracy in the Mideast would probably extend the natural lifespan of Islamist ideology by keeping it an abstract longing rather than an experienced reality for most Muslims.

In the long run, this inability to end the war could lead to a greater ultimate likelihood of WMD terrorism for containment than for rollback. By leaving the enemy in the field for the long term, containment would give al Qaeda many chances to beat its proliferation controls and acquire WMD in spite of them. No conceivable anti-proliferation program can be perfect; all have some chance of failure. The antiproliferation means outlined above can reduce the odds of WMD acquisition in any given year, perhaps to a very low level. But failure to eliminate the threat means the conflict will extend over many years. Even low probability events eventually occur, given enough trials; if we give al Qaeda enough opportunities, even a nearly fool-proof antiproliferation system would eventually fail. In the short term, containment would probably reduce the odds of WMD use, but in the long term, its cumulative risks could ultimately exceed rollback's.

Containment and rollback thus pose very different risks, and very different tradeoffs against nonterror challenges. Neither is risk free. But they imply very different distributions of risk over time. Rollback trades higher near-term risk of catastrophe for a chance to end the war in the foreseeable future and thereby cut the risk of any major Islamist terrorism dramatically thereafter. Containment trades a lower near-term risk of catastrophe for a steady-state condition of chronic non-WMD terrorism, and a long-term danger of al Qaeda eventually getting WMD and using

it. Neither can guarantee that WMD will not be used; neither can exclude some prospect of major non-WMD terrorism before the passing of Islamist ideology. Both offer a reasonable mechanism by which to obtain an explicitly specified goal. Where they differ is ultimately in the goals they seek—in the level of terrorist violence they will accept as tolerable—and the consequences this implies for our ability to hedge against other threats, and for the distribution of risk and cost between the near term and the long run.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Three years of post-9/11 strategic debate have left America with a combination of ambition and ambiguity. And whereas the costs of strategic ambiguity were relatively modest for the first 2 years of the War on Terror, the campaign in Iraq is now rapidly increasing the financial, human, and strategic opportunity costs of leaving basic choices unmade. Perhaps the most important of these ambiguities concerns our end-state goal for countering terrorism: should we insist on reducing this threat to a level as close to eradication as we can manage, or should we tolerate greater terrorist violence as a quasi-permanent condition?

The natural answers to this question imply the strategic alternatives of rollback and containment. Rollback accepts the implicit ambition of today's declaratory policy—and the high costs and near-term risks required to realize that ambition. Containment fills in the ambiguities in today's strategy with an explicit acceptance of noncatastrophic terror in order to avoid the near-term risks and costs of seriously seeking an end to Islamist terror altogether.

Neither strategy is unambiguously superior to the other. They each have important drawbacks—in particular, they each imply serious risks. For rollback, the chief risk is of near-term chaos resulting from failed political engineering in the Mideast—and the ensuing danger of Islamist terrorists obtaining WMD and using it against Americans. Rollback also involves heavy financial costs if done properly; it implies an elevated risk of additional military campaigns in the Mideast; and it aggravates the challenge of great power competition. Containment, by contrast, is hard to justify normatively and leaves Islamist terror organizations in the field long enough to pose a long-term risk of terrorist WMD use, even if the likelihood in any given year is low. It also, by definition, tolerates the greater terrorist violence associated with al Qaeda's long-term survival as the price of reducing the risk of near-term chaos in the effort to remake the Mideast politically.

These costs, benefits, and risks cannot be resolved analytically. The choice between rollback and containment turns on a series of value judgments. Should we prefer higher risk and cost now in order to get a chance at something closer to absolute security in the future? Or should we prefer lower risks and lower costs now, with a danger that sometime in the unspecified future al Qaeda might eventually hit a longshot chance and obtain WMD? How much security is enough? What risks and costs are appropriate to pursue it? And how should we balance risk today against risk in the possibly distant future? Analysis can identify these risks and costs, bound their magnitudes, and show how these vary and interact over time. But analysis cannot provide the value choices needed to select among them. The latter is a fundamentally political process. Indeed, it is perhaps the most important political responsibility of our elected officials in the defense domain.

My purpose here is thus not to prescribe a choice between rollback and containment—it is to advise those who must choose by clarifying the choices to be made, illuminating the strengths and weaknesses of the alternatives, and identifying the values at stake in the choice. There are no easy options for grand strategy in the aftermath of 9/11: something important must be sacrificed whichever way one chooses. But the failure to choose embodied in the ambiguity of today's grand strategy is fast becoming intolerable. For better or worse, we must decide.

## ENDNOTES

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strategic planning also directed war planners to consider categories of threat (e.g., “a South American country” or “two European continental powers”), rather than specific enemies. Adolf Carlson, *Joint U.S. Army-Navy War Planning on the Eve of the First World War: Its Origins and Its Legacy*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1998, pp. 13-16.

6. President George W. Bush, Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001. For subsequent characterizations, see, e.g., General Richard B. Myers, Remarks as Presented to the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, Nashville TN, August 31, 2004, available at <http://www.dtic.mil/jcs/chairman/040831NashvilleCofC.html>; General Peter Pace, “A Conversation with Peter Pace,” Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, February 17, 2004; General Peter Schoomaker, “Serving a Nation at War,” Testimony Before the House Armed Services Committee, April 7, 2001, available at: <http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstatementsandpressreleases/108thcongress/04-07-21Schoomaker.pdf>.

7. “Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.” Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans., New York: Oxford University Press, 1963 ed., p. 84.

8. This claim is based on official strategic documents available to the public: see references below.

9. This is an important shortcoming of “capabilities-based planning” (CPB). CPB directs defense planners to size and structure a military to respond to generic threat types rather than specific opponents. This reduces our ability to design a military force that can either exploit the specific weaknesses of any actual enemy, (since these are necessarily particular to the opponent), or to pit our potential strengths most effectively against those weaknesses. In a wartime environment with a special premium on getting the most out of the available resources, the inefficiencies associated with such generic, peacetime-like planning are particularly costly.

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11. *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2002, p. 5.

12. Statement as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld to the NATO North Atlantic Council, Brussels, Belgium, December 18, 2001, p. 2.

13. Remarks by then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Marriott Crystal Gateway, Arlington, Virginia, February 1, 2002, p. 2.

14. President George W. Bush, Address to Joint Session of Congress, September 20, 2001.

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17. Remarks by then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to the Conservative Political Action Conference, Marriott Crystal Gateway, Arlington Virginia, February 1, 2002, p. 2.

18. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, April 2004, Appendix B.

19. This is not to suggest that American foreign policy will not oppose the entire range of terror groups identified above, or still others unnamed, or that the United States will not take action to thwart their funding, prosecute their members, or obstruct their operations. America did this before 9/11, and will surely continue to do so regardless of our grand strategic choices for waging the war. There is an important difference, however, between such ordinary diplomatic and police activities and the waging of war, which implies levels of violence far beyond those of peacetime activity, and involves very different standards of evidence and proof in the use of force. Terrorists themselves surely recognize this difference: it is a very different matter to be the target of American warmaking (as was al Qaeda in Afghanistan) rather than American criminal investigation (as the IRA has been, for example, for many years). Identifying the enemy in a time of war is thus a critical distinction, even if it does not relieve those groups left off the enemy list from any American interference whatever.

20. *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2003, Appendix B, pp. 118, 120-122, 133.

21. Hezbollah has been more active against American targets than the others, but even Hezbollah has been focused primarily on Israel: *ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

22. Cf., e.g., Holger H. Herwig, "The Dynamics of Necessity: German Military Policy during the First World War," and Paul Kennedy, "Britain in the First World War," in Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, eds., *Military Effectiveness, Vol. I: The First World War*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988, pp. 80-115 and 31-79, respectively.

23. Vague definition of the enemy has other potential disadvantages as well. In particular, this degree of ambiguity complicates planning. Warmaking is inherently a sprawling, interagency undertaking, involving dozens of agencies and organizations and hundreds of thousands of people. How is this massively complex project to be coordinated when it is unclear who the enemy is?

24. Even here, though, the debate often miscasts the issue. Assessments of great power military potential are usually framed in terms of material wherewithal: it is the quantity and quality of weapons, microelectronic technology, or economic potential that receives the lion's share of attention. Yet there is good reason to believe that nonmaterial factors—such as training, tactics, or leadership—are more important determinants of real military outcomes, and thus real military power. Sound assessment of real military power requires the integration of material and nonmaterial factors in a determinate, empirically sound way: for a detailed discussion, see Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

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26. For more detailed articulations of similar arguments, see, e.g., Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; Robert Pape, "The World Pushes Back," *Boston Globe*, March 23, 2003, p. H1.

27. See, e.g., Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, September/October 2004, pp. 34-56; Robin Wright and Thomas E. Ricks, "US Faces Growing Fears of Failure," *Washington Post*, May 19, 2004, p. A1; Thomas L. Friedman, "Three Conversations Needed to Save Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, April 12, 2004; Francis Fukuyama, "The Neoconservative Moment," *The National Interest*, January 6, 2004; Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, "Iraq and U.S. Legitimacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, November/December 2004, pp. 18-32; also Christopher Gelpi, *The Power of Legitimacy: Assessing the Role of Norms in Crisis Bargaining*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

28. See, e.g., Roger Cliff, Sam J. Tangredi, and Christine E. Wormuth, "The Future of U.S. Overseas Presence," in Michele Flournoy, ed., *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America's Security*, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2001, ch. 9.

29. Japanese and Chinese holdings of U.S. Treasury debt are currently growing at the rates of \$26 billion and \$5 billion a month, respectively: Eduardo Porter, "Private Investors Abroad Cut their Investments in the U.S.," *New York Times*, October 19, 2004, p. C13. A single nation, Japan, now holds 16 percent of all outstanding U.S. Treasury Bonds: David R. Francis, "Losing Patience with U.S. Trade Deficit," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 2004, p. 17. For the fraction of all U.S. national debt held by foreigners, see U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2005: Analytical Perspectives*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004, Table 15-6, p. 235.

30. See, e.g., Andrew Cassel, "The Economy: Fill 'Er Up, and Curse the Euro's Strength," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 5, 2004, pp. C1ff.; David Streitfeld, "Dollar's Decline is Reverberating," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2004, pp. A1ff.; Michael Klare, "Policy and Bush's Second Term," *Washingtonpost.com*, November 9, 2004; Charles Grant, "Euro-Muscle," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2001, pp. B2ff.; Porter, "Private Investors Abroad Cut their Investments in the U.S.;" Francis, "Losing Patience with U.S. Trade Deficit."

31. See, e.g., Mark Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Lexington Books, forthcoming 2005; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd edition, New York: Longman, 2000.

32. Robert Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Don't Work," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Fall 1997, pp. 90-136.

33. See, e.g., Claude Barfield, "U.S. Steel Tariffs Give Safeguards a Bad Name," *Financial Times*, December 8, 2003. This experience reinforces an important point: whereas the sanctions debate tends to assume that the United States will be the enforcer, it can also be the target of sanctions imposed by others—and in fact, it has been. There is no reason to suppose that economic leverage cannot be employed by others against the United States.

34. Although the effectiveness of these measures is disputed: see, e.g., James Noren, "CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Economy," in Gerald K. Haines and Robert E. Leggett, eds.,

*Watching the Bear: Essays on the CIA's Analysis of the Soviet Union*, Washington, DC: CIA Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2003, ch. 2.

35. For introductions to the mercantilist tradition, see, e.g., Jacob Viner, "Power vs. Plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *World Politics* 1:1-29, 1948; Albert O. Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* 2d ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Joseph Grieco, *Cooperation Among Nations*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

36. Information is often cited as another crucial element of state power: the mnemonic "DIME," for Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic dimensions of power, is commonplace in the American defense planning community. America's ability to affect others' information through public diplomacy, however, is often exaggerated. In a world of proliferating, globalized communications media, there are many voices competing for attention. Many of these benefit from deep knowledge of local values and norms in their primary audience. American public diplomacy is just one among this cacophony of sources competing for audiences' attention—and it will often seem less in touch with its audience, given its necessarily greater cultural distance. More broadly, all great powers' efforts to use "information power" strategically must increasingly compete for attention with sophisticated local voices, and this may erode public diplomacy's efficacy as a tool of state power even as broadcast technology increases the role of information in politics. This is not an argument for abandoning public diplomacy or the informational dimension of power—all instruments should be used to their maximum potential. But it is an argument for caution in projecting the likely impact of public diplomacy in a world of increasingly diverse sources of public information. (The author is indebted to Prof. Peter Katzenstein of Cornell University for this observation.)

37. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979, p. 168. For a recent overview of the theory of balancing, see Jack S. Levy, "Balances and Balancing: Concepts, Propositions and Research Design," in John A. Vaquez and Colin Elman, eds., *Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2002, pp. 128-153.

38. Cf., e.g., James F. Hoge, Jr., "A Global Power Shift in the Making," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, July/August 2004, pp. 2-7; George J. Gilboy, "The Myth Behind China's Miracle," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, July/August 2004, pp. 33-48.

39. See, e.g., Harold Brown, Joseph W. Prueher, and Adam Segal, *Chinese Military Power: Independent Task Force Report*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2004; Nicholas R. Lardy, *Integrating China into the Global Economy*, Washington, DC: Brookings, 2002; Charles Wolf, Jr., et al., *Fault Lines in China's Economic Terrain*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2003, RAND MR-1686-NA/SRF; Charles Wolf, Jr., et al., *Asian Economic Trends and their Security Implications*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2003, RAND MR-1143-OSD/A; Hans Binnendijk and Ronald N. Montaperto, eds., *Strategic Trends in China*, Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1998; Carolyn Pumphrey, ed., *The Rise of China in Asia: Security Implications*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002.

40. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2002-3*, London: Oxford University Press, 2002; idem, *The Military Balance 2003-4*, London: Oxford University Press, 2003.

41. Cf., e.g., the discussions in David P. Calleo, "The Broken West," *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 3, Autumn 2004, pp. 29-38; James B. Steinberg, "An Elective Partnership: Salvaging Transatlantic Relations," *Survival*, Spring 2003, pp. 113-146; Ivo Daalder, "The End of

Atlanticism," *Survival*, Spring 2003, pp. 147-166; Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Knopf, 2003; Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era*, New York: Knopf, 2002; Philip Gordon, "Bridging the Atlantic Divide," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 1, January/February 2003, pp. 70-83; James Kitfield, "US to NATO: Change or Else," *National Journal*, October 12, 2002; Angela Stent and Lilia Shevtsova, "America, Russia, and Europe: a Realignment?" *Survival*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Winter 2002-3, pp. 121-134; Josef Joffe, "Axis of Envy," *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2002; James Thompson, "US Interests and the Fate of the Alliance," *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 4, Winter 2003-4, pp. 207-220; Philip Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004; Dominique Moisi, "Reinventing the West," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6, November/December 2003, pp. 67-73.

42. See, e.g., Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000; Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke, eds., *Parity and War*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

43. See, e.g., Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, pp. 24, 103, 146-147; George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, *Tacit Bargaining, Arms Races, and Arms Control*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990, ch. 3; Samuel Huntington, "Arms Races: Prerequisites and Results" in Robert Art and Kenneth Waltz, eds., *The Use of Force*, 4th edition, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993, pp. 85-118; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, January 1978, Vol.30, No.2, pp. 167-214.

44. On the role of multilateralism in economic sanction effectiveness, for example, see M. S. Daoudi and M. S. Dajani, *Economic Sanctions: Ideals and Experience*, Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, pp. 159-173; Margaret Doxey, *International Sanctions in Contemporary Perspective*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.

45. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government, February 2003, p. 1.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

47. Paul Wolfowitz, speech to the Munich Conference on European Security Policy, Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich Germany, February 2, 2002, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20020202-depsecdef1.html> (emphasis added).

48. Douglas Feith, as quoted in Jeremy Feiler, "'Battle of Ideas' Central to War on Terrorism, Feith Says," *InsideDefense.com*, November 24, 2003. For a similar formulation, see the 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, pp. 23-24.

49. See, e.g., Robin Dougherty, "A New Anarchy on the High Seas," *Boston Globe*, May 30, 2004, p. D8; Ellen Nakashima and Alan Sipress, "Singapore Goes it Alone in Maritime Security Drill," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2004, pp. A12ff.; Office of the Undersecretary for Global Affairs, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, rev. June 2003, Department of State Publication 11057; Todd S. Purdum, "Several U.S. Allies Criticized in Powell Report on Slave Trading," *New York Times*, June 6, 2002, pp. A15ff.; Colum Lynch, "U.S. Urges Aid to Spur Peace in Sudan," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2004, pp. A21ff.; Emily Wax, "In Sudan, A Sense of Abandonment," *Washington Post*, November 16, 2004, pp. A1ff.

50. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, p. 13.

51. Elizabeth Arias, et al., "Deaths: Final Data for 2001," *U.S. Centers for Disease Control National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 52, No. 3, September 18, 2003, Table 10, which lists 4,491 American deaths from peptic ulcers and 3,454 from malnutrition.

52. The bombings of the USS *Cole*, the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Khobar Towers, Pan Am Flight 103, and the initial World Trade Center attack of 1993, for example, all long predated 9/11, and all were organized products of international terrorist groups that had access to state support in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

53. Such threats may suffice to coerce concession without actual warfare—a threat does not necessarily imply a war. And not all threats will be carried out, even without concessions from the target (especially where the threat is implicit or indirect). *Ceteris paribus*, however, the more frequent the threat, the more frequent the war: a policy that relies on such threats is likely to yield a higher incidence of warfare against terrorist sponsors than one that does not.

54. See, e.g., Kier Lieber and Gerard Alexander, “Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Isn’t Pushing Back,” Paper prepared for delivery at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 2-5, 2004; Stephen Walt, “Keeping the World ‘Off-Balance’: Self-Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy,” in G. John Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002; Josef Joffe, “Who’s Afraid of Mr. Big?” *National Interest*, Summer 2001, pp. 43-52; Robert W. Tucker, “The End of a Contradiction?” *National Interest*, Fall 2002, pp. 5-7; James Chance, “Avoiding Empire,” *National Interest*, Fall 2002, pp. 21-23.

55. Andrew Kohut *et al.*, *A Year After Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists*, Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, March 16, 2004, p. 6. In each country, opinion of America has improved since the immediate aftermath of the war, March 2003, but in no case has it reached the prewar levels of summer 2002: *ibid.*

56. Tom Hundley and Michael Martinez, “Voters in Spain Oust U.S. Ally; Anger over Iraq War, Blasts Helps Socialists,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 2004, p. 1; Keith B. Richburg, “Madrid Attacks May Have Targeted Election; Wiretaps Bolster Theory That Blasts Were Timed to Hurt Chances of Leader Who Backed Iraq War,” *Washington Post*, October 17, 2004, p. A16.

57. More broadly, most great powers see the terrorist threat much less gravely than does the United States, and this divergence in threat perception makes American energy in counterterrorist warfare seem less explicable and less benign. For most other great powers, terrorism is an ugly fact of life, but not an acute crisis warranting war as a solution. This difference in perception is rooted in a variety of historical and structural differences, but its consequence is to magnify the negative effects of maximum counterterrorist exertion for the benign impression of American intent that underlies the failure to date of others to balance American power.

58. Richard Opiel, “Congressional Unit Analyzes Military Costs in Iraq,” *New York Times*, November 1, 2003; Tim Weiner, “A Vast Arms Buildup, Yet Not Enough for Wars,” *New York Times*, October 1, 2004.

59. *Estimated Costs of Continuing Operations in Iraq and Other Operations of the Global War on Terrorism*, Washington, DC: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, June 25, 2004, p. 3.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 7-8.

61. See <http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GDP.pdf>, and assuming nonzero GDP growth in 2004.

62. See *Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables*, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2005/pdf/hist.pdf>.

63. *An Analysis of the President's Budgetary Proposals for FY 2005*, Washington, DC: U.S. Congressional Budget Office, March 2004, available at: <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?inde x=1944&sequence=0>. The White House's most recent projection for FY 2004 is slightly lower, at \$440 billion: see Dana Milbank, "White House Predicts 2004 Deficit Of \$445 Billion—the Biggest Ever," *Washington Post*, July 31, 2004, p. A02.

64. See, e.g., C. Fred Bergsten, "Foreign Economic Policy for the Next President," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, March/April 2004, pp. 88-101, at p. 92; Peter G. Peterson, "Riding for a Fall," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, September/October 2004, pp. 111-125. In fact, in many third world countries, deficits of this magnitude have produced acute crises leading to sweeping financial crashes: *ibid.*

65. See, e.g., Glenn Kessler, "Right-Leaning Policy Won a Nickname: Reaganomics," *Washington Post*, June 6, 2004, pp. A27ff.; David R. Francis, "How Moves Abroad can Force Dollar's Dive," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 10, 2003, p. 17ff.

66. See, e.g., Andrew Cassel, "The Economy: Fill 'Er Up, and Curse the Euro's Strength," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 5, 2004, pp. C1ff.; David Streitfeld, "Dollar's Decline is Reverberating," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2004, pp. A1ff.; Michael Klare, "Policy and Bush's Second Term," *Washingtonpost.com*, November 9, 2004; Charles Grant, "Euro-Muscle," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2001, pp. B2ff.; Porter, "Private Investors Abroad Cut their Investments in the U.S.;" Francis, "Losing Patience with U.S. Trade Deficit."

67. On multilateralism and cooperation, see, especially, G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; also, e.g., Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go it Alone*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; Josef Joffe, "Who's Afraid of Mr. Big," *The National Interest*, Summer 2001, pp. 43-52; Lisa Martin, "Interests, Power and Multilateralism," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, Autumn 1992, pp. 675-792; Beth C. Yarbrough, and Robert M. Yarbrough, "International Institutions and the New Economics of Organizations," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, 1990, pp. 235-259; *inter alia*. An interesting gap in the large (and growing) literature on multilateralism and cooperation, however, concerns relative magnitudes. It is widely agreed that multilateralist policies induce some increase in cooperation from other states. Many conservatives, however, see the gain as small relative to the cost; most liberals expect the opposite. Yet there is no systematic analysis of the relative magnitudes of multilateralist constraint and cooperative payoff in the scholarly literature, nor is there any treatment of the conditions under which this magnitude might be larger as opposed to smaller. This gap is an important shortcoming in this literature as a basis for policy prescription.

68. See, e.g., James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3, September 1994, pp. 577-592; the seminal analysis of this "costly signaling" phenomenon is Michael A. Spence, "Job Market Signaling," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 87, 1973, pp. 355-374.

69. Note that this is not to suggest that other powers are any less (or more) self-interested than the United States. The importance of costly signals lies in communicating to states whether their interests will be served by another's actions—not whether their motives are more (or less) pure or altruistic than ours.

70. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes;" Spence, "Job Market Signaling." Of course, many forms of cooperative alliance behavior *increase* military effectiveness by inducing the assistance of others—by ensuring overflight or transit rights, by affording diplomatic support, by providing for allied troops to augment

one's own, for example. While valuable, however, these behaviors only convey meaningful signals of intent when they incur cost on the actor, not when they convey benefit.

71. In principle, heavy spending to counter terror could be accommodated without a tax increase or increased deficits by cutting government spending elsewhere. In practical terms, this is highly unlikely. The Bush administration, for example, has *increased* nondefense "discretionary" expenditures since 2001, not decreased them: *Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables*, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2005/pdf/hist.pdf>.

72. On the relationship between defense expenditure and economic performance in developed states, generally, see, e.g., Todd Sandler and Keith Hartley, *The Economics of Defense*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, ch. 8; Lee D. Olvey, James R. Golden and Robert C. Kelly, *The Economics of National Security*, Wayne, NJ: Avery, 1984, ch. 8; on defense expenditure and American long-term economic growth in particular, see Chi Huang and Francis W. Hoole, "Military Burden and Economic Hegemonic Decline: The Case of the United States," in Alex Mintz, ed., *The Political Economy of Military Spending in the United States*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 238-260. The majority view in this literature is that, for developed states, defense expenditure's marginal effects on growth are modest but negative, and most significant in the long run. For a well-known assertion of more substantial effects, see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York: Random House, 1987. For less developed countries, on the other hand, the evidence suggests a variety of effects depending on the peculiarities of the states concerned. See, especially, A. Chowdhury, "A Causal Analysis of Defense Spending and Economic Growth," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, 1991, pp. 80-97; R. Ram, "Defense Expenditure and Economic Growth," in K. Hartley and T. Sandler, eds., *Handbook of Defense Economics*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1995, pp. 251-273; Steve Chan, "The Impact of Defense Spending on Economic Performance: A Survey of Evidence and Problems," *Orbis*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Summer 1985, pp. 403-434.

73. Don Van Natta, Jr., and Leslie Wayne, "Al Qaeda Seeks to Disrupt U.S. Economy, Experts Warn," *New York Times*, August 2, 2004, pp. 12ff.; Patrick Olsen and Molly Marinik, "Bin Laden's Vow: Bleed U.S. Economy," *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 2004, p. 12.

74. Gail Makinen, coordinator, *The Economic Effects of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment*, Washington, DC: U.S. Congressional Research Service, September 27, 2002, p. 58. See also former Undersecretary of Commerce Robert Shapiro, "Al Qaeda and the GDP," *Slate*, February 28, 2003; Robert Looney, "Economic Costs to the United States Stemming From the 9/11 Attacks," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 1, No. 6, August 2002.

75. A major WMD attack would pose stiffer economic costs than even a severe conventional strike: some have estimated, for example, that a 10 kiloton nuclear explosion in downtown Manhattan might cause perhaps \$1 trillion in economic damage: Nicholas Kristof, "A Nuclear 9/11," *New York Times*, March 10, 2004.

76. See, e.g., Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Knopf, 2003; Andrew Moravcsik, "Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4, July-August 2003, pp. 74-89; Jonathan Stevenson, "How Europe and America Defend Themselves," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2, March-April 2003, pp. 75-90.

77. Moravcsik, "Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain."

78. See, e.g., Robert Block and David Cloud, "Experts Reassess Al Qaeda's Strength: Extremist Network's Leadership, Once Thought Crippled, Is Constantly Replenished," *Wall*

*Street Journal*, August 16, 2004, p. 4; Owais Tohid, "Next Wave Of Al Qaeda Leadership," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 2004, pp. 1ff.; Zahid Hussain and Jay Solomon, "Al Qaeda Gaining New Support," *Wall Street Journal*, August 19, 2004, p. 11.

79. For more detailed articulations of this argument, see, e.g., Fareed Zakaria, "The Politics of Rage: Why Do They Hate Us?" *Newsweek*, October 15, 2001, pp. 22ff.; *idem*, "How to Save the Arab World," *Newsweek*, December 24, 2001, pp. 22ff.; *idem*, "Bush, Rice and The 9/11 Shift," *Newsweek*, December 16, 2002, pp. 35ff.; *idem*, "How to Wage War," *Newsweek*, April 21, 2003, pp. 38ff.; Thomas L. Friedman, "Fighting Bin Ladenism," *New York Times*, November 6, 2001, p. A21; *idem*, "Hama Rules," *New York Times*, September 21, 2001, p. A35; *idem*, "Breaking the Circle," *New York Times*, November 16, 2001, p. A25; *idem*, "Wall of Ideas," *New York Times*, March 3, 2002, Sec. 4, p. 15; Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York: Modern Library, 2003.

80. See, e.g., "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and the Middle East," Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, November 6, 2003; "President Speaks to the United Nations General Assembly," Remarks by the President at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, September 21, 2004; "A Strategic Approach to the Challenge of Terrorism," Remarks as prepared for delivery to RAND by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Grand Hyatt, Washington, DC, September 8, 2004; "Defense, Democracy and the War on Terrorism," Remarks as prepared for delivery by Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, April 22, 2004; Thomas Ricks, "Holding their Ground: As Critics Zero In, Paul Wolfowitz is Unflinching on Iraq Policy," *Washington Post*, December 23, 2003, p. C1. On some of the limitations of more modest liberalizing strategies, see Daniel Brumberg, *Democratization Versus Liberalization in the Arab World: Dilemmas and Challenges for U.S. Foreign Policy*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, forthcoming. For a formal analysis of the causal dynamics that might underlie the spread of democracy from Iraq to other states in the region, see Lars-Eric Cederman and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Conquest and Regime Change: An Evolutionary Model of the Spread of Democracy and Peace," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, 2004, pp. 603-629.

81. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

82. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Testimony Before the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, March 27, 2003; Michael R. Gordon with Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Plans to Reduce Forces In Iraq, With Help of Allies," *New York Times*, May 3, 2003, pp. A1ff.; Michael R. Gordon, "Allies to Begin Seizing Weapons from Most Iraqis," *New York Times*, May 20, 2003, pp. A1ff.; Christopher Dickey, "The Cost," *Newsweek*, July 21, 2003, pp. 28ff.; Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. Troop Level In Iraq To Grow," *Washington Post*, December 2, 2004, pp. 1ff.

83. See, e.g., Ashton B. Carter, "How to Counter WMD," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, September/October 2004, pp. 72-85; Graham T. Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe*, New York: Times Books, 2004; Lee Feinstein and Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A Duty to Prevent," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 1, January/February 2004, pp. 136-151; Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998; Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001; Charles D. Ferguson, et al., *The Four Faces of Nuclear Terrorism*, Monterey: Monterey Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2004; Graham T. Allison, et al., *Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy*:



*Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996; Matthew Bunn, Anthony Wier, and John P. Holdren, *Controlling Nuclear Warheads and Materials: A Report Card and Action Plan*, Washington, DC: Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University, 2003; Joseph Cirincione, ed., *Repairing the Regime: Preventing the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, New York: Routledge, 2000; Philipp C. Bleek, *Global Cleanout: An Emerging Approach to the Civil Nuclear Material Threat*, Cambridge: Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2004; Peter Stein and Peter Feaver, *Assuring Control of Nuclear Weapons: The Evolution of Permissive Action Links*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989.

84. For Nunn-Lugar program expenditures, see, e.g., Amy F. Woolf, *Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Programs: Issues for Congress*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 6, 2002, CRS 97-1027F, p. 1.

85. Ashton B. Carter, "How to Counter WMD," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, September/October 2004, pp. 72-85 at pp. 76, 77. Of course, production controls cannot prevent completed weapons from being transferred to terrorists. Aggressive control of existing weapons would be required for any production control regime to be meaningful.

86. Chemical weapons, while a potential terror threat, are widely considered a lesser challenge than nuclear or biological weapons. See, e.g., Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

87. Thomas J. Torok, et al., "A Large Community Outbreak of Salmonellosis Caused by Intentional Contamination of Restaurant Salad Bars," in Joshua Lederberg, ed., *Biological Weapons: Limiting the Threat*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, pp. 167-184; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 121.

88. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 126. Their better-known attack in the Tokyo subway using chemical weapons (sarin nerve gas) proved more lethal, killing a dozen commuters and sickening several thousand: *ibid.*, p. 121.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-127.

90. Frank James, "FBI Hits Wall in Anthrax Investigation," *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 2004, pp. 9ff.; Marilyn W. Thompson, "The Pursuit of Steven Hatfill," *Washington Post Sunday Magazine*, September 14, 2003, pp. 6ff.; Keith Rhodes, *Issues Associated with Anthrax Testing at the Wallingford Facility*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accounting Office, May 19, 2003.

91. On BW countermeasures, see, e.g., Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, especially ch. 5; Lederberg, *Biological Weapons*. For a more pessimistic view, see Christopher F. Chyba and Alex L. Greninger, "Biotechnology and Bioterrorism: An Unprecedented World," *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Summer 2004, pp. 143-162.

92. The decision has been made to pursue forcible democratization in Iraq—but not yet elsewhere. And it is always possible that policy could change even for Iraq: it is not inconceivable that the administration could eventually opt for a fallback position of stability in Iraq as opposed to full democracy. This is not current policy, but even strongly held policies can change under the pressure of future events.

93. My usage here deliberately parallels the Cold War debate between advocates of containment and rollback vis-à-vis Soviet communism. See, e.g., John Lewis Gaddis,

*Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 128-129, 155-156.

94. Either rollback or containment would need to be accompanied by a more specific identification of the enemy to provide a fully coherent articulation of national grand strategy. In principle, either rollback or containment could be practiced against a broader or narrower target. The long-term cost-limiting focus of containment would encourage a narrower definition of the enemy; on the other hand, its emphasis on antiproliferation encourages a broad effort, given the range of actors who might either use WMD themselves or act as conduits for its transfer. Conversely, rollback's necessary acceptance of greater cost and more energetic effort lends itself to a broader, more ambitious definition of the enemy; yet its very ambition counsels effort to limit the scope of its application in order to afford greater traction versus the targets against which it is ultimately directed.

95. See, e.g., Shahram Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002, Adelphi Paper No. 342; Afshin Molavi, "Iran's Young Are Restless Under Islam," *Washington Post*, December 28, 1999, pp. A17ff; "Iran: Crisis and Consensus," in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey, 1999/2000*, London: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 174-182. Of course, it is far from clear that these stirrings will produce real reform; many recent assessments have tended toward the pessimistic. See, e.g., Dan De Luce, "Not Much of an Opening in the Mullahs' Robes," *Washington Post*, November 21, 2004, p. B2; Ray Takeyh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "Pragmatism in the Midst of Iranian Turmoil," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Autumn 2004, pp. 33ff.; "Iran: Domestic Retrogression and International Scrutiny," in International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey, 2003/4*, London: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 183-196.