



## **POLICY ROUNDTABLE:**

# **THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATIVE FOREIGN POLICY**

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## 1. The Future of Conservative Foreign Policy

By Colin Dueck

The Trump era has triggered an intense, yet useful discussion on the political right and center-right about the proper direction of American foreign policy. Conservatives within the United States — like Americans generally — have oscillated between realist and idealist interpretations of world affairs, just as they have between military intervention and non-intervention, always trying to find the right balance. But American conservatives have also made these choices in their own characteristic ways. In particular, a recurring tension has long existed between placing emphasis on national versus international priorities. Conservative nationalists have tended to stress U.S. sovereignty,<sup>1</sup> while conservative internationalists have tended to stress the need for U.S. strategic engagement overseas.<sup>2</sup> These two emphases are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and at times have been compatible. But the 2016 Trump presidential campaign had the effect of highlighting the differences, rather than the commonalities, and, at least at the level of elite opinion, these differences have yet to subside.

There is a wide range of opinion among conservative foreign policy experts over the wisdom of President Donald Trump’s international approach. Nor do these opinions always fall along predictable factional lines. For example, there are GOP foreign policy realists who

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<sup>1</sup> For related arguments, see John Fonte and John O’Sullivan, “The Return of American Nationalism,” *National Review*, Nov. 18, 2016, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/11/donald-trumps-win-american-nationalism-returns/>; Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005); Julian Koo and John Yoo, *Taming Globalization: International Law, the US Constitution, and the New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Jeremy Rabkin, *Law Without Nations? Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Various definitions can be found in Thomas Knock, *To End All Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 55–58; Charlie Laderman, “Conservative Internationalism: An Overview,” *Orbis* 62, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2017.11.009>; Paul Miller, *American Power and Liberal Order* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016); and Henry Nau, *Conservative Internationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

believe Trump's international direction to be mostly sound, and GOP foreign policy realists who disagree.<sup>3</sup> There are neoconservatives who largely support the president's approach, and neoconservatives who do not.<sup>4</sup> There are anti-interventionists who like the president's basic direction, and anti-interventionists who don't.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, some of these differences go straight to the heart of the matter. Indeed, the entire history of the U.S. conservative intellectual movement, beginning in the 1950s, has in a way been a series of attempted purges, redefinitions, or excommunications of one view or another that were considered as being outside the permissible bounds.<sup>6</sup> As it turns out, however, the great majority of conservative GOP voters say they support the Trump administration's foreign policy approach.<sup>7</sup> This raises an interesting question: Can the intellectuals excommunicate the voters? Probably not.

What then is the role of conservative intellectuals in a populist era? One answer is to try and provide foreign policy recommendations and principles, and foster a deeper understanding of the issues, whether or not it is politically popular. Another is to listen to the concerns of conservative voters, in the realization the public may understand something that the intellectuals do not. It may even be possible to do both of these things at the same time. But regardless of which path is pursued, conservative intellectuals will first need to acknowledge that, as an empirical historical reality, there is more than one specific way of

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<sup>3</sup> Randall Schweller, "Three Cheers for Trump's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 5 (September/October 2018), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2018-08-13/three-cheers-trumps-foreign-policy>; Dov Zakheim, "Trump's Perilous Path," *National Interest*, June 18, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/trumps-perilous-path-26325>.

<sup>4</sup> Elliott Abrams, "Trump the Traditionalist," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 4 (July/August 2017), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-06-13/trump-traditionalist>; Robert Kagan, *The Jungle Grows Back* (New York: Knopf, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Buchanan, "Trump Calls Off Cold War II," *American Conservative*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/buchanan/trump-calls-off-cold-war-ii/>; Curt Mills, "A Year On, Foreign Policy Restrainers Assess the Trump Administration," *National Interest*, Nov. 7, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/year-foreign-policy-restrainers-assess-the-trump-23088>.

<sup>6</sup> George Hawley, *Right-Wing Critics of American Conservatism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), chap. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Monthly Harvard-Harris Poll*, The Harris Poll, October 2018, [https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HHP\\_Oct2018\\_Topline\\_Memo\\_RegisteredVoters.pdf](https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HHP_Oct2018_Topline_Memo_RegisteredVoters.pdf).

defining conservative foreign policy — and that the debate between these various options cannot be constructively advanced without first accepting the possibility of honest disagreement between intelligent people.

It is in this spirit that the *Texas National Security Review* convenes this particular roundtable, drawing from a wide range of notable foreign policy voices on this topic. Our contributors each represent their own distinct point of view, offering analysis, predictions, and/or recommendations of their own. The purpose of this opening essay is not to offer a thunderous statement about what conservative foreign policy should or will be. Rather, it is simply to prompt and provoke broader discussion and debate, by pointing out certain historical patterns, current tendencies, and possible future directions.

### *Past Examples*

Any judgment on the future of conservative foreign policy necessarily rests upon a judgment regarding both its past and its present. Conservatism in America is not identical with the Republican Party, but over a period of many years it has become more closely associated with it. The GOP has been America's more rightward political party going back at least to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal era, if not earlier, and social or cultural traditionalism has since been layered on as an added point of difference with Democrats.<sup>8</sup> To discuss conservative foreign policy over the past century is, therefore, to discuss Republican foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> And here, conservatives have more than one historical model upon which to draw. These models tend to focus on differing presidencies, but are not limited to them. Or, to put it another way, when reviewing the history of conservative foreign policy one must ask: What past U.S. foreign policy leaders are today's conservatives supposed to emulate? Ronald Reagan? Either Bush presidency? Richard Nixon? Dwight

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018); David LEEGE et al., *The Politics of Cultural Differences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 27–28, 254–58; Gary Miller and Norman Schofield, “The Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions in the US,” *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 3 (September 2008): 433–50, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592708081218>; and James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1983), chaps. 8–12, 16–17.

<sup>9</sup> Colin Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and US Foreign Policy since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Eisenhower? Or should future conservatives look to even earlier examples of a more detached U.S. approach?

Conservatism as a self-conscious intellectual-political movement within the United States only coalesced after World War II, under the leadership of public figures such as William F. Buckley.<sup>10</sup> But of course a range of recognizably conservative U.S. foreign policy options existed long before that. In the 1920s, for example, Republican presidents from Warren Harding to Herbert Hoover pursued an international approach based upon U.S. economic nationalism together with strict limitations against American military commitments overseas.<sup>11</sup> This approach had certain serious, inherent weaknesses, but was politically very popular in its day.

Congressional Republicans such as Sen. Robert Taft (R-OH) argued for the continuation of a non-interventionist approach well into World War II.<sup>12</sup> An opposing faction of Republican internationalists rose to prominence during the great foreign policy debate of 1940–41, calling for increased U.S. aid to Great Britain to help fight Nazi Germany. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and Hitler’s declaration of war on the United States, ended that particular debate. But Taft and other Midwestern conservatives continued to favor limitations on America’s postwar international commitments, even as the Soviet Union advanced its influence over Eastern Europe during and after Hitler’s defeat.<sup>13</sup>

Many GOP conservatives remained profoundly skeptical of the need for broad, expansive multilateral commitments in the late 1940s. It was only a fierce anti-Communism that convinced these Republicans of the need to adopt a forward strategic posture. Taft himself outlined an alternative foreign policy strategy in 1950–51, one that emphasized U.S. airpower and anti-Communist rollback, rather than indefinite containment via major

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<sup>10</sup> George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006 edition), chap. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Hoover, *Memoirs, Volume II: The Cabinet and the Presidency, 1920-1933* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1952), 28, 70, 81–82, 330–332, 366, 377.

<sup>12</sup> Clarence Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition, and Party in US Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 2–6, 9–31, 36–38.

<sup>13</sup> Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft*, 77–90, 112–32.

American commitments on land.<sup>14</sup> Eisenhower — Taft’s opponent for the 1952 Republican nomination — did not entirely disagree with this emphasis. But both as candidate and as president, Eisenhower combined it with underlying reassurances to U.S. allies. It was under Eisenhower that most American conservatives became reconciled, in practical terms, to a genuinely global U.S. foreign policy role.<sup>15</sup>

The Republican right’s acceptance of a forward U.S. role in combatting Communism did not indicate a full acceptance of the liberal internationalist policy menu. Far from it. Early Cold War conservatives such as Buckley and Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) argued for rollback rather than containment, U.S. national sovereignty rather than multilateral institutions, and U.S. military strength rather than foreign economic aid programs.<sup>16</sup> Goldwater’s capture of the 1964 Republican nomination, along with his subsequent general election defeat, revealed the political weight of these arguments on the right, as well as a continuing inability to win the presidency itself.

In the wake of the Vietnam War, Nixon, with his adviser Henry Kissinger, offered a very different conservative foreign policy approach — one based upon great power balancing, realpolitik, and limited U.S. retrenchment alongside tactical bolstering of American positions.<sup>17</sup> This approach had some practical successes, but, in turn, invited its own

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Taft, *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1951), 11–23, 39, 47–66, 73–87, 100–120.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 47, 96–108, 139–46; Aaron Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 115–25, 130–33; Douglas Irwin and Randall Kroszner, “Interests, Institutions, and Ideology in Securing Policy Change: The Republican Conversion to Trade Liberalization After Smoot-Hawley,” *Journal of Law and Economics* 42, no. 2 (October 1999): 643–74, <https://doi.org/10.1086/467437>; and Gary Reichard, *The Reaffirmation of Republicanism: Eisenhower and the Eighty-Third Congress* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 28–68, 87–96, 227–28.

<sup>16</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., “The Magazine’s Credenda,” *National Review*, Nov. 19, 1955, <https://www.nationalreview.com/1955/11/our-mission-statement-william-f-buckley-jr/>; Barry M. Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, ed. C.C. Goldwater (1960; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 6–19, 27–31, 37, 53–65.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1979), 9–48, 55–61, 69, 116–19, 127–30, 195, 265–69, 535, 765, 1089, 1132–34, 1250–55; Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, rev. ed. (1978; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 51, 340–341, 344–51, 393–94, 551–80, 618, 697, 701–2, 725–26, 743.

critique from both left and right. By the mid-1970s, a growing number of conservatives felt that superpower détente had benefitted the Soviet Union more than the United States. California Gov. Ronald Reagan became the leading spokesman for this critique, adding his own criticisms as well.

Reagan was a heartfelt anti-Communist hawk who recoiled from the concept of mutual assured destruction, while believing that the Soviet Union had unappreciated vulnerabilities.<sup>18</sup> After winning the presidency in 1980, he pursued an energetic strategy to pressure the Soviet Union and its allies, openly proclaiming the superiority of the democratic model. At the same time, in practice, Reagan was very careful not to overextend U.S. forces in direct, protracted, large-scale warfare.<sup>19</sup> In the end, his anti-Soviet pressure campaign succeeded, allowing George H.W. Bush to manage the Cold War's denouement with impressive professionalism and skill.<sup>20</sup>

For conservatives, the collapse of international Communism opened up the possibility of completely new directions in U.S. foreign policy. Former Nixon speechwriter Pat Buchanan, in particular, called for “a new nationalism” through a series of presidential campaigns emphasizing trade protection, immigration restriction, military non-intervention, and an “America first” approach.<sup>21</sup> In the short term, however, broad satisfaction with the GOP's performance in the Cold War seemed to argue for the maintenance of America's international leadership role. Buchanan would foretell more long-term trends.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005), 16, 22–27, 61–72.

<sup>19</sup> “U.S. National Security Strategy,” The White House, May 20, 1982, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/archives/reference/scanned-nsdds/nsdd32.pdf>. See also John Arquilla, *The Reagan Imprint* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 38–43, 51–53, 227–35; Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 188–202; and Peter Rodman, *More Precious than Peace: The Cold War and the Struggle for the Third World* (New York: Scribner, 1994), 197, 317–23.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Buchanan, “America First – and Second, and Third,” *National Interest*, no. 19 (Spring 1990), 77–82; Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012), 157.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush, in his campaign for the presidency in 2000, ran well within the mainstream conservative approach at that time, emphasizing U.S. military strength, international alliances, free trade agreements, and the dangers of nation-building exercises overseas.<sup>22</sup> But after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Bush became convinced of the need for a U.S. policy shift in the direction of assertive counter-terrorism efforts, preventive counter-proliferation strikes, and a Middle East freedom agenda centered on the invasion and democratization of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Bush brought most American conservatives along with him in this shift, despite increased discontent during the course of his second term.

One provisional conclusion to draw from the above examples is that every single Republican president has struck a somewhat different balance between national versus international concerns, realist versus idealist approaches, and interventionist versus non-interventionist tendencies, each defined according to the circumstances of the moment. And past Republican presidents have had a remarkable ability, in this way, to rework the very definition of American conservatism on foreign policy issues, by bringing their party along with them.

## **The Trump Phenomenon**

Barack Obama's electoral success in 2008, running against the Iraq war, returned conservatives to the role of the opposition, and gave them time to reflect on foreign policy fundamentals. At the elite level, Republican internationalists continued to predominate on national security issues, including in the 2012 Mitt Romney campaign. Most grassroots conservatives agreed that Obama's counter-terror approach was unsatisfactory. But beneath the surface, there was growing discontent at the base of the party with a whole host of international policy-related issues, including immigration, pro-democracy

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<sup>22</sup> George W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism" and "A Period of Consequences," in *The George W. Bush Foreign Policy Reader*, ed. John W. Dietrich (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 22-31; and Alexander Moens, *The Foreign Policy of George W. Bush* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 60-68, 87-117.



interventions in the Muslim world, and the downside of economic globalization.<sup>23</sup> A political opening existed for a Republican nationalist able to thread the needle by voicing these concerns without seeming weak on terrorism.

A common assumption among journalists through much of the Obama era was that the only real alternative to existing GOP foreign policy ideas lay in the libertarian stance of former Texas congressman Ron Paul and his son, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky. However, Trump picked the lock of the 2016 Republican presidential primary, running on a highly unusual platform that emphasized nationalist rather than libertarian themes. Like the Pauls, Trump emphasized U.S. sovereignty, the dangers of “globalism,” and the costs of the Iraq war. But at the same time, he stressed the need for a U.S. military buildup, an aggressive counter-terrorism agenda, renegotiated trade arrangements, and tightened restrictions on immigration. This particular combination of emphases — together with an attention-getting personality and a fiercely anti-establishment demeanor — helped power the New York billionaire through the Republican primaries. In doing so, Trump overturned much conventional wisdom regarding apparent inevitabilities in American politics. No GOP nominee since the 1930s had spoken so openly against assumptions of U.S. international leadership. At the same time, and especially as the presidential campaign wore on, Trump offered a number of assurances that, in his own way, he would bolster America’s global position rather than undermine it.<sup>24</sup> After his surprise general election victory, the world held its breath to see what he would do.

The actual practice of the Trump administration’s foreign policy since January 2017 has, in fact, been a hybrid of elements distinctive to Trump, elements common to past Republican administrations, and elements common to all presidencies from both parties since World War II. The Trump administration has not dismantled U.S. alliances and forward bases overseas. On the contrary, in some cases it has bolstered them. At the same time, Trump

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<sup>23</sup> “Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology,” Pew Research Center, June 26, 2014, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/the-political-typology-beyond-red-vs-blue/>. See also Brian Rathbun, “Steeped in International Affairs? The Foreign Policy Views of the Tea Party,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, no. 9 (January 2013): 21–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2012.00196.x>.

<sup>24</sup> Donald J. Trump, “Trump on Foreign Policy,” *National Interest*, April 27, 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-foreign-policy-15960>.

pursues certain specific international priorities very much his own. These include, for example, an emphasis on renegotiated trade arrangements with U.S. allies, assertive efforts to secure increased allied defense spending, and an intense pressure campaign against Chinese foreign economic practices. The United States has retained a great many international commitments under this administration. But the starting point was a fresh emphasis on U.S. national sovereignty and U.S. national interests — as understood by the president.

## **Future Possibilities**

Conservative GOP voters largely support Trump’s foreign policy approach. Yet, when it comes to issues beneath the surface, significant differences in opinion continue to exist. Like most Americans, conservative Republicans have mixed feelings about a number of U.S. commitments overseas. One segment of party voters is deeply skeptical regarding the continued benefits of U.S. alliances, free trade agreements, military intervention, foreign policy activism, and economic globalization. Another segment of conservative Republican voters — no less numerous — is considerably more supportive of all these things.<sup>25</sup>

Viewed over a period of several decades, the Republican Party has become more populist, precisely by adopting conservative positions on cultural and social issues.<sup>26</sup> This has left the GOP with increasingly strong support from working-class white voters — once a core New Deal constituency. But this opens up the possibility of intra-party tensions between economic conservatives and culturally right-leaning populists, including on certain foreign policy issues. In 2016, this tension was fully revealed. Trump’s most distinctive and earliest primary supporters were non-college educated Republicans skeptical of bipartisan elites,

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<sup>25</sup> Dina Smeltz, Ivo H. Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, and Craig Kafura, *What Americans Think About America First* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2017), 8, 13, 22–23, 33, [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/ccgasurvey2017\\_what\\_americans\\_think\\_about\\_america\\_first.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/ccgasurvey2017_what_americans_think_about_america_first.pdf); *Political Typology Reveals Deep Fissures on the Right and Left* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2017), 63–64, <http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/24/political-typology-reveals-deep-fissures-on-the-right-and-left/>.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), chap. 10; Miller and Schofield, “[Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions.](#)”

centrist on numerous economic issues, deeply concerned about immigration, culturally conservative, and nationalist rather than internationalist. Today, his core supporters tend to favor trade protection and a less interventionist foreign policy. They are also more prepared to question traditional U.S. alliances overseas. An equally large bloc of party voters is more traditionally Republican, conservative across the board, pro-trade, and supportive of a muscular U.S. foreign policy role combined with immigration restrictions at home. These traditional GOP voters are more likely to favor free trade, U.S. foreign policy activism, and international alliances.<sup>27</sup> Only by combining these two political constituencies was the Trump campaign able to win the 2016 election, including surprise victories in Rust Belt states around the Great Lakes. This leaves today's GOP, like every major American party historically, as a big-tent coalition with some significant internal differences, and these differences now clearly extend to foreign policy. In other words, there has been a long-term trend toward culturally populist conservatism within the Republican Party, with important consequences for U.S. foreign relations — and this trend is unlikely to fade.

In the short term, it seems probable that most conservative GOP voters will continue to support Trump's foreign policy for some time to come. This will, in turn, shape congressional Republican responses. As in any administration, the key foreign policy decisions will be made by the president, though not always in ways he originally anticipated.

A more intriguing question is what conservative foreign policy will look like after Trump. And on this question, there are a variety of possible scenarios.

In the abstract, conservatives could embrace a foreign policy stance of strict non-intervention, dismantling existing military alliances overseas, and offering deep cuts in U.S. defense spending. Alternatively, a post-Trump conservatism could take Republicans even further along the path initially indicated by the president during his campaign on issues including trade, immigration, and alliance dynamics. Finally, a post-Trump conservatism

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<sup>27</sup> Chicago Council on Global Affairs, *What Americans Think*; Emily Elkins, "The Five Types of Trump Voters," *Democracy Fund Voter Study Group*, June 2017, <https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2016-elections/the-five-types-trump-voters>; Pew Research Center, *Political Typology Reveals Deep Fissures*, 1–3, 13, 19, 21–24, 48, 61–65, 74–76, 79, 84, 88, 95–98.

could attempt a full-blown return to the 2002–03 Bush doctrine, involving rogue state rollback, preventive strikes, a Middle East freedom agenda, and pro-democracy interventions.

Theoretically, all of the above scenarios are possible. Still, even to list them is to note the great domestic and international obstacles to any one of them. A more probable direction — as Trump himself has found out — is that future GOP leaders will have to build coalitions and strike a balance between pure versions of conservative internationalism, non-intervention, and hardline American nationalism. But the particular manner in which this is done, in terms of character and substance, will be up to future conservative leaders, under circumstances different from those of 2018.

The Trump phenomenon has broken preexisting orthodoxies and cracked open a once-latent debate over the fundamentals of American foreign policy.<sup>28</sup> The president and his supporters have made some valid points against the post-Cold War liberal internationalist consensus. Bipartisan U.S. opinion elites and transatlantic associates will have to come to terms with this. The 2016 election was an alarm bell — if one was even required — that Wilsonian bromides are not as compelling as once believed. Donald Trump is certainly among the least ideological of presidents. But he has tapped into and spoken on behalf of one specific form of American nationalism that is very real. And because it is larger than Trump, it will no doubt outlast him. Whether in this form or some other, a conservatism oriented toward the relative advantages of a sovereign American nation-state will remain within the mainstream for many years to come.

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Anton, “America and the Liberal International Order,” *American Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2017), 113–25, <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2017/02/america-liberal-international-order/>.

Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy (*Princeton 2006.*) His current research focus is on the relationship between party politics, presidential leadership, American conservatism, and U.S. foreign policy strategies. He has worked as a foreign policy advisor on several Republican presidential campaigns.

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## **2. The Struggle for Conservative Foreign Policy**

*By Elliott Abrams*

To ask about the future of conservative foreign policy is to propound two questions: What will conservatives think about foreign policy, and what influence on U.S. foreign policy will their thinking have?

So we enter immediately into issues of electoral politics, where one conclusion is simple: Whatever influence conservatives will have on foreign policy will be channeled through the Republican Party. There endeth the simplicity, for some careful distinctions are now necessary. Colin Dueck's introductory essay uses, sometimes interchangeably, terms that are not, in fact, interchangeable: "conservative GOP voters," the "Republican Party," "white working-class voters," "grassroots conservatives," "the base of the party," "GOP voters," "party voters," and Donald Trump's "core supporters." The interplay among those groups is where the answer to the present question about the future of conservative foreign policy will, over time, be found.

In electoral terms, Trump voters seem to have been a combination of Republicans who supported him as they would any Republican candidate and what used to be called "Reagan Democrats." The latter group, in Ronald Reagan's day, were, and in Trump's day, are, largely "white working-class voters." They are not ideological or "grassroots" conservatives, customary or loyal GOP voters, or the "base of the party." I think it is fair to

say they make up a good part of Trump’s “core supporters,” or his own base, and therein lies a problem: Just as these voters once upon a time voted for Bill Clinton after voting for Reagan, in theory they might well vote again for a Democrat for president, were another election like that of 1988 to take place, in which a populist Democrat faced off against an elitist Republican. In the 2012 election, some of those voters appeared to go “home” to vote for Barack Obama rather than support Mitt Romney.

I say “in theory” they may again vote Democrat because just as there has been, as Dueck writes, “a long-term trend toward culturally populist conservatism within the Republican Party,” there has been a contrasting trend in the Democratic Party. Once, it was the party of the working man, its fortunes aligned with those of members of labor unions. But today’s Democratic voters (and leaders) are more likely to be upper middle class, college educated, and employed by the government.<sup>29</sup> The party itself is financed substantially by left-wing billionaires and public employee unions.<sup>30</sup> The Democratic party, with its “progressive” social policy positions, has left many working-class voters and rural voters behind.

A related but distinct phenomenon visible in U.S. politics is a populist reaction similar to the surge of populism in Europe that led to Brexit and has undermined German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Trump won as the outsider, populist candidate against a rival who personified the Washington establishment. In Europe and in the United States, the advance of populism is a vote of no confidence in the ruling elites. Two issues demonstrate this phenomenon: immigration and foreign trade. Elites in parties of the left and right have not

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<sup>29</sup> Eugene Scott, “As Americans Become More Educated, the GOP Is Moving in the Opposite Direction,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 21, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/03/21/as-americans-become-more-educated-the-gop-is-moving-in-the-opposite-direction/?utm\\_term=.8f178ed91dcc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/03/21/as-americans-become-more-educated-the-gop-is-moving-in-the-opposite-direction/?utm_term=.8f178ed91dcc). See also “Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups,” Pew Research Center, Mar. 20, 2018, <http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/>; Jonathan Swan, “Government Workers Shun Trump, Give Big Money to Clinton,” *Hill*, Oct. 26, 2016, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/302817-government-workers-shun-trump-give-big-money-to-clinton-campaign>; and Frank Newport, Dan Witters, and Sangeeta Agrawal, “Democrats Lead Ranks of Both Union and State Workers,” Gallup, Mar. 24, 2011, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146786/democrats-lead-ranks-union-state-workers.aspx>.

<sup>30</sup> Ashley Balcerzak, “How Democrats Use Dark Money — and Win Elections,” *NBC News*, Feb. 20, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/how-democrats-use-dark-money-win-elections-n849391>.

taken the issue of immigration seriously (most calamitously for Merkel) while many Americans agree with Trump that America must guard its southern border and prevent illegal immigration. Elites in both the Republican and Democratic parties have long championed multilateral trade deals, arguing that they are good for the economy overall and that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” But that has been a broken promise for millions of Americans who have lost manufacturing jobs. To this can be added one more key ingredient in the anti-elite rebellion: The social and cultural policy changes on issues like “gay marriage” and “transgender rights” (whether the new policies are right or wrong) have been imposed with contempt for traditional mores and religious beliefs, adding insult to feelings of injury.

America is thus left with a Democratic Party moving left, and a Republican Party that is more populist, more nationalist, and less based in urban elites — if one looks at Democratic and Republican *voters* in 2016. But it is not clear what Republican foreign policy will look like after Trump because it is impossible to know whether he will be followed by another, similar iconoclast, or by a sort of regression to the Republican mean. We do not know what proportion of those Reagan Democrats who became Trump Republicans will shift again, for reasons that may have little or nothing to do with foreign policy. Dueck’s conclusions seem right to me: “[F]uture GOP leaders will have to build coalitions and strike a balance” among the various approaches to foreign policy, mixing internationalism and nationalism, *realpolitik* and idealism.

## **Reasons for Conservative Optimism**

There are three good reasons why, in any conservative foreign policy, that balance should not tilt over into any form of isolationism, and why nationalism should not be interpreted as requiring some form of *realpolitik* that abandons American idealism. First, making America great again, which was Trump’s nationalist slogan, is logically not only compatible with many forms of American global leadership, but that leadership can be said to require it. While one component of Trump’s foreign policy argument was a desire to withdraw from foreign wars that do not seem to produce victory while being expensive in blood and money, another component was a desire to end the weak and apologetic foreign policy that characterized the Obama administration. Americans do not like the notion that their

country is in retreat, its stature and influence waning. Trump voters who are Republicans have had the chance to vote for Rand Paul and, previously, for his father, but neither achieved any notable support for their isolationist nostrums.

Second, Americans don't actually believe in isolationism or realpolitik. Polling in 2018 for Freedom House, the George W. Bush Institute, and the Penn Biden Center found that a 91-percent majority of Americans agreed that "we can't control what happens in the world, but we have a moral obligation to speak up and do what we can when people are victims of genocide, violence, and severe human rights abuses." Perhaps even more significant, an 84-percent majority agreed that "when other countries become democratic, it contributes to our own well-being." And a 67-percent majority agreed that "when other countries are democratic, rather than dictatorships, it often helps make the U.S. a little safer," rejecting, in the polling, the alternative statement that "there is no impact on U.S. security when other countries move away from dictatorship and become democracies." Moreover, "These responses crossed party lines but were slightly stronger among Republicans."<sup>31</sup>

As to trade, 2018 polling by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found, "The highest percentages ever registered in this survey (since 2004) say that trade is good for the US economy (82%), good for consumers like you (85%), and good for creating jobs in the United States (67%)." Moreover, partisan differences are small:

The overall increases in positive views of trade are driven by double-digit increases among Republicans and Independents, as well as slight increases among Democrats, who already held broadly positive views of trade. Moreover, self-described Republicans and Democrats voice equally positive opinions of trade, closing the partisan gap on trade from recent years. Eight in ten Democrats (84%), Republicans (82%), and Independents (81%) say international trade is good for the US economy.

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<sup>31</sup> "Reversing a Crisis of Confidence," The Democracy Project, June 26, 2018, [https://www.democracyprojectreport.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/FINAL\\_POLL\\_REPORT\\_Democracy\\_Project\\_2018\\_v5.pdf](https://www.democracyprojectreport.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/FINAL_POLL_REPORT_Democracy_Project_2018_v5.pdf).



Similar proportions say international trade is good for consumers like them (84% Republicans, 86% Democrats, 86% Independents).<sup>32</sup>

Pew polls in 2018 found that *more* Republicans than Democrats had a positive view of trade:

By 2009, a larger share of Democrats than Republicans viewed trade positively. And by 2018 the partisan gap had flip-flopped, with Republicans more affirmative about trade. It is noteworthy that Democrats became more positive when Democrat Barack Obama became president and Republicans became more upbeat when their party's candidate, Donald Trump, was elected.<sup>33</sup>

The Chicago Council found, along similar lines, that nowadays Democrats favor trade negotiations with groups of countries while Republicans favor negotiating with one country at a time — just as the current Republican president does. These latter findings are suggestive: leadership counts.

And that is the third reason that conservative foreign policy should remain internationalist. The great majority of Americans, and of Republican voters, are not foreign policy experts with strong and fixed views. On the contrary, they listen to the arguments that candidates and officials offer and then make up — and sometimes change — their minds. The neoconservative view that the United States should have a policy of promoting human rights and democracy, for example, is broadly understood by many Americans. One might make not only a moral but a strategic argument for such policies: America's opponents and enemies try to subvert democracy whenever and wherever they can because they clearly recognize that the spread of democracy is in the United States' interest. They're right, and the United States should understand, just as they do, that supporting democracy and

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<sup>32</sup> Dina Smeltz and Craig Kafura, "Record Number of Americans Endorse Benefits of Trade," Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Aug. 27, 2018, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/record-number-americans-endorse-benefits-trade>.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Stokes, "Spotlight on Views of Trade in the U.S., EU and Japan," Pew Research Center, Sept. 26, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2018/09/26/spotlight-on-views-of-trade-in-the-u-s-eu-and-japan/>.

human rights is in America's strategic interest and will help to put "America First." The poll data does not suggest a widespread desire for a Nixonian realpolitik: Americans do not actually believe there are no moral distinctions between the tyrants of the world and the United States and its democratic allies.

Electoral politics should not, in sum, lead conservatives to believe that U.S. foreign policy must move further in the direction of realpolitik or isolationism than they would otherwise think best. Trump will govern until January 2021, or more likely 2025, and will pursue foreign policies that conservatives can fully support in most ways — but not all. The task is not to redefine conservatism so that it matches the president's views on all policy matters, but to seek, during and after his presidency, to persuade officials and voters that American foreign policy will be at its best the closer it moves to conservatism. I take that to mean not only defending America's interests in the narrow (but essential) sense, but also doing what American statesmen have tried to do since the founding: seeking to promote an international system that protects and advances Americans' safety, prosperity, and freedom.

What is the role of conservative intellectuals in a populist era? To make the best possible arguments for a principled conservative foreign policy, one that is far more nationalist than that proposed by the Left and by the Democratic Party. A conservative foreign policy should promote the American military *and* American moral strength and leadership, and do so unabashedly — without fear that "Trump voters" or "Trump's core supporters" or "white working-class voters" will consequently abandon the party for the increasingly "progressive" Democrats. And conservative intellectuals should do what they have usefully done for decades: elucidate the issues and choices in ways that allow conservative political leaders to win arguments and elections. In the end, we want to have the best arguments but we also want to have the most votes.

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### **3. Libertarianism, Restraint, and the Bipartisan Future**

*By Emma Ashford*

This roundtable on the future of conservative foreign policy features a wide range of voices, from neoconservatives to paleoconservatives, conservative internationalists, and libertarians. One of these things, however, is not like the others.

Perhaps uniquely among the ideologies explored here, it's questionable whether libertarians should be categorized as part of the conservative ideological spectrum. Indeed, the Trumpian nationalism increasingly dominating the Republican Party serves as a reminder to libertarians that their philosophy itself is neither liberal nor conservative, but rather is based on core principles of liberty and human freedom.

Partly as a result, libertarians don't have a predetermined approach to foreign policy, though the core tenets of classical liberalism do lend themselves to a foreign policy that could best be described as realist or restrained. Restraint is an approach to the world that is fundamentally internationalist, but that de-emphasizes military means of foreign engagement in favor of diplomacy and other tools of statecraft.

At one time, this approach to foreign policy was welcome within the Republican Party, whether it was Dwight Eisenhower's warnings about the military industrial complex, or Richard Nixon's careful *realpolitik*. Today, however, the principles of restraint are as likely — and perhaps more likely — to be espoused by Democrats than by Republicans.

This doesn't mean that the prospects for restraint in American foreign policy are poor. There is, perhaps, more political will and popular support for it than at any time in the last 25 years.<sup>34</sup> But these bright prospects for restraint are not a "conservative" story. Instead, they are the outcome of a de facto growing bipartisan coalition aimed at reining in the impulses of America's militaristic foreign policy and promoting a more open and balanced form of engagement with the world.

## The Classical Liberal Roots of Restraint

Foreign policy has historically been the weak link in the chain of libertarian beliefs, at least in the American context, as a focus on domestic politics tends to lead libertarians to neglect foreign policy until specific questions arise. And while most libertarians tend to oppose war, that's not always the case. The Iraq war, for example, saw many libertarians argue against unnecessary war, while a smaller number supported the war's strategic and humanitarian aims.<sup>35</sup>

Nonetheless, the classical liberal philosophical ideas on which modern libertarianism is built are far more inclined toward peace than war, producing a common — but misleading — trope that libertarians are strict non-interventionists.

The Bible suggests three core virtues for Christians: faith, hope, and love. Libertarians need look no further than Adam Smith for their own trinity of virtues: "peace, easy taxes and a tolerable administration of justice."<sup>36</sup> Too often, libertarians consider the greatest of these

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<sup>34</sup> Trevor Thrall, "Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy," in *The Cato Handbook for Policymakers* 8th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2017), <https://www.cato.org/cato-handbook-policymakers/cato-handbook-policy-makers-8th-edition-2017/public-opinion-us-foreign>.

<sup>35</sup> Brink Lindsey and John Mueller, "Should We Invade Iraq?" *Reason*, last modified Jan. 1, 2003, <https://reason.com/archives/2003/01/01/should-we-invade-iraq>; Ilya Somin, "Libertarianism, the Iraq War, and the Division in the Friedman Household," *Volokh Conspiracy*, last modified July 22, 2006, [http://volokh.com/posts/chain\\_1153624105.shtml](http://volokh.com/posts/chain_1153624105.shtml).

<sup>36</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Alex Murray, 1872), 1:13.

to be easy taxes, yet peace is indispensable for a world in which human beings can truly be free.

Peace promotes liberty in two key ways. First, it's harder for people and goods to move freely during times of conflict: peace facilitates trade and economic prosperity.<sup>37</sup> This philosophical principle is backstopped by a massive amount of historical and political science research that suggests that while interdependence cannot prevent conflict entirely, it undoubtedly serves to reduce it.<sup>38</sup> To put it another way, peace facilitates trade, and trade, in turn, helps to facilitate peace. Conflict disrupts this virtuous cycle.

Second, classical liberals like Smith, Richard Cobden, and John Stuart Mill were also conscious of the ways in which conflict shapes the citizen's relationship with the state. As Charles Tilly famously put it, "[W]ar made the state, and the state made war."<sup>39</sup> In his book on war and the state, Bruce Porter describes how even "the *nonmilitary* sectors of the federal government actually grew at a faster rate during World War II than under the impetus of the New Deal."<sup>40</sup>

Worse, the genie is hard to put back in the bottle. States rarely return the power that they have accumulated in times of war: New taxes, a larger bureaucracy, and expansive surveillance powers all tend to stick around after the conflict is done. War grows the state. Peace rarely shrinks it. Better then, classical liberals argue, to avoid the issue all together. Of course, it's never quite that easy. Any libertarian who has thought seriously about the question of foreign policy will tell you that war is sometimes — if rarely — necessary. As with other schools of foreign policy thought, for different people, that line will lie in

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher Preble, *Peace, War and Liberty: Understanding U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2019), *Forthcoming*.

<sup>38</sup> Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Bruce M. Russett and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 280.

different places. A number of prominent libertarians, for example, supported the post-9/11 invasion of Afghanistan — a clear response to an attack on American soil — while opposing the 17-year nation-building fiasco it ultimately turned into.<sup>41</sup> The Iraq War was far more controversial, though most ultimately sided against a pointless, unjustified invasion.

But while a few libertarians have argued in favor of a more expansive, liberty-promoting foreign policy — such as the Bush administration’s freedom agenda<sup>42</sup> — most are dubious that the benefits of such wars could ever outweigh the costs. As skeptics of government intervention in general, libertarians are justifiably doubtful that America can easily bring liberty to others. After all, if the fatal conceit is true — if government cannot be trusted to manage the domestic economy — how could it possibly be expected to achieve more ambitious goals overseas?<sup>43</sup>

On average, then, libertarians tend toward peace, not war. Yet it is fundamentally misleading to refer to this simply as “non-interventionism.” There are clear cases in which even libertarians acknowledge that war is justified. Libertarian foreign policy thinkers have thus either clustered around the classic strategic formulations of restraint or around realist theories like offshore balancing.

Each of these approaches accepts the premise that the United States is remarkably secure and that the bar for the American use of force should be commensurately high. Restrainers and realists generally eschew nation-building and humanitarian intervention, as they raise minimal security concerns for the United States and are rarely successful. They aim to avoid threat inflation. And they are skeptical of permanent alliances, because although

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<sup>41</sup> Ted Carpenter, *Smart Power: Toward a Prudent Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2008), 68–79.

<sup>42</sup> Bryan Caplan, “Why Did So Many Libertarians Support the War?” *EconLog*, Nov. 25, 2007, [https://www.econlib.org/archives/2007/11/why\\_did\\_so\\_many.html](https://www.econlib.org/archives/2007/11/why_did_so_many.html).

<sup>43</sup> Christopher J. Coyne and Rachel L. Mathers, “The Fatal Conceit of Foreign Intervention,” in *What is so Austrian about Austrian Economics?* (*Advances in Austrian Economics, Volume 14*), ed. Roger Koppl, Steven Horwitz, and Pierre Desrochers (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2010), 227–52.

alliances can often offer strategic benefits — take, for example, NATO’s pivotal role during the Cold War — they can also serve to entrap the United States in unnecessary conflicts.<sup>44</sup> Just as neither restraint nor realism can be categorized as non-interventionist, neither do they argue in favor of isolationism. Rather, both approaches are fundamentally internationalist — they simply argue that America’s global engagement should not be primarily the responsibility of the military. Diplomacy, cultural engagement, trade, and immigration are vital under a grand strategy of restraint, allowing America to safeguard its security while playing an active, constructive role in international affairs.

### **A Conservative Foreign Policy?**

Given the principles underlying a libertarian approach to foreign policy, it might seem surprising to say that libertarians do not have a conservative foreign policy. After all, conservatives are perfectly at home with small government, limited taxation, and the notion that the state is rarely the answer. A smaller defense budget and fiscal conservatism are perfect bedfellows. Restraint is the best fit for those inclined toward slow, gradual Burkean political change.

But while American conservatives have often been devotees of these principles on the home front, they have typically favored a more expansive approach abroad. Among Republican presidents since the end of World War II, only Eisenhower and Nixon could plausibly be described as realist in orientation. Since the end of the Cold War — and particularly since the second Bush administration — the GOP has often taken a near-reactionary approach to foreign affairs.

A common conservative criticism of restraint is, therefore, simply that the approach of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and other Republican presidents helped to end the Cold

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<sup>44</sup> For more on restraint as a grand strategy, see Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for American Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Trevor Thrall and Benjamin Friedman, *U.S. Grand Strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Case for Restraint* (Routledge: 2018). On offshore balancing, see John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July/August 2016), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/case-offshore-balancing>.

War. But what these critics often overlook is that restraint’s prescriptions today differ substantially from its prescriptions during the Cold War. Put simply, when the United States had a peer superpower competitor, a more activist and alliance-heavy approach to the world was necessary. Today, in the absence of the Soviet Union, a strategy of restraint is far less expansive. The grand strategy itself hasn’t changed. The world has changed.

Meanwhile, though I’ve primarily discussed questions of war and peace here, there are other cleavages to consider, most notably trade and immigration. Ignoring these problems has allowed conservative writers in the past to slander restraint as “isolationism,” bundling together Buchanan-style non-interventionism with realist-derived approaches to foreign policy.

	<b>More Interventionist</b>	<b>Less Interventionist</b>
<b>Internationalist</b>	Primacy/ Liberal Internationalism	Restraint/ Realism
<b>Nationalist</b>	Trumpian Nationalism	Buchananite/ Isolationist

But with the Trumpian nationalist wing ascendant inside the Republican Party, this split can no longer be ignored. Trump’s approach to foreign policy shares with conservative internationalists a predilection for the use of force, but he dismisses their emphasis on free trade and immigration in favor of proto-nationalist autarky. Likewise, his administration openly questions the value of treaties and international agreements, even when — as with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty — they actually serve the U.S. national interest.

Restraint is certainly present inside today’s GOP — just look at libertarian-leaning politicians like Sen. Rand Paul, or constitutional conservatives like Sen. Mike Lee. But it



remains a relatively lonely group, differing from classic Republican hawks on the use of military force, and from the new Trumpian nationalists on most other things. Even fiscal hawks like Paul Ryan often regard the defense budget as sacrosanct, making it difficult to make progress even on common sense reforms like reining in excessive Department of Defense spending.

In short, though restraint and realism are fundamentally conservative in their approach to foreign policy, they continue to be shunned by the majority of Republican policymakers. That's a loss for America.

### **The Bipartisan Future Is Bright**

Perhaps this is why these happy few GOP members of Congress are increasingly reaching across the aisle to their fellow realists and restrainers inside the Democratic Party. From Yemen to the defense budget, there's a growing bipartisan group of lawmakers keen to move American foreign policy in a more restrained direction, indicating that progress can be achieved even if the GOP remains stubbornly interventionist.

In many ways, this expanding group of pro-restraint Democrats — not all of whom would accept that label, but all of whom agree with at least some of the principles of restraint — are responding to what Peter Beinart recently referred to as a crisis of “foreign policy solvency.”<sup>45</sup> In short, it has become clear to many Americans that America's post-Cold War foreign policy has come off the rails, with excessive military commitments in the Middle East, ballooning defense spending, and no clear goals. As Sen. Bernie Sanders noted in his foreign policy speech a few weeks ago,

We spend \$700 billion a year on the military, more than the next 10 nations combined. We have been at war in Afghanistan for 17 years, war in Iraq for 15 years, and we are currently involved militarily in Yemen — where a humanitarian crisis is

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Beinart, “America Needs an Entirely New Foreign Policy for the Trump Age,” *Atlantic*, Sept. 16, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/09/shield-of-the-republic-a-democratic-foreign-policy-for-the-trump-age/570010/>.

taking place. ... The time is long overdue for a vigorous discussion about our foreign policy and how it needs to change in this new era.<sup>46</sup>

The gentleman from Vermont is not alone in his criticisms. The incoming chair of the House Armed Services, Rep. Adam Smith, has spoken eloquently about the need to cut the defense budget and rein in the Trump administration's deficit-inflating military spending.<sup>47</sup> Sen. Chris Murphy has expressed the need to de-emphasize military power in U.S. foreign policy.<sup>48</sup> Murphy, Rep. Ro Khanna, and various others have championed the idea that the United States should not be backing the Saudi-led war in Yemen, whether for humanitarian or strategic ends.

Meanwhile, a broader spectrum of Democratic and Republican lawmakers, from Sen. Ben Cardin to Sen. Jeff Flake and Sen. Tim Kaine, have expressed interest in repealing the 2001 Authorization to use Military Force and replacing it with a more circumscribed version. Sen. Tammy Duckworth has lambasted other members of congress for being unwilling even to debate the question of such a new authorization.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, like Duckworth, many of those now speaking out are veterans, like Rep. Tulsi Gabbard or Rep. Seth Moulton.

Certainly, progress towards concrete achievements has been slow, as Congress struggles to find either the willpower or the capacity to exercise even its constitutional prerogatives on

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<sup>46</sup> Bernie Sanders, "Building a Global Democratic Movement to Counter Authoritarianism," Speech given in Washington, D.C., Oct. 9, 2018), <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sanders-speech-at-sais-building-a-global-democratic-movement-to-counter-authoritarianism>.

<sup>47</sup> Jeff Schogol, "Rep. Adam Smith: Trump's Military Spending And Planning Needs A Reality Check," *Task and Purpose*, Feb. 19, 2018, <https://taskandpurpose.com/adam-smith-trump-military-spending/>.

<sup>48</sup> Uri Friedman, "Do Liberals Have an Answer to Trump on Foreign Policy?" *Atlantic*, March 15, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/chris-murphy-donald-trump-progressive-foreign-policy/518820/>.

<sup>49</sup> Leo Shane III, "15 Years Later, Iraq Vets in Congress Worry Lawmakers Learned Little From the War," *Military Times*, March 21, 2018, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2018/03/21/15-years-later-iraq-vets-in-congress-worry-lawmakers-learned-little-from-the-war/>.

foreign policy.<sup>50</sup> But the repeated introduction of bills advocating restraint-oriented policies is a positive development. As these conservatives and progressives learn to work together on specific issues like Yemen or arms sales, they are developing a working coalition. And that coalition is, in turn, shaping the broader debate on the future of foreign policy inside the Democratic Party.

To be clear, that debate is not only occurring among restrainers and realists. The party retains a strong Clinton-style liberal interventionist wing. The Democratic Party even has its own international debate over the merits of free trade and immigration.<sup>51</sup> And as left-leaning intellectuals debate the future of Democratic foreign policy,<sup>52</sup> there are strong temptations to forge a “new mission” for American foreign policy, whether it is a humanitarian “Responsibility to Protect” commitment or a crusade against global kleptocracy and authoritarianism.<sup>53</sup>

Yet there are other reasons to be hopeful.<sup>54</sup> Public opinion is increasingly supportive of restraint in foreign policy. In one recent poll, a plurality of Americans expressed their belief that excessive overseas intervention has made America less safe.<sup>55</sup> Half of Americans would

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<sup>50</sup> Julian Borger, “Republicans Block Yemen War Vote by Sneaking Rule Change on to Wildlife Bill,” *Guardian*, Nov. 14, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/nov/14/republicans-yemen-war-powers-saudi-arabia>.

<sup>51</sup> Heather Hurlburt, “Security Policy Is Economic Policy,” *Democracy Journal* 48 (Spring 2018), <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/48/security-policy-is-economic-policy/>.

<sup>52</sup> See Daniel Bessner, “What Does Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Think About the South China Sea?” *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/17/opinion/democratic-party-cortez-foreign-policy.html>; Daniel Nexon, “Toward a Neo-Progressive Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept. 4, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2018-09-04/toward-neo-progressive-foreign-policy>; “Colloquium: Five Principles for Left Foreign Policy,” *Fellow Travelers* (blog), Oct. 23, 2018, <https://fellowtravelersblog.com/2018/10/23/colloquium-five-principles-for-left-foreign-policy>.

<sup>53</sup> Sanders, “Building a Global Democratic Movement”; Jacob Sullivan, Trevor Thrall, and Emma Ashford, “The Future of Liberal Foreign Policy,” *Power Problems*, Podcast Audio, Nov. 20, 2018, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/power-problems/id1282100393?mt=2>.

<sup>54</sup> For more on this question, see Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America’s Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> “New Poll: Veterans, Americans in General are Skeptical of Status Quo; Aren’t Convinced Military Intervention Results in Greater Security,” *Charles Koch Institute*, <https://www.charleskochinstitute.org/news/cki-real-clear-politics-foreign-policy-poll/>.

like to see troop reductions or the total removal of American forces from Iraq, as well as from Afghanistan.<sup>56</sup> And the data suggests the existence of a long-term shift in foreign policy attitudes among the electorate: Millennials are notably more likely to support international cooperation and to oppose military intervention than older generations.<sup>57</sup> In short, the future is bright for a libertarian foreign policy of restraint, but it will not necessarily be a Republican foreign policy. When it comes to foreign policy — as with immigration, criminal justice, or corporate welfare — the Trump era serves to highlight that libertarians don't always share a common cause with conservatives.

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<sup>56</sup> “New Survey: 15 Years After Operation Iraqi Freedom, Americans Think the Conflict Has Failed to Make the United States Safer and Believe It’s Time to Bring Troops Home,” Charles Koch Institute, March 20, 2018, <https://www.charleskochinstitute.org/news/iraq-war-15-year-poll-with-real-clear/>; “New Survey: Seventeen Years On, Americans—including Veterans—Want Out of Afghanistan,” Charles Koch Institute, Oct. 8, 2017, <https://www.charleskochinstitute.org/news/afghanistan-17-anniversary-poll/>.

<sup>57</sup> A. Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, “Millennials and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Next Generation’s Attitudes toward Foreign Policy and War (and Why They Matter),” Cato Institute, June 16, 2015, <https://www.cato.org/publications/white-paper/millennials-us-foreign-policy-next-generations-attitudes-toward-foreign>.

## 4. The Trump Doctrine: The Future of Conservative Foreign Policy

*By John Fonte*

The core premises of Colin Dueck’s essay are essentially on target. President Donald Trump has indeed “tapped into and spoken on behalf of one specific form of American nationalism that is very real. And because it is larger than Trump it will no doubt outlast him.” This means that, as Dueck puts it, “a conservatism oriented toward the relative advantages of a sovereign American nation state will remain within the mainstream for many years to come.”

### The Trump Doctrine

Over the past two years, America has seen the emergence of a coherent Trump doctrine, as regards foreign policy, in both words and deeds. There is a remarkable consistency throughout all of the president’s speeches, formal documents, such as the 2017 *National Security Strategy*, and the actions of his administration.

To fully understand the Trump doctrine, one must begin with candidate Trump’s first major speech on foreign policy on April 27, 2016 — before the Indiana primary — to the Center for the National Interest. All the elements of the Trump doctrine are revealed in this maiden speech, including reversing military decline; emphasizing economic strength and “technological superiority” in geopolitical competition; confronting the threats from China, North Korea, Iran, and radical Islam; opposing nation-building; reversing Obama’s ambivalence toward Israel by showing strong support for this U.S. ally; ending illegal immigration; and “strengthening and promoting Western Civilization.” Finally, candidate Trump rejected the “false flag of globalism” and declared that “[t]he nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump Foreign Policy Speech,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html>.

These core elements have since been expanded upon in speeches to the United Nations and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation, as well as in Warsaw and elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> In articulating his concept of sovereignty, Trump posited democratic sovereignty, or popular sovereignty, in the sense of self-government. That is to say, he makes the moral argument that ultimate political authority resides in the people of a nation, not in transnational global elites or in the always “evolving” notions of international — essentially transnational — law. Trump notes, however, that sovereign nations have core duties to “respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, North Korea, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela violate the sovereign duties of nation- states.

In his speech in Warsaw in 2017, Trump presented a much broader conception of Western Civilization than what one often hears from secular elites in the European Union. His vision of the West encompasses not simply Brussels, Berlin, and Washington D.C., but Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. It includes Christianity and Judaism, as well as the Enlightenment and modernity. It is not the Enlightenment only, but the Enlightenment plus.

Trump’s presidential rhetoric has been re-enforced by the actions of his administration in directly confronting China, Iran, and Russia; in withdrawing from the global climate accord and the Iran deal; and in the proposed withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty because of Russian cheating.<sup>61</sup> Trump administration actions have also included withdrawing previous cooperation with the International Criminal Court; moving

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<sup>59</sup> “Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland,” The White House, July 6, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland/>; “Remarks by President Trump to 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly,” The White House, Sept. 19, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>; “Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit, Da Nang, Viet Nam,” The White House, Nov. 10, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam/>; “Remarks by President Trump to the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY,” The White House, Sept. 25, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/>.

<sup>60</sup> “Remarks by President Trump to 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.”

<sup>61</sup> Kingston Reif, “Trump to Withdraw US from INF Treaty,” *Arms Control Today* (November 2018) <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-11/news/trump-withdraw-us-inf-treaty>.

the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem; increasing military funding; and promoting the energy independence of, and closer relations with, the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe through the “Three Seas Initiative.”<sup>62</sup>

For the most part, the Trump doctrine is deeply rooted in the historical traditions of American foreign policy. Its emphasis on national interests, strong military and naval power, reciprocity in trade, and the primacy of American sovereignty were hallmarks of the foreign policy vision of statesmen such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln.

The editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*, Charles Kesler, declares that Trump’s policies (including his foreign policy) are very much in the tradition of the historical Republican Party from Lincoln to the New Deal. According to Kesler, Trump’s words and actions on the necessity of America’s economic strength, on a reciprocal trade policy with a focus on American workers, on America’s manufacturing base, and on the central role of American business in both creating good jobs and in providing a strong material base for national security echo the rhetoric and policies of Lincoln, William McKinley, an early Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, and even to some extent Ronald Reagan.<sup>63</sup>

## **What About Trumpism After Trump?**

In his campaign speech in April 2016, Trump stated, “My goal is to establish a foreign policy that will endure for generations.”<sup>64</sup> However, whether Trump’s influence is long-lasting in

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<sup>62</sup> Ayesha Rascoe, “Bolton: International Criminal Court will face Repercussions if Americans Prosecuted,” *NPR*, Sept. 10, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/10/646321536/bolton-icc-will-face-repercussions-if-action-taken-against-americans>; Ian Brzezinski, “Prosperity Across Three Seas: An Opportunity Awaits in Bucharest,” *Atlantic Council*, Sept. 14, 2018, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/prosperity-across-three-seas-an-opportunity-awaits-in-bucharest>.

<sup>63</sup> Charles R. Kesler, “Donald Trump is a Real Republican, and That’s a Good Thing,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/opinion/donald-trump-is-a-real-republican-and-thats-a-good-thing.html>.

<sup>64</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump Foreign Policy Speech.”

conservative foreign policy circles depends upon future circumstances. What will be the shape of the global chessboard 10 or 15 years into the future?

As the 2017 *National Security Strategy* declares, the United States is entering a period of increased geopolitical — and in the case of China, also geo-economic — competition with revisionist nation-states, specifically China, Russia, and Iran.<sup>65</sup> There is widespread agreement among conservative elites (with many liberals concurring) that China is the most serious revisionist competitor, politically and economically, to American national interests and will remain so far into the future.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to the geopolitical and geo-economic challenges from revisionist nation-states and the threat of terrorism from radical Islamists in both Iran and the Sunni world, there is, and always has been, global ideological competition. At the broadest level is the perennial conflict between constitutional democracy and various forms of authoritarianism, including oligarchy, dictatorial one-party rule, and militant jihadism.

### *The War of Ideas within the Democratic World*

That said, the “war of ideas” goes much deeper. Within the democratic world itself exists a deep division over where ultimate authority — that is to say, sovereignty — resides. Is it with sovereign democratic nation-states, or is it with evolving transnational and supranational institutions and rules of global governance (e.g., new concepts of customary

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<sup>65</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House (December 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Zack Cooper, “China’s Latest Cyber offensive and What to Do About it,” *New York Post*, Oct. 5, 2018, <https://nypost.com/2018/10/04/chinas-latest-cyber-offensive-and-what-to-do-about-it/>. “Michael Pillsbury on U.S.-China Relations,” C-SPAN, Oct. 4, 2018, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?452464-6/washington-journal-michael-pillsbury-discusses-us-china-relations>; Arthur Herman, “The War for the World’s 5G Future,” *Forbes*, Oct. 17, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arthurherman/2018/10/17/the-war-for-the-worlds-5g-future/-fc225ac1fe51>.



international law) that nation-states have either delegated authority to or permitted to expand.<sup>67</sup>

To put it bluntly, the democratic family is in an argument over the single most important question in politics: Who should rule? While conservatives embrace America's democratic sovereignty and the U.S. Constitution as the highest political authority for Americans — others, including allies such as Germany and many other nation-states in the European Union, as well as a considerable number of American progressives, tout the transnational institutions of global governance and the evolving concepts of international law as the final arbiters of legitimate authority above the sovereignty of any nation-state, including democracies like the United States and Germany.

This global ideological conflict over core values between what one might call “sovereignists” and “post-sovereignists” — or, as the president puts it, between “patriotism” and “globalism” — is perennial. Therefore, it will continue well into the future and no doubt intensify in the decades to come. It will intensify because “globalism” (what I have labeled “transnational progressivism”)<sup>68</sup> is not a chimera, an apparition, or the moniker for a conspiracy theory. On the contrary, transnational progressivism is a real actor in world politics, complete with a workable ideology, a strongly situated material-social base among global elites, and, in some areas, the backing of nation states.

Transnational progressives dominate major international and transnational institutions, including the leadership of the United Nations, the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, the International Court of Justice, international non-governmental organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.), the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, CEOs of global corporations, major universities throughout the West, and even organizations such as the American Bar

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<sup>67</sup> To be clear, the prefix “inter,” in international, means relations between states. The prefix “trans,” in transnational, means relations and authorities “across” states. The prefix “supra,” in supranational, means authority above states.

<sup>68</sup> John Fonte, “Liberal Democracy vs. Transnational Progressivism: “The Ideological War Within the West,” *Orbis* 46, no. 3, (Summer 2002): 449–67, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387\(02\)00126-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0030-4387(02)00126-6).

Association, which actively promotes global legal rules that transcend U.S. sovereignty.<sup>69</sup> Most significantly, globalist ideology is predominate in many European nation-states including Germany and Emmanuel Macron's France.

My colleague, Walter Russell Mead, has labeled the globalists the "Davoisie,"<sup>70</sup> while National Security Advisor John Bolton has referred to them as the "High Minded."<sup>71</sup> In any case, it is clear to most American conservatives today (and it will be even clearer in the future) that the worldview advocated by transnational progressives is diametrically opposed to the interests and principles of those who want to "conserve" America's constitutional democracy and way of life. Future political conflict between American conservatives and transnational progressives is inevitable.

### **Liberal Foreign Policy Moves Toward Transnational Progressivism**

Liberal foreign policy has changed significantly since Bill Clinton's presidency, not to mention the days of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. What has traditionally been called liberal internationalism is steadily morphing into transnational progressivism. A comparison of President Barack Obama's speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September 2016 with Trump's U.N. General Assembly speeches of 2017 and 2018 is revealing.<sup>72</sup> Whereas Trump emphasized sovereignty, Obama focused on [global] "integration," which he mentioned at least eight times in his final U.N. speech.

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example, the ABA's CEDAW (U.N. Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Assessment Tool, which is a book-length report that outlines recommendations for the U.S. government's formal acceptance of the CEDAW treaty. The report makes specific problematic assertions. For example, the ABA insists upon gender quotas for elected officials and in employment. Most significantly, the ABA report states that American judges should receive training "about CEDAW's precedence over national law" (in other words, over the U.S. Constitution and federal and state law.)

<sup>70</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "In It to Win," *American Interest*, Jan. 27, 2015, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/01/27/in-it-to-win-it/>.

<sup>71</sup> John Bolton, *Surrender is not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations* (New York: Threshold, 2007), 441-55.

<sup>72</sup> "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland"; "Remarks by President Trump to 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly"; "Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit, Da Nang, Viet Nam"; "Remarks by President Trump to the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York,

Even more significantly, at the United Nations in 2016, Obama outlined a post-sovereigntist vision that was the mirror opposite of Trump’s worldview. Obama told the General Assembly, “We’ve bound our power to international laws and institutions.” He declared that the “promise” of the United Nations could only be realized “if powerful nations like my own accept constraints... . I am convinced that in the long run, giving up freedom of action — not our ability to protect ourselves...but binding ourselves to international rules over the long term — enhances our security.”<sup>73</sup>

Key positions in Obama’s foreign policy apparatus were filled with people with strong post-sovereigntist, pro-global governance leanings, such as Anne Marie Slaughter and Harold Koh. As an academic, Slaughter, head of policy planning at the U.S. State Department, wrote that nation-states should cede sovereign authority to supranational institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, in cases requiring “global solutions to global problems.” In this way, she argues global governance networks “can perform many of the functions of a world government — legislation, administration, and adjudication — without the form.” Therefore, a “world order out of horizontal and vertical networks could create an effective global rule of law.”<sup>74</sup>

Koh was the Obama State Department’s legal adviser, the official who interpreted international law for the U.S. government. As former dean of Yale Law School, Koh is a leading advocate of what he labeled the “transnational legal process.” Koh explains: “Transnational legal process encompasses the interactions of public and private actors — nation states, corporations, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations — in a variety of forums, to make, interpret, enforce, and ultimately internalize rules of international law” in “the domestic law of even resistant nation-states.”<sup>75</sup>

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NY,”; Katie Reilly, “Read Barack Obama’s Final Speech to the United Nations as President,” *Time*, Sept. 20, 2016, <http://time.com/4501910/president-obama-united-nations-speech-transcript/>.

<sup>73</sup> Reilly, “Read Barack Obama’s Final Speech to the United Nations as President.”

<sup>74</sup> Anne Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Harold Koh, “On America’s Double Standard,” *American Prospect*, Sept. 20, 2004,

<http://prospect.org/article/americas-double-standard>.

Obama’s U.N. speech and the writings of Slaughter and Koh are worth remembering because they are prototypes of the transnational progressive arguments that conservative foreign policy specialists will encounter more and more in the future. In the formulation of liberal foreign policy, past is prologue, as progressives envision an enlarged role for transnational legalism that goes well beyond what conservatives consider the checks and balances of American constitutional democracy.

Global progressives are quite open in their support for decreased national sovereignty, and, thus, by definition, diminished democratic self-government and increased transnational authority. One of the leading academic advocates of global governance, G. John Ikenberry, writes,

The liberal international project foresees a future where there will be a fuller realization of universal rights and standards of justice, and the obligations and commitments of national governments will need to be adjusted accordingly. International authority — in the form of courts and collective governance mechanisms — will be expanded...and a rule-based order will intensify.<sup>76</sup>

Ikenberry asks, “how do they [nation-states] reconcile the international liberal vision of increasing authority lodged above the nation-state — where there is a sharing and pooling of sovereignty — with domestic liberal democracy built on popular sovereignty?” He admits “This is the unsolved problem in the liberal international project.”<sup>77</sup>

Ikenberry’s answer appears indirectly buried in several footnotes citing essays authored by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, and leading to other sources.<sup>78</sup> The core argument is that

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<sup>76</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 296.

<sup>77</sup> Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 294.

<sup>78</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “Global Governance and Democratic Accountability,” in *Taming Globalization: Frontiers of Governance*, ed. David Held and Mathias Koenig-Achibugi (London: Polity, 2003), 130–59. Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Redefining Accountability for Global Governance,” in *Governance in a Global Economy: Political Authority in Transition*, ed. Miles Kahler and David A. Lake (Princeton, NJ:

liberal democracies cannot be relied upon because they disregard the interests of foreign citizens (Keohane specifically mentions the United States and Israel as examples). Given what they perceive as the “limitations” of democratic sovereignty, these transnational progressive theorists posit that the legitimacy of global governance institutions comes from the knowledge and expertise of what they call “external epistemic communities” and “external epistemic actors” — presumable experts on international law, human rights, the environment, gender equity, and the like.

## Global Domestic Politics: A Blurring of Domestic and Foreign Policy

The future will likely see a great divide between liberal and conservative worldviews on foreign policy and national sovereignty. Despite pious pronouncements from all sides, partisanship at home will play an outsized role in foreign policy. And just as domestic partisan politics will not “stop at the water’s edge,” neither will the on-going culture war over issues of identity politics, religion, secularism, family, free speech, demographics, abortion, LGBT rights, immigration, migration, and national and civilizational identity.

There is already a name for this phenomenon. The Germans call it *Weltinnenpolitik*, or global domestic politics. Former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and Germany’s leading philosopher Jurgen Habermas have analyzed and advocated for global domestic politics since the turn of the century.<sup>79</sup> In a similar vein, former British and E.U. diplomat Robert Cooper noted that the post-modern states of the European Union actively intervene in the domestic affairs of democratic nation states, including regulations for “beer and sausages.”<sup>80</sup>

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Princeton University Press, 2003), 386–411. Also see, Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane, “The Legitimacy of Global Governance Institutions,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (December 2006): 405–437, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2006.00043.x>.

<sup>79</sup> Fischer discussed Global Domestic Politics in a speech to the Bundestag on November 16, 2001 <http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb5/Frieden/themen/Aussenpolitik/reden.html>. Jurgen Habermas, *The Divided West*, trans. and ed. Ciaran Cronin, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press Limited, 2008), 48, 135–39, 160, 177–79.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Grove Press, 2003), first published in the United Kingdom in Atlantic Books in 2003, 27.

In the United States, global domestic politics first began in earnest in the 1990s. Transnationalist non-governmental organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Human Rights First, and others, worked with U.N. “rapporteurs” visiting the United States and at the U.N. Durban Conference to excoriate American domestic policy on race and gender as severe “violations of international human rights.”<sup>81</sup>

During the Yugoslav wars and the post 9/11 Global War on Terror, these same non-governmental organizations waged continuous “lawfare” against American military and counter-terrorism operations. They charged American leaders with “violations of the laws of war,”<sup>82</sup> collaborated with foreign elites, and attempted to manipulate international law for the purpose of disrupting American foreign policy.

From 2009 to 2016, the tables were turned, as the Obama administration launched its own version of global domestic politics. At that time, the U.S. government worked with those previously mentioned transnationalist non-governmental organizations to actively promote

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<sup>81</sup> “Human Rights Violations in the United States: A Report on U.S. Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” Human Rights Watch, Jan. 1, 1993, <https://www.hrw.org/report/1994/01/01/human-rights-violations-us/report-us-compliance-international-covenant-civil-and>. UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Glélé Report, Jan. 16, 1995. On the negative conduct of leading American NGOs (including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Human Rights First) at the U.N. Durban Conference see Tom Lantos, “The Durban Debacle: An Insider’s View on the UN World Conference Against Racism,” Fletcher Forum for World Affairs, (Winter/Spring 2002), [http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/assets/attachments/articles/568\\_durban\\_debacle.pdf](http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/assets/attachments/articles/568_durban_debacle.pdf). Also see Edwin Black, “Ford Foundation Aided Groups Behind Biased Durban Parley,” *Jewish Daily Forward*, Oct. 17, 2003, <https://forward.com/news/6855/ford-foundation-aided-groups-behind-biased-durban/>; and Anne Bayefsky, “Human Rights Watch Coverup,” *Jerusalem Post*, April 13, 2004. Also, Reuters, “UN Conference 2001 Against Racism: Rights Activists Ask UN to target Racism in US,” Oct. 27, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> “Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)/NATO: ‘Collateral Damage’ or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO During Operation Allied Force,” Amnesty International, June 5, 2000, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur70/018/2000/en/>; “Civilian Deaths in the NATO Air Campaign,” *Human Rights Watch* 12, no. 1 (February 2000), <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/>; “Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo” Human Rights Watch, Oct. 26, 2001, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/10/26/under-orders-war-crimes-kosovo>.

progressive social policy, particularly on issues of gender, abortion, LGBT rights, and identity politics throughout the world.

Not surprisingly, these aggressive policies (e.g., flying the LGBT flag at U.S. embassies) elicited traditionalist pushback. For example, when Obama's State Department began pressuring newly democratic Central and Eastern European countries to endorse LGBT and radical feminist agendas, some conservative democrats in these nations began to envision (falsely, to be sure) their former oppressor, Russia, as an upholder of "family values" and a counter weight to leftist American bullying.<sup>83</sup>

For years, both conservative and liberal foreign policy elites have lauded a "liberal global order" of interlocking international institutions created by the United States, such as NATO and the International Monetary Fund, as a bulwark of the free world in the global struggle against communism.

In recent years, the liberal global order (heralded by Reagan and Margaret Thatcher) is slowly, almost imperceptibly, becoming the "progressive global order." This shift started with the new Obama-Merkel emphasis on global social progressive (and regulatory social democratic) norms replacing the previous Reagan-Thatcher focus on political freedom and democratic capitalism. The once nearly unanimous positive view of the "liberal global order" will likely change as conservatives resist both social engineering and statist overreach. Hence, the entire concept of the "liberal global order," instead of reflecting the conventional wisdom, will become "contested."

### **What Do Conservative Foreign Policy Elites Want to "Conserve"?**

The emerging Trump doctrine appears to be a pretty good fit for American conservatives as they face the world politics of the future. This future will specifically include the twin challenges (one hard power and one soft power), first, from revisionist nation-states who

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<sup>83</sup> Author conversation with Central-East European national working for the International Republican Institute. Associated Press in Warsaw, "Obama Uses Embassies to Push of LGBT rights abroad," *Guardian*, June 28, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/28/obama-gay-rights-abroad-embassies-activism>.

want to undermine American power globally, and second from Western and American transnationalists who seek to constrain America's democratic sovereignty because, as noted earlier, they have a fundamentally different answer than conservatives to the most important question in politics: Who should govern?

One of the reasons the Trump doctrine works so well with foreign policy conservatism is that it is philosophically, psychologically, and politically “conservative” in the sense that it seeks to “conserve” something realistic — America's military superiority and manufacturing base — and idealistic — America's sovereignty and way of life. This is in sharp contrast to President George W. Bush's second inaugural address, which proclaimed in utopian Wilsonian rhetoric that the policy of the United States encompassed “the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”<sup>84</sup>

As a practical matter, Trump's “Principled Realism” appears to have stronger support among conservative voters than Bush's “freedom agenda.” Dueck has stated that “roughly 80 percent” of GOP voters support Trump's foreign policy.<sup>85</sup> He then asks what is the role of conservative intellectuals in a populist era?

One response, that of the drafters of the 2017 *National Security Strategy*, is to translate Trump's core premises into the language of foreign policy and strategy. Another option is to synthesize the various conservative foreign policy traditions into a new fusionism that reserves a prominent place for sovereignty. As Dueck noted, conservative nationalists and conservative internationalists may have tended to stress different issues, but the “two emphases are not necessarily mutually exclusive and at times have been compatible.”

One could contrast the conservative foreign policy universe that permits latitude for both the national and the international with liberal foreign policy thinking that runs from internationalism increasingly to transnationalism and supranationalism. Does anyone doubt that the next Democratic administration will be increasingly transnationalist, just as

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<sup>84</sup> “President Bush's Second Inaugural address,” NPR transcript, Jan. 20, 2005,

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172>.

<sup>85</sup> Colin Dueck, “GOP Foreign Policy Opinion in the Trump Era,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 20, 2018, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/04/gop-foreign-policy-opinion-in-the-trump-era/>.



Obama was more transnationalist than Bill Clinton, and Clinton was more transnationalist than Jimmy Carter, and Carter was more transnationalist than Johnson? Moreover, does anyone doubt that the Democratic push towards increased transnationalism will trigger a conservative reaction along patriotic sovereigntist lines?

For several decades, a fierce intellectual battle has been waged beneath the surface of U.S. foreign policy debates between American sovereigntists and transnationalists.<sup>86</sup> In the 1990s, American transnationalist non-governmental organizations worked with foreign governments to undermine the U.S. government positions at U.N. conferences that created the landmines treaty and the International Criminal Court.<sup>87</sup> In September 2000, Bolton warned Americans to take the forces promoting global governance seriously as a threat to

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<sup>86</sup> American Sovereigntist literature includes: Jeremy A. Rabkin, *The Case for Sovereignty: Why the World Should Welcome American Independence* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2004), <http://www.aei.org/publication/the-case-for-sovereignty/>; Jeremy A. Rabkin, *Law Without Nations: Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). Bolton, *Surrender is Not an Option*; John Fonte, *Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or be Ruled by Others?* (New York: Encounter Books, 2011). Julian Ku and John Yoo, *Taming Globalization: International Law, the U.S. Constitution, and the New World Order*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Bork, *Coercing Virtue: The Worldwide Rule of Judges*, (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2003); Eric A. Posner, *The Perils of Global Legalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); David B. Rivkin and Lee A. Casey, "The Rocky Shoals of International Law," *National Interest*, no. 62 (Winter, 2000/01): 35-45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42897300>; Curtis A. Bradley and Jack L. Goldsmith, "Customary International Law as Federal Common Law: A Critique of the Modern Position," *Harvard Law Review* 110, no. 4 (February 1997): 815-76, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1342230>; Paul B. Stephan, "International Governance and American Democracy," University of Virginia School of Law, Public Law Working Paper, no. 00-9 (May 2000), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=224801](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=224801); Jon Kyl, Douglas J. Feith, and John Fonte, "The War of Law: How the New International Law Undermines Democratic Sovereignty," *Foreign Affairs*, (July/August 2013), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/2013-06-11/war-law>.

<sup>87</sup> See "121 Nations Sign Historic Land Mine Treaty," *CNN Interactive*, Dec. 4, 1997, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9712/04/landmine.wrap/>; Fanny Benedetti and John L. Washburn, "Drafting the International Criminal Court Treaty: Two Years in Rome and an Afterword on the Rome Diplomatic Conference," *Global Governance* 5, no. 1 (January -March 1999), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27800218>. M. Cherif Bassiouni, *The Legislative History of the International Criminal Court*, (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2005).

American sovereignty.<sup>88</sup> In December 2000, law professor Peter Spiro, in an important essay in *Foreign Affairs*, attacked the “New Sovereignists.”<sup>89</sup>

In 2009, conservatives rallied to oppose the nomination of transnationalist Koh as the State Department’s legal advisor.<sup>90</sup> In 2011 and 2012, retiring Republican Sen. Jon Kyl gave a series of speeches outlining the global governance challenge to American sovereignty.<sup>91</sup> Also in 2012, Daniel Deudney and Ikenberry, in a Council on Foreign Relations paper, complained that “liberal internationalism” was “increasingly under attack...by neoconservatives and new sovereignists who directly challenge its goals and policies.”<sup>92</sup>

Trump, to his credit, has, for the first time, thrust this battle between American democratic sovereignty and transnational governance (patriotism vs. globalism) directly into the public policy arena. The result is that conservatives will likely do what liberals have done for years,

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<sup>88</sup> John R. Bolton, “Should We Take Global Governance Seriously?” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 1, no. 2, September 1, 2000, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1090&context=cjil>.

<sup>89</sup> Peter J. Spiro, “The New Sovereignists: American Exceptionalism and Its False Prophets,” *Foreign Affairs*, (November/December 2000), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2000-11-01/new-sovereignists-american-exceptionalism-and-its-false-prophets>.

<sup>90</sup> Jeffrey Toobin, “The Fight Over Harold Koh,” *New Yorker*, April 9, 2009, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-fight-over-harold-koh>; “Koh, No? Critics Decry Obama Nominee for State Department Legal Adviser,” Fox News, March 31, 2009, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/koh-no-critics-decry-obama-nominee-for-state-department-legal-adviser>; John Fonte, “Koh Fails the Democracy Test,” *National Review Online*, April 28, 2009, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2009/04/koh-fails-democracy-test-john-fonte/>.

<sup>91</sup> Sen. Jon Kyl gave three speeches affirming American sovereignty and decrying global governance in 2011 and 2012. He spoke at the Nixon Center (which became the Center for the National Interest), Arizona State University, and at an American Enterprise Institute conference on Global Governance and the Challenge to the U.S. Constitution. His talk was entitled “The Perils of Global Governance,” [https://thehill.com/images/stories/blogs/globalaffairs/kyl\\_lost.pdf](https://thehill.com/images/stories/blogs/globalaffairs/kyl_lost.pdf). Also see Josh Rogin, “Kyl Warns About the War on American Sovereignty,” *Foreign Policy*, March 10, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/03/10/kyl-warns-about-the-war-on-american-sovereignty/>

<sup>92</sup> Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “Democratic Internationalism: An American Grand Strategy for a Post-Exceptionalist Era,” Council on Foreign Relations: International Institutions and Global Governance Program Working Paper, Dec. 18, 2012, <https://www.cfr.org/event/democratic-internationalism-american-grand-strategy-post-exceptionalist-era>.

which is to take the issue of global governance seriously. And, as conservatives, they will realize that the globalist project is a direct challenge to American constitutional democracy.

In the future, conservatives should view world politics through bi-focal lenses, which is to say, conservatives should recognize that they have two sets of serious global competitors, the hard competitors of geopolitics and geo-economics and the soft competitors of transnational progressives, globalists, post-sovereignists, or whatever one wants to call them.

In the end, what American conservatives want to “conserve” is the American nation, its constitutional framework, its self-government, its free enterprise economic system, its Judeo-Christian-moderate, Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment cultural heritage, and its way of life. The Trump doctrine’s emphasis on sovereign self-government, military and economic strength, cultural-religious tradition, and the promotion of Western Civilization, along with its recognition of the real threats, hard and soft, to the American democratic republic should ensure its continuing influence in foreign policy circles, both conservative and non-conservative, well into the future.

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## 5. Freedom, Defense, and Sovereignty: A Conservative Internationalist Foreign Policy

By Henry R. Nau

Jeane Kirkpatrick wrote in 1993 that “a conservative approach to foreign policy ... should ... reflect conservative values ... an irreducible respect for individual freedom, a suspicion of government ... and an irreducible commitment to citizenship.”<sup>93</sup> These values translate into priorities for freedom (self-governing republics), national sovereignty (limited governmental commitments), and military defense (patriotism) as the basis of a conservative American foreign policy.<sup>94</sup>

Differing conservative foreign policy traditions bring these values to the debate.

*Conservative realists* focus on military defense, balancing power to preserve peace.

Historically, they identify with the likes of Alexander Hamilton, Teddy Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, and Henry Kissinger and among the electorate with the military-industrial complex, veterans’ associations, and global business interests. *Conservative nationalists* prioritize national sovereignty, being reluctant to surrender the rights and responsibilities of an elected republic to the dictates of unelected international institutions. Their ranks include George Washington (“steer clear of foreign entanglements”), Andrew Jackson, William Jennings Bryan, Calvin Coolidge, Franklin Roosevelt (in his first term), Robert Taft, Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, and perhaps Donald Trump. Among the electorate, conservative

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<sup>93</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Defining a Conservative Foreign Policy*, The Heritage Lectures, The Heritage Foundation, 1993. Colin Dueck identifies conservative values as “classical liberal,” classical in the premodern sense of human imperfectability and skepticism, and liberal in the Enlightenment sense of individual freedom and equal opportunity (though not equal outcomes as sought by “social liberals”). See Colin Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), ch. 1. I agree with Dueck. See Henry R. Nau, *Conservative Internationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), ch. 1.

<sup>94</sup> These three elements track closely with the tensions in conservative foreign policy identified by Dueck in the introduction of this roundtable: freedom (realist vs. idealist), national sovereignty (national vs. international), and military defense (intervention vs. non-intervention).

nationalists tap into the libertarian, populist, and patriotic currents of American politics. Finally, *conservative internationalists* bring freedom to the debate, holding out the expectation that freedom is universal, that all individuals, not just Americans, want to be free and participate in self-government. As Ronald Reagan said, “[F]reedom is not the sole prerogative of a lucky few, but the inalienable and universal right of human beings.”<sup>95</sup> Like realists, conservative internationalists arm U.S. diplomacy with a muscular military capability but, unlike neoconservatives, they target the expansion of freedom in selected areas only — primarily on the major borders of existing free countries — and seek incremental compromise, not military victory, that will improve the international environment for freedom.<sup>96</sup> At the dovish end, conservative internationalists include the likes of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, William Taft, and Herbert Hoover, and at the hawkish end, James K. Polk, Abraham Lincoln, William McKinley, and Ronald Reagan. Among the public, this group draws support from the constitutional and religious enthusiasts of the conservative community, for example, members of the Tea Party and evangelical Christians.

A successful conservative foreign policy, however, must blend all three of these traditions. Conservative realism alone is not enough. Settlers came to this continent to escape authoritarian governments, not to mimic them and play the cynical games of balance of power and war more effectively. Conservative nationalism on its own ignores ideological realities. American freedom cannot thrive in a world of despots even if those despots leave the United States alone, which is unlikely. As Reagan used to say, “[I]f they oppress their

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<sup>95</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Members of the British Parliament, June 8, 1982,” Public Papers President Ronald W. Reagan, Reagan Presidential Library, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/june-1982>.

<sup>96</sup> The fault line between conservative internationalists and neoconservatives was evident already in the 1990s before 9/11. Kim R. Holmes and John Hillen wrote a penetrating critique of the neoconservative vision of William Kristol and Robert Kagan asking “what limits [especially on military costs] Kristol and Kagan would impose on their global democratic enterprise — one that ultimately would have the U.S. government engineering the domestic transformation of nations around the globe.” See respectively “Misreading Reagan’s Legacy: A Truly Conservative Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 5 (September/October 1996): 162–69, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-09-01/misreading-reagans-legacy-truly-conservative-foreign-policy>; and “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July-August 1996): 18–33, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-07-01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy>.

own people, why wouldn't they oppress us if they got the chance?"<sup>97</sup> And conservative internationalism alone demands too much. No country can be serious about promoting freedom throughout the world and making the military commitments which that entails without asking too much of its own citizens. That is exactly what liberal internationalists did in Vietnam and neoconservatives did in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Taken together, however, the three elements promoted by each tradition — freedom, defense, and sovereignty — complement and discipline one another. America stands for freedom but not everywhere at once, respecting the limits of public resources and will. It concentrates on the major borders where freedom already exists — Eastern Europe and Northeast Asia. It gives priority to defense but not to win wars and change regimes, but rather to compromise in negotiations that create better incremental opportunities for freedom to flourish. And it rejects a world of centralized global institutions that usurp national sovereignty and embraces instead a federalist world of sister democratic republics that live side-by-side in freedom, independence, and peace. Successful Republican presidents have integrated and applied these elements to the world they faced. Reagan is the lodestar of this conservative (Republican) approach to foreign policy, just as Franklin Roosevelt is the lodestar of the liberal (Democratic) approach to foreign policy.<sup>98</sup>

## **Freedom**

America defines itself in good part by contrast to the rest of the world. It originated in the desire to find an alternative form of republican government to the authoritarian monarchs and satraps that populated the world of the 18th century. An elected and divided government with a widening franchise was burned into its DNA from the outset. Remember, America was the first country to pursue republican government without the authoritarian glue of a monarchy, state church, or even common history (the colonies

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<sup>97</sup> I recall this quote from private discussions while serving on the National Security Council from 1981 to 1983.

<sup>98</sup> Liberal foreign policy also includes internationalists, realists, and nationalists. But liberal internationalists give priority to social equality over individual liberty and seek national security through multilateral institutions (e.g., League of Nations and United Nations), liberal realists place more emphasis on arms control and strategies of restraint to lessen the role of force in foreign affairs, and liberal nationalists envision a largely nonthreatening world in which America mingles as an equal and learns from other societies.

interacted more with England than with one another). As it grew, America also abandoned the common glue of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. Today, it is the most diverse free society on the face of the earth, struggling, to be sure, but still more successful than ever imagined. Since 1950, it has politically liberated and economically integrated, albeit still incompletely, millions of African Americans, women, and immigrants (in the latter case, 59 million from 1965 to 2015).<sup>99</sup>

America cannot ignore these ideological origins in formulating its foreign policy.<sup>100</sup> It leads the world of democratic republics, whether it acknowledges that role or not. On the other hand, the United States does not have the DNA or resources to play this role across the board. Imperialism is simply not compatible with republicanism. Nor is it compatible with America's resources, except in very unusual cases. Two such cases marked the postwar era: America's unprecedented power in 1945 over half the world, albeit matched, at least militarily, by Soviet power over the other half, and America's emergence at the end of the Cold War as the world's sole superpower. In those two circumstances, America led an unprecedented expansion of freedom in the world, most notably, the pivotal and successful development of democracy in Germany and Japan and the spread of free governments across Eastern Europe and beyond.

But neither of those circumstances exist today. America created a world after 1945 in which it deliberately reduced its relative power. The disappearance of the Soviet Union disguised this decline momentarily, but it is clearly evident today. America's allies are powerful and democracy is stronger and more widespread than ever before (although it has flattened out since 2006). To stand for freedom, the United States does not have to do as much as it did before.

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<sup>99</sup> Pew Research Center, "Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to US,"

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>.

<sup>100</sup> For a full development of this argument, see my article, "America's International Nationalism," *American Interest* (January/February 2017): 18–30, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/01/06/americas-international-nationalism/>.

The Cold War was a contest between freedom and oppression worldwide. No such contest exists today. The fight against terrorism and radical Islam is not the equivalent of a new Cold War. It is an ideological conflict, to be sure, as the Islamic State's establishment of its so-called caliphate suggests. But it does not require the mobilization of American resources against a continental totalitarian power like the Soviet Union. The ideological threat of authoritarianism from Russia and China is far more serious. Even this threat, however, is not global in the same way the communist threat was. Russia is struggling economically and has geopolitical ambitions focused chiefly in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, not in Asia and across the rest of the globe. And China, while economically more global and ascendant, still has geopolitical ambitions targeted largely toward its neighboring sea lanes.

To cope with these challenges, therefore, standing for freedom means contesting Russian authoritarianism in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine, and counterbalancing China's ambitions in the Far East, especially on the Korean peninsula. In these two conflicts, a conservative foreign policy holds out for a free Ukraine, not necessarily now, but in the indefinite future, and a Korean Peninsula, divided or united, that tilts toward the free democratic alliances of Asia rather than the oppressive dictates of Beijing. The United States should not settle in either case, as conservative realism alone might urge, for spheres-of-influence or buffer state solutions, as such solutions often strengthen rather than weaken authoritarianism. There is no timetable for Ukrainian freedom or Korean reunification, but if the prospect of freedom is lost in these two places it will weaken already fragile democracies in nearby countries and commence a roll back of the Western liberal order in both Europe and Asia — exactly what Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping seek.

What about elsewhere, especially the Middle East and South Asia? Durable freedom exists in Israel and India but hardly anywhere else. Spreading freedom in these regions should not be an objective of a conservative foreign policy. America ought to support Israel, as long as it remains a republic that guarantees all of its citizens, Jewish or Palestinian, equal rights, even as the Middle East becomes less important due to declining U.S. oil dependency and diminished great power competition. It should cultivate India as a potential new ally in the Indo-Pacific, a region that is becoming increasingly important with the rise of China. In the Middle East and other regions — Southwest Asia, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America — America should combat terrorism, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, but not deploy



large American conventional forces or seek to build democratic nations. Here, the advice of conservative realists is on target: use an offshore strategy to marginalize terrorists and counter Iranian hegemony by assisting Kurdish and Arab forces, backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to hold strategic ground seized from terrorists.

## **Defense**

Whether to defend against geopolitical or ideological threats is the issue that has traditionally divided conservative realists and conservative internationalists. It divided Richard Nixon and Reagan, for example. Conservative realists see threats in geopolitical terms, essentially great power rivalries, whereas conservative internationalists see threats in terms of regime types, as contests of rival ideologies. Neither approach can win the argument on its own. Realists cannot inspire enough public will to back a cynical realpolitik (especially in a country with freedom woven into its DNA), and internationalists cannot mobilize enough resources to spread democracy everywhere — unless the United States is under existential threat as it was in the Cold War or America's power is preeminent as it was in 1945 and 1991.

In a world of lesser threat or more equitable power, conservative realists and internationalists complement one another. Internationalists can take credit for the major advances in regime change that occurred after 1945 and 1991. The world today is a far better place for republics such as the United States than the world of 1914 or 1940. Realists, on the other hand, point out that American power is now relatively less significant and that, in a world of greater equilibrium, the United States would do well to preserve, not upset, the status quo. They advise against expanding NATO to Georgia or Ukraine or seeking more than denuclearization and a stable peace agreement on the Korean peninsula. Realists take the world as it is, which is pretty much the same world that the internationalists celebrate, given the postwar spread of republics. Thus, in present circumstances, a conservative foreign policy calls for a realist defense of the largely democratic status quo. That means giving priority to defense commitments in NATO, Japan, and South Korea, calling upon U.S. allies to pony up more resources for these alliances, and negotiating arrangements to manage competition with Russia in Ukraine and China on the Korean Peninsula.

The one thing a conservative foreign policy should not give up is the prospect (date unspecified) of eventual freedom in Ukraine or North Korea. Some realists do not want to give this goal up either. They simply prefer pursuing peace and biding time until history tips the scales in favor of freedom (George Kennan's reasoning for pursuing containment in Europe during the Cold War). The divide between realists and internationalists in present circumstances has become rather small, largely because the world "as it is" is substantially democratic.

## **Sovereignty**

A bigger divide exists between the internationalists and realists on the one hand and nationalists on the other, although that divide, too, is narrowing. Traditionally, conservative nationalists have rejected both the alliance agenda of conservative realists and the freedom agenda of conservative internationalists. They fear the garrison state of a large military and being sucked into battles that belong to others. Most of all, they fear the loss of national sovereignty, the entanglement in global affairs that impairs American independence. Their mantra is "America First, Second, and Third" and they prefer unilateral or bilateral, not multilateral, diplomacy.<sup>101</sup>

In recent years, conservative nationalists (and many realists) have been reacting to neoconservatives, disdaining the idea that military intervention can spread democracy. The neoconservatives have responded in turn as "Never Trumpers," repudiating the nationalism of Donald Trump. But this dispute is overblown. The neocons were never entirely conservative. Many harbor liberal values, promoting big government, social welfare, and international agreements. Conservative internationalists do not support such outcomes. They envision a global system (like the domestic system) that is federalist and decentralized, in short, a globalism that is based on nationalism not international institutions. To be sure, they favor *democratic* (or *republican*) nationalism because only then is a nationalist world, unlike the world of authoritarian nationalism in the 1920s and

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<sup>101</sup> Patrick Buchanan, "America First - and Second, and Third," *National Interest*, no. 19 (Spring 1990): 77--82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42894664>.

1930s, safe for America.<sup>102</sup> Some tension therefore persists between conservative internationalists and conservative nationalists. But that tension has diminished in recent years because the contemporary world is more democratic than ever before and there is no need to press democratic expansionism.

A larger divide exists between conservative realists and conservative nationalists. Realists want to preserve the world the way it is. That means accepting existing U.S. alliances in both Europe and Asia. Conservative nationalists see less need for such alliances, especially if allies who have become stronger refuse to increase their share of the burden. However, this difference, too, is narrowing. With funding from the Koch brothers, libertarian nationalists and realists are collaborating to design an offshore approach to global security.<sup>103</sup> The differences come down to how many troops the United States keeps overseas and what tripwires would occasion a reengagement of the American military in Europe or Asia. Realists are likely to want higher troop levels and lower tripwires than nationalists. But a meeting of the minds is possible that leaves plenty of room for unilateral deliberation and decision-making, which nationalists favor, and cold calculations of great power rivalries in foreign regions, which realists favor.

A revealing case is China. Conservative realists worry about an increasingly powerful and belligerent China, whereas conservative nationalists favor waiting and giving China more time to display its true intentions. Above all, conservative nationalists counsel, America ought not act before its allies, Japan and South Korea, do, ensuring that these allies — not the United States — carry the brunt of any conflict with China.<sup>104</sup> Conservative internationalists, for their part, concede that their bet that trade would moderate China's

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<sup>102</sup> Henry R. Nau, "Democratic Globalism," *National Interest* (November/December 2018), 27-33.

<sup>103</sup> Greg Jaffe, "Libertarian billionaire is Making A Big Bet on Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/libertarian-billionaire-charles-koch-is-making-a-big-bet-on-foreign-policy/2017/11/10/f537b700-c639-11e7-84bc-5e285c7f4512\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.23e5403f66c1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/libertarian-billionaire-charles-koch-is-making-a-big-bet-on-foreign-policy/2017/11/10/f537b700-c639-11e7-84bc-5e285c7f4512_story.html?utm_term=.23e5403f66c1).

<sup>104</sup> As the prize-winning (and nationalist-leaning) historian Walter McDougall advises, rely first on a "regional security framework," then calculate "how far and precisely where Chinese power would have to extend before our interests were truly threatened," and only if the first fails and the second occurs, "maintain the alliances and military presence that we and the locals will need in case we must actively balance Chinese power." See *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 212.

domestic and foreign policy does not seem to have paid off. Nevertheless, they would argue that it is probably better to keep the present economic entanglement in place, at least until China invokes the economic “nuclear option” and sells off American bonds.

## **Conclusion**

A new fusion is possible between the various internationalist, realist, and nationalist traditions of conservative foreign policy. Such a synthesis would acknowledge that America must always stand for freedom (i.e., republican self-government) in the world or betray the very purpose for which it was created. That commitment varies, however, with threat and power. When a truly *global* ideological threat emerges, as it did in the Cold War, America steps up and defends, as well as expands, freedom. When American power is preeminent, as it was in 1991, America promotes a strategy of democratic enlargement and market engagement.<sup>105</sup> In these circumstances, conservative internationalists provide the ballast of a conservative foreign policy. But when threat and power recede, America settles for preserving the more democratic world it has created, while keeping open the expansion of freedom over the long term. Today, conservative realists and nationalists supply the ballast for American foreign policy. Conservative realists, attuned to America’s declining relative power, call for restraint to maintain the world as it is, which is now substantially democratic. And conservative nationalists go along with realists as long as other U.S. allies take the lead and do the heavy lifting of containing threats to stability.

America assumes, as Jeane Kirkpatrick anticipated almost three decades ago, a more normal role. Here is her advice from 1991:

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<sup>105</sup> In his State of the Union message in 1994, Clinton declared, “how much more secure and more prosperous our own people will be if democratic and market reforms succeed all across the former Communist bloc.” “STATE OF THE UNION; Excerpts from President Clinton’s Message on the State of the Union,” *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/26/us/state-union-excerpts-president-clinton-s-message-state-union.html>.

It is not within the United States' power to democratize the world, but...we can and should encourage others to adopt democratic practices. ... Our alliances should be alliances of equals, with equal risks, burdens, and responsibilities. ... The time when Americans should bear unusual burdens is past. With a return to "normal" times, we can again become a normal nation...an independent nation in a world of independent nations.<sup>106</sup>

It would be hard to capture better a conservative foreign policy that fuses freedom, sovereignty, and defense.

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## 6. The Conservative Realism of the Trump Administration's Foreign Policy

*By Nadia Schadlow*

American conservatives are in the midst of a debate about how to relate interests, values, and costs in American foreign policy. This is not a new debate. As Colin Dueck's introductory essay to this roundtable highlights, such arguments have been "common to all

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<sup>106</sup> Jeane, J. Kirkpatrick, "A Normal Country in a Normal Time," *National Interest* (Fall 1990), 40-44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42894693>.

presidencies from both parties since World War II.”<sup>107</sup> To students today, what might seem new is the divisive tone in debates among conservatives. Even so, historians recognize that the contemporary debate is muted in comparison to controversies prior to both World War I and World War II, during the Cold War, and beyond.<sup>108</sup>

Today, conservatives fall more or less into three schools of thought. The first is the conservative internationalism of the Republican establishment, which holds that the United States should not only defend its interests but also seek to uphold the liberal international order. The more ambitious neoconservative offshoot of this school calls for Americans to shoulder the costs of acting as the world’s policeman and promoting American values universally. This group defends the interventions in Iraq and Libya and has called for intervention in Syria and the broader Middle East. It has been criticized by other conservatives for advocating unconstrained interventionism and risking geopolitical overreach.

The second school of thought is that of the conservative non-interventionists, and it argues for American retrenchment. Such conservatives believe that American security commitments and engagement abroad are likely to drag America into unnecessary conflicts. They define vital U.S. interests narrowly and, while supporting a strong national defense, see few contingencies in distant regions that merit the use of force. In their view, the use of military force has “backfired, making Americans *less* safe and secure.”<sup>109</sup> Conservative non-interventionists argue for staying closer to home and, in some cases, suggest that U.S. alliances are more a burden than a benefit. They are skeptical of policies designed to

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<sup>107</sup> In addition to Dueck’s essay for this series, see this useful paper by Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross: “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996-1997): 5-53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539272>.

<sup>108</sup><sup>108</sup> There are many examples of the divisive debates. President Roosevelt, on the eve of America’s intervention in World War II called opponents “useful idiots” and “shrimps.” See Susan Dunn, “The Debate Behind U.S. Intervention in World War II,” *Atlantic*, July 8, 2013, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/07/the-debate-behind-us-intervention-in-world-war-ii/277572/>.

<sup>109</sup> See many of the essays and viewpoints on the Foreign Policy section of [www.charleskoch.org](http://www.charleskoch.org). This quote is taken from William Ruger, Vice President of Research, at <https://www.charleskochinstitute.org/issue-areas/foreign-policy/>.

advance American values, preferring to see the United States lead by example. This group is highly conscious of the costs of American policy.

The third school of thought — conservative realism — includes the Trump administration’s “America First” foreign policy. In crafting its *National Security Strategy*,<sup>110</sup> the administration sought to respond to key shifts in the geopolitical order, including the resurgence of great power competition, to acknowledge limitations in American power and agency and to modernize U.S. engagement with other countries and institutions. Its emphasis is on advancing U.S. interests and leaves other countries to make decisions about their own values. Conservative realism is sensitive to costs, not only in open-ended interventions, but also in terms of burden sharing with allies and partners.

The *National Security Strategy* of the Trump administration advocated for a strategy of “principled realism” — it is realistic because it acknowledges the central role of power in international politics and that “the American way of life cannot be imposed upon others, nor is it the inevitable culmination of progress.”<sup>111</sup> It is principled because “it is grounded in the knowledge that advancing American principles spreads peace and prosperity.” The strategy is animated by four principles.

The first is *sovereignty*: the preservation of American freedom of action and the unwillingness to cede control of decisions to multilateral organizations or other collective bodies. This view has deep roots in American conservative thinking, including skepticism of the United Nations and even hesitancy to support NATO at the beginning of the Cold War. As Dueck’s essay points out, the Trump campaign sought to appeal to conservative non-interventionists who stress U.S. sovereignty, and criticized conservative internationalists who champion U.S. engagement in multilateralism. However, this should not be mistaken for advocacy of retrenchment.

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<sup>110</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 4, 55.

Instead, Donald Trump is wary of any separation of policy decisions from democratically elected leaders. His criticism of the European Union is rooted in a view that it diminishes popular democracy by undercutting the sovereignty of its member states. This position is neither isolationist nor anti-European. Rather, it arises out of a deep concern that the European Union is not fulfilling the objective for which it was originally created: to have a strong and capable group of European allies that are a source of order on the continent and can radiate stability in their wider neighborhood. As the various electorates in Europe are indicating, there is growing discontent with the path the European Union has chosen over the past decades and skepticism about the value of having surrendered many competencies to higher decision-making bodies too removed from the nations they are supposed to serve. Trump is similarly wary of giving up power to undemocratic bodies such as the United Nations. He is willing to work through such organizations, but his north star is whether these organizations produce actions consistent with U.S. interests and values.

Those who view the president as an opponent of the so-called liberal international order are off point. He is not intent on tearing down this order, but rather is merely raising questions about whether institutions established over 60 years ago are up to the task of today's challenges — and whether they are serving U.S. interests. He comes from the business world and does not take the value of these institutions as a given. He consistently asks how they perform and what benefits accrue to the United States. Critics should remember that many Americans are also asking these questions.

The second principle is the need to respond to a world defined by *competition*. Trump's *National Security Strategy* put competition front and center. Trump came into office suspicious of what one observer has referred to as “the unrestrained optimism of the era of globalization in the 1990s.”<sup>112</sup> He called out the competitions that were unfolding across political, economic, and military spheres, all accelerated by advances in technology. Trump sees the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be. The nature of the order the United States has created and led over the last century has not been static. It has allowed, and even encouraged, the rise of new powers. This order provided a foundation for other states to

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<sup>112</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “The Anarchy that Came,” *National Interest*, Oct. 21, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/anarchy-came-33872>.



grow, and some of these states emerged as competitors or adversaries. The reality is that the liberal international order has enabled the rise of illiberal powers that seek to exploit that order to their advantage.

Central to this diagnosis is the administration's emphasis on great power competition. The Trump *National Security Strategy* addressed in a straightforward manner the realities of global competition and the power shifts taking place in the world. Engagement with China, Russia, and Iran had not succeeded, as all three powers exploited the accommodating posture of the United States. The Trump administration called for the United States to reestablish a policy based on peace through strength, reversing the disastrous defense budget cuts under sequestration, and developing a national defense strategy to reestablish the balance of power in key regions.

Trump, like other realists, does not believe that the arc of history will take care of America's security problems. He dismisses the view that new power equilibria (such as the rise of China) will not matter because international rules and domestic regimes would ultimately lead to convergence and political harmony. He has challenged the idealism of conservative internationalists, questioning whether the world is inexorably progressing toward liberal democratic values.<sup>113</sup>

These views have been upsetting to critics from the right and the left. An op-ed, published early in the Trump administration, by then-National Economic Advisor Gary Cohn and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, cited the president's "clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage."<sup>114</sup> Critics disputed this assessment, with some calling it Hobbesian.<sup>115</sup> Yet, events have borne out Trump's view. Indeed, it is hard to

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<sup>113</sup> *National Security Strategy*, 37. See also essay questioning idealism by William S. Smith, "Why Foreign Policy Realism Isn't Enough," *American Conservative*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/why-foreign-policy-realism-isnt-enough/>.

<sup>114</sup> H.R. McMaster and Gary D. Cohn, "American First Doesn't Mean America Alone," *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426>.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, "The Most Extraordinary Op-Ed of 2017," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/06/01/the-most-extraordinary-op-ed-of-2017/?utm\\_term=.bfaddb8ae7a8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/06/01/the-most-extraordinary-op-ed-of-2017/?utm_term=.bfaddb8ae7a8)

conceive of a genuine community of common purposes with such states as China, Russia, and Iran.

The third principle is an emphasis on *catalyzing change*. Trump, conscious of the costs of ambitious policies, is cognizant that the United States cannot and should not bear undue burdens. He believes America's agency is limited. Also, even as the United States remains the world's sole superpower, it is not a hegemon capable of controlling all outcomes.<sup>116</sup> He therefore believes that realism requires a new emphasis on catalyzing actions by others.

This has been a repeated theme throughout his administration, whether called "burden sharing" or sharing responsibility. When the president visited the Middle East early in his tenure, he called on leaders of Muslim-majority countries to take the lead in fighting radical Islamists ideologically. Although other presidents, whether Republican or Democratic, have called out allies and partners to do more in terms of defense spending, the results have been uneven. Trump's approach, on the other hand, has been more forceful and direct. In a sense, he understands that catalyzing change sometimes requires making others uncomfortable.

In this respect, the Trump administration actively seeks cooperation, in security matters as well as trade, but demands reciprocity. The president has reached out to modernize America's alliances, even as he forcefully argues that these allies must meet their defense spending obligations. And it has started to work. More NATO allies are now increasing their spending on defense, while Germany may be more willing to consider diversifying its natural gas supplies.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, the president wishes to advance trade agreements but insists that such deals address persistent, structural trade imbalances, many of which are the result of tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as currency manipulation. He has demanded that countries such as China stop stealing America's intellectual property — the

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<sup>116</sup> Nadia Schadlow, "The Vagaries of World Power," Hoover Institution, Nov. 15, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/vagaries-world-power>

<sup>117</sup> Jonathan Stearns, "NATO Members Post New Defense-Spending Increase," *Bloomberg*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-15/nato-members-post-new-defense-spending-rise-amid-trump-pressure>; "Germany to Import US Liquefied Natural Gas," *Government Europa*, Oct. 23, 2018, <https://www.governmenteuropa.eu/germany-import-us-liquefied-natural-gas/90859/>.

United States loses about \$600 billion a year to intellectual property theft, with China accounting for the majority of cases.<sup>118</sup> For the president, it makes no sense, from an American point of view, for the United States to care more about European or East Asian security than about its allies in those regions. As a businessman, he cannot abide unfair trade relationships.

The fourth principle is an unabashed *confidence* in the United States. He believes in American exceptionalism. “America,” he has stated, “has been among the greatest forces for good in the history of the world.”<sup>119</sup> He sees a restoration in American confidence at home — through, for example, a growing economy — as an essential foundation for an effective foreign policy. He knows that the free world cannot stand up to revisionist powers without the leadership of a confident America, though he does not believe this means the United States should be a policeman in all the world’s hotspots or should impose its values on others.

These principles come together to support a strategy that focuses on geopolitical competitions in regions central to U.S. interests, particularly Europe, the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and the Western Hemisphere. Trump sees the global competition with revisionist powers as playing out in these regions. He places priority on these contests, even as he recognizes that the United States will continue to play a role in other regions as well. He has questioned the idea of a “global” order. Rather, what is unfolding is a composite of regional equilibria that are being threatened by revisionist powers. This may seem a trite statement, but for the past several decades America has been chasing a “global order” that is impossible to achieve — while America’s rivals have been busy altering facts on the ground through wars (Russia in Ukraine, Iran throughout the Middle East), economic imperialism (China in Asia), subversion and disinformation (Russia and China), and even building new real estate (China in the South China Sea). What this administration has done is to reject the idea that a global order can be attained while regional balances are tilting in favor of U.S. competitors.

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<sup>118</sup> Dennis C. Blair and Keith Alexander, “China’s Intellectual Property Theft Must Stop,” *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/opinion/china-us-intellectual-property-trump.html>

<sup>119</sup> Politico Staff, “Full Text: Trump’s 2017 U.N. Speech Transcript,” *Politico*, Sept. 19, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/19/trump-un-speech-2017-full-text-transcript-242879>.

In each of these critical regions, the president, to the dismay of some conservative non-interventionists, has pursued activist, integrated strategies. In doing so, he has sought cooperation with allies and partners, though, unlike conservative internationalists, he has demanded reciprocity. His competitive response to regional revisions has been to bolster U.S. defense and catalyze greater efforts by others, with the objective of creating balances of military power sufficient to deter conflict or defeat any open challenge that might come.

At the same time, Trump seeks to come to terms with America's adversaries. He seeks to reach deals with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. His competitive policies are designed to create incentives for those powers to enter into balanced agreements that achieve American objectives but that respect the legitimate interests of America's opponents. While Trump is realistic in terms of his expectations, the design of his policies toward U.S. adversaries has always been to deter conflict, check their destabilizing actions, and cooperate when and where possible.

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## **7. Six Decades Without a Conservative Foreign Policy**

*By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos*

Foreign policy is a theory, an application of principles, or, as Colin Dueck expressed in his opening essay, an interpretation of world affairs. As Dueck correctly noted, the various visions of U.S. foreign policy have “oscillated between realist and idealist,” and with the revolving door of each administration has come a different rendering of America's international posture and responsibilities.

Unfortunately, in actual execution there has been but one policy over the last 60 years, and that is one of globally projected American power, made possible by economic and military primacy, and forced upon the rest of the world in the name of liberalism, democracy, and the “common good.”

How each president justifies America’s role in this U.S.-led international order can vary of course, so much that from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan, or from George W. Bush to Barack Obama, America’s foreign policy has appeared different. But the outcome is always the same — maintaining the status quo, no matter how loud the clarion calls (outside of the prevailing, consensual establishment) urge against it.

### **Are You Wilsonian or Jacksonian?**

In 2001, historian Walter Russell Mead provided a neat typology in which presidents and foreign policy leaders generally fit: Wilsonian, Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, and Jacksonian.<sup>120</sup>

The Wilsonian approach is of course the most idealist of the group, supporting American power projection and democracy promotion, and focused on attaining global peace through a universal, liberal world order. The Hamiltonian vision is more realistic in scope, but equally concerned with bolstering national interests abroad through trade and global economic frameworks and military alliances abroad.

On the other hand, Jeffersonians, while supportive of international engagements like trade, eschew anything resembling American hegemony or empire, including overseas military and political foreign entanglements, putting domestic national interests and sovereignty first. Jacksonians, who Mead describes as “nationalist, egalitarian, [and] individualistic,” believe in “honoring alliance commitments but are not looking for opportunities for military

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<sup>120</sup> Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (London: Routledge, 2002).

interventions overseas and do not favor grandiose plans for nation-building and global transformation.”<sup>121</sup>

Conservatives have vacillated between all four of these positions over time, with the most Wilsonian found among the neoconservative faction, the most traditional swimming about in the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian pool, and the Hamiltonians somewhere in between — think Presidents Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush. The current U.S. president, Donald Trump, has not only been called Jacksonian, but has reportedly embraced the label.<sup>122</sup> In his mission to put America first, Trump has responded to a backlash in Middle America against big politics, big business, and globalization,<sup>123</sup> which has resulted, in part, in unfair trade agreements and a corporate concentration of wealth that has left workers behind and 80 percent of Americans in debt.<sup>124</sup> While not pulling out of trade agreements, Trump has instigated a trade war with China, withdrawn from the ill-fated Trans-Pacific Partnership, and renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement — all in the spirit of getting “a better deal” for U.S. workers and businesses.<sup>125</sup>

Also in the Jacksonian tradition, Trump supports maintaining current foreign alliances for better or worse,<sup>126</sup> and, at least in his rhetoric, less nation- and democracy-building — and

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<sup>121</sup> Walter Russell Mead, “Donald Trump’s Jacksonian Revolt, Hudson Institute,” Nov. 13, 2016, <https://www.hudson.org/research/13010-donald-trump-s-jacksonian-revolt>.

<sup>122</sup> Susan B. Glasser, “The Man Who Put Andrew Jackson in Trump’s Oval Office,” *Politico Magazine*, Jan. 22, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/22/andrew-jackson-donald-trump-216493>.

<sup>123</sup> Robert W. Merry, “Trump’s Working Class, Conservative, Populist Realignment,” *American Conservative*, (July/August 2018), <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/trumps-working-class-conservative-populist-realignment/>.

<sup>124</sup> Maurie Backman, “It’s Official: Most Americans Are currently in Debt,” *Motley Fool*, Feb. 15, 2018, <https://www.fool.com/retirement/2018/02/15/its-official-most-americans-are-currently-in-debt.aspx>.

<sup>125</sup> Paul Wiseman and Ken Thomas, “As Midterms near, Trump gambles on his hardline trade policy,” *Associated Press*, Sept. 27, 2018, <https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2018/09/17/as-midterms-near-trump-gambles-on-his-hardline-trade-policy>.

<sup>126</sup> Josh Dawsey, Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, “Trump Calls Saudi Arabia a ‘Great Ally,’ Discounts Crown Prince’s Responsibility for Khashoggi’s Death,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 20, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-defends-saudia-arabias-denial-about-the-planning-of-khashoggis-death/2018/11/20/b64d2cc6-eceb-11e8-9236-bb94154151d2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a9c2feed8828](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-defends-saudia-arabias-denial-about-the-planning-of-khashoggis-death/2018/11/20/b64d2cc6-eceb-11e8-9236-bb94154151d2_story.html?utm_term=.a9c2feed8828).

even less war — than his recent predecessors.<sup>127</sup> But unlike the few non-interventionist members of his Republican Party — like Sen. Rand Paul<sup>128</sup> — Trump wants to build up rather than reduce the size and scope of the military, and in that way he is more Jacksonian, too — a bite to match the bark.

## Six Decades of Status Quo

But truly, this labeling and compartmentalizing of foreign policy principles, not only among successive leaders and administrations, but between parties and political factions, amounts to an intellectual parlor game when, in reality, there has been but one foreign policy embraced by nearly all presidents throughout the second half of the 20th century up until today — that of global American hegemony perpetuated by an ever-expanding and self-sustaining military industrial complex. What began in 1950 as a postwar economic stimulus program of U.S. rearmament, using the threat of Soviet communism as a justification,<sup>129</sup> has metastasized into a leviathan, first sensed by Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who oversaw much of that early industrial boom. He was the first to coin the term “military industrial complex” in his 1961 farewell address, warning of the repercussions it could have on American society:

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence — economic, political, even spiritual — is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump’s Foreign Policy Speech,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2016,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html>.

<sup>128</sup> Rand Paul, “It’s Time for a New American Foreign Policy,” *National Interest*, March 12, 2018,

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/rand-paul-its-time-new-american-foreign-policy-24862>.

<sup>129</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, “The Tyranny of Defense Inc.,” *Atlantic* (January/February 2011),

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/the-tyranny-of-defense-inc/308342/>.

<sup>130</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Address,” Jan. 17, 1961, <http://mcdams.posc.mu.edu/ike.htm>.

But what Eisenhower may not have perceived is that this new “immense military establishment” would not only expand under his successor, Kennedy,<sup>131</sup> with the war in South Asia, but would be used to enforce a new U.S.-led liberal world order. This would be facilitated by American military dominance and a “multitude of doctrines” over the decades,<sup>132</sup> including anti-communism, humanitarian intervention, regime change, and democracy promotion. Eisenhower could not have predicted that after the fall of the Soviet Union, no president would be fully willing to stand up to the military industrial complex to recalibrate for peace. Therefore, no matter what their beliefs were — Wilsonian, Hamiltonian, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, or otherwise — America’s presidents were bound by a powerful national security state and foreign policy establishment that had fully internalized the moral imperative for what historian David C. Hendrickson calls American “universal empire,”<sup>133</sup> marked by a major international arms trade; regional alliances (e.g., NATO), resulting in a neo-colonial dependency on the part of America’s allies and client states;<sup>134</sup> armed occupations, if not full-on interventions (both covert and overt); massive foreign aid; and endless war abroad.

Perhaps then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put it best in 2009 when she said, “America will always be a world leader, as long as we remain true to our ideals and embrace strategies that match the times. So we will exercise American leadership to build partnerships and solve problems that no nation can solve on its own.” Then, before rejecting the viability of “a 19th century concert of powers or a 20th century balance of power strategy,” she put the rest of the world fully within Uncle Sam’s paternal embrace: “Just as no nation can meet these challenges alone, no challenge can be met without America.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Donald A. Carter, “The U. S. Military Response to the 1960 - 1962 Berlin Crisis,” U.S. Army Center for Military History, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/cold-war/1961-berlin-crisis/overview/us-military-response.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> David C. Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 82, 78.

<sup>133</sup> Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril*, 53–103

<sup>134</sup> Daniel Keohane, “The Anglo-German Addiction to American Defense,” Carnegie Europe, July 6, 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71447>.

<sup>135</sup> “A Conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,” Council on Foreign Relations, July, 15, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-us-secretary-state-hillary-rodham-clinton-1>.



More than a decade earlier, neoconservatives Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol had already laid out how this new American creed would get a more muscular Republican touch: “The more Washington is able to make clear that it is futile to compete with American power, either in size of forces or in technological capabilities, the less chance there is that countries like China or Iran will entertain ambitions of upsetting the present world order.”<sup>136</sup> And what is that order?

Benevolent global hegemony. Having defeated the “evil empire,” the United States enjoys strategic and ideological predominance. The first objective of U.S. foreign policy should be to preserve and enhance that predominance by strengthening America’s security, supporting its friends, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world.

With the 9/11 attacks still fresh, George W. Bush would adopt this as his doctrine in 2005, making “ending tyranny” a primary U.S. objective and not ruling out preventative war to achieve it. His successor, Barack Obama, was “loathe to directly repudiate” this policy,<sup>137</sup> and continued to pursue the liberal order via foreign interventions, including 5,000 armed drone strikes, mostly in Afghanistan, during his eight years in office.<sup>138</sup>

As for the role of executing this military primacy, none other than the RAND Corporation, the military industrial complex’s longtime institutional handmaiden, said itself in a 2013 report, that mobilization and basing abroad is “a physical expression of the enduring global interests of the United States,” and “influences the behavior of those who might disrupt the international order.”<sup>139</sup> It further quoted the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report,

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<sup>136</sup> William Kristol and Robert Kagan, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1996-07-01/toward-neo-reaganite-foreign-policy>.

<sup>137</sup> David C. Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 53–54.

<sup>138</sup> Gareth Porter, “The Permanent War Complex,” *American Conservative* (November/December 2018), <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/americas-permanent-war-complex/>.

<sup>139</sup> Michael J. Lostumbo et al., “Overseas Basing of U.S. Military: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits,” (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR201.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR201.html).

which said the U.S. military personnel who are forward-stationed or rotationally deployed “help sustain U.S. capacity for global reach and power projection.” As of 2012, according to the RAND report, there were 275,396 military personnel stationed at bases and installations in seven command theaters in every continent, the biggest footprint since the United States began establishing a permanent presence overseas in the 1950s. (That number *does not* include military deployed at the time in wartime contingency operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere in the Middle East).

To bring it closer to home, today, there are some 450,000 Department of Defense employees — including civilians — serving overseas in 163 countries.<sup>140</sup> This dwarfs the 13,000 foreign service officers working on behalf of the State Department in a diplomatic capacity,<sup>141</sup> further underscoring the militaristic focus of America’s foreign policy since the Cold War.

## **Democrat, Republican — It’s All the Same**

One certainly could point out that Republicans, in particular the more realist presidents like Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, actually cut defense spending<sup>142</sup> and initiated power-balancing “triangular diplomacy” with China and the Soviet Union to avoid more war and nuclear proliferation.<sup>143</sup> But those administrations, particularly Nixon’s, did not pull back from stationing U.S. military personnel and weapons across the globe, nor did they discontinue the use of the Central Intelligence Agency to foment regime change abroad. Take, for example, the right-wing overthrow of democratically elected Chilean president

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<sup>140</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, “Department of Defense: What it Does and Its Impact,” *The Balance*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.thebalance.com/departments-of-defense-what-it-does-and-its-impact-3305982>.

<sup>141</sup> Tracy Wilkinson, “Tillerson Trims State Department Staff and Vows to Make Diplomacy More Efficient,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 14, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-fg-pol-state-department-plan-20170915-story.html>.

<sup>142</sup> Gordon Adams and Matthew Leatherman, “Five Myths About Defense Spending,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/14/AR2011011406194.html>.

<sup>143</sup> “Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy,” U.S. State Department, Office of Historian, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/i/20592.htm>.

Salvadore Allende in favor of Gen. Augusto Pinochet in 1973.<sup>144</sup>

Ronald Reagan's foreign policy (at least in his second term) was also considered realist, but in the sense that he thought adopting a singular, diplomacy-on-our-own-terms posture to defeat the Soviet Union and all of its communist projects in the rest of the world was a matter of national interest. In addition to a "peace through strength" military arms build-up that brought the United States uncomfortably close to nuclear war,<sup>145</sup> the Reagan Doctrine aimed to overwhelm and end Russian influence by funding and arming resistance movements in developing countries,<sup>146</sup> namely Nicaragua, Afghanistan,<sup>147</sup> Cambodia, and Angola.<sup>148</sup> One need only to look at Afghanistan today to see the repercussions of America's imperialistic behavior (whether under a conservative president or not). Nevertheless, the late Charles Krauthammer, a neoconservative and defender of the Reagan Doctrine, called the president's policies a restoration of "democratic militance."<sup>149</sup>

One could argue that, after the collapse of Iron Curtain in the 1990's, presidents H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton closed or reduced a number forward military bases abroad, but that, too, would be a misnomer, because most of those changes were made to outdated programs in the European theater, while interventions and mobilizations were on the rise in the Middle East.<sup>150</sup> It is true that budgets came down in that period, but as Franklin "Chuck" Spinney

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<sup>144</sup> Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intentions: CIA Covert Operations in Chile, 1964-1974* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2007).

<sup>145</sup> Jamie Doward, "How a NATO Wargame Took the World to the Brink of Nuclear Disaster," *Guardian*, Nov. 2, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/02/nato-war-game-nuclear-disaster>.

<sup>146</sup> "Reagan Doctrine, 1985," U.S Department of State, Office of Historian, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/17741.htm>.

<sup>147</sup> Robert Pear and Special to the New York Times, "Arming Afghan Guerrillas: A Huge Effort by the U.S.," *New York Times*, April 18, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/18/world/arming-afghan-guerrillas-a-huge-effort-led-by-us.html>.

<sup>148</sup> William Pascoe III, "Angola Tests the Reagan Doctrine," Heritage Foundation, Nov. 14, 1985, <https://www.heritage.org/africa/report/angola-tests-the-reagan-doctrine>.

<sup>149</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "The Reagan Doctrine," *Time*, June 24, 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,141478,00.html>.

<sup>150</sup> Lostumbo et al., "Overseas Basing of U.S. Military."

pointed out in 2011,<sup>151</sup> the “spending spree” for high-tech weapons systems that began in the 1980s and continues today saw more money being poured into “fewer numbers of ever more complex and costly weapons,” shepherded by a short list of major defense contractors. If defense budgets fluctuated downward in peacetime, it was to the detriment of force structure and readiness, a problem critics cite as a “crisis” today.<sup>152</sup>

This dovetails with the corporatization and “government reinvention” of the Department of Defense led by H.W. Bush and Clinton, creating a new “contract state,” (as described by Aaron Friedberg in the nascent years of military privatization in 1992),<sup>153</sup> something Eisenhower did not even begin to anticipate.<sup>154</sup> He could not conceive how fully entrenched this contract state would be in America’s political, economic, and foreign affairs, particularly after the Sept. 11 attacks drove the demand for more surveillance, more weapons, more support staff, more private security, more “advisors,” and more trainers. Postwar reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan has only been a boon for the private sector.<sup>155</sup> At some point, the U.S. military became so fully dependent on contractors in the Washington Beltway that they achieved full symbiosis — one cannot exist without the other. A steady stream of lobbyists buttering up a compliant Congress and a revolving door between the military, Congress, and the private sector that would make anyone’s head spin,<sup>156</sup> has guaranteed that no matter the administration — Democratic or Republican, conservative or progressive — U.S. foreign policy is represented by a growing military

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<sup>151</sup> Franklin C. Spinney, “Why Is This Handbook Necessary?” in *The Pentagon Labyrinth: 10 Short Essays to Help You Through It*, Center for Defense Information, Aug. 16, 2010, <http://dnipogo.org/labyrinth/>.

<sup>152</sup> Jeff Groom, “The Military Readiness Crisis is Not in Dispute – But...” *Small Wars Journal*, July 4, 2018, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/military-readiness-crisis-not-dispute>.

<sup>153</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, “Why Didn’t the United States Become a Garrison State?” *International Security* 16, no. 4, (Spring 1992): 109–142, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539189>.

<sup>154</sup> Paul C. Light, “Rumsfeld’s Revolution at Defense,” Brookings Institution, July 1, 2005, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/rumsfelds-revolution-at-defense/>.

<sup>155</sup> Maud Beelman, “U.S. contractors reap the windfalls of post-war reconstruction,” International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, May 7, 2012, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/windfalls-war/us-contractors-reap-windfalls-post-war-reconstruction-o/>.

<sup>156</sup> Mandy Smithberger, “Brass Parachutes: Defense Contractors’ Capture of Pentagon Officials Through the Revolving Door,” Project on Government Oversight, Nov. 5, 2018, <https://www.pogo.org/report/2018/11/brass-parachutes/>.

footprint ostensibly promoting and defending American values while imposing them on the world at large.

This perversion of America's core principles benefits the interests of a shrinking number of Americans, namely the foreign policy and national security elite, and defense industry executives and shareholders (you might think Big War helps American workers, but there's plenty of debate over that, too).<sup>157</sup>

Without a serious course correction from Trump's "Jacksonian" foreign policy, or a major geopolitical shift (perhaps due to an ascending China), U.S. primacy could continue for years to come, marked by tragic strategic, military, and political failures abroad (e.g., in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Libya), catastrophic costs, and a corrupt, bloated, and counterproductive national security state at home. The latest Defense Department budget is \$717 billion. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost taxpayers at least \$5 trillion so far,<sup>158</sup> and the country is currently \$21 trillion in debt.<sup>159</sup>

## **No "Conservative" Foreign Policy**

This isn't conservative. It is anything but. To get to the core of an American conservative foreign policy, one needs to take a time machine much farther back than to William F. Buckley's era, or even to Sen. Robert Taft's quixotic attempts to stay out of World War II. Instead, set the coordinates for Feb. 22, 1796, to hear President George Washington's

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<sup>157</sup> Spencer Ackerman, "Defense Industry: Keep Paying Us or Your Economy Dies," *Wired*, Oct. 26, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/10/defense-industry-cuts-economy/>.

<sup>158</sup> Leo Shane III, "Report: Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan Cost Almost \$5 trillion so far," *Military Times*, Sept. 12, 2016, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2016/09/12/report-wars-in-iraq-afghanistan-cost-almost-5-trillion-so-far/>.

<sup>159</sup> Paul Bedard, "Debt Ceiling Will Be Set to Record High of \$22 Trillion, Fund Government to Just Summer," *Washington Examiner*, Nov. 8, 2018, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/washington-secrets/debt-ceiling-will-be-set-to-record-high-of-22-trillion-fund-government-to-just-summer>.

farewell address, as he spoke clearly in words that 200 years later ring with uncanny truth.<sup>160</sup>

He warned about the “passionate attachment of one nation for another,” arguing, “Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”

Washington by no means recommended cutting young America off from the rest of the world, but preferred to engage it by example, to “observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all.” On a practical level, that meant trade: “The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.”

On national defense, Washington was also clear: “Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.”

To put a finer point on it, some 27 years later, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams declared of the young United States:<sup>161</sup>

Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy...she might become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.

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<sup>160</sup> *George Washington, September 17, 1796, Farewell Address, Library of Congress,*  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw2.024/?sp=229&st=text>.

<sup>161</sup> *John Quincy Adams, July 4, 1821: Speech to the House of Representatives on Foreign Policy,*  
<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-4-1821-speech-us-house-representatives-foreign-policy>.

By the end of the 19th century, that all got turned around, the warnings crowded out by hubris, wealth, and a headful of righteousness. Nearly 200 years after the signing of the Monroe Doctrine, America is “dictatress” of the world.

It would seem there are few conservatives at the levers of power who understand this and are attempting to provide a ballast for this dark and perhaps doomed, voyager. Sen. Paul and his father, former Rep. Ron Paul, come to mind, hailing from the libertarian side of the family. One can hope that Sen. Paul’s reported positive influence on Trump will, at some point, bear fruit — at least before another war occurs or America finds itself bankrupt, or both.

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## **8. A Conservative Foreign Policy: Drawing on the Past, Looking to the Future**

*By Dov S. Zakheim*

Colin Dueck postulates convincingly in his opening essay that there is no uniform foreign policy stance that all conservatives share, nor has there ever been one to which all conservatives have subscribed. Moreover, he also demonstrates that President Donald Trump’s approach to foreign policy, to the extent that his approach has any semblance of coherence, borrows from the variety of foreign policy postures that conservative policymakers and thinkers have articulated at different times over the past century. Yet, it is arguable that Trump’s foreign policy is actually purely transactional, and that it fluctuates between incoherence and unreliability. In fact, it is so much a reflection of the man that it cannot be a long-term prescription for America’s place in the world.

The world has been adjusting, first to President Barack Obama's explicit characterization of the United States as just one nation among many, followed by Trump's clear view that America is so exceptional that, if need be, it could stand alone. As a result, conservatives seeking to articulate a forward looking national security and foreign policy for the United States will first have to come to grips with the reality that American leadership can no longer be taken for granted. The Chinese communist model in particular, which provides for a social contract that combines political authoritarianism with a degree of economic freedom, has garnered considerable interest worldwide, especially among authoritarian governments. Indeed, the roster of democracies has declined since the triumphalism that marked Western, and especially American, policies and writings in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Moreover, conservatives will have to recognize that the American public's view of its country's role in the world is not what it was as recently as a decade ago. American voters made it clear in the 2016 election that they are increasingly disinclined to support either American intervention abroad or the maintenance of free trade agreements to which the United States already is committed — much less any new ones. Indeed, it is important to recall that candidate Trump was not alone in opposing the American adherence to the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. The other three leading candidates in the primaries — Sen. Ted Cruz on the Republican side, and Hillary Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders for the Democrats — held identical views.

Isolationists may well be comfortable with these developments. On the other hand, conservatives who, to a greater or lesser extent, believe that the United States cannot turn itself completely inward, will have both to formulate a viable national security approach that can compete with the nation's growing impulse toward isolationism and to articulate that approach in a sufficiently convincing manner that will win over the majority of the voting public.

## **Alliances Are as Valuable as Ever**

Perhaps the place to begin is the state of America's alliances. The end of World War II witnessed a major drawdown of the 7.6 million men under arms. Nevertheless, several hundred thousand troops remained in Europe, primarily in Germany, initially to deal with a possible German uprising, but by 1947 their purpose was to act as a counterweight to the emerging Soviet threat to Western Europe. It was in that year that President Harry Truman made it clear that the United States intended to remain engaged in European affairs. On March 12, 1946, in what later came to be known as the Truman Doctrine, the president requested that Congress approve a massive \$400 million aid



package to Greece and Turkey to counter communist subversion in those countries. Three months later, with Truman's backing, Secretary of State George Marshall outlined what was quickly dubbed the Marshall Plan, a \$17 billion aid package for Europe that, like the programs for Greece and Turkey, was intended to stabilize Western Europe's economies and prevent Soviet expansion into the region.<sup>162</sup>

Significantly, the Truman administration's proposals won bipartisan support. It was widely understood that, should America return to its prewar isolationism, it might find itself dragged into yet another European conflict, this time with the Soviet Union. The creation of NATO in 1949 effectively codified America's presence in Europe and its commitment to Europe's defense. The United States dedicated itself to deterring threats to its European allies, both by stationing forces on the continent and by deploying reinforcements to confront any threat to any member of the alliance. These U.S. allies committed themselves to contributing to the common defense, both by providing facilities and other forms of host nation support to American troops based on their soil and by contributing their own forces and resources to the overall alliance force posture.

Beginning in the early 1950s, it became clear that the allies would never meet their force commitments, nor the spending levels that would underpin them. This pattern persisted throughout the Cold War and its aftermath. Failure to meet the 1952 Lisbon force commitments was followed by the failure of most European NATO allies to meet their more modest commitment to devote three percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defense spending, and their inability, in the current decade, to devote even two percent of their GDP to defense spending.<sup>163</sup>

American resentment of the European allies' reluctance to meet their obligations to contribute to NATO's defense posture — what decades later Obama would famously call “free riding”<sup>164</sup> — has at times been matched by European bitterness over America's policies. Much of the European public,

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<sup>162</sup> Steven L. Rearden, *The Formative Years: 1947-50* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 147-69.

<sup>163</sup> On the Lisbon Force Goals, see Doris M. Condit, *The Test of War: 1950-1953* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1988), 373ff.

<sup>164</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine: The U.S. President Talks Through His Hardest Decisions About America's Role in the World,” *Atlantic* (April 2016), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

and many European governments, opposed America's role in the Vietnam War,<sup>165</sup> as well as the Carter administration's ultimately ill-fated plan for a Neutron Bomb.<sup>166</sup> They opposed the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative and its plan to deploy Ground Launched Cruise Missiles and Pershing missiles on the European continent in response to Soviet deployment of the SS-20 Intermediate Range Nuclear missile. And many Europeans also opposed the American invasion of Iraq.<sup>167</sup>

Despite these and other tensions, the alliance held firm throughout the Cold War and its aftermath. It did so because the implicit bargain that the United States and its European allies had struck in the late 1940s still applied: Washington would commit forces to deter an attack on a NATO ally. Should deterrence fail, however, a war would be fought on European, not American, soil. That bargain seemed less necessary after the Soviet Union collapsed. Nevertheless, it remained sufficiently viable for both sides to preserve it. With the revival of Russian belligerence and aggression in recent years, there can be little doubt that the bargain still has value.

America's alliances in East Asia likewise are a legacy of World War II. There is no one overarching alliance, comparable to NATO in Europe, but rather a series of bilateral treaties — and one trilateral agreement — that the United States concluded with individual states. The single attempt to create a multilateral alliance, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO — a brainchild of then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles — collapsed in 1972.<sup>168</sup>

Following the end of the war, U.S. forces remained in occupied Japan, as they did in Germany, only to be reconfigured as U.S. Forces Japan in accord with the 1951 Security Treaty once Japan regained its full independence and confronted a hostile communist China.<sup>169</sup> More treaties followed in 1954

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<sup>165</sup> Edward J. Drea, *McNamara, Clifford and the Burdens of Vietnam:1965-69* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), 540–41.

<sup>166</sup> Edward C. Keefer, *Harold Brown: Offsetting the Soviet Military Challenge, 1977-81* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2017), 458–66.

<sup>167</sup> For example, see “Up to 500,000 in anti-war march,” CNN.com/World, Nov. 9, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/11/09/florence.antiwar/>.

<sup>168</sup> *Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954*, Department of State, Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>. For U.S. treaties, see “U.S. Collective Defense Arrangements,” U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/collectivedefense/>.

<sup>169</sup> *Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954*; see also Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation* (London: Routledge, 2009), 23–24.

and in January 1960. American forces were sent to South Korea in response to the North's surprise attack across the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950, and remained there after the July 1953 armistice, dual-hatted as U.N. forces. After that, the United States and South Korea signed a mutual defense treaty in October 1953. America also maintained its post-World War II presence in the Philippines, signing a basing treaty in 1947 and a mutual defense treaty four years later. It signed the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) with Australia and New Zealand in September 1951. And, despite the collapse of SEATO, the United States maintained its defense commitment to Thailand, which had originated in the treaty that established that organization. The United States remains committed to the defense of Taiwan, although it has no formal treaty with that island nation.

As with Europe, America's defense relations with its Asian allies have not been free of disputes. In 1991, the Philippines announced the expulsion of U.S. forces from major bases on the islands, notably Clark Air Force Base and the Naval Base at Subic Bay.<sup>170</sup> There has similarly been ongoing tension over the presence of U.S. Marines on Okinawa.<sup>171</sup> Acts of violence against locals on that island, whether deliberate or accidental, as well as in South Korea, have stoked demands by left wing groups to expel U.S. forces.<sup>172</sup> New Zealand's 1987 decision to forbid American nuclear-powered ships and submarines from docking in its ports, or even entering its waters, threatened to undermine the ANZUS agreement.<sup>173</sup>

Nevertheless, as with its European allies, America's alliances with its Asian partners have held firm — and for the same reason. The deployment of American forces in Asia represents the same implicit bargain in terms of the value of American deterrence to Asian allies on the one hand, and allied acceptance of the reality that any conventional war would be fought in Asia and not on American territory on the other.

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<sup>170</sup> Philip Shenon, "Philippine Senate Votes to Reject U.S. Base Renewal," *New York Times*, Sept. 16, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/16/world/philippine-senate-votes-to-reject-us-base-renewal.html>.

<sup>171</sup> Tamami Kawakami, "The Contentious U.S. Presence in Okinawa, Japan," *World Policy*, April 5, 2018, <https://worldpolicy.org/2018/04/05/the-contentious-us-presence-in-okinawa-japan/>.

<sup>172</sup> See Sook-Jong Lee, "Growing Anti-US Sentiments Roil an Old Alliance with South Korea," *Yale Global Online*, June 8, 2004, <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/growing-anti-us-sentiments-roil-old-alliance-south-korea>.

<sup>173</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, "Shultz Ends U.S. Vow to Defend New Zealand," *New York Times*, June 28, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/06/28/world/shultz-ends-us-vow-to-defend-new-zealand.html>.

There is, however, a major difference between America's posture in Asia and its posture in Europe. Although there are far fewer American forces on the East Asian landmass, America does have territory in, or near, East Asia, most notably Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Marianas, and numerous islands. Over time, these territories have become increasingly vulnerable to a military threat from China, making it all the more important for American forces to deter any Chinese aggression as far from them as possible.

It is the implicit bargain with allies in Europe and in East Asia that argues for America to continue its commitment to its allies and sustain the treaties that it has long upheld. Not only would doing so diminish the chances of war reaching American soil, it also saves the American taxpayer money that would otherwise have to be devoted to defense. For however much more the allies might be expected to spend on the common defense, their aggregate contribution — which includes the value of the land that hosts American forces — comes to the tens of billions of dollars. Should the United States pursue an “America First” — meaning “America Alone” — defense policy, it would have to spend additional billions on new bases for an expanded Navy and Air Force that would have to patrol the skies and waters around its borders.

There certainly will continue to be tension between America and its allies over defense spending and the levels of America's presence on allied territory. Nevertheless, that is no reason for America to alter what has been a successful and cost-effective strategy for seven decades. Conservatives, in particular, should therefore recognize the value of having allies that enable the United States to bring a possible war as close to the enemy as possible, rather than having to fight on or near its own shores and spend far greater sums in doing so.

An America that turns away from the world will not only undermine the military strategy that has successfully stood the test of time, it would also inflict serious damage on what otherwise would be an expanding economy. The overwhelming majority of American economists support the principle of free trade. And while there is no denying that several nations, most notably China, engage in what can only be termed mercantilist practices, conservatives should consider means other than tariffs in order to counter such behavior.

Whatever policy the United States adopts vis-à-vis China, conservatives should advocate that it do so in concert with its allies. If it fails to do so, or if, as is currently the case, it actually seeks to penalize its allies at the same time as it confronts China, its efforts to level the U.S.-Chinese economic and trade playing field are likely to be far less effective. Given that the United States

maintains a surplus over Europe in both services and investment that offsets its trade deficit,<sup>174</sup> Washington should be willing to set aside lesser trade disputes with the European Union in order jointly to confront Beijing's predatory practices.

Moreover, if it were to formulate a joint policy with its allies, Washington could, for example, organize a boycott of Chinese students wishing to study in the West. There are some 350,000 Chinese students in the United States,<sup>175</sup> and tens of thousands more in Europe.<sup>176</sup> The overwhelming majority of these students enroll in faculties of the hard sciences, earn their undergraduate and/or advanced degrees, and then return to China, where many become part of its military-industrial complex. Were the West to brandish the threat of such a boycott, the leadership in Beijing might well reconsider its trade practices, as well as ongoing Chinese theft of Western intellectual property. Nevertheless, the United States could not implement such a policy on its own, in part because of pressure from American universities that benefit from the full tuition that Chinese students pay (which could be partially offset by U.S. government subventions), and in part because those students would simply migrate to European and Australian universities. Again, conservatives ought to formulate policies that would force China and other trade predators to alter their ways while not undermining the system of free trade — and the financial system that was created alongside it.

## Avoiding Interference in the Domestic Affairs of Other States

Many who call themselves “conservative” advocate American intervention in foreign countries, at times to overthrow their governments — as America has done repeatedly in the past. Such behavior

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<sup>174</sup> For a discussion of investment as an offset to trade imbalances, see Tim Worstall, “America’s Trade Deficit Is Largely Paid For By European Investment In American Manufacturing,” *Forbes*, June 22, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2016/06/22/americas-trade-deficit-is-largely-paid-for-by-european-investment-in-american-manufacturing/#7df7daf744f9>. For U.S.-E.U. trade and investment statistics see “Archive:USA-EU - international trade and investment statistics,” Eurostat, Jan. 5, 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=USA-EU\\_-\\_international\\_trade\\_and\\_investment\\_statistics&oldid=368909](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=USA-EU_-_international_trade_and_investment_statistics&oldid=368909).

<sup>175</sup> “Number of college and university students from China in the United States between 2006/07 and 2016/17\*,” Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/372900/number-of-chinese-students-that-study-in-the-us/>.

<sup>176</sup> “France, Germany, Italy, Europe and Chinese students,” Daxue Consulting, Feb. 12, 2015, <http://daxueconsulting.com/france-germany-italy-europe-chinese-students/>.

represents military internationalism in the extreme. Others who call themselves “conservative” would prefer America to revert to the economic environment of the 1920s and 1930s — a tendency toward economic isolationism in the extreme.

Hindsight suggests that neither approach ultimately proves successful. America’s 1953 overthrow of the government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh led not only to the Shah, but to the current Mullah-led regime. America’s overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 led to the ongoing chaos in Guatemala. America’s interventions in Haiti have never ameliorated that state’s economic and political misery, just as America’s overthrow of Saddam Hussein has not stabilized the Middle East. And America’s imposition of the tariffs that culminated in the 1930 Hawley-Smoot tariff did much to weaken the free world economically, while stoking German resentment that led to the rise of Adolf Hitler and his Nazis.

There is a conservative middle way, however. It is to remain active in the world without being interventionist or isolationist. It is to maintain and strengthen the alliances that America has created, yet refrain from wanton intervention in the affairs of other nations unless a true genocide — on the order of the Holocaust, Rwanda, or Cambodia — is taking place. It is to continue to participate in the economic and financial organizations that America has also created, and to work in concert with countries that seek to bolster the effectiveness of those organizations in order to confront the countries that would seek to undermine them. Finally, it is to maintain the good relations with America’s neighbors that prompted Truman to boast that the United States was fortunate not to have walls along its borders.

These are a few of the elements of a conservative foreign policy that, in its fundamentals, has been implemented by all presidents and administrations since the end of World War II. These fundamentals have stood the United States in good stead, enabling it to maintain its political-military and economic supremacy for the better part of a century. Only if they continue to be adhered to can America confidently look forward to many more decades of world leadership.

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