Mapping the Alternatives to the Neocon-Neoliberal Diarchy in US Security Policy

Thursday, 14 December 2006, 11:00 AM to 5:30 PM
Carnegie Endowment, 1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW. Washington DC

❖ DISCUSSION POINTS ❖

The 14 December meeting will comprise three *Main Discussions* and two "Quick Rounds".
Each *Main Discussion* will last between 70 and 110 minutes and will touch on several related
points. *Quick Rounds* will last less than 20 minutes and will involve a brief "provocation"
followed by several responses. *Quick Rounds* will occur between the main discussions.

Our common purpose in all the discussions is to:

- Specify the essential points of criticism with regard to post-Cold War US policy –
  distinguishing neoliberal and neocon views, where relevant – and also to outline
  those principles we consider fundamental to positive alternatives.

- Adduce the empirical evidence and lessons of recent practice that we consider most
  important in substantiating critical and alternative views. And, finally,

- Develop some broadly accessible "narratives" that convey both the errors of post-
  Cold War US policy and the essential features of an effective alternative.

Main Discussion Points

1. World maps: Contrasting views on global trends & conflict potentials, now-2030
    1.1 Questioning the "standard narrative" on globalization
    1.2 Interstate versus nonstate conflict potentials
    1.3 Special topics: the "Global Islamic Insurgency" and China

2. Reassessing the utility of war
    2.1 The strategic lessons of the Kosovo, Afghan, and Iraq conflicts.
    2.2 The limits of counter-insurgency.

3. Adapting US security policy instruments to the current environment
    3.1 Nonmilitary instruments – rebalancing the security toolkit: why, how?
    3.2 Military instruments: What drives US "military transformation"? Are current
        transformation goals off the mark?
    3.3 Military instruments: Thinking about "How much of what is enough?"

Quick Rounds (short interlude discussions)

QR-1. Interrogating "American global leadership" – What does it mean? Has it been
effective? Why is it so contested? Can we re-imagine it?

QR-2. Second thoughts on the creative uses of military power: prevention, preemption, and
dissuasion in recent US security policy.

DISCUSSION 1.

World maps: contrasting views on global trends & conflict potentials, now-2030

Every security policy framework rests on an assessment of the security environment – a global map or schema depicting actors, relationships, and background factors (such as energy scarcity or refugee flows). The interaction of these elements is supposed to drive the process of change. Alternative futures are possible, depending on the policy choices of actors.

- In this session our primary aim is to identify those features of the evolving security environment that are contributing to the potential for significant future conflicts and strategic competitions.

- In doing this, we should try to distinguish those assumptions and assessments that are key to the neoliberal and neoconservative views.

Neoliberals and neoconservatives have a story to tell – two versions of a "standard narrative" – about where the security environment is heading and why.   In brief:

- They see world events as governed by an immutable process of "globalization".

- The world itself is divided into a zone of peace (order, freedom) and zones of chaos (mayhem, authoritarianism).

The story they tell (in slightly different versions) is one of a wave of progress (democracy and markets) spreading outward from a stable core of states, promising to eventually bring peace, freedom, and order to the fractious zones. However, this progressive wave faces resistance from recalcitrant "dead-enders" of various stripes – governmental and non-governmental – who may strike back at the core.   Abandoning the zones of chaos is not an option: they continuously leak threats of various sorts, which travel along avenues opened by globalization. Also of concern is the "reverse flow" of weapon technology from the core to the troubled zones.

Some of the elements of the "standard narrative" can be found in the following documents (available on the *Background Readings* web page):

> *Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project*
> Richard N. Haass, "The Case for Integration," *The National Interest,* 1 Sept 2005.
> Thomas P.M. Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map," *Esquire,* March 2003
> Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly,* February 1996.

Discussion Points

1.1 The central "globalization" narrative. A force for peace and stability?

- Does the standard narratives give a complete and accurate picture of globalization and its likely effects on security concerns? Is it a stabilizing force? Apart from

increased flows of trade and information, what about financial dynamics? Also stabilizing?

- Central to both neoliberal and neoconservative views are the notions of "democratic peace" and "market peace" which assert that the spread of democracy and market economics causes a reduction in conflict potentials.   Is this a well-supported assertion?

- In assessing the narrative we might think about relevant global dynamics that it leaves out – eg. long-term secular decline in world economic growth; emerging resource shortages – especially energy; other "carrying capacity" problems.

1.2 Interstate & non-state conflict potentials

- How do neoliberals and neocons treat interstate *versus* non-state conflict potentials?

- Generally speaking, more attention is today focused on non-state actors and new, asymmetric forms of conflict. That said: do the neos correctly portray the challenge? Is there a way to scale the problems posed by non-state actors?

- While neocons and neoliberals differ in the emphasis they put on state actors, both seem to agree that the potential for contention is low among states in the "stable core" (including many transitional states like China). Do they overstate the degree of unanimity among these states regarding globalization and security issues? Or is the "core" more divided?

1.3 The "Global Islamic Insurgency" and China

Two conflict potentials central to the neocon and neoliberal views concern Islam and China. These are worthy of separate treatment.

China

Neocons seem less optimistic than neoliberals about the salutary effects of globalization on China. Both are deeply committed to Taiwan and both have pursued an energetic program of military dissuasion. What is the potential for major confrontation in the future (ie. after 2020) between the United States and China – confrontation of a type and scale reminiscent of the Cold War?

War on terrorism – "long war" – Global Islamic Insurgency

Prior to 9/11 the threats emanating from the "zones of instability" were viewed as categorical ("terrorism", "proliferation"). Since 9/11, neoconservatives have advanced the notion of a "Global Islamic Insurgency" as a principal threat of concern. Is this a useful and accurate construct? Related to this, we might discuss the value of the "long war", "war on terrorism", and "clash of civilization" as policy frameworks. Are these suitable frames to guide US security policy?

DISCUSSION 2.

Reassessing the utility of war – the strategic lessons of the Kosovo, Afghan, and Iraq conflicts. *Subsection:* **the limits of counter-insurgency.**

2.1 The strategic lessons of the Kosovo, Afghan, and Iraq conflicts

America's experience in Iraq could have a transformative effect on policy as profound as that of the 9/11 attacks. Although less controversial domestically, both the Kosovo and Afghan efforts also have fallen short of their promises, while feeding the global well of anti-Americanism. In each case, American military power proved itself very capable in some respects, but not others. This has inspired a large "lessons learned" literature (mostly focusing on operational issues) and urgent calls for improved techniques and technologies.

> A rough summary of the conventional wisdom is that America needs to either find more reliable and capable local surrogates or put more boots on the ground, faster – and these need to be equipped with better means of force protection, more thoughtful nation-building plans, and an effective counter-insurgency doctrine.

If this is the lesson of our recent wars than Iraq certainly will not mark a policy turning point.

However, today, we begin our discussion with a suspicion (or, at least, a supposition) that the conventional "lessons learned" are missing the "forest for the trees" – that is: they are ignoring a strategic impasse. In fact, we may be witnessing the limits of war as an instrument of policy. If so, this might have less to do with "war" as a human practice than it does with the specific nation that is waging it, the goals for which it is being fought, and the *milieu* in which it is occurring – all matters for discussion.

- ■ In exploring the strategic lessons of America's recent wars, let's try to explicate the troubled relationship between "the power we have" and "the ends that we seek".

- ■ What have been the *systemic effects* of the three wars in question? How have they affected regional and global dynamics? How have they affected perceptions of American power and leadership?

- ■ Many regard our capacity to wage war as a cornerstone of our present primacy and a key element of our comparative advantage over other states.   What do the three wars in question say about the US power position? What does it mean that the "world's only superpower", the "indispensable nation", cannot turn the corner in Iraq – a small, devastated, and impoverished nation with no big power allies.

2.2 The limits of counter-insurgency.

An obvious effect of the war has been increased attention to US counter-insurgency capabilities. Yet, from the day the Hussein regime collapsed, there has been a general recognition that progress in Iraq depended on our success in "winning hearts and minds" – with little obvious progress in 44 months. This may indicate a structural problem that goes beyond any easy "hearts and minds" fix. What are the limits of effective counter-insurgency – and are we, in fact, up against them?

DISCUSSION 3.

Adapting US security policy instruments to the current environment.

This portion of the discussion is about "transformation" of a sort – while, hopefully, avoiding the pitfalls of that word and concept, which has become both hegemonic and deadening. Today, "transformation" has as many meanings as it has advocates. It even – and, perhaps, principally – encompasses recapitalization of the "status quo". A perhaps more useful concept is "adaptation" insofar as it minimally implies an external reference point: a changed and changing environment.

Our discussion of "security instrument adaptation" will divide into two parts: non-military and military.

3.1 Nonmilitary instruments – rebalancing the security toolkit: why, how?

With the experience of the past six years has come a growing sense that America's security policy toolkit suffers from a serious "imbalance" between military and non-military components – and that the non-military side needs to be built-out significantly from its present state. This is held to be especially important for the goals of conflict/threat prevention and for post-conflict stabilization.

Among the most distinctive non-military instruments at our disposal are diplomacy – both official and public, support for arms reduction efforts (including non-proliferation), support for international organizations, humanitarian aid and development assistance, and support for peace, stability, and post-conflict capabilities.

Today funding for the military side of security policy is six or more times as plentiful as that for non-military (if we include in the latter category both State Department and homeland security functions). Nonetheless, there may not be consensus support among 14 December participants for substantially building-out the non-military side. It's worth finding out.

However, our discussion on the issue of "imbalance" will not follow a "yea/nay" path. Instead, we will focus on several issues central to efforts to re-balance our security toolkit:

First, what is the strategic logic governing (and perhaps privileging) the use of non-military means in a preventative capacity?

- Why might we believe they are more suitable in this role (and in some other roles as well) where military means presently predominate?

- What is the causal chain that links these means to the achievement of threat/conflict prevention?

- This discussion would be well-served if we focus on one of more concrete examples – such as nuclear non-proliferation efforts and the cases of North Korea and Iran.

■ We might also usefully address "development assistance" as a means of stabilization, "humanitarian assistance" as a means of public diplomacy, or the role of international organizations in preventing the flair-up of *intra*-state communal conflict

Second, how did the current imbalance evolve and what keeps it in place?

On the face of it, the difference in funding between military and non-military means is profound. Many nations, if not most, have balanced these means very differently. Some public opinion polling organizations (PIPA) have found that in focus groups, American citizens routinely choose to spend less on DOD than has Congress and several successive administrations – and much more on non-military security instruments. And, yet, the "imbalance" has seemed to have little political traction – that is: little impact in the voting booth.

■ Is this purely an artifact of a large and powerful military and defense industrial establishment?

■ Or is there something in how we frame and understand "security issues" and "foreign relations" that privileges military means?

Finally (unless already addressed earlier in the meeting):

US diplomatic practice has been seriously troubled for some time by problems other than those attributable to an imbalance in policy instruments. If an increased reliance on non-military instruments is to pay dividends, a more fundamental change in the tenor of US foreign policy practice may be required.

Our diplomatic practice has put us frequently at odds with even our closest friends – and not simply starting in 2001. This has been evident for 10-15 years in policy regarding, for instance: the Mideast, the United Nations, nonproliferation, the Kosovo war, the functioning of NATO, and the European Security & Defence Identity. At issue are our modes of leadership and cooperation – and perhaps something more as well: disagreement over the "new rule set(s)" favored by neoliberals and neoconservatives – rules meant to govern all our security instruments, hard and soft.

As an important part of thinking about re-balancing our tool kit, we may want to critically examine the methods of leadership and cooperation apparent in US diplomatic practice during this past 15 years.

■ How have we tried to lead?
■ How have we tried to cooperate?
■ And is there a common theme to the policy differences that have created tension between ourselves and many of our long-time allies?

3.2 Military instruments: What drives US "military transformation"?

> *We've applied the new powers of technology… to strike an enemy force with speed and*
> *incredible precision. By a combination of creative strategies and advanced technologies,*
> *we are redefining war on our terms.*   – President George W. Bush, April 2003

For more than a decade the Pentagon has been haunted by the promise and prospect of "transformation".   And, in a general sense, its hard to argue against the need for change. What is surprising is that there has been relatively little of it – given the historic shifts of the past 17 years. In most respects, today's military is a somewhat smaller version of the one that vied with a global peer competitor in the years before 1990. One clear change is that it has significantly multiplied its capacity to accurately deliver bombs and missiles on targets from "standoff" distances.

During the 1990s, a variety of efforts at structural change got underway, aiming variously to reconfigure military roles and missions, cut redundancy in infrastructure and support functions, improve cooperation among the services, and reform DOD's financial management and procurement process. Some of these faltered and a few made significant progress, but none gained more public attention than the idea of a "revolution in military" affairs and the advent of a "new warfare".

In the view of DOD's Office of Force Transformation, the process of transformation is principally about leveraging the power of the microchip. Its putative promise is to produce a highly-flexible military, able to see clearly through the "fog of war" and to very rapidly deliver the right mix of force to the right place at the right time – thus ensuring fast, clean, and decisive victory.

Insurgency in Iraq, terrorism, and a wide variety of "complex" challenges seem to argue for a very different type of war and transformation. But the idea of military change driven by the info-tech revolution and leading to a new type of warfare has remarkable tenacity.

- ■ We might usefully spend some time thinking about why this promise has gained and maintained such currency and momentum during the post-Cold War period. What strategic purpose does it serve?

In a sense, it resembles the F-22 on a grand scale: a capability originally conceived to rapidly blunt a massive Soviet assault on the European heartland becomes a *cause célèbre* despite the disappearance of the Soviets.

- ■ Why the great weight given to "standoff precision strike", "dominant battlespace awareness," "rapid decisive operations", and related concepts during the post-Soviet period?

- ■ The idea of maintaining a large global military presence has a similar anachronistic quality. Although numbers are supposed to be pared back in accord with *Global Posture Realignment,* the scope of our coverage will increase. And new efforts at *Prompt Global Strike* – including rapid deployment from great distances – will help substitute for continuous presence. But what is the dire strategic necessity of trying to deploy, for instance: 10,000 Army troops *anywhere in the world* within 5 days?

3.3 Military instruments: Thinking about "*how much of what is enough***?"**

Since 9/11 (and actually before) the perennial question – *How much is enough?* – has virtually disappeared from public discussion. Emergent fiscal realities, a soaring defense budget, and the costs of the war may bring it back.   In light of increased awareness that the military we have may not be the one we most need, the question may be re-phrased: How much of *what* is enough?

- For us today, it may be useful to talk a bit about *how to begin figuring an answer to that question* – how much of what is enough?

- An easier question, but no less important, is: What capabilities are currently missing? One answer alluded to earlier is: more ground troops. Another is: an effective counter-insurgency doctrine. Initiatives along these lines are already underway and if the meeting has not yet addressed them, we might.

QUICK ROUND 1.

Interrogating "American global leadership" – What does it mean? Has it been effective? Why is it so contested? Can we re-imagine it?

The prospect of "American leadership" today routinely earns an ambiguous response (at best) – even among long-time allies.   And, it is important to note: "anti-Americanism" was already a phenomenon worthy of front-page news in 1997.

> During the post-Cold War period, the challenge to American leadership – or, more precisely, to the *American presumption of leadership* – has come as much from those we propose to lead as from any dedicated adversary. *This is the paradox of American leadership.*

Assertions of a special American prerogative to lead are common among neoliberals and neoconservatives alike. Neoliberals may favor functional justifications, as did Secretary of State Albright, when she asserted in a 1998 interview that the United States had a responsibility to act globally (with or without others) due to its superpower status – which also conveyed a capacity to "see further" than other states (in her view). According to Albright, our capacity to lead resided in our being "the indispensable power" – that is to say: the world's key master.

By contrast, President Bush directly invokes History or God to explain our exceptional position, having said at different times that we were chosen by one, the other, or both to act as a model for the world and to rid it of evil.

More than just a prerogative, American leadership has been framed as a *security imperative*:

> *Without our leadership and engagement, threats would multiply and our opportunities would narrow. Our strategy recognizes a simple truth: we must lead abroad if we are to be secure at home.*   – 1997 National Security Strategy

And it is seen as uniquely dependent on military power:

> *It is imperative that the United States maintain its military superiority... Without such superiority, our ability to exert global leadership and to create international conditions conducive to the achievement of our national goals would be in doubt.*
> 								– 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review

Of course, it is the use of military power (or the threat of its use) that often divides us from those we propose to lead. True enough: when the war train leaves the station, recalcitrants will often clamor to climb on board. Compelling such choices might be considered a form of "leadership" – but it's not the type that makes for reliable partners, eager to share the burdens of the journey.

We might look more closely at several issues:

- What do neoliberals and neoconservatives differently mean by "leadership"?

- How has the United States exercised leadership since the Cold War's end, to what effect, and to what benefit?

QUICK ROUND 2.

Second thoughts on the creative uses of military power: prevention, preemption, and dissuasion.

> *America will not wait to be attacked again. Our doctrine is clear: We will confront emerging threats before they fully materialize.*   – President George Bush, 14 August 2005.

> Our *approach would discourage prospective challengers from initiating a military competition with the United States through the combination of a robust presence of U.S. forces, the ability to respond to a full range of crises, and a steadily improving technical prowess.*   – 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review

A central feature of US security policy since the mid-1990s has been the effort to apply military power in various ways to prevent or block the *emergence* of "threats".
(Here, we define "threat" as something that involves both the intent and capability to do harm). During the past 15 years (or so), three successive administration have sought ways to use military power to "act early" or act despite uncertainties.

These stratagems have included:

- Targeting proscribed weapon capabilities (eg. WMDs) even when no actual conflict seems imminent;

- Treating very low probability threat scenarios as urgent when they involve a potential for substantial casualties and or destruction;

- Treating emerging or possible threats as though they were actually existing threats;

- Applying military pressure to discourage military or strategic competition; and

- Seeking to discourage arms races by "winning them in advance".

The last two of these represent efforts to use military power as part of a "dissuasive" (*QDR 2001*) or "environment shaping" (*QDR 1997*) strategy. Essentially, the logic is to "cow" prospective competitors into quitting the competition before they even start. This would be accomplished "through the combination of a robust presence of US forces, the ability to respond to a full range of crises, and a steadily improving technical prowess." (*QDR 1997*) In accord with this, the goal of force modernization would be to maintain "substantial margins of advantage across key functional areas of military competition".

The United States has accumulated 15 years of experience attempting to put these stratagems into action – with direct relevance to policy on China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Russia, and Venezuela. And the stratagems have substantially affected US military deployment patterns, operational tempo, weapon procurement, and budgets.

It's time to re-assess:

> *Reviewing the post-Cold War period, can we offer a cost-benefit perspective on the preventative, preemptive, and dissuasive uses of military power?*

In this assessment, we might conceive "costs" broadly to include:

- Financial costs;
- Impact on military operational tempo, deployment, and procurement choices;
- Systemic effects – that is: effects on the international system and behavior of third parties; and
- Inadvertent effects – undesirable reactions by target countries.

Any stratagem for the use of military power entails a "causal chain" by which the use of power is supposed to achieve its goals. In the case of the recent US stratagems of preventive, preemptive, and dissuasive action, is this chain clear and plausible?

Can we imagine how rebalancing our use of the military back toward more traditional functions of deterrence and crisis response (mostly defense against aggression) would alter our present requirements and how it might affect our approach to dealing with:

- The Iran nuclear fuel issue, and
- China.