

Evaluating the Post-Cold War Policy of the United States

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This afternoon, I will describe post cold war U.S. security policy in three major areas, evaluate how well the U.S. has carried out these policies, and suggest future prospects. The areas are: U.S. security cooperation in Europe; U.S. policy regarding the UN; and U.S. policy on nuclear and conventional arms control.

As we conduct our evaluation today, we should keep firmly in mind the remarkable non-violent ending of the cold war: The end of the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation, the reunification of Germany, withdrawal of Soviet forces from Europe, and peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union itself. It took great skill to avoid the bloodshed that these developments could easily have brought. These were enormous achievements, for which we must give credit to the Bush and Clinton administrations. The nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union were also gathered into Russia and there has been an underfunded but well-conceived program to cope with the problems of loose nukes and migration of Russian WMD experts to foreign employ.

There have been some other important gains for U.S. security policy in this period. Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait and his violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty was frustrated. North Korea was blocked from moving to substantial nuclear weapons capability. There were partially successful UN actions in Cambodia, Haiti, Bosnia, Somalia, Kosovo and East Timor. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was extended indefinitely. The Chemical Weapons Convention was concluded and entered into force. A Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was negotiated and signed. NATO was saved from oblivion and decline by enlargement and by involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Some may not consider NATO's survival a positive achievement, but, after a 50 year fight against political evil, it was not at all unreasonable to expect that developments like these would open a new and better era, a new world order, as President Bush put it at the UN after the Gulf War ended.

Yet this did not happen. For the United States, the main factor preventing this new era was not so much poor leadership or poor policy – the main topics of our discussion here -- but something quite different and outside the framework of good or bad policy. It was the unexpected revival of traditional American isolationism, transmuted into the new phenomenon of unilateralism. Today, the current dominance of the unilateralist trend in the continuing struggle between groups in American society supporting concepts of strong reliance on multinational cooperation and multilateralism, and the groups supporting the idea that the U.S. should rely mainly on its own strength threatens to cost the United States much of the prestige and influence that it gained from the peaceful end of the cold war. It threatens to bring deterioration in U.S. relations with Russia, China, and Europe, to cause failure in using the UN as an effective instrument for furthering U.S. values, and, perhaps worst of all, to cause the collapse of nuclear disarmament. A lot has been said on this topic in past weeks, but it deserves our continuing close attention. In fact, it should have received the unwavering attention of the Clinton administration for the past five years.

Europe

To turn to our three security policy topics: In Europe, post-cold war American security policy has had three main objectives: To further the integration of Western Europe; to integrate Eastern Europe into the Western structure; and to integrate Russia into the Western circle. The first task has largely succeeded with the beginning of European Monetary Union. However, Germany's still incomplete unification and the move of the capital to Berlin has disjointed the Franco-German partnership that has driven European unification and has made it even more clear that the European Union is moving towards confederation, not federation.

The second objective, integration of the former Warsaw Pact countries of Eastern Europe into the West has partially succeeded. The difficulties of German unification and the resultant delays in EU enlargement to the East brought the use of a substitute mechanism, NATO enlargement, which frustrated the third objective, integration of Russia.

There are at least 15 more candidates for NATO membership, a fact which could keep the enlargement issue alive as a source of serious friction with Russia for decades to come. The integration process has also left out part of Yugoslavia, which Marshall Tito had taken out of the alliance with the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia has remained under fairly continuous authoritarian rule from the dawn of recorded history, with tribal and clan cohesion as the only dependable social foundation. Now, belatedly, these poor Balkan cousins of the European Union will have to be gathered into the family. Even Albania has gained political entrée through its asylum for the Kosovars. Quite possibly,

a forty to fifty year process is involved here, but European television and other media will probably keep the issue alive during that period and the process will continue fitfully.

With Russia, the first wave of attempted Western integration failed. Western governments put up insufficient money. There was no Marshall Plan organization of donor governments with the authority that was needed to overrule sovereignty-based defenses for theft, corruption, and the absence of accountability in Russia. The procedure the West used for integrating Eastern Europe, the enlargement of NATO, alienated Russia. American military power used in Iraq and in Kosovo over Russian objections, and U.S. plans for nationwide missile defense of the United States brought fear and more alienation.

It would have been extremely difficult under any circumstances to conduct a Western policy that could avoid intensifying Russia's pain over its loss of international status. Efforts were made, but in the cases I cite, Russian sensitivities were trampled on. Now, the job of integrating Russia will have to be done the slow way over a fifty-year period through German-led European Union investment and possible ultimate integration.

The missed opportunity means that Russia may go through serious detours – fascism or military rule, or the two combined. The Caucasus area has already become Russia's Balkans. The worst victims of this process will continue to be the Russian people, but there will also be increased danger of military clashes with the outside world. Making NATO membership universal for all potential candidates, including Russia, would ease the continuing friction of that process, but the harm seems to have been done in terms of creating enduring Russian hostility toward the United States, although fortunately less for the European Union states.

As regards the long-term future of Europe's security organizations, ultimately, I see the European Union slowly absorbing both the OSCE, NATO and WEU.

The United Nations

United States post-cold war policy toward the United Nations has also been a failure, at least for the short term, in the sense of failure to exploit the huge opportunity that arose at the end of the cold war for building this organization into an effective mechanism for peacemaking. America's enormous post-cold war prestige and political, economic and military power could have provided great leverage for this effort.

In the Gulf War, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, the United States was able to use its military capability, joined with that of its allies, with considerable military effectiveness. But this has been done at the cost of a serious drop in the standing of the UN in United States political opinion, and to some extent, Western political opinion, a decline which came as the U.S. blamed the UN for its own errors in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia. This development has also brought a drop in U.S. prestige.

Humanitarian intervention was justified in Kosovo. The military means used appear to have cancelled out the humanitarian gains. But other uses of military force, like use of combined ground and air forces, if they had been politically feasible, would probably have had similar effects. Possibly, a proposal for a UN-led peacekeeping force might have been more acceptable to Milosevic, and might have cut the duration of the NATO bombing. But by this time, American political opinion, including administration opinion, had so thoroughly trashed the reputation of the United Nations that it was no longer politically feasible for the administration to propose the use of UN peacekeepers in Kosovo.

Part of the problem here is the failure of the U.S. administration to present humanitarian intervention as a U.S. national security requirement, justified when governments violate their stewardship for the welfare of their population with serious human rights abuses or, put another way, when governments abuse the sovereign powers entrusted to them by their populations. However, instead of presenting the prevention of human rights abuses as a recognized and legitimate national security interest of this country, the administration has presented it as an optional extra to much higher ranked national security interests. As a result, the administration has been obliged to laboriously try to explain in the individual case why the U.S. is getting involved after it has repeatedly said that these humanitarian crises were not important. It should be the other way around: When appropriate, the administration should explain why action by others or by the UN itself will make U.S. action unnecessary to maintain a clearly established policy of humanitarian intervention.

Nonetheless, controversy over Kosovo, East Timor and the many difficult cases like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and Sudan has focused attention on the right place, on conflict prevention. Numerous actions can be taken in this field at the UN and elsewhere to improve capability for conflict prevention.

As many of you know, Randall Forsberg, Saul Mendlovitz, and I have proposed the Global Action to Prevent War project. Among other things, the Global Action program urges establishment of a professional mediation corps at the UN, and of a conflict prevention committee in the General Assembly. It urges the possibility of an understanding among permanent members of the Security Council to move into a pro-

active conflict prevention role and to limit the use of the veto for that purpose. We propose establishing a standing UN police force of 2-5,000 men and women which could be rapidly deployed to many areas where efforts to gain entry for military peacekeeping forces would cause problems. There are many other specific proposals in the Global Action program. They are on our website at www.globalactionpw.org.

Disarmament

Turning to the issue of disarmament and arms control, following rejection by the United States Senate of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, there is wide agreement that the present situation of nuclear arms control and disarmament is abysmal.

I believe we are at the end of a forty-year era of Russian-American nuclear arms control. Both countries have shifted their positions significantly away from cooperation on nuclear reductions toward national self-reliance.

Instead of a situation where we could look forward to a relatively continuous process of incremental steps of nuclear arms control, we appear to be on the verge of deployment of nationwide missile defense, collapse of the ABM Treaty, and even possible collapse of the NPT regime.

Rather than trying to paste together the old policy, I believe it is time to move to an approach that can cope with these dangers, bring Russia back into serious negotiation, and make China a full player, as well as establishing a role for India, Pakistan and Israel, and in this way compensate to some degree for declining American motivation.

To carry out this approach, the United States and Russia would agree as a first step to reduce to 1,000 warheads, real count.

All five weapon states would then immediately begin to negotiate comprehensive information exchange on their holdings of warheads and weapons-grade fissile material, reduction of all nuclear warheads in their possession to no more than 200 warheads each, and transfer of fissile material for weapons to monitored storage following verified agreement to end its production. Remaining permitted warheads would be separated from delivery systems. Both would be stored under international monitoring on owner state territory in multiple, dispersed sites that could have site defense against air or missile attack.

The three de facto nuclear weapon states – India, Pakistan and Israel -- would be urged to store their nuclear weapons materials and delivery systems under similar

conditions. No realistic proposal for deep cuts in nuclear arsenals can omit coverage of the de facto weapon states.

Details of the program I have just sketched out are in a newly published book, *The Nuclear Turning Point*, edited by Harold Feiveson and published by the Brookings Institution.

If it were actually implemented, the program I just described here would cover all known weapon states and would eliminate the worst dangers from current nuclear arsenals, including preemptive attack, accidental or unauthorized launch, and threats of use of nuclear weapons. It would sharply cut risks of diversion of nuclear weapons and fissile material and of nuclear proliferation. Moreover, it would set the stage for the first serious discussion with the weapon states of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This approach might ultimately be attractive to Russia and to China because it would deal with their concerns about American nuclear superiority and missile defense, and also attractive to India and Pakistan, because it would give them an active role in disarmament politics.

I am hoping for favorable statements about this approach from non-weapon states in the NPT review conference -- from the New Agenda Coalition, from the non-aligned movement, and especially from China, Russia, and also from India and Pakistan outside the NPT. A broad coalition like this could bring the United States to seriously consider the coalition's proposals for nuclear disarmament.

We should also introduce a program of conventional disarmament, including the disarmament among the major powers that is required to make nuclear disarmament feasible. The Global Action program has a practical proposal for this.

In conclusion, I would point out that one common characteristic unites U.S. post-cold war policy on all three of the subjects I have touched on here: it is the continuing ambivalence and inconsistency of U.S. policy arising from the unresolved confrontation between the concepts of multilateralism and unilateralism.

In European security policy, we see this ambivalence in U.S. emphasis on NATO and U.S. reluctance to build OSCE and the Western European Union and the European defense identity within NATO. NATO enlargement itself was a reaction to mistaken administration fears of a tidal wave of American isolationism. Instead, the wave of unilateralism that actually took place approves NATO as the only good U.S. foreign commitment.

We see this ambivalence and incoherence in the refusal to follow the common sense course of building the UN, a tiny organization whose current budget and personnel total are smaller than those of my home county, Fairfax County, Virginia, into a more effective mechanism for preventing conflict. The administration has not even succeeded in paying the costs for peacekeeping operations that the U.S. itself approved in the Security Council. In the end, this struggle also controlled the nature of the U.S. response in Kosovo, with its reliance on NATO and on bombing. We see its effects in disarmament, where the Senate majority has rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and voted in favor of a free hand for American military and technological capacity and of taking our chances in a proliferated world. And we see it in the pressure of the majority party in the Congress to push ahead with nationwide missile defense in the United States and with theater missile defense on the periphery of China, and the administration's surrender to that pressure.

Perhaps it should not have been one of the major surprises of the post-cold war period that traditional isolationism should suddenly erupt in the 1994 congressional elections in its new guise of unilateralism. After all, this strand of American thinking, historically based, and nourished by American exceptionalism, had been repressed as unpatriotic for at least half a century of World War II and cold war. It was perhaps inevitable that these dammed up sentiments would erupt as soon as the cold war cap was removed, and understandable that they would break through in changed form.

Fifty years of television coverage of the outside world has meant that it is no longer possible for any American to wholly ignore the existence of the 96% of the human species outside our borders. Old-fashioned isolationism has passed on the torch. The lesson of overwhelming American military power has also been absorbed in this new phenomenon of American unilateralism. Unilateralism no longer rejects the outside world as such, but opposes a position of seeking to cooperate with it.

In actuality, unilateralism is classic nationalism. We cannot expect that this spurt of American nationalism will seep away on its own. After all, it has been an almost universal post-cold war phenomenon all over the world. So we cannot expect the complete elimination of these trends. But we should not accept their easy dominance over American security policy. We can rightfully expect that U.S. national leadership will effectively make clear to the American public the destructive effects of unilateralism on American security, and we can hope that each of us will vigorously engage in this debate, which is vitally important for the future of our country in coming decades and quite possibly for the future of the world.