

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in a draped, wavy pattern. The colors are vibrant, with a deep blue for the canton and bright red and white for the stripes.

America's National Interests

**The Commission on
America's National Interests**

July 2000

The Commission on America's National Interests was established by a group of Americans who are convinced that, in the absence of American global leadership, citizens will find their fortunes, their values, and indeed their lives threatened as surely as they have ever been. We are concerned that after five decades of extraordinary exertion, the US is in danger of losing its way. The fatigue of many, and distraction of some with special interests, leave American foreign policy hostage to television images and the momentary passions of domestic politics. Lacking basic coordinates and a clear sense of priorities, American foreign policy becomes reactive and impulsive in a fast-changing and uncertain world.

The goal of the Commission on America's National Interests is to help focus thinking on one central issue: What are the United States' national interests? What are American national interests today and as far forward as we can see in the future for which we must prepare? In the short run, we hope to catalyze debate about the most important US national interests during this season of presidential and congressional campaigns. We also hope to contribute to a more focused debate about core national interests, the essential foundation for the next era of American foreign policy.

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AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

A Report from The Commission on America's National Interests

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This Report reflects the general policy thrust and judgments reached by the Commission, although not all members of the Commission necessarily subscribe to every finding and recommendation in the Report.

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Commission on America's National Interests

Executive Summary

This report of the Commission on America's National Interests focuses on one core issue: what are US national interests today? The US enters a new century as the world's most powerful nation, but too often seems uncertain of its direction. We hope to encourage serious debate about what must become an essential foundation for a successful American foreign policy: America's interests. We have sought to identify the central questions about American interests. Presuming no monopoly of wisdom, we nevertheless state our own best answers to these questions as clearly and precisely as we can—not abstractly or diplomatically. Clear assertions that some interests are more important than others will unavoidably give offense. We persist—with apologies—since our aim is to catalyze debate about the most important US national interests. Our six principal conclusions are these:

America advantaged. Today the US has greater power and fewer adversaries than ever before in American history. Relative to any potential competitor, the US is more powerful, more wealthy, and more influential than any nation since the Roman empire. With these extraordinary advantages, America today is uniquely positioned to shape the international system to promote international peace and prosperity for decades or even generations to come.

America adrift. Great power implies great responsibility. But in the wake of the Cold War, the US has lost focus. After four decades of unprecedented single-mindedness in containing Soviet Communist expansion, the United States has seen a decade of ad hoc fits and starts. A defining feature of American engagement in recent years has been *confusion*. The reasons why are not difficult to identify. From 1945 to 1989, containment of expansionist Soviet communism provided the fixed point for the compass of American engagement in the world. It concentrated minds in a deadly competition with the Soviet Union in every region of the world; motivated and sustained the build-up of large, standing military forces and nuclear arsenals with tens of thousands of weapons; and precluded the development of truly global systems and the possibility of cooperation to address global challenges from trade to environ-

mental degradation. In 1989 the Cold War ended in a stunning, almost unimaginable victory that erased this fixed point from the globe. Most of the coordinates by which Americans gained their bearings in the world have now been consigned to history's dustbin: the Berlin Wall, a divided Germany, the Iron Curtain, captive nations of the Warsaw Pact, communism on the march, and, finally, the Soviet Union. Absent a compelling cause and understandable coordinates, America remains a superpower adrift.

Opportunities missed and threats emerging. Because of the absence of coherent, consistent, purposive US leadership in the years since the Cold War, the US is missing one-time-only opportunities to advance American interests and values. Fitful engagement actually invites the emergence of new threats, from nuclear weapons-usable material unaccounted for in Russia and assertive Chinese risk-taking, to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the unexpectedly rapid emergence of ballistic missile threats.

The foundation for sustainable American foreign policy. The only sound foundation for a sustainable American foreign policy is a clear sense of America's national interests. Only a foreign policy grounded in America's national interests can identify priorities for American engagement in the world. Only such a policy will allow America's leaders to explain persuasively how and why American citizens should support expenditures of American treasure or blood.

The hierarchy of American national interests. Clarity about American national interests demands that the current generation of American leaders think harder about international affairs than they have ever been required to do. During the Cold War we had clearer, simpler answers to questions about American national interests. Today we must confront again the central questions: Which regions and issues should Americans care about—for example, Bosnia, Rwanda, Russia, Mexico, Africa, East Asia, or the Persian Gulf? Which issues matter most—for example, opening markets for trade, investment opportunities, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), international crime and drugs, the environment, or human rights? Why should Americans care? How much should citizens be prepared to pay to address these threats or seize these opportunities?

The Commission has identified a hierarchy of US national interests: "vital interests," "extremely important interests," "important interests," and "less important or secondary interests." This Report states our own best judgment about which specific American national interests are vital, which are extremely important, and which are just important. Readers will note a sharp contrast between the expansive, vague assertions about vital interests in most discussion today, and the Commission's sparse list.

While others have claimed that America has vital interests from the Balkans and the Baltics to pandemics and Taiwan, the Commission identifies only five vital US national interests today. These are (1) to prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States or its military forces abroad; (2) to ensure US allies' survival and their active cooperation with the US in shaping an international system in which we can thrive; (3) to prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or failed states on US borders; (4) to ensure the viability and stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and the environment); and (5) to establish productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia.

Challenges for the decade ahead. Developments around the world pose threats to US interests and present opportunities for advancing Americans' well-being. Because the United States is so predominant in the economic, technical, and military realms, many politicians and pundits fall victim to a rhetoric of illusion. They imagine that as the sole superpower, the US can simply instruct other nations to do this or stop that and expect them to do it. But consider how many American presidents have come and gone since President Kennedy consigned Fidel Castro to the dustbin of history. Students of history will recognize a story-line in which a powerful state emerges (even if accidentally), engenders resentment (even when it acts benevolently), succumbs to the arrogance of power, and thus provokes new threats, from individual acts of terrorism to hostile coalitions of states. Because America's resources are limited, US foreign policy must be selective in choosing which issues to address seriously. The proper basis for making such judgments is a lean, hierarchical conception of what American national interests are and what they are not. Media attention to foreign affairs reflects access to vivid, compelling images on a screen, without much consideration of the importance of the US interest threatened. Graphic international problems like Bosnia or Kosovo make consuming claims on American foreign policy to the neglect of issues of greater importance, like the rise of Chinese power, the unprecedented risks of nuclear proliferation, the opportunity to increase the openness of the international trading and financial systems, or the future of Mexico.

Based on its assessment of specific threats to and opportunities for US national interests in the final years of the century, the Commission has identified six cardinal challenges for the next US president:

- strengthen strategic partnerships with Japan and the European allies despite the absence of an overwhelming, immediate threat;
 - facilitate China's entry onto the world stage without disruption;
 - prevent loss of control of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons-usable mate-
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- rials, and contain the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons;
- prevent Russia's reversion to authoritarianism or disintegration into chaos;
 - maintain the United States' singular leadership, military, and intelligence capabilities, and its international credibility; and
 - marshal unprecedented economic, technological, military, and political advantages to shape a twenty-first century global system that promotes freedom, peace, and prosperity for Americans, our allies, and the world.

For each of these challenges, and others, our stated hierarchy of US national interests provides coordinates by which to navigate the uncertain, fast-changing international terrain in the decade ahead.

SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Vital

Vital national interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans' survival and well-being in a free and secure nation.

Vital US national interests are to:

1. Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States or its military forces abroad;
2. Ensure US allies' survival and their active cooperation with the US in shaping an international system in which we can thrive;
3. Prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or failed states on US borders;
4. Ensure the viability and stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and the environment); and
5. Establish productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia.

Instrumentally, these vital interests will be enhanced and protected by promoting singular US leadership, military and intelligence capabilities, credibility (including a reputation for adherence to clear US commitments and even-handedness in dealing with other states), and strengthening critical international institutions—particularly the US alliance system around the world.

SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Extremely Important

Extremely important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Extremely important US national interests are to:

1. Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of the use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere;
2. Prevent the regional proliferation of WMD and delivery systems;
3. Promote the acceptance of international rules of law and mechanisms for resolving or managing disputes peacefully;
4. Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, especially the Persian Gulf;
5. Promote the well-being of US allies and friends and protect them from external aggression;
6. Promote democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Western Hemisphere;
7. Prevent, manage, and, if possible at reasonable cost, end major conflicts in important geographic regions;
8. Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies, particularly information systems;
9. Prevent massive, uncontrolled immigration across US borders;
10. Suppress terrorism (especially state-sponsored terrorism), transnational crime, and drug trafficking; and
11. Prevent genocide.

SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Important

Important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Important US national interests are to:

1. Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries;
2. Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization;
3. Prevent and, if possible at low cost, end conflicts in strategically less significant geographic regions;
4. Protect the lives and well-being of American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations;
5. Reduce the economic gap between rich and poor nations;
6. Prevent the nationalization of US-owned assets abroad;
7. Boost the domestic output of key strategic industries and sectors;
8. Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations;
9. Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements; and
10. Maximize US GNP growth from international trade and investment.

Instrumentally, the important US national interests are to maintain a strong UN and other regional and functional cooperative mechanisms.

SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Less Important or Secondary

Less important or secondary national interests are not unimportant. They are important and desirable conditions, but ones that have little direct impact on the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Less important or secondary US national interests include:

1. Balancing bilateral trade deficits;
 2. Enlarging democracy everywhere for its own sake;
 3. Preserving the territorial integrity or particular political constitution of other states everywhere; and
 4. Enhancing exports of specific economic sectors.
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I.

Defining the Problem

In the world of 2000, with its great global changes and born-again nationalisms that drive the military and economic behavior of states and groups, it is essential for the political leaders of the United States to understand our national interests. This will not be automatic or easy, and answers will not come from public opinion polls or focus groups. Our leaders will have to define our national interests; persuade fellow citizens; and then exploit the unique leadership capacities of the United States among the major power centers of the world. American leaders of every kind must accept the challenges of building domestic foundations for foreign policy in an America where social stability, public confidence, and a sense of common purpose are in short supply.

Above all, Americans must recognize that the rest of the world includes many powerful states that are just as intent on ensuring their own safety and advancing their own national interests as we are. The organization of power—the political ordering of the international system—remains an inescapable issue that directly affects the safety and well-being of Americans.

What are American national interests today? Which regions and issues should Americans care about? How should we order Bosnia, Rwanda, Russia, Africa, Mexico, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf? And how should we weigh opening markets for trade, investment opportunities, WMD, international crime and drugs, the environment, or human rights? Why should we care? How much should we be prepared to pay to address threats and seize opportunities? To be more systematic, the following questions must be addressed.

- Once identified, how should national interests be ranked?
- What is the relationship between national interests, on the one hand, and American values or moral purposes, on the other?
- Does the unique US position in the world at the beginning of a new century imply special constraints or convey special license, or even a moral imperative, in the definition and pursuit of our interests?

- Are US national interests in the next decade mainly defined by the geopolitical and economic realities of a shrinking globe, and thus primarily objective; or instead, are US national interests principally the sum of whatever happens to capture the attention of Americans now and in the decade ahead?

The confusion and cacophony surrounding America's role in the world today is reminiscent of two earlier experiences in the twentieth century: the years after 1918 and those after 1945. We are experiencing today an extension of the third post-war transition of the past century. In the twenty years after 1918, American isolationists forced withdrawal from the world. America's retreat undermined the World War I peace settlement in Europe and contributed mightily to the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, and the resumption of war in Europe after what proved to be but a two-decade intermission. After 1945, American leaders were determined to learn and apply those lessons of the interwar period. Individuals such as presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, secretaries of state George Marshall and Dean Acheson, and Senator Arthur Vandenberg, fashioned a strategy of thoughtful, deep American engagement in the world in ways they judged vital to America's well-being. As a result, two generations of Americans have enjoyed five decades without world war, in which America experienced the most rapid economic growth in history, and won a great victory in the Cold War.

No historical analogy is precise—but which of the two earlier experiences seems more similar to developments since 1990? The first. By 1947, after two years of withdrawal, fatigue, and distraction, the combination of Joseph Stalin's challenge and Harry Truman's response set the course for the next era. In contrast, today, a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, America remains in international limbo. Sensing no urgent danger, most Americans have thus returned to their own affairs. This shift reflects not so much isolationism as preoccupation. For a continental nation, accustomed to the protection afforded by wide oceans and weak neighbors, peace seems a natural condition. Rogues or villains emerge from time to time, such as Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf. In meeting specific threats, Americans are prepared to do their part, and more. But after the job is done, most Americans believe that most parts of the world should handle their own problems.

As the Scriptures warn, "If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will respond to battle?" Leadership from the president and his administration is a necessary condition for constructing any consensus on American national interests. It is thus the executive branch that bears the lion's share of responsibility for articulating a coherent sense of American interests around which to mobilize support. But with a Republican majority in the House of Representatives and in the Senate as well, the collapse of comity and acceptance of exaggerated conflict between the executive branch and Congress is fast becoming a norm.

The costs of the breakdown of relations between the president and Congress can be seen across the foreign policy agenda. In relations with China, an administration that began by insisting that minimal steps toward increasing human rights for Chinese citizens were a precondition for renewal of China's Most Favored Nation status flip-flopped to argue that the absence of immediate progress on human rights should not preclude China's membership in the World Trade Organization. The costs of the divisions in American government that produce zigs and zags in American policy must be measured in the Chinese government's view of American seriousness and steadiness. As China makes decisions about the role of force in its strained relations with Taiwan, a judgment that America lacks steadiness will create great risks, including even the risk of war.

Beneath this institutional breakdown is an even more troubling divide among elements of the public, some seeking withdrawal from the world (even as communications, trade, and technology make America the capital of a global village), others demanding that the US reform the world. American television news organizations, print papers and magazines, and philanthropic foundations have all cut back dramatically on things "foreign." Some leftists' conviction that the US is not morally fit to lead in the world combines with some nationalists' tendency to believe that the world is not worthy of American efforts. Some Americans' anxiety about economic insecurities abetted, if not caused, by international competition, foreign imports, and immigration, generates support for America to withdraw and hunker down inside a fortress. Yet most Americans know better. A majority recognizes that many of America's best jobs depend on trade and that America can compete successfully on level international playing fields. Indeed, polling data consistently find large majorities supporting the proposition that the United States must play a unique leadership role in the world. On the left and right of both political parties, one finds persuasive advocates of new crusades to promote human rights and democracy.

The executive and legislative branches' ability to rise above their bitter differences to create a bipartisan coalition to grant China permanent normal trading relations (PNTR) reflects both good and bad news. The good news is that in an extreme case when priority national interests were at stake, after many missteps and high risks of failure, and even in this political season, political adversaries joined together to do the right thing. The bad news is that such an easy call—from the perspective of American national interests—should have required such an extraordinary effort across the US government and beyond. While American foreign policy has always reflected domestic politics, it risks becoming only an extension of domestic politics. Unless domestic politics are informed and disciplined by a larger sense of American stakes abroad, America will be imperiled.

What then is to be done? A necessary precondition for any effective action is a renewed sense of American national interests and values. A broad national under-

standing of these stakes is a necessary foundation for a steady, sustained American role in the decades ahead. Thus we ask:

- Which American interests are vital, which are extremely important, which are important, and which are less important or secondary?
- How can Americans think clearly about these issues? By what process or method can we hope to identify American national interests and the priorities among them?
- What developments will challenge American interests in the decade ahead? Which developments provide opportunities to advance American well-being?

It is to these three questions that we now turn.

II.

Thinking Clearly About America's National Interests

National interests are the foundation of foreign policy. The concept is often invoked as if it were beyond the conceptual reach of most Americans. In fact, the idea is used regularly and widely by ordinary citizens and members of Congress, as well as administration officials.

Today most Americans have no vivid, shared sense of this nation's interests in the world. Even fewer can rank those interests hierarchically. Many find it difficult to distinguish between whatever happens to interest them personally, at the moment, and American national interests. We were chastened by the results of a year-long study of national interests that was conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations and involved more than 100 of its members.¹ The principal conclusion of that study was: dissensus. Even among "foreign policy elites," there is widespread confusion and little agreement about US interests today. In the end, the Council Study Group's consensus list of putative vital interests included dozens of items, some representing little more than a way of insisting that more attention be paid to some issue. Participants in the Council on Foreign Relations Study reached unanimity on only one American vital interest: "to protect US territorial integrity, including prevention of the use of force against US territory."

This Commission's work began with an effort to be clear about the concepts we are using, to specify the criteria for identifying national interests, and to be explicit about the analytic process by which interests are to be ranked. Thinking clearly about national interests requires making hard choices. One member of the Commission, Andrew Goodpaster, recalled for the group the instructions Army Chief of Staff George Marshall gave America's wartime strategic planners in 1942: They were to identify the Allies' "basic undertakings"—the essential objectives without which the war would not likely be won. Many initiatives, such as Winston Churchill's call to dispatch Allied

¹ Council on Foreign Relations Project on U.S. National Interests after the Cold War, 1994–95.

forces to Yugoslavia, failed to make the cut. As Marshall's maxim put it: when deciding what to do, one is also deciding what not to do.

For example, the Council on Foreign Relations' list of vital interests includes Canada's territorial integrity and prosperity. This Commission disagrees. In our analysis, this item does not even qualify for the "important" list. If Quebec were to separate from Canada, leaving the United States with two northern neighbors, how would this affect US interests? If the separation were peaceful, probably minimally. If separation produced some immigration, as long as it were legal, again the consequences would be minimal. Separation might create a need to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but separated from Canada, Quebec would be weaker, making it likely that the US could improve the terms of that trade agreement for Americans.

How did we reach this conclusion? What analytic process do we recommend to our fellow citizens who wish to think clearly about national interests? We found the best clues in some of the more sensible uses of the concept of national interests in ordinary debate. We started by reflecting on how we use terms like "vital" or "important." Without presuming to have the last word, we propose eleven guidelines drawn primarily from reflection on ordinary debate. Together, these provide a framework and process for answering questions about America's national interests.

First is the necessity for priorities in making a hierarchy of interests. We face hard choices among interests of great importance: which is more important than another? We suggest four columns, which we label vital, extremely important, important, and less important or secondary. A sense of priorities rooted in an established hierarchy of interests and values is central to an interest-based approach to foreign policy.

Second, the Commission insists that we reserve the word "vital" in vital interests for what the dictionary says it means. According to Webster's dictionary, "*vital*" means "*essential to the existence or continuance of something; indispensable.*" Government officials tend to use the term "vital national interests" promiscuously, as if all national interests were vital. In part this reflects occupational requirements. Imagine, for example, welcoming visiting heads of state with an introduction that said that their countries were not vital but "just important" to the US. Were the exaggeration simple diplomatic doublespeak, it could be excused. But sadly, much thinking as well as talking has become muddled. One of the sharpest differences between this Commission's conclusions and most other discussions of national interests today is our refusal to elevate interests that are just important or secondary to "vital." While it is understandable that advocates of particular causes will seek to apply this term to their concerns, in any wide-ranging discussion the word "vital" should be applied only to interests that are indeed strictly indispensable.

Third, we subscribe to the sturdy one-line summary of American vital interests, first formulated in the late 1940s: to “*preserve the United States as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values intact.*” According to this summary America’s vital interests include (1) survival as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values; and (2) the international conditions required therefor—in current vernacular, to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Fourth, links among national interests, current opportunities to advance our interests and threats to those interests, and longer-term developments that could threaten or advance these interests are complex. Interests exist independently of specific opportunities and threats. Understandably, many debates fail to recognize the distinction between interests and threats, since a vivid threat is often needed to remind one of an interest that would otherwise go unnoticed or unattended. To take one controversial example, America has a vital interest in preserving a biosphere in which Americans can prosper and thrive. This interest is independent of and separate from the question of whether any specific threat—global warming, for example—is a real danger.

Developments that pose little direct threat to interests in the short run can grow to become major threats to national interests in the long run. Consider, for example, US relations with China. If China becomes a major strategic adversary of the US over the longer run, this could undermine Americans’ well-being as surely as a collapse of energy supplies from the Persian Gulf. Yet acknowledging potential long-term impacts across a globe in which no nation is an island can become an invitation to sloppy thinking. While everything potentially impacts everything else, the question is: How much? Surely AIDS in Africa, or pandemics, or virulent nationalism could mutate and spread to an extent that threatens vital US interests. We ask: in what way, with what probability, and over what time line?

Fifth, interests are distinct from policies to protect or advance these interests. Interests are the foundation and starting points for policy prescriptions. The first questions are: why should we care, and how much? But once interests are identified, choices about preferred policies require complex analyses of threats and opportunities, options for action, costs and benefits, and capacities for implementation. An interest-based approach to American foreign policy does not provide a silver bullet for settling policy debates. But it does help focus debates on preeminent issues, which can then be debated with evidence or analysis. So, to return again to the case of environmental threats as an example, the appropriate question is not whether a livable environment is a vital American interest. Of course it is. The issues are whether current developments like global warming threaten a livable environment for Americans, what policy options exist to address those threats, and what the costs and benefits would be of alternative policies, including investments in research in order to better assess the potential threat.

Sixth, the relationship between a nation's interests and its power is also complex. As with individuals' hierarchy of needs, once the basic requirements for survival are met, further interests become more vivid. As Thomas Jefferson observed: "I study war so that my children can study commerce, and their children philosophy and poetry." Particularly in the current unipolar era, with America's preponderance of military and economic power, the US has the opportunity to act anywhere around the globe to address virtually any issue (real or imagined). This embarrassment of rich opportunities exaggerates the difficulty of choice about where to focus attention and energy. Failure to apply these unique advantages wisely to shape a twenty-first-century international system in which America can not only survive, but thrive would be in Napoleon's phrase: "worse than a crime, a blunder." The US cannot do everything, everywhere, at the same time. Reality imposes the necessity for choice. An American president and his or her secretaries of state, defense, and treasury cannot have more than five items on the list of the administration's top five priorities.

Seventh, interests are not just whatever the current government says they are. Nor are they a summary of current public opinion reports. Governments and public opinion often make mistakes. Neither the American nor the British governments or publics recognized the vital interests that were threatened by the rise of Hitler in the 1930s. Whatever the current perceptions of interests (or distractions), there exists an objective core of national interests and a hierarchy of interests. When a direct threat to genuinely vital interests arises and is identified, actions to protect these vital interests will override other concerns that have previously preoccupied a government or the public.

Eighth, beyond a basic objective core there are further layers of interests—and interpretations of interests—constructed in ways that reflect more subjective choice and creativity. Consider, for example, NATO. In the Commission's analysis, NATO addresses one vital American interest: that the US establish strong relations in Europe to prevent the emergence of a hegemon hostile to the United States. This judgment reflects American experience in World War I and World War II about a condition required for US survival. In addition to this vital interest, the United States has a second vital, though instrumental, interest on the European continent, which is to sustain communities with democratic values that share a sense of responsibility for European security. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, and again in 1999 in Kosovo, coalitions of willing and able members of NATO provided the bulk of the coalition forces. Beyond these core interests are other important interests, including the prevention of mass violence in the European periphery, as in Bosnia or Kosovo. NATO constitutes a creative answer to each of these interests. Thus, an instrument like America's alliance system—including NATO—once constructed and maintained is in our view properly referred to as a vital interest. It is a condition that in practice, and at least for the foreseeable future, is

necessary for preserving other vital interests. With all of its enormous power, the United States cannot accomplish very much in a sustained way in the world without its allies and partners.

Ninth, interests are analytically distinct from what a nation is prepared to do to protect those interests. Given its current position, the US can choose to use military force on behalf of interests that are of lesser importance. For example, the fact that the Clinton administration chose to go to war in Kosovo does not make Kosovo a vital national interest. Given America's current military preponderance, the US can, if it chooses to do so, intervene militarily in Somalia or Sierra Leone, or almost anywhere else in the world. On the other hand, where the US has vital national interests that can be defended by force, it should be willing to use the military. Indeed, we endorse the traditional spectrum of corollary injunctions linking interests and military actions. For "vital" national interests, the United States should be prepared to commit itself to fight, even if it has to do so unilaterally and without the assistance of allies. For "extremely important" interests, the United States should be prepared to commit forces to meet threats and to lead a coalition of forces, but only in conjunction with a coalition or allies whose vital interests are threatened. For "important" interests, the United States should be prepared to participate militarily, on a case-by-case basis, but only if the costs are low or others carry the lion's share of the burden. These corollaries for responses to threats to interests are consistent with the early US position on Bosnia, according to which the absence of vital US interests meant that the United States would not commit American troops to combat on the ground in Bosnia. As for the war against Yugoslavia, it seems doubtful that the American national interests that were involved justified launching a massive US-dominated air campaign against Yugoslavia that threatened relations with Russia and China, except possibly for the interest in restoring US credibility that had been fractured by the previous years' policy.

Tenth, judgments about the hierarchy of American interests are often formally embodied in international commitments, including US alliances, treaties (NAFTA and the World Trade Organization), the stationing of American troops, and the establishment of bases. The constitutional requirement that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of treaties reflects the founding fathers' judgment about the appropriate constitutional process for identifying US interests in the world beyond its borders. Ratified treaties also communicate the fact that the nation has reached a consensus about an issue's place in the hierarchy of American interests.

Finally, the relationship between interests and values is complex and subtle. In his book, *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger wrestles with this dichotomy for 900 pages without resolution. His study emphasizes the competition in twentieth-century American foreign

policy between Woodrow Wilson's "idealism" and Theodore Roosevelt's "realism." Nonetheless, for the purposes at hand, the Commission is more comfortable with an earlier American concept in which values and interests are seen less as dichotomous poles, and more as alternative expressions of valuation. The survival and well-being of the United States is not just an interest in contrast to Americans' values, but also a core value essential to all Americans. Similarly, Americans are not uninterested in human rights in China or Burundi or indeed in the well-being of other individuals with whom they share the globe. But the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution assert first and foremost Americans' interest in the idea and ideal that America survive and thrive. Freedom for individuals, democratic government, and conditions that secure life, liberty, and opportunities for happiness are both interests and values. The Founding Fathers believed that America should advance these interests principally by providing an example, a shining city on a hill. This strategy is made more complex by advances in science and technology. In today's increasingly interconnected world, all can see, and many can reach out and touch America—to harm as well as to help. Protecting and advancing America's well-being is thus more challenging now than in the eighteenth century and requires deeper and more sustained engagement beyond America's shores. But a concept of American national interests that begins with the freedom and prosperity of Americans and puts Americans' well-being first reflects the original concept of both values and interests in the American experiment. Together, these guidelines shaped our deliberations and informed our conclusions about what American national interests are today.

III.

What are America's National Interests Today?

The chart in the executive summary captures the Commission's answer to the question: what are American national interests today? A spectrum of American national interests stretches from "vital" interests through "extremely important" and "important" interests to "less important or secondary" interests.

The chart is avowedly American-centric: we distinguish between Americans and citizens of other countries. An equivalent hierarchy of Japanese, Indian, or Brazilian national interests would give priority to the citizens of these countries. Our hierarchy puts American national interests first, as American leaders do when they are being forthright.

As noted above, we base our use of "vital" interests on the dictionary definition of that term: indispensable for survival. Thus, vital American interests are only those that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans' survival and well-being in a free and secure nation. "Extremely important" interests are precisely that—no less, but no more. They are interests or conditions that if compromised would severely prejudice, but not strictly imperil, the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance Americans' well-being in a free and secure nation. "Important" interests are again not irrelevant but also not critical to the survival, or even prosperity, of Americans. Compromise of "important" interests could, however, have negative consequences for the safeguarding and enhancing of Americans' well-being. Finally, interests listed under "less important or secondary" are intrinsically desirable but have no major effect on the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans.

Many readers will find these distinctions uncomfortable. A hierarchy in which restoring democracy in Haiti or stability in Bosnia is "important," rather than "vital," will appear to some as insensitive or invidious. Any categorization of interests that does not rank interests in a way that offends some will fail to provide guidance about which interests are more critical in protecting and advancing America's security and well-being. Indeed, our review of what others have written, and our own debates

about how national interests should be characterized, have reconfirmed our understanding that there exist no natural accounting categories for interests and that the process for distinguishing among higher priority and lower priority interests is complex. Nonetheless, to facilitate debate about how and where America should expend its resources, we have reduced a complex process of calculation to criteria that can be stated as a single question for each column.

In considering whether an interest is “vital,” the question is whether the preservation of this interest, value, or condition is strictly necessary for the United States to safeguard and enhance American’s survival and well-being in a free and secure nation. Most proposed “vital interests,” from Bosnia and Kosovo to Haiti, do not meet this strict test, and consequently appear in the other columns of our chart. For example, many today assert that human rights in China are a “vital” US national interest. But massive violations of human rights as a matter of government policy occurred in every decade of the twentieth century in many countries around the world. While such violations are harmful to America’s values and in conflict with American efforts to promote norms of human rights internationally, these violations—even official, massive, systematic ones—do not threaten the survival or the freedom of America.

More controversial, we suspect, will be this Commission’s unwillingness to consider “preventing genocide” or “preventing the use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere” as vital national interests for the United States. But when we ask ourselves whether prevention of genocide in Rwanda (as occurred in 1994) or Burundi (as may occur this year or next) or the use of nuclear weapons between India and Pakistan (as may occur in the years immediately ahead) is strictly necessary for the United States to survive as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values intact, we believe the answer is clear. Such atrocities are horrific and should be prevented. If they occur, they will have serious consequences for Americans’ well-being in a free and secure nation. They do not, however, strictly imperil the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance US survival and freedom, and thus are “extremely important” in our hierarchy.

As the table shows, we identify but five vital US national interests in the decade ahead. These are to:

- Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States or its military forces abroad;
 - Ensure US allies’ survival and their active cooperation with the US in shaping an international system in which we can thrive;
 - Prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or failed states on US borders;
 - Ensure the viability and stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and the environment); and
 - Establish productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia.
-

In addition to these interests, we recognize “instrumental” interests—that is, acquired stakes in instruments that are themselves strictly necessary to protect or advance the interests stated. In the vital column, we identify these instrumental interests: promoting singular US leadership, military, and intelligence capabilities (including the ability to fight and win regional wars in proliferated environments), credibility (including a reputation for adhering to clear US commitments and for fairness in dealing with other states and individuals), and critical institutions (particularly the US alliance system around the world).

IV.

Challenges to and Opportunities for America's National Interests in the Decade Ahead

Challenges to the United States' national interests come in many forms. Threats and opportunities are often opposite sides of the same coin. Some are posed by countries or regions of intrinsic geopolitical importance; others are global issues driven by technology or ideology. The Commission has identified twelve regions and issues that will present challenges and opportunities to the leaders of the US government who take office in January 2001. These areas of concern overlap, reflecting a world that rarely serves up threats in neat packages. Addressing each challenge requires tradeoffs with other issues and careful allocations of US resources. The hierarchical concept of national interests developed in the preceding section provides a useful guide in identifying these tradeoffs and making choices about priorities among them. The twelve briefs in this section begin this process.

Regions

- China, Japan, and East Asia
- Russia
- Europe and NATO
- The Middle East
- The Western Hemisphere

Functional Issues

- Nuclear Futures—US and Worldwide
- The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Drugs
- International Trade and Investment
- Cyberspace and Information Technology
- The Global Environment

Instruments

- Requirements for US Military Capabilities

CHINA, JAPAN, AND EAST ASIA**Summary of US National Interests at Stake***Vital*

- That the US establish productive relations with China, America's major potential strategic adversary in East Asia.
- That South Korea and Japan survive as free and independent states, and cooperate actively with the US to resolve important global and regional problems.

Extremely Important

- That peace be maintained in the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean Peninsula.
- That China and Japan achieve lasting reconciliation under terms that benefit America.

Important

- That the East Asian countries, including China, continue on the path toward democracy and free markets.
- That East Asian markets grow more open to US goods, services, and investment.
- That a peaceful solution is reached to secondary territorial disputes such as those in the South China Sea or Senkaku Islands.

Amid concerns about the direction that China's rising power may take, together with the unresolved status of Taiwan, tensions with North Korea, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, it is easy to forget how advantageous a position the US enjoys in East Asia. By maintaining approximately 100,000 troops in the region (with much of the cost borne by host nations), the United States today retains low-cost influence that stands in sharp contrast to the Cold War, when it *lost* nearly 100,000 troops in two major conflicts. A key to US success in Asia is the strength of its alliance system there.

The emergence of a new hegemon in Asia would threaten this advantageous position. Fortunately, no country in East Asia, including China, appears capable of seriously challenging US leadership any time soon unless America, through neglect or indifference, were to create a vacuum. China's rise to power, though indisputable, is happening at a manageable pace. In the first half of the 1990s, China's economy grew at unsustainable rates well above 10 percent per year. By the end of the decade,

gross domestic product growth had slowed to under 8 percent (and many outside economists believe these figures exaggerate the real growth rate), and China's economy was exhibiting signs of stress—including high unemployment and labor unrest—stemming from difficulties in reforming the state sector and a slowdown in foreign investment.

Despite severe fiscal constraints, Beijing continues to modernize the People's Liberation Army, which is large but severely constrained by outdated technology. China has recently acquired advanced fighter planes, warships, and anti-ship missiles from Russia. In addition, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is testing a new generation of solid-fueled, road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles—though there is no evidence that Beijing is moving away from its traditional nuclear doctrine of minimal deterrence. Most disturbingly, China is boosting its deployment of short-range ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan. Thus, while China is by no measure emerging as a new Soviet-scale threat, it is gaining a greater ability to challenge America and its allies in areas close to China's shores.

As the region's largest power, China is the key to present and future stability. The United States has the opportunity to maintain a policy of vigorous engagement with the PRC that includes regular contact between top leaders and serious dialogue about key strategic issues, including Taiwan, Korea, stability in South and Central Asia, and non-proliferation. Rather than try to build a strategic partnership, which implies an intimacy and common purpose that does not yet exist, Washington and Beijing should concentrate on the more modest goals of managing differences while making the most of the points of converging interest and potential cooperation (e.g., stability on the Korean peninsula). Ties to China, however, cannot take precedence over US alliances with Japan, South Korea, or Australia.

The greatest immediate threat to the United States is not a hegemonic China, but rather the potential outbreak of localized wars in either the Taiwan Strait or Korea. An abating famine in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong-il's apparent consolidation of power, and Seoul's "sunshine policy" have helped reduce tensions on the peninsula somewhat since the nuclear crisis of 1994. However, North Korea's ballistic missile program, including an August 1998 Tae-po Dong launch over Japan, shows that Pyongyang is still a threat to stability. China's cooperation in moderating the DPRK's behavior is of great importance.

In the Taiwan Strait, the situation is more dangerous. Even as Taiwan and China have expanded their economic ties, the cross-Strait political relationship has grown steadily worse. Though Taipei and Beijing both express a desire for political talks, they remain deadlocked over the "one China" principle and fundamental sovereignty issues. Meanwhile, both sides are accelerating their purchases of advanced weaponry in preparation for a possible conflict. Taiwan's absorption into the PRC through force would represent a failure of US leadership and would call into question Washington's

reliability as an ally, thus undermining America's crucial bilateral alliances. A peaceful solution must be America's bottom line. While taking no position on what Taiwan's ultimate status should be, the US must continue to provide the island with defensive arms and implicit military backup.

Taiwan's protracted separation, which the PRC blames on the United States, is heightening China's discomfort with American preponderance. Chinese leaders point to American arms sales to Taiwan, Washington's plans to deploy a regional missile defense system, and the strengthened security alliance between the US and Japan as evidence of a growing US hegemony that runs counter to China's vision of a multipolar world. China's opposition to the perceived US position is mostly rhetoric. In actions, China displays a desire to boost its power and prestige within the current international system rather than pushing for radical change. China's efforts to join the World Trade Organization and its signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty are consistent with a trend, going back to the late 1970s, of gradually adopting the norms of international economic and political behavior. However, this trend toward greater integration may not continue if China remains frustrated in its quest to regain Taiwan.

Unlike Europe, Northeast Asia is devoid of multilateral institutions, such as NATO, that are capable of contributing to stability when power balances are shifting. Maintaining the US military presence in East Asia—both through alliances and unilaterally with the Seventh Fleet—is thus critical for long-run stability. Any unilateral reduction of the US military would likely be the opening bell in a fresh round of competition between China and Japan for supremacy in the region. Japan has demonstrated a desire to become a “normal” country with a defense and foreign policy more independent of the United States. America should welcome efforts by Japan, East Asia's largest economy and most stable democracy, to play a more active role in regional security, but this cannot come at the expense of Japan's alliance with the United States. In addition, Japan and China should work to achieve meaningful reconciliation, and Tokyo must be sensitive to historically rooted fears of Japanese remilitarization.

The crucial long-term problem facing the United States in East Asia is how to accommodate China's inevitable rise in ways that maintain stable security in the area. Further integration of China into the international system, a peaceful solution to the Taiwan issue, and the continued presence of the United States through its alliance relationships are the three key requirements for successfully finessing this difficult transition. Sino-Japanese reconciliation, democratic change within China itself, and continued economic prosperity in the region, while less essential, will help smooth over the inevitable bumps along the way.

RUSSIA

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That Russia launch no nuclear weapons against the United States.
- That the US establish productive relations with Russia, America's major potential strategic adversary in Europe.
- That all Russian nuclear weapons and weapons-usable nuclear material be kept secure, safe, and accounted for.

Extremely Important

- That Russia not collapse into civil war or into reflexively adversarial authoritarianism.
- That there be no violent conflict between Russia and European post-Soviet states, particularly Ukraine and the Baltic states.

Important

- That Russia's political and economic transition establish the rule of law.
- That conflicts within Russia and on the Russian periphery be resolved peacefully, with human rights protected.

Russia is not now a superpower and is unlikely to regain such status in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, Russia remains a potential challenge to American national interests in the twenty-first century though the nature of its challenge is changing. Chief among the dangers is that Russia's formidable, though deteriorating nuclear arsenal is capable of causing the United States to disappear. In this context, Russia's new military doctrine, which permits the first use of nuclear weapons under extreme circumstances, takes a small step in a troublesome direction. At the same time, the country's new leadership is introducing greater central controls and has somewhat reduced the danger of loose nuclear weapons and weapons-usable material, though it remains significant.

Within Russia, a new spirit of political and social consolidation and emerging economic normalcy prevails. The danger of civil war is more remote; the helplessness of much of the 1990s has dissipated. Russia's August 1998 financial collapse energized many of its leaders to try to solve problems on their own, without Western assistance, and provided a modest boost to domestic industry as a result of the devaluation of the ruble and the production of goods to substitute for imports. Simultaneously, Russian disillusionment over NATO's air campaign against Serbia has spurred increased efforts to blunt American international leadership both alone and in concert with other

nations. Though this was a key rhetorical aspect of Russian foreign policy under Boris Yeltsin, it only rarely shaped behavior when Moscow perceived that US interests were at stake. Under more energetic and assertive leadership, Russia could become a major power with the ability to oppose vital US interests around the globe.

Yet Russia's new political leadership also presents the US with a significant opportunity to develop a stronger, more productive relationship with Moscow. While US and Russian interests will be at odds in some areas, America can reap important international gains from cooperation with Russia on high priority issues of common interest, including regional and international security, non-proliferation, and terrorism.

US interests will best be served by a stable, democratic, free-market Russia that is at peace with its neighbors and is a responsible member of a healthy international system. The United States should continue to hope for and encourage this outcome. However, America's foreign policy decision-making must be realistic. Given that Russia's transition has been rocky and remains in many regards unpredictable, the US must establish and act upon well-defined priorities in its dealings with Moscow.

The first and overriding objective is to avoid nuclear confrontation with Russia without sacrificing other US vital interests. Since there are presently no logical causes for such a confrontation, this paramount objective is also the easiest to achieve.

A related priority is to minimize the danger to Americans from loose Russian nuclear weapons or weapons-usable material. The United States thus has vital interests both in helping Russia control and eliminate its nuclear weapons and materials and in protecting US citizens from unauthorized missile launches or third-country nuclear missiles developed with Russian nuclear technology or materials. Because Moscow is seeking to establish a linkage between its adherence to existing arms control agreements and a US agreement not to deploy a limited national missile defense (NMD) system, there is likely to be tension between these two vital interests. It is essential to reject any Russian veto over American decisions to secure national American interests, including decisions about NMD as the United States continue to seek reductions in the nuclear arsenals of both countries and to maintain other arms control agreements.

A third priority is Russian foreign policy. The combination of a more energetic, purposeful leader with Russia's lack of checks and balances on presidential authority could result in increasingly assertive international behavior and sudden changes in Russian conduct. Russia's location, military power, natural and human resources, and technology could make it a key player in a variety of potential ad hoc regional coalitions aimed at countering America's international leadership. It is an extremely important US interest to head off such a result by discouraging Russia from seeking such a role. Effects of Russian participation in such groups of countries could range from sales of arms and technology to increased terrorism, instability on international

markets, and higher oil prices. Needless to say, any such effort to influence the direction of Russian foreign policy should be based primarily upon positive American action to reward cooperation with Washington, though it must also include clear and meaningful costs for failure to do so.

Although Russia's military campaign in Chechnya took place within its own borders, its execution—and the West's acquiescence—are likely to influence calculations by leaders in Russia's neighboring states. Most important, Russia has explicitly forsworn the Gorbachev-Yeltsin-era notion that military force should not be used to resolve conflicts, a view that had actually been upheld and strengthened by the first campaign in Chechnya in 1994–96. Former Soviet states, particularly in the Caucasus, the Caspian Basin, and Central Asia, are bound to be troubled by this fundamental change.

The nature of Russia's evolving relationship with Belarus, including its security links, will also play a role in local decision-making. While Russian behavior toward its new neighbors does not engage US interests as deeply as does its behavior toward Western and Central Europe, preserving the independence of Ukraine and the Baltic States, and preventing, if necessary, a major conflict between Russia and these former Soviet republics is an extremely important interest to the US. A threat to their independence could destabilize the situation in Europe, damage US-Russian relations, and create the potential for subsequent serious conflict. Moreover, as essential choices such as those surrounding pipeline routes from the Caspian Basin are made, it is important for the US that they be taken without undue Russian pressure.

Within Russia, America's principal interest remains the domestic component of Russian international behavior. Thus, stability and the rule of law—and particularly checks and balances—should be extremely important US priorities, as they tend to result in predictability and restraint in foreign policy decision-making.

EUROPE AND NATO

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the European allies survive as free and independent states.
- That the North Atlantic Alliance remain a powerful and effective political-military alliance linking Europe and North America, with increasing geographic scope and mission beyond Europe.

Extremely Important

- That the conflict in former Yugoslavia not spread beyond its borders.
-

Important

- That the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe continue to be integrated into European and Atlantic institutions.
- That the European Union be a responsible free trading partner.
- That the conflicts in the Balkans be settled, with NATO and US credibility intact and at a sustainable long-term cost.

No vital US interest is seriously threatened in Europe today. That is a striking statement about a region of the world over which the United States fought two wars in the first half of the twentieth century, that was the central theater of the Cold War for almost forty-five years afterwards, and where 100,000 US troops are deployed today. Nonetheless, the concentration of power that Europe represents remains pivotal in geopolitical terms; if American policy is badly managed or if some current trends take a turn for the worse, vital interests could again be challenged.

Most importantly, the only serious nuclear rival to the US, and an important potential source of nuclear proliferation is located on Europe's edge, if not within it (as many Russians argue). The West's relations with Russia will be shaped by Russia's internal evolution and by how skillfully the West manages such issues as arms control, conflicts in the Balkans, and the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into European and Atlantic institutions.

While there is no danger of the rise of a hostile hegemonic power in Europe in the next decade, Russia is likely eventually to rebuild its economy and geopolitical position—and history suggests that a renewed Russia could again aspire to undue influence (and Chechnya shows a readiness to resort to force). The United States should address this long-term possibility by seeking, on the one hand, a mutually beneficial political and economic relationship with Russia and by strengthening, on the other, European security structures as a hedge. Germany's disproportionate economic strength, its new assertion of its own interests, its new eastward preoccupation (given the potential power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe), and the psychological effect of moving the capital from Bonn to Berlin could theoretically unbalance Western Europe. But the solution to this unlikely problem remains the traditional US policy of supporting European integration and maintaining the US alliance and security presence on the continent.

Europe and America remain tightly linked economically, through direct investment, capital markets, and flows of goods and services. A vibrant European economy is extremely important to the US economy. Europe suffers from regulatory rigidities, an overly generous social safety net, and demographic trends. Yet the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) may eventually make Europe a stronger competitor. It is important that the EU not be inward-looking or protectionist.

The US is unable to achieve many of its vital and extremely important global objectives without help from Europe (as well as Asian allies): prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; dealing with Russia; protecting the international economic and financial system from the turbulence of globalization; and ensuring access to energy at affordable prices. The Europeans are our most important partners across the board, because, unlike Japan, they are politically able to employ military power abroad. In areas of crisis in many regions—particularly the Middle East—Americans' and Europeans' natural first recourse should be each other.

In the post-Cold War environment, however, the transatlantic partnership is undergoing a structural change. With no Soviet threat, and with the emergence of the US as the sole superpower, there is a tendency in Europe to seek greater autonomy from the US. The EU is not only strengthening its economic clout through EMU, but seeking to develop a common foreign, security, and defense policy, with the institutions to go with it. One goal is the establishment by 2003 of a military force of 50,000–60,000 troops able to handle mid-range tasks of crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian interventions. Where NATO in 1996 sought to give the European members of the North Atlantic Alliance a more autonomous military role in the NATO framework, the Europeans are now building this autonomous role in the EU framework.

The US has no interest in a Europe that is weak, divided, or incapable of acting autonomously in the military sphere. The Balkan crises are a good case where the US would have been delighted to see Europe act more effectively with less of a direct US military role. Since the EU has such political and moral momentum in Europe, it is natural for Europe to seek to build the EU further. However, the US has two interests in this process.

First, the US should aim to keep the EU security and defense project in harmony with the Alliance framework. NATO remains the core institution of Western collective defense and European security, and the new EU institutions in their formative stage should ensure a tight procedural link and operational transparency with NATO. Disrupting the cohesion of the Alliance would be a blow to the political and moral unity of the West. Therefore, support of EU integration should not come at the expense of transatlantic unity; if there is a conflict between the two, the latter should have precedence.

The second US interest is that the EU project should inspire Europeans to be more serious about defense modernization and restructuring. The worst of all worlds would be an EU defense organization that provides no significant capabilities but complicates NATO's cohesion, leaving Europe both strategically myopic and militarily weak.

It is hard to imagine serious crises in Europe in which US and allied interests would not be congruent. That is the main argument for ensuring—and expecting—

an enduring Alliance unity. The “gray zone” stretching from the Baltics to the Balkans is a zone of geopolitical uncertainty (in the former case) and festering crisis (in the latter). The US and its allies should seek a common strategy in these areas.

In the northeast, NATO should be clear about its stake: A reimposition of Russian domination in the Baltic region would be an omen of a resurgent Russian nationalism and expansion, with obvious implications for all of Europe. NATO needs a strategy to deter this; a variety of options are available. The problem, however, should not be evaded.

In the southeast, NATO's prestige, credibility, and solidarity have all been put on the line in the Bosnia and Kosovo crises. These are the main interests America has there; derivative as they may be, they now amount to something quite considerable. Bosnia seems stable, and NATO may have the luxury of considering how best to organize a long-term (and possibly gradually reduced) security presence while also providing for an increased European role relative to the American. In Kosovo, the test is yet to come, as a possible Kosovar bid for independence could reopen this crisis. The core issue for the United States is not the merits of independence versus autonomy; it is to achieve a stable long-term outcome that avoids a crisis in the Alliance, a crisis with Russia, and destabilization of the surrounding region, and the extraction of the multi-national force in Kosovo (KFOR).

THE MIDDLE EAST

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That Israel survive as a free state.
- That there be no major sustained curtailment in energy supplies to the world.
- That no state in the region hostile to the United States acquire new or additional weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities.

Extremely Important

- That there be no hostile regional hegemon in the Persian Gulf.
- That the Middle East peace process continue toward success.
- That the United States maintain good relations with the region's pro-Western Arab regimes and that these regimes survive domestically.
- That regional terrorism be held in check.

Important

- That the states of the region adopt or maintain moderate forms of governance and show growing respect for fundamental human rights.
-

Multiple US national interests are at stake in the Middle East, a region of the world that has always been complex and important but has grown increasingly so over the past three decades. Five interrelated challenges to US national interests are critical: the fate of Israel and the peace process; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; the complex geopolitics of the Persian Gulf, especially involving Iraq and Iran; access to Middle East petroleum for the US and world markets; and terrorism. The US has few unilateral options for dealing with each of these challenges. Perhaps more than in any other region of the world, achieving US objectives in the Middle East requires active cooperation with the governments of the major regional states as well as with the European allies.

For almost fifty years it has been an article of faith for many Americans that Israel's survival is a vital American national interest. Although Israel is today more secure than at any other time in its history, the potential for conflict between Israel and its neighbors remains. A serious reversal in the Arab-Israeli peace process, for example, could lead to violence or even a renewed war, which would endanger vital US interests in the region. A renewed cycle of conflict and mistrust could also be triggered by a Syrian, Iranian, or Iraqi provocation, or by terrorism, or even by rising WMD threats in the region.

The greatest US concern in the Middle East is the continuing proliferation and build-up of WMD capabilities. Iran presents the most serious and complex WMD challenge in the region. Despite various arms control commitments, US intelligence agencies maintain that Iran is currently seeking to enhance its chemical and biological weapons capabilities, to extend the range and payload of its ballistic missile program, and to procure the necessary technologies and materials needed to produce nuclear weapons. A nuclear-armed Iran would fundamentally alter the balance of power in the region and would pose a major strategic challenge to the United States, particularly if hardline elements remain in power in Teheran.

The continuation of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and the failure of the United Nations Security Council to return arms inspectors to that country following Operation Desert Fox in 1998, has led to a standoff that ensures sanctions on Iraq will continue. With no inspections, there continues to be great uncertainty about the state of Iraq's weapons programs. Sanctions are increasingly unpopular throughout the region, while Saddam Hussein's grip on power remains as firm as ever. The irony is that as long as Iraq remains stable but unable to attack its neighbors because of the formidable American presence, most countries in the region are willing to tolerate the situation, even though there are long-term risks. First, if Saddam Hussein were overthrown and chaos resulted, neighboring countries could be drawn into a wider Middle East conflict. Alternatively, if Saddam remains in power and reconstitutes his weapons of mass destruction, he could then threaten to use them directly or indirectly through surrogates or against American assets or Israel.

The political situation in Iran remains dynamic and tenuous. While the reformers who support President Khatami have won overwhelmingly at the ballot box, they are unable at this point to translate their popularity into meaningful political power. As a result, turmoil in Iran is possible. The danger to the United States is that conservative hardliners will be tempted to use terrorism—which they have employed in the past and now use against their domestic opposition—to hit again at American and Israeli targets in the Middle East.

Terrorism in the greater Middle East affects extremely important American interests. Currently, the greatest threat of anti-American terrorism comes from the renegade Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, now hiding in Afghanistan. However, the collapse of the Arab-Israeli peace process could also unleash further terrorism, particularly in southern Lebanon or in the Palestinian Authority if it were to become even less vigilant in suppressing its own home-born terrorism. The US interest lies in suppressing existing terrorist movements while ensuring that terrorism remains ineffectual in a strategic sense. These objectives can only be achieved through diplomatic, legal, and intelligence cooperation with the governments of the region.

The danger of a substantial, sustained disruption of the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf looms as large today as it did when the energy crisis of 1973 shocked America, triggering a period of prolonged stagflation in the American economy. In the year 2000 the US will import a larger share of its daily consumption of gasoline than it did in 1973: more than one out of every two gallons. Today energy is a less significant factor in the American economy, as demonstrated by the limited impact of the doubling of oil prices in 1999. But the percentage of world daily oil consumption supplied by the Persian Gulf has increased. Moreover, world dependence on a single country, Saudi Arabia, as the sole producer and the source of all current surge capacity, has grown dramatically. Currently, Saudi Arabia produces one out of every eight barrels of oil exported to international markets. Saudi Arabia is the only state that maintains a substantial standby capability that would allow it to increase world oil supplies in response to a crisis elsewhere. While there is currently little evidence of instability in Saudi Arabia, an upheaval in the Persian Gulf as disruptive as the Iranian revolution of the 1980s cannot be excluded.

A prudent US response to this danger would give greater emphasis to energy efficiency and to research on alternative technologies for supplying energy requirements. Nonetheless, for the foreseeable future oil will remain an essential commodity. Greater attention must therefore be given to increasing supplies of oil in ways that diversify supplies from areas other than the Persian Gulf. The most promising new source of world supplies is the Caspian region, which appears to contain the largest petroleum reserves discovered since the North Sea. This geopolitical crossroad, which includes Iran, Russia, and a number of newly-independent states struggling with

post-Soviet modernization and dangers of Islamic extremism, demands more attention by American policymakers.

There are, of course, many scenarios for conflict in the Middle East that do not infringe upon vital US interests. The fate of the Kurds, while tragic, does not directly affect the US unless it becomes part of a broader conflict involving key US allies or antagonists. There could be occasions where the United States has conflicting interests at stake. Providing friendly Arab regimes with arms could threaten Israel; similarly, Israeli arms sales to China could threaten the security of Taiwan. Handling these ambiguous situations requires adroit diplomacy and a sense of American priorities. Thus, from an analytic perspective, it is helpful to use Israel, petroleum, and weapons of mass destruction as filters through which to evaluate the significance to the United States of the array of political issues both inside and outside the Middle East. Without these vital US interests, other issues in the Middle East would appear less significant than they often do.

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That there be no hostile major powers or failed states on US borders.

Extremely Important

- That the states of the Western hemisphere growing increasingly democratic, prosperous, and stable.
- That there be no massive, uncontrolled immigration across US borders.

Important

- That narcotics trafficking not overturn or come to control the larger countries of the region.

It often seems that the United States will do anything with regard to its own hemisphere except pay sustained attention to it. The United States has particular interests in the Western Hemisphere for reasons of geography and, in some cases, special responsibilities for reasons of history. To the north, Canada—America's long-time ally and greatest trading partner—is all too often ignored by Washington. This is because Canada presents only opportunities for the United States, not threats, and this is virtually certain to remain so in the future.

America's neighbors to the south present a more complex picture. For most of US history, since the British navy enabled the United States to implement the Monroe Doctrine, the agenda in Latin and South America has been economics: originally trade and investment, and later development. The stakeholders have been private Americans. The US government has not been much engaged. Only the appearance of an external threat has engaged the government's sustained attention—in this century during the two world wars and especially during the Cold War after the communist take-over in Cuba. For a time the Cold War agenda trumped the traditional economic agenda. US policy toward Latin and South America ranged from counterinsurgency to deal with existing threats to the Alliance for Progress to ward off future ones.

Attention to security tapered off when communism did not expand beyond Cuba; the debt crisis of the early 1980s was handled in the terms of the traditional, private-sector agenda. While the US eventually provided considerable relief for the Latin and South American nations, the US Treasury's concern was less the economic well-being of the region than the health of the US private banking system. The heated US debate over Central America in the late 1980s can be seen as an argument over whether left-wing and pro-Soviet governments constituted a severe enough security threat to trump the traditional agenda and thus justify a range of government interventions, from covert action and military aid to economic assistance.

Now and for the foreseeable future, the traditional economic agenda dominates US policy toward its southern neighbors. To be sure, there will be setbacks to democracy and other crises, but those will not be ideological challenges, much less major security threats. Terrorists' threats will be scattered local grievances, in general a threat only to people in specific countries, notably Colombia and Peru.

Mexico is unquestionably America's most important neighbor to the south. With the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the historic change in Mexican attitudes that produced it, Mexico has become explicitly what it was implicitly before—part of the US strategic space, like Canada. In the words of the Canadian saying, the United States is Mexico's best friend whether Mexico (or the United States) likes it or not. In these terms, the debate over "certifying" Mexico's antinarcotics efforts is really an argument over whether US pressure on that score does more good or more harm to the larger US strategic interest in that country.

The United States has intervened dramatically in Mexico before, to counter bandits or to rescue the country from its peso crisis, and it may do so again. Indeed, the only currently conceivable threat to vital American national interests in the Western Hemisphere is the collapse of the Mexican state. If Mexico were to suffer a simultaneous economic collapse and violent political crisis, the United States would be faced with mass migration across its southwest borders and possibly a dramatic increase in the authority and reach of the drug traffickers who are already penetrating the Mexican political system. Such a crisis in Mexico would divert the US from pursuing

other vital interests around the world—the government would immediately become preoccupied with the Mexican crisis. For domestic political reasons, all other vital American national interests would take a back seat to this one. Fortunately, such a scenario appears a remote possibility. Given the great importance of avoiding a failed state on America's southern border, however, US policy should work to ensure that the possibility remains remote.

The lands of the Caribbean would depart from the traditional economic agenda and present a “threat” to the United States only if internal disruptions touch off waves of immigrants to the United States. This occurred in Haiti, and US action to deal with that “threat” was perfectly understandable (if perhaps not terribly effective). Central America is at the edge of the neighborhood, both because its emigrants also come to the United States in numbers and because it and its people bear on the future of Mexico.

In South America, the major security concern will continue to be the power of narcotics traffickers, sometimes mixed up in complicated ways with antigovernment guerrillas, as is the case in Colombia. It is striking that the countries for which the security agenda dominates US government action are generally of modest economic importance. The traditional economic agenda and its stakeholders are focused first on Brazil and Mexico, which rank high in terms of private capital inflows among emerging market countries, and then on Argentina, Chile, and oil-exporting Venezuela.

The largest single stream of immigrants to the United States comes from Latin and South America, and from Mexico in particular. In 1990, Latin and South America accounted for nearly half of all immigrants, almost twice the share of Asia. Debate continues over which Americans benefit and which suffer as a result of immigration. As a general rule and despite occasional alarm in particular regions or over particular populations, America has benefited from the legal immigration that has been permitted as a matter of policy. Indeed, immigration is essential to America in many respects: it is necessary to enhance American economic competitiveness, to promote further prosperity, to introduce new talent and energy, and to maintain a population that can support the Social Security system as American demographics change. If it is not handled with purpose and care, immigration may also create serious dangers for America in the future.

Illegal immigration is an entirely different matter. The United States has an extremely important interest in preventing the massive, uncontrolled movement of people across US borders, as from Cuba in the early 1980s and from Haiti in 1994. The continual flow of illegal immigrants over America's southern border presents a less acute threat to American interests but nonetheless one that should be curbed. While most illegal immigrants seek only a better economic future for themselves and their families, their increasing presence denies Americans the ability to define their own society, and also presents certain heightened risks of criminality.

NUCLEAR FUTURES—US AND WORLDWIDE

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the nuclear danger to the US be reduced to the achievable minimum.
- That no country acquire new or build up existing intercontinental-range strategic nuclear capabilities.
- That all global stockpiles of nuclear weapons and weapons-usable nuclear material be maintained in conditions of security, safety, and accountability.
- That the safety and reliability of the US nuclear stockpile be assured.

Extremely Important

- That there be no hostile use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere in the world.

The enormous destructive potential of nuclear weapons gives them special status in weighing US national interests. As President Dwight Eisenhower often said, nuclear weapons pose the only real threat that could destroy the United States. Removing that possibility, or reducing the danger to the strictest minimum, is an opportunity that will make a powerful contribution to a safer America and a safer world. A series of important policy issues are involved, including reducing nuclear arsenals and controlling nuclear weapons material.

A number of serious studies and proposals in recent years have called for substantial reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals beyond those established in the START II Treaty. Now that the Russian Duma and the United States Senate have both ratified START II, there is likely to be significant impetus to examine further bilateral reductions—for example, to the 2,000–2,500 strategic warhead level that Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin agreed to as the tentative target for START III, or even lower. Negotiations to achieve such reductions should be a high priority issue for policymakers and an important component of long-term strategy considerations in overall global efforts to limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

If there is a START III Treaty, and if it is to be relevant to the nuclear challenges of the twenty-first century, the new treaty must go beyond simply reducing the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads in Russia—a timeworn metric that dates back to the 1972 SALT Treaty. START III should establish quantitative limits and intensive verification measures along the entire nuclear weapons “chain of custody”: from deployed warheads, to stockpiled warheads (the “strategic reserve” and tactical weapons), to dismantled warhead components, to bulk fissile material from or for

nuclear weapons. This is a highly ambitious arms control agenda, but one that is appropriate for the nuclear challenges of the present and future.

Most of the declared nuclear weapons nations maintain that the status and the observance of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty will affect their future nuclear policy, since Russia has explicitly linked the entry into force of START II and its approach to further nuclear cuts to US compliance with the ABM Treaty. Though there is strong domestic political support for the planned US development and eventual deployment of a limited national missile defense system, the issue is highly controversial abroad. Integrating the US interest in effective missile defenses with the need to reduce the nuclear danger to its achievable minimum and to maintain productive relationships with Russia and China is one of the paramount challenges for this generation of US national security leaders.

The problem of the nuclear weapons states not recognized in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty—Israel, India, Pakistan—is well recognized and was given even greater import by the 1998 nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan. In the case of Israel, the underlying impetus for nuclear weapons status—the mortal threat from its Arab neighbors—may be on the way toward resolution, though it will likely be a very long time before Israel will consider deep reductions or the elimination of its nuclear arsenal. In the case of India and Pakistan, vital US national interests would not necessarily be directly threatened by a nuclear conflict between them, should it occur, but there can be no doubt that the United States has an extremely important national interest in maintaining the current implicit taboo on nuclear weapons use.

The acquisition of fissionable materials is the most difficult step in building nuclear weapons. As nuclear arsenals are phased down, a particular need will be to maintain the tightest possible control over the weapons being deactivated, the weapons materials being recovered, and indeed any nuclear materials from whatever sources that are usable to construct weapons. Here is an area where the vital national interests of the United States powerfully coincide with those of other nations, under the NPT as well as other nuclear agreements.

The rationale for giving high priority to efforts to reduce, restrict, and control nuclear weapons is that these weapons directly threaten vital American national interests. The issue clearly deserves a major place on the US national policy agenda as well as sustained efforts to build and maintain public understanding and congressional support.

THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That there be no nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons attacks on the United States or against its military forces abroad.
- That there be no major leakage of loose nuclear weapons and weapons-usable fissile material from the former Soviet Union.
- That US military forces be prepared to fight in proliferated environments.

Extremely Important

- That there be no hostile use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere in the world.
- That there be no further proliferation or build-up of WMD capabilities in countries hostile to the United States (e.g., Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya).

There is an emerging consensus within the US national security community that the greatest source of direct threat to US national interests stems from the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and their delivery systems to hostile states and non-state actors. This view is correct. Because of its geographic position, the United States is highly secure from conventional forms of attack. Only weapons of mass destruction offer US adversaries a powerful way to strike America's cities and citizens. Moreover, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses profound challenges to the US government as it seeks to advance or protect other interests in distant regions. With its immense conventional military superiority, the only current real threats to US military forces abroad are adversaries equipped with, and prepared to use effectively, nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. These facts force WMD proliferation to the center of any US assessment of the threats to US national interests.

Nuclear and biological weapons are the most dangerous elements of the proliferation problem. Preventing the spread of these items is more important than stopping chemical weapons or ballistic missile proliferation, even though these weapons also pose serious problems. A nuclear or biological device could destroy hundreds of thousands, or millions of people; a chemical weapon would kill far fewer, however horrific in its effects, and would not destroy a society or city. Similarly, ballistic missiles are no more deadly than the warheads they carry. In a regional conflict, ballistic missile attacks can frighten civilian populations, as they did in the 1991 Gulf War. But unless armed with nuclear or biological warheads, the ballistic missile threat is militarily tractable.

Clearly the highest aim of US national security policy should be to prevent nuclear or biological weapons attacks against American cities and civilians, or American military forces abroad. While the shape of the biological weapons threat is only beginning to emerge, the nuclear threat had been familiar in the form of the Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal. The disappearance of the Soviet Union and the accompanying collapse of its command-and-control state has presented today a new nuclear challenge. As a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the risks of one or a dozen nuclear devices being exploded in an American city have increased. Today the most serious threat to vital American interests is the threat that loose nuclear weapons and fissile material from the former Soviet Union will fall into the hands of pariah states or terrorist or criminal groups.

The continuing transformation of Russia and the former Soviet Union leaves everything there vulnerable to theft, seizure, or loss. After decades of totalitarian Soviet rule that effectively imprisoned an entire society, including everything of value, Russia has now freed individuals to do virtually whatever they choose. Elimination of all traditional constraints combines with rampant criminalization to threaten chaos. One hundred thousand nuclear weapons and weapons-usable equivalents of highly enriched uranium and plutonium remain scattered across several hundred locations in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Security at most of these facilities is lax. This has transformed the nature of the international nuclear non-proliferation problem; once fissile material is available, building a simple nuclear weapon is not difficult.

Preventing the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons to countries and entities that wish America ill must take priority over controlling proliferation to friendly, democratic countries. Not surprisingly, this attitude is interpreted as a double standard and is used by critics to reject the United States' efforts to advocate multilateral arms control. Iraq is the cause for great worry. In 1998, the United Nations inspectors (UNSCOM) were finally withdrawn from Iraq at the time of major US and British air strikes—Operation Desert Fox. Since that time there have been no inspections of Iraq, and it must be assumed that Saddam Hussein is actively pursuing a full range of WMD programs, though how much progress has been made and how he would use the weapons remain a matter of intense debate and speculation. While the United States and Britain put the highest priority on stopping the reconstitution of WMD programs, other countries in the region, as well as other key UN Security Council members, including France, Russia, and China, seem more concerned about lifting sanctions and normalizing relations with Iraq.

Iran's nuclear and missile programs are another matter of great concern to the United States. As the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States (the Rumsfeld Commission) reported in 1998, Iran's ballistic missile and WMD development programs are a high priority for the Iranian government.

Although Iran is not currently believed to possess nuclear warheads or missiles that can reach the United States, Iran may be able to acquire such capabilities in the near future through the illicit transfer of weapons from Russia, North Korea, or elsewhere. Slowing the build-up of Iranian WMD capabilities is an enormous diplomatic challenge for the United States. Russia remains unwilling to cancel its ostensibly legal civilian nuclear assistance program with Iran, and appears unable to halt the illegal flow of advanced weapons technologies from Russia to Iran. The US allies in NATO, on the other hand, are content with their own national export controls and with Iran's notional compliance with multilateral treaties, and hence are unwilling to cooperate with the United States in any strategy of political or economic coercion vis-à-vis Iran's WMD programs.

In the long run, technology controls cannot stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon if it truly intends to do so. The regional context, however, does provide some leverage for preventing the build-up of an Iranian arsenal. There is no doubt that the United States could offer Iran significant concessions and material inducement if it were prepared to accept further intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and limit its missile program to ranges that cannot directly affect American vital interests, including Israel. However, none of this will happen until Saddam Hussein's regime is ended in Iraq, and the United States and Iran have a better relationship.

North Korea is a unique case. The North Korean regime signed an Agreed Framework with the United States in 1994. Under its terms, North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for the provision of modern proliferation-resistant reactors. It also was promised closer relations with the United States and the removal of many of the sanctions that have penalized its economy. The 1994 agreement may have prevented a crisis at the time, but problems with implementing the Agreed Framework led North Korea to use brinkmanship, this time by deploying and testing missiles in the late 1990s. North Korea's missile potential has grave implications for Japan and the proliferation environment in East Asia. Furthermore, North Korea has supplied missile technology to countries such as Iran, which adds to the proliferation problems in the Middle East. Whether or not the improved relations between the two Koreas will ultimately make North Korea more willing to terminate its missile programs remains to be seen. Suffice it to say that it is a vital American interest to prevent further proliferation in North Korea, an interest shared by America's closest ally in the region, Japan.

Finally, given the difficulty of preventing WMD proliferation entirely, preparing US forces to fight and prevail against WMD-armed adversaries is a vital instrumental US national interest. In this respect, the basic premise of the counterproliferation strategy advanced by the Clinton administration is sensible and prudent. The preparation of US forces to fight in proliferated environments involves many different

types of military innovations: improved intelligence, revised training procedures for troops, updated military doctrines, improved passive defensive systems, new active defensive systems (especially including theater missile defense), and precision-guided munitions, to name only a few. A robust ability to counter the effects of WMD proliferation is a military imperative for the twenty-first century, and these adaptations and reforms must be continued by the US armed forces. At the same time, however, these military reforms are a poor second to preventing WMD proliferation, in all its aspects, in the first place.

TERRORISM, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, AND DRUGS

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That terrorist groups be prevented from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and using them against US citizens, property, and troops.

Extremely Important

- That US vulnerability to all forms of international and domestic terrorism be reduced in a manner consistent with the liberal, democratic principles of the American constitution.
- That states which support international terrorism, or shelter individual terrorists, be punished and convinced to desist.

Important

- That American lives, well-being, and wealth be protected from international crime and drug trafficking.
- That the lives and well-being of individual American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations be protected.

As one of the most free and open societies in the world, the US is also among the most vulnerable to terrorism. Events such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, 1995 Aum Shinrikyo gas attacks in Japan, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, 1996 attack in Khobar Towers barracks in Saudi Arabia, and 1998 car bombs outside the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam have increased American concern about terrorism. Protecting American citizens both at home and abroad demands a well-coordinated counter-terrorism effort by all US government agencies, giving due regard for fundamental American civil liberties and values. The US government should continue to adhere to the fundamental principles that it will make no concessions to terrorist

demands, that individual terrorists must be found and brought to justice, and that state sponsors of terrorism will be ostracized and punished. Other countries at the forefront of the international fight against terrorism deserve the full support of the US government.

In its fight against terrorism, the US government must be careful not to undermine its own political legitimacy or infringe on the freedoms guaranteed to US citizens. Indeed, there is a risk that too vigorous a counterterrorist effort will prove counterproductive. For example, increased publicity for the terrorist threat may encourage additional or more severe acts of terrorism. The highly disruptive anthrax hoaxes that took place across America in 1999 appear to fit this pattern. These dynamics, together with the tangible, growing terrorist threat, make terrorism a rising challenge to US national interests.

In the 1970s and 1980s, most terrorist acts were perpetrated by groups seeking to achieve limited political objectives, draw attention to their causes, and sway domestic or international opinion in their favor. Their preferred techniques were aircraft or ship hijackings, hostage taking, short-warning bombings, and assassination. Because it was politically driven, this type of terrorism tended to be relatively selective and discriminate, which sometimes allowed the terrorist to affect but not permanently alienate public opinion. The 1990s, however, witnessed a series of terrorist acts that do not fit this pattern: they are wanton, indiscriminate acts designed not to achieve limited political purposes but to disrupt the social fabric, impede diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes, or avenge perceived past wrongs by killing and maiming as many people as possible.

This trend toward more destructive terrorist actions is particularly alarming due to the increasing accessibility of weapons of mass destruction. The well-publicized attack by the apocalyptic Buddhist cult, Aum Shinrikyo, revealed that no absolute taboo against the use of weapons of mass destruction exists among terrorist groups, that non-state actors can acquire significant WMD capabilities, and that urban areas are acutely vulnerable to terrorist use of WMD. It also revealed that even with significant levels of funding and education, however, the effective use of these weapons is no mean feat. Nonetheless, given the severity of the potential consequences of a WMD terrorist incident, as well as the rising technical capacity of non-state actors, the US government should attach the highest priority to developing the capacity to preempt these threats if possible, and mitigate their consequences if necessary.

To counter WMD terrorism effectively, the United States must stretch to new dimensions of cooperation with allies and friends to identify and destroy terrorist cells before they can become operational. The US must accept the fact that some pariah states or dissident groups will see terrorism as a legitimate form of warfare against a better armed and better organized enemy. In addressing potential terrorist threats, issues relating to more intrusive forms of identification and screening will

inevitably arise. Balancing the requirements for tighter controls to find criminals and terrorists without violating the freedoms that Americans take for granted is likely to become a highly contentious subject in the United States in the coming decade. Just as important is that in preparing for possible terrorist attack on US soil, the US government must avoid inciting so much fear in the population that terrorist attacks would become that much more effective. A responsible, measured public posture regarding terrorism is critical.

Finally, on the issues of transnational crime and drug trafficking, the United States has important interests in protecting its citizens from the loss of life, health, and property as a result of organized criminal coercion or drug trafficking. As organized crime and drug trafficking become more transnational in character—and there is considerable evidence that this trend is already happening—these issues will inevitably become more important topics for US foreign policy. However, US foreign policy does not offer the best—and certainly not the sole—means of addressing the larger threats to American society resulting from transnational crime and drug trafficking. Although transnational crime may in some cases enjoy the sponsorship of a particular state, in general it occurs with neither the knowledge nor the approval of other governments. For this reason, the role of diplomacy and US foreign policy is primarily to create the conditions in which international law enforcement—both by US and foreign agencies—can operate more effectively against transnational criminal organizations. In the case of international drug trafficking, it is important to remember that the demand for drugs is a domestic phenomenon. While it is unquestionable that US law enforcement agencies must make every effort to stop the flow of illegal drugs into the United States and that strong diplomatic pressure should be exerted on corrupt or acquiescent governments in drug transit states, these measures should be regarded as no more than important adjuncts to a national drug policy that seeks to reduce the domestic demand for drugs as well as the resources or drug supply, be they international or domestic.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the US ensure the viability and stability of the international trade and investment systems.

Extremely Important

- That US GNP growth from international trade and investment be maximized.
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Important

- That all countries lower their formal and informal barriers to international trade and investment.
- That domestic output of strategic sectors, such as information technology, be preserved or enhanced.

The expansion of international trade and investment that marked the last half of the twentieth century—the “globalization” of economic activity—has yielded significant benefits for the United States and for most of the world. Resources have been more efficiently utilized. Access to goods and services produced in foreign countries have expanded choices and raised standards of living for hundreds of millions of people in many parts of the world. The ability to sell local products in foreign markets has raised wages and incomes in most of the world. International investment flows have expanded the resources available within a country for economic development and facilitated the spread of technical know-how and managerial expertise.

Less obviously, but just as importantly, the proliferation of international economic transactions has made it increasingly difficult for authoritarian governments to isolate their populations from contact with the outside world. Economic openness can contribute to political openness and increased respect for individual freedoms. International markets can also impose a beneficial discipline on national governments, rewarding those that implement sound economic policies and show respect for the rule of law.

The United States has a vital national interest in the viability and stability of international trade and financial systems. This not only protects and enhances Americans’ economic well-being, but also fosters economic development and effective governance abroad.

Although economic globalization has on net been a powerful force for good, it has also brought new risks and dangers. Because the affairs of countries’ economies and key economic institutions are more closely intertwined than ever before, the kinds of economic or financial difficulties that were once isolated can now have global consequences. The financial “contagion” that followed the Mexican financial crisis of 1994–95 and the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 were stark reminders that the international trade and financial systems remain fragile.

As the largest economy in the world and as a principal beneficiary of globalization, the United States bears a special responsibility for strengthening the international economic infrastructure and for devising policies, practices, and institutions that will help to avoid future crises. Efforts currently under way to increase the accuracy, timeliness, and transparency of economic and financial reporting are certainly welcome. Similarly, efforts to promulgate more robust international standards for capital adequacy and supervision of financial institutions are clearly valuable. There

is, however, much debate today about the roles that international financial institutions—particularly the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—can or should play in averting future crises and about what sorts of policies—national and multinational—will minimize the risks of future crises. That the international financial architecture requires considerable reform and strengthening seems beyond question, but no clear consensus has emerged regarding the nature of this reform. Careful analysis and consultation with other interested countries will be required in the coming years.

Although the vast majority of the world's population has benefited from expanded international trade and investment, some groups and even some nations have suffered as a consequence of changing patterns of economic activity, the erosion of traditional ways of life, realignments of political power and priorities, and misconceived or badly implemented economic policies. Finding ways to minimize the negative consequences of globalization for particular populations will be essential to maintaining support for and thus preserving the benefits of international trade and investment.

Finally, economic globalization has generally weakened the power of national governments to control economic activities. In many circumstances, this has been a salutary development because it has brought reductions in inefficient or unnecessary regulation, but some important social objectives—protecting workers' rights and the environment are key examples—require governmental regulation. Preserving the international economic system will also require finding new ways to accomplish necessary regulation when no single national government can do so effectively.

The United States has an important interest in maximizing the economic gains that accrue to Americans as a consequence of international trade and investment. This does not suggest, however, that the United States necessarily has an interest in reducing either the overall US trade deficit or bilateral trade deficits with particular countries. The large US trade deficit is not primarily a consequence of unfair foreign competition but of the fact that US domestic saving is inadequate to finance continuing high levels of domestic investment. Indeed, the flip side of US trade deficits is a desire by foreigners to invest in the United States rather than in their home countries. As long as these foreign funds are invested in productive projects and not used simply to subsidize private or governmental consumption, continuing large inflows of foreign capital are a sign of and will contribute to a healthy and growing US economy. The elimination in the last two years of the US federal government budget deficit goes a long way toward ensuring that foreign capital is being invested productively.

The freedom to import contributes just as much to the well-being of Americans as does the ability to export, and restrictions on imports meant to punish other countries or to bully them into reducing their own trade restrictions are not costless to Americans. Vigorous economic competition—whether from foreign or domestic

firms—tends to enhance productivity of American firms (and therefore the real sustained growth in American wages) by imposing stiff market discipline. In short, the US government is not serving important, much less vital, US national interests when it seeks to balance the overall US trade deficit—never mind any bilateral trade deficit—through coercive foreign economic policy. More often than not, it does great harm to more important interests.

Important US interests are served when all countries lower barriers to trade. Consequently, the United States should persevere in its historic policy of seeking to lower formal and informal trade and investment barriers worldwide, to extend the scope of trade liberalization into services, agriculture, and other still-protected economic sectors; to strengthen the World Trade Organization; and to promote the creation and growth of free-trade areas. Lower trade barriers cannot eliminate the US trade deficit (which is determined by the overall balance of US savings and investment), but they can improve the terms of trade, which would mean that US citizens could buy more foreign output for about the same domestic output.

CYBERSPACE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the US critical infrastructure be reasonably resistant to concerted, sophisticated cyber-attack.

Extremely Important

- That the United States maintain a technological lead in key military-related information technologies.

Important

- That the United States maintain its strong position in international distribution of information so that American values continue to influence positively the cultures of other nations.

The rapid development and explosive expansion in the use of information technologies provide the past decade's greatest promise for the United States' continued growth and well-being. Personal computers on most workplace desktops, linked corporate information networks; the Internet that serves as a common communication and commerce backbone nationally and worldwide; wireless communication that enables the widespread use of cellular telephones and computing devices; and the

World Wide Web and electronic commerce provide signs of—and the promise of further—substantial productivity enhancement. In the great majority of these technologies and applications, United States firms provide leadership, standards, and jobs.

Information systems are the vital backbone upon which American financial, energy, transportation, defense, and telecommunication infrastructures depend. Those systems are becoming ever more linked—primarily by the Internet and the public telecommunication network—into a worldwide “cyberspace.” The growing US dependence on the Internet and other computer networks may leave the world’s financial institutions and military communications systems vulnerable to “cyberterrorism.” A hostile state, or even an antitechnology terrorist (such as the Unabomber), might be able to disrupt much of the international financial system with sophisticated computer viruses, wreaking economic havoc. Indeed, concern with this issue led to a tightening of security and a heightened sense of alert as the year 2000 approached. This emerging threat requires that computer and network security be addressed as national security challenges, not just as issues of telecommunications policy. The US is so dependent on these systems, and the existing vulnerabilities are so pervasive, that enhancing the resilience of American infrastructure information systems is a vital national concern.

The vulnerability of US critical infrastructures has been studied by the President’s Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection, resulting in a number of subsequent actions and reports, such as Presidential Decision Directive 63 and the January 2000 *National Plan for Information Systems Protection* formulated within the National Security Council and issued by the White House. These studies and documents form a reasonable basis for progress, but must overcome a major stumbling block: most of the relevant infrastructures (e.g., in energy, telecommunications, transportation, and finance) within the United States are controlled by private, increasingly multinational, companies. For a variety of valid reasons these companies are reluctant to share information about vulnerabilities, attacks, and losses with the government, and the government finds it difficult to share information about threats—which is often classified—with such firms. These problems of cooperation are difficult, but as a very high national priority they must be overcome if the safety and security of the United States is to be ensured.

The direct military benefits of American technological superiority are relatively well understood, especially since the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Partly as a result of informational dominance, a ground war that many predicted would take weeks and involve thousands of allied casualties was over in a matter of hours with virtually no allied casualties. It is important that this dominance continue, and no major road-blocks in the coming decade are foreseen.

With the dramatic increase in e-commerce (both among businesses, and business-to-consumer), it is clear that information technology is the engine of economic

prosperity in the coming decades. Information technology industries are America's fastest growing source of jobs, exports, and economic growth. The application of information technology to manufacturing is increasingly responsible for dramatic gains in productivity.

America's dominance in information technology, broadly defined, substantially influences the development of cultures throughout the world, including our own. CNN, the millions of US Web pages on the Internet, Hollywood movies and TV programs, and systems designed by Microsoft, Intel, Sun, Cisco, Oracle, eBay, or any number of dot-coms are American information carriers that affect other nations in a manner more supportive of American values than those of nations that would restrict, tailor, and censor information flows to and among their citizens.

As more of commerce—especially to and from individual citizens—is transacted at least partly in cyberspace, it becomes increasingly important that individuals' privacy be honored, and the integrity of transactions ensured. There are difficult trade-offs to be addressed between privacy and security, and between accountability and anonymity. The problems are not just technical; they also involve policy decisions that can have substantial effects on American society. It is time to pay serious attention to these issues and begin a national dialogue on the proper roles of government, the private sector, and individual responsibility in striking an appropriate balance among multiple options. This relatively early stage of e-commerce is the appropriate time to provide a solid foundation for cyberspace transactions that addresses various competing interests and the public good.

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That a physical environment in which current and future generations of Americans can survive and thrive be preserved.

Important

- That other states of the world adopt environmental policies and norms consistent with long-term US interests.

The United States has a vital national interest in preventing major changes in the natural environment that would significantly degrade the physical health or economic well-being of American citizens during the next century. This statement is true irrespective of one's judgment as to the likelihood of such a change.

Distinguished environmental scientists have argued for years that consumption of fossil fuels and the clearing of the rain forests are behind a nascent global warming trend, which, continued into the future, could shift crop and disease zones, increase storminess, and significantly raise the sea level. The validity of these claims has been extensively debated, but the evidence that burning fossil fuels is contributing to global warming has become persuasive. This could present serious long-term risks to American society. The US should exercise leadership in slowing the rate of growth of worldwide carbon emissions into the atmosphere and finding alternative ways to address this issue.

Coping with long-term environmental threats is profoundly difficult. Great uncertainty surrounds the nature of these threats. The long time lags between the causes and effects create a temptation to defer costly corrective measures indefinitely. Moreover, organizing collective action by many states, each of which has an incentive to free-ride on the efforts of the others, is enormously difficult, as both the Bush and Clinton administrations learned in negotiating and seeking to implement the Climate Convention. Yet if the problems of global warming and ozone depletion are really as grave as many environmental scientists say, then the need for strong, enlightened American leadership in this area is pressing and will be a long-term requirement. This suggests that very high priority must be attached to forging a broad, multinational consensus on a global strategy to curb the burning of fossil fuels and halt deforestation.

There are also a number of lesser environmental threats to US national interests. The United States has an important interest in preventing cross-border pollution that affects, or could affect in the future, the physical health or economic well-being of American citizens, which at the moment is threatened only modestly (and regionally) by effluent emissions in Canada and Mexico. Holding the depletion of global commons, such as fish stocks and rain forests, to sustainable rates and protecting endangered species are also important US national interests, and serious threats to both of these interests currently exist.

REQUIREMENTS FOR US MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Summary of US National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States or its military forces abroad be prevented, deterred, and reduced.
 - That US citizens and territory be protected from hostile attack.
 - That the survival of US allies and the vitality of our key alliances be ensured..
 - That the military capability to successfully prosecute wars in regions where vital US national interests may be threatened be maintained.
-

Collectively, these and other interests beget a number of missions for the armed forces of the United States. It is from these missions, and from a consideration of the circumstances under which these missions might have to be carried out, that one determines the military capabilities most needed. The key missions and associated capabilities lie at the heart of US defense planning: protecting the homeland; projecting power abroad; and maintaining a forward presence in peacetime.

The United States must have sufficient military power to convince any rational adversary that there are no advantages (and, in fact, grave risks) associated with attacking its territory or its people. To the extent possible, American armed forces must also be able to defeat attacks if they occur and to minimize whatever damage might result from them.

Attacks with weapons of mass destruction are a particular concern and require a multi-pronged approach. First, the US armed forces must be able to dissuade enemies from attacking by having an unquestioned ability to inflict unacceptable damage in retaliation. Second, the US armed forces must be able to defeat any attacks that might occur. As new means of delivering WMD (e.g., ballistic missiles) proliferate to potential rogue states, robust active and passive defenses against them are required. Third, the United States must be able to limit the consequences of chemical and biological attacks by having the military and civilian capabilities to deliver large-scale medical assistance swiftly and to contain and decontaminate affected areas. And fourth, the US armed forces should contribute to reducing the threat of attack by impeding the proliferation of sensitive technologies and materials.

The United States is unique in its ability to conduct large-scale military operations at great distances from its own territory. This ability to fight and win wars in the “back yards” of potential adversaries is essential to preventing the emergence of a hostile hegemon and to ensuring the survival of American allies. US power projection capabilities redress potential military imbalances abroad. As such, these capabilities are the keys to ensuring that the United States retains viable alliances in key regions. By ensuring that US security guarantees are credible, power projection capabilities constitute a source of influence over issues that span the entire range of US interests.

Projecting power across oceans is an extraordinarily demanding task. It requires combat forces that can move swiftly to threatened regions and dominate battles in the air and on the surface, even when these forces are outnumbered. It also requires large investments in airlift and sealift assets and a global intelligence network, so that challenges can be detected early and so that when US forces go into a fight they have the information they need to win. Because the United States has vital interests and adversaries in more than one region, US forces must be able to conduct large-scale operations in two parts of the world simultaneously. Viewed in this light, it should not be surprising that the United States spends roughly an order of magnitude more on its military forces than any other single nation.

Finally, as an unambiguous token of America's ability and commitment to defend US and allied interests in critical regions, there is no substitute for forces routinely stationed and deployed abroad. US forces in Asia, the Persian Gulf, and Europe deter and contain adversaries, and they reassure friends. They provide opportunities for combined training and military-to-military exchanges that enhance the effectiveness of allied operations in time of war. In time of crisis US forces abroad provide capabilities for immediate response, and they facilitate reinforcement by troops from outside the region.

These missions are the primary determinants of the military capabilities required to safeguard and advance American national interests. As threats, opportunities, and the circumstances surrounding potential military operations change, so too will demands for specific capabilities. But the underlying bedrock of interests and missions remains fairly constant.

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