

Recovering Diplomatic Agility

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The Pax America is no more. In the second decade of the 21st century, world affairs are shaped by economic trends and shifting coalitions, not political affinities and fixed alliances. The new world disorder calls for strategic nimbleness, not the ideological constancy and geopolitical steadfastness demanded of Americans by the Cold War. To cope with the newly unstable international environment, American diplomacy must become unprecedentedly agile. In the future, presidents must be selected for their qualifications as America's diplomat-in-chief, not just its commander-in-chief. What worked in the past often does not work now. Today, I want to explore the prospects for the renewal of American diplomacy to meet the challenges of the new world disorder.

All diplomacy can be divided into three kinds: (1) techniques to influence the leaders of other states and peoples and persuade them to do this or not do that; (2) interactions with states and peoples and negotiations to set frameworks for relations with them; and (3) statecraft to cause them to recalculate their interests and make decisions that coincide with one's own.

Diplomacy depends on relationships with foreigners that enable the expression of national strength through respectful discourse. A really good diplomat is supposed to be able to tell you to go to hell and make you want to get there right away, before the Devil takes his annual vacation. A diplomat should be able to deliver a declaration of war politely, in such a way that the other side is intimidated, but made to look forward to the resumption of cordial relations once it has suffered the well-deserved defeat that is in store for it. Holding a snarling mutt at bay by saying "nice doggie" until one can find a rock is also part of the skill-set.

Diplomacy is not just a splendid seat on stage at the theater of life (though it is that) but a

political performing art. It's a messy job at times. These days diplomats are kept busy cleaning up after presidential candidates who seem to confuse giving offense to foreigners with defining workable foreign policies. For their part, of course, diplomats would never insult anyone . . . unintentionally.

Skill at making friends and influencing people is an essential aspect of diplomatic professionalism. Diplomacy is first and foremost a political contact sport. The level of trust other players have in one is key to enlisting and retaining their support. Hanging around the capital and making occasional forays abroad, as courtiers and securocrats do, demands skill in bureaucratic politics, not diplomacy. Its success is measured in brownie points back home, not changed behavior abroad. Diplomats must, of course, carry out the thankless task of explaining foreign realities to domestic politicians, as well as domestic realities to foreign politicians. But diplomacy is directed at influencing foreigners, not one's own government.

Interesting as they are, the nitty-gritty level of foreign relations and the inevitable idiocies of diplomatic life are not my topics today. I want to talk about the requirements for effective American diplomacy of the second and third kinds: the management of relations between independent states by civil discourse and negotiation, and the indirect regulation of other states' and peoples' policies by reshaping their calculus of their own interests.

There is nothing starry-eyed about diplomats, even those operating under the star-spangled banner. Whether diplomacy is reshaping realities or adjusting foreign perceptions of them, its starting point is the logic of others' interests as they see them. Diplomacy is an exercise not just in empathy but also in the manipulation of others' perspectives on matters of common concern.

Diplomats profess expertise in advancing national interests through the peaceful resolution of international problems, but they are not pacifists. No diplomat considers diplomacy to be a panacea or a magical alternative to the use of force. Most would agree with the late Al Capone, who observed that "you can get much farther with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone."

Diplomacy is a great deal less expensive, unpredictable, and bloody than warfare. And since others can do to one's own country what it does to others, diplomatic approaches to problem

solving are safer than war. But diplomacy must also be invoked to clean up the messes that war makes. That's why, when confronted by an international problem, even a great military power like the United States should give diplomacy a chance – and hold the air strikes and infantry in reserve. And it's why diplomats are necessary to consolidate the gains or limit the losses that war imposes by translating them into durable political arrangements.

As Americans should have learned by now, neither threats and insults nor coercive measures like sanctions, punitive raids, and invasions solve problems on their own. They do so only when they are adjuncts to a process that can legitimize and institutionalize change. The record is compelling on this point.

Take sanctions first. A couple of dozen countries and some 6,000 companies and individuals are currently subject to U.S. sanctions. Faith in sanctions as an instrument of behavior modification rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of economic power. Like a string, trade and investment attract, connect, and bind. You can use economic power to pull but you cannot use it to push. Economic relations foster mutual assimilation between states. Their severance causes estrangement and reduces the willingness of each side to address the concerns of the other. The threat to ostracize a state or people is music to the ears of any regime that wishes to distance itself from old relationships. It justifies rather than weakens defiance.

Sanctions punish their target by impoverishing it and depriving it of benefits. Of course, they also penalize the economy of those who enact them. They give birth to market distortions that shift the cost of foreign policy onto the private sector of the state imposing them and soon generate increasingly entrenched interests in their continuation. Sanctions can, however, create leverage for bargaining about adjustments in behavior or relationships. Achieving such adjustments at minimal cost in blood and treasure is the object of diplomacy.

When the threat of sanctions, or relief from the pain they cause, is linked to negotiations, sanctions support diplomacy. When sanctions are not part of a bargaining process, they harden attitudes, stiffen backs, stimulate work-arounds, and provoke countermeasures. Sometimes they overachieve in this regard, as in the Japanese Empire's response to the American sanctions of 1940 and '41, which was to attack Pearl Harbor.

Ironically, given the frequency with which the United States now resorts to sanctions, they do not achieve their objectives when they are threatened or applied, but only when they are obviated or removed pursuant to agreement. In other words, the success of sanctions is not properly measured by the pain they inflict but by the concessions the other side is ultimately willing to make to gain relief from them in return for compromise by those sanctioning it. If negotiators cannot credibly promise that restrictions on trade and investment will be lifted in return for concessions, sanctions bolster recalcitrance and provide no leverage for change.

Consider the recent example of the Iran nuclear deal. By themselves, years of escalating sanctions coupled with a refusal to talk without preconditions simply caused Iran to double down on its enrichment program. It took the opening of a bargaining process and a commitment to remove international sanctions to curtail the program and bring it under international control. Pressure that can't be adjusted invites reactive rigidity, not compromise.

The political ostracism that typically – and foolishly – accompanies economic sanctions deprives the country adopting political isolation as a policy of both presence and influence in a relationship. We have seen many instances of this in recent years. Take, for example, the 2007 “Saffron Revolution” in Myanmar. Years of sanctions had severely attenuated U.S. influence in that country. This led to the ludicrous spectacle of the United States trying to enlist China to use its influence in support of an American democratization agenda with which China disagreed. Two years later, when the “Green Movement” took to the streets in Iran and the Islamic Republic entered a moment of inflection, the United States was not on the scene.

In a sense, however, in democracies like the United States, sanctions always succeed. That's because their purpose isn't really to influence the foreigners on whom they are imposed – which they seldom do, except counterproductively – but to strike a political pose. They fall under the heading of declaratory diplomacy, which is at best a form of feckless self-gratification and at worst a goad to foreign hostility. They plant false teeth in otherwise toothless denunciation. The advocates of sanctions are trying to show how tough they are, not how good they are at changing the minds and behavior of foreign adversaries.

So sanctions are almost always good politics but bad policy – all shout for no clout. Sanctions that can only be removed by legislation are especially counterproductive. Fortunately for those

in Congress who are addicted to them, however, their success is invariably measured by how much pain they inflict on their target, not on whether they alter its policies for the better – which they almost never do. Attempts to force the other side to back down by denouncing and sanctioning it set up equal and opposite political requirements for it to show that it can stand up to bullying by foreigners. Such public confrontation therefore promotes impasse, not compromise.

In this regard, authoritarian regimes with opaque policy processes have an ironic advantage. Take China as an example. In recent years, Beijing has imposed restrictions on trade, investment, and other forms of interaction in response to territorial disputes with neighbors like Japan and the Philippines. The Chinese government has neither announced these restrictions nor confirmed their imposition, leaving their target nations to infer them from their impact. China has not specified what must be done to lift the vague, unconfirmed measures it has taken.

This approach maximizes Chinese negotiating flexibility. China's leaders can't be held politically accountable for failing to achieve objectives they haven't declared. Uncertainties about what is actually going on can even cause the targets of sanctions to start negotiating with themselves, as they speculate about what is happening, why it is happening, and what they must do to end their pain. Silence and artful ambiguity can be more effective than impassioned forthrightness.

In today's world, not rubbing the noses of others in their relative weaknesses and using sanctions sparingly and only in support of tactically flexible negotiations makes even greater sense than before. The efficacy of sanctions that are not approved and universally observed at the global level is far less than it was under the Pax Americana. In the globalized economy of the 21st century, trade is made up of supply chains and productive capacity, markets, and technology are increasingly dispersed. What one or two countries or economic blocs will not supply or buy, other blocs or countries can and will. As the monopoly roles in trade and investment transactions of the dollar and the institutions tied to it erode, ways to circumvent financial sanctions are proliferating.

The reflexive American habit of sanctioning countries with which it disagrees is becoming a fast track to futility – a path not to influence but to retaliation in foreign markets, reduced U.S.

exports, and diplomatic irrelevance. But American politicians will have to learn this the hard way. Sanctions won't cease to be the first resort of political poseurs anytime soon.

That's a problem, as seen in the difficulty the United States has had in responding to the gradual end of the Castro era in Cuba. U.S. policies designed to deny Cuba strategically to the USSR and to wall up the destabilizing effects of the Cuban revolution on the rest of Latin America no longer make sense. The United States should be able to seize opportunities as they arise. In the case of Cuba, that means engagement to facilitate both political change and the resolution of property claims and other concrete grievances that date back half a century or more. Whatever its merits in the bygone era of Cold War immobilism, in the 21st century, locking in hostility between states through sanctions can impose unacceptable opportunity costs by precluding the timely exploitation of change.

The American experience with Cuba, north Korea, Iran, and – in an earlier era – China, amply illustrates the inability of punitive sanctions to induce state collapse or regime change. In the new world disorder, regime removal through military assault no longer entails much risk of wider war, but is very likely to prove counterproductive. Americans are now threatened not by evil empires, but by backlash to our own interventions and the breeding grounds for terrorism they create.

This brings me to the subject of negotiation. Its purpose is not, as many suppose, the achievement of agreement. It is the advancement of the interests in one's charge. Like sanctions, negotiating processes can provide the appearance that something is being done about a situation even when it is not. Playing for time by taking part in protracted dialogue is a form of negotiation. So is refusing to negotiate. As Israel has shown in four decades of a fraudulent "peace process," negotiations can be a potent form of distraction and deception as shifts in the underlying situation are engineered. A grand conciliatory gesture, like Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing or Sadat's 1977 travel to Jerusalem, also constitutes negotiation. Negotiations remain the least costly way to obtain agreed adjustments in one's relations with other actors and in their behavior. Such adjustments, of course, reflect judgments by the parties about the correlations of present and future power between them.

This is clearest when negotiations confirm the outcome of war. It has always been true that wars

are not over until the defeated explicitly accept both their defeat and the adjustments in their behavior and international relationships that it implies. The blindness of the American national security establishment to this reality has twice led to tragic failures to bring wars to an end in Iraq. There is every reason for the United States to refrain from the invasion and occupation of other countries in the future. But, if Americans do again launch such wars, we need first to consider how we will terminate them, on what terms, with whom, and subject to what means of verification.

The 1990-91 War to Liberate Kuwait resulted in a lopsided military victory over Iraq. On February 28, 1991, the United States and Saudi Arabia declared Kuwait liberated and announced a unilateral cease-fire. Two days later, at a military technical meeting, Iraq agreed to the cease-fire. The victorious US and Saudi-led coalitions had not announced war aims beyond the liberation of Kuwait. After a month of deliberations among themselves, they secured a resolution from the UN Security Council that – *ex post facto* – imposed terms on Iraq. No attempt was made to consult Iraq or obtain its consent to these terms. Resolution 687 treated Iraq as though it had unconditionally surrendered, not just been defeated in battle. Iraq was compelled officially to acknowledge the resolution. Saddam responded to its terms with passive aggression. Neither he nor his government were ever made to feel honor-bound by them.

Had Saddam Hussein been required personally to agree explicitly to the terms Resolution 687 sought to impose on him, this humiliation would almost certainly have led to his overthrow by those around him. In the event, like Gamal Abdel Nasser after the 1956 Suez War, Saddam was able to portray survival in power as a political victory. Ironically, sanctions then gave him patronage power that any politician would envy. As president, Saddam decided who in Iraq could have access to imported food and medicine. Shortages caused many deaths, including half a million children. Iraqis attributed their privations to foreign malevolence and rallied behind Saddam.

Resolution 687 and related writs were a misguided attempt at war termination by fiat. This reflected the unique American history of total war followed by the unconditional surrender of the losing sides in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. But the War to Liberate Kuwait was a limited war. Like the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, and the Spanish-American War, bringing it to a close required the agreement of both sides. The

unilateral attempt to end the 1990-'91 war with Iraq without negotiating terms with it failed. Baghdad began a pattern of resistance to foreign dictation that came to be known as “cheat and retreat.” The war resumed as low-level, low-intensity conflict as the United States returned to a combination of sanctions and intermittent bombing campaigns in Iraq. No security architecture was devised to restore the balance between Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf Arabs. Instead, the United States found itself required to garrison the Gulf.

The purpose of war is to produce a better peace. The War to Liberate Kuwait failed this test on multiple levels. It was a military triumph but a failure of statecraft.

In the 2003 American reinvasion of Iraq, Washington once again imagined that military triumph could in itself assure desirable political results. U.S. forces removed the government in Baghdad without taking its surrender. There was no indigenous authority left to persuade Iraqis to accept defeat and stand down from resistance to occupation (as the Japanese emperor had done with his subjects at the end of World War II).

Once again, the United States failed to devise a war termination strategy. Diplomacy was not invoked to translate military victory into a new status quo accepted by those subjected to it. And the Iraqis did not accept it. Resistance to the American occupation soon evolved into sectarian strife from which Iraq has yet to recover. The “mission” in Iraq – whatever it was – was not “accomplished,” but botched.

In the nuclear age, if our species is not to perish, wars cannot pursue open-ended objectives that invite escalation. If wars must be fought at all, they must be limited in ambition, amplitude, and duration. And, as was not done in America’s most recent wars, diplomacy must translate their outcomes into arrangements that obviate their reignition.

Carl von Clausewitz famously described war as “the continuation of policy by other means.” War is vindicated by whether it achieves the policy objectives for which it was fought, not by how much destruction it wreaks. This requires the translation of military outcomes into durable political results. This never happens automatically. It requires negotiation between the victor and the vanquished to define adjustments in relations, territory, or behavior between them and to reconcile those defeated on the battlefield to the concessions they must make to avoid further

losses. Americans have forgotten this central task of diplomacy but must now remaster it.

For the most part, of course, diplomacy is not involved in exploiting the sort of coercive measures, including the use of force, that I have just discussed. It is instead devoted to the sustenance of mutually beneficial interaction between one country and others. Diplomats are the official voice, eyes, ears, and hands of their government in foreign lands. Their mission is the peaceful promotion of their nation's interests through the discovery and exploitation of common interests that enable the management of differences and the expansion of areas of agreement and cooperation with other states and peoples. This is a task that depends on well-honed skill in cross-cultural communication and foreign languages.

Diplomats must persuade others that it is in their interest to do things our way, rather than the way that comes naturally to them. This demands empathy that falls short of sympathy and objectivity that understands but does not embrace passion. Foreign policy by tantrum seldom succeeds. Diplomacy is sober work for affable professionals.

The United States is now the only great power (and, indeed, almost the only country) that staffs its foreign policy and diplomatic positions through the hit-or-miss human resources policies of the spoils system. The end of the Cold War enlarged the U.S. margin for error in foreign policy. Since then, an ever increasing percentage of jobs in the foreign affairs agencies have gone to campaign donors, political straphangers and camp followers, dilettantes, ideologues, and single-issue advocates for powerful domestic interest groups. And the errors have multiplied in proportion to their rising numbers.

A century of half-hearted effort to create a professional American diplomatic service has crested and begun to ebb. The U.S. national security and foreign policy apparatus is now ever more politicized, deprofessionalized, and indifferent to the concerns of foreigners. The U.S. Foreign Service is increasingly hard-pressed to put forward qualified candidates for top diplomatic jobs. This is part of the general dumbing-down and dysfunction of politics in American society. We Americans have come to expect little of government – and have been busy evolving bureaucracies incompetent enough to meet our expectations. The late Senator Roman Hruska anticipated the current American diplomatic lineup when he argued that the "mediocre . . . are entitled to a little representation, aren't they, and a little chance?"

The balances of prestige and power are shifting against the United States, and it is up against some tough diplomatic rivals. Perceived adversaries and longstanding allies alike are happy to take Americans for all they can. In an era in which Washington no longer commands automatic deference abroad, international competition is intensifying, and the U.S. margin for error is narrowing, America can ill afford to cultivate diplomatic incompetence.

It is dangerous to send envoys abroad who don't know whether the country in which they will represent the United States is a republic or a monarchy, don't speak its language, have never visited it, know nothing of its history, geography, culture, or politics, and have never met a professional diplomat, still less practiced diplomacy. But we do. And, as long as we do, we can expect to lose ground internationally. That's what happens when you put people who've never played a game up against professional players. Natural talent is no match for seasoned competence and cunning.

In diplomacy, continuity is important. One is never just negotiating a transaction but always adding or subtracting from a relationship in ways that will tell for or against cooperation in future. Most diplomatic assignments are already too short. Transients are easily dismissed as unworthy of consideration or trust.

As a Ghanaian diplomat, commenting on how technology shrinks the world, put it: "Radio enables people to hear all evil, television enables them to see all evil, and the jet plane enables them to go and do all evil." This makes it possible for home-based officials to engage in ephemeral do-it-yourself diplomacy abroad rather than supporting the patient cultivation of influence for their country by forward-deployed diplomats. But it doesn't make diplomacy by arrival statement a sound approach to managing relationships or solving international problems. The greatest diplomats of recent times in Washington – legendary ambassadors like Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar bin Sultan or Russia's Anatoly Dobrynin – built influence and reputations for effectiveness among their American hosts through many years on station. Riyadh and Moscow were better served by reliance on these resident envoys than by frequent flyer diplomacy through jet-propelled drop-bys.

Part of diplomatic effectiveness is, of course, the use of international organizations, the

fashioning of agreed rules and procedures, and the building of coalitions to aggregate political, economic, and military power and bring it to bear on issues of common concern. The United Nations and many of the agreements that constitute international law are monuments to the successes at these order-setting tasks of past American diplomacy. By contrast, the 2015 Paris conference on climate change exemplifies the impairment of the American capacity to set the rules today. The United States, which had refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, insisted that the conference commitments not be binding since that would require their ratification by the Senate. In the current dysfunctional state of U.S. politics, there is no prospect that the Senate will ratify any treaty, though that is one of its main functions under the Constitution.

There are great ironies produced by America's political paralysis and inability to play the role of a responsible stakeholder internationally. The United States, which has not ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, now finds itself disputing interpretations of the convention with China and other countries that have ratified it. America cannot resort to the dispute resolution mechanisms of the convention because the United States is not a party to it. A sampling of other international treaties that the United States has signed but not ratified includes conventions on the rights of the child, on the elimination of discrimination against women, on the rights of persons with disabilities, on the protection of persons from enforced disappearance, defining economic, social, and cultural rights, banning nuclear tests, and establishing the international criminal court. It's hard to lead if you refuse to subject yourself to the rules you insist everyone else follow.

The United States can and must do better if we are to prosper in security in future. But upping the American game demands curing domestic political dysfunction. That dysfunction is the major source of our national strategy deficit. The very definition of strategy is an approach that unifies political, economic, and military action in the efficient pursuit of agreed objectives. At present, Americans can neither agree upon national objectives nor articulate them.

This severely hampers the use of diplomacy of the third kind, or "deep diplomacy," the creation of circumstances that cause other states to conclude that they would benefit by doing things that they originally were disinclined to do but that serve U.S. interests. American power once spoke for itself and incentivized others to court the approval of the United States by conforming to its

preferences internationally. There's not so much of that these days. The fact that American power is a wasting asset should encourage the United States to act now, while its power is greater than it will be, to shape a world that will suit a future, relatively weaker America.

Britain's strategy for dealing with the rise of the United States to great power status in the 19th century is a classic example of the successful management of such a challenge. As the century neared its end, the British came to the conclusion that they would lose a land war should they get into one in North America. They also assessed that American ambitions were limited in relation to their own interests and that the United States had no desire to go to war with them.

Increasingly concerned about the implications of shifting balances of power in Europe, they chose to minimize problems with the United States and to maximize the possibility of future cooperation with it. To this end, in January 1896, following an Anglo-American confrontation over Venezuela, Britain adopted an explicit policy of appeasing the United States to ameliorate American hostility and replace it with a stable, cooperative Anglo-American relationship .

In short order, London agreed to scrap a treaty of 1850 by which the United States had agreed not to seek sole control of a future Panama canal. In a new treaty, concluded in 1901, Britain conceded the right of the United States to just such a monopoly. In 1903, to the same end, the British representative on the tribunal established to fix the disputed frontier between Alaska and Canada supported American rather than Canadian claims. These and other modest concessions paid off in reduced frictions in Anglo-American relations that facilitated U.S. solidarity with Britain in World War I. The partnership this led to dominated the last century.

The United States also has a history of the skillful use of its power to frame strategic choices for others. Consider the Marshall Plan, which used U.S. economic strength to shape both Europe and transatlantic relations to an American design. Or the Helsinki Accords of 1975, which legitimized advocacy of human rights in the Soviet sphere and helped set off the ferment that brought it down. Or Ronald Reagan's 1982 decision to reduce arms sales to Taiwan, which led Taipei ineluctably to the conclusion that it was in its interest to abandon a purely military approach to cross-Strait relations and to open a political dialogue with Beijing. Or Chet Crocker's diplomacy of linkage in southern Africa in the 1980s, which enabled Cuba to withdraw from Angola with honor and South Africa to release Namibia from colonial captivity, while helping to catalyze the end of apartheid by demonstrating the potential for mutually

productive relationships between white South Africans and their black African neighbors.

All this is to say that diplomacy – in the sense of order and norm-setting and the shaping of the international environment to channel the decisions of actors within it – can make a difference that is as decisive and much less costly than war. But the prerequisite for such deep diplomacy is intellectual and political coherence that can formulate national strategy. And to have that, America must either undergo a revolution or return to constitutional government.

Disrespect for both the constitutional separation of powers and the need for compromise across partisan lines is well along in delegitimizing government in America and disempowering the United States abroad. The Congress shirks its duty to pass budgets, authorize uses of force internationally, consider and ratify treaties, and advise and consent to the appointment of officials and judges. The president fills the governance vacuum with executive orders and actions based on assertions of authority that vastly exceed those granted to him in the U.S. Constitution, which was drawn to limit the powers of government. The Congress responds with intrusions into the president's constitutional power to conduct foreign policy, including the enactment of country-specific sanctions, pledges of allegiance to the interests of foreign countries, partisan invitations to foreign politicians to join in opposing the policies of the president, and writing letters to foreign leaders declaring that the president cannot speak for the United States.

This is no way to run a country or a foreign policy in a world in which others are on the rise and American power is in relative decline. The public clearly agrees. The front-running candidates for the presidency in both major parties at present are radical populists. From opposite sides of the political spectrum, both are calling for revolution. Returning to constitutional government is, I believe, a preferable alternative to this. But something must be done.

Simply regaining lost ground for the United States internationally will not be easy. Recent American foreign policy has ignored international law and institutions, despite the fact that both were largely made in the USA. This has gravely damaged the prospects for the continued global prevalence of values of Western civilization like the rule of law. If the law is no protection, the alternative is the gun. If the United Nations Charter and other provisions of international law do not restrain the use of force by the United States, why should others rely on them for their

defense?

It matters too that the estrangement of mainstream America from the fourth or more of humanity that is Muslim is now well advanced. Having poked the hornet's nest, Americans must live for a while with hornets. It will take help from Muslim allies, broad cooperation from the international community as a whole, and partnership with nations that are adversaries on other issues to restore security from attack by the fanatics the United States has agitated.

More generally, America would be wise to recall the cynical advice of Confucius, who said – with an eye on the principle of reciprocity – that one should not seek “to impose on others what one does not wish for oneself.” Or, as Rabbi Hillel the Elder put it more idealistically about 500 years later: “What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow man; this is the whole Law. The rest is but commentary.” The law is the first defense of the weak against the strong. The United States is strong now. It will be relatively less strong later. Americans have a stake in bolstering the protections of international law.

Defending a rule-bound order and other Western values internationally requires transatlantic solidarity. The United States needs rapprochement with Europe for this. It also needs a focus on building political influence rather than on shoring up global military supremacy. The erosion of excellence in American education and the deterioration of U.S. infrastructure undermine U.S. competitiveness. To revitalize authority, the United States must both rebuild America and husband its strength. Issuing demands that have no prospect of being met by other countries devalues power. Idle threats and empty shows of force do not deter. They erode rather than buttress credibility. “Speak softly and carry a big stick” is good advice.

The United States needs to amplify its power by using it ergonomically – that is, with concentrated efficiency. Washington must professionalize its diplomacy. It should cease to be a promiscuous provider of security services to the world, responding to every country that seeks refuge beneath the American eagle's wings by spreading them in welcome. Americans must choose those we will protect as carefully as we choose our enemies. To maximize its leverage internationally, the United States should play hard to get. America must cease to do for others what they should do for themselves, and demand that allies, partners, and friends carry the primary burden of defending their own interests. The United States can no longer afford to

enable self-destructive behavior by client states. Giving them blank checks and unconditional security guarantees creates moral hazard. This serves neither their interests nor America's.

Whatever happens, the United States will remain a major force in shaping the world of the 21st century. It will best serve its interests and the interests of those who place their hopes in it abroad if it focuses on restoring constitutional democracy, economic competitiveness, and social justice at home, while exercising restraint beyond its borders. To prosper in liberty with security, America must readhere to the sound counsel of one of their greatest secretaries of state, John Quincy Adams. In 1821, Adams laid out the principles of a self-interested foreign policy for the United States:

“America ... [respects] the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining her own. She ... [abstains] from interference in the concerns of others, even when conflict [is] ... for principles to which she clings.... [She] goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”