

Choices for America in the World

America's Role Project – Scope Paper #4

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Effective state craft = “clearly defined objectives and policy consensus within government; accurate, realistic assessments of obstacles and of the resources required to overcome them; and the systematic integration of all tools of power in a sustained and intense diplomatic effort.” – Chester Crocker, Foreign Affairs, July/August 2007.

- There has been a lively debate about America's role in the world since the founding of the Republic.
 - John Quincy Adams argued that “America 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.”
 - This credo was largely satisfactory for much of the United States early history as we settled into our immediate neighborhood. (Mexicans, presumably, did not agree with Mr. Adam's characterization of U.S. policies.) In 1898, however, we went to war with Spain and established a “presence” in the Philippines and the Caribbean. In 1917 we again went to war – this time to “make the world safe for democracy” in Woodrow Wilson's memorable phrase. Adam's and Wilson's pronouncements capture the debate about America's role in the world ever since.
 - President Bush has redefined America's role in the world with a combination of the unilateral use of force, a focus on combating global terrorism and promoting democracy, and the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. He chose to pursue these policies without substantially increasing the size of the U.S. armed forces and while cutting taxes.

Next President

- America is uniquely powerful and is the world's only truly global power. Nonetheless, the limits on U.S. power has been exposed by the Iraq conflict. The next American president will have to establish priorities and make choices or significantly expand the resources, human and financial, that he is prepared to devote to national security. This paper seeks to lay out what foreign policy decisions will confront our next president recognizing that many will not be either/or decisions but will entail a blending of

possibilities. (No American president is going to be either entirely unilateralist or cede complete authority for U.S. national security to multilateral organizations.)

- The next American president will face four categories of choices:
 - (I) Choices that should ideally be made in advance of inauguration.
 - (II) “In-box” choices that will face him/her on assuming office.
 - (III) Medium term “shaping” choices.
 - (IV) “Anticipatory” choices for the future.

(I) Choices to be made in advance of inauguration:

- Campaign rhetoric from both party candidates in 2008 will, no doubt, be about restoring American global leadership, safeguarding American territory, defeating terrorists, and promoting democracy and human rights.
- Political campaigns, however, are not conducive to deep thinking about issues particularly in a sound bite era. This said, there are fundamental questions on which a candidate should have settled views before taking office.
 - Will it be a central goal of his/her presidency to restore and maintain American global leadership and primacy? This is not as simple as it sounds given that much of the world is dissatisfied with America’s leadership. (It begs the question, of course, if not the United States, than who?)
 - If the answer is in the affirmative then a series of choices open up about the future character and direction of this leadership role:
 - (1) Will it be unilateral or collaborative?
 - (2) Will we seek regime change in selected cases or regime acceptance?
 - (3) Will we actively promote democracy and, if so, through what means?
 - (4) Will we see ourselves as a stabilizing or transformational force in the world?
 - (5) Will the Global War on Terrorism remain a defining feature of American foreign policy?
- Two issues will have a substantial impact on ultimate presidential choices. (There may, of course, be others from a terrorist or economic “surprise” between now and 2009 to say nothing of the size of the winner’s election margin and which party controls the House and Senate.)
 - The “lessons” Americans draw from the Iraq debacle.
 - The uneven implications of globalization and other contemporary systemic change for America.

Lessons of Iraq

- The consequences of the Iraq War will have a profound impact on the next president.

They will dominate his/her “in box” and influence his/her choices on a wide range of issues.

Americans are likely to draw one of two broad conclusions about Iraq – the way they did after the Vietnam War – “never again” or “do it better/differently”.

- Never Again – This could entail calls for American retreat into isolationism but not necessarily or probably. It could however, mean national resistance to once again unilaterally occupying a troublesome nation or even to participating directly in nation building activities.
 - More specifically, “never again” would be a choice in favor of reducing or at least limiting U.S. global commitments. Realists talk about the U.S. becoming (once again) an “off shore balancer.”
 - The logical focus of a reduction of U.S. global military presence would be in the Middle East where U.S. forces seem least welcome. (The United States is already reducing its forces in Asia and Europe.) A sharp decline in U.S. forces in the Middle East would have implications for the size of the force we need overall in the future.
 - Presumably, if we decide to do less, we will ask others to do more – to multilateralize U.S. foreign policy.
 - Finally, if the “lesson” from Iraq is that the U.S. is not very good at nation building then one answer is to avoid rather than prepare for future contingencies.
- Do it better/differently – This would not necessarily mean “going in search of monsters to destroy” but it might. What is clear from our Iraq experience is that there is much work to be done to build America’s capacity to “do” future Afghanistans and Iraqs.
 - It is clear that the next president will have to repair a badly broken policy making process with particular emphasis on improving policy implementation. We make policy with interagency input but we still implement policy through poorly integrated stove pipes.
 - We must build capacity – and particularly civilian capacity – to deal with failed states. This means, in practice, retooling the U.S. State Department and AID to create a substantial civilian role to address future contingencies. Doing this, of course, has implications for the size of the Foreign Service and the training that officers receive. Some have called for a doubling of the Foreign Service from its current level of 6500 and training substantial numbers for a new mission. There have also been calls for civilian reserve forces to be called up in time of need. It may also be necessary to revisit decisions to house embassy workers in massive fortress like embassies around the world where security concerns trump mission performance.
 - Tough choices will be forced in an over-stretched armed force. Much has been asked of too few. Iraq-bound units are deploying for the fourth time. If the same demands

- are to be made in the future our forces must be properly sized, trained, and prepared.
- Whether or not the U.S. maintains or diminishes its global role, we have an interest in improving the capacities of international organizations and our allies to bear larger burdens. It is worth noting that the second largest deployed armed force in the world today is that of the United Nations, at present in excess of 100,000 blue helmets.
 - Finally, and critically, if the U.S. is to continue to lead there will have to be Congressional “buy in” and support. The Congressional inclination is always to support the troops – financially and in other ways – but the stark lesson of Iraq is that our troops cannot and should not be charged with civilian missions in post-conflict situations. We need an adequate civilian capacity. As noted above, this has implications for the size and training of the Foreign Service and career AID employees. It also means that the Congress would have to agree to building a civilian financial and human surge capacity.

Implications of globalization for America

- Globalization is really shorthand for accelerating systemic change and power shifts in process around the world. The free movement of information, goods, services, and people is empowering new actors – state and individual. Globalization will both expand and constrict future presidential choices. It has helped produce great wealth for America and the world but has also helped empower terrorists and has contributed to job loss (and gains) in the United States.
- The expansion of trade and the communications revolution have contributed to a huge global wealth expansion. Access to the U.S. market and U.S. investment abroad remain potent sources of American influence around the world. But globalization has also fostered growing inequalities including in the U.S.. Many new sectors in U.S. economy are now open to global competition including in the service sector.
- It has fostered new claimants to global power – China, India, corporations, terrorists. Indeed, arguably, globalization has helped support alternative governance models to liberal democracy – political Islam and authoritarianism (the Chinese model of economic opening without political reform.) Nationalism, of course, remains an important motivation for opposition to the United States in many regions of the world.
- Presidential choices
 - (1) The Cold War was all about the competition of large, strong powers. By contrast the contemporary period has seen America embroiled with weak and/or failing states. However, with new rising powers the next president will have to chose where to focus.
 - (2) Protectionist pressures are rising in the United States because of globalization’s losers. The next American president will have to decide whether to succumb to these

pressures or take fundamental steps to deal with our trade problems, including addressing the low U.S. domestic savings rate and the education of the U.S. work force versus politically attractive bashing of our trade partners. (The premise here is that many or most of our trade problems are self-inflicted).

Clearly imbalances cannot continue to grow indefinitely. An export driven Chinese economy and a consumer driven U.S. economy means trouble for one or both over time.

(3) There remains a fundamental debate in this country between those suspicious of international institutions and those prepared to work in and through them.

- The next U.S. president, in short, needs to come into office with a world view about America's global role. Challenges to America are more complex than during the Cold War. The line between domestic and foreign is much more permeable.
- Interestingly many of these issues do not break down neatly on partisan lines. Liberal Democrats and Conservative Republicans join in making democracy promotion a centerpiece of American foreign policy. Protectionist pressures are rising in both parties.

After Inauguration

- New administrations take time to settle in – to get their people in place and policy directions determined. There is a tendency – particularly but not only when there is a change in party in the White House – to begin by rejecting a predecessor's policies and to view suspiciously anyone, including career civil servants, who worked for the previous administration. The learning curve will necessarily be particularly steep for the new administration in 2009 because for the first time since 1952 neither a sitting vice-president or president is running.
- The new administration will also have to be mindful of a likely assertiveness in the new Congress – whatever its makeup. It is historically normal that the executive/legislative balance reasserts itself after a period of dominance by one branch as we had in the first six years of the Bush administration.
- The immediate choices will be personnel decisions. These, we know, can have significant consequences. A new president must decide whether to locate foreign policy power in his National Security Council staff or in his cabinet secretaries. In either case he may be selecting people he does not know well. Moreover, there will always be uncertainty about how his foreign policy "team" will work together. For the early months of the administration much of his foreign policy will be carried out by career holdovers from the Bush administration as the new team is confirmed.

- Invariably there will be surprises for the new team – for Bush ‘41 it was Tianaman, for Clinton it was Somalia, and for Bush ‘43 it was the EP3 incident. The United States is potentially at particular risk from a terrorist incident during presidential transitions when political leadership is turning over. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center came 37 days after Bill Clinton took office. 9/11 came within George Bush’s first eight months in office.
- Moreover, the next administration’s choices will be limited by virtue of widespread and deep anti-Americanism in much of the world and enormous strains placed by Iraq and Afghanistan on both military and civilian agencies of the U.S. Government. U.S. national security policy has been largely financed with foreign debt, a substantial portion held by China. Simply put, the next president will inherit an America whose concrete power has declined. His/her future choices will be affected by this fact.
- The immediate inherited agenda of issues will dominate initial presidential choices, particularly around the Middle East and Northeast Asia – two regions of central importance for the next president. Only when initial steps are taken on the “in box” and the president’s team is in place, can medium term “reshaping” issues be tackled, and initial steps be crafted and implemented on “long term” issues.

Part II – “In-box” choices on assuming office

- The world will look to the new president for early messages of reassurance and direction. The Bush Administration sent signals in 2001 by decisively rejecting a number of international agreements negotiated by the Clinton Administration. These early moves played well for the president’s domestic base but needlessly antagonized international audiences. Of necessity, the new administration in 2009 will focus on the Middle East in its early days but must also craft careful initial signals to key countries including Turkey, Russia and Mexico. Missteps with a friend or adversary early in a presidential term can set the tone for the rest of the term.
- The next president is likely to inherit a significant strategic reversal for the United States in the Middle East – Iraq in turmoil with U.S. influence waning, Iran well launched on a nuclear path, and the Arab-Israeli issue potentially irretrievable as a land for peace swap. In addition, one or more of a number of “friends” of America is likely to be in serious internal trouble – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, and/or Lebanon.
- This region is and will be a central “zone of conflict” for America. If the next president is not careful, it could dominate his/her presidency the way it did for Bush ‘43 – to the

detriment of America's position in the world and to other priorities. Managing the draw-down of U.S. forces in Iraq will be of fundamental consequence for the success of the next president. Done poorly only Al-Qaeda and Iran can benefit as they have during our pre-occupation with Iraq.

- The next president will be confronted immediately with a series of painful choices:
 - (1) The collapse of Iraq is very likely to be in process with massive internal and external refugee flows and continuing sectarian violence in Iraq. With a decline in U.S. force levels in Iraq will come a diminution in U.S. influence. Iraq's neighbors are likely to ratchet up their interference as a way of safe-guarding their equities. What will America do?
 - (2) Will he/she continue Bush policy of limited to no contact with: Iran, Syria, Hamas, Hezobollah? Some argue that Talking with our enemies is not a favor. What matters is not how negotiations begin but how they end. Others believe we infer legitimacy on bad guys and reward bad behavior by talking. It's a choice.
 - (3) What will be the extent of U.S. military power in the region? This is a fundamental choice. We have seen our presence as part of the solution to the region's insecurities. Many in the region see our presence as part of the problem. The Saudis required the United States to withdraw our military presence from the Kingdom. Others – including a future Iraqi government – may seek the same outcome. Talk in 2007 of an extended U.S. military presence in Iraq similar to our Korea basing is apt to prove wildly unrealistic.
 - (4) Will the United States accommodate a nuclear capable Iran? We did so with India and Pakistan, to say nothing of Israel. If not, then what other choice might we make including the use of force or more effective containment? If so, what does “accommodation” mean in practice? Will we be ready for a grand bargain and will the Iranians? What will be the costs to our other relationships in the region to reversing longstanding U.S. policies vis a vis Iran? The unpleasant truth is that our invasion of Iraq destroyed the uneasy balance between Iranian nationalism and Arab nationalism. We face a number of choices in addressing the consequences of this new geostrategic circumstance.
 - (5) Will the U.S. re-engage in the search for a Palestinian/Israeli peace recognizing that such a peace will be much more elusive in 2009 than in January 2001? Indeed, a “land for peace” deal may no longer be a realistic goal given the disintegration of the Palestinian leadership, the radicalization of Palestinian factions, the fracturing of Israeli politics, and an Israeli settlement building program beyond practical recall.

Will the new administration appoint a super negotiator or continue to operate within the State Department framework? Might the new administration press for a Syrian deal in advance of movement on the Palestinian front. The Bush administration opposed this approach. The next can revisit this choice.

(6) Will the GWOT remain a central focus of U.S. Middle East policy? How will the U.S. address the spread of indigenous terrorist cells to North Africa and Europe? What will the U.S. position be vis a vis the revival of Al-Qaeda in Pakistan? How will we come to grips with the role of Saudi Arabia supporting extremist Islamic ideology around the world.

- The second “in-box” area of concern will be Northeast Asia where the issue could be as much one of opportunity as risk. There is a decisive shift in global economic power to Asia in process. Asian demand for natural resources, including energy, is affecting geopolitics. Again the next president will face a series of choices:
 - (1) The immediate risk will be posed by a nuclear capable North Korea. The next U.S. president is very unlikely to inherit a denuclearized DPRK. Intensified negotiations at the end of the Bush administration are unlikely to have produced a decisive outcome. Instead, the inheritance passed on to the next administration may be a more rather than less uncertain Northeast Asia security environment. We also face potential problems with our South Korean ally where a new generation of Koreans, with no memory of the Korean War, is unpersuaded that the U.S. military presence on Korean soil is necessary or desirable.
 - (2) The major immediate issue with China is likely to be economic – American domestic politics drive Beijing/Washington towards confrontation on trade issues as trade and current account imbalances continue to worsen. China is likely to be the focal point for the free vs. fair trade debate in the United States. On this issue in particular the next president is likely to come into office with a well established campaign position which will have to be disavowed or implemented. Longer term U.S. and China’s economies are deeply intertwined but our two countries are increasingly bumping up against each other in the drive for natural resources around the world and in the comparative political models we offer. Authoritarian control at home and the absence of judgement abroad offered by Beijing is proving attractive in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iran, Venezuela and others authoritarian countries.
 - (3) Japan’s future trajectory is uncertain but it appears posed to breakout of its constitutional straightjacket to permit it to become a more “normal” country. However, if this means a more robust defense posture – in response to continuing challenges from a nuclear capable North Korea – the reaction from the region and

particularly China will be negative. The Bush Administration managed to maintain good relations with both Tokyo and Beijing. The next administration will have to move adroitly to continue this position. Circumstance could force a choice.

(III) Medium term “shaping” choices

- As noted above, the new administration will face these “shaping” choices immediately during the transition process but is only likely to be able to give them full and considered attention as the new team settles into place.
- Once the new administration has been formed then presidential discretion will increase. This will be the time to put his/her stamp on the future. The macro decisions outlined at the beginning of this memo should now be operationalized.
- Key bilateral relationships will have to be clarified:
 - (1) Russia – Russia’s present trajectory is not promising. The U.S./Russia relationship has become very brittle complicated by the energy “hold” Russia now has on Europe as evidenced by the recent cut-off of oil and gas to Ukraine and Belarus. Russia’s authoritarian roots are becoming exposed. Its accumulating anger at what it sees as Western encroachment on its “space” – through NATO enlargement and more recently the Bush administration’s missile defense project in Poland. Russia’s ability to complicate initiatives of the next U.S. president in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Iran is likely to remain high.
 - (2) The weight of Europe in American calculations should now be laid out. The next American president may well face a more congenial European leadership than did Bush but a Europe whose “out of area” activism will be constrained by domestic demographic trends and public opinion. Rising tension between Turkey and Europe is bad news for America. Moreover, Europe will be looking for genuine American partnership on issues from global warming to Middle East peace. Europeans will be mindful that some Americans see a decisive shift in America’s core interests to the Middle East and Asia and question Europe’s value. Others see Europe at the center of a coalition of democracies that might provide a focus for American leadership and partnership in the future.
 - (3) Latin America has traditionally been a forgotten region for the U.S., but an American president always has the choice to redirect U.S. policy south of our border. The next American president needs to weigh the costs of immigration reform which builds higher fences vs. relations with Mexico, the management of America’s Venezuela problem, the possibility of integrating Brazil into a more prominent leadership role in the United Nations and other forums.

(4) The Bush Administration pursued a significant AIDS initiative in Africa but has been frustrated by mass killings in Darfur. The next administration will have the choice as to how and to what extent to engage Africa.

- Key multilateral relationships

President Bush chose to vigorously emphasize American sovereignty over multilateral engagement and institutional renewal. Reform of the United Nations did not show measurable progress on his watch. The Doha Round of trade negotiations failed. Non-Proliferation Treaty authorities eroded badly as North Korean and Iranian programs moved forward following in the steps of India and Pakistan.

Some Americans remain adamant about not ceding authority to international organizations. Others point to transnational problems requiring multinational solutions. The next U.S. president will face fundamental choices about how and whether to work in and support reform of multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. Specific choices include:

- Whether to move forward on the WTO Doha Round of trade negotiations. The Bush Administration has pursued bilateral trade agreements but the next U.S. president may be confronted with rising protectionism at home. The makeup of the next Congress will be an important factor on this issue.
- Whether to provide genuine leadership in the transforming the United Nations Security Council into a body which genuinely represents the world's major powers in all regions. The attitude of China and Russia will be an important factor.
- Revive the sinking N.P.T. by, (for example), pressing for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and substantially reducing the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals.

- Decisions about American capacity

- If the next president decides to diminish U.S. global activism he can bring our capabilities more in line with our commitments. He/she will, in any case, face immediate budgetary questions with respect to the draft FY2010 budget submission prepared by the outgoing Bush Administration.
- Alternatively, the incoming president can send a significant message about his/her preferences by his budgetary requests both for the Department of Defense and for the civilian foreign affairs agencies.
- The Bush Administration attempted massive reorganization of the U.S. government in the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, (DHS), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, (DNI). The beginning of DHS and the DNI have been uneven and will require presidential attention.

- Bush '43 gave democracy promotion a bad name.

First he, in effect, tried to impose it by fiat in Iraq. He then made democracy a centerpiece for his policies in the Middle East only to back away when the implications of greater freedom became evident in the Palestinian elections and the risks to our authoritarian friends in the region of greater liberalism.

The next American president will face fundamental choices not simply about whether but also how to promote democracy abroad.

(IV) “Anticipatory” choices for the future

- Finally, there is a category of choices that involve issues in which significant payback is unlikely to come during the next administration but where immediate painful effort is necessary to limit future pain. The next American president’s legacy may well be judged on how well he/she deals with the following:
 - (1) Social Security/Medicare – If these issues are not dealt with, money for international programs will be squeezed out by escalating entitlement costs as baby boomers begin to retire in the next presidential term. Arguably decisions in this area may be among the most important national security question the next president will face.
 - (2) Energy – The U.S. now imports 60% of its oil consumption. Increasingly the U.S. is competing with growing energy demand in developing countries. U.S. energy independence will not happen. But, energy diversification can happen. However, choices about nuclear power, mandatory mileage standards and other politically painful measures will have to be made.
 - (3) Environment/global warming – The science and the visible evidence of environmental challenge is becoming persuasive. Perhaps no single issue will define the success of the next presidency than decisive steps taken to curb the growth of greenhouse gases, to preserve the world’s fisheries, and to address the declining availability of fresh water in heavily populated parts of the world. Tipping points toward accelerating danger are evident in all three areas. All three were largely ignored by the Bush Administration.
 - (4) Health – The Bush Administration exhibited great leadership in putting resources against the AIDS pandemic. This leadership has been less evident in preparations made for the next great health pandemic which will find health systems around the world and in the United States unprepared to cope.