



Schlesinger Working Group  
on Strategic Surprises

# Surprises, Challenges and Opportunities Since September 11

SCHLESINGER WORKING GROUP REPORT, SPRING 2002

Prepared by Paul G. Frost

The Institute for the Study of Diplomacy of Georgetown University launched the Schlesinger Working Group in 1999. This program recognizes the distinguished public career of Dr. James R. Schlesinger and his remarkable contributions to national security policymaking and strategic thought. This project is based on a multi-year Working Group initiative with a mandate to review and assess a range of possible scenarios that contain significant potential for strategic surprise and for unanticipated outcomes. The Schlesinger Working Group relies on a permanent “core membership” of generalists from the policy-making and research communities and academia (please see page 2), who are sometimes joined by respected authorities on specific regional or functional topics under consideration. The meetings are chaired by Schlesinger Professor of Strategic Studies Dr. Chester A. Crocker and ISD Director Professor Casimir A. Yost.

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## OVERVIEW

The Institute for the Study of Diplomacy hosted the spring 2002 meetings of the Schlesinger Working Group on the topic of challenges and potential surprises flowing from September 11 and its aftermath. As a starting point for the discussion, the March meeting of the Working Group debated the following main points:

- How has the world changed since September 11, and how enduring and deep-seated are the changes? Have key U.S. relationships changed? Has the U.S. itself changed?
- What are the main shifts in U.S. policy and the framework of U.S. policy debate since the terrorist attacks?
- What kinds of surprises might lie in store for U.S. policymakers as we pursue the war on terrorism as a unifying policy rubric?

The second, May meeting focused on a range of surprise scenarios or unanticipated consequences born out of a current trendline in U.S. foreign policy. While the group does not make forecasts, some scenarios were judged more credible and more significant in the near to medium term than others. Where appropriate, the working group identified policies that could forestall the surprise or mitigate its effects.

## SUMMARY

The Group discussions — over 7 hours of meetings — identified six major unanticipated consequences for the United States as a result of its war on terror, that could take place in the near to medium term future:

### More Terrorist Attacks

The “surprise” is not that there will be another attack. Almost by definition the nature and dimension of the attack will surprise us. It, in turn, will

lead to unpredicted consequences, particularly if the attack is on U.S. soil. The U.S. thus confronts the challenge of preventing or pre-empting the unknown shape of a certain threat, and attempting to prioritize its most serious forms.

### Israel/Palestine: The Worst is Yet to Come

The Israelis and Palestinians may have only begun the current descent into an abyss of violence. Continued Israeli/Palestinian violence could bring either the fall of a moderate Arab regime or a break of ties with the U.S. by a key Arab state.

### Surprises in a Post-Saddam Iraq

An end of Saddam Hussein’s reign *without* significant U.S. intervention would be a significant surprise. Whether he was overthrown by Iraqis themselves or with substantial external involvement, the downfall of Saddam could yield some unexpected scenarios:

- Spontaneous joy at Saddam’s fall brings popular demand for a stronger, more modern Iraq.
- With a return to normalcy and legitimacy, Iraq might lead the Middle East in an anti-Israel and anti-U.S. campaign.
- No real change. The new regime would look all too much like Saddam’s.

### South Asia: The Tightrope Breaks on Musharraf

President Pervez Musharraf has been walking a fine line between being tough on terrorists to the west and soft on terrorists to the east. Members discussed how it would impact the U.S. if President Musharraf were assassinated by one of the many indigenous groups that oppose him, or otherwise fell from power because of domestic disputes over the war on terror and/or the conflict with India over Kashmir.

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\* Core members of the Schlesinger Working Group were not asked to approve this *Report*. The *Report*, however, relies heavily on the discussions of the group. As such, this document reflects the general ideas of working group members, but is not a consensus document and cannot be ascribed to any individual member.

**Post-election Surprises in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is preparing to elect a transitional government in June. Two divergent and surprising outcomes are possible:

1. The electoral process is successful, but the elected leaders are corrupt loyalists of regional warlords who are reluctant to cede power to Kabul. The unsavory outcome tempts the U.S. to “walk away” from Afghanistan.

2. The new government in Afghanistan, with surprisingly coherent support from regional powers, the U.S. and its allies, pulls together and gradually constructs a prosperous and peaceful nation.

**Surprises in U.S.-Russian Relations**

Relations between Bush and Putin could grow surprisingly strong, yielding a harder stance on arms sales to Iran or support for regime change in Iraq. But the sudden loss of Putin could jeopardize a number of important initiatives currently underway.

Group members also discussed a range of additional surprises, which are briefly outlined at the end of this report.

**WHAT HAS REALLY CHANGED?**

For some participants, the clear answer is that it is the United States which has changed since September 11. Not only has this country lost its previous sense of invulnerability to the terrorist phenomenon. It has acquired a “primary filter”—the need to deal with terrorist threats—for framing policy choices. After a decade without such a governing mechanism, in a sense we are experiencing a return to the familiar habits of the Cold War period in which many aspects of foreign policy were ‘shaped in advance’ by an omnipresent strategic paradigm. The dilemma is that the threat comes from a source less susceptible to deterrence.

Some argued that September 11 only reinforced these trends. For example, a case could be made that a turn away from a heavily values-based foreign policy was already under way, that the U.S. and Russia were already moving toward a much more pragmatic bilateral relationship, and that the U.S. was already targeting as adversaries the regimes in Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Others argued that the U.S. risks neglecting or distorting other important priorities by putting a ‘war on terrorism’ gloss on everything we do.

**Opportunities.**

The group considered the question of whether September 11 could be viewed as a blessing in dis-

guise for the conduct of U.S. global policies. On one hand, terrorism is a “very narrow filter” for global policy, one that identifies what we are against rather than what we are for. Yet, Washington has outlined an ambitious and engaged vision for U.S. global leadership on multiple fronts. It is unclear how many tasks and challenges—and potential enemies—can be managed effectively at one time under the ‘war on terrorism’ rubric. To undertake all the tasks proposed and suggested by the administration will require serious discipline, careful definitions, and a sense of priorities to avoid a “Christmas tree” approach to the war on terrorism. It will also require that we come to grips with the need for coalition-building/sustaining and alliance management.

On the other hand, other members pointed to the exceptional opportunities for U.S. leadership post-September 11. This watershed event and the administration’s response to it has mobilized a widespread and impressive popular mandate for global engagement and has created a climate in which, for the first time in years, there are resources for defense and foreign policy and political capital to match—if we know what we really want to accomplish.

**Challenges.**

A less sanguine view questioned whether the U.S. is shaping events or playing catch up with the ‘new’ reality that we face many challenges and potential liabilities as we reorient ourselves toward failing states and intractable conflict zones in Central and South Asia and the Middle East/Africa. This more pessimistic view doubted whether the U.S. had an ample stock of ‘political capital’ to utilize in reshaping world affairs, and underscored some perceived negatives in the new situation:

- Satisfaction about Afghanistan masks our continued vulnerability to the risk of future terrorist strikes on the U.S. and our friends;
- Continuing questions about our ability to organize our intelligence/law enforcement agencies so that they not only are able to share information effectively but also reinforce each other’s efforts effectively;
- Continuing divisions among executive branch agencies over national security objectives and the policy tools to achieve them;
- U.S. unpreparedness to articulate wider goals of conflict management that are capable of engaging the interests, values and ambitions of friends and allies;

The world did not change on September 11; the U.S. changed in response to an unprecedented wake-up call. And, as the U.S. changes, others shift their behavior in reaction/response, setting in motion a spiral of action and reaction in which commitments and relationships keep shifting.

- A new sense of vulnerability and danger facing consumers and citizens of open societies, which could affect our can-do optimism and hunger for engagement, especially if bipartisan support erodes for combating a loosely-defined axis of evil.

#### CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS

Group members identified a range of significant U.S. relationships which have been decisively shaped by recent developments:

- A sharply improved, even transformed, relationship with Putin's Russia;
- A halt to the downward trendline of U.S.-China ties; China was described by several participants as 'the loser' from September 11 as the nightmare of U.S. hegemony becomes reality and Japan and Russia join the American coalition;
- A number of secondary relationships have been dramatically transformed by September 11 — Pakistan, Afghanistan and several other Central Asian 'stans', Sudan — but it remains an open question how durable these changes will prove to be, and what unanticipated consequences flow from new relationships;
- The indisputably important Saudi relationship may have been decisively fractured;
- The 'trans-Atlantic anchor of the international system is in flux', in the words of one participant, with the role of NATO viewed widely as less important in some western capitals and less threatening in Moscow. European-American strains over Middle East, Iraq, unilateralism, and Afghanistan reconstruction make for a heady brew.

#### ARE U.S. POLICY SHIFTS LASTING?

Participants identified a range of specific policy shifts/reversals in addition to the overarching change to a much higher level of U.S. engagement in global affairs and far greater media, public and congressional interest in them. Specific areas of policy shift post-September included:

- A recognition of the need for allies, if not alliances, for most of the new tasks we are focusing on. This shift directly contradicts unilateral U.S. actions such as steel tariffs, which have become considerably more costly than would have been the case prior to September 11.
- A shift from concentrating on 'rising states' to a far more conscious focus on failing states which could become the next terrorist magnets and isolated rogue regimes with WMD capacity as well as deeply troubled economies.
- A slow but steady realization of the inexorable

linkage between obtaining Arab/Islamic support against Saddam and addressing the universal Muslim concern about the collapsed Israeli-Palestinian peace process. While it has not fully dispelled Bush administration reluctance to get sucked into micro-management of an intractable diplomacy, the desire to act on Iraq and concern for U.S. ties to moderate Arab states has created an imperative to engage in peacemaking.

- While new terms are necessarily being used, senior administration officials have committed themselves to the equivalent of fairly ambitious 'nation-building' in Afghanistan whose success is essential if we are to attract support for remaking Iraq.

#### SURPRISE SCENARIOS AND IMPLICATIONS

We have entered, in the view of many participants, a suddenly dynamic period where events can develop in volatile and dramatic ways. Yet, as one participant put it, the world did not change on September 11; the U.S. changed in response to an unprecedented wake-up call. And, as the U.S. changes, others shift their behavior in reaction/response, setting in motion a spiral of action and reaction in which commitments and relationships keep shifting. Not surprisingly, there was no shortage of candidate surprises. This report gives in-depth coverage to the following six candidates; other worthy surprise candidates are briefly summarized at the end of the report.

*Terrorism Here or Elsewhere.* While almost everyone predicts further terrorist attacks, their precise shape will, almost by definition, be a surprise. The terrorist attacks of September 11 revealed that while it is uniquely powerful, the U.S. is also newly vulnerable. The American public's outcry over the attacks showed the world that even a superpower could be wounded using conventional, low-tech means. This single attack changed the course of U.S. national security policy, and arguably caused an international realignment. A combination of unprecedented U.S. power and vulnerability in the face of asymmetry is drawing us into diverse matters worldwide in ways that candidate Bush would never have imagined.

The U.S. suddenly finds that *deterrence* and *defense* no longer work well and that *pre-emption* is one of the few ways to defend itself against non-state terrorists prepared to engage in suicide attacks. Members agreed that effective intelligence gathering from various sources, as well as productive diplomacy, would facilitate pre-emptive action. On the other hand, some partici-

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pants expressed concern that *preventive* action (such as strikes against Iraq) would carry the risk of losing important political allies.

Al Qaeda had as its purpose to provoke the U.S. to strike back against them, thereby hoping to polarize Islamic populations against the U.S. and its allies. Osama bin Laden’s tactic failed in this regard. However, the downward spiral of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has created the greatest sense of Islamic solidarity against Israel in decades. This was not ‘caused’ by Al Qaeda but, ironically, could serve its basic purpose.

**SOURCES AND TYPES OF TERROR.** The U.S. is “target rich” from the perspective of the terrorist. Every target cannot be defended, so the U.S. must develop criteria for identifying and defending those deemed most critical. Further, our intelligence community and domestic agencies must learn not only to share information but also to share analysis. Past bureaucratic practice does not encourage such exchange. These tasks, done properly, are the work not of months but of years, and we do not have years.

Working Group members looked at a wide range of future terrorist possibilities ranging from attacks on U.S. or friendly overseas assets to an attack on the U.S. homeland. Members also considered a range of potential sources of terrorist action: (a) Al Qaeda: a globalized network, not necessarily needing a specific physical sanctuary; (b) Al Qaeda offshoots/sympathizers: indigenous groups (e.g. Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines or others with varying levels of connections); (c) copy-cat opportunists who strike in the aftermath of terror (e.g. December 2001 anthrax attacks); (d) state-sponsored groups — fewer than in past decades, and with smaller resources overall; and, (e) non-Islamic terror groups using U.S.-based diasporas to mount a terrorist strike.

Members agreed on the importance of distinguishing the *likelihood* and probable *consequences* of various types terrorist attacks in order to prioritize efforts to pre-empt them. For example, many agreed that our main concern should be devoted to the following high likelihood/high consequence scenarios: (a) coordinated attacks on the U.S. homeland (e.g. public areas, commercial hubs, nuclear plants or government buildings) using conventional, radiological or transportable nuclear weapons; (b) devastating attacks on Israel or a European ally or a friendly Middle East regime; and (c) targeted political events (e.g. assassination of an Arab leader and blaming another party). By contrast, chemical or biological

attacks could be viewed as somewhat lower probability; and, isolated attacks and mock threats were of lower consequence.

Historically speaking, terrorist attacks have not employed technological innovation as much as tactical innovation. Such is the case of the suicide bombings used by Palestinian militants in recent months. One participant pointed out that, considering the total number of Israeli casualties from suicide bombings, a proportional amount in the U.S. would be about 10,000 persons. Realizing that the stakes of another attack are much higher after September 11, members raised concerns about the prospects for some sort of a crude nuclear weapon delivered through unconventional means, such as in a sea-borne cargo container, a notoriously under-regulated sector. The possibility of coordinated strikes on transport infrastructure was also discussed.

*Israel/Palestine: The Worst Is Yet to Come.* It cannot be excluded that the Israelis and Palestinians have only just begun the current descent into the abyss of violence. While there may be pauses and fresh security initiatives, there are major obstacles to any early return to a sustained and substantial peace process: (a) the leadership ‘deficit’ and structural challenges of both polities; (b) the asymmetric quality of strategies pursued by the ‘sides’ in an environment when each is convinced it can prevail; (c) an uncertain American commitment to sustained engagement in these matters; (d) growing signs that a battle of nationalisms is morphing into a clash of culture and identity; (e) the growing potential of social and political forces beyond the control of governments to simply ‘get out of hand’. As always, the weapon of mass terror looms in the background as a potential transforming development which could trigger unforeseen Israeli reactions and unanticipated repercussions within Israeli society. A surprise could be that perceptions of U.S. bias in favor of Israel push Arabs to the point of rejecting a U.S. role, and the U.S. loses vital partners in a region of critical importance from an economic and security perspective.

*Surprises in a post-Saddam Iraq.* One Iraqi scenario posed here includes a modicum of success in taming the fires of Israeli-Palestinian passion and in acquiring a minimum of support from essential partners (Turkey, Kuwait, the Emirates) for the conduct of a successful campaign to oust Saddam Hussein. This first Iraqi ‘surprise’ candidate is that the U.S. actually manages to pull off a

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successful political-military strategy for overturning Saddam.

One participant proposed another, quite different, Iraqi surprise: the downfall of Saddam Hussein could come through a coup by Iraqi citizens, having nothing to do with U.S. action; or, as this member put it, Saddam might actually die of natural causes. The U.S. would still be faced with external factors outside of its control: continued violence between Israel and Palestine, and enduring resentment and rage among elements of Arab populations concerning various U.S. policies.

Three surprise patterns were put forth as possibilities under this scenario:

(a) The downfall of Saddam is met with joy by the populace, giving rise to expectations for Iraq to return to elevated status in the Arab world;

(b) The post-Saddam Iraq, with the help of the international community, achieves some normalcy, which then triggers a deep domestic yearning for Iraq to return to a leadership role in the Middle East, not necessarily in ways friendly to the U.S. and Israel;

(c) No real change at all. Some members see extremely low prospects of pluralistic government in post-Saddam Iraq; rather, a new regime would like all too much like Saddam's.

Participants focused on the second scenario. Iraq could feasibly lead a bloc of countries in the region, as it is admired in the Arab world for its secularism and for its scientific and technological prowess. Because of the presence of nuclear weapons in Israel and the prospect of such weapons in Iran, working group members raised the possibility of a scenario in which Saddam goes, but the Iraqi WMD remains. Another participant pointed out that American policymakers are caught in a dilemma between the necessity of long-term initiatives such as public diplomacy outreach to Muslim societies and post-conflict nation-building, but our deepest concern is the short-term necessity of preventing the movement of WMD to terrorist elements.

#### *Unexpected Developments in South Asia.*

**INDIA/PAKISTAN CONFLICT.** Foremost in the minds of many members was concern about the renewed India/Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, and what the prospects are for U.S. efforts to prevent all-out war possibly including a resort to nuclear arms. One member inquired whether the U.S. should use pre-emptive force against Pakistan, a stated ally, if President Pervez Musharraf were known to be thinking of first use of nuclear weapons. Clearly, in response to such a prospect,

top priority must be given to upgrading our intelligence and overall readiness.

**THE TIGHTROPE BREAKS ON MUSHARRAF.** A questionable April 30 referendum in Pakistan has ratified Musharraf's bid for a further five years as president. Parliamentary elections in October will lead to the installation of a civilian, constitutional government, almost certainly under a prime minister who will play second fiddle in Musharraf's one-man band. But Musharraf has been walking a dangerous tightrope over cooperation with the U.S. in the war on terror and tensions with India over Kashmir. Were that tightrope to break — either through assassination or a domestic uprising — the U.S. would face a whole new set of challenges. Musharraf's demise could make space for Islamic extremists to seize power, perhaps with the support of the army, and gain access to Pakistani nuclear capabilities. The U.S. might consider contingency plans to withdraw troops in Pakistan in order to continue the anti-terror war from bases in Central Asia. Members considered the question whether the U.S. is actually better off having a military ruler as an ally in Pakistan over a fledgling, unpredictable civilian government, another example of the short-term/long-term dilemma noted above.

*Post-Election Surprises in Afghanistan.* The December 6, 2001 Bonn Agreement among the four main political-ethnic factions in Afghanistan called for the creation of a special *loya jirga* commission that will decide on a transitional government for Afghanistan to serve through the end of 2003. For the first time since 1973, the *loya jirga* is meant to create a government seen by most Afghans as legitimately Afghan and representative of the country's regions and ethnic groups. Central to the challenge of getting a central government in place is the role of local military commanders who will try to influence the June elections by stuffing their region's delegation with loyalist generals, police officers and civil servants. Some of these regional military leaders are able to remain financially independent by erecting customs duties around their regions.

The linkage between continued U.S. leadership of what could become a protracted, low-level guerrilla conflict on the one hand and U.S. political support for UN-mandated peacekeeping and for building new Afghan forces remains a central element of the policy debate. The 'nation-building' issue will not easily be confined to

Afghanistan, but will arise wherever the U.S.-led war on terrorism impacts domestic stability in critically affected or targeted states.

Assuming that the *loya jirga* goes as planned (which would in itself be an encouraging surprise), participants considered two scenarios:

(a) The *loya jirga*, full of corrupt officials loyal to warlords, creates serious obstacles toward forming a functional government in Afghanistan. If the U.S. “walked away” from a disappointing outcome, it is likely that the EU would follow suit, creating a reversion to the terrorist swamp conditions we waged a war to remove. Walking away would also have a huge knock-on effect on Iraq policy; U.S. credibility would seriously suffer if Exhibit A in the war on terrorism were a failed Afghan transition to peace.

(b) A different surprise could be that the regional players surrounding Afghanistan took the high road and pulled together to support a stable transition to prosperity and peace.

**Surprises in U.S.-Russian Relations.** U.S.-Russian relations have developed better than expected on multiple fronts since September 11, particularly on the strategic side. The U.S. has encountered increasingly cooperative Russian positions on a range of security issues relating to the war on terrorism, WMD, strategic arms reduction, NATO expansion and the end of the ABM treaty. Another surprise has been the emergence of Russia as an energy partner of the West and as a ‘co-conspirator in the Caspian’ with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the issue of control of Caspian energy resources, at the expense of the Iranians. On the other hand, members expected the Russians to keep Iran as a strategic partner. A welcome surprise, therefore, would occur if Russia cooperated with the U.S. by (a) taking a harder stance on arms sales to Iran; and (b) not blocking a plan for “properly prepared” regime change in Iraq. On the other hand, Russian engagement in a UN-based Iraq approach would make it more difficult for the U.S. unilaterally to use force against Iraq. But if the UN inspection mission comes to naught, key European and Middle Eastern allies (the Saudis, Kuwait and Turkey) may support action against Saddam, in which case Russia would not likely stand in the way. In addition, the North Caucasus remains deeply unstable. If Azerbaijan’s President Heydar Aliyev (or another regional leader) dies, there is potential for much broader conflict in the Caucasus and the Caspian littoral states, which would shift the way we view that strategically important region. Finally, it

would be a most unfortunate surprise for the U.S. if Putin left the scene for whatever reason, because much of what is happening now appears to depend personally upon Putin’s direction. Another short versus long term dilemma is apparent.

#### OTHER SURPRISES

**Successful Engagement with Islam.** The U.S. focus on the ‘hard’ national interest of combating terrorism obliges us to consider far more seriously the ‘values’ issues that arise in troubled Islamic countries where concern grows about the vulnerability of friendly leaders to an increasingly disaffected and aroused “street”. U.S. leaders find themselves torn between cranking up greater efforts to sell our message, initiating fresh efforts to respond to the Israel/Palestine crisis, developing longer-term efforts to engage with repressive Islamic societies that do not share our values, and pushing for a political opening in societies where the wrong people could end up occupying that space. The working group discussed whether the U.S. could successfully engage the leaders of these countries by: (a) constructing a viable peace plan with the Saudis, Egyptians and Jordanians for a resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; (b) engaging intellectuals, Islamic clergy and moderate policy elites in these countries in frank discussions about risks of regional instability; (c) taking measures to counter the one-sided malicious press which is hostile to Western values; (d) making a concerted effort to reach out to the burgeoning 17–30 year-old population, which makes up so much of the Islamic “street”; (e) helping to build a moderate civil society by opening markets that will promote job creation and by providing aid for institution-building and educational reform; and (f) engaging in active introspection about our own policies to consider why they are so offensive to Islamic lands, in order to win more support among moderates. While no firm conclusions were reached, participants noted that a successful engagement with the Muslim world — vital as it may be — would surprise many people.

**If we get Osama.** Despite efforts to deflect the public focus away from the elusive mastermind of the September 11 attacks, there can be little doubt that it would be a significant event if Osama shows up somewhere, dead or alive. It matters very much which it is, however. If he dies or is killed, it could be viewed in many places as further evidence of U.S. power and effectiveness. If he is captured, this would suddenly confront Washington with awkward decisions and the

U.S. leaders find themselves torn between cranking up greater efforts to sell our message, initiating fresh efforts to respond to the Israel/Palestine crisis, developing longer-term efforts to engage with repressive Islamic societies that do not share our values, and pushing for a political opening in societies where the wrong people could end up occupying that space.

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challenge of how to avoid contributing to his martyrdom. Either way, the tangible fact of getting him would change the current scenario, bringing us back — at least temporarily — to where the whole campaign started.

*Osama Wins One.* It is no secret that there are ‘states of concern’ for political Islamists as well as American leaders. We have vast resources of power and reach. They have a laser-like focus, Islamic soft power, and the suicide weapon. U.S. officials need to ponder the possibility that the post-September 11 chain reaction leads to a big win for fundamentalists somewhere: possibilities include a mega-terror event in Israel (see above) or violent, pro-Islamist regime change in a key Muslim state such as Indonesia, Pakistan (see above), Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Nigeria (see below).

*A Terrorist Coup in a Key African State.* The U.S. will soon begin looking to African exporters for some 20% of its imported crude; imports from Africa already exceed imports from Saudi Arabia. No African nation has effective control of its airspace and most African airfields boast lax security. A serial attack on offshore oil installations (primarily American- and British-owned), possibly in conjunction with a military coup in Nigeria as President Obasanjo heads into an election year, could change the African political balance and open up a large field of opportunities for anti-U.S. terrorist organizations.

*Latin Wheels Fly Off.* The adoption of a single lens for conducting foreign policy is widely believed to account, at least in some measure, for the apparent lack of serious and sustained U.S. focus on Latin American challenges since September 11. Relations with important hemispheric partners facing serious domestic problems (Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru) are not receiving pri-

ority attention, while Colombia — the most troubled of our neighbors — appears to be receiving attention based principally on the terrorist reflex. In this setting, it is possible that Washington could be surprised by the emergence of a negative trendline based on disappointed expectations of U.S. leadership on trade, immigration, democracy, human rights, and economic contagion problems.

*Asian Realignments?* Asia, too, is ripe for surprise at a time when America’s attention has turned elsewhere. The Korean Peninsula and Taiwan remain potential candidates for conflict. Indonesia and North Korea remain economically and politically fragile. The failure of the U.S. and Japan to restore robust growth could impact their ability to maintain a strong security relationship in the long run, which in turn might generate political realignments in the region vis-à-vis China, which has become the engine of regional growth. If September 11 and other factors combine to create a double-dip recession in the U.S., the ripple effects could undercut regional export prospects and accelerate such a realignment.

**CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

Time constraints and the rich variety of potential ripple effects of September 11 and its aftermath precluded the working group from exploring adequately each of the above possibilities. On some points of analysis and interpretation, there were significant differences among participants. It may be worth underscoring the importance of the working group’s mission: the age of terror is almost by definition an age of surprise. Given the seemingly profound effects of this event on U.S. strategic thinking — and the central role the U.S. plays in the calculations of everyone else — it is clear that we have entered not only a new era but an especially dynamic and volatile one. ■

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