
WILL THE UNITED STATES LEAD A NEW WORLD ORDER?

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Predicting the world's future is a daunting task. The only certainty is uncertainty. More often than not, trying to ascertain how events may unfold over a long timeframe is an act of self-deception. Forecasting even very short periods is difficult. Who in 1988, for example, predicted the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the freeing of Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany within NATO, and the breakup of the Soviet Union into some fifteen states struggling to achieve democracy and open markets? Given the ever-accelerating pace of technological, political, and sociological change, all we can do is either speculate or envision. If we choose to envision, then we have to define the conditions that will create a proposed scenario.

For the last 50 years, the broad Cold-War framework in which events unfolded was relatively well defined. Therefore, as we enter into a new era, it is important that we establish a system of conflict management that best meets the demands of this period. We may logically assume that much of the present, now fragmented, structure will extend into the future, especially during the period of transition. We must also anticipate the entirely new alignments that may develop.

It is clear that the United States, as the surviving superpower, will have a major influence in shaping its own destiny and that of the world in the future. Therefore, an important determinant of the world order in 50 years will be what objectives the United States believes are in its long-term interests. In addressing the world that could emerge in the next half century, this essay enumerates some of the discernible challenges, suggests how new opportunities and problems might be managed, and comments on the critical leadership role the United States will have to play.

The Challenges

Although there will be additional unforeseen problems over the next 50 years, a full agenda of major challenges has already emerged. Among the most critical are how the interests of the North and South can be accommodated in a new world system which is mutually beneficial and, at the same time, adaptive to

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the growing impact of transnational trends. Another central issue in the near decades will be whether Russia, the Eastern European nations, and the states of the former Soviet Union will remain cooperative partners in dealing with global problems. This cooperation can be facilitated if democratic institutions take root and economic reforms are institutionalized so that open markets develop and competition in the world economy becomes possible. If Russia, for example, does not make this transition, the world will face a far different set of security challenges. Hopes will be dashed for organizations, such as the United Nations, which have benefitted from the new spirit of cooperation. There are other major questions. For instance, how do countries like Germany and Japan play a role comparable to the power of their economies without becoming threatening? China's position is also a question of growing importance as its significant economic potential is being fully achieved.

We are already witnessing a new source of instability: the fracturing along ethnic lines of old confederations and nation states. Whether this fissure will be a sustained chain of events or simply a phenomenon to be managed in the near term is not yet clear. In any event, the consequences are great as they spill over national boundaries and draw in neighboring states. While Czechoslovakia managed a "velvet divorce," the breakup of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia has created some 20 new struggling states all of which are embroiled in complex internal struggles.

The information and communication revolution, which has already created the "global village" for countries whose populations have access to television and radio, can continue to increase the degree of economic and political cooperation. Or, as we continually monitor the uneven development and conflict within and among the nations of the world, some of our sensitivity to man's inhumanity to man is deadened. The high standards of living communicated to developing nations, where the possibilities for similar realization are a long way off, can create impatience and discontent. In other words, advancing communication technology presents the potential for both progress and disruption.

These are the types of new challenges that must be met in the context of continuing transnational trends whose net effect appears to be a squeezing of peoples closer together. Major social and economic problems in one area of the world will reverberate in others, sometimes in startling ways. Although the economic component will be a source of competition among nations, national boundaries are being blurred as nations become more closely linked financially and through trade. Population growth, centered in the developing world, and its new waves of economic migrants will press in on neighboring countries. Failure to observe environmental standards will continue to have an impact on economic competition, and nations with higher standards may insist on greater protection. Proliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological, and other weapons of mass destruction is likely to accelerate, despite growing world cooperation to prevent their development. With longer-range means of delivery these threats will not be restricted to local "neighborhoods."

Managing the Challenges

In this new period, structures are needed that encourage world cooperation and peaceful change; promote economic growth, constructive competition, and pluralistic governments; and enhance stability.

Continuing progress in eliminating existing barriers to free and equitable trade will be a critical determinant of our future. The conclusion of the Uruguay round of GATT will be an important step, but it is only part of an evolutionary process to open up free-trading areas which will pave the way for mutually prosperous intercourse between East and West, and North and South. There must also be an overhaul of the world monetary and financial systems to incorporate the successors of centrally controlled economies and to meet the needs of a more closely integrated global economy. An era of healthy and mutually beneficial economic competition is achievable, but it will require enlightened leadership and cooperation among the most powerful nations.

The evolution of the United Nations, especially in the area of peacekeeping, and the strengthening of regional security organizations, is important to advance a structure of greater world security. With Russia pursuing partnership rather than an adversarial relationship with the West, the United Nations has been enabled politically to provide peacekeeping operations throughout the world. Currently, demand is overwhelming capacity. But with a large contingent having served in Cambodia and currently serving in Yugoslavia and Somalia, the United Nations is starting to make an important contribution to regional stability. The outcome of these initial endeavors will have a profound influence on the United Nations' continuing evolution as a peacekeeping instrument. As its Charter envisioned, the United Nations has important potential for maintaining international peace and security. In the next few years, the international community should work together to create an effective and respected blue-helmeted world police force.

It will also be important for regional organizations to expand their roles and effectiveness. NATO, for example, provides an important element of security in Europe, even when the possibility of a major Soviet ground attack across central Europe has disappeared. Whether NATO will still be relevant in the next century will depend on if it evolves into an organization with a more flexible mandate and a membership to meet the shared security needs of North Americans and Europeans. The Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and other regional organizations also can make valuable contributions to stability if they can develop the capability to deal with the Haitis, Somalias, and Cambodias of the future.

The probability of global war is less likely, and the role of military intervention for peacekeeping and cantonment purposes is growing rapidly. In a decade that already has witnessed the Persian Gulf War, the tortured breakup of Yugoslavia, the race to acquire weapons of mass destruction, and the volatile instabilities raging in the former Soviet Union, it is safe to predict that significant conflicts will continue. Other Saddam Husseins will appear who challenge the

status quo. A central question will be whether the major nations of the world will share enough of a stake in peaceful and orderly evolution to cooperate in handling such challenges and working together to prevent major conflicts from developing among themselves. In the interim, the creation of an international military force that commands respect and compliance will be necessary.

The Role of the United States

There is not much hope that the United Nations or other multinational security organizations will be effective in the near term without strong support from the United States. U.S. leadership is essential in bolstering the organization as well as in forming coalitions and other arrangements for dealing with current problems. As we enter this new period, people around the world are calculating whether or not the United States can be counted on to retain an active leadership role. With a smaller margin of economic and military advantage, is the United States willing and able to retain the mantle of global leadership? America could gradually retrench from the burdens of years of containing the Soviet Union. It could decide that its greatest new danger is overextension. With no overarching security threat, it could choose to relinquish the title of world leader and promote the constructive sharing of those responsibilities among the stronger emerging nations of the world. As tempting as a turn inward might seem, it would be the wrong direction if Americans still want to retain a decisive influence on their future. Twice before in this century at the end of a period of conflict, America has retreated from a world role. Twice it has discovered that failure to invest actively in sustaining the desired world ultimately meant having to pay a far greater price: two world wars.

In looking ahead, *the more prudent path for the United States to take is the leadership role into which it has grown, and to attempt proactively to shape a new and better future.* Instead of disengaging, the United States needs to stretch across the crumbling barriers of the Cold War and to establish new, mutually beneficial, relationships. It is better to work actively around the globe to resolve differences than to turn our backs and hope that such problems do not touch us. *The United States needs to adopt a policy of active engagement.* It is imperative that America continues to do so in areas of vital national interest.

The United States appears to be on the threshold of a period of great potential — one in which the world envisioned by the U.N. Charter could finally become a reality. The next 50 years could be ones in which global wars are avoided, regional struggles are contained, and the tangled current disorder managed. It could be a period of economic cooperation and constructive competition. It could be a period in which democracy continues to advance around the world. But such an optimistic vision is unlikely to materialize if the United States is unwilling to play a leading role.

During the decades ahead, the world will need a leader that aggressively promotes economic growth, stability, and peaceful political change. Through the first half of the next century *there is no apparent alternative to America's leadership role.* Eventually, the United Nations or a group of nations, including

the United States, may collectively serve such a need. Greater allocation of responsibility is inevitable as new centers of power develop. Although the United States can be the most influential voice as nations wrestle with global problems, it will not be able to dictate solutions. Increasingly, the United States will need to build consensus and encourage cooperation. Nonetheless, *the United States should strive to remain the captain of the team. If Americans eschew such a role, they are likely to face an even more disorderly and unproductive world, one fraught with security threats and challenges to U.S. interests.* The mechanisms with which the world is currently organized will not function as effectively.

While the United States must pay attention to building its own internal strength for the competitive period ahead, domestic and international power are linked together. We no longer have the luxury of living in isolation shielded by geography. Prosperity and economic growth are difficult to sustain without expanding outwardly to meet the needs of other nations. Today, about one quarter of U.S. gross domestic product comes from foreign trade; 50 years from now the number is likely to be much higher. Exports have been the fastest growing segment of the U.S. economy. Nonetheless, there will be a tension between domestic and international priorities. For example, as cutbacks occur in military power, more selectivity will be necessary in meeting challenges, and there will be a growing political and practical necessity to do so in concert with others. The United States does not have the aspiration or capacity to be the world's policeman. But in a more tightly integrated world, we can not dismiss a seemingly distant problem as belonging to someone else without assessing how that problem might evolve into one that the United States could not ignore.

The United States should pursue a program of building a stable world structure designed to promote commerce, opportunities for peaceful evolution and change, and to deal with the inevitable crises and conflicts of the future. To do so Americans must continue to be active promoters of peaceful negotiation and diplomacy. Whether in the Middle East, Cyprus, or any other area of international dispute, the United States will continue to be uniquely qualified to help find solutions.

The United States also will need to encourage the implementation of the web of arms control agreements and confidence-building measures. Just putting into place new agreements, such as the ones on chemical weapons and strategic arms, will take years. And they will have to be strengthened at every opportunity, by increasing membership and broadening the content of the agreements. A cooperative global effort to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction is needed. With the rapid acquisition of longer-range missiles, this problem will not be confined to local neighborhoods. In spite of intensified preventive efforts, states have been able to evade international constraints and acquire these capabilities. There will be many more nuclear powers in the next few decades, and there will be no guarantees that these powerfully destructive weapons will not be used.

If the United States is to play a leading role in promoting security and protecting its global interests, smaller American forces of the future will need to be superior in terms of training, technology, and responsiveness. Such forces

will not be used for America to impose its will on others; but while an effective and respected international police force is being built, the U.S. military will have the capability of acting as an insurance policy for the success of peacekeeping efforts. There is no doubt that for the time being the United States will have to continue contributing heavily to most major international military forces. The world is too uncertain to conclude that the United States can safely give up its position as the preeminent military power; that need is likely to continue for years to come.

There is another aspect of U.S. power that acts as a stabilizing force in the world — the nuclear umbrella. America's special nuclear offensive and defensive responsibilities means that many nations have put their security into U.S. hands; the United States will continue to be responsible for maintaining their ultimate security. In this respect, the American role is probably the most critical in ensuring stability and confidence among the most powerful nations of the future.

Throughout the first decades of the twenty-first century, a stable international system will require that the United States maintain an independent military capability in regions of the world that are vital to U.S. national interests, especially Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. *Absence of a visible indication of commitment and the capability to respond leads to uncertainty among nations who rely on the United States, and encourages them to invest in alternative security arrangements that may be counterproductive to regional security. Both traditional allies and newly independent states are examining ways to ensure their security, and will be watching closely the U.S. attitudes toward security in this new era.*

United States' Leadership Illustrated

Two recent examples of U.S. leadership may provide clues as to how the United States and coalitions of like-minded nations could act to establish necessary discipline in any new world order that might emerge. These are the cases of Iraq and Somalia, in which the United Nations needed forceful assistance in overcoming the defiance of its missions.

Confronted by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and a threat to vital world oil resources, the United States formed a coalition of concerned nations under U.N. auspices. When world condemnation and economic sanctions met stubborn resistance, force was necessary to expel Iraq from Kuwait. But force could not have been utilized without American leadership. After the war, force and the threat of force also have been needed to facilitate the work of the United Nations in searching for and destroying Iraq's clandestine weapons of mass destruction. When Iraq chose to dictate the terms of the U.N.'s entrance, it was necessary to demonstrate that the U.N.'s ultimate objectives could be accomplished by even more intrusive means. *As the United Nations takes a more active role in containing aggression and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, it will need to find ways of effectively disciplining nations that refuse to cooperate.*

When the United Nations tried to deal with the anarchy preventing distribution of food and medicine to dying Somalians, factions prohibited the entry of

additional U.N. peacekeeping forces. Therefore, *peacemaking* was necessary to reestablish food delivery and sufficient security for the entry and operation of more U.N. forces. As with the Gulf War, the logistical and mobile capabilities of the United States to operate in remote areas allowed it to lead a coalition of other nations to accomplish this purpose. *Until the U.N. mandate allows peacekeepers to implement their mission more assertively, the United Nations will be dependent on the willingness of capable member nations to take action when U.N. missions are frustrated.* U.S. capabilities will make it a strong contributor to these missions for the foreseeable future.

It is unlikely, however, that a combination of the United Nations and regional organizations will be adequate to contain the ambitions or resolve the conflicts among major powers. Therefore, a structure that knits together and accommodates such differences is needed. This cooperation might be attempted in several ways. First, existing security arrangements might be extended; for example, NATO membership may be expanded to include Russia and newly independent European countries. Building a similar cooperative grouping of Pacific nations that include the United States, China, Japan, Russia and Korea might also promote security. Finally, cooperation can be generated through ad hoc, bilateral, or multilateral arrangements. *Whatever structure ultimately evolves, American leadership will be central to ensuring stability and accommodating differences in both global areas.*

Conclusion

In spite of the upheaval at the beginning of this new era, it is more promising than the one just concluded. Establishing a new world order can be achieved. But this will only occur if the United States completes the job that was thrust upon it earlier this century and actively promotes economic growth, free trade, representative government, and peace and stability. If the United States does not meet the imperative to lead, the world will be more dangerous in 50 years.



