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Article 1.

Al-Monitor

Who's the Bigger Friend of Israel — Do Voters Really Care?

Shibley Telhami

Oct 23, 2012 -- One of the striking aspects of the third presidential debate was the frequent mention of Israel (34 times). Western Europe and the challenges facing the European Union, or Mexico and Latin America hardly registered. It is as if the Israel issue is a burning one in American politics, or that the American public is dying to see which candidate supports Israel more. Neither is close to the truth.

Even aside from the fact that Americans are not much focused on foreign policy in any case in determining their electoral choices, the Israel issue is often misunderstood. For years now, polls indicate that when Americans are asked if they want the United States to lean toward Israel, toward the Palestinians, or

toward neither side, about two thirds consistently choose neither side. Roughly one quarter to one third want the US to take sides, and among those, Israel is favored over the Palestinians by a strong ratio, ranging from 3-to-1 to 5-to-1. But something happened over the past decade in public attitudes toward Israel: America has become far more polarized than ever before.

Historically, there was little difference in the degree of support for Israel among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. In recent polls, a huge difference emerged. According to two polls I conducted with the Program for International Policy Attitudes in 2010 and 2011, more than two thirds of Democrats and Independents wanted to the United States to take neither side in the conflict, and among those who supported one side or the other, the ratio of support for Israel over the Palestinians was about 2-to-1. Republicans had substantially different views: Nearly half wanted the United States to lean toward Israel and the ratio of support for Israel over the Palestinians was 46-to-1. In other words, the Israel issue has become far more a Republican issue than a Democratic one, at the level of constituency opinion. Obviously, given the demographic makeup of both major parties, it is more about the Evangelical Rights than about Jewish Americans.

Yet these demographics do not explain why both candidates would go out of their way to compete in avowing support for Israel. In fact, two of the constituencies that were a central target of the final presidential debate, Independents and women, were less likely to want the United States to take sides. And it is obvious that Mitt Romney labored to bring up women's issues (at least in the Middle Eastern contest, where it is "safe" politically) and projected himself as a candidate for "peace,"

knowing that the general public — especially Independents and women — feared being dragged into another costly war. Is there any risk of alienating them?

No. An Israeli friend with whom I spoke the morning after the debate said he felt "embarrassed" and "uncomfortable" about the frequent mention of Israel in the debate, knowing that neither candidate truly ranked this issue as high in their priorities as they made it appear. I suspect that many Americans felt the same way, or felt at least puzzled. But here is why it is not likely to make a difference for those who didn't like the focus on Israel: In the polling we have done in the past couple of years, those who want the US to take neither side rank the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict much lower in their priorities than those who want the US to take Israel's side. Those who don't rank the issue high in their priorities are less likely to vote based on the candidate's position on that issue. They can be uncomfortable, but not uncomfortable enough to make a difference.

In a close election campaign like this one, the focus is much narrower. Certainly, there is a fundraising aspect of American electoral politics, and supporters of Israel tend to be generous contributors in the American electoral process, which is an important element of the clout of organizations like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), whose mission is to consolidate American support for Israel. But electorally it matters, too. Sure, majorities of Jewish Americans will vote Democratic no matter what, as the Israel issue is not the top (or even the second top) issue in their voting behavior. And the Evangelical Right will mostly vote Republican, no matter what Romney's position is on foreign policy. Still, both constituencies also need to be energized. But, in the end, the

principle focus of the campaigns in the final two weeks on this issue is two swing states in which Jewish voters could affect a close election: Florida and Ohio. One Republican advisor, Ari Fleischer has been quoted to say that with only 25% of Jewish votes going to Romney, Republicans would win Florida, and 30% support would mean winning Ohio and the election. That certainly sounds like an exaggeration. But no democratic strategist wants to test it out.

All of this adds up to a show that is particularly hard to take seriously for many voters, and which is puzzling to audiences around the world, especially in the Middle East. But most have come to expect that there is in the end little correlation between what is said in the heat of political campaigns, and what presidents in fact do when elected.

Shibley Telhami is Anwar Sadat professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center of the Brookings Institution. He is co-author of the forthcoming book, "The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011" (Cornell University Press, December 2012).

Article 2.

NYT

Who Threw Israel Under the Bus?

Efraim Halevy

October 23, 2012 -- ON Monday, in their final debate, Mitt

Romney denounced President Obama for creating "tension" and "turmoil" with Israel and chided him for having "skipped Israel" during his travels in the Middle East. Throughout the campaign, Mr. Romney has repeatedly accused Mr. Obama of having "thrown allies like Israel under the bus." But history tells a different story. Indeed, whenever the United States has put serious, sustained pressure on Israel's leaders — from the 1950s on — it has come from Republican presidents, not Democratic ones. This was particularly true under Mr. Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush. Just one week before the Iraq war began in March 2003, Mr. Bush was still struggling to form a broad international coalition to oust Saddam Hussein. Unlike in the 1991 Persian Gulf war, Russia, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, decided to opt out, meaning that the United Nations could not provide formal legitimacy for a war against Mr. Hussein. Britain was almost alone in aligning itself with America, and Prime Minister Tony Blair's support was deemed crucial in Washington. Just as the British Parliament was about to approve the joint venture, a group of Mr. Blair's Labour Party colleagues threatened to revolt, demanding Israeli concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for their support for the Iraq invasion. This demand could have scuttled the war effort, and there was only one way that British support could be maintained: Mr. Bush would have to declare that the "road map" for Middle East peace, a proposal drafted early in his administration, was the formal policy of the United States. Israel's prime minister at the time, Ariel Sharon, had been vehemently opposed to the road map, which contained several "red lines" that he refused to accept, including a stipulation that the future status of Jerusalem would be determined by "a negotiated resolution" taking into account "the

political and religious concerns of both sides." This wording implied a possible end to Israel's sovereignty over all of Jerusalem, which has been under Israeli control since 1967. On March 13, 2003, senior Israeli officials were summarily informed that the United States would publicly adopt the draft road map as its policy. Washington made it clear to us that on the eve of a war, Israel was expected to refrain from criticizing the American policy and also to ensure that its sympathizers got the message. The United States insisted that the road map be approved without any changes, saying Israel's concerns would be addressed later. At a long and tense cabinet debate I attended in May 2003, Mr. Sharon reluctantly asked his ministers to accept Washington's demand. Benjamin Netanyahu, then the finance minister, disagreed, and he abstained during the vote on the cabinet resolution, which eventually passed. From that point on, the road map, including the language on Jerusalem, became the policy bible for America, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. Not only was Israel strong-armed by a Republican president, but it was also compelled to simply acquiesce and swallow the bitterest of pills. Three years later, the Bush administration again pressured Israel into supporting a policy that ran counter to its interests. In early 2006, the terrorist group Hamas ran candidates in the Palestinian legislative elections. Israel had been adamant that no leader could campaign with a gun in his belt; the Palestinian party Fatah opposed Hamas's participation, too. But the White House would have none of this; it pushed Fatah to allow Hamas candidates to run, and pressured Israel into allowing voting for Hamas — even in parts of East Jerusalem. After Hamas won a clear majority, Washington sought to train Fatah forces to crush it militarily in the Gaza Strip. But Hamas pre-empted this scheme

by taking control of Gaza in 2007, and the Palestinians have been ideologically and territorially divided ever since.

Despite the Republican Party's shrill campaign rhetoric on Israel, no Democratic president has ever strong-armed Israel on any key national security issue. In the 1956 Suez Crisis, it was a Republican, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who joined the Soviet Union in forcing Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula after a joint Israeli-British-French attack on Egypt.

In 1991, when Iraqi Scud missiles rained down on Tel Aviv, the administration of the first President Bush urged Israel not to strike back so as to preserve the coalition of Arab states fighting Iraq. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir resisted his security chiefs' recommendation to retaliate and bowed to American demands as his citizens reached for their gas masks. After the war, Mr. Shamir agreed to go to Madrid for a Middle East peace conference set up by Secretary of State James A. Baker III. Fearful that Mr. Shamir would be intransigent at the negotiating table, the White House pressured him by withholding $10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel, causing us serious economic problems. The eventual result was Mr. Shamir's political downfall. The man who had saved Mr. Bush's grand coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1991 was "thrown under the bus."

In all of these instances, a Republican White House acted in a cold and determined manner, with no regard for Israel's national pride, strategic interests or sensitivities. That's food for thought in October 2012.

Efraim Halevy was the director of the Mossad from 1998 to 2002 and the national security adviser to the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, from October 2002 to June 2003.

Article 3.

The Washington Post

A country united, for a change

David Ignatius

October 23, 2012 -- There are moments when you can glimpse an emerging bipartisan consensus on foreign policy, and Monday night's presidential debate was one of them: Barack Obama and Mitt Romney knew they were speaking to a war-weary country and talked in nearly identical terms about bringing troops home, avoiding new conflicts — and countering terrorism without embracing a "global war."

Obama has articulated versions of this foreign-policy approach for the past four years, not always with clarity or evident public support. But it was obvious Monday night that we are living in a changed world — where the combative ethos of George W. Bush is truly gone — when Romney said in his first debate answer: "We can't kill our way out of this mess."

This rejection of what was described just a few years ago as the "long war" is something I hear from four-star generals and soldiers in the field, and it's increasingly evident in the public-opinion polls. Monday's debate ratified that America in 2012 wants to settle the conflicts it has and avoid new ones.

Even if Obama should lose on Nov. 6, this emerging consensus might well be his legacy. Just as Bush saw the country through the immediate aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, and took America into two long and painful wars in the Muslim world, Obama voiced a public desire to "turn a page," as he likes to say, and end the decade of war — at least the open, "boots on the ground" part.

Obama's alternative to traditional military conflict has been drone attacks, and Romney endorsed this approach of targeted killing, too. That's another part of the new American consensus, and it deserves more public discussion.

Romney's answers had the soft polish that comes from focus groups and poll testing. He backed Obama's sanctions strategy toward Iran and said he favored military action only as a last resort; he declared Obama's troop surge in Afghanistan a success and promised not to remain there past 2014, even if Afghanistan is fracturing; he rejected military intervention in Syria, including a no-fly zone.

"We don't want another Iraq, we don't want another Afghanistan," insisted Romney. He said he wanted to "help the Muslim world," through economic development, education, gender equality and the rule of law. Undoubtedly, he was chasing the women's vote in these pacific answers, but the very fact that Romney is something of a weather vane — a man who trims his positions to political need — reinforces my sense of the public mood.

With Romney so determined to play the peacemaker, it fell to Obama to voice what might have been Romney's best lines:

Obama was the first to express passionate support for Israel, "a true friend." He spoke of America as the "indispensable nation." And he had the relentlessly pugnacious, in-your-face presence of a man who wanted to be seen as in command.

What does polling tell us about the public mood the two candidates were channeling Monday night? A good summary was compiled by Michael J. Mazarr, a professor at the National Defense University, in a recent article in The Washington Quarterly. He noted a Pew Research Center poll that found the percentage of Americans who think the country should "mind its own business internationally" had jumped from 30 percent in 2002 to 49 percent in 2009.

America's wariness of global conflict is obvious in other recent Pew Research polling. A September sample found that the percentage of Americans who list terrorism as "very important" to their vote has fallen 12 points since 2008. In September interviews just after the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, 45 percent of the public approved Obama's handling of the situation, vs. just 26 percent who endorsed Romney's approach. In an October poll, 63 percent of those surveyed wanted to see the United States "less involved" in the Middle East.

I wish I'd heard more clarity from the candidates about how the United States will shape an Islamic world in turmoil, remove Bashar al-Assad from power in Syria and keep Afghanistan from a civil war — all without using U.S. troops. That's the real debate this war-weary country needs — about alternative ways to project American power in a highly unstable era of transition.

But Monday's basic message was clear: The country may be divided on many issues, but it's united in not wanting another war.

Article 4.

The American Conservative

We Are Not All Westerners Now

Leon Hadar

October 18, 2012 -- In Blind Oracles, his study of the role of intellectuals in formulating and implementing U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, historian Bruce Kuklick equated these scholars with the "primitive shaman" who performs "feats of ventriloquy."

We tend to celebrate foreign-policy intellectuals as thinkers who try to transform grand ideas into actual policies. In reality, their function has usually been to offer members of the foreign-policy establishment rationalizations—in the form of "grand strategies" and "doctrines," or the occasional magazine article or op-ed—for doing what they were going to do anyway. Not unlike marketing experts, successful foreign-policy intellectuals are quick to detect a new trend, attach a sexy label to it ("Red Menace," "Islamofascism"), and propose to their clients a brand strategy that answers to the perceived need ("containment," "détente," "counterinsurgency").

In No One's World, foreign-policy intellectual Charles

Kupchan—a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations—tackles the trend commonly referred to as "American decline" or "declinism," against the backdrop of the Iraq War, the financial crisis, and the economic rise of China. While I share Kuklick's skepticism about the near zero influence that intellectuals have on creating foreign policy, I've enjoyed reading what thinkers like Charles Kupchan have to say, and I believe that if we don't take them too seriously (this rule applies also to what yours truly has written about these topics), they can help us put key questions in context. Such as: is the U.S. losing global military and economic dominance and heading towards decline as other powers are taking over?

The good news is that Kupchan's book is just the right size—around 200 pages—with not too many endnotes and a short but valuable bibliography. Kupchan is readable without being too glib. He is clearly an "insider" (he is a former National Security Council staffer) but exhibits a healthy level of detachment. And Kupchan displays a commendable willingness to adjust his grand vision to changing realities. In a book published ten years ago, The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century, Kupchan advanced the thesis that an integrating European Union was rising as a counterweight to the United States, with China secondary to the EU. That was his view then. The thesis has since been overtaken—let's say, crushed to death—by the crisis in the eurozone and the failure of the EU to develop a unified, coherent foreign policy. But unlike neocons who spend much of their time trying to explain why, despite all the evidence to the contrary, they have always been right, Kupchan

doesn't even revisit his now defunct thesis. While this suggests that we should treat his current book and its claims that the global balance of power is shifting from the United States and the "West" and towards the "Rest"—non-Western nations like China, India, Brazil, and Turkey—with many grains of salt, we should nevertheless give Kupchan credit for pursuing a non-dogmatic, pragmatic, and empiricist approach to international relations. Kupchan may once have worked on implementing the liberal-internationalist agenda of the Clinton administration, but the views advanced in his latest book—in particular his pessimism about America's ability to "manage" the international system and his emphasis on the role that history and culture play in relationships between nation-states—place him in the intellectual camp of realist foreign-policy intellectuals like George Kennan and Henry Kissinger, at a time when not many of them are around in Washington. Kupchan's thesis that America and its Western allies are losing their global military, financial, and economic power, and that the rising non-Western powers are not going to adopt Washington's strategic agenda, may not sound too revolutionary these days, when even the most non-contrarian strategists and economists working for the Pentagon and Wall Street recognize that the dominance of the West is on the wane.

But in a chapter titled "The Next Turn: The Rise of the Rest," Kupchan provides the reader with the "hard cold facts" as he skims through forecasts made by government agencies and financial institutions predicting that China's economy will pass America's within the current decade. And while America is still overwhelmingly the greatest military power on the planet, it is only a question of time, according to Kupchan, before China

overtakes the United States in this arena as well and contests America's strategic position in East Asia. "The Chinese ship of state will not dock at the Western harbor, obediently taking the berth assigned to it," he concludes.

What lends Kupchan's overall theme a certain conservative and Kennan-like quality is the challenge he poses to the reigning ideological axiom shared by U.S. and Western elites since the end of the Cold War: the notion that the core ideas of the modern West—enlightenment, secularism, democracy, capitalism—will continue to spread to the rest of the world, including to China and the Middle East, and the Western order as it has evolved since 1945 will thus outlast the West's own primacy. Even the most doctrinaire neocon assumes that American and Western hegemony must come to an end at some point. But that won't matter since the Rest will end up being just like us—holding free elections, embracing the free markets, committed to a liberal form of nationalism and to the separation of religion of state. Such values and practices will guarantee that rising states like China and India bind themselves to a liberal international order based on functioning multilateral institutions, free international trade, and collective security. Kupchan doesn't buy this vision. The "Western Way" is not being universalized, he argues, and the international system looks more and more like a mosaic of nations, each following its own path towards modernization, a path determined by unique historical circumstances and cultural traditions that may not result in anything like our own liberal and democratic principles. Hence, China can embrace a form of "communal autocracy," Russia chooses a system of "paternal autocracy," while the Arab world follows the route of "religious and tribal

autocracy." Iran remains a theocracy, and other non-liberal political orders may flourish in parts of Latin America and Africa.

In a way, Kupchan is doing here what foreign-policy intellectuals do best, inventing catchy labels to describe existing trends in China, Russia, and the Arab world that are familiar to anyone who follows current events. Kupchan argues, however, that these trends are quite enduring and that the United States and Europe should deal with this reality instead of pursuing policies based on wishful thinking—expecting, for example, that the Islamists ruling Egypt and the communist-fascists in Beijing will eventually be replaced by a bunch of liberal democrats. It ain't going to happen, Kupchan predicts. Free elections can in fact lead to the victory of anti-Western and anti-American leaders, while capitalism is just a system that allows governments to harness wealth for aggressive nationalist policies.

As many conservatives would point out, the notion that we are all taking part in an inexorable march towards enlightenment, prosperity, and liberty that culminates in the embrace of liberal democracy, representative government, and free markets here, there, and everywhere is only one version of history, described sometimes as "Whig history." What is basically the story of the emergence of constitutional democracy in Britain and America has been applied broadly to describe the political and economic development of Europe and West in general from around 1500 to 1800—and to explain why the West prospered and rose to global prominence while other parts of the world, like the Ottoman Empire and China, stagnated and declined.

Kupchan himself subscribes to a Whiggish narrative, in which decentralized feudal power structures and the rise of an enlightened middle class that challenged the monarchy, aristocracy, and the church led to Europe developing modern liberal states and capitalism, while the Reformation exposed religion to rational inquiry and unleashed bloodshed that ultimately caused European societies to accept religious diversity. The growing costs of the modern state forced monarchs to share power with ever larger classes of citizens, while the rising middle class provided the economic and intellectual foundations for the Industrial Revolution, which in turn improved education and science and established the military power that allowed the West to achieve superiority over the more rigid hierarchical orders of the Ottoman Empire, India, China, and elsewhere.

Francis Fukuyama in The Origins of Political Order has argued that this Whig version of history may help explain how Britain and America developed. But in other parts of Europe, such political and economic changes as the rise of the modern state and notions of citizenship and political accountability were driven in large part by the villains of the Whig narrative, including monarchy and the Catholic Church.

There have always been different paths towards political and economic modernity, not only in contemporary China, India, Iran, and Brazil, but also in Europe and the West between 1500 and 1800—and later, with the rise of communism and fascism. Russia is an example of a nation whose road towards economic growth has been very different from that taken by the Anglo-Americans, or for that matter, the Germans, the French, or the Chinese.

[1]Kupchan could have provided us with a more simplified set of arguments to support his thesis—that China and Iran are not "like us"—by recognizing that the political and economic transformation of different European states was not based on a standard model of development. We therefore shouldn't be surprised that Egypt and Brazil are also choosing their own non-Whig paths of change and growth.

Contrary to Kupachan's narrative, as the historian John Darwin argues in his masterpiece After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire, Europe's rise to pre-eminence was not a moment in the long-term ascent of the "West" and the triumph of its superior values. "We must set Europe's age of expansion firmly in its Eurasian context," Darwin writes, and recognize that there was nothing foreordained about Europe's rise—or its current decline. Great powers like the Ottomans, the Safavids, the Mughals, the Manchus, the Russians and the Soviets, the Japanese and the Nazis have risen and fallen for reasons all their own. Today the Rest may be rising. But it has never been anyone's world.

Leon Hadar, a Washington-based journalist and foreign policy analyst, is the author of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.

Article 5.

The Washington Quarterly

The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency

Michael J. Mazarr

FALL 2012 -- A moment has arrived when a great power with global responsibilities is having a crisis of confidence. Its economy has grown sluggish and it is being overtaken by a number of rising competitors. Financial pressures loom, notably the ability to keep a balance between government revenues and expenses. It is losing long-standing superiorities psychological as well as technological and numerical in key categories of military power; this great power, whose diplomats and military leaders manage active or potential conflicts from Afghanistan to Europe with treaty alliances as far flung as Japan and Australia, confronts the need for constraints on its global ambitions and posture. This urgent reckoning has been prompted in part by a painful and largely unnecessary counterinsurgency war far from home that cost many times more than initially thought and exhausted the country's overstretched land forces.

The moment in question is the period 1890-1905, and the power is Great Britain. In one sense, London was riding the crest of her imperial power: As brilliantly narrated by Robert K. Massie, the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 broadcast the image of an empire at its apogee.1 Yet even as Britain paraded its navy before the world, many of its leaders were suffering through a two-decade surge of pessimism about the prospects for their global role. They saw their economic prospects dimming, their finances unsupportive of endless foreign commitments, and their naval as well as land

power strained by global commitments that pressed against the burgeoning power of a half-dozen regional challengers. As Princeton scholar Aaron Friedberg has put it, "The nation appeared to have its neck in a gradually tightening noose from which no easy escape was possible"; without a national crisis to justify new taxes "there seemed no way of avoiding eventual insolvency."2

Despite this awareness, that insolvency was destined to hit home during a number of key moments from the Boer War to post-war colonial crises to Suez. Britain suffered this fate in part because successive governments in London, although scaling back military and diplomatic commitments in a fashion that many commentators have found to be a masterful example of stepping back from global primacy,3 still could not bring themselves to make a clean break with a deeply-ingrained strategic posture and fashion a more sustainable global role. Great Britain remained continually overextended, and suffered the drawn-out consequences.

Throughout history, major powers have confronted painful inflection points when their resources, their national will, or the global geopolitical context no longer sustained their strategic postures. The very definition of grand strategy is holding ends and means in balance to promote the security and interests of the state.4 Yet, the post-war U.S. approach to strategy is rapidly becoming insolvent and unsustainable not only because Washington can no longer afford it but also, crucially, because it presumes an American relationship with friends, allies, and rivals that is the hallmark of a bygone era. If Washington continues to cling to its existing role on the premise that the international order depends upon it, the result will be increasing

resistance, economic ruin, and strategic failure.

The alleged insolvency of American strategy has been exhaustively chronicled and debated since the 1990s. The argument here is that twenty years of warnings will finally come true over the next five to ten years, unless we adjust much more fundamentally than administrations of either party have been willing to do so far. The forces undercutting the U.S. strategic posture are reaching critical mass. This is not an argument about "decline" as such; the point here is merely that specific, structural trends in U.S. domestic governance and international politics are rendering a particular approach to grand strategy insolvent. Only by acknowledging the costs of pursuing yesterday's strategy, under today's constraints, will it be possible to avoid a sort of halfway adjustment billed as true reform, forfeiting the opportunity for genuine strategic reassessment. That opportunity still exists today, but it is fading.

Enduring Assumptions

The consensus of conventional wisdom today holds several specific tenets of U.S. national security strategy dear. It is important to grasp the paradigm because existing trends are making a very specific U.S. national security posture infeasible. The primary elements include:

- America's global role was central to constructing the post-war order and remains essential to its stability today;
- American military power, including the ability to project power into any major regional contingency, is predominant and should remain so for as long as possible, both to reassure allies and to dissuade rivals;

- The stability of many regions has become dependent on a substantial U.S. regional presence of bases, forward-deployed combat forces, and active diplomatic engagement;

- That stability is also inextricably linked to the security and well-being of the U.S. homeland;

- The United States must commit to the force structures, technologies, nonmilitary capacities, and geopolitical voice required to sustain these concepts. This conventional wisdom is the core of the current administration's major

U.S. strategy documents the 2010 National Security Strategy and 2011 National Military Strategy which envision continued U.S. predominance and global power projection. In fact, it has been central to all post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy doctrines. It was Bill Clinton's Secretary of State who called America "the indispensable nation,"5 Clinton who decided to expand NATO to Russia's doorstep and Clinton who inaugurated the post-Cold War frenzy of humanitarian intervention.6 The George W. Bush administration embraced a strategy of primacy and dissuading global competition. As Barry Posen has remarked, the debate in post-Cold War U.S. grand strategy has been over what form of hegemony to seek, not whether to seek it.7 A variety of powerful trends now suggest that the existing paradigm is becoming unsustainable in both military and diplomatic terms, and that the United States will inevitably have to divert from its current posture to a new, more sustainable role.

Engines of a Paradigm Shift

To be clear, a significant U.S. leadership role in world politics

remains important and viable. But the current paradigm suffers from cracks in a number of key foundational areas. This essay briefly summarizes five: disappearing finances;rising alternative power centers; declining U.S. military predominance; a lack of efficacy of key non-military instruments of power; and reduced domestic patience for global adventures. These threats to U.S. strategic solvency have existed for decades but they are accelerating, and maturing, in new and decisive ways.

The first threat is budgetary. Debt is set to rise significantly over the next decade, in some scenarios approaching 100 percent of GDP shortly after 2020, along with interest payments by one estimate, rising from $146 billion in 2010 to over $800 billion in 2020.8 This has already raised fears of downgraded U.S. credit ratings and threats to the dollar as a reserve currency. The corresponding social austerity and financial pressures at all levels of government, as well as a public hostility to taxes, mean that spending cuts will bear the burden of deficit reduction.9 In recognition of this, several bipartisan budget proposals include major defense cuts. Groups pushing for serious deficit control have aimed for $800 billion to over $1 trillion in ten-year defense reductions, and even those may be just a down payment on a larger bill to follow. Further, the defense budget faces its own internal budget issues: for example, Tricare, the military's health program, costs the Department of Defense triple the amount of just a decade ago, and the annual costs of the military pension program may balloon from just over $52 billion in 2011 to as much as $117 billion by 2035.10 This is putting further pressure on those components of the defense budget essential to global strategy and power projection.

A second trend is the rise of alternative centers of power: states and influential non-state actors are clamoring to set the global affairs agenda and determine key outcomes.11 A fundamental reality of the last two or more decades has been an emerging reaction against U.S. primacy many others desire that U.S. influence decline and contrary centers of power strengthen.12 This trend is now accelerating, and the coming decade seems certain to represent the full emergence of an international system of more assertive powers who are less interested in dominant U.S. leadership. More and more nations, from Brazil to Turkey to India, while far from "anti-American" in their foreign policy or hostile to American leadership per se, have become disaffected with the idea of a U.S.-centric world order, and are determined to squeeze out U.S. influence on certain issues to claim greater influence for themselves. Related to this is a set of geopolitical trends reducing the perceived salience of American power: The end of the Cold War reduced the perceived urgency for U.S. protection; the Arab Spring and other developments have brought to power governments uninterested in U.S. sponsorship; and the reaction to globalization, including reaffirmations of ethnic, religious, and national identity, has in some places spilled over into a resentment of American social and cultural hegemony.

A third trend is declining U.S. military predominance and a fast-approaching moment when the United States will be unable to project power into key regions of the world. The reasons are partly technological rising actors have burgeoning capabilities in anti-ship missiles, drones, or other "area denial" structures.13 Moreover, actors have also found other ways to counter American power: major states like China or Russia now possess

the ability through financial, space, or energy means to threaten massive global consequences in response to unwanted U.S. force. This includes cyber mayhem: as one recent survey concluded, cyber weapons "allow, for the first time in history, small states with minimal defense budgets to inflict serious harm on a vastly stronger foe at extreme ranges," a new form of vulnerability that would "greatly constrain America's use of force abroad."14 An important new RAND report by Paul Davis and Peter Wilson warns of an "impending crisis in defense planning" arising "from technology diffusion that is leveling aspects of the playing field militarily, geostrategic changes, and the range of potential adversaries."15 These challenges are exacerbated by a crisis of defense procurement; America's leading-edge military systems are becoming less affordable and reliable. Aircraft carriers, for example, have become prohibitively expensive, with costs set to break through congressionally-imposed limits next year.16 The systems that undergird U.S. military primacy are being whittled down to a small handful that no president will readily risk in anything but the most essential of crises. A fourth threat to U.S. global strategy is that America's non-military tools of influence have proven incapable of achieving key U.S. goals in the areas nominated as the leading security challenges of the future transnational, sub-state threats, and the risks emanating from fragile states. While states have well-established theories for pursuing traditional political-military ends with diplomacy and force, the United States possesses no proven models for achieving progress in the social, psychological, and environmental costs of an integrating globe areas such as regional instability, terrorism, the complexities of development, radicalism, aggressive nationalism, organized crime, resource

shortages, and ecological degradation.17 For half a century, the United States was a dominant global power which identified challenging core goals and tasks deterring military adventurism, building political-military alliances, erecting mutually-beneficial institutions of trade but to which Washington could apply established models and techniques. U.S. leadership and power becomes much more problematic in a world of complex problems which generate no broad agreement and which subject themselves to no clear solutions.

Fifth and finally, even as America's power projection instruments have become less usable and effective, the American people have grown less willing to use them. A 2009 poll by the Pew Research Center found that 49 percent of those surveyed, an all-time record, said that the United States should "mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own." That number jumped from 30 percent in 2002.18 Those who favor a powerful American leadership role in the world have also declined in Gallup polling. For example, the percentage fell from 75 in 2009 to 66 in mid-2011, while the percentage advocating a far more minimal U.S. role grew from 23 percent to 32 percent.19 Over 40 percent of Americans now say the country spends too much on defense, compared with less than a quarter who say it spends too little.20 Many Americans want their nation to remain a global leader,21 but the public is less enamored with the massive expenditures and national efforts necessary to sustain the existing paradigm.

The Risks of Strategic Bankruptcy

The default response to looming failures in strategic posture has

so far been, and will likely continue to be, to chip away at its edges and avoid exhausting fundamental reform. Some would argue that persistence, or incremental change, is the best course: avoiding the risks to U.S. credibility, to the international system, to the domestic political health of whatever administration waded into it of recalibrating U.S. power in the form of cascading loss of faith in American credibility.22 This is a mistake; in fact, refusing to come to terms with U.S. strategic insolvency will damage U.S. credibility and global stability to a far greater degree. A well-managed readjustment will better avoid the pitfalls of strategic insolvency.23 Persisting without reform substantially increases the risk of a number of specific strategic perils.

Global strategies and specific military plans lose credibility. As the leading power is overtaken by others, if it refuses to prioritize and attempts instead to uphold all its commitments equally, the credibility of its regional plans, postures, and threats is destined to erode. Recent literature on credibility argues that it is not based merely on past actions, but from an adversary's calculations of the current power capabilities at a state's disposal.24 When Hitler's Germany was considering whether to take seriously the pledges and commitments of the Western allies, for example, he paid much more attention to their existing capabilities, their current national will, and the perceived feasibility of their strategic posture than to reputations formed over years or decades of actions. Indeed, such judgments seem to derive not from a checklist of a rival's defense programs or military actions, but from a much more diffuse and visceral sense of the trajectory of a state's power relative to its current posture. What is now clear is that the

consensus of such perceptions is shifting decisively against the tenability of the existing U.S. paradigm of global power projection. It is, in fact, natural for rising challengers to see weakness in the leading power's capacities as a by-product of the growing self-confidence and faith in their own abilities. There is already abundant evidence of such perceptual shifts in the assertive leaders and elites of rising powers today, who while respecting continuing U.S. strengths and expecting the United States to remain the primus inter pares for decades to come, perhaps indefinitely nonetheless see current U.S. global commitments as excessive for a debt-ridden and "declining" power.

In China, as a leading example, senior officials and influential analysts view the United States as troubled, overextended, and increasingly unable to fulfill its defense paradigm. They believe that the United States will continue as a global power, but expect it to be in a different guise.25 Conversations with business, government, and military officials from burgeoning powers such as India, Turkey, Brazil, and Indonesia produce the same broad theme: Structural trends in economics, politics, and military affairs are undermining the degree of American predominance and the sustainability of the existing paradigm of U.S. influence. A leading theme is a growing belief in the social and economic decay of the U.S. model and the inability of U.S. political system to address major issues. Recent polls and studies of opinion in emerging powers come to many of the same conclusions.26

These perceptions will be fed and nurtured by parallel actions and trends which will undercut the viability of the existing paradigm. Critics at home are already suggesting that the

United States will be unable to sustain the demands of its "strategic tilt to Asia" given planned budget cuts, or meet the requirements of both Middle East and Asian contingencies.27 As the United States is forced to pursue cost-saving measures, such as cancellations of major weapons systems or troop reductions from key regions, the sense of a paradigm in free-fall will accelerate. We see this already in the recommendations in many reports, even those arguing for a general promotion of forward deployment, for a reduction if not elimination of the U.S. force presence in Europe.28

In addition to a loss of global credibility, a paradigm in crisis also threatens the credibility of specific U.S. military and foreign policy doctrines. When concepts and doctrines flow from stressed conventional-wisdom worldviews, those concepts and doctrines begin to take on the air of empty rhetoric. A good parallel was the British "two-power" doctrine (the notion that the Royal Navy should match the world's next two best fleets combined), which eventually became a form of self-reassurance without strategic significance. After a certain point, Aaron Friedberg explains, "official analyses of Britain's position took on an air of incompleteness and unreality."29 One can begin to sense this tendency in some recent U.S. conceptual statements, such as AirSea Battle: from all the public evidence, this concept appears to respond to growing challenges to U.S. power projection capabilities with an immense amount of vague rhetoric about intentions,30 coupled with bold new plans to expand planned military efforts in precisely the region where such insertion of military might is becoming more problematic. Meantime, the heyday of counterinsurgency doctrine appears to have come and gone.

A perception of strategic insolvency, if not corrected by a readjustment of priorities and commitments, will trigger a decline in perceived credibility of threats and promises. The risk then becomes that, in a future scenario, an American administration will lurch into a crisis assuming that it can take actions with the same effect as before. Instead, a pledge or demand will be ignored by an adversary (or an ally or friend) now unimpressed with the viability of U.S. defense policy and the United States will find itself in a conflict that its degraded defense posture could not forestall. Advocates of the current paradigm agree with the risk, but have a different solution: expand the defense budget; reaffirm global commitments; reassure allies. But the United States simply does not have that option because, as argued above, the factors closing down on the current paradigm are not merely momentary or reversible they are structural. **The only way out is a recalibrated strategic posture.**

A related risk, then, is a form of strategic opportunity cost. Every ounce of energy spent trying to prop up an obsolete strategic paradigm forfeits the opportunity to discover new and sustainable ways of meeting the same U.S. interests and goals. The pivot to Asia is a perfect example. Instead of pursuing the pivot and institutionalizing an unsustainable U.S. regional position, Washington should be constructing and moving toward a post-primacy architecture in Asia. The fact is that we have a limited grace period-perhaps a decade, perhaps less-to put into place regional and global security architectures for a post-primacy world, structures that envision a revised while still prominent role for the United States. Using that precious and dwindling time to prop up a fraying paradigm would be

counterproductive.

Diplomacy increasingly fails. A parallel risk has to do with the ebbing force of U.S. diplomacy and influence. International power is grounded in legitimacy, and in many ways it is precisely the legitimacy of the leading power's global posture that is under assault as its posture comes into question. Historically, rising challengers gradually stop respecting the hegemon's right to lead, and they begin to make choices on behalf of the international community, in part due to strategies consciously designed to frustrate the leading power's designs. Germany, under Bismarck and after, is one example: It aspired to unification and to its "rightful place" as a leading European power as its power and influence accumulated, its willingness to accept the inherent legitimacy of the existing order as defined by other states, and the validity and force of their security paradigms, declined proportionately. At nearly all points in this trajectory, German leaders did not seek to depose the international system, but to crowd into its leadership ranks, to mute the voices of others relative to its own influence, and to modify rather than abolish rules.

We begin to see this pattern today with regard to many emerging powers, but especially of course, China's posture toward the United States.31 As was predicted and expected in the post-Cold War context of growing regional power centers, the legitimacy of a system dominated by the United States is coming under increasing challenge. More states (and, increasingly, non-state actors) want to share in setting rules and norms and dictating outcomes.

The obvious and inevitable result has been to reduce the

effectiveness of U.S. diplomacy. While measuring the relative success of a major power's diplomacy over time is a chancy business (and while Washington continues to have success on many fronts), the current trajectory is producing a global system much less subject to the power of U.S. diplomacy and other forms of influence. Harvard's Stephen Walt catalogues the enormous strengths of the U.S. position during and after the Cold War, and compares that to recent evidence of the emerging limits of U.S. power. Such evidence includes Turkey's unwillingness to support U.S. deployments in Iraq, the failure to impose U.S. will or order in Iraq or Afghanistan, failures of nonproliferation in North Korea and Iran, the Arab Spring's challenges to long-standing U.S. client rulers, and more.32 As emerging powers become more focused on their own interests and goals, their domestic dynamics will become ever more self-directed and less subject to manipulation from Washington, a trend evident in a number of major recent elections.33

Washington will still enjoy substantial influence, and many states will welcome (openly or grudgingly) a U.S. leadership role. But without revising the U.S. posture, the gap between U.S. ambitions and capabilities will only grow. Continually trying to do too much will create more risk risk of demands unmet, requests unfulfilled, and a growing sense of the absurdity of the U.S. posture. Such a course risks crisis and conflict. Similarly, doubt in the threats and promises underpinning an unviable U.S. security posture risks conflict: U.S. officials will press into situations assuming that their diplomacy will be capable of achieving certain outcomes and will make demands and lay out ultimatums on that basis only to

find that their influence cannot achieve the desired goals, and they must escalate to harsher measures. The alternative is to shift to a lesser role with more limited ambitions and more sustainable legitimacy.

A military force comes under increased stress and risks military setbacks. A state trying to do more than it can afford, as a treasury or a society, risks overextending its military, with possibly ruinous results. We are already beginning to see the evidence: U.S. ground forces are showing symptoms of stress and exhaustion in terms of post-traumatic stress levels, reenlistment challenges at key officer grades, tragic suicide numbers, and other indices.34 After ten years of continuous deployments, equipment has become worn down, and there are growing reports of everything from ships being unready for missions because of wear and tear to aircraft engines exploding to cruisers with hull cracks to radar technology failing inspections.35 As of the first quarter of 2011, just over 40 percent of Navy and marine aircraft were judged "mission capable," according to the services well off the 60 percent goal, itself seemingly modest.36 The vice chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, for example, testified in July 2011 that "this high operations tempo (OPTEMPO) has had some detrimental effects on our overall readiness. Since 2003, we have seen a slow but steady decline in reported unit readiness indicators."37 The "stress on the force is real and it is relentless," said Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jon Greenert.38

The existing paradigm, then, threatens to destabilize the U.S. military, both in terms of personnel and equipment. Defenders of the existing paradigm have a simple cure: more resources. Ramp up procurement budgets, expand the Army and Corps,

boost readiness funding, and solve the problem. As argued above, however, the financial ceiling descending on U.S. security capacities is not fungible, it is structural. There is no way to avoid further substantial cuts without worsening cuts to domestic programs that will already be excruciating. Americans would have to absorb a lower standard of living in order to continue to underwrite global primacy. If they will not, then persisting in the current posture will gradually erode the health and readiness of U.S. military forces.

The ultimate result of this dangerous practice will be military setbacks in the field. Overextended U.S. forces unable to bring their full complement of equipment to the fight will be unable to prioritize. Meantime, adversaries employing the asymmetric techniques discussed above (the proliferating means of anti-access and area denial, as well as space and cyber counterstrike capabilities) will impose costs which will horrify a U.S. public accustomed to "virtual wars." In sum, remaining locked in the current paradigm invites future embarrassments, setbacks, and even defeats.

Toward a Revised Posture

Historians Harold and Margaret Sprout summarized Britain's bankrupt strategy in an age of dimming empire: Britain had "too heavy commitments, depleted capabilities, [and] extreme reluctance to relinquish the role of a Great Power."39 This aptly describes the United States today. The argument here is not to surrender a central,

leading U.S. global role it is to refashion that role in a manner that achieves many of the same goals, but in a more sustainable

way. Advocates of the current paradigm emphasize the dangers of moving off the current posture, such as worrying allies about the U.S. desire to remain engaged in regional affairs. As we have seen, however, the risks of refusing to reform a bankrupt posture are far greater. Washington's current paradigm is being undermined; the only question now is whether U.S. officials take the initiative to craft a persuasive, credible, innovative concept to supplant it.

At the moment, there seems little interest in such a process. The existing paradigm is deeply ingrained in habits of thought and assumptions about the nature of world politics and the necessary U.S. role in the international system. For ideological and political reasons, the managers of U.S. national security remain resistant to necessary changes. Even the Obama administration, which promised a transformation of U.S. foreign policy, has reaffirmed and even deepened many aspects of the conventional paradigm. Successive U.S. administrations will be likely to apply well-established concepts, doctrines, worldviews, and ideologies for example, the forward deployment of U.S. military forces in support of regional alliances and the U.S. commitment to global precision strikes for counterterror purposes whose effect will be to emphasize or even exaggerate the immediate threats facing the United States, and to militate against dramatic changes in the existing paradigm.

Most likely, we will see a sort of halfway strategic reform: policies will make a seeming shift to a supposedly constrained posture without actually surrendering the core elements of the current paradigm. A perfect example of such an approach can be found in a recent essay by two former senior Obama

administration officials, who firmly reject "retrenchment" while offering something they call "realignment" as an answer to the obvious need for "a recalibration of the United States' global military posture."40 Their "realignment" in fact defends nearly all the existing paradigm's assumptions. Such halfway choices forfeit the opportunity for innovative strategic thinking at a critical transition moment. They do not represent coherent, truly sustainable strategic postures, and they leave the time bomb at the core of the current paradigm the essential mismatch between ends and means ticking loudly away.

If a future U.S. administration were interested in a more dramatic break from the existing posture, what steps might it take? This essay has been mostly a diagnosis; elements of a cure are largely beyond its scope. Some principles do, however, suggest themselves. The first is a theme on whichboth history and current analyses of the U.S. predicament speak most loudly: the essential causes of great power constraints and strengths are always to be found at home, in the economic and social foundations of national power. Without an energetic campaign to reinvigorate institutions of national governance to address key national problems, catalyze growth and innovation in key sectors of the economy, build 21st-century energy and education sectors, and more, every other proposal for U.S. grand strategy will represent mere rhetoric.

Second, the U.S. military establishment must shrink, and be deployed less with a stronger capacity to arrive with decisive force when required. This can be accomplished through a combination of emerging capabilities (cyber, unmanned vehicle, stealth, long-range precision strike) as well as hard core, over-the-horizon capabilities that can overawe the military

of any single aggressor state. Such capabilities can sustain U.S. deterrent and effectively "veto" large-scale aggression. The United States need not withdraw from all forward-deployed commitments, but it will need to assess its current slate much more frugally.

Third, U.S. strategists need to design a new arrangement which preserves the essential function of U.S. power in the current system shaping conditional preferences of other states in different, more constrained, shared, and efficient ways.41 There is not space to sketch out what this might mean in detail. One piece, however, could be to help the world community comprehend events to help their capabilities in anticipation and response by expanding investments in knowledge, intelligence, and strategic foresight. A second component will be to become more adept at, and expand and deepen existing efforts in, rallying coalitions despite state reluctance, from China to Europe, to bear leadership burdens in a range of areas from anti-piracy to global warming to counterproliferation.42

Unlike Great Britain, a less-dominant United States has no rising liberal democracy to whom it can hand off leadership of the world community. The only alternative, as challenging as it will be, is to make U.S. global strategy much more purposeful in inviting a set of emerging powers into the shared leadership of norm-and institution-bound world politics. This is a natural extension of the international system the United States set out to build in 1945. The approach retains a realistic core by preserving a U.S. military force sufficient to threaten any single large-scale aggressor, a backstop to multilateral norms and institutions. It is by no means a perfect option, but for a state confronting an insolvent strategic posture, no perfect option

exists.

Bismarck once remarked that the essence of strategy is the ability to hear the hoof-beats of history. They are clamoring for our attention today, thundering in the background as the United States goes about daily business as it has for the last sixty years. Meanwhile, key assumptions that have supported the current U.S. posture, as well as America's ability to sustain a dominant role, are being called into question at an accelerating rate. These facts grow more obvious and insistent with every passing year as do the dangers of a strategic posture whose insolvency is exposed, gradually or in several disastrous episodes, over the coming decades. Left to its own natural momentum, the present trajectory of the U.S. strategic posture is likely to end in generalized loss of confidence, direct challenge, or perhaps even conflict. The question for the United States now is whether it responds to this emerging reality, or continues doggedly trying to ignore it.

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41.

The author is indebted to a conversation with Robert Keohane for raising the connection to the concept of conditional preferences.

42.

As Robert Keohane recently argued, states cannot hand off power to multilateral institutions but they can use them as vehicles "to pursue their own interests"; Keohane, "Hegemony and After," Foreign Affairs 91, no. 4 (July/August 2012), 116.