

Background

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Time for a New International Game Plan

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A growing number of the national security challenges America faces are global in nature. Terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons along with the missiles to deliver them merely top the list. The economic crisis of 2008 and Russia's invasion of Georgia, a free and democratic nation looking to enter NATO, demonstrate that America's interests span the globe. Sadly, the alliances and international institutions that we helped create in the past century to deal with such challenges are ill suited to doing so.

The world's major international institutions and organizations, established in the wake of World War II, have changed dramatically over the decades, yet they have never shed the genetic makeup of their creation. Their original structures fit a particular time, which has long since passed away.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was designed to defend Western Europe from the Soviet Union, but that is not its central focus today. The United Nations was supposed to enable Western powers like the United States to lead the world in securing peace; yet after the addition of scores of new members to its political body, the General Assembly, it has seemed more intent on curbing rather than accommodating U.S. leadership. Of all the postwar creations, the Bretton Woods institutions function most closely to their original purposes; yet even they at times have lost touch with the fundamental economic principles of free-market capitalism on which the world's prosperity depends.

Talking Points

- America's alliances and international associations are sorely outdated. Our adversaries and friends use the United Nations and other institutions to contain U.S. influence and to counter American leadership.
- A Global Freedom Coalition would mobilize freedom-loving peoples into a common effort to define and defend liberty, and a Global Economic Freedom Forum would help promote economic freedom.
- There also is a need to create a new international association of nations to defend and advance human rights. The U.N. Human Rights Council has proven itself completely unworthy of the mantle.
- The President of the United States should therefore take the lead in launching a Liberty Forum for Human Rights, where countries that uphold economic, civil, and political freedoms can promote them and the role of the free democratic and sovereign state in upholding liberty, justice, and equality before the law.

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It is time for America's leaders to think more boldly about the best ways to secure peace and prosperity in the 21st century. It is time for a new international game plan, one that envisions new and revitalized international institutions and alliances that are better equipped to defend and promote liberty both at home and around the world.

21st Century Challenges Need 21st Century Responses

America had at least a hand in creating all of the postwar international institutions, and it was assumed that their success depended on its continued support and leadership. Today, however, many of these institutions often dismiss the very idea of U.S. leadership as a relic of the past. Even our allies will sometimes treat America's attempts at leadership more as a problem to be overcome than as a necessity for securing peace and freedom in the world.

Yet securing peace and freedom in the world cannot be achieved with America on the sidelines. With interests that span the globe, the United States is still the most powerful, most influential, and richest country in the world and the only major power capable of projecting that power on behalf of freedom and peace. No country that relies on her for freedom and security should ever want to see America relegated to the role of mere Chairman of the Board of International Consensus as defined by the U.N. or the European Union (EU)—which is precisely what American leadership will become unless the United States finds more effective ways to exercise its unique role in the world. Our existing institutions and alliances should not be abandoned, but they should be supplemented with something far more effective.

The time may be right for a fundamental reevaluation of our alliances and international associations. Russia's recent invasion of Georgia and its military support for blatantly anti-American countries like Venezuela and Iran have been stark reminders that new threats to our freedoms can arise at any time, and our existing alliances may not be up to the task of defending them. The EU proved feckless in the face of Russian aggression; and NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, undermined as it was by many European members' meager com-

bat contributions, has been unable to prevent a military success from withering away. This is exactly the opposite of what occurred in Iraq with the U.S.-led coalition of the willing.

There is also the open question of China's rise. Though some believe its international power is and will remain economic, no one can completely predict or dismiss what a future powerful China will do in Asia. It is a rising power unhappy with key aspects of the international order. It may or may not become a major military threat to international peace and stability. No one disputes that possibility. Yet the United States is poorly equipped to prepare for or deal with such a contingency. Our military alliances in Asia are not and should not at this point be focused exclusively on China, but the lack of a mechanism to coordinate our interests across alliances is a major strategic weakness.

In addition, the U.S.-led war on terrorism lacks any coherent way to coordinate policies and activities. Most counterterrorism relies on intelligence, and intelligence sharing is best done bilaterally. But the world still needs an international venue to bring together all the countries committed to freedom and security to share best practices, build confidence and trust, and find better ways to coordinate the various and complicated strands of countering international terrorism—a truly global phenomenon. There are no major institutions dealing with or fighting terrorism today in a serious or effective manner.

The same is true for countering nuclear proliferation. Iran and North Korea have shown how difficult it is under the existing international non-proliferation framework to dissuade hostile regimes from pursuing and acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities. The U.N. has blessed the creation of multilateral partnerships like the U.S.-initiated and led Proliferation Security Initiative for interdicting illicit shipments of nuclear technology, nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles, but even the PSI, largely a cooperative exercise-based operation, has had little effect on resolving the international impasse over Iran and North Korea.

Moreover, U.S. economic leadership in international institutions is increasingly weak. The World Trade Organization (WTO) should remain the main

avenue for advancing free trade globally, but its narrow focus on trade and lack of progress on trade agreements make it a poor vehicle for discussing larger issues of economic freedom—the primary determinant of economic development.¹ International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are too narrowly focused on aid or financial functions and their membership is too ideologically split to broadly advocate policies that promote economic growth. And with its dedication to retrograde and discredited economic development theories, the U.N. is the last place America should expect to exercise leadership on economic policy. With China, Russia, and authoritarian regimes offering renewed challenges to free-market capitalism, America and the world's other free economies need a louder international voice with which to proclaim the virtues of their proven system.

Finally, there is the issue of human rights. The U.N. Human Rights Council is simply an embarrassment. With such members as China, Cuba, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, it is the proverbial fox guarding the henhouse. It is more an impediment than facilitator in ending the tragedy in Darfur; it passes resolutions against Israel but ignores atrocities elsewhere; it adopts resolutions on the “defamation of religion” that restrict freedom of speech when it means criticism of Islam. The entire U.N. machinery for implementing human rights conventions trivializes the very notion of human rights, which today include everything from a child's right to access any and all information, no matter how objectionable parents find it, to the right of all people to leisure and paid holidays.

The watering down of real human rights—the natural rights to life, liberty, and property—by these actions has set back the advance of civil rights and freedom for decades. The fact that EU members and other U.S. allies so readily defer to the U.N. on human rights questions only makes matters worse. The world greatly needs a new forum in which to more sharply define and better advocate basic

human rights based on the protection of life, liberty, and economic freedom.

All of these problems point to one conclusion: We need imaginative thinking about what kinds of new institutions, coalitions, and associations would best fit America's traditional role as defender of freedom. It will not do to create international bureaucracies that pretend to capture an “international consensus” as if that necessarily represents a common good, no matter what its content. International consensus has never been and may never be a common good. More often, it is an excuse for inaction or a cover for oppression (as was the case in Rwanda and is the case in Darfur).

American leadership must connect to our nation's historical roots of defending liberty, prosperity, and security. Otherwise, our actions will lack moral justification in the eyes of the American people and the world.

Time for a Global Freedom Coalition

At the top of the list of institutional reforms must be America's security associations. NATO is still needed for the defense of Europe and if enlarged will be a vital alliance for out-of-area missions that threaten its interests—such as fighting al-Qaeda and global terrorism. But today, it is not the only partner for America to advance its global interests and values, and despite taking on the lead in Afghanistan, it is too slow, divided, and parochial to become a truly global alliance.

The time may be ripe for America to start looking for additional potential partners that are not already in an existing formal alliance with us. It may also be wise to begin thinking of mechanisms that are not as formal as but are no less dedicated to action than alliances to help advance our security interests. Consultative and planning mechanisms may be the order of the day, rather than rigid promises or commitments. Whatever the mechanism, the days of forming alliances based exclusively on the lines of regional and territorial defense may be over.

1. For a discussion of why economic freedom matters, see Terry Miller and Kim R. Holmes, eds., *2009 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2009), especially the executive summary.

Clearly, some new global security association is needed, but what would it look like? Washington should consider forming a Global Freedom Coalition (GFC)—a voluntary association of like-minded nations around the world that is premised on two fundamental principles: first, that security and liberty (which encompasses civil, economic, and political freedoms) are inextricably linked in that, as the United States and its partners promote global conditions conducive to the strengthening of free societies, they are simultaneously enhancing their own national security interests and, second, that broader multilateral security cooperation becomes more critical as global economic power becomes more diffuse and global threats increase.

Objectives for the Coalition. Such a new coalition should have four essential objectives:

- *To serve as a flexible, adaptive multilateral forum for the world's major free nations.* In the coming years, countries linked by a commitment to freedom will need a better consultative mechanism for matters of international importance. Existing institutions like the U.N. and the Community of Democracies cannot fulfill this role; the former is overbureaucratized, and consensus is the dominant value; the latter is defined by inaction and irrelevance.
- *To cooperate to defeat the most immediate global threats to free nations.* Members of the coalition would take collaborative action to limit the perils posed by terrorism, international crime, and the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, radiological, and biological weapons, utilizing a full complement of tools—such as coordinated sanctions, intelligence sharing, integrated law enforcement and counter-terrorism capabilities, and joint military training, exercises, and operations. The success of the Proliferation Security Initiative has demonstrated the potential for such effective multilateral coordination. The coalition could draw these and other projects into a broader, more coherent strategy for addressing threats as they arise.
- *To maintain, as the 2002 National Security Strategy asserts, “a balance of power that favors freedom” well into the future.* Amid

today's uncertainty and potential instability, the coalition would strive to protect the cause of liberty against forces that have both the aim and the capacity to undermine free institutions on a global scale. Much as the Concert of Europe kept the peace in the 19th century, the coalition should work to ensure that the current order evolves toward a stability in which freedom flourishes and authoritarianism and anarchy fade.

- *To create positive inducements for economic liberalization and the growth of free institutions worldwide.* Members of the coalition would tailor and coordinate their development and aid strategies to open economies further and ensure an uninterrupted supply of energy, strengthen pluralism and political systems, and adopt other measures that will increase freedom.

Criteria for Membership. Membership in the coalition should be based on three simple criteria: a country's demonstrated commitment to freedom on both domestic and international levels; its willingness and readiness to respond to any significant and common threat that arises; and its ability to contribute meaningfully to the coalition's activities and purposes. It should be clearly understood at the outset that countries failing to honor these core commitments could be asked to disassociate themselves from the coalition.

As a voluntary association, coalitions within the coalition could perform tasks that the whole group might not wish or need to undertake. A “front-line state strategy” would give primary responsibility to the nations directly affected by a given issue or crisis but leave the resources deployed (military or otherwise) under the jurisdiction of each contributing state. In this way, the coalition would affirm the principle of national sovereignty even as it promoted cooperation.

States transitioning to greater liberalization and that are committed to the coalition's aims could be included in its activities in some manner, much as our Cold War alliances included Portugal, which, though not yet fully democratic, was contributing to the defense of liberty against the Soviet Union. The coalition must not sacrifice quality for quantity. Yes,

it must be a broadly multilateral endeavor to succeed, but diluting its aims or criteria just to increase its numbers would undercut its effectiveness. The coalition thus should not seek a membership so broad as to make meaningful action impossible, but instead should find a core group of states that can operate cohesively on most essential matters.

Since this coalition would not be an official international organization, there would be no need for a bureaucracy, secretariat, or other permanent supra-national structure. Members would coordinate policies and activities for common aims; conduct ministerial or other meetings as required; and pool their economic, military, intelligence, or diplomatic resources as needed.

This concept of a flexible, voluntary coalition should not be confused with recent ideas for a “democratic community,” or even a “League of Democracies” as John McCain proposed in a *Foreign Affairs* article in late 2007. Such proposals suggest that the membership criterion should be “democracy,” which, though laudable in intent, is both too broad and too narrow. It would be too broad in that states that are democracies in name only could qualify; they might hold elections, but they could contribute little to the coalition activities or, worse, resist taking action—putting the coalition at risk of falling victim to the same cacophony of competing interests that hobbles the U.N.

The Community of Democracies, which includes such authoritarian nations as Belarus and Egypt, demonstrates what happens if the criteria are too broad. But using a strict definition of political democracy would also be too narrow, forcing the coalition to exclude states such as Thailand, which is transitioning to liberal democracy and has demonstrated its commitment to the defense of liberty by participating in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Finally, the Global Freedom Coalition should not be thought of as a traditional military alliance. Since it would not be organized to defend a discrete territory, there would be no need for a “common defense” commitment like NATO’s Article V. It would be inappropriate for the coalition’s overall aims and could also embroil it in a member’s territorial or border disputes that have little to do with the broader mission. Indeed, there would have to

be understandings with specific members that the coalition would not address certain issues. Rather than replicating NATO’s structure or that of other alliances, the coalition should forge a new and highly flexible security framework that is better suited to addressing the evolving challenges of the 21st century.

The Advantages. The benefits of such a coalition are attractive. Its mission would match well the policies of allies like the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and others that joined us in promoting freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Democratic and transitioning states in East and Southeast Asia (such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines) would value its counterterrorism work as well as its role as a hedge against an aggressive China. Colombia, Indonesia, and others menaced by violent extremism would gain much from building trust and cooperating on law enforcement, intelligence sharing, and military training. Rising powers that desire respect and recognition might find its prestige more alluring than relations with Russia or China. Finally, the potential for receiving U.S. technical and military assistance, traditionally a central part of U.S. relations with its allies, would be a strong attraction.

The coalition would thus be well positioned to draw broad international support and transcend traditional divisions between Europe and Asia and between industrialized and underdeveloped nations.

The Global Freedom Coalition would complement rather than supersede other bilateral and multilateral agreements and alliances. It would deal with global issues that NATO cannot or is unwilling to touch or handle and should be viewed as a supplement, not rival. Specific NATO members might or might not choose to associate themselves with it; that should be left up to them. Europeans should apply the same logic they assign to the European Security and Defense Policy: It would benefit NATO. A strong America globally is at least as good for NATO as a strong EU (some may argue that it would be far better). Anything that strengthens international peace and security is good for NATO. The only grounds on which some Europeans could object would be ones that reflect parochial concerns.

Major non-NATO allies such as Australia, Israel, or Japan could be first-tier candidates for the coalition. The same logic of not interfering with NATO would apply; no one should be asked to choose between NATO and the GFC. If circumstances warrant it, non-NATO nations should be encouraged to join both organizations to advance freedom and security. NATO expansion could proceed on a separate track, following existing procedures, objectives, and plans.

For the U.S., there would be other advantages. Since the end of the Cold War, Washington has often found its options constrained by the very institutions that served it so well during that 45-year struggle. Cultural and political rifts between America and many of its European allies have emerged and even deepened. Relations with NATO are often a matter of Washington's trying to convince unenthusiastic European leaders to contribute to causes for which they have little sympathy or understanding (such as Iraq and missile defense). To the extent that our core security relationships become more global in nature, we would be less dependent on the cooperation of countries that speak about freedom but insist that America shoulder almost all of the burden.

In other words, the Global Freedom Coalition would be a means for strengthening both freedom and liberty while at the same time restoring America's strategic flexibility.

As this coalition develops, so too would its salutary effect on international politics. The inclusion of both Japan and South Korea, or India and Pakistan, would weave such nations into a framework that emphasizes their shared interests, just as NATO did for countries following World War II. The coalition could serve as a deterrent to authoritarian powers seeking regional or global hegemony and an additional multilateral source of pressure on nuclear-ambitious nations like Iran and North Korea. Finally, the allure of membership could induce more countries to liberalize, much as the prospect of joining NATO pushed former Soviet bloc countries to embrace political reforms in the 1990s.

There will be objections to a Global Freedom Coalition, of course. Its very scope and ambition would, in the short term at least, produce friction in

U.S. relations with some European allies. Certain NATO members (such as France and Germany—ironically, the very countries that champion a separate European defense identity) would sense an end run around them and complain that the coalition is undermining NATO. Washington and other free nations should not accept this argument. NATO will likely remain at its core a transatlantic alliance, while the GFC would be explicitly global in purpose and function. The very argument that some European NATO members use to circumscribe NATO expansion—namely, that some prospective new members like Georgia are not part of Europe—should be highlighted to prove that the GFC does not seek to replicate or interfere with NATO's fundamental mission of transatlantic and European defense.

With the Iraq War fading and Russia again flexing its military muscle, more countries are likely to welcome a broader security association with the U.S. And though countering terrorism would be a central focus, it should not be the only one. Allies such as South Korea and Japan may have little interest in that effort. However, they and other smaller Asian countries like Singapore might like to join a global security coalition as insurance against a rising China. Since it would be a global enterprise, the GFC could not be tarred as merely intending to contain China. And yet, if China ever were to act as an aggressor, the coalition could be politically useful in organizing a response.

The coalition also would have value in compensating for a weakened NATO. As president of the EU, French President Nicolas Sarkozy took the lead in negotiating a cease-fire with Russia over Georgia, in spite of the fact that many Europeans believe Georgia is not part of Europe (they opposed Georgia's membership in NATO for this very reason). So why did the EU take the lead in the negotiations? Because there was no viable alternative. The U.S. had to choose between direct confrontation or mediation by the EU, an institution that is interested more in accommodating energy-rich Russia than in defending "faraway" Georgia's sovereignty.

If the GFC had existed with Georgia as a member, at the very least it could have put another negotiator into the mix. This negotiator might or might

not have been the U.S., but if it were not, it would at least have been a country more in tune with U.S. and Georgian wishes and interests and not as fearful and beholden to Russia as the EU is. As a multilateral and global institution, it would have been a stronger voice for the geopolitically orphaned Georgia than either the EU or NATO was.

At some point, the GFC could become strong enough to supplant the EU as surrogate negotiator on behalf of U.S. interests. The EU played that role rather unsatisfactorily with respect to Iran and Russia. Diplomatic inertia and habits as well as howls of complaints from some EU members would militate against such a change. Adversaries like Russia and Iran like negotiating with the U.S. through the EU; it gives them leverage they otherwise would not have if they were negotiating directly with Washington or a firmer interlocutor than the EU.

The United States needs a negotiating partner that would protect its interests more reliably. Whether the GFC would evolve into that is an open question, but as a long-range goal, it should be explored.

Time for a Global Economic Freedom Forum

There is also a need to ramp up efforts to promote and protect economic freedom around the world. In Washington and elsewhere, free trade and the economic policies that promote prosperity are under attack. Policymakers too often make decisions that are economically counterproductive and frankly protectionist.

The time has come for countries that have witnessed the benefits of economic freedom to create a new venue where they could freely discuss what works and what does not and develop new ways to tackle the latest stresses on the global economy. The United States, still the world's economic powerhouse, should take the lead in establishing a Global Economic Freedom Forum—a flexible association that would host summits, similar to the G-8, where heads of state from the world's 15 or 20 freest economies would gather, set agendas, and find ways to highlight the benefits of lowering taxes, eliminating subsidies, deregulating markets, improving property rights, signing trade agreements, and liberaliz-

ing investment laws. Each year, they could issue joint statements on the best way to deal with the world's current economic and financial problems.

The President of the United States could host the first summit in Washington. He should invite only countries that believe in economic freedom so as to avoid the ideological battles over basic economic policies that characterize the debates at the WTO and the U.N. He should seek broad geographical diversity in those he invites. Countries such as Mauritius, Bahrain, Chile, Ireland, and Singapore have as much to bring to the table as the U.K., Canada, and Australia. Small countries, if they do the right things, should be invited as well. Countries that do not uphold the principles and policies of economic freedom should not be invited, even as observers, as that would undermine the summit's purpose, confuse the dialogue, and duplicate other ineffective forums.

The initial group of invitees could evolve into a sort of steering committee that would establish the principles and agenda for future summits. It could select countries that have demonstrated prominent leadership on issues like agricultural subsidies, intellectual property rights, and Internet taxation to lead various discussions. It could also host larger meetings with those countries that do some things well but still fall short in some areas of economic freedom as measured by international indices like The Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal's *Index of Economic Freedom*. As the forum's prestige grows, its policies could be echoed by its members at the G-8 and the WTO. They could even become the basis for a caucus at the U.N.

Such a forum would highlight American leadership on world economic issues and the remarkable prosperity that its leadership brought to the world over the past 50 years. And it would set a positive example for how to break the logjams that cripple today's international institutions.

Time for a Liberty Forum for Human Rights

A Global Freedom Coalition would be best placed to mobilize freedom-loving peoples into a common effort to define and defend liberty, and a Global Economic Freedom Forum would help promote economic freedom. But there also is a need to

create a new international association of nations to defend and advance human rights. The U.N. Human Rights Council has proven itself completely unworthy of the mantle.

The President of the United States should take the lead in launching a Liberty Forum for Human Rights, a place where countries that uphold economic, civil, and political freedoms can promote them and the role of the free democratic and sovereign state in upholding liberty, justice, and equality before the law. Some of America's friends (particularly in Europe) would at first be lukewarm, but many other countries would want to join. All of the forum's meetings should be held in neutral places as far from the discredited United Nations Human Rights Council as possible.

A New Game Plan

America's alliances and international associations are sorely outdated. Our adversaries and friends use the United Nations and other institutions to contain U.S. influence and to counter American leadership. Washington has been reluctant to challenge this situation, too often relying on creaky old institutions that have outlived their usefulness or that have taken on roles other than those originally intended.

America's multilateral strategies are like an old-fashioned football team stuck in the past. While

younger "teams" invent exciting plays that essentially reinvent the game, America keeps doing the same old thing—plodding off to the Security Council or begging the EU to negotiate an end to a crisis. Running old plays is precisely what our adversaries and rivals want us to do. They know how to defeat them and are fond of doing a classic "head fake," showering our "multilateral" efforts with self-serving praise. We invented the U.N. and the international system, they say, so we should be happy to play the game. The problem is that others know it's *not* the same old game, and our adversaries in many cases are running circles around us.

This must stop. The United States cannot remain a global leader unless it modernizes its alliances and international associations. It's time to think boldly about our nation's future. America needs international institutions, alliances, and a multilateral diplomacy worthy of a great power that is dedicated to the advancement of freedom and security.

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