

Background

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Defining the Obama Doctrine, Its Pitfalls, and How to Avoid Them

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Abstract: *President Barack Obama has said that America would reach out to other countries as “an equal partner” rather than as the “exceptional” nation that many before him had embraced; that “any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail”; and that “[o]ur problems must be dealt with through partnership” and “progress must be shared.” He has laid out in his public statements the tenets of a doctrine that, if enacted, would enable his Administration to remake America as one nation among many, with no singular claim either to responsibility or exceptionalism: (1) America will ratify more treaties and turn to international organizations more often to deal with global crises and security concerns like nuclear weapons, often before turning to our traditional friends and allies; (2) America will emphasize diplomacy and “soft power” instruments such as summits and foreign aid to promote its aims and downplay military might; (3) America will adopt a more humble attitude in state-to-state relations; and (4) America will play a more restrained role on the international stage. These tenets, however well-intentioned, will make America and the world far more insecure. Examining President Obama’s doctrinal statements and actions more closely demonstrates why reasserting American leadership on behalf of liberty would be the wiser course.*

American Presidents become known for “signature” statements and responses to foreign policy and national security challenges. Ronald Reagan is known for his efforts to defeat Communism and advance “peace through strength.” Bill Clinton is remembered

Talking Points

- President Obama’s foreign policy ideas are jelling into what can be described as an emerging Obama Doctrine. Unfortunately, it is a doctrine that makes the United States—and the world—less secure, courting global instability.
- The Obama Doctrine revolves around trust in the ability and willingness of international institutions to solve our most fundamental foreign policy challenges, such as terrorism or nuclear proliferation, often before we turn to our traditional friends and treaty allies.
- Under President Obama, the United States will also try so-called soft-power approaches like summitry and foreign aid and de-emphasize military might.
- The Obama Doctrine is anchored in the belief that America is devoid of singularity, exceptionalism, or historic mission rather than a country with unique resources, experiences, and devotion to freedom.
- The Obama Doctrine, by minimizing American sovereignty and self-reliance, amounts to a radical departure from the approach taken by America’s previous Presidents.

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for his argument that military interventions, such as his humanitarian intervention in the former Yugoslavia, are justified “where our values and our interests are at stake and where we can make a difference.”¹

It is fashionable to describe presidential statements or responses to foreign policy challenges as “doctrine.” As Barack Obama’s second year in office winds down, there are increasing references to an “Obama Doctrine,” including comparisons to what it is not (the Bush Doctrine, for example).

Doctrines by themselves are not legally binding declarations. Nor are they always ideas embraced as such by the Presidents in whose names they are declared. Rather, they are clearly expressed principles and policies, often deduced by consensus, which set the tone for how each Administration intends to act on the world stage. Doctrines clarify how a President views America’s role in the world and his strategy for relations with other nations.

During Obama’s first year in office, no widely repeated description of an Obama Doctrine emerged. One reason may be that for much of that time, domestic policy battles took center stage. But since pushing his health care bill through Congress and successfully taking on Wall Street, the President has turned more of his attention to international issues, and based on a number of statements he has made and documents he has issued, it is possible to describe the set of ideas and policies—in line with the customs described here—that make up his doctrine.

President Obama may have coined the phrase that best characterizes this doctrine in a speech in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009. He said that America would reach out to other countries as “an equal partner” rather than as the “exceptional” nation that many before him had embraced. During his first meeting with the Group of 20 economies in Europe, Obama went further, saying that he does

believe in American exceptionalism, but “just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.”²

Obama expanded this theme of America as “equal partner” in Cairo in June 2009: “Given our interdependence,” he said, “any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners of it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; progress must be shared.”³

To demonstrate that he fully believes in what he has proclaimed, he has laid out in his public statements the tenets of his doctrine that will enable his Administration to remake America as one nation among many, with no singular claim either to responsibility or exceptionalism:

1. America will ratify more treaties and turn to international organizations more often to deal with global crises and security concerns like nuclear weapons, often before turning to our traditional friends and allies;
2. America will emphasize diplomacy and “soft power” instruments such as summits and foreign aid to promote its aims and downplay military might;
3. America will adopt a more humble attitude in state-to-state relations; and
4. America will play a more restrained role on the international stage.

These tenets may be well-intentioned, ostensibly to improve America’s standing in the world, but they will make America and the world far more insecure. Examining President Obama’s doctrinal statements and actions more closely demonstrates why reasserting American leadership on behalf of liberty would be the wiser course.

1. “Clinton’s Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention, 29 August 1996: Foreign Policy Excerpts,” at <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/elect96/bc960829.htm> (August 6, 2010).
2. Real Clear Politics, “Obama’s Press Conference in Strasbourg,” April 4, 2009, at http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/04/obamas_press_conference_in_str.html (July 30, 2010).
3. “Text: Obama’s Speech in Cairo,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html> (July 30, 2010).

The Precedents of American Exceptionalism

The idea that the United States is an “exceptional” nation has been a part of the American story ever since the country’s founding. In his first inaugural address, President George Washington said that the “preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.”⁴ This form of government, based on the principles of liberty and government of and by the people, had not been tried, and its future depended on every generation of Americans protecting and preserving it.

America’s more memorable Presidents shared a common perspective: that the U.S. is truly a remarkable country that therefore has responsibilities beyond those of other countries.

Since then, most Presidents in some fashion or another have acknowledged that America plays a special role in history. It is a view deeply ingrained in the American conscience that has been manifested in the foreign policies of America’s Presidents in traditional and even “progressive” terms. But few if any of our leaders before President Obama expressed the view that the United States was merely a country just like any other.

America’s more memorable Presidents, in fact, have been those who left a lasting impression about how the United States orients itself to the outside world. They combined the pressing demands of their times with the universal principles of America’s Founding to leave a legacy in American foreign policy. Many of their policies were groundbreaking and controversial, but they shared a common perspective: that the U.S. is truly a remarkable country

that therefore has responsibilities beyond those of other countries.

Particularly good examples are the policies of George Washington, James Monroe, Harry Truman, and Ronald Reagan in response to the challenges they faced.

George Washington. Among the Founding Fathers, George Washington proved himself adept at safeguarding the young nation’s interests. In his first State of the Union address, he advised Congress to consider as one of its highest priorities the matter of providing for the common defense: “To be prepared for war,” Washington said, “is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.” If Congress intended to ensure the young country’s survival, it must take steps to strengthen and protect it, particularly by establishing a national defense system.

While that statement could be called Washington’s doctrine, it is not what some historians cite. Rather, they refer to a statement he made at the very end of his presidency in his Farewell Address. The challenges Washington faced in keeping friendly relations with other countries so as not to take sides in their wars led him to warn his countrymen “to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.”⁵ This statement was not isolationist, as some today portray it. Washington believed that temporary alliances, particularly in the areas of commerce and defense, were justified, but he also believed it would not be wise for a fledgling country to become embroiled, through permanent political alliances, in conflicts between European states that had little interest in seeing the American experiment succeed.⁶

His warning also does not describe his actual policies as President. President Washington in fact signed several treaties—with Great Britain, Algeria, and Spain. He did not fear making binding commitments to other nations. His statement at the end of his presidency is less a declaration of an unchanging

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4. For more on American exceptionalism, see Matthew Spalding, “What Makes American Exceptionalism?” a forthcoming Heritage Foundation *Understanding America* booklet.
 5. George Washington, “Farewell Address,” in U.S. Information Agency, *Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy*, at <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/49.htm>.
 6. Matthew Spalding, *We Still Hold These Truths* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2009), pp. 177ff. See also Robert H. Ferrell, *American Diplomacy: The Twentieth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), p. 14.

absolute than a statement of prudential, principled policymaking: Always remember that, as global conditions change, America will need the freedom to engage (or not to engage, as the case may be) with other nations in ways that protect her freedoms and security and best serve her interests.

President Washington's actions in the world and his interactions with Congress firmly established the Framers' intent that Presidents play the principal role in American statecraft, with the appropriate checks and balances from the legislative branch.

James Monroe. In 1823, President James Monroe used his State of the Union address to declare that the American continents were "not to be considered as subject for future colonization" by interested European powers.⁷ The Monroe Doctrine became a fundamental principle of U.S. foreign policy throughout the modern era.

James Monroe chose to articulate the political differences between the United States and certain other countries in order to explain why America was committed to the principles on which republican self-government is based.

Monroe and his successors knew the credibility of their doctrine rested on British naval mastery and their common interest in diminishing the interest of foreign states in the Western Hemisphere.⁸ Of course, the U.S. could have passively enjoyed British naval protection, but President Monroe chose instead to articulate the political differences between the United States and certain other countries in order to explain why America was committed to the principles on which republican self-government is based.

John Quincy Adams, the principal author of the Monroe Doctrine, argued that it would be "more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly."⁹ Although substantively different from any other U.S. foreign policy until that time, the Monroe Doctrine was remarkably consistent with the character and principles of American diplomacy and foreign policy since Washington.

Harry Truman. With the unfolding of the Cold War after World War II, President Harry Truman enunciated what became known as the Truman Doctrine, a declaration of America's support for peoples threatened with Communist aggression.¹⁰ He built on that doctrine with the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His strategy of containment was based on deeply held American values and principles.

For Truman, historian Elizabeth Edwards Spalding explains, the Cold War was "a conflict between good and evil, between freedom and tyranny, between liberal democracy and totalitarianism, between capitalism and communism."¹¹ The Korean War prompted him to invest more heavily in a credible U.S. defense. By the end of his presidency, the Truman Doctrine had become the precedent that successive Presidents would use to enunciate some sort of doctrine.

Ronald Reagan. President Reagan's 1985 State of the Union address clarified and made public a doctrine he had already adopted: to give "overt and unashamed support for anticommunist revolution" based on justice, necessity, and democratic tradition, as Charles Krauthammer described Reagan's remarks.¹² Reagan had already started implementing that doctrine through classified national security directives. His statement before Congress exemplifies effective presidential doctrine-making.¹³

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7. James Monroe, "State of the Union," seventh annual message to Congress, December 2, 1823, at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe.asp.
 8. For more on the Monroe Doctrine, see Mark T. Gilderhus, "The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 2006), pp. 5–16.
 9. Quoted in Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (Santa Barbara, Cal.: Greenwood-Heinemann Publishing, 1981), p. 385.
 10. Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12 1947, at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2189&st=&st1>.
 11. Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p. 223.

Reagan proclaimed America's obligation to impede the spread of Communism everywhere and to bolster indigenous support for democracy. He believed, rightly, that the United States had the capacity to out-compete the Soviet Union and that,

Ronald Reagan pursued a "peace through strength" strategy, revitalizing the U.S. military while promoting economic growth at home and increasing support for oppressed people around the world.

by reasserting our resolve, we could accelerate its decline. He pursued a "peace through strength" strategy, revitalizing the U.S. military while promoting economic growth at home and increasing support for oppressed people around the world. And he repeated this doctrine in speeches at home and abroad, including the "evil empire" address to the British Parliament at Westminster Abbey and his "tear down this wall" remarks at the Berlin Wall.

It may not be possible to attribute the collapse of the Soviet Union to any single variable, but Ronald Reagan's policies and inspiration certainly contributed greatly to it.¹⁴

Ineffective Doctrine. Ineffective presidential doctrines also have characteristics in common. The most common elements are an overconfidence in international entities, a disregard for the importance of American independence, and far less emphasis on American exceptionalism as it was traditionally understood.

Consider the policies of Woodrow Wilson. At the outset of his presidency, Wilson described his intention to follow a less aggressive, more "ethical" foreign policy than his predecessors had followed. He talked about moral diplomacy and remaining neutral in foreign affairs, relying on economic relations to create a "concert of nations" to keep the peace.

His approach to engagement, however, failed to stem the tide of World War I or prevent America from having to intervene in Europe. An argument could be made that it even spurred Germany to challenge the U.S. After the war, Wilson sought to revive his "concert of nations" idea by establishing the League of Nations, the failed forerunner of the United Nations. He also chose to emphasize soft-power diplomatic tools; he wanted Congress, for example, to issue an official apology to Colombia for U.S. actions in Panama. Congress refused.

Wilson's brand of foreign policy became synonymous with an American idealism which presumed that traditional exceptionalism was somehow parochial and not universal enough. Ironically, just as this posture failed to stem World War I, it also helped to foster the isolationism of the 1920s and 1930s that inadvertently eased the road into World War II.

Progressive policies like Wilson's generally reject the grounding of foreign relations in the principles on which this nation was founded—the same principles that undergird American exceptionalism. For progressives, there are no permanent truths; there are only ideals and the progress that skilled elites and the administrative state can bring about with the help of science and technology.¹⁵

The Obama Doctrine

The dominant characteristics of the Obama Doctrine are more like those of Woodrow Wilson than Washington, Monroe, Truman, or Reagan. Though President Obama has not formally rejected the principles on which America was founded, his statements and actions are consistent with a doctrine that at its core is progressive. That doctrine becomes increasingly apparent.

Though this is a critical time in our history—when terrorists have Americans and liberty in their

12. See especially Lee Edwards, *The Essential Ronald Reagan* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), pp. 110–115, and Charles Krauthammer, "Essay: The Reagan Doctrine," *Time*, April 1, 1995.

13. Chester Pach, "The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 75. See also William G. Hyland, ed., *The Reagan Foreign Policy* (New York: New American Library, 1987).

14. Mark R. Amstutz, *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), p. 138.

15. Spalding, *We Still Hold These Truths*, pp. 196–199, 212–213.

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crosshairs, the U.S. military is strained, and the nation is falling deeper into debt—Obama has made it clear that he will rely more on the “international system” and treaties to address critical problems; he will engage other nations as equals and with restraint; and he will elevate the use of soft power in his foreign policy toolkit. Obama has downplayed America’s military strength and has been reluctant to voice criticisms or consequences to countries that threaten U.S. interests, and he has shown an eagerness to apologize for America’s actions—past or present, real or perceived—to foreign audiences.

President Obama has repeatedly characterized America as just one nation among many and an “equal” partner rather than an indispensable nation with unique resources and experiences that we want to share with the world. Take, for example, his remarks at the Summit of the Americas in April 2009:

I know that promises of partnership have gone unfulfilled in the past, and that trust has to be earned over time. While the United States has done much to promote peace and prosperity in the hemisphere, we have at times been disengaged, and at times we sought to dictate our terms. But I pledge to you that we seek *an equal partnership*. There is no senior partner and junior partner in our relations; there is simply engagement based on mutual respect and common interests and shared values.¹⁶

It is a belief and theme he emphasized during his campaign for the presidency. His campaign document on this, “Strengthening Our Common Security by Investing in Our Common Humanity,” declares that:

Barack Obama’s vision of leadership in this new era begins with the recognition of a fundamental reality: the security and well-being of each and every American is tied to the security and well-being of those who live beyond our borders. The United States should provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity. We must lead not in the spirit of a patron, but the spirit of a partner.¹⁷

As the following examples will show, President Obama’s policies do not veer from his fundamental view that America, which has no particular claim to greatness, has no unique responsibilities as the world’s greatest historical example of the fruits of freedom.

Downplaying American Sovereignty. President Obama’s *National Security Strategy* tellingly states on page three that “we must focus American engagement on strengthening international institutions

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and galvanizing the *collective action that can serve common interests*.” Several later statements explain how the Administration plans to do that:¹⁸

- “International institutions must more effectively represent the world of the 21st century, with a broader voice—and greater responsibilities—for emerging powers, and they must be modernized to more effectively generate results on issues of global interest.”
- “We will draw on diplomacy, development, and international norms and institutions to help resolve disagreements, prevent conflict, and

16. Barack Obama, “Address to the Summit of the Americas,” Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, April 17, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-the-Summit-of-the-Americas-Opening-Ceremony (June 2, 2009). Emphasis added.

17. Available at http://www.cgdev.org/doc/blog/obama_strengthen_security.pdf (August 15, 2010).

18. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 27, 2010. Emphasis added.

maintain peace, mitigating where possible the need for the use of force.”

- “We are pursuing arms control efforts—including the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty—as a means of strengthening our ability to mobilize broad international support for the measures needed to reinforce the non-proliferation regime and secure nuclear materials worldwide.”

None of this is surprising. At a major address at West Point just prior to the release of that document, Obama said, “As [our] influence extends to more countries and capitals, we also have to build new partnerships, and shape stronger international standards and institutions.”¹⁹ Yet consider the response he received to his efforts to do that during

When it comes to peacekeeping, Obama is pressing to strengthen the United Nations.

his first speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2009. He said then that the U.S. “must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect.”²⁰ Later in the program, Libya’s Muammar Qadhafi criticized the U.S. for its invasion of Grenada, and Iran’s Mahmoud Ahmadinejad condemned U.S. operations in Afghanistan. Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez waited until the U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen in December to say that he “still” smelled sulfur on the podium after President Obama spoke—recalling his characterization of the smell after George W. Bush (“the devil”) spoke at the U.N. some years earlier.²¹

When it comes to peacekeeping, Obama is pressing to strengthen the United Nations. During his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize awarded for his calls to eliminate nuclear weapons, Obama spoke about stronger U.N. and regional peacekeeping efforts so as not to “leave the task to a few countries.”²²

Many Presidents before Obama have called on the United Nations to fulfill its mandate and play a leading role in achieving peace and security instead of leaving the task to the U.S. and the coalition it could muster. President Bush authorized operations in Iraq only after Saddam Hussein failed to comply with 16 binding U.N. Security Council resolutions (which authorized member states to enforce those resolutions for non-compliance). Yet few Presidents have made it sound as though the leader of the free world did not want to play a leading role in achieving international security. Speaking at a news conference after his nuclear summit in Washington, Obama said:

[W]hether we like it or not, we remain a dominant military superpower, and when conflicts break out, one way or another we get pulled into them. And that ends up costing us significantly in terms of both blood and treasure.²³

It is one thing to ask the so-called international community to come together to solve crises, and the President is right, as a practical matter: We often get pulled into world conflicts. But it is another to suggest, no matter how subtly, that the United States is weary of or takes a jaundiced view of its global leadership role. Yet that is precisely what this statement implies. The President appears tired of America’s “dominant military superpower” role, which he qualifies with “whether we like it or not.” This is not

19. CNN transcript, “President Obama Delivers Commencement Address at West Point,” aired May 22, 2010, at <http://archives.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/100522/se.01.html> (July 10, 2010).

20. Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President to the United Nations General Assembly,” September 23, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-by-the-president-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly (June 10, 2010).

21. FoxNews.com, “Venezuela’s Chavez ‘Still’ Smells Sulfur After Obama Speech,” December 18, 2009, at <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2009/12/18/venezuelas-chavez-smells-sulfur-obama-speech/> (July 30, 2010).

22. Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize,” December 10, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize> (June 16, 2010).

23. FoxNews.com, “Obama: America a Superpower ‘Whether We Like It or Not’,” April 15, 2010, at <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/04/15/obama-america-superpower-like/> (July 30, 2010).

the clarion call to world leadership that most people expect of American Presidents. Rather, it expresses ambivalence, self-doubt, or even anxiety. It implies a view of America as potentially unwilling or even unable to continue its role as a “dominant military superpower.”

If anything, the rhetoric of U.N. engagement has vastly outstripped the limited reality of what can be achieved at the U.N.

This viewpoint meshes with the President’s desire to engage the United Nations more fully, as if to fill the gap left by a lesser leadership role for the U.S. As the President says:

We’ve also re-engaged the United Nations. We have paid our bills. We have joined the Human Rights Council. We have signed the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We have fully embraced the Millennium Development Goals. And we address our priorities here, in this institution—for instance, through the Security Council meeting that I will chair tomorrow on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.... The United States stands ready to begin a new chapter of international cooperation—one that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of all nations.²⁴

This statement is more rhetorical flourish than hard policy. While it is true that the Obama Administration has used the U.N. Security Council to try to pressure Iran, it is not true that anything else of international strategic significance has happened at the United Nations since Obama took office. If anything, the rhetoric of U.N. engagement has vastly outstripped the limited reality of what can be achieved at the U.N.

Moreover, it is a green light for countries to use the U.N. to pursue their own interests regardless of

whether or not those interests conflict with the founding principles and Charter of the U.N. itself. It finds no moral conflict in having human rights abusers sitting on the U.N. Human Rights Council; or for socialist, corrupt, or even repressive countries to sit on the U.N.’s Economic and Social Council to influence discussions on development and governance; or for terrorism-sponsoring nations to block the U.N. from defining an act of terrorism.

In terms of action, the Administration is pursuing an ambitious agenda on international treaties—the most prominent one being the recently signed New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia. In addition, President Obama has signed the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as a number of bilateral treaties dealing with mutual legal assistance and tax avoidance and an annex to a protocol on environmental emergencies under the Antarctic Treaty. He has also indicated his intent to seek ratification of a number of old treaties the U.S. has not ratified for various reasons, as well as to sign new ones that pose serious implications for our sovereignty, our system of federalism, and states’ rights. These include the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOST), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the treaty on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a treaty on arms trade.²⁵

The ideals behind most of these treaties may be reasonable, even admirable. Indeed, some treaties the U.S. signed are important legal documents. But in every case of a new treaty under consideration for ratification, the onus is on the U.S. government to ensure that the treaty does not compromise America’s security or the rights and freedoms established in the U.S. Constitution. Treaties, when they work best, manage affairs between states and nations. They falter or even become harmful if they over-

24. CBSNews.com, “Full Remarks: Obama at United Nations,” September 23, 2009, at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5331527-503544.html (July 30, 2010).

25. U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April 2010, at <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf> (July 30, 2010).

Treaties falter or even become harmful if they overreach into the domestic affairs of nations, which in America are rightly reserved under the U.S. Constitution for the federal–state system of government.

reach into the domestic affairs of nations, which in America are rightly reserved under the U.S. Constitution for the federal–state system of government.

In his Nobel speech, Obama said he is “convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don’t.”²⁶ This belief rests on the assumption that all nations signing treaties or agreements that purportedly embody universal “standards” will keep their end of the bargain, but there are many examples of how this has not been the case. For example, more than once the Soviet Union was found to have violated the terms of the now-defunct ABM Treaty²⁷ and START I.²⁸

Another example is CEDAW. Among its signatories is Saudi Arabia, a nation in which women still hold second-class status and have to get permission from a male to do things we take for granted. Being a signatory of CEDAW has not furthered their rights.

For over 30 years, consecutive U.S. Administrations and Senates have failed to approve ratification of CEDAW because of the many problems it will create for our system of government and our laws. Yet a statement posted on the U.S. Department of State’s

Web site states that “President Obama’s Administration views CEDAW as a powerful tool for making gender equality a reality. We are committed to U.S. ratification of the Convention.”²⁹ The same is true for the Convention on the Rights of the Child; in June 2009, Ambassador Susan Rice remarked that Administration officials were actively discussing “when and how it might be possible to join.”³⁰

Regarding CTBT, a treaty that the Senate rejected in the past for lacking adequate verification measures and potentially leaving the U.S. vulnerable due to an insufficient nuclear deterrent, the Obama White House press office released this statement:

While the United States sent a delegation to the initial conference in 1999, it has not attended the subsequent four conferences. Accordingly, U.S. participation in this year’s conference will reaffirm the strong commitment of the Obama Administration to support the CTBT and to work with other nations to map out a comprehensive diplomatic strategy to secure the Treaty’s entry into force.³¹

Regarding PAROS and measures such as a “code of conduct” for space, the Administration has indicated that it is ready to help bring these kinds of international agreements into force. The 2010 *National Space Policy* states: “The United States will consider proposals and concepts for arms control measures if they are equitable, effectively verifiable, and enhance the national security of the United States and its allies.”³² However, no option for arms

26. “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize.”

27. “United States Unilateral Statement Following the Third Quadrennial Review of the ABM Treaty,” Geneva, Switzerland, August 31, 1988, at <http://www.missilethreat.com/treaties/pageID.229/default.asp>.

28. “Top 10 Reasons Not to Trust Russia,” Heritage Foundation *Fact Sheet* No. 71, July 29, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Factsheets/Top-10-Reasons-Not-to-Trust-Russia>.

29. Robert Wood, “Thirtieth Anniversary of the United Nations’ Adoption of CEDAW,” U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2009, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/dec/133893.htm> (July 30, 2010).

30. John Heilprin, “Obama Administration Seeks to Join U.N. Rights of the Child Convention,” *HuffingtonPost.com*, June 22, 2009, at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/23/obama-administration-seek_n_219511.html (July 30, 2010).

31. The White House, “Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. Delegation to the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty,” September 15, 2009, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-press-secretary-us-delegation-conference-facilitating-entry-force-compreh> (July 30, 2010).

32. The White House, “National Space Policy of the United States of America,” June 28, 2010, p. 7, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/national_space_policy_6-28-10.pdf (August 10, 2010).

control in space today meets any of these necessary standards, so the Administration's support for PAROS is confusing.

Finally, with regard to the New START treaty with Russia, it appears that for the Obama Administration, simply signing it is more important than its content. Proponents claim it will reduce the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons in both countries, but in fact it will allow Russia to *increase* its numbers.³³ It will open the door for future restrictions on U.S. missile defenses, either as a result of Russia's incorporating its complaints into other bilateral agreements (claiming the treaty is precedent) or because of the bilateral consultative commission that the treaty sets up imposing restrictions beyond its precise terms.

When an Administration approaches treaties and international "cooperation" without due regard for protecting U.S. interests and establishing conditions for real security, as President Obama's has done, they become harmful to American security and constitutional rights.

Again, this criticism of Obama's approach to treaties is not meant to imply that all treaties are bad or even that international collaboration is by itself problematic. After all, Reagan signed treaties that were in America's interest, and the Bush Administration's Proliferation Security Initiative has become a prime example of how international action can be mobilized on behalf of real security. Rather, the criticisms suggest that when an Administration approaches treaties and international "cooperation" without due regard for protecting U.S. interests and establishing conditions for real security, as President Obama's has done, they become rather useless

exercises or, worse, harmful to American security and constitutional rights.

Soft-Pedaling American Power. President Obama intends to use soft-power tools like diplomacy and aid to engage other nations, soft-pedaling American "hard" power so as to appear more as an equal at the negotiating table. Consider these remarks:

- On January 2009, shortly after taking office, he said that "[i]f countries like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us."³⁴
- In September 2009 at the United Nations, he said: "[In] an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game. No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold. The traditional divisions between nations of the South and the North make no sense in an interconnected world; nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone Cold War."³⁵
- His new *National Security Strategy* points to diplomacy and development aid as the preferred tools to "prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance."³⁶ Countries, it states, then have a choice: Abide by "international norms, and achieve the political and economic benefits that come with greater integration with the international community; or refuse to accept this pathway, and bear the consequences of that decision, including greater isolation."³⁷

After a special U.N. session on nuclear proliferation in September 2009, French President Nico-

33. New START Working Group, "An Independent Assessment of New START," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2410, April 30, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/04/An-Independent-Assessment-of-New-START-Treaty>.

34. CBSNews.com, "Iran: Obama Must 'Unclench' America's Fist," January 28, 2009, at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-4759248-503543.html (July 30, 2010).

35. Transcript, "Full Remarks: Obama at United Nations," September 23, 2009, at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5331527-503544.html.

36. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, p. 3.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

las Sarkozy criticized Obama and the soft-power approach to Iran and North Korea:

We live in the real world, not in a virtual one.... President Obama himself has said that he dreams of a world without nuclear weapons. Before our very eyes, two countries are doing exactly the opposite at this very moment. Since 2005, Iran has violated five Security Council Resolutions.... I support America's "extended hand." But what have these proposals for dialogue produced for the international community? Nothing but more enriched uranium and more centrifuges. And last but not least, it has resulted in a statement by Iranian leaders calling for wiping off the map a Member of the United Nations.³⁸

In recent months, the President's soft-power approach has become more ambiguous, particularly toward Iran. After his full-throated engagement approach failed to produce results, he fell back on the harder sanctions strategy practiced by George W. Bush. Tougher sanctions from the U.N. Security

Obama's schizophrenic attitude toward soft and hard power is less a conscious application of "good cop, bad cop" than an expression of uncertainty about the direction his policy should take.

Council, the United States, and the European Union have been adopted. Yet the President recently reached out to Iran again, saying the door was still open for peace so long as Iran agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

The Washington Post reported that this "renewed opening to Iran also included a proposal for talks on Afghanistan" because "the two sides have a 'mutual interest' in fighting the Taliban."³⁹ But if there is mutual interest, it is illusive. The U.S. military has

repeatedly issued findings that Iran is still giving the Taliban significant arms support.⁴⁰

Obama's schizophrenic attitude toward soft and hard power is less a conscious application of "good cop, bad cop" than an expression of uncertainty about the direction his policy should take. Since taking office, his Administration has backed off from some of Obama's promises, such as closing the detention center at Guantanamo Bay and trying captured terrorists in civilian courts. It also has stepped up drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the President did eventually approve the surge in Afghanistan.

But those welcome policy changes more likely resulted from Obama's military and intelligence leaders preventing him from adopting ineffective or even naïve policies than from a conscious shift in principle. At times, the President seems politically pained by his changes in his policies on Afghanistan and detainees. They were clearly unwelcome to his supporters in the left wing of his party, and splitting the difference among his advisers over an Afghan war strategy—agreeing to an unwise timetable, for example—is a manifestation of the ambivalence that pervades his thinking.

This embrace of soft power, caused in part by a desire to break with perceived excessive applications of hard power by Bush, is thus grounded not merely in tactics, but in a basic attitude about the nature of America's role in the world and how that role should be played. The belief that the U.S. over-utilized hard power in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has shaken Obama's confidence in the application of hard power at all. Thus, the expressions of soft power he chooses—diplomatic engagement, working with the U.N., dispensing foreign aid, and soft-pedaling differences with enemies—are grounded in the assumption that the limits of American military power are in fact also the limits of America's ability to influence events on its own.

38. Editorial, "French Atomic Pique," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 2009, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704471504574441402775482322.html> (August 8, 2010).

39. David Ignatius, "Obama to Iran: Let's talk," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2010, at <http://www.ohio.com/editorial/commentary/100098969.html> (August 8, 2010).

40. For example, see CBS Evening News, "Cooperation Rises Between Iran and Taliban," October 7, 2009, at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/07/eveningnews/main5370148.shtml> (August 2, 2010).

In light of recent history, this viewpoint may be understandable, but it is also unfortunately selective in its choice of examples. For example, Libya gave up its nuclear weapons program not because of our “engagement” or soft-power outreach, but because it was afraid it was next on President Bush’s target list after Iraq. The same is true for Iran’s early cooperation after 9/11 when it was helping us to confront al-Qaeda. After the Iranians realized they were not next, they stopped cooperating. Even Libya’s Qadhafi has become less cooperative in recent years.

Additionally, while it is true that the Iraq War created a public relations backlash in Europe and parts of the Middle East, it is not true the war has been (so far at least) a failure in terms of power relations. Saddam Hussein’s removal from power elimi-

Any time an American leader believes soft power is a substitute for or somehow superior to hard power, he is bound to fail.

nated any possibility of a major threat from Iraq for the foreseeable future. And while Afghanistan is still an open question, only the anti-war left argues that the Taliban can be persuaded to lay down their arms with promises of aid and diplomatic approval.

Soft power works only as an adjunct to hard power. Any time an American leader believes it is a substitute for or somehow superior to hard power, he is bound to fail. Presidents like Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and even Obama may resort to military force when they feel they have no choice, but they do so often reluctantly.⁴¹ In the case of Wilson and Obama particularly (Jimmy Carter was also well within this tradition), this reluctance is an expression not merely of caution, but of an ideological

predisposition about the proper role of America in the world.

A More Humble America. This leads to the question of what Barack Obama means when he describes a more humble America. The Obama Doctrine seeks to raise America’s standing around the world and gain influence by acting less as a leader and more as an equal of many.

Besides his now-famous remark about America not being any more exceptional than Britain or Greece,⁴² Obama undertook a campaign around the world to apologize for what he believed had been America’s arrogance. His “apology tour” began with a video speech to the “Muslim world,” saying that we “are not your enemy. We sometimes make mistakes. We have not been perfect,” and there’s no reason we can’t go back to “the respect and partnership that America had with the Muslim world as recently as 20 or 30 years ago.”⁴³ Then in Europe, at his first NATO summit in early 2009, he lamented America’s “arrogance,” its “failure to appreciate Europe’s leading role in the world,” and those “times where America has shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive.”⁴⁴

Obama has been criticized for his policy of extending an open hand to enemies while rebuffing friends and close allies. Consider why:

- He is the first President since 1991 not to welcome the Dalai Lama to the White House (reportedly because he did not want to offend China) when that dignitary made his first visit to Washington after Obama took office.⁴⁵
- He prominently posed in a now-famous handshake with Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chávez.
- He did not meet with Prime Minister Gordon Brown when Brown first came to Washington; in

41. While it is true that Roosevelt came around to the need for war in Europe before others did, he also continued the isolationist policies of the past until he felt he had no choice but to jettison them. This fact is forgotten because of his reputation as a great war leader, which he became after he felt the war was forced on him.

42. KT McFarland, “Mr. President, Is America Exceptional? You Betcha!” FoxNews.com, June 11, 2010, at <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2010/06/11/kt-mcfarland-obama-american-exceptionalism-military-navy-iwo-jima> (June 17, 2010).

43. “Obama’s Interview with Al Arabiya,” January 27, 2009, at <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/01/27/65096.html> (June 2, 2009).

44. The White House, “Speech at the Rhenus Sports Arena, Strasbourg, France,” April 3, 2009, and “Remarks by President Obama at Strasbourg Town Hall,” April 3, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-President-Obama-at-Strasbourg-Town-Hall/ (June 2, 2009).

fact, the White House refused five requests from the U.K. before the President granted a meeting and after turning down Brown's request for help in the Falklands dispute⁴⁶ (and reversing years of U.S. policy by supporting Argentina in that dispute).

- He canceled his trip to Asia twice for domestic political reasons.
- To "reset" relations with Russia, he essentially allowed Russia a veto over our missile defense plans with the Czech Republic and Poland, making no effort to criticize Moscow's growing assault on its citizens' political and civil rights.
- He further fed our allies' concerns about his aims toward Russia when he failed to meet with the President of Georgia in Washington for his nuclear proliferation summit, and he did not even invite the President of Azerbaijan—a country important to his plans for Afghanistan and Iran—to that summit despite inviting all of its neighbors but Iran.⁴⁷
- To the people of "The Americas," he wrote: "too often, the United States has not pursued and sustained engagement with our neighbors." He said the U.S. had been "too easily distracted" by its other priorities in the world, but that his Administration would "renew and sustain a broader partnership...on behalf of our common prosperity and our common security."⁴⁸

- And he chose to back Hugo Chávez's ally in Honduras, who was seeking to extend his own presidency unconstitutionally, even as Chávez was mocking Obama for weakness and asking Russia for new weapons.

Actions speak loudly, but perhaps the words of the new *National Security Strategy* speak loudest about how the Obama Administration sees its diplomatic role in the world:

Finally, we will pursue engagement among peoples—not just governments—around the world. The United States Government will make a sustained effort to engage civil society and citizens and facilitate increased connections among the American people and peoples around the world.⁴⁹

The problem with this approach is that the U.S. government has a responsibility to the people of America to act in its own and its allies' best interests. Apologizing for things that happened in the past may gain popularity abroad, but so far, it has done little to change minds about our policies. If anything, it has portrayed a weaker United States not only to our allies, but to adversaries striving to gain any advantage over us.

The repercussions could be grave—and here, history also provides an example. Not long after President Jimmy Carter apologized for America's supposedly excessive fear of Communism, the

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45. Alex Spillius, "Barack Obama Cancels Meeting with Dalai Lama 'to Keep China Happy'," *Daily Telegraph* (London), October 5, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/6262938/Barack-Obama-cancels-meeting-with-Dalai-Lama-to-keep-China-happy.html> (July 30, 2010). Obama finally did meet with the Dalai Lama on his later trip to D.C. in February 2010 "despite Chinese objections." See "Obama Meets with Dalai Lama Despite Chinese Objections," CNNPolitics.com, February 19, 2010, at <http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/02/18/obama.dalailama/index.html> (July 30, 2010).
46. A State Department official, responding to a reporter's question about Brown's March 2009 non-visit, said the visit was kept low-key because "[t]here's nothing special about Britain. You're just the same as the other 190 countries in the world." See Tim Shipman, "Barack Obama 'Too Tired' to Give Proper Welcome to Gordon Brown," *Daily Telegraph* (London), March 7, 2009, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/barackobama/4953523/Barack-Obama-too-tired-to-give-proper-welcome-to-Gordon-Brown.html>.
47. Jackson Diehl, "At Nuclear Summit, Obama Snubs an Ally," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2010, at http://voices.washingtonpost.com/postpartisan/2010/04/at_nuclear_summit_obama_snubs.html (August 8, 2010).
48. Barack Obama, opinion editorial, "Choosing a Better Future in the Americas," *Miami Herald*, April 16, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Op-ed-by-President-Barack-Obama-Choosing-a-Better-Future-in-the-Americas (June 2, 2009).
49. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, p. 12.

Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the hard-liners revolted in Iran, taking Americans hostage. Similarly, just two months after John F. Kennedy indicated to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that he was willing to compromise on nuclear testing, Khrushchev erected the Berlin Wall and restarted nuclear weapons testing. Kennedy believed that reaching out to the Soviet leader would make him more conciliatory; Khrushchev read that as weakness.

Apologizing for things that happened in the past has done little to change minds about our policies. If anything, it has portrayed a weaker United States not only to our allies, but to adversaries striving to gain any advantage over us.

It is worth noting in this respect that the main reason why the Obama Administration has recently adopted a tougher line on Iran is that the previously conciliatory approach utterly failed. Many people predicted this would happen. President George W. Bush had in fact reached out to Iran numerous times, only to be rebuffed each time. So it is not as if there was not enough historical evidence to predict what would happen to Obama if policymakers in the Administration had been willing to acknowledge it.

The reason that earlier policy had failed is that it misunderstood the problem. Iran does not want nuclear weapons because the U.S. is arrogant, but rather because it wants to dominate the region and prevent any military intervention that could dislodge its leadership. So a “humbler” America is completely irrelevant to the problem: In fact, it is a naïve application of what hitherto had been a cynical political strategy to win the election against an unpopular President, George W. Bush. It would have been much better if the political cynicism practiced in politics at home had been applied internationally to Iran.

A More Restrained America. As mentioned in the discussion of soft power, Obama clearly is uncomfortable with America’s role as the world’s “dominant military superpower.” In his Nobel Prize

acceptance speech, he chastised America for its military actions in the past:

America—in fact, no nation—can insist that others follow the rules of the road if we refuse to follow them ourselves. For when we don’t, our actions appear arbitrary and undercut the legitimacy of future interventions, no matter how justified. And this becomes particularly important when the purpose of military action extends beyond self-defense or the defense of one nation against an aggressor.⁵⁰

Adopting the worldview of America’s critics abroad is telling. It may be what an ivory tower professor might assert, but it is not what Americans expect their President to say. Most American Presidents have believed it is always best to have more military power than they would actually use. This is fundamentally what deterrence is about. For a President to distrust that power, as America’s critics abroad appear to do, because it is different or “exceptional” suggests a willingness to tolerate a diminution of that power in order to strike some conciliatory posture abroad. Deterrence is no longer letting others know that you will strike at them hard if they attack you, but rather trying to disarm them by convincing them that you mean them no harm.

This attitude is probably not shared by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, but it does not really matter. Both he and the President are allowing U.S. military power to wane. Gates may be doing so because he believes the future will not necessarily contain warfare among large land armies (believing we will need to fight insurgencies instead), but the President appears to believe that there is positive value in pulling back on hard military power. He cut funding for the production of F-22 fighter jets and the continued development and testing of key missile defense programs. His defense procurement budget is anemic, and so far, he refuses to modernize our nuclear deterrent. Secretary Gates proposed stretching out the procurement of the new class of aircraft carrier and terminating the development of the next-generation Navy cruiser with missile defense capa-

50. “Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize.”

bilities.⁵¹ As our colleague Baker Spring explains, a force structure as small as they are projecting “cannot sustain existing U.S. security commitments.”⁵²

The repercussions of such misguided policy may not be known for years. Military power is not only about fighting and winning wars, but also about oth-

The perception of American weakness, both in terms of diplomacy and in terms of likely cutbacks in military programs, is starting to bear some disturbing fruit.

ers’ perception of whether you have the means and the will to defeat their aggression. In this case, the perception of American weakness, both in terms of diplomacy and in terms of likely cutbacks in military programs, is starting to bear some disturbing fruit.

- China has only become more bellicose in the wake of these developments, snubbing Secretary Gates’s request to visit Beijing for talks on military affairs.
- Sensing that Russia’s influence, rather than America’s, is growing, Ukraine’s parliament adopted a law effectively preventing it from joining NATO—unthinkable a few years ago.
- North Korea attacked a South Korean naval vessel with impunity and threatened nuclear war over the military exercises we planned with our ally.
- Despite Obama’s late conversion to toughness, Iran appears to have taken Obama’s mark and decided to go for broke on nuclear weapons.

The “correlation of forces,” as the Soviets used to say, does not seem to favor America at this point, and it appears that the world is drawing this conclusion about Obama’s America: Far from the “kinder, gentler” nation that will elicit goodwill and cooperation, they see a weak and untrustworthy America that forces friends to pull back and enemies to forge

ahead. A recent poll of the Arab world found that confidence in Obama’s foreign policies in the Middle East fell from 51 percent to 16 percent in just one year. It also found that a slight majority of the Arab public sees a nuclear-armed Iran as a better option for the Middle East. According to an expert at George Washington University, “Arabs have concluded that [Obama] can’t deliver on his promises at best, or that he’s just like Bush at worst.”⁵³

A Better Foreign Policy Vision

The pillars of the Obama Doctrine will have both intended and unintended consequences: They will make America less exceptional and put us on the road to decline, and they will make us less secure as other countries feel emboldened to threaten us and hold our policies hostage. The alternative is not to become the world’s bully, but rather to reassert American leadership in defense of liberty around the world. This will require policies that:

- **Strengthen our security alliances, create new ones, and establish new coalitions and entities based on shared values.** President Obama has talked about the significance of international partnerships, but partnerships will fall short of our expectations if the countries with which we align share neither our values nor our goals. The U.N. is a prime example. As one of 192 member states, our efforts there frequently are sidelined or voted down. For many other states, the U.N. is their only claim to relevance in the global arena and their only chance at influencing the decisions or restraining the actions of the United States.

In addition, many of the institutions created in the aftermath of World War II are outdated, unable to respond to today’s challenges. The U.S. is not required to run all of its initiatives to spur peace, security, and development through the U.N. or these other bodies. Instead, to spur economic development, respect for human rights, and security, the U.S. should take the

51. Baker Spring, “The 2011 Defense Budget: Inadequate and Full of Inconsistencies,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2375, February 22, 2010, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg2375.cfm>.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Laura Rozen, “Poll: Arab World Opinion of Obama Dims,” Politico.com, August 4, 2010, at http://www.politico.com/blogs/laurarozen/0810/Poll_Arab_world_opinion_of_Obama_dims.html (August 5, 2010).

To spur economic development, respect for human rights, and security, the U.S. should take the lead in creating new institutions and arrangements that enhance strong bilateral cooperation among like-minded nations.

lead in creating new institutions and arrangements that enhance strong bilateral cooperation among like-minded nations. Examples could include a Global Economic Freedom Forum that focuses on expanding free markets, a Liberty Forum for Human Rights that promotes individual freedoms and human rights, or a Global Freedom Coalition to promote security.⁵⁴

- **Invest in peace through strength.** Our ability to defend our nation and our allies, and to advance our interests, depends on our ability to maintain the strength, flexibility, and quality of our forces. Declining defense investments that take us to the margins of military superiority while countries like China and Russia invest heavily to modernize and grow their forces is risky business. A robust U.S. military is both the surest way to deter aggression and the backbone of effective diplomacy.

However, U.S. defense spending is projected to *fall*, relative to the economy, from today's 4.9 percent to 3.6 percent by 2015.⁵⁵ According to White House spending projections, Obama plans to increase spending for the General Services Administration by 22 percent, the

Treasury Department by 35 percent, and foreign aid by 18 percent over the next two years, but he will cut the defense budget by 5.5 percent.

In 2010, defense was targeted for about half of the \$17 billion identified for spending cuts—with some 50 defense programs either cut back or eliminated, compromising our air, naval, and ballistic missile defense superiority.⁵⁶ Yet one of the most serious threats to fielding a robust military force tomorrow is Obama's out-of-control domestic discretionary spending on top of the rapid growth of mandatory funding to run the nation's entitlement programs.⁵⁷ Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently told a group at the Brookings Institution that the number one threat that keeps him up at night is the national debt, because it is on a trajectory to exceed America's gross domestic product in 15 years.⁵⁸ In fact, according to the Office of Management and Budget, gross federal debt will exceed GDP in 2012.⁵⁹

- **Place liberty first.** Rather than apologizing for supposed American "wrongdoings" of the past, the President and his Administration should focus on defending and advancing liberty wherever it may be cultivated. As it was after World War II, promoting liberty should once again be the central organizing political principle of our alliances and the international institutions and treaties we join.⁶⁰

Promoting liberty is more than spreading democracy; it involves creating strong institu-

54. Kim R. Holmes, *Liberty's Best Hope: American Leadership for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2008), p. 187.

55. Spring, "The 2011 Defense Budget: Inadequate and Full of Inconsistencies."

56. John T. Bennett, "DoD Examining F/A-18 Multiyear Plans; Gates Endorses KC-X Requirements," *Defense News*, March 24, 2010, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4553123>.

57. Baker Spring, "The FY 2010 Defense Budget Request: Prelude to Another Procurement Holiday?" Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2286, June 19, 2009, pp. 2–3, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg2286.cfm> (August 10, 2010).

58. Strobe Talbott, "Obama's America and the World," RealClearPolitics.com, July 23, 2010, at http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2010/07/23/obamas_america_and_the_world_99084.html.

59. See Office of Management and Budget, *Historical Tables, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2011*, Table 7.1, "Federal Debt at the End of Year: 1940–2015," at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2011/assets/hist07z1.xls> (September 1, 2010).

60. Holmes, *Liberty's Best Hope*, p. 186.

tions that enable and protect self-governance, the rule of law, civil and political rights, property rights, and economic opportunities. The people of the United States continue to demonstrate the fruits of such liberty, and we should never apologize for their generosity and endeavors that have saved millions of lives and rescued millions of people from the throes of tyranny.

- **Win in Afghanistan.** The United States will sacrifice its credibility, undermine the confidence of the NATO alliance, and place vital U.S. national interests at risk if it accepts defeat in Afghanistan. The world will become a much more dangerous place. On the other hand, winning in Afghanistan will guard against the possibility of another 9/11 type of terrorist attack on the U.S. and create the necessary pressure on nuclear-armed Pakistan to deal with organized terrorist groups within its borders, partner to demobilize the Taliban, and recognize the importance of normalizing relations with India.

Winning will be a crushing blow to those who provide support for Islamist terrorism and a stern warning to all our enemies that the U.S. can and will defend its vital national interests. But winning will require renouncing a predetermined timeline and fully resourcing the U.S. military counterinsurgency strategy.

- **Take a tougher stand on North Korea.** The U.S. must stand shoulder to shoulder in defense of its ally, South Korea. It must insist that all nations fully implement U.N. sanctions on North Korea to prevent Pyongyang from procuring and exporting missile- and WMD-related components and freeze the financial assets of any complicit North Korean or foreign person, company, bank, or government. The sanctions should be maintained until Pyongyang abandons the behavior that triggered punitive action.

The U.S. must press the U.N. Security Council to close the loopholes in Resolution 1874, such as adding measures to enable the military means to enforce the sanctions. It should target the other end of proliferation by imposing unilateral sanctions on a more extensive list of foreign entities engaged in the pipeline and call upon

other nations to fulfill their obligations to enforce laws and U.N. resolutions. It should lead the global effort to enforce international law against illegal North Korean activities, including the counterfeiting of currency and pharmaceuticals, the production and distribution of narcotics, and money laundering.

- **Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.** An Iranian people free from the domination of a repressive, extremist government is the best way to turn back the ambitions of a regime intent on threatening the free world with nuclear weapons. The U.S. must insist that other concerned countries enforce the strongest possible targeted sanctions on the regime in Tehran and on its internal security organs; ban all foreign investment, loans and credits, subsidized trade, and refined petroleum exports to Iran; and deny visas to its officials. It should launch a targeted public diplomacy campaign to expose the regime's human rights abuses and help facilitate communications among the dissidents. It should find ways to aid the opposition. It should strive to reduce Iranian meddling in Iraq by maintaining the strongest troop presence there; a stable and democratic Iraq will offer Shiites an alternative model that helps to delegitimize Iran's Islamist system.

The U.S. should rapidly develop and deploy a new generation of nuclear weapons to convince Tehran that any attempt to use nuclear weapons will likely fail to achieve whatever political and military objectives it has in mind. And it should expand U.S. military capabilities to defend U.S. interests and allies, including deploying a robust and comprehensive missile defense system.

- **Undertake responsible arms control with a strategy to "protect and defend" the nation.** Such a strategy would allow the U.S. and Russia to reduce their operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads below the levels in the Moscow Treaty without constraining missile defenses. It would permit nuclear weapons to be configured and deployed to enhance those defenses without the threat of retaliation on population centers. It would seek mutual cooperation from Moscow in fielding effective missile defenses against strategic

attacks. It would seek, as an offshoot of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, to negotiate bilateral treaties with Russia and others to counter nuclear-armed terrorism. Finally, it would seek to invite other countries to join with the U.S. and Russia in a global stability treaty that emphasizes strategic defenses, not offensive nuclear arms.

- **Establish the world's freest economy.** Economic strength is the cornerstone of national power. We must adopt an economic freedom agenda⁶¹ for the United States that, if fully implemented, would help the U.S. to rejoin the ranks of the economically "free" on the Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal *Index of Economic Freedom* by improving its score from 78.0 to 89.8. Even better, for the first time ever, this would give the U.S. the top ranking among all the economies of the world—a worthy goal for "the land of the free" that is fully attainable by a committed and determined citizenry.

America Must Lead

A doctrine that posits that America must blend in better with the rest of the world will usher in America's decline. American exceptionalism is not dead. Even more, it is not the root of all the world's evils. It is the blessing of the liberty for which so many Americans fought, and each generation has a moral obligation to do what they can to spread that liberty and thereby ensure peace. It is simply not possible to remain free and prosperous at home if freedom and prosperity do not exist abroad. We cannot isolate ourselves from the world any more than we can become like all the rest without drastic repercussions for our nation and the world.

The Obama Doctrine, by seeking to remake America to please others, will fail because, in the end, no one will like the instability, vulnerability, and economic stagnation that follow from a weaker America.

America has seen dangerous times before—during the Revolution, the Civil War, and two world

wars. Each time, America emerged stronger than before because most Americans decided they did not want to be defeated. They refused to give up.

The Obama Doctrine, by seeking to remake America to please others, will fail because, in the end, no one will like the instability, vulnerability, and economic stagnation that follows from a weaker America.

America's decline is not inevitable. It is a choice; it will happen when most Americans decide that what is unique about this country—the Constitution and our legacy of liberty—is no longer worth fighting for. The Tea Party movement indicates that many Americans still hold our founding principles dear, but they must remain vigilant and ready to defend our liberties from every internal and external threat.

America remains the indispensable nation, with many lives depending on its economic and political power. It is the guardian of freedoms and security at home and abroad precisely because it is exceptional.

What Ronald Reagan believed remains true: America must secure the peace with strength—strength of character, strength of will, moral strength from our values and our aspirations, economic strength born of opportunity, and military strength hewn from the ingenuity and ideals of a free people.

President Obama believes that his outward orientation will improve America's standing in the world and thus its security, but America's policies and interests can never mirror those of other countries. No other country has the caliber of military and economic resources to compare to ours, and no other country accepts the kind of responsibility we have for assuring the security of free people around the world. Our interests will always be at odds with those of other nations, no matter how much we try to conform to them.

61. Ambassador Terry Miller and Kim R. Holmes, "Mostly Free": The Startling Decline of America's Economic Freedom and What to Do About It," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 82, July 14, 2010, p. 13, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2010/07/Mostly-Free-The-Startling-Decline-of-Americas-Economic-Freedom-and-What-to-Do-About-It>.

The tenets of the Obama Doctrine described in this paper do not suit either this geopolitical reality or someone who believes in America's obligation and ability to lead. Rather, they suit someone who believes he is managing America's decline in a "post-American" world. They do not reflect history or the threats we face. They will serve to undermine America's strengths and make it more difficult for friends and allies to figure out where we stand or how we might act in critical times. Ultimately, the Obama Doctrine will force friendly nations to look elsewhere, not to Washington, for arrangements that bring them greater security.

And that will make this a far more dangerous world indeed.

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