

# A World of Liberty Under Law

## By G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter

**The United States is at a foreign policy crossroad.**

**For five tumultuous years since the September 11 attacks, America has seen itself – and the world – through the prism of these attacks and the resulting “war on terrorism.”**

NOW IT IS TIME for the U.S. to conduct foreign policy with a more positive and encompassing vision of the world – and to pursue a national security strategy that responds to the wider array of threats and opportunities in the 21st century. With precisely this goal, the Princeton Project on National Security launched a multi-year effort that brought together several hundred experts in working groups and conferences to assess the global security landscape in the decades ahead and chart a way forward.

The project was inspired by one of America’s most distinguished diplomats, George Kennan, who after World War II articulated the famous strategy of “containment” that guided the U.S. during the Cold War. The Princeton Project is, in effect, an attempt to do what Kennan did at an earlier crossroads – that is, to articulate a set of ideas about the global challenges that lie ahead and offer a plan to confront them. As co-directors of this Project, we wrote the Final Report that sets out our vision. It is a forward looking

strategy that advances policy recommendations aimed at shaping the international environment in ways that will enhance the security of the U.S. and its allies in the decades ahead. We call this strategy “forging a world of liberty under law.”

We propose that the U.S. work with other nations to strengthen the global infrastructure of capacity and cooperation to deal with a kaleidoscopic array of 21st century issues. The global institutions that are critical for coping with crisis and violence have been weakening in the last decade. At the same time, newly powerful states – many of them in Asia – are seeking a voice in running the global system. A central part of the Princeton Project is a set of recommendations about the rebuilding of global institutions, starting with radical reform of the United Nations Security Council, the creation of a Concert of Democracies, and the establishment of a North-east Asian security organization.

### **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY THREATS AND CHALLENGES**

A national security vision must start with a judgment about the nature of the international threat environment. In our view, the U.S. does not face a singular preeminent security threat in the 21st century. In the last century, America confronted fascism and communism – perils generated by aggressive and militarily powerful states wielding dangerous ideologies. National security strategies organized around anti-fascism and anti-communism followed. But in the coming era, the U.S. faces a much more decentralized and diversified set of threats and chal-

lenges. As much as some Americans might prefer to see a world with one big threat and one simple formula for fighting it – Islamo-fascism as the successor to Nazism and communism – that is just not the world we live in. The rise of China, the risk of global pandemics, nuclear proliferation, transnational terrorism, and environmental catastrophe are only some of the interconnected challenges we must face.

An effective national security strategy must build on an infrastructure of capacity and cooperation to meet whatever comes at us, so that we may respond quickly and flexibly. Time and money must be invested in technology, diplomacy, institutions and policies that have maximum impact and multiple uses. An overarching concept is needed as a guide, but it must offer a positive vision of the world and concrete policies for achieving that vision rather than a fear-based response to individual threats.

The vision we put forth for a secure and prosperous America is a world of liberty under law, with stable democracies able to provide their citizens with both order and freedom. And it is a world of effective international institutions able to build democracy over the long term, safeguard human rights, and use force when necessary to uphold international law.

#### **FORGING A WORLD OF LIBERTY UNDER LAW**

In our view, America must stand for, seek, and secure liberty under law both within countries and between them. Our founders knew that the success of the American experiment rested on the combined blessings of order and liberty, and by order they meant law. Internationally, Americans would be safer, richer, and healthier in a world of countries that have achieved this balance – mature liberal democracies. This is a long term goal and does not mean unilaterally promoting a particular system of government by force or coercion; indeed, it recognizes the

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vital importance of good relations with countries like China if America is to create a cooperative international order. Getting to this goal requires a series of sustainable policies and commitments.

#### **BRINGING GOVERNMENTS UP TO PAR**

Democracy is the best instrument yet devised for ensuring individual liberty over the long term, but only when it exists within a framework of order established by law. We must develop a much more sophisticated strategy of creating the deeper preconditions for successful liberal democracy – preconditions that extend far beyond the simple holding of elections. The U.S. should assist and encourage Popular, Accountable, and Rights-regarding (PAR) governments worldwide. A PAR approach means working with other countries to edge them along the path to democracy, not because it is in America's interest but because over time they will come to see that it is in their own interest.

To help bring governments up to PAR, we must connect them and their citizens in as many ways as possible to governments and societies that are already at PAR and provide them with incentives and support to follow suit. We should establish and institutionalize networks of national, regional, and local government officials and nongovernmental representatives to create numerous channels for PAR nations to work on common problems and to communicate and inculcate the values and practices that safeguard liberty under law.

#### **RETHINKING THE ROLE OF FORCE**

At their core, both liberty and law must be backed up by force. Instead of insisting on a doctrine of primacy, the U.S. should aim to sustain the military predominance of liberal democracies and encourage the development of military capabilities by like-minded democracies in a way that is consistent with their security interests. The predominance of liberal democracies is necessary to prevent a return to destabilizing and dangerous great power competition; it would also augment our capacity to meet the various threats and challenges that confront us.

America must also dust off and update doctrines of deterrence. The U.S. should announce – preferably with our allies – that in the case of an act of nuclear terrorism, we will hold the source of the nuclear materials or weapon responsible. We must also ensure that our deterrent force remains credible against countries with different strategic cultures and varied national security doctrines. And we must find ways of deterring suppliers of nuclear weapons materials from transferring them – deliberately or inadvertently – to terrorists.

America should also work with other nations to develop new guidelines on the preventive use of force against terrorists and extreme states. Preventive strikes represent a necessary tool in fighting terror networks, but they should be proportionate and based on intelligence that adheres to strict standards. The preventive use

## **Focus on**

### **Rebuilding the Liberal International Order**

**The system of international institutions that the U.S. and its allies built after World War II and steadily expanded over the course of the Cold War is broken. Every major institution – the United Nations (U.N.), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – and countless smaller ones face calls for major reform. The U.S. has the largest stake of any nation in fixing this system, precisely because we are the most powerful nation in the world. Power cannot be wielded unilaterally, however, in the pursuit of a narrow definition of the national interest because such actions breed resentment, fear, and resistance. We need to reassure other nations about our global role and win their support to tackle common problems.**

**The emphasis is on taking culture into account in addressing sustainability issues. This is especially the case in efforts to balance traditional perspectives and mainstream conservation principles, where solutions are often dictated by a centralized state and guided by inappropriate scientific logic – what the editors term, “scientism.” The tendency to ignore the cultural context, the authors argue, hinders outcomes that actually favor the environment.**

**However, it is clear that America can no longer rely on the legacy institutions of the Cold War; radical surgery is required. The U.N. is**

simultaneously in crisis and in demand. Its structures are outdated and its performance is inadequate, yet it remains the world's principal forum for addressing the most difficult international security issues. America must make sweeping U.N. reform a major priority. Necessary reforms include: expanding the Security Council to include India, Japan, Brazil, Germany, two African states, and at least one major Muslim power as either permanent members

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without a veto or the equivalent of permanent members; ending the veto for all Security Council resolutions authorizing direct action in response to a crisis; and requiring all U.N. members to accept "the responsibility to protect," which acknowledges that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe, but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility passes to the international community.

While pushing for reform of the U.N. and other major global institutions, the U.S.

should work with its allies to develop a global "Concert of Democracies" – a new institution designed to allow the world's liberal democracies to develop common positions and take concerted action on issues ranging from U.N. reform to humanitarian intervention and nuclear non-proliferation. This Concert would institutionalize and ratify the "democratic peace," the idea that liberal democracies do not fight each other. If the U.N. cannot be reformed over the course of the coming decade, the Concert would provide an alternative forum for liberal democracies to authorize collective action, including the use of force, by a supermajority vote. Its membership would be selective, but self-selected. Members would have to pledge not to use or plan to use force against one another; commit to holding multiparty, free-and-fair elections at regular intervals; guarantee civil and political rights for their citizens enforceable by an independent judiciary; and accept "the responsibility to protect."

The U.S. must also revive the NATO alliance by updating its grand bargains and expanding its international partnerships; build a "networked order" of informal institutions, such as private networks and bilateral ties; and reduce the sharply escalating and politically destabilizing inequalities among and within states that result from the otherwise beneficial process of globalization.

of force against states should be employed only as a last resort and authorized by a multilateral institution – preferably a reformed Security Council, but alternatively by the existing Security Council or another broadly representative multilateral body like NATO.

#### **TACKLING SPECIFIC GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

In addition to our proposals for building liberty under law and rebuilding global institutions, we also offer specific ideas for confronting dangers and trouble spots:

**The Middle East:** Preventing the cradle of civilization from becoming the cradle of global conflict must be a top priority. Any long-term settlement in the Middle East must include a comprehensive two-state solution in Israel and Palestine; the U.S. should take the lead in doing everything possible to advance this goal. This push for peace should be accompanied by a steady process of institution building to establish a framework of liberty under law among Middle Eastern nations. In an effort to combat radicalization, the U.S. should make every effort to work with Islamic governments and Islamic/Islamist movements, including fundamentalists, as long as they disavow terrorism and other forms of violence.

America must take considerable risks to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons. However, we must also be prepared to offer Iran assurances that assuage its legitimate fears, such as a negative security assurance, the reliable provision to it of peaceful nuclear materials, and international influence commensurate with its position. On the other hand, the U.S. should make it clear that life as a nuclear weapons power, if it came to pass, would be a thoroughly miserable experience for Iran.

The U.S. should assure Iraq that we remain willing and ready to do everything we can to rebuild the country and to train and support a government that is up to PAR, but that this will not be sustainable in the context of a full-scale civil war. In cooperation with the Iraqi government,

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America should establish a series of benchmarks that would allow U.S. forces to redeploy outside Iraq and to places inside Iraq where they can be useful in building order and avoid becoming entangled in civil conflict. The U.S. must also work with the European Union and Russia to prevent a spillover of the Iraqi conflict to the rest of the region; this should include the provision of incentives to regional powers to behave responsibly and the imposition of costs on those countries that exacerbate the crisis.

**Global terror networks:** Framing the struggle against terrorism as a war similar to World War II or the Cold War lends legitimacy and respect to an enemy that deserves neither. The result is to strengthen, not degrade, our adversary. Labeling terrorists as Islamic warriors has a similar effect. Terror networks represent a global insurgency with a criminal core. Our response must take the form of a global counterinsurgency that utilizes a range of tools – law enforcement, intelligence, and tactical military tools, such as special forces. Our priorities must be to prevent terror networks from acquiring nuclear weapons, to destroy the hard core of terrorists, and to peel away terrorist supporters and sympathizers. The ability of terror networks to dictate the

agenda of the world's leading powers is a crucial source of their strength; the U.S. must not dance to this tune. In the longer run, building a world of liberty under law will make it harder for specific grievances and fanatical ideologies to take root and grow into global violence.

**The proliferation and transfer of nuclear weapons:**

The world is on the cusp of a new era of nuclear danger. Life in a nuclear world promises to be unstable and fraught with peril, from the risk of the collapse of a nuclear state to the potential failure of deterrence in a sea of uncertainty. These problems are not separate but part of a general breakdown of the global non-proliferation regime. Thus, we must reform and revive the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by revising Article IV to allow non-nuclear weapons states nuclear energy but not nuclear weapons capacity and by taking concrete steps to live up to our commitment under Article VI to reduce our own dependence on nuclear weapons. We should also use aggressive counter-proliferation measures, including locking down all insecure nuclear weapons and materials, building on the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to interdict the trade in nuclear materials, and developing plans to intervene effectively if a nuclear-weapons state like Pakistan or North Korea collapses.

**The rise of China and Order in East Asia:** The rise of China is one of the seminal events of the early 21st century. America's goal should not be to block or contain China, but rather to help it achieve its legitimate ambitions within the current international order and to become a responsible stakeholder in Asian and international politics. Over the long run, the U.S. should seek to foster conditions that make it attractive for China to embrace liberty under law both for the Chinese themselves and in the international system. In Asia more broadly, America should aim to build a trans-Pacific, rather than pan-Asian, regional order – that is, one in which the U.S.

plays a full part. The U.S.-Japan alliance should remain the bedrock of American strategy in East Asia. However, the U.S. should advise Japan to move very cautiously in revising Article 9 of its postwar constitution to allow it to militarize and to do so only in tandem with a new multilateral framework through which it can consult and reassure South Korea and China.

The U.S. should also seek the creation of an East Asian security institution that brings together the major powers – China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and America – for ongoing discussions about regional issues. This forum would provide a mechanism through which China and the regional powers could signal restraint and register commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. At the same time, we should continue to strengthen ties with Asia's other emerging power, India, and formulate policies throughout the region based on the principle that sustained economic growth in Asian countries other than China is the key to managing China's rise.

**A global pandemic:** Highly infectious diseases represent a national security threat of the first order – even though they are not guided by a human hand. Health experts currently warn of the apocalyptic danger of an avian influenza pandemic, which has the potential to kill hundreds of millions of people. Indeed, AIDS already poses a grave security threat. To combat the threat of another global pandemic, we must invest more in our public health system, provide adequate resources and training to our first responders, build the capacity of foreign governments that are least equipped to deal with disease outbreaks, and create an incentive structure in at-risk countries to ensure that they take necessary public health measures in a timely fashion.

**Energy:** Massive U.S. consumption of oil threatens American security by transferring an enormous amount of wealth from Americans to autocratic regimes and by contributing to climate change and degradation of the environ-

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ment. The only solution to these problems is to decrease our dependence on oil and provide incentives for investments in energy alternatives. The U.S. should also lead international efforts to deal with climate change, seeking a third way between the Kyoto Protocol's requirements for emission reductions and opposition to any binding constraints.

#### **RENEWING AMERICA'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD**

The U.S. must build a stronger protective infrastructure – throughout our society, our government, and the wider world – that helps prevent threats and limits the damage once they materialize. In our society, we must strengthen our public health system, repair a broken communications system, and reform public education so that students attain the skills required to achieve our national security objectives. In our government, we need to create “joined-up government;” de-politicize threat assessment; integrate relevant but neglected portfolios, such as economics and health, into the national security policy-making process; and reach out to the private sector. In the wider world, we must work through networks of security officials to contain immediate threats before they reach our shores and should consider defining our border protections beyond actual physical borders.

Finally, America should renew its “grand bargain” with the rest of the world. For fifty years after 1945, the U.S. created and led a stable and prosperous world order organized around open markets, democracy, security alliances and co-

operative institutions. American national security and global security were tied together. America associated its national security with the building of a liberal international order that responded to the aspirations of many nations and peoples. Now, in the 21st century, the U.S. has an opportunity to rise up and do so again – in new ways, to be sure, and in response to new realities. The patient pursuit of liberty under law is a strategy for building a new global order that makes America safe – and also proud of itself.

**G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter are co-directors of the Princeton Project on National Security, which brought together almost 400 national security experts over the past three years to develop a bipartisan national security strategy aimed at the coming decades. They are co-authors of the project's final report, “Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: U.S. National Security Strategy in the 21st Century.”**

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