

Beyond Borders

American foreign policy must look beyond the nation state and toward human security.

Anyone not immediately caught up in the whirlwind of today's Beltway foreign policy punditry would be driven to hair-tearing at the back-and-forth between defenders of the Bush Administration and the multitude of critics arrayed against it. That's because while President George W. Bush's approach has obviously failed, too many of its critics refuse to focus on why. Their alternatives revolve around competence, with perhaps a bit of multilateral fence-mending thrown in. But they also assume as valid the fundamental tenet guiding the Administration's approach, as defined by George Kennan during the Cold War, that securing the national interest lies in protecting "the continued ability of this country to pursue its internal life without serious interference." While that approach might have been relevant to

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the era of Cold War containment, it is untenable today. In a globalized world, it is no longer enough to center our foreign policy on a narrowly-defined concept of “national security” that assumes the continued dominance of the nation-state. What is needed is a fundamental change in the terms of the debate to include a realistic assessment of a world that is both interdependent and increasingly fragmented. What is missing is consideration of human security—and why, if we are to promote effectively our sustainable security, it must be incorporated into a modern American foreign policy.

“Human security” is a concept more familiar to those in the economic development field than the foreign policy world. Some define it in narrow terms, referring simply to the challenges posed by war and mass atrocities. But, increasingly, it is being more broadly defined as a concept that goes beyond a singular focus on the survival of states—as “national security” does—to include the survival and dignity of human beings regardless of national origins. The UN’s Commission on Human Security defines it as protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment,” while the Human Security Network—an alliance of like-minded countries ranging from Canada and the Netherlands to Jordan and Mali—describes its vision as “a humane world where people can live in security and dignity, free from poverty and despair.”

There is a tendency among national security experts to discount the human security paradigm as idealistic and soft, while advocates of human security criticize those favoring national security for placing too much emphasis on narrow nationalism and military power. To be sure, the nation-state-based concept of national security can provide the foundation for strategies to deal with state-based threats, such as those posed by Iran or North Korea. But it is less relevant to the host of contemporary threats, ranging from climate change and pandemic flu to money-laundering and the international drug trade, threats that transcend state borders and affect people across the globe without reference to citizenship or state affiliation. Only by pursuing both national and human security can the United States hope to achieve a level of security that is sustainable and durable in the long term. This means adopting a strategy that takes into account short-term threats and long-term challenges; that focuses on both state-based concerns and global trends; and that reflects the simple fact that we can no longer pursue our internal life without interference from abroad.

Short-term vs. Long-term Security

With Iraq, Iran, and North Korea all posing greater risks to our security today than when President George W. Bush first lumped them together as the “axis

of evil” five years ago, it is tempting to put off the less tangible and seemingly distant trends that are shaping the modern world and our future in it. And to be fair, American leadership must focus its attention on the near-term, state-based threats to our security; to do otherwise would be negligent. Successive presidents had to ensure that we prevailed in the long-running rivalry with the Soviet Union, and Bush rightly chose to prioritize the defense of America against terrorism in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Yet, the need to confront immediate threats to America’s security must be balanced with efforts to manage our long-term security challenges; in other words, we must do two things at once. The short-term perspective considers how to deal with immediate threats and discrete incidents simply defined; a long-term view defines how a country wants an increasingly complex world to look in a

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generation and then outlines strategic approaches to make it so. Both approaches are necessary in a sustainable foreign policy package.

Bush, of course, would argue that his foreign policy will produce real security because it not only focuses on the near-term goal of success in Iraq, but also on the need to defeat “global

terror.” But even if he were to align his policies with his rhetoric, his vision would not lead to long-term, sustainable security because his fundamental assumption—that the events of September 11 changed everything—is wrong. Central as the war on terror is to our current security, it ignores the long-term human security challenges that existed before September 11 and still flourish today, from a global energy crisis and climate change to weak states and poverty. Responding to these challenges is complicated by the fact that we are facing a world in flux and, significantly, a shift in the arc of global power and influence that makes the simple assertion of America’s prerogatives difficult, if not impossible.

First, today’s centers of power and influence are growing in number and diversity. With growing economic and military power, China and India have established themselves as new and potent powers. The pursuit of nuclear weapons has rendered Iran, North Korea, India, and Pakistan decisive players on the world stage. Latin America is fast realigning as a left-leaning bloc eager to counter the United States. And as the recent collapse of the Doha Round of world-trade talks has made clear, even the world’s poorest countries, by uniting among themselves and with emerging-market nations, have newfound influence.

Second, ours is a time of stunning political upheaval. Since 1974, the number of democracies worldwide has increased by a factor of three—a positive gain to be sure, but one that has yet to be locked in. The vast majority of these countries—Nigeria, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and even a large part of Eastern Europe—remain exceedingly fragile as they grapple simultaneously with profound political transition, the legacies of war and repression, and the strains of poverty. In the increasingly volatile Middle East, Africa, and Asia, the failure of rulers to deliver, economically or politically, has hastened the rise of a new political construct shaped by Islam. And where political Islam has grown more hostile, two other trends have emerged: the rise of a contrary, transnational political identity combined with a potent and dangerous extremism.

Third, we live in an era characterized by the economic marginalization of a near-majority of the world. Almost half of the world's six billion people live on less than two dollars per day, and more than a billion survive on half that amount. More than 50 countries are poorer today than they were in 1990. Low-income countries account for only three cents of every dollar generated through exports in the international trading system, and less than 1 percent of the total global flow of foreign direct investment is going to the world's least-developed countries. At the same time, the world's ten wealthiest nations, which constitute only 14 percent of the world's population, are 75 times richer than the ten poorest, and account for 75 percent of global GDP. With the expansion of the Internet and satellite television, these disparities become more visible—including to those on the bottom—and can easily fuel discontent.

Finally, sweeping demographic changes are poised to alter further the contours of the global socio-economic landscape. While the developed world soon will incur the economic burdens imposed by an aging population, the developing world is grappling with an expanding youth bulge. By 2025, 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities, with many of them—like Cairo, Lagos, Nairobi, and Mumbai—ill-equipped to provide the jobs, housing, and services that this expanded population will require. These vast demographic convulsions are exerting increased pressure on already overstretched natural resources. Fossil-fuel-based energy supplies are already proving insufficient to meet our own demands, let alone the new demands posed by rapidly emerging markets like China and India. To top it all off, unchecked climate change threatens to trigger violent global weather patterns, exacerbate water stress, provoke mass migrations, and induce famine that could kill thousands of people and displace 150 million more by 2050.

These challenges are unique not only in scope but also in nature, as they are all transnational threats. They affect all of the world's people, not just a handful

of states. They cannot be defeated by military power. Managing them requires more than a strategy focused on defending and protecting the United States. It also requires a focus on human security to guide the United States as it attempts to manage globalization to its advantage and modernize the international system to serve our collective interests.

Toward a Sustainable Security Strategy

By complementing the traditional concept of national security with human security, America can craft a strategy that is more sustainable for the simple reason that it would afford the possibility of dealing simultaneously with short-term, nation-state-based threats and the global challenges that transcend state borders. But getting there requires three core elements: an organizing principle that can unite a majority of the world's people; the elevation and strategic utilization of the full range of our foreign policy tools; and a revitalized international system that reflects not just the challenges that existed when it was created in the wake of World War II, but also the realities of today.

America is currently without an organizing principle to unite an increasingly fragmented world. During the Cold War, it was the struggle between freedom and communism. Today, however, an ill-conceived and poorly managed “global war on terror” has divided America from much of the world rather than uniting it behind our ideals. To address transnational challenges, then, we must replace at the center of foreign policy the promotion of the universal values that in the past have enabled America to assert its power and influence. And these values must be more than just “American values”—in the eyes of much of the world, what the Bush Administration describes as the projection of American values is interpreted as the assertion of American imperialism.

What is needed is a vision for a global common good that looks beyond nation-state interests to address the conditions that all people seek for themselves: dignity, good health, and a future for their children. Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy does talk about the importance of “human dignity,” including in its definition the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the state, freedom of speech and worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance, and respect for private property. It's a laudable list, but one that is more striking for what it omits than for what it includes. In his second inaugural in 1937, Franklin Roosevelt said that “the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.” And this is what is missing from the administration's concept of human dignity—access to economic opportunity or, from a human security perspective, freedom from want. These are priorities

that sit at the core of the progressive vision and are in serious need of attention at home and abroad.

For more than half of the world's population, basic human dignity is compromised by rampant unemployment, the inaccessibility of affordable health care and education, chronic hunger and malnutrition, and a lack of access to affordable energy. Like in the United States, the current antidote to economic decline is increased borrowing; developing-world debt increased to almost \$3 trillion early in this decade, and developing countries spend on average \$13 for debt repayment for every \$1 they receive in development assistance.

In response, the United States must start to think boldly—and globally—about the issues that transcend national borders and are confronting not just the United States and our allies but people all over the world. Today, for example, we stand at an impasse on global trade,

with negotiations under the Doha round of trade talks having collapsed because of disagreements over the massive agricultural subsidies paid by the United States and European Union to our agricultural sectors. The current debate about the way forward is con-

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strained by a false choice between two unworkable options. Some argue that we should stay the course and attempt to get the best deal possible for the United States, regardless of the impact on hundreds of millions of poor producers in the developing world. The countervailing view is that because a global agreement remains elusive, we should abandon the Doha talks and instead focus on securing multiple, bilateral trade agreements. Both options assume that what is best for the United States is to prevail over other trading partners, but neither option will result in what is needed—a rationalized global agricultural system that provides fair market prices for all farmers. In addition, both would result in a global trading system that fosters more division than unity. Instead of viewing trade as an all-or-nothing proposition for individual states, a human security focus means approaching these negotiations as an opportunity to promote global stability by ensuring that the benefits of globalization accrue to a global majority of individual people.

Even bolder would be to take on the global energy crisis as a vehicle for acting on the global common good, rather than just national security, and leading a worldwide effort to develop renewable energy markets and the jobs and savings that those new markets would generate. For much of the world, the cost of oil dependence is captured less in terms of security or expenditure to meet

increasing demand and more in terms of lost economic potential. As the bipartisan Energy Future Coalition points out, of the world's six billion people, only one-third enjoy the kind of access to energy that we take for granted and another third have only intermittent access. The remaining third—some two billion people—are fully without modern energy services and thus lack the lights by which to read, the refrigeration needed to store vital medicines and food, or the transportation capacity required to move goods to market.

Against this backdrop, ordinary producers at home and abroad are ill-served by the existing system. In the United States, despite \$2 billion in annual subsidies, 300 family farms are shutting down each month; while in Africa, farmers cannot compete with the heavily subsidized crops produced by America and Europe. Despite the common problem faced by family farmers at home and

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halfway across the world, however, current international deliberations on agriculture find American farmers pitted against their counterparts in Africa and Latin America.

The alternative is to start from the premise of shared transnational interests, plan with an eye toward the future, and recapture the spirit of in-

novation that has made America a world leader throughout our modern history. A grand bargain, for example, through which the United States would make significant investments in the domestic production of biofuels and share with the developing world our expertise and technology, would lay the ground for a new global agricultural economy and change fundamentally the debate about agricultural trade. Such a plan would lead to the unraveling of America's complex subsidy program and be a boost to the developing world's agricultural sector, while seeding a new biofuel industry in the United States. This would not solve all of the problems that currently plague global trade talks, but it would shift the debate from a battle to divide the spoils of a system that is not working to one premised on a win-win scenario.

Acting from a human-security perspective would also mean using the full range of our power to ensure that a global majority is able to participate in and reap the benefits of globalization. To be sure, sustained military power is critical to our security in the short and long term. But only when we couple our defensive might with an ability to make offensive moves—using both “hard” and “soft” power—can we truly protect America. Take the issue of development assistance, one of our most potent but least contemplated foreign policy tools. To its credit,

the Bush Administration has supported an almost threefold increase in overseas development assistance since 2000 and launched such major initiatives as the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). But, even with these gains, our foreign aid program remains an afterthought rather than a core element of our foreign policy. A sustainable security strategy—one that incorporates human security—would adopt a fundamentally different approach to how the United States employs development assistance, using it to bolster investments in the future stability and prosperity of countries that, because of weakness, conflict, poverty, or the mere facts of history, are not yet integrated into the global community.

This is not a new concept. Under the Marshall Plan, the United States invested \$13 billion, or approximately \$100 billion in today's dollars, in the reconstruction of postwar Europe, an investment that yielded stability, the emergence of new trading partners, and alliances that have provided the basis for greater global and American security for over a half-century. Development assistance today is a powerful instrument for making sure that we actually deliver on the values we promote; for shoring up weak states and consolidating emerging democracies; and for making sure that the world is made up of a majority of capable, democratic states.

But, for all of its potential power, our development assistance, as currently structured, is neither efficient nor relevant to the challenges we face today. It remains tied to the nation-state model and to reinforcing our immediate rather than long-term interests, reflecting an overwhelming bias in favor of buttressing short-term policies over managing long-term trends. Egypt, for example, today receives in excess of \$1 billion per year, while we have allocated only \$300 million over four years to promote democracy in the entire Middle East. Our aid to Pakistan far exceeds any investment we are making in bolstering the capacity of weak states in the developing world to contain or withstand an outbreak of pandemic flu. And the hundreds of millions of dollars we have spent on emergency relief and peacekeeping in Liberia far outstrip any investments in that country's long-term capacity to function. To be fair, we will always need to use foreign aid to enhance our chances of short-term policy success. But only when we balance the equation to include substantial and parallel investments in preventing crises and consolidating positive trends will we be able to lay the ground for greater security.

Rationalizing our investments and giving development assistance the prominence it deserves would also require a change in how it is handled within the federal government. Development assistance today resides in the State Department, where it is readily subjected to short-term imperatives, while the Defense

Department is increasing its own role in the delivery of foreign aid. When the president convenes his Cabinet, he needs to have at the table an officer with the skills, expertise, and authority to craft and implement development policies that balance short-term imperatives and long-term interests. To start, a new, stand-alone development agency should be established, headed by a Cabinet-level secretary and mandated to direct policy and coordinate all economic assistance. Moreover, the optimal utilization of development assistance would require a new, forward-looking Foreign Assistance Act to overcome the constraints imposed by the existing guiding legislation, which was written for a far different time some 45 years ago, has been amended to include multiple and competing objectives, and is loaded with earmarks.

Finally, a human security strategy must give shape to a new global architecture that champions fairness, is relevant to our times, and governs international cooperation. The Bush Administration and its allies have abandoned a long tradition of American support for the multilateral system, portraying it as a threat to our sovereignty rather than as a vehicle for our leadership. As a result, even the most passionate critics of the Administration have retreated in the face of the Bush Administration's passive-aggressive stance toward the UN, allowing the debate to focus more on whether the UN is totally or only partially ineffective rather than on how we might fix it. Clearly, the United States—like any country—must reserve the right to defend itself, even absent the support of the international community. Upholding that right, however, does not mean that there is wisdom in weakening our international institutions.

That our international system is not as effective as we need it to be is less a matter of will than of relevance, for the UN was designed for an era defined by the nation-state. And it is a fallacy that our participation in a robust, effective, and empowered UN would erode our sovereignty, as globalization has already altered state sovereignty in fundamental ways. Individual states no longer control global trade, for example, which is today dominated by commerce conducted between multinational corporations and not national companies. States acting alone cannot control the spread of disease, the international drug trade, the movement and financing of terrorist networks, or the spillover effects of armed conflict. In fact, the international community, including the United States, has endorsed a principle rooted in this changed notion of state sovereignty—the “responsibility to protect”—which posits that when states are either unwilling or unable to protect their own citizens, the international community has an obligation to step in to safeguard them from harm.

In the realm of transnational threats and challenges, a human security strategy would thus put America in the lead in efforts not simply to reform the

UN, but to transform it and other institutions, ranging from the World Trade Organization to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, while also building the new forums for international cooperation that are necessary to manage the challenges of the future.

Beyond Bush

America is growing less, rather than more, secure because Bush operates on a one-dimensional view of the globe as a Cold War chessboard, changed only by the fact that our enemy today is not the Soviet Union but the “axis of evil.” The world was changing even before September 11, and is changing still. Progressives must shift the terms of the debate from one that assumes a static world in which America’s security rests exclusively on our ability to dominate to one that assumes that our security rests on our ability to lead and manage an extremely fluid and interdependent world.

By pursuing both national and human security, America can achieve more sustainable security over time. By aligning our interests with those of others, we can deliver on a common good that can prevail in the war of ideas. By using the full range of our power to integrate more countries into the global system, we can make that vision available to all. And by crafting a new, fair, and more effective global architecture, we can foster a world that is more united than divided. ■