

The vital national interests of the United States have always included:

\225 Protect the sovereignty, territory, and population of the US and prevent and deter threats to our homeland, including, today, nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) attacks and terrorism.

\225 Prevent the emergence of a hostile regional coalition or hegemon, such as the Nazi-Japanese Axis in World War II and the fear of a Soviet-Chinese axis in the Cold War.

\225 Ensure freedom of the seas and security of international sea lanes, communication, airways, and space. The US Navy is essential here.

\225 Ensure unhampered access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources. Ensure that energy resources flow without challenge. Think about Russia and Europe here.

\225 Deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression against US allies and friends. Our many treaties with countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Western Europe (during the Cold War) were essential in keeping the peace so far.

\225 \223Making the world safe for democracy\224 (Woodrow Wilson) has given us grief. Illiberal democracies do not provide a stable world. This should be scratched from our ongoing foreign policy missions.

\225 Our foreign policy works best when adversaries are afraid of our president. He should be both smart and dangerous, a difficult balance.

The military can play another role---but with care. During some humanitarian catastrophes (such as the Tsunami in Thailand), we assisted the UN in rescue missions. We learned, however, that humanitarian intervention in the Muslim world (Somalia, Syria, and Lebanon) is thankless and should probably be avoided.

Promoting regional stability, we can sometimes lead but other times the task should be shared. The French and British have intervened in genocides of former African colonies within reach of their sea power. Unfortunately, Central Africa is one of those areas not easily reached by anyone, Rwanda and Congo. Because they are not threats to us and are too difficult for intervention, those areas show us what the world is like without us.

We use alliances to reduce or eliminate NBC weapons, a successful program since the end of the Cold War. Two American senators were responsible for directly encouraging the Russians and their former satellites to cooperate in this mission.

We prevent and deter future terrorism and reduce our vulnerability to terrorist acts

through enhanced intelligence collection and protecting critical infrastructure. This policy is being hampered by well-intentioned opponents of intelligence gathering. Should there be a successful new attack, such opposition will melt.

Two other areas of global security involve criminal drug cartels and now, the trafficking of women and girls. The newest criminals in this trafficking are militant Islamists in Pakistan/Afghanistan, Nigeria, North Africa, Yemen, and Central Africa. The host countries are failing to address these issues, but at some point we will have to.

George Friedman, STRATFORD, examines the basic principles of US defense policy through both world wars and the Cold War. In all cases, American strategy for a century was to maintain a balance of power in Eurasia. If the balance shifted (invasions by Germany and Russia), the US would intervene, usually well after the trouble began, but we would win in each case.

The US would maintain the balance of power with minimal American exposure. We are doing the same today as in 1914: leaving the Europeans to manage themselves, assuming that the Russians were just as weak. When that balance changes, we intervene decisively.

Russia is now trying to take back its borderland buffers that they lost at the end of the humiliating Cold War. They are making a lot of noise right now, but the US is doing some important things behind the scenes, such as providing support for NATO, and, despite Western Europe's timidity, the Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, Romanians, Azerbaijanis, and Baltic states remember too well what it was like under Russian rule. They want, and will have, our help.

History does not repeat itself, but it sometimes comes close. US defense policy has been, for the most part, sensible (Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam excepted). Listen to the geographers and read history.

Foreign Policy Part 2: World War I and Today.

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