

The majority of Americans, furious over the Assad regime using poison gas on his own Syrian people, expressed approval of President Trump's attack on the Syrian airfield that launched the gas attack. When one sees such horrors, such as when American soldiers first entered the Nazi death camps, the desire for revenge is powerful. But knee-jerk revenge is not policy. What is American policy about assaults on helpless civilians? Do we have a consistent policy? Do we always react by punishing the perpetrator? Of course not.

Defense of helpless victims of violence outside of our own borders is not a policy; it is, however, an occasional reaction. The problem here is that we react inconsistently and nobody outside of our country knows when or why we will lash out.

However, this country does have some universal policy mandates that have been with us from our origins as a country, and it is important to know them. We have five geopolitical goals that drive our grand strategy. (See George Friedman's wonderful book, *The Next 100 Years*, for the best analysis and predictions based on them.) All of these policies involve national security.

1. The complete domination of North America by the United States Army. We absorbed every bit of land from coast to coast over the 19th century through purchase, wars that we won, and settlement. This gave us an amazing geographic benefit enjoyed by no other major country: two oceans, many protected ports for trade, river systems that water and permit transport of goods covering half our country. Natural resources and human resourcefulness second to none.

2. The elimination of any threat to the United States by any power in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine was declared even before we could defend it. We have defended it. We worry about Latin America only when we see a threat from another power at times of war. Cuba and the Soviets were the last such challenge.

3. Complete control of the maritime approaches to the United States by the Navy in order to preclude any possibility of invasion. Like the British, we discovered early how essential the navy is, much more important than any land army. Nobody has succeeded in invading us.

4. Complete domination of the world's oceans to further secure U.S. physical safety and guarantee control over the international trading system. The Bretton Woods conference gave this gift to the world, which resulted in 70 years of unprecedented wealth and the spread of improved governance worldwide.

5. The prevention of any other nation from challenging U.S. global naval power. Since the end of World War II, no other nation has had, or needed, the sort of naval power we have today. Even during the Cold War, the Russians could not rival our naval power. Geography is against them.

Friedman says that contrary to the notion that the U.S. has not won a war since the end of World War II (Korea truce, Vietnam retreat, Afghanistan and Iraq stalemates), we have to look at what our policy was. Part of U.S. policy is to prevent things from happening, to hinder our long-term enemies. The assault from Militant Islam, for example, greatly alarmed us on 9/11. However, our policy has resulted in the ultimate failure of this movement. Islamist attacks are largely in Muslim countries rather than here; and so long as Muslims are fighting each other, the United States has won its war. Islamist ideology produces individual martyrs willing to die, but they cannot win this way.

The Korean War ended in a truce, North Korea still threatening, but South Korea is prospering. North Korea, despite its noisy dictator, is not prospering, nor will it until his inner circle removes him.

We mistakenly thought Vietnam was an arm of Communist China. They were not, and although we withdrew, they are now on friendly terms with us and are starting to thrive.

And yes, we are an adolescent sort of country with a short attention span, but the grownups who usually lead us have done well. That's why I am an optimist.

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