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## A Strategy of Partnerships

### Secretary Colin L. Powell

Essay

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#### Broad and Deep

When most people think about U.S. foreign policy these days, they think first and sometimes only about aspects of the war on terrorism: the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, the troubles of the Middle East, and the terror cells lurking in Southeast Asia, Europe, and even the United States. This preoccupation is natural. International terrorism literally hit home on September 11, 2001, and, for understandable reasons, an outraged American public wants those responsible brought to justice. The American people also want to understand why the attacks happened -- and demand a foreign policy that makes sure such events will never happen again.

It is also natural that the war on terrorism has become the United States' number one foreign policy priority. It will remain so for as long as necessary, because terrorism -- potentially linked to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) -- now represents the greatest threat to American lives. Defeating terrorism is a priority that drives not only military action to subdue individual terrorists and deter their state supporters but also multilateral cooperation in law enforcement and intelligence sharing. It encompasses efforts both to stigmatize terrorism as a political instrument and to reduce the underlying sources of terrorist motivation and recruitment.

But the breadth of U.S. strategy transcends the war on terrorism. Indeed, a strategy limited to dealing with immediate threats would in the end fail to defeat them -- just as bailing water out of a boat would not fix a leak. The sharp focus on the front lines of the war against terrorism, however, has made it harder than usual for people to grasp what American strategy is really all about. We all know the old aphorism that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. These days, it seems that an administration can develop a sound foreign policy strategy, but it can't get some people to acknowledge or understand it.

#### President Bush's Vision

It is an unfailingly effective applause line for critics of any U.S. administration to charge that the president has no vision for the world, that he has no strategy. Every trouble is attributed to this failing, as though the world would otherwise be

perfectly accommodating to U.S. purposes. Unfortunately, this criticism has come close to being true in some administrations. But it is not true in the present one. President George W. Bush does have a vision of a better world. And he also has a strategy for translating that vision into reality. I know -- I was present at its creation.

The president's strategy was first laid out publicly in September 2002, in the *National Security Strategy of the United States* (NSS). A succinct document of fewer than 40 pages, the NSS defines U.S. policy priorities in eight substantive sections. Together, these parts add up to an integrated strategy that is broad and deep, far ranging and forward looking, attuned as much to opportunities for the United States as to the dangers it faces.

Of course, a public strategy document cannot be entirely frank about all the choices that U.S. leaders make; we do ourselves and our allies no favors by telling our adversaries everything that we think and plan. Nonetheless, this administration's public pronouncements have been remarkably candid. They reflect the personality of the president himself, a man who, with great consistency, says what he means and means what he says.

It is somewhat odd, therefore, to discover that our foreign policy strategy is so often misunderstood by both domestic and foreign observers. U.S. strategy is widely accused of being unilateralist by design. It isn't. It is often accused of being imbalanced in favor of military methods. It isn't. It is frequently described as being obsessed with terrorism and hence biased toward preemptive war on a global scale. It most certainly is not.

These distortions are partly explained by context. The NSS made the concept of preemption explicit in the heady aftermath of September 11, and it did so for obvious reasons. One reason was to reassure the American people that the government possessed common sense. As President Bush has said -- and as any sensible person understands -- if you recognize a clear and present threat that is undeterrable by the means you have at hand, then you must deal with it. You do not wait for it to strike; you do not allow future attacks to happen before you take action.

A second reason for including the notion of preemption in the NSS was to convey to our adversaries that they were in big trouble. Instilling a certain amount of anxiety in terrorist groups increases the likelihood they will cease activity or make mistakes and be caught. Moreover, some states have been complicit in terrorism not for ideological reasons but for opportunistic ones. It was worth putting the leaders of such countries on notice that the potential costs of their opportunism had just gone way up.

Sensible as these reasons are, some observers have exaggerated both the scope of preemption in foreign policy and the centrality of preemption in U.S. strategy as a whole. As to preemption's scope, it applies only to undeterrable threats such as those that come from nonstate actors like terrorist groups. It was never meant to displace deterrence, only to supplement it. As to its being central, it isn't. The discussion of preemption in the NSS takes up just two sentences in one of the document's eight sections.

Some at home have distorted the NSS for partisan reasons, attempting to make the Bush administration look bad by turning fear of preemption into an early twenty-first-century equivalent of the Cold War era's "rocket rattle." Some abroad, meanwhile, have distorted U.S. intentions through an apparent exercise in mirror imaging. Using their own mottled political histories as a reference point, they have asked what they would do with the power that the United States possesses and have mistakenly projected their own Hobbesian intentions onto our rather more Lockean sensibilities.

But however it has happened, the distortion of U.S. foreign policy strategy requires repair. This distortion does a disservice to honest observers trying to understand U.S. policy, and it contributes to irrational partisanship.

## The Primacy of Partnerships

The United States' *National Security Strategy* does commit us to preemption under certain limited circumstances. We stand by that judgment, the novelty of which lies less in its substance than in its explicitness. But our strategy is not defined by preemption. Above all, the president's strategy is one of partnerships that strongly affirms the vital role of NATO and other U. S. alliances -- including the un.

Don't believe it? Perhaps this is because the commentariat widely claimed that the president's recent decision to seek a new UN Security Council resolution on the postwar reconstruction of Iraq was a sharp break with policy. To think this, one would have to ignore the fact that President Bush went before the UN September 12, 2002, to make his case for the un's enforcing its own resolutions (16 of them in total); that Security Council Resolution 1441 -- which warned the Iraqi regime to comply with its own obligations under previous UN resolutions -- passed unanimously in November 2002; that we tried for a further resolution to unite the international community in the months before Operation Iraqi Freedom began; that we went to the UN in May 2003 after Operation Iraqi Freedom to secure Resolution 1483, lifting sanctions against Iraq that had become obsolete; and that we sought and secured Resolution 1500 in August, recognizing the Iraqi Governing Council.

Had we not done all of these things, month after month, the president's decision to go to the UN Security Council in September 2003 -- and to persevere in his efforts until Resolution 1511 was approved by a 15-0 vote on October 16 -- would have been a significant departure from policy. But the administration *did* do all of these things. Indeed, it would have been a departure from policy *not* to go to the UN when, in our judgment, the next phase of Iraqi reconstruction was at hand. If there has been any departure here, it is the commentariat's departure from the basic rules of logic.

Partnership is the watchword of U.S. strategy in this administration. Partnership is not about deferring to others; it is about working with them. Beyond upholding the partnerships we have inherited, the president seeks new ones to deal with new challenges. Some are global in scope, such as the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS. Others are regional, such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative, which provides assistance for educational, economic, and political reform throughout the Arab world.

Beyond partnership comes principle. The president's strategy is rooted, above all, in the promotion of freedom and dignity worldwide. "America must stand firmly," the president wrote, "for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property." We stand by these values now and always. They are the values served by the partnerships that we build and nurture.

Free trade and new American initiatives for economic development also figure prominently in the president's strategy. The Free Trade Area of the Americas, the expanded Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, and especially the Millennium Challenge Account are our policy vanguards in this area. Our efforts to control the proliferation of wmd also form part of the president's strategy. These efforts led to the Proliferation Security Initiative in May 2003, an 11-nation effort to seize materials related to wmd in transit to countries of concern. In September 2003, signatories were able to agree on basic implementation guidelines, and in the president's address to the UN General Assembly on September 24, he called other nations to join. I hope they will heed his invitation.

President Bush's strategy also demands that we play a role in helping to solve regional conflicts. Not only do such conflicts cause much suffering, but they can also spread to envelop societies now at peace and can stoke the fires of terrorism. Nowhere is the U.S. role in helping to resolve regional conflicts more important than in bringing Israelis and Palestinians to a stable peace settlement. We are obviously not there yet, but this administration's policies have brought peace closer.

The Bush administration was widely criticized during its first two years in office for not being more active in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. To many, "more active" meant spending presidential and secretarial capital on state visits and photo opportunities, as if nearly a decade of such activity had not already been tried without managing to resolve the conflict. But diplomacy can take other, more appropriate forms. In reality, we have worked hard on advancing peace, if often quietly, making the proper analysis of the situation and determining our tactics accordingly.

As a result, we created the Quartet -- another partnership -- made up of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the UN. We developed the "road map" out of this partnership, and the president went to Aqaba, Jordan, in June 2003 to commit the parties to it.

Most important, we recognized that there needed to be fundamental reform inside the Palestinian Authority if the forces for peace among Palestinians were to prevail. After it became clear that the United States would not obstruct Israel's efforts to defend itself from Palestinian terrorism, pressures for genuine reform grew within the Palestinian community. This convergence produced the hopeful premiership of Mahmoud Abbas.

Unfortunately, Abbas' efforts were aborted by Chairman Yasir Arafat, and Abbas' successor, Ahmed Qurei, has been obstructed as well. Chairman Arafat has not been a genuine interlocutor for peace, but he has been an obstacle to it. Although our hopes for progress have been temporarily disappointed, it is now clear to all where the real problem lies. One way or another, we are bound eventually to get past this problem. Moreover, there is now a solid and growing constituency in Israel that supports prominent Palestinian leaders who genuinely seek an honorable and stable peace. Bleak as things often seem in this conflict, this does represent progress.

Conflicts in other regions have also demanded our attention -- and our compassion. The United States has not turned away from the suffering of the Liberian people, and we have been actively trying to end strife in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nor have we forgotten the need for continued progress in the Balkans, in Northern Ireland, and in East Timor. We are making progress in most if not all of these areas, and we are often doing so by supporting other governments that are taking the lead. In other words, we are working as a partner.

### **An Age of Cooperation**

Not least among the policy priorities laid out in the NSS is our determination to develop cooperative relations among the world's major powers. It is here, above all, that the key to a successful conclusion to the war against terrorism lies.

To say that the world has changed is a truism: the world, after all, is always changing. It is not so trivial, however, to specify just how it has changed. As I see it, the critical tipping point of recent years was the evening of November 9, 1989. That date is when the Berlin Wall was first breached, never to be repaired, marking the end of the Cold War and, before long, of the Soviet Union itself. These events, in turn, ended the epoch of intense struggle between liberty and totalitarianism that had shaped most of the twentieth century.

The president grasps the importance of these momentous events. As he wrote in the NSS, "today, the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the seventeenth century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war. Today, the world's great powers find ourselves on the same side."

This development is not just good news; it is revolutionary news. For too many years -- too many centuries -- the imperial

habits of great powers squandered untold resources and talent by jousting for land, glory, and gold. The futility of such habits has become evident in the twenty-first century. The possession of vast territory, raw physical resources, and brute power guarantees neither prosperity nor peace. Investment in human capital, social trust, trade, and cooperation within and among nations does.

The sources of national strength and security for one nation thus need no longer threaten the security of others. An insight of the Enlightenment and a deep belief of the American founders -- that politics need not always be a zero-sum competition -- has at last been adopted by enough people worldwide to promise a qualitative difference in the character of international relations. If, instead of wasting lives and treasure by opposing each other as in the past, today's powers can pull in the same direction to solve problems common to all, we will begin to redeem history from much human folly.

One of these common problems is, of course, terrorism, and American strategy endeavors to solve it by integrating it into the management of our key international relationships. We do not see the war against terrorism and the nurturing of constructive relationships among the major powers as mutually exclusive tasks. We conduct the war on terrorism with an eye toward great-power cooperation, and we seek enhanced great-power cooperation with an eye toward success in the war on terrorism.

The logic of this dual approach rests on the fact that terrorism threatens the world order itself -- and thus creates a common interest among all powers that value peace, prosperity, and the rule of law. The civilized world has spent more than a thousand years trying to limit the destructiveness of war. Drawing a distinction between civilians and combatants has been an essential part of this process. But terrorism aims to erase that distinction. We cannot allow this to happen, not because we want to "make the world safe" again for major conventional war, but because we must reassure people everywhere that the world has not just traded one kind of danger for another with the end of the Cold War. The victory of freedom will turn hollow if new fears replace old ones.

The common interest of all major powers in defeating terrorism is one source of a rare and remarkable opportunity: the United States' chance to enjoy excellent relations with all the world's major powers simultaneously. Of course, we have a head start in this, because we are blessed with many enduring friendships. None is more important than those enshrined in NATO.

Some observers predicted that NATO would wither away after the Cold War, others that the United States and the European Union would even end up on a collision course. Neither prediction has, or will, come true. Not only has NATO survived, but both its membership and its mission have expanded. As for our relations with the EU, never has our common agenda been so large and mutually significant -- from advancing free trade to joint efforts in counterproliferation.

It is true that we have had differences with some of our oldest and most valued NATO allies. But these are differences among friends. The transatlantic partnership is based so firmly on common interests and values that neither feuding personalities nor occasional divergent perceptions can derail it. We have new friends and old friends alike in Europe. They are all, in the end, best friends, which is why the president continues to talk about partnerships, not polarities, when he speaks about Europe. Some authorities say that we must move to a multipolar world. We do not agree -- not because we do not value competition and diversity, but because there need be no poles among a family of nations that shares basic values. We believe that it is wiser to work at overcoming differences than to polarize them further.

### **Embracing Major Powers**

We work hard to have the best relations we can with nations large and small, old and new. But for practical purposes

we concentrate on relations with major powers, especially those with whom we have had difficult relationships in the past, notably Russia, India, and China.

Our relationship with Russia has been dramatically transformed since that November evening in 1989. Americans and Russians no longer point growing arsenals of missiles at each other. Thanks to the leadership of President Bush and President Vladimir Putin, we are now radically reducing our strategic weapons arsenals. Moscow is also a committed partner in fighting terrorism and in combating the global spread of wmd.

U.S.-Russia commercial relations have also expanded and will expand further to mutual benefit -- not least, we trust, in the energy sector. The new relationship that is developing between Russia and NATO has real substance as well. From sharing intelligence on terrorism to working together to deal with humanitarian crises and peacekeeping, the NATO-Russia Council is operational. That relationship can expand as far as our creativity and mutual effort will let it. We are closer than ever to a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Such a Europe definitely includes Russia, as well as the other new and reborn republics that emerged from the Soviet Union.

Perhaps most important, U.S. and Russian political and economic philosophies are converging. Today, Russia is more democratic than not. It is also more of a market economy than not. We should be patient as Russia develops its democratic institutions and as the remnants of Soviet-era corruption is rooted out and the rule of law firmly established.

We do not agree on everything, of course. We had hoped for more Russian support for our Iraq policy, and we still hope Russia will change its attitude toward the Iranian nuclear program. We also differ over aspects of Russian policy in Chechnya. But the relationship as a whole is no longer locked in knee-jerk antagonism. We now have the necessary level of trust to resolve even the most difficult issues between us.

Whereas Russia is still developing its democracy, India's democracy dates from its independence in 1947. With recent economic reforms setting institutional roots, India is developing into a mature market economy. As Indians themselves are the first to admit, however, their country still faces many challenges. Illiteracy, poverty, environmental degradation, and inadequate infrastructure all hamper progress. We want to help India overcome these challenges, and we want to help ourselves through a closer association with one of the world's venerable cultures. We have therefore worked to deepen our relationship with India. The two largest democracies on earth are no longer estranged. At the same time, we have also been able to advance our relations with Pakistan -- a country with domestic challenges of its own.

India and Pakistan still dispute who should control Kashmir. During 2002, a major war between them -- perhaps involving nuclear weapons -- seemed distinctly possible. So, working with partners in Europe and Asia, we mobilized to help end the crisis. We have since been trying to turn our parallel improvement of relations with India and Pakistan into a triangle of conflict resolution. We do not impose ourselves as a mediator. But we do try to use the trust we have established with both sides to urge them toward conciliation by peaceful means.

What the United States has done in South Asia is an example of "turning adversity into opportunity," to quote President Bush. In a different way, we have done the same with China.

Sino-American relations got off to a bad start in this administration when a certain American airplane made an unscheduled visit to Hainan Island in April 2001. Today, however, U.S. relations with China are the best they have been since President Richard Nixon first visited Beijing more than 30 years ago. This is not just because the September 11 attacks led us to shuffle priorities, nor only because we championed Chinese accession to the World Trade Organization; nor is it the result

of the accession of a new generation of Chinese leaders. It is certainly not because we have ignored Chinese human rights abuses, China's still unacceptable weapons proliferation activities, or the reluctance of China's leadership to match political to economic reform. We have never downplayed these difficulties.

The Sino-American relationship has nonetheless improved for a reason that transcends all these particulars: neither we nor the Chinese believe that there is anything inevitable about our relationship any longer -- either inevitably bad or inevitably good. Instead, we now believe that it is up to us, together, to take responsibility for our common future. The NSS put it directly: "We welcome the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China." We also seek a constructive relationship. Indeed, we welcome a global role for China, so long as China assumes responsibilities commensurate with that role. China's leaders know all this. Neither false fear about the future nor the overhang of Cold War enmity prevents us from cooperating where our interests coincide.

A case in point is North Korea. American and Chinese interests on the Korean Peninsula may not overlap completely, but they do so considerably. Neither side wishes to see nuclear weapons developed and deployed there. Neither side enjoys the spectacle of the dilapidated North Korean economy. Neither side wants the refugee crisis on China's border to worsen nor relishes a North Korean regime that smuggles drugs and weapons, counterfeits currencies, and engages in the periodic extortion of its neighbors through brinkmanship. And neither side, to be sure, has any interest in another Korean war.

Thus we have worked to transform our common interests with China into solid and productive cooperation over the challenges posed by Pyongyang. We are also cooperating with Japan, Russia, and South Korea on the issue. Our agenda is ambitious, but it is succeeding, as attested to by the six-party framework for talks over North Korea's nuclear program. We employed this framework in September 2003, and we will do so again soon. Beijing, as well as Washington, deserves credit for this achievement.

We still have a long way to go in dealing with North Korea's dangerous nuclear weapons program. As we have told the North Koreans, we have no intention of invading or attacking North Korea. During his trip to Asia in October 2003, President Bush suggested that he was even open to putting this intention in writing. We have stated our policy openly and honestly: we want peace, not war, and we want security, not fear, to envelop the Korean Peninsula and its neighbors. But we will not yield to threats and blackmail; if we did, we would only guarantee more threats and more attempts at blackmail. Nor will we take any options off the table.

It is now well past time for North Korea to alter its behavior, cease its threats, and end its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable manner. That is what all of North Korea's neighbors desire, which is why, in the end, a diplomatic solution to the problem can be achieved. When this happens, we will have demonstrated that American diplomacy is designed to satisfy not only our own national interests, but also those of international security as a whole. We will show that the equities of other powers can be best advanced along with American ones, not in opposition to them.

### **Interests and Responsibilities**

We must not take the present peace among the world's nations for granted. Today's peace will not just take care of itself. We have to work at it with patience, mindful that major war has broken out in the past despite a widespread conviction that it simply could not happen again.

Of course, we want to promote human dignity and democracy in the world, to help people raise themselves from poverty, and to transform the inadequate system of global public health. We are pursuing these goals right now. But only if the deep peace of our era can be "preserved, defended, and expanded" -- to use the president's words -- can we pursue these goals for as

long as it will take to achieve them.

And make no mistake, these are the central goals of American policy in the twenty-first century. We fight terrorism because we must, but we seek a better world because we can -- because it is our desire, and our destiny, to do so. This is why we commit ourselves to democracy, development, global public health, and human rights, as well as to the prerequisite of a solid structure for global peace. These are not high-sounding decorations for our interests. They are our interests, the purposes our power serves.

Because this is so, the United States' reputation for honesty and compassion will endure. Today, U.S. motives are impugned in some lands. But as we preserve, defend, and expand the peace that free peoples won in the twentieth century, we will see the United States vindicated in the eyes of the world in the twenty-first.

It would be churlish to claim that the Bush administration's foreign policy has been error-free from the start. We are human beings; we all make mistakes. But we have always pursued the enlightened self-interest of the American people, and in our purposes and our principles there are no mistakes.

Our enlightened self-interest puts us at odds with terrorists, tyrants, and others who wish us ill. From them we seek no advice or comity, and to them we will give no quarter. But our enlightened self-interest makes us partners with all those who cherish freedom, human dignity, and peace. We know the side on which the human spirit truly abides, and we take encouragement from this as our strategy unfolds. In the end, it is the only encouragement we really need.



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