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DESIREE A. MELLIKAN  
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**U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD:  
OPTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS**

by

**Desiree A. Millikan  
Foreign Service Officer, Department of State**

**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER . . . . . ii

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . . . iii

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . . . . iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . . 1

II. "NEW WORLD" CHARACTERISTICS: CURRENTS AND COUNTERCURRENTS 3

    A. INTERNATIONAL

        -- CENTRIPETAL FORCES . . . . . 4

        -- CENTRIFUGAL FORCES . . . . . 6

    B. DOMESTIC

        -- TRENDS AND CONCERNS . . . . . 7

        -- THE POWER OF PRINCIPLES . . . . . 10

III. POWER VS. PRINCIPLES

    A. THE GULF WAR LEGACY . . . . . 11

    B. POWER POLITICS . . . . . 13

    C. PRINCIPLES WITHOUT POWER . . . . . 14

IV. THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

    A. TRADE AS A STRATEGIC INTEREST . . . . . 15

    B. ENLARGEMENT OF DEMOCRACY . . . . . 16

V. WHEN POWER AND PRINCIPLE ARE UNBALANCED

    A. SOMALIA: THE CLASH OF RHETORIC AND REALITY . . . . . 18

    B. U.S. RESPONSE: CONFUSION AT HOME AND ABROAD . . . . . 19

    C. BOSNIA . . . . . 20

        -- LEARNING FROM MISTAKES . . . . . 22

        -- LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE . . . . . 23

VI. WHEN POWER AND PRINCIPLE ARE IN BALANCE. . . . . 26

VII. LOOKING FORWARD RATHER THAN BACKWARD . . . . . 28

VIII. CONCLUSION. . . . . 31

NOTES . . . . . 34

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 37

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## ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World: Options and Constraints

**AUTHOR:** Desiree A. Millikan, Foreign Service Officer,  
U.S. Department of State

The demise of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union has effectively de-linked U.S. national security from the need to preserve order and safeguard freedom throughout the world, thereby complicating the decision of when, why, and how to become engaged internationally. U.S. ideals -- support for democracy and individual human rights -- have collided with the reality of a disorderly world in which support for national determination often amounts to support for fragmentation and instability -- elements at odds with traditional U.S. objectives of political stability and enhanced prosperity through trade. Whereas, in some respects, the U.S. has more foreign policy options in the post-cold war world, absent a hostile global ideology and a virtually veto-free UN Security Council, it also has more constraints -- many of them self-imposed.

This essay has two objectives: a) to demonstrate the importance of analyzing and understanding the multiple, contradictory forces at work domestically and abroad and their potential impact on U.S. policies, and b) to underscore the need for the U.S. to focus its priorities and adapt its policies -- without sacrificing America's distinctive blend of power and principle -- to fit the changed circumstances of today.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Desiree A. Millikan is a career foreign service officer. In her fourteen-year career with the U.S. Department of State, she has served in: Minsk, Belarus; Athens, Greece; London, England; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; and Washington, D.C. Her duties have varied by post from consular affairs to political-military matters to political and economic reporting to running the mission as Charge d'affaires, a.i. Under the sponsorship of the American Political Science Association, she participated in a Congressional Fellowship Program on Capitol Hill where she served on the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Her next posting will be Consul General in Vladivostok, Russia.

Ms. Millikan has a degree from Oberlin College in Russian and Soviet Studies; she attended then-Leningrad State University as an exchange student, and is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1994. Ms. Millikan speaks Russian, French, Greek, and Spanish.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the demise of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union, debate has been raging as to what role the U.S. should appropriately play in the world. Hopes that the end of the bipolar world would usher in "a new world order," in which universal aspirations of peace and democratic values would prevail, have been buried under "the disorder" of the post-cold war world and U.S. foreign policy failures in post-Desert Storm Iraq, Somalia and Haiti. Pundits have gotten lost in debates about whether the world is unipolar, multi-polar or multi-layered; about whether economic power has superseded military power as the defining measure of a nation's strength and influence in the world; about whether the U.S. should define its national interests in narrow strategic terms or in broader terms encompassing the spread of democracy and protection of human rights.

At the heart of these debates is the nature of the post-cold war world itself. "A new vision of the world we seek must rest on a shared understanding of what is happening around us."<sup>1</sup> In other words, we need to be sure where we are, before we can hope to reach a given objective or decide how best to achieve it. By examining the currents and counter-currents of today's world, both internationally and domestically, and their impact on U.S. foreign policies, our aim is: a) to gain an understanding as to why some policies have gone so terribly awry, while others have been relatively successful, and b) to identify elements which will have to be taken into account if the U.S. is to have a more coherent, consistent foreign policy in a world still very much in flux.

As will be demonstrated, many of our recent foreign policy mishaps have been the result of inattention to global realities and an unwillingness or inability to focus or prioritize U.S. objectives. The Clinton administration has failed to understand the implications of elevating humanitarian principles and U.S. ideals -- respect for human rights, enlargement of democratic nations -- to a foreign policy goal. This maximalist objective not only is out of tune with the mood of the nation and the perception, real or imagined, of constrained resources, but the nature of the post-cold war world make exceptions to the policy inevitable, prompting charges of inconsistency and raising questions about U.S. credibility.

With a world still so much in transition, any attempt to define an overarching doctrine to replace the strategy of containment is doomed to failure. That said, the U.S. must have some clear priorities of what it seeks to accomplish, a strategy -- including the political, diplomatic, economic and military resources it is willing to expend -- to achieve those priority objectives, and the political will to stay the course, notwithstanding setbacks. This requires the administration to distinguish between real or potential threats to stability and security and those that seize U.S. media and public attention, but have little impact on our interests.<sup>2</sup> It also requires concerted effort to debunk the public's expectations -- fed by the Gulf War -- that the U.S. can and should intervene only if U.S. engagement is quick, decisive and cheap in terms of American lives and resources.

The President must exploit the power of his office to educate and persuade a recalcitrant public that priority objectives in support of U.S. national interests require steadfast U.S. engagement.

Regardless of whether the world is unipolar, multi-polar, or multi-layered, strong, pro-active U.S. leadership -- even if in a multilateral context -- can influence and shape the international environment to ensure that no hostile threat to U.S. interests emerges. Conversely, failure to act could result in the U.S. having to react to a future menace which might otherwise have been avoided. The challenge for today's foreign policy makers is to find the right mix of power and principles at a time when perceived resource constraints and the disappearance of a tangible threat to U.S. security have resulted in a clash of traditional ideals, perceived priorities, and the new world disorder of today.

## II. CURRENTS AND COUNTERCURRENTS

### INTERNATIONAL:

The confusion and debate over the "new world order" and the role the U.S. should appropriately play in it are understandable given the fundamental changes brought about by the end of the Cold War. With the collapse of communism and demise of the Soviet empire, the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy for over forty years -- the policy of containment -- has also collapsed. The unifying force of an enemy has disappeared and with it any clear ideological justification for the risking of U.S. blood and prestige overseas.<sup>3</sup> Countries, areas and issues which might have seemed vital to U.S.

security in its contest with the USSR, have lost their urgency and importance.<sup>4</sup> Whereas prior to the collapse of communism, there was a direct relationship between ensuring international order, protecting freedom, and providing for U.S. national security, the disappearance of the Soviet threat largely de-linked U.S. security from these concepts.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, this has occurred at the very time -- absent a challenge from a hostile global ideology and with a virtually veto-free UN Security Council -- when U.S. freedom to act on behalf of democratic freedom and human rights was broadened.

#### Centripetal Forces:

Against this background, a unique combination of competing centripetal and centrifugal forces has been affecting the way Americans view the world and America's place in it. On the one hand, increased global economic interdependence, enhanced influence of transnational corporations, and the importance of global trade for the U.S. economy and American prosperity make a strong case for continued U.S. international engagement.

The growing threat posed by transnational problems -- inter alia, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the drug trade, terrorism, environmental concerns -- similarly require concerted efforts by the U.S. working within the international community, since these problems are largely immune to unilateral solutions. Ironically, while the collapse of the Soviet Union eliminated a direct threat to U.S. survival, it has nevertheless exacerbated many of the transnational problems which are tomorrow's potential security threats. For example, the collapse of the

Soviet Union's border and customs controls together with the loosening of technological constraints on advanced military technologies has vastly complicated the task of limiting nuclear proliferation. Similarly, there is evidence that powerful Russian crime syndicates involved in narcotics trafficking and weapons smuggling have begun to move across Eastern Europe into the West.<sup>6</sup>

The growth of transnational problems combined with the collapse of a bipolar world and a global economic downturn have resulted in a movement toward a "community of power" -- primarily under UN auspices -- to promote international cooperation in pursuit of common objectives. The UN has emerged as a key instrument in such diverse matters as humanitarian relief, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, human rights, and environmental clean-up. As the aftermath of Desert Storm demonstrated, however, this greater reliance on international organizations for conflict resolution did not usher in "a new world order" in which the sense of collective responsibility for the behavior of governments toward their own people took precedence over traditional state-centric concepts of power, interest, and circumstance. Moreover, Bosnia and Somalia highlighted the limitations of UN institutions, as currently conceived.

A final centripetal force worthy of mention is the information and technology revolution. Positive consequences of this phenomenon include the fact that it has become virtually impossible for any nation to deny its citizens knowledge of events and world developments.<sup>7</sup> On the downside, the revolution in communications,

by literally making the world a smaller place, has graphically and instantaneously brought the impact of the forces of fragmentation at work in today's world into the American living room. Media coverage has increased pressure for immediate engagement and immediate disengagement when things go awry. Somalia is a case in point. On the one hand, images of starving Somali women and children prompted calls from the American public "to do something" -- to help. On the other hand, images of the corpses of U.S. servicemen being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu precipitously provoked demands for U.S. disengagement.

#### Centrifugal Forces:

Whereas centripetal forces at work in the post-cold war world generally argue for U.S. active engagement, especially in a multilateral context, the centrifugal characteristics of today's world argue for caution, even non-engagement. At the head of the list of centrifugal forces is the unleashing of age-old ethnic, tribal, and religious divisions which had been largely held in check by the bloc system. "Hot wars" rage today in more than thirty countries and regions;<sup>9</sup> many of these conflicts threaten or have already altered internationally recognized political borders.

American ideals of support for democracy and self-determination are suddenly not as simple and clear-cut as before; in many instances, self-determination is resulting in the disintegration of nation states with bloodshed and increased instability as end products, rather than ballots and orderly

constitutional democracies. Many of the republics of the former Soviet Union have one or more minorities of significance; if they were to follow the example of the former Yugoslavia, hyperdisintegration (and hyperinstability) would result. The lack of stable political traditions in former communist countries coupled with severe economic and social problems -- collapsed markets, lack of capital, growing unemployment and inflation, outdated equipment, dramatic falls in production, lack of expertise and training -- are also potentially destabilizing, especially when nationalist extremists are waiting in the wings to take advantage of popular discontent. The globalization of the world economy, while intertwining many of the most developed states' economies is, at the same time, marginalizing certain regions and industrial sectors.<sup>9</sup> Economic desperation and civil strife are inducing large-scale migrations of people and contributing to xenophobic and racist resistance to refugees and foreigners.<sup>10</sup> In short, rather than the end of history and the new world order forecast by neoconservative Francis Fukuyama, the post cold-war world has emerged as the new world disorder<sup>11</sup> -- a disorder over which the U.S. seemingly has little control.

#### CURRENTS AND COUNTERCURRENTS - DOMESTIC

##### Trends and Concerns:

The tensions resulting from the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces on the international scene are mirrored to a certain extent on the domestic front where traditional isolationist

tendencies are colliding with U.S. ideals of the promotion of human rights and the expansion of democracy. Given the blatant disorderliness of the post-cold war world, the obvious risks and difficulties associated with intervention, the disjunction between global disorderliness and U.S. security, Americans -- faced with compelling domestic problems -- have been clamoring for greater focus on St. Petersburg, Florida, than St. Petersburg, Russia.<sup>12</sup> The appeal of isolationism among Americans is not new; it is rooted in U.S. geography and history. An island continent, protected by two oceans, America was largely founded on the principle of nonentanglement in Europe's political affairs.<sup>13</sup> It has taken wars to engage the United States in global matters, with the ensuing peace reviving the national preference to focus inward.<sup>14</sup> It was only the direct threat posed by the Soviet Union to U.S. security and American basic values after WWII that persuaded the American public, (with strong leadership from President Truman), to depart from the traditional policy of isolationism and to establish a protective umbrella over certain areas of the world under which free institutions could prosper.<sup>15</sup>

The 1990's have witnessed U.S.-led victories in not one, but two major wars -- the Gulf War and the Cold War. With these victories have come the cyclical pull toward introversion aggravated not only by the virtual disappearance of any real or potential direct threat to U.S. security, but by the general global economic downturn. Americans appear to have come to the conclusion that U.S. involvement abroad is the cause of America's economic

problems and that if only the U.S. were to give up "the dubious benefits of superpower status," pressing problems of education, crime, poverty, homelessness, the budget deficit, and an eroding industrial base could be effectively addressed and funded.<sup>16</sup>

Without disputing the importance of actively reducing the U.S. budget deficit and of renewing and reforming the U.S. economy, the fact of the matter is that the real choice facing Americans is "not between domestic and foreign policy, but between consumption and investment."<sup>17</sup> U.S. economic problems have less to do with overseas commitments than with "the low tax ideology of the 1980s, coupled with America's insatiable desire for yet higher standards of living without paying any of the cost."<sup>18</sup> In the last thirty years, while taxes have remained largely stable and defense spending has declined, domestic entitlements have nearly doubled. In FY 1991, the U.S. spent just under 4.9 percent of its GNP on defense.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that the 1948 Marshall Plan involved less than 2 percent of U.S. GNP for six consecutive years.<sup>20</sup> The equivalent amount today would equal "approximately 115 billion dollars, about twenty times what President Bush proposed" to spend to help the CIS.<sup>21</sup> In point of fact, foreign aid, including security assistance, accounted for about one-quarter of 1 percent of U.S. GNP; proposals for assistance to former communist countries raised this percentage only fractionally.<sup>22</sup> That said, perception is often more important than reality and President Bush can attest to the dangers of ignoring the mood and concerns -- real or imagined -- of the American people.

### The Power of Principles:

America's traditional proclivity toward isolationism has been balanced by its ideology which, at its core, is interventionist in its call for individual human rights and democratic freedoms.<sup>23</sup> The selfish concept of national interest has not traditionally been a sufficient motive for U.S. engagement overseas; instead, policies have been articulated in terms of moral principles. "When Americans fight, they want to see not just victory, but virtue."<sup>24</sup> Thus, when President Wilson sent Americans across the Atlantic in 1917, he proclaimed "the world must be made safe for democracy;" President Franklin Roosevelt emphasized that "military and naval victory for the gods of force and hate would endanger the institutions of democracy in the western world."<sup>25</sup> President Kennedy, at his inauguration, spoke of U.S. willingness "to pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship...to assure the survival and the success of liberty." President Bush, in leading Americans into battle against Saddam Hussein affirmed that, "for two centuries, we've done the hard work of freedom. And tonight we lead the world in facing down a threat to decency and humanity. What is at stake is...a new world order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom and the rule of law."<sup>26</sup>

### III. POWER VS. PRINCIPLES

To a certain extent, all Presidents have used rhetorical

packaging "to sell" or market U.S. intervention. The Gulf War marked a departure from the past, in a number of respects, however.

### The Gulf War Legacy:

First, Desert Storm established an unrealistic level of expectation in the American body politic for quick, decisive, successful military action with minimal cost to the U.S. in terms of life and resources. It reinforced what one pundit has aptly characterized as the "free-lunch-foreign-policy syndrome,"<sup>27</sup> whereby the U.S. successfully intervenes in a massive show of force, but shuns away from the responsibility of imposing order or stability.<sup>28</sup> This expectation for "quick fixes" and no-cost solutions has regrettably coincided with the emergence of problems the nature of which do not lend themselves to easy resolution and require staying power and a long-term commitment, notwithstanding setbacks.

Second, Desert Storm established a false model for future conflict resolution. A U.S.-led war with traditional balance-of-power objectives was given the semblance of a UN-operation intended to achieve justice and freedom. In mobilizing Americans to go to war against Saddam Hussein, President Bush suggested that what was at stake were "standards, championed by the United States but applicable to all humanity, about how governments should govern."<sup>29</sup> He spoke of the UN as being on the threshold of fulfilling "the historic vision of its founders."<sup>30</sup> Yet the reason for the coalition's success against Iraq had less to do with the desire to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind than with fears by

coalition members that if Saddam's violation of internationally recognized borders were left unchallenged, it would establish a precedent that could jeopardize each country's sovereignty.<sup>31</sup> Both the casus belli and the timing of the suspension of hostilities were based on pragmatic considerations related to preserving the territorial integrity of existing nation states. The coalition took on Saddam Hussein because he had flagrantly violated Kuwait's territorial integrity. President Bush suspended hostilities largely to preserve the territorial integrity of Iraq, amidst fears of the "lebanonization" of the country and the inevitable instability that would likely ensue with Iraq's dismemberment. Equally pragmatic considerations that came into play were concerns that continuation of the war could possibly result in higher U.S. casualties, the possibility of becoming bogged down in a Vietnam-like quagmire, and the dissolution of the international coalition.

Third, the war's aftermath which witnessed Saddam's continued bloody repression of the Kurds and Shi'as, led to UN-sanctioned intervention - via UNSC resolution 688 -- on behalf of victims of Iraqi repression inside Iraq's borders. This exception to the otherwise hard-nosed pragmatism which guided President Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis appeared to give substance to Bush's rhetorical packaging about a new world order and raised unrealistic expectations throughout the international community on the principles that would guide U.S. intervention in the future. U.S. acquiescence to the UNSC resolution was the result of two sources of pressure on President Bush: a) pressure from media broadcasts of

starving, freezing Kurds fleeing Saddam's repression and, b) pressure from Turkish President Ozal and British Prime Minister Major. The former feared the possibility of a destabilizing influx of Kurds from Iraq into Turkey; the latter feared that the publicized massive starvation of Kurds while the world sat on its hands could wipe away the victory of the war overnight.<sup>32</sup>

#### Power Politics:

Notwithstanding this tentative step in the direction of collective action to promote justice among peoples regardless of their location on one or another side of the border, President Bush quietly dropped the rhetoric of a new world order following Desert Storm.<sup>33</sup> When a military coup overthrew Haiti's popularly elected President, Bush did little more than protest; when Yugoslavia erupted in bloodshed, Bush's initial reaction was to support the forces of federalism --even at the cost of Serbian dictatorship -- in support of stability.<sup>34</sup> Even after the U.S. had recognized former Yugoslavian republics as independent states, Bush nevertheless rejected Bosnian appeals to the UN for assistance to defend itself and supported a UN arms embargo against all combatants, a move that many believed unfairly penalized Bosnia. Bush studiously avoided U.S. engagement even in the search for a diplomatic solution, content to leave what he believed was a European problem for the Europeans to resolve.

To a certain extent, Bush left the nation confused not only over what the U.S. had fought for in the Gulf war but over what

principles should guide U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold war world. Bush's decisions on Iraq, Haiti and Yugoslavia were based on hard-nosed assessments of power politics, U.S. security interests, the complexity of the problem and its resolution, and fear of a becoming involved in a quagmire. The exceptions to this rule, namely Operation Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq and the decision to send troops to Somalia to alleviate starvation were the result less of a commitment to humanitarian ideals than a reluctant response to pressure brought by chilling television images of an entire people threatened by starvation, amidst calls from the American people for the administration "to do something."

Principles Without Power:

President Bush largely used the rhetorical packaging of a new world order to market his interventionist policies which were implemented on the basis of traditional balance-of-power interests; Clinton seemed prepared, at least initially, to accept the new world order rhetoric at face value -- largely because he did not give foreign policy the attention it required. For example, whereas Bush used the UN umbrella in the Gulf War as a burdensharing device and a means to make U.S.-led action more palatable not only to other members of the international community, but also to Americans, Clinton appeared to be willing to believe that the UN really was on the verge of fulfilling the historic vision of its founders. The newly elected President seemed to assume that the UN was greater than the sum of its parts and that

a mission could be simply turned over to the UN for implementation and forgotten. In his September 27 address before the UN General Assembly, Clinton stated that, "if the American people are to say yes to UN peackeeping, the United Nations must know when to say no." The implication was that somehow the UN had a will of its own and that UN missions could somehow proceed notwithstanding a US veto. By failing to understand the limits of available multi-lateral conflict resolution mechanisms or to analyze the forces at work in the new world order and the implications of new world rhetoric, Clinton set himself up for some hard foreign policy knocks which were not long in coming.

#### IV. CLINTON'S FOREIGN POLICY "PRIORITIES"

##### Trade as a Strategic Interest:

Elected on a platform aimed at renewing U.S. economic strength, Clinton's foreign policy interests were initially focused on trade, which he elevated to a strategic interest. In August 1992, he noted that "our first foreign priority and our domestic priority are one and the same: reviving our economy."<sup>35</sup> Clinton effectively marketed and sold the idea of global trade to a protectionist-inclined America, emphasizing that trade expansion meant not only new markets, more jobs, economic growth and greater prosperity for Americans, but was a means to encourage "democracy and human rights in nations that trade with us."<sup>36</sup> "U.S. national security," said Secretary Christopher to the Senate Foreign Affairs

Committee, "is inseparable from our economic security."<sup>37</sup> Clinton's successes on the economic front were impressive, if not easily won: a deficit reduction program, NAFTA, GATT, a new economic framework with Japan, a successful Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

While devoting tremendous amounts of time and effort to the economic aspects of foreign policy, Clinton appeared to put non-economic-related foreign policy issues on auto-pilot, largely accepting Bush's agenda. The problem was that he didn't appreciate the contradictions that flowed from applying U.S. ideals such as democracy and human rights in a post-cold-war setting with traditional objectives of stability and order; nor did he fully realize -- again largely from inattention -- that new world developments and demands still relied on old, state-based institutions for resolution. Embracing the "principles" side of Bush's agenda, he failed to back it up with the power that Bush so effectively wielded in Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

#### Enlargement of Democracy:

One of Clinton's underlying foreign policy themes was the promotion of democracy overseas. His National Security Assistant Anthony Lake went so far as to outline "a strategy of enlargement of the community of market democracies," one component of which would involve "engagement on behalf of humanitarian concerns to reduce suffering; help resolve regional conflicts; and foster democratic, sustainable development."<sup>38</sup> Maximalist in scope, the

"strategy" was out of tune with the new reality, the perception of constrained resources and the mood of the American people.

Whereas support for democracy has always been one of America's ideals, and was a key pillar in the ideological struggle of the Cold War, it acquired a much more ambiguous hue in the post-cold war world. Given the centrifugal force of aggressive nationalism as manifested, for example, in Bosnia Herzegovina, a policy of unqualified support for national determination could amount to support for fragmentation and instability<sup>39</sup> -- elements totally out of sync with the President's primary goal of prosperity through trade expansion in a stable, ordered world. Trade as a key Clinton priority also clashed with the ideal of promoting human rights, as exemplified by rising tensions with China. In the case of China there is the potential for a three-way clash of objectives: human rights, trade and non-proliferation, since a cut-off of MFN to China could result in Chinese non-cooperation with the U.S. effort to head off North Korea's development of a nuclear device.

Lake's strategy of enlargement -- which incidentally was enunciated after the October 3 deaths of American servicemen in Somalia -- not only proposed an activism at odds with the nation's mood, but at odds with the perception of constrained resources. Evidently, no one bothered to ask the tough questions about how this "feel-good" policy was to be funded. A strategy requires not merely an objective, but also "a plan for using resources to achieve that objective."<sup>40</sup> In elevating humanitarian principles

to a foreign policy goal, the Clinton administration was setting itself up for criticism and failure. The fragmentation and chaotic conditions of the post-Cold-war world made exceptions to the policy inevitable given the proliferation of civil wars, economic dislocation, and humanitarian disasters.

#### V. WHEN POWER AND PRINCIPLE ARE UNBALANCED

##### Somalia:

The consequences of foreign policy rhetoric without the required power -- unilateral or multilateral -- to back it up are encapsulated in the (mis) handling of Somalia. When President Bush decided to send troops to Somalia to help feed a starving population, he initially suggested that the troops would be out within a month or two, implying that the objective was merely to get food to the starving and return home. By designating a special envoy to try to negotiate the disarming of rival Somali gangs, however, the Bush administration revealed that it understood the linkage between the mission of feeding a starving population and the need to take measures to prevent its reoccurrence -- at least in the short-run. While Clinton embraced the humanitarian mission associated with Somalia, he failed to grasp that, implicitly, the objective was more than the provision of aid to starving Somalis; inadvertently, he permitted the political negotiations to lapse.

The Clinton administration's lack of focus on Somalia is best underscored by U.S. approval of two UNSC resolutions which

explicitly spelt out the changing mission in Somalia. UNSC resolution 814 of March 26, 1993, formally modified the mission from one of ensuring the secure delivery of relief supplies to assistance in creating a civic structure to prevent a relapse into famine and anarchy; UNSC resolution 837 of June 6, 1993, authorized the arrest and detention of those responsible for the murders of 24 Pakistani peace-keepers. These changed objectives did not occur without explicit U.S. approval. For the President to pretend, following the unfortunate death of U.S. servicemen, that somehow the UN had hoodwinked the U.S. into assuming a role for which it had not bargained strained credulity and again attributed to the UN a power it did not have. Yet that is what the President implied in a Washington Post interview October 15, when he said that, "if we're gonna go in and do something with the UN, but we're the main military player, and then the mission has to be broadened...then we should not be asked to assume the police function."<sup>41</sup>

Media coverage of U.S. servicemen being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu prompted yet a fourth objective, namely that of extricating U.S. troops from Somalia. The inadvertent and potentially dangerous message to future U.S. adversaries was: "Kill enough Americans and the U.S. will disengage."

#### Confusion at home and abroad:

Ironically, the penchant of the Clinton administration to act in support of U.S. ideals, but without adequate analysis of the power required to see those ideals realized, resulted in the

perception that the U.S. was not guided by any principles other than the fluctuating mood of U.S. public opinion in response to media clips. This perception was further reinforced when, in Haiti, eight days after the tragic death of U.S. servicemen in Somalia, an angry mob of Haitian protesters turned away a U.S. naval ship carrying American soldiers to participate in a UN effort to return Haiti's elected president to office.

Allies expressed concern about the implications of these reverses for U.S. credibility. Americans began questioning whether the U.S. had any business intervening in the first place. The Clinton administration responded with an attempt to shift the blame away from inadequate U.S. attention to foreign policy onto inadequacies of the UN in general and UN peacekeeping in particular. Tough conditions were proposed for U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping missions, with an eye toward avoiding U.S. ground participation in Bosnia. Still, the administration maintained its maximalist rhetoric; the difference was that it studiously ignored it in favor of a hands-off policy. This approach merely invited well-deserved criticism highlighting the dissonance between a foreign policy based on rhetorical maximalism and minimal activism.

#### Bosnia:

Whereas Somalia -- in its later stages -- highlighted the problems of principles without power; Bosnia, in the U.S. initial reaction, was an example of power, without principles.

Notwithstanding Bush's high rhetoric in the run-up to Desert Storm about the "universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom and the rule of law," Bush, with cold calculation, refused initially to take any action to stem the atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. Even after the U.S. had followed the European lead and recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bush continued to take an arms length approach to the conflict, underscoring to the American public that the problem was far too difficult to resolve and implying that this was a European problem for the Europeans to solve. Notwithstanding credible reports about mass rapes, detention camps, and ethnic cleansing, the Bush administration largely sat on its hands, prompting a U.S. network to conclude that, in America, "the fear of appeasement has given way to the fear of quagmire."<sup>42</sup>

Clinton, while initially proposing a "lift and strike" policy, whereby the arms embargo against Bosnia would be lifted and Serbian positions around Sarajevo would be subject to NATO air strikes, stepped back in the face of European resistance to the plan. Like Bush, the Clinton administration felt -- especially in the wake of the Somalia mishap -- that if the Europeans weren't prepared to make some tough calls in their own back yard, then the U.S. was not about to stick its neck out.

What Bush and, initially, Clinton, failed to appreciate was that failure by the West to act to halt the bloodshed in Bosnia has potentially serious repercussions. In addition to the consequences of a possible spillover of the conflict into nations outside the

borders of the former Yugoslavia, NATO's relevance in the post-cold war world and its credibility as a guarantor of peace is at stake. Failure to take concerted action could also send a very dangerous signal to aggressive nationalists in the former USSR who might otherwise be encouraged by the West's bickering and indecision to follow Serbia's bloody example of expansion through ethnic cleansing. Some have expressed concern not only about the possible implications of U.S. inaction from the perspective of Muslim countries, but about the possibility that Western inaction in the face of Serbian and Croatian campaigns of "ethnic cleansing" against Muslims may have "radicalized a population that initially identified only slightly, if at all, with Islam."<sup>43</sup>

Just as important as the pragmatic implications are the idealistic ones. Failure by the U.S. to act in the face of what some believe amounts to genocide in Bosnia calls into question the basic principles for which the U.S. stands. How can the U.S. pretend to symbolize freedom, democracy and individual human rights when it stands by in the face of atrocities reminiscent of Nazi Germany?

#### Learning from Mistakes:

Recent U.S. actions in Bosnia reflect application of some lessons learned in Somalia. The decision finally to take decisive action was, alas, not unlike Somalia in that media pressure -- this time in the form of broadcasts of the killing of more than 70 people by a mortar shell fired into Sarajevo's market -- was the spur to

action. But, in Bosnia, unlike Somalia, military engagement has not lost sight of the need for a political process ultimately to end the conflict. The threat and application of military force, to date, has been narrowly focused and has served as a means to coerce the parties to negotiate a political solution. Cognizant of the nation's mood and U.S. military skittishness about the possibility of becoming embroiled in an open-ended conflict, the administration has made clear that no U.S. ground forces will be involved unless a comprehensive settlement is negotiated that includes the Bosnian Serbs. It remains to be seen whether additional force will be required to tilt the cost-benefit equation sufficiently to force the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table. Still, the steps taken thus far are important not only because of the possibility of achieving a workable peace in Bosnia, but because of lessons which Bosnia has brought home to the administration.

Lessons for the Future:

As a more likely model for conflict resolution in the post-cold war world than Desert Storm, Bosnia highlighted many of the elements which will likely be required for a successful approach to problems of the future. First, Bosnia underscored the importance of U.S. leadership, as evidenced by U.S. success in brokering a Muslim-Croat deal to establish a federation in Bosnia -- the first step to a comprehensive negotiated solution. Notwithstanding European and UN efforts to end the fighting, it was U.S. clout that ultimately brought two of the three combatants to a negotiated

solution.

A second lesson brought home by Bosnia is the importance of not taking Russia for granted by excluding it from global decision-making. Bosnia reminded the U.S. that, notwithstanding Russia's many problems, Moscow still has influence and, if excluded or ignored, has the power potentially to block and veto. Russian intervention in Bosnia proved ultimately beneficial to the extent that its action to persuade the Serbs to withdraw their weapons from Sarajevo, including its decision to deploy Russian peacekeepers, precluded a reluctant West from having to carry out NATO strikes. Russian influence could possibly deliver the Bosnian Serbs. Although a potentially complicating factor, cooperation and consultation with Russia should not be neglected, especially since Russian cooperation is essential in a number of areas of great interest to the United States, e.g. the Middle East peace process and non-proliferation. Moreover, failure to engage the Russian government could inadvertently encourage ultra-nationalists to capitalize on Russian emotions about perceived U.S. high-handedness.

Third, Bosnia underscored that the nature of today's problems require the application of all the elements of power -- political, diplomatic, humanitarian, economic, and military -- over a sustained period of time. Humanitarian aid, although worthy, is rarely more than a temporary paliative and the American people could legitimately ask whether it is in the U.S. interest to embark on an open-ended, costly humanitarian mission. Sanctions by

themselves can rarely play a decisive role, and some would argue that, in the case of Bosnia, the arms embargo hurt more than it helped. Military action, though potentially decisive, is not an end in itself, but rather, to quote Clausewitz, an instrument of policy. Diplomatic and political action without the military and economic power to back it up, is ineffective, as the UN-EU effort demonstrated. Bosnia demonstrated that a piecemeal response to a deep-seated problem fools no one and accomplishes little; what is needed is an integrated strategy using all the instruments of power available to policy-makers.

Bosnia has highlighted another important factor, the importance of which this administration may or may not have fully understood -- only time will tell. That lesson is that, although action carries certain risks that must be weighed and evaluated, inaction also carries risks. A solution to the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia has been inevitably complicated by the extent of the death and destruction which has transpired since Bosnia first declared -- and the West recognized -- its independence in April 1992. Many have argued that the threat of force against Serbia when it began militarily to slice off chunks of Croatia would have prevented the chaos that ultimately emerged in Bosnia. Whereas engagement may be more difficult to justify prior to the onset of a full-fledged crisis, the passage of time limits options and complicates solutions. Bosnia is not the only example of this; North Korea's possible development of a nuclear device is another case in point.

Finally, Bosnia has highlighted that the nature of today's problems do not lend themselves to quick fixes. A corollary is that unless the administration can explain to the American people why it is in the U.S. national interest to become and remain engaged, setbacks are inevitably going to lead to objections to continued U.S. engagement. Former President Nixon aptly observed that "the mark of great political leadership is not simply to support what is popular, but to make what is unpopular popular if that serves America's national interest."<sup>44</sup> It is instructive to remember that when the Marshall Plan was first proposed, it was supported by "only about 10 percent of the American people."<sup>45</sup> If, as the pundits claim, the White House is ahead of the American people in its pledge to provide U.S. peacekeepers to Bosnia in the event of a negotiated political settlement that includes the Bosnian Serbs, then the President should bring to bear, sooner rather than later, the power of his office to persuade and convince the American public about the importance of Bosnia to U.S. interests -- in both power politics and idealistic terms.

#### VI. WHEN POWER AND PRINCIPLE ARE IN BALANCE

Confusion and vacillation have not plagued all aspects of the Clinton administration's foreign policy. U.S. support for Russia's reform efforts -- notwithstanding setbacks and partisan criticism -- has been staunch, largely because the administration has been able effectively to articulate support for Russia's transition to

democracy both in terms of U.S. national interests and moral values. Unlike the administration's mishandling of U.S. relations with China, relations with Russia have been conducted with an eye toward what is in the long-term U.S. interest. Anti-democratic behavior by Yeltsin and business-as-usual spying have appropriately not been allowed adversely to affect the long-term objective of "a stable, democratic, market-oriented Russia, a Russia secure in its own borders and respectful of the borders of others, a Russia integrated rather than contained." At the heart of this steadfastness is the recognition that such a Russia "will mean fewer U.S. tax dollars spent on defense; a reduced threat from weapons of mass destruction; new markets for U.S. products, and a powerful, reliable partner for diplomacy as well as commerce in the 21st century."

Support of the Middle East peace process is another example in which the administration has been able to explain the need for sustained diplomatic and financial commitments. U.S. engagement has been articulated both in terms of preserving vital political and economic stakes in a strategically important region and in promoting other key objectives such as a reduction in the flow of arms, decrease in the influence of political and religious extremism, and a reduction in the sources of tension via enhanced interaction between Arabs and Israelis. Setbacks in both cases are inevitable, but the Administration seems to appreciate the need for sustained U.S. engagement and is prepared to stand up to those advocating a cut-and-run approach.

## VII. LOOKING FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD

President Clinton has emphasized that "it is not possible for the United States to become the ultimate resolver of every problem in the world."<sup>47</sup> No one disputes that. The 69 dollar question is when, how and why should the U.S. become engaged internationally in a world that appears to be coming apart at the seams, but which ironically poses no direct threat to U.S. national security.

In order to begin to answer the question, the U.S. administration needs to do a number of things. First, it must develop and articulate U.S. objectives, but only after analyzing the implications of those objectives, and the costs the U.S. is willing to pay to realize those aims. As discussed above, rhetorical excesses without the muscle or the money to back them up merely result in inconsistencies and embarrassments. Similarly, failure to think things through and to prioritize can result either in a CNN-dictated foreign policy or the clash of objectives, e.g. the simultaneous promotion of trade and human rights.

One possible approach that could preserve U.S. ideals without constraining pragmatic goals, is something akin to the CSCE "basket approach" to issues, an approach successfully used by the Reagan administration in its approach to the USSR.<sup>48</sup> Rather than have a one-note approach to states or regions which, as demonstrated recently in our relations with China, has the potential to hold other U.S. interests hostage, the U.S. could develop a multi-faceted approach which would include a number of issues and areas of importance to the U.S. A parallel approach to priority issues

and objectives would allow flexibility to stress, for example, non-proliferation in one area or with one country, without seeming to abandon other priority objectives of trade promotion or human rights. Such an approach would have the added benefit of reminding policy makers to consider the interplay of the various objectives before launching off in one direction or another without fully considering the consequences of a given course of action on other elements of the policy. Careful communication of these "baskets" to the public and Congress would make media pressure more manageable as well as facilitate the "sale" of specific courses of action in support of one or another basket of objectives.

Second, the administration should understand the panoply of tools available to it and select the most appropriate instrument(s), based on an assessment of: a) whether and to what degree U.S. national interests are threatened, and b) the impact of today's crosscurrents on the effectiveness of these tools. "Intervention is a matter of degree, with actions ranging from statements and limited economic measures at the low end of the spectrum to full-fledged invasions at the high end." On issues affecting neither U.S. security nor U.S. national interests, but which are of compelling humanitarian concern, U.S. involvement could be in the form of materiel or logistic support -- to UN institutions or private voluntary organizations -- rather than in the provision of U.S. personnel. Such cases would include such matters as famine relief in Somalia or disaster relief in Armenia or Bangladesh. On matters that directly or potentially affect U.S.

national interests, however, focused U.S. engagement -- whether in a unilateral or multilateral context -- must be the order of the day. North Korea's attempt to develop a nuclear bomb, efforts to integrate the former Soviet Union into the western community of nations, efforts to end the violence in the former Yugoslavia -- these all require the U.S. to be in the driver's seat, convincing Americans and allies alike on the need to take effective action. Still, in other instances, the U.S. might be unable or unwilling to commit resources, on the basis that the cost of engagement is not worth the potential benefit. Peacekeeping in the former Soviet Union might be one example of this. Still, the U.S. must be aware that there is a price for inaction and assess whether the U.S. can live with that price.

Third, the U.S. needs to weigh the benefits of multi-lateral action against its drawbacks and assess what changes should be instituted to make international organizations more effective. Multilateral action has become today's instrument of choice both because it shares costs and responsibility and because it provides a legitimacy for intervention in matters and areas which heretofore were outside the bounds of acceptable action. The fact that the UN has become involved in more peacekeeping operations in the last five years than in the previous 43 years is indicative of this trend. That said, UN institutions are constrained by limitations imposed at their creation. They are, in fact, less than the sum of their parts and, not surprisingly, have fallen short of the heavy burdens imposed on them in the post-cold war world. Rather than

simply say no to UN missions or renege on U.S. dues, the U.S. should be seeking ways to reform or refocus international organizations so that they better meet the requirements of today. Any number of suggestions have been put forward to increase the effectiveness of the UN to meet today's challenges. Former Secretary of State Baker has suggested that UN peacekeeping operations be formed with an eye toward selecting peacekeepers on the basis of a "compatibility of values of participant countries," noting that it is naive "to put troop units from widely disparate armies together under the UN flag and assume they will...show equal tolerance and restraint toward refugees, ethnic minorities, and other civilians."<sup>50</sup> Another possibility is to have regional players whose interests are most threatened by instability ante up the bulk of the resources required for UN missions in that region. Better communications and logistics support systems have been proposed, but this takes money, as does the suggestion that a UN permanent force be established. To date, the U.S. has been reluctant to endorse the creation of a supranational force; at the same time, we have been reluctant to devote the time or the forces to ensure that UN missions are carried out to our liking. If, as it appears, the trend is toward greater reliance on international institutions to promote and preserve order, the U.S. must give serious thought to whether it wants merely to improve the performance of UN missions via financial and managerial reforms or whether a new approach is called for via new, supranational structures.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Part of the difficulty in identifying and implementing a new foreign policy to meet a new world order is that the post-cold war world is a world in transition. State-centric power politics, while inadequate in and of themselves to resolve the problems of today, have yet to be replaced by effective supranational institutions. Whereas, in some respects, the U.S. has more foreign policy options -- given a partnership of sorts with Russia -- it also has more constraints, many of them self-imposed. As the link between world order and U.S. security has become more tenuous, the U.S. has become increasingly reluctant to become involved unilaterally. Indeed the U.S. public mood and pressing domestic concerns have all but ruled out unilateral action. But multi-lateral action, as the U.S. found out in Somalia and Bosnia, has its own drawbacks. It is much more difficult to get 12 or 15 governments to agree on a given course of action, than it is one.

Given the many contradictory trends and currents at work in today's world, the inclination to throw up one's hands and concentrate on domestic renewal is undoubtedly strong. Yet it is an inclination that must be resisted if the U.S. is to ensure that no hostile threat to U.S. interests emerges.

In many respects, U.S. attitudes in the 1990's bear many similarities to American attitudes following WWI. Emerging from a global victory, with no visible threat in sight, weary of global responsibilities, suffering from a moral and spiritual vacuum, and

faced with a host of compelling domestic problems, Americans want to focus on domestic prosperity. President Clinton, like Harding, was elected to focus on domestic affairs. What gives reason for pause is that, on the international front, many of the same social, economic and political elements that led to the emergence of fascism and communism are present in today's world: global economic dislocation, growing xenophobia as waves of immigrants threaten rich countries, and growing populism.<sup>51</sup> George Santayana said those who do not know history are doomed to fulfill it.

President Clinton has demonstrated his ability to exploit the power of his office to achieve uphill successes on matters of concern to him -- budget deficit reduction, crime, gun control, trade agreements, e.g. NAFTA and GATT. The challenge for the administration on the foreign policy front is to bring a similar degree of high-level attention and commitment to matters which can and do affect U.S. national interests. President Bush overestimated the capacity of power, divorced from principles, to shape the new world order; President Clinton, in the early days of his administration, overestimated the capacity of principles, unaided by power, to influence events. The challenge for foreign policy makers is to find the right mix of power and principles to garner the required international and domestic support to manage centrifugal forces, while resisting centripetal pressures to become involved when U.S. interests are not at stake. The task is by no means an easy one, but one thing is clear, a world in flux requires more, not less attention to foreign policy matters.

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