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## MANAGING RELATIVE DECLINE:

AN ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN POLICY ALTERNATIVES FOR THE UNITED STATES

by

Darcy Molstad, LCol, Royal Canadian Air Force

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Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Record

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## **Biography**

Lieutenant-Colonel Darcy Molstad is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1997 and subsequently received his Pilot Wings in 1999. After completing the CF-18 Basic Fighter Pilot Course in 2000, he was posted to 433 Tactical Fighter Squadron in Bagotville, Québec. From 2004 to 2007, he conducted an operational exchange tour with the United States Marine Corps (USMC) in Beaufort, SC. In 2009, he assumed the position of Deputy Commanding Officer at 410 Tactical Fighter (Operational Training) Squadron and in 2012 he assumed command of 425 Tactical Fighter Squadron in Bagotville, Québec.

His staff experience includes a tour as the Officer Commanding the 1 Canadian Air Division Fighter Standards and Evaluation Team and a tour as the Senior Staff Officer for Strategy at the Canada Command Headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario.

Lieutenant-Colonel Molstad's operational experience includes numerous NORAD and Noble Eagle deployments, a Western Pacific tour while attached to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Air Policing in Iceland, and NATO Reassurance Operations in Romania.

He is a Fighter Weapons Instructor with over 2100 hours in the F-18. He holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Alberta and a Master's in Defense Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada.

## **Abstract**

As the world trends towards a multipolar construct, it is imperative the United States adapt its approach to international relations and its use of the military instrument of national power. It must do so to reverse its outward focus, reform its reputation within the international community, and empower its partners as it slowly moves towards being *a* pole vice being *the* pole. This paper analyzes the relative decline debate and compares and contrasts the concepts of deep engagement and restraint. It contextualizes the problem by highlighting the extant forces that will compel Washington to favor the latter over the former and it recommends fundamental foreign policy principles and associated restraint options that will help slow down America's economic decline and preserve its power and influence. In the future, Washington will be compelled to exercise a degree of restraint so that it can focus on the domestic economy, satisfy a war-wary electorate, correct the folly of global democratization, and sequester the costs of nation-building. With a restrained foreign policy, the United States must define its national interests more narrowly, reduce partner dependence on the American security umbrella, and empower coalition partners in future military operations by treating them as "mutually indispensable." If the United States does not seriously reexamine its foreign policy "first principles," relative decline will wax, and influence will wane. America must seize its opportunity for a course correction now.

The idea of the future being different from the present is so repugnant to our conventional modes of thought and behavior that we, most of us, offer a great resistance to acting on it in practice.<sup>1</sup>

John Maynard Keynes, a world-renowned economist, delivered the above statement to the Eugenics Society nearly 80 years ago describing a psychological phenomenon that still permeates current macroeconomic and foreign policy discourse. In particular, there has been “a great resistance,” as Keynes puts it, among academic and foreign policy elites to recognize and “act on” the changes in the international order that have occurred since the end of the Cold War. The central debate continues to be whether the world is trending towards a multipolar construct and the complementary, but related, debate relates to what foreign policy principles should be practiced in such an international system.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many argued a multipolar world would quickly emerge, but instead, the United States transitioned through what Charles Krauthammer termed the “unipolar moment” – it stood alone at the apex of the global hierarchy and has remained there since.<sup>2</sup> For the United States, unipolarity is a blessing and a curse at the same time; it provides Washington with the strategic flexibility to implement foreign policies ranging from pseudo-isolationist to deep engagement with rapid transitions from one to the other, but it also reinforces a hegemonic hubris which distorts America’s perception of the very real “rise of the rest.”<sup>3</sup> This paper will show that the future *will* be different from the present and thus it is imperative for the United States to adapt its approach to international relations and its use of the military instrument of national power. It must do so to reverse its outward focus, reform its reputation within the international community, and empower its partners as it slowly moves towards being *a* pole vice being *the* pole.

This paper is divided into three main parts: the first part will lay the foundation by analyzing the “declinist” debate and compare and contrast the concepts of deep engagement and

restraint; the second part will contextualize the problem by highlighting the extant forces that will compel Washington to favor restraint over engagement; and the final part will recommend fundamental foreign policy principles and associated restraint options that, if adopted, will slow down America's economic decline and preserve, to the maximum extent possible, its power and influence as it adapts to a multipolar world order. The United States can be a global leader in a multipolar world, as it is today if it makes the course corrections prescribed herein. Conversely, if policymakers continue to be blinded by Keynesian "repugnancy," America's decline could be as disorderly and destabilizing as it was for Great Britain at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Ever since the "unipolar moment," international relations theorists have debated whether America is in a precipitous relative decline or whether it will continue to stand tall and maintain its global dominance. On the surface, the United States has the largest economy in the world which continues to grow in absolute terms, and the preeminent status of its armed forces will be uncontested for decades despite recent military spending trends in both Russia and China. However, the causal relationship between economic power and military superiority is not synchronous. According to renowned historian and international relations theorist, Paul Kennedy, "there is a noticeable 'lag time' between the trajectory of a state's relative economic strength and the trajectory of its military/territorial influence."<sup>4</sup> In a comprehensive historical analysis, Kennedy also showed that it is the *relative* vice absolute change in *economic* strength (vis-à-vis a state's competitors) that predicts the rise and fall of Great Powers.<sup>5</sup> If one looks at the numbers, the United States' absolute share of world gross domestic product (GDP) has gone from its peak at almost 40 percent in the late 1940s to just over 22 percent in 2013; however, many argue these numbers do not represent the true strength of the United States economy nor do they reflect a superpower in decline.<sup>6</sup>

Leading “ascentists” like Robert Kagan and Charles Krauthammer argue that the “rise of the rest” is a fallacy, and the United States is in no danger of losing influence in the world. Kagan correctly points out that the American share of global economic output in 1969 was essentially the same as what it is now, “roughly a quarter.”<sup>7</sup> However, it is misleading to be imprecise when analyzing such large sums of money. The difference between the 1969 share of 26.23 percent and the 2013 share of 22.83 percent represents only a 3.4 percent decline but in constant 2010 currency this amounts to more than 2.3 trillion dollars. Since 1969, the United States has lost (in relative terms) the equivalent of the economic output of the United Kingdom – the sixth largest economy in the world.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, Kagan correctly acknowledges these trends must be viewed across decades if not longer, and that pessimistic outlooks following the 2008 economic crisis are too narrowly focused. In his words, “just as one swallow does not make a spring, one recession, or even a severe economic crisis, need not mean the beginning of the end of a great power.”<sup>9</sup> However, he fails to point out that the United States share of the world economy *before* 1969 steeply declined from its high-water mark just twenty years earlier. It is just as shortsighted to focus on the 2008 economic crisis as it is to ignore the post-war decades in which there was significant relative decline.

In his 2002 article, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” Krauthammer also downplays the rate at which rising powers are gaining ground on the United States and contends its hegemonic status remains unchallenged.<sup>10</sup> He goes further by claiming the United States’ actions after 9/11 have served to “heighten” global asymmetry thanks to America’s demonstration of its incredible military might.<sup>11</sup> According to Krauthammer, without 9/11, “the world would have been aware of America’s size and potential, but not its ferocity or full capacities.”<sup>12</sup> But looking at military strength alone misses the point; political scientist C. Dale Walton highlights the flaw in this type



of thinking: “because America’s leaders – and its citizenry – assume that their country’s military strength greatly surpasses that of its potential foes, they greatly underestimate the seriousness of the challenge that it may face in coming decades from one or more other great powers.”<sup>13</sup> More importantly, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not gone well since Krauthammer’s 2002 article. Since the withdrawal from both theaters, Iraq is in a state of near-anarchy while the Taliban has succeeded in taking back territory in Afghanistan. Krauthammer was correct: the world was given a demonstration of American “ferocity” and its “full capacities” but was also shown the folly of over-optimistic nation-building and democratization strategies and an absence of will to stay until the job is done. The points gained by demonstrating overwhelming kinetic force were erased by failed strategies and weak resolve.

Krauthammer also contends that the United States’ “recuperative power,” or its resilience, after the 9/11 attacks also gave it much hegemonic capital – according to him, America’s sense of invulnerability “was transmuted from impermeability to resilience, the product of unrivaled, human, technological and political reserves.”<sup>14</sup> To assert that the United States has somehow gained power in the international system because it was able to reopen the New York Stock Exchange six days after the 9/11 attacks is hyperbole and hubris more than a quantifiable measure of real power. Would the London, Toronto, or Tokyo Stock Exchanges been incapable of doing the same? This overestimation of self and underestimation of others has proven dangerous in both strategy and war and does not facilitate objective analysis.

In contrast to Kagan and Krauthammer’s optimism, the government’s own National Intelligence Council identifies diffusion of power as a “megatrend” and argues that the future “...will shift to networks and coalitions in a multipolar world.”<sup>15</sup> It predicts that by 2030, “Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based upon

GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment... [and] China alone will probably have the largest economy, surpassing that of the United States.”<sup>16</sup> America is still undoubtedly the world’s dominant geopolitical actor, but the “rise of the rest” must not be ignored. It will take just one or two decades, according to the late Samuel P. Huntington, “before [the world] enters a truly multipolar 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”<sup>17</sup> The stability of the international system has not improved over the last two and a half decades of unipolarity and if Washington does not change its approach to international relations, it “will be less able to shape world politics.”<sup>18</sup> The central debate is whether the United States should adopt a policy of restraint or deep engagement.

America emerged from World War II as an unrivalled economic and military superpower and having successfully reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, affinity for a deep engagement doctrine was both expected and appropriate.<sup>19</sup> However, the world has fundamentally changed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, thereby demanding a reexamination of such foreign policy “first principles” and analysis of how they should be practically applied. International Relations scholars Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth lead the deep engagement camp arguing that the United States should not stray from its status quo grand strategy while Barry Posen leads the retrenchment camp contending that America *is* suffering from overstretch and its foreign policy should be more “restrained.”<sup>20</sup>

In a 2013 article published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Brooks et al. assert that deep engagement reduces the risk of conflict because it gives the United States influence over alliances and security arrangements, it secures the global commons (critical to maintaining unfettered international trade and commerce), it is not as costly as its opponents claim, and it is

“the devil we know.”<sup>21</sup> They predict that if the United States did not have a presence in Asia and the Middle East, regional insecurity would ensue, producing “cascades of nuclear proliferation as powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan built nuclear forces of their own.”<sup>22</sup> They warn that such a regional nuclear arms race would make it even easier for a non-state actor to acquire such armament, an undesirable scenario under any foreign policy. The United States, in their view, must continue to “lean forward.”

In contrast, Posen contends that America *is* suffering from overstretch and argues that a more restrained foreign policy should be adopted.<sup>23</sup> In his view, United States grand strategy is “undisciplined, expensive, and bloody.” He asserts that it “...makes enemies almost as fast as it slays them,...discourages allies from paying for their own defense, and convinces powerful states to band together and oppose Washington's plans, further raising the costs of carrying out its foreign policy.”<sup>24</sup> He also warns against engagement of “sub-state” actors who have proven to possess extremely resilient identities and where the prospects for their democratization or elimination are indeed limited. Posen does not propose the United States return to its pre-World War II isolationism but that it refocuses its foreign policy more narrowly upon national interests. In particular, he believes that America should focus on containing the establishment of a regional hegemon in Eurasia, proliferation should be controlled cooperatively and diplomatically instead of by preventive military action, and threats such as terrorism should be countered by focusing on defense while using offensive action very sparingly.<sup>25</sup> In his words, the United States must “set political and military priorities much more rigorously and subsidize the security of others much less generously.”<sup>26</sup> The United States, according to Posen, must “pull back.”

To support the “lean forward” argument, Brooks et al. highlight two main points that, upon closer examination, fail to hold up to critical analysis. First, they claim that very low

defense spending of America's allies is an indicator of the pacifying function of deep engagement. However, it is the pacification of America's potential adversaries, not allies, which should be of primary concern. If one accepts that a large military presence near a potential adversary does provide stability, then should it matter what flag the "allied" forces fall under? Their second argument contends that deep engagement was the ideal policy to counter, contain, and eventually defeat, the Soviets in the Cold War and should, therefore, continue to be relevant and effective under current geopolitical circumstances. The radical changes in the international security environment over the last 25 years make it hard to believe that a late 1940s grand strategy is not in any need of revision.<sup>27</sup> In general, arguments for deep engagement are based on disparaging retrenchment concepts rather than emphasizing the virtues of leaning forward. Stephen Walt succinctly summarizes the faulty logic of the "lean forward" doctrine:

U.S. leaders can only sell deep engagement by convincing Americans that the nation's security will be fatally compromised if they do not get busy managing the entire globe. Because the United States is in fact quite secure from direct attack and/or conquest, the only way to do that is by ceaseless threat-mongering, as has been done in the United States ever since the Truman Doctrine, the first Committee on the Present Danger and the alarmist rhetoric of NSC-68. Unfortunately, threat-mongering requires people in the national security establishment to exaggerate U.S. interests more-or-less constantly and to conjure up half-baked ideas like the domino theory to keep people nervous. And once a country has talked itself into a properly paranoid frame of mind, it inevitably stumbles into various quagmires, as the United States did in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Again, such debacles are not deviations from 'deep engagement'; they are a nearly inevitable consequence of it.<sup>28</sup>

President Barack Obama's failed attempts to retrench the degree to which he intended in his campaign promises demonstrates how difficult it is to pull back after decades of leaning forward. However, there are powerful structural forces that are conspiring to drive a foreign policy course correction.

It is probable the United States will continue to emphasize an idealistic value based approach to world affairs; but, in the coming years it will be forced to do so in a more physically

retrenched manner. There are three factors that will drive this trend and limit American foreign policy flexibility: the American economy is in need of significant attention and long-term renewal; the public is growing wary of costly military “engagement”; and the failed nation-building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrates the limits of even extraordinary military power – the status quo is not working.

The 2010 *National Security Strategy* correctly recognizes the economy as “the wellspring of American power.”<sup>29</sup> For years, successive American administrations could afford to spend four percent (or more) of a massive GDP without creating unmanageable deficits or neglecting essential domestic programs. However, such luxuries no longer exist. The United States has embarked upon too many trillion dollar military “adventures” and the resultant financial burden is now being shouldered by the average citizen. For example, in 2013 the government almost came to a grinding halt when it nearly defaulted on its debt, causing a second credit-rating downgrade in two years. The national debt is now over 18 trillion dollars and continues to grow unabated, and income inequality has reached unprecedented levels which will exacerbate social ills and constrain social mobility.<sup>30</sup> A unipolar order still exists to be sure, but it is being steadily eroded by rising powers like China, who sagely allocate resources to stimulate their domestic economies and modernize their militaries rather than embarking on costly expeditionary “adventurism.” In the United States, recent fiscal pressures have resulted in drastic sequestration initiatives, and further reductions to the Department of Defense (DOD) baseline budget are expected by the Pentagon. In the 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR), even the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, acknowledged the need to collectively put the “Nation’s fiscal house in order.”<sup>31</sup> As the chief steward of American hard power, he faces significant challenges since it is difficult to justify more defense spending in a climate of fiscal

austerity, especially when the public does not perceive an existential threat – and public opinion *does* matter.

The waters of public opinion are difficult to navigate for policymakers who must appease an ill-informed and sometimes apathetic electorate, even when appeasement results in adopting foreign policies that are not in the best strategic interests of the nation.<sup>32</sup> The most recent polls examining American views on restraint and engagement have shown that support for the latter has been declining for years. In a recent survey by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the number of Americans who say the United States “should stay out of world affairs...[reached] its highest point since the first Chicago Council Survey in 1974.”<sup>33</sup> The majority of those surveyed still favor an active role, but the qualifying questions reveal most prefer non-military forms of engagement.<sup>34</sup> A Pews survey also showed that, for the first time, a majority of Americans feel the United States “should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own.”<sup>35</sup> The public has clearly become war-wary, and they have not been satisfied with the results of recent American “activism” – they are ready for a different approach.

Americans are ready for a different approach because deep engagement and neoconservative ideals have cost the United States much blood and treasure yet have yielded very little results. The failed democratization of Iraq created a power vacuum that allowed the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a violent extremist faction, to take root and conduct a brutal form of religious and ideological cleansing. The air campaign in Libya “protected civilians” by empowering anti-Gadhafi forces to depose their autocratic leader, leaving another vacuum for power-brokers to exploit and further de-stabilize the region. After the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban commenced a revival campaign, and there is a risk Kabul will

once again be subjugated to rule under its despotic regime. According to Huntington, these outcomes show “American leaders repeatedly make threats, promise action, and fail to deliver. The result is a foreign policy of ‘rhetoric and retreat’ and a growing reputation as a ‘hollow hegemon.’”<sup>36</sup>

As the world marches slowly toward multipolarity, the United States will need to begin a process of gradual retrenchment to preserve, for as long as possible, its privileged hegemony while at the same time socializing the norms required for effective membership in the future world order. America’s tendency to prioritize foreign over domestic policies should be reversed, democratization and nation-building should be doggedly avoided, national interests should be defined and applied more narrowly, soft power should be revived, and diplomacy renewed. Finally, as the United States pulls back, it should empower partner nations to share the burden of preserving international stability in both indirect and direct ways.

For the last decade and a half, the United States was unable to focus adequately on domestic policies as a result of ambitious and costly democratization and nation-building endeavors. The current administration has attempted to reverse this trend recognizing the gravity of the existing economic decline and domestic malaise. In President Obama’s words, “it is time to focus on nation-building here at home.”<sup>37</sup> The economic factors already described as forces for a foreign policy course correction only scratch the surface of the myriad domestic maladies that should be targeted. However, to do so will require political cooperation and compromise, which have been conspicuously absent in Washington lately. More importantly, it will require money which will only be available if discipline and restraint are exercised to avoid costly and unproductive military adventures.

On September 11, 2001 America's path to overreach was drastically accelerated because vitriolic emotion and retributive motives replaced pragmatic grand strategy deliberations. After this date, counterterrorism became the singular focus amongst the political elite and the Bush Administration erroneously extended the United States' strategic perimeter to encompass the entire globe.<sup>38</sup> The death and destruction caused by the 9/11 attacks were on a massive scale but, in general, terrorism has never been, and never will be, an existential threat to the United States. 9/11 identified the seams and gaps in American defenses and intelligence sharing that will forever be sealed, but the elimination of "safe havens" through democratization and nation-building has been woefully ineffective and exorbitantly expensive.<sup>39</sup> Americans are more likely to be killed by a plethora of domestic threats (police, car accidents, and poverty to name just three) than they are as a result of terrorism. According to Walton, the United States must "move beyond the myopic grand strategy of the past decade, instead adopting one that is focused mainly on the future of the international system and, particularly, the relationship among the great powers."<sup>40</sup>

The United States must begin to accept that keeping the military instrument of power sheathed, when national security is not directly threatened, may be the best course of action. At times, it is better to be a "paper tiger" than it is to be a "hollow hegemon" and Washington must be prepared to ignore the rhetoric from nations who will criticize restraint as much as they do overreach. When it acts militarily, the United States must ensure that end-states are well-defined, achievable, and ultimately realized or it should not act at all – a self-evident statement since no administration commits forces expecting anything but victory; but overconfidence and excessive optimism have plagued American asymmetric wars for decades with no sign of correction. It is unrealistic to expect that foreign policy will ever be divorced from domestic



politics; thus, if not acting is a sign of domestic political weakness and acting but failing is a sign of international strategic incompetence then Washington must pick its poison wisely or suffer the consequences.

If hard power is to be used less over time then it follows that soft power must be cultivated and diplomacy renewed. The two concepts are inextricably linked with soft power dissolving enmity and diplomacy resolving it. If soft power is, as former President Bill Clinton eloquently stated, the power of America's example, it must derive from within – yet another reason for a “rebalance” to the domestic front. In contrast to current practices, diplomacy and negotiations should *lead* to the carrot rather than masquerade as one. As Yitzhak Rabin wisely stated while shaking hands with Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn in 1993, “you don’t need to talk to make peace with your friends. You need to make peace with your enemies.”<sup>41</sup> If peace is elusive, then the United States must work cooperatively within alliances or multilaterally in order to achieve international solutions to international problems.

With respect to hard power, the United States cannot underwrite global security indefinitely. In order to wean itself from this incredible burden, it must encourage and empower its allies to assume more responsibility. Accordingly, the United States should take the following actions: encourage countries to spend more on defense and take ownership of their regional deterrence; and empower partners by executing multinational operations with greater humility and inclusiveness.<sup>42</sup>

One of the main pillars of Posen’s model of restraint is to encourage allies to stop “free-riding.” He contends that European and Asian countries have become too comfortable under the United States’ security umbrella and have thus reduced their defense spending too much.<sup>43</sup> His argument is convincing, but his solution for Europe, in particular, is extreme. Posen suggests

that the United States withdraw completely from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), allowing only the alliance's political shell to remain extant while American forces are repatriated. Reducing the DOD footprint in Europe is a major change that would certainly be met with bureaucratic resistance, but is a reasonable adjustment to force structure in the current fiscal and geopolitical climate. It would put direct pressure on European countries to increase their deterrent capacities. However, the dissolution of NATO's military body would eliminate the only structural institution outside of the DOD proven to be capable of commanding and controlling complex multinational operations. Moreover, NATO's collective defense article may be the only thing preventing Russian President Vladimir Putin from expanding *his* "adventurism" outside the borders of the Ukraine. The United States, therefore, should preserve its leadership role within NATO's defense body, exert diplomatic pressure on alliance members to increase their military budgets, and seriously consider leaving its strategic hubs while repatriating the preponderance of its European forces. The United States could then conduct rotational deployments to provide presence and reassurance based on circumstances the same way regular force units are rotated in the Western Pacific.<sup>44</sup>

The United States can empower its partners and allies by establishing what *Foreign Policy* contributor Leslie Gelb calls relationships of "mutual indispensability."<sup>45</sup> Even in a leadership role, if the United States respects partner nations' interests, coalitions will be more robust in foundation and more successful in action. First, military interventions do not need to be United States-led from D-day to V-day. The Pentagon should look for opportunities to quickly transfer operational command and control to alliances or partner nations once unique American capabilities provide the initial burst of operational momentum. The transfer of Odyssey Dawn under Africa Command to Operation Unified Protector under NATO is an

example of such a transition.<sup>46</sup> Second, to demonstrate inclusiveness in deed and not just words, the Pentagon should conduct multinational planning for select contingency operations in accordance with current joint doctrine (JP 3-16). According to JP 3-16, in multinational operations, “all partners must be included in the planning process, and their opinions must be sought in mission assignment.”<sup>47</sup> These words sound inclusive to the foreign reader; but in reality they are hollow because very few (if any) operational plans are prepared outside of the standard “no foreign” caveat. Multinational planning does occur but only during established multinational operations for forces already in theater. A modern war on the Korean Peninsula, for example, would likely be waged by a robust coalition (as it was in the 1950s under United Nations auspices) and therefore the United States should include some expected contributors (such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada) in the planning process or revision cycles of its numbered operational plan. These partners could then inform their respective governments on the scope and scale of the campaign design, thereby expediting national authority for the use of force should it be executed. The United States could still plan for the worst case of “going it alone” in terms of force allocation, but multinational contingency planning would effectively identify the seams and gaps that partner nations could fill.<sup>48</sup>

Recent trends have indicated that policymakers are reluctant to engage in a meaningful debate regarding relative decline, foreign policy first principles, and the use of America’s incredible military strength. Those who deny that changes are occurring in the global distribution of power are, according to Walton, simply “...proud citizens [who] do not want to confront the corrosion of their polity’s influence and are apt to find alluring flattering humbug that emphasizes national ‘specialness’ and offhandedly dismisses decline.”<sup>49</sup> However, in reality the “unipolar moment” was just that – a moment in time that has come and gone. The United

States *is* in relative decline in a world where power is becoming more and more diffuse. The macroeconomic and geopolitical conditions that exist today are ill-suited to an “in your face” deep engagement foreign policy.

Regardless of one’s position on the isolation-neoconservative spectrum, Washington will be compelled to exercise a degree of restraint in the future so that it can focus on the domestic economy, satisfy a war-wary electorate, correct the folly of global democratization, and sequester the costs of nation-building. Such a course correction will be difficult after decades of deep engagement, but according to Thucydides, “of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men the most.”<sup>50</sup> With a restrained foreign policy, the United States must define its national interests more narrowly and avoid the temptation to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. Militarily, the Pentagon should conduct a measured withdrawal of forces from Europe to encourage allies to spend more on defense and reduce partner dependence on the American security umbrella. The Pentagon should also empower partner nations by treating them as “mutually indispensable” – give them instrumental roles and responsibilities from planning to leading operations. According to Winston Churchill, “there is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them!”<sup>51</sup>

If the United States adopts even some of the recommendations found herein, it will effectively manage its decline and lay the foundation for a preeminent role in the future international system – whatever form it takes. If it does not make the prescribed course corrections, growing domestic and economic malaise will have deleterious effects on America’s ability to influence in a multipolar world. Walton astutely points out, “There is an immense qualitative difference between managed relative decline and an unregulated, chaotic freefall.”<sup>52</sup>

The United States must act now to avoid the “freefall” – there is no such thing as a grand strategy parachute.

## Notes

1. J.M. Keynes, “Some Economic Consequences of a Declining Population,” *The Eugenics Review* 29, no. 1 (1937), 13.
2. Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” *The National Interest*, no. 70 (Winter 2002/03), 5.
3. C. Dale Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency: Foreign Policy, War and the American Role in the World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 136.
4. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1987), xxiii.
5. *Ibid.*, xv.
6. Derek Thompson, “The Economic History of the Last 2,000 Years in 1 Little Graph,” *The Atlantic*, 19 June 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/06/the-economic-history-of-the-last-2-000-years-in-1-little-graph/258676/> (accessed 1 February 2015).
7. Robert Kagan, “Not Fade Away: The Myth of American Decline,” *The New Republic*, 11 January 2012, <http://www.tnr.com/article/politics/magazine/99521/america-world-power-declinism/> (accessed 10 February 2015).
8. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, “International Macroeconomic Data Set,” <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/international-macroeconomic-data-set.aspx> (accessed 1 February 2015).
9. Kagan, “Not Fade Away.”
10. Charles Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” *The National Interest*, no. 70 (Winter 2002/03), 6.
11. *Ibid.*, 7.
12. *Ibid.*, 7.
13. Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency*, 136.
14. Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” 7-8.
15. Director of National Intelligence, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, December 2012), ii. A “megatrend” is a factor that will likely occur under any scenario.
16. *Ibid.*, iv. Note: In October 2014, China’s GDP (corrected for purchasing power parity) surpassed the United States’.
17. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 2 (March 1999), 37.
18. G. John Ikenberry, “The Future of the Liberal World Order,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (May 2011), Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 10 January 2015).
19. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 359.
20. Barry R. Posen, “Pull Back,” *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January 2013), 116-128.

21. Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January 2013), Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 10 January 2015).
22. Ibid..
23. Posen, "Pull Back."
24. Ibid..
25. Barry R. Posen, "The Case for Restraint" (lecture, George Washington University, Washington, DC, 17 June 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGfvVc3UJUo> (accessed 10 January 2015).
26. Ibid..
27. Stephen M. Walt, "More or Less: The Debate on U.S. Grand Strategy," *Foreign Policy*, 2 January 2013, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/02/more-or-less-the-debate-on-u-s-grand-strategy/> (accessed 13 Dec 2014).
28. Ibid..
29. White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 2.
30. TreasuryDirect, "The Debt to the Penny and Who Holds It," <http://www.treasurydirect.gov/NP/debt/current> (accessed 30 January 2015).
31. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, 4 March 2014), v.
32. Michael A. Cohen, "Unipolar Disorder: Why are American voters so all over the place when it comes to foreign policy?" *Foreign Policy*, 3 July 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/03/unipolar-disorder/> (accessed 30 Jan 15).
33. Dina Smeltz and Ivo Daalder, *Foreign Policy in the Age of Retrenchment: Results of the 2014 Chicago Council Survey of American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2014), 3.
34. Ibid., 3.
35. Pew Research Center, *Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips: America's Place in the World 2013*, 3 December 2013, <http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/12-3-13%20APW%20VI%20release.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2015), 5.
36. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," 40.
37. Barack Obama, "America, It Is Time to Focus on Nation Building Here at Home," *Vital Speeches Of The Day* 77, no. 9 (September 2011), 328.
38. Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency*, 86.
39. Micah Zenko and Amelia Mae Wolf, "The Myth of the Terrorist Safe Haven," *Foreign Policy*, 26 January 2015, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/26/al-qaeda-islamic-state-myth-of-the-terrorist-safe-haven/> (accessed 1 February 2015). Also see Posen's article "Pull Back," where he asserts that "because the threat is modest, and because trying to reform other societies by force is too costly, the United States must fight terrorism with carefully applied force, rather than through wholesale nation-building efforts such as that in Afghanistan."
40. Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency*, 86.
41. Yitzhak Rabin quoted in David E. Sanger, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 2009), 84. Another variation of the quote ("you don't make peace with friends,...you make it with very

unsavory enemies”) was reported in Clyde Haberman’s, “Mideast Accord: The Overview; P.L.O. and Israel Accept Each Other After 3 Decades of Relentless Strife,” *New York Times*, 10 September 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/10/world/mideast-accord-overview-plo-israel-accept-each-other-after-3-decades-relentless.html> (accessed 13 February 2015).

42. General Martin E. Dempsey, *Chairman’s Strategic Direction to the Joint Force*, 6 February 2012, 4. In this document, the CJCS speaks about empowering others to lead during multinational operations.

43. Posen, “Pull Back.”

44. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, 60. DOD leadership acknowledges the need to rationalize all deployed forces: “We will need to balance permanent, prepositioned, and rotational presence with surge capability. We will seek new presence models that assure our allies and deter our adversaries while addressing our many responsibilities around the world.”

45. Leslie H. Gelb, “In Defense of Leading from Behind: So What if it’s a Terrible Slogan? It’s Still the Right Strategy,” 29 April 2013, *Foreign Policy*, [http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/in-defense-of-leading-from-behind/?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/in-defense-of-leading-from-behind/?wp_login_redirect=0) (accessed 30 January 2015). “Mutual indispensability” is the term proposed by Gelb as an alternative to the weak intonations of “leading from behind” which emerged in the discourse following Operation Unified Protector in Libya.

46. JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, 11 August 2011, I-12. “The intent of unified action is *not that the US must lead every operation*, since our country will not be able to respond directly to every crisis. Also, any large-scale employment of US military forces abroad invites political repercussions simply because it is the US that is acting. Some international parties will oppose almost any US military commitment, no matter how limited or benign, solely to restrain the exercise of American power. In such circumstances, friendly surrogates assisted by US joint forces may be able to conduct operations and achieve mutually agreeable objectives when the direct employment of US forces would be objectionable or infeasible” [Emphasis added].

47. JP 3-16, *Multinational Operations*, 16 July 2013, I-3.

48. Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, *Decade of War, Volume 1: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*, 15 June 2012, 31. The following is a short summary of the recommendations that relate to multinational and coalition operations: “Accommodate and anticipate national caveats and rules of engagement: Understand, acknowledge, and plan for differences in national caveats and ROE, including US SROE for self-defense. Resolve knowledge management and interoperability challenges: Develop policies, procedures, and systems to rapidly and effectively share information and intelligence across the spectrum of coalition partners. Build common basis for action: Sustain efforts to develop common doctrine, TTP, and policies with the spectrum of coalition partners. Avoid over-classification: Classification policies should be realistic in terms of the potential harm of sharing information, with leaders proactively sharing needed information with partners.”

49. Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency*, 136, 158.

50. Commonly attributed to Thucydides’, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, but historians have debated the veracity of this claim. The phrase was prominently displayed in an epigram on Colin Powell’s desk when he was the CJCS. For a discussion regarding the debated origin of the phrase, see <http://www.thesphinxblog.com/2013/02/21/of-all-manifestations-of-power/> (accessed 10 January 2015).

51. Viscount Alanbrooke diary, 1 April 1945, as quoted in Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West, 1943-1946* (London: Grafton Books, 1986), 445.

52. Walton, *Grand Strategy and the Presidency*, 158.



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[http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/in-defense-of-leading-from-behind/?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/29/in-defense-of-leading-from-behind/?wp_login_redirect=0) (accessed 30 January 2015).
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