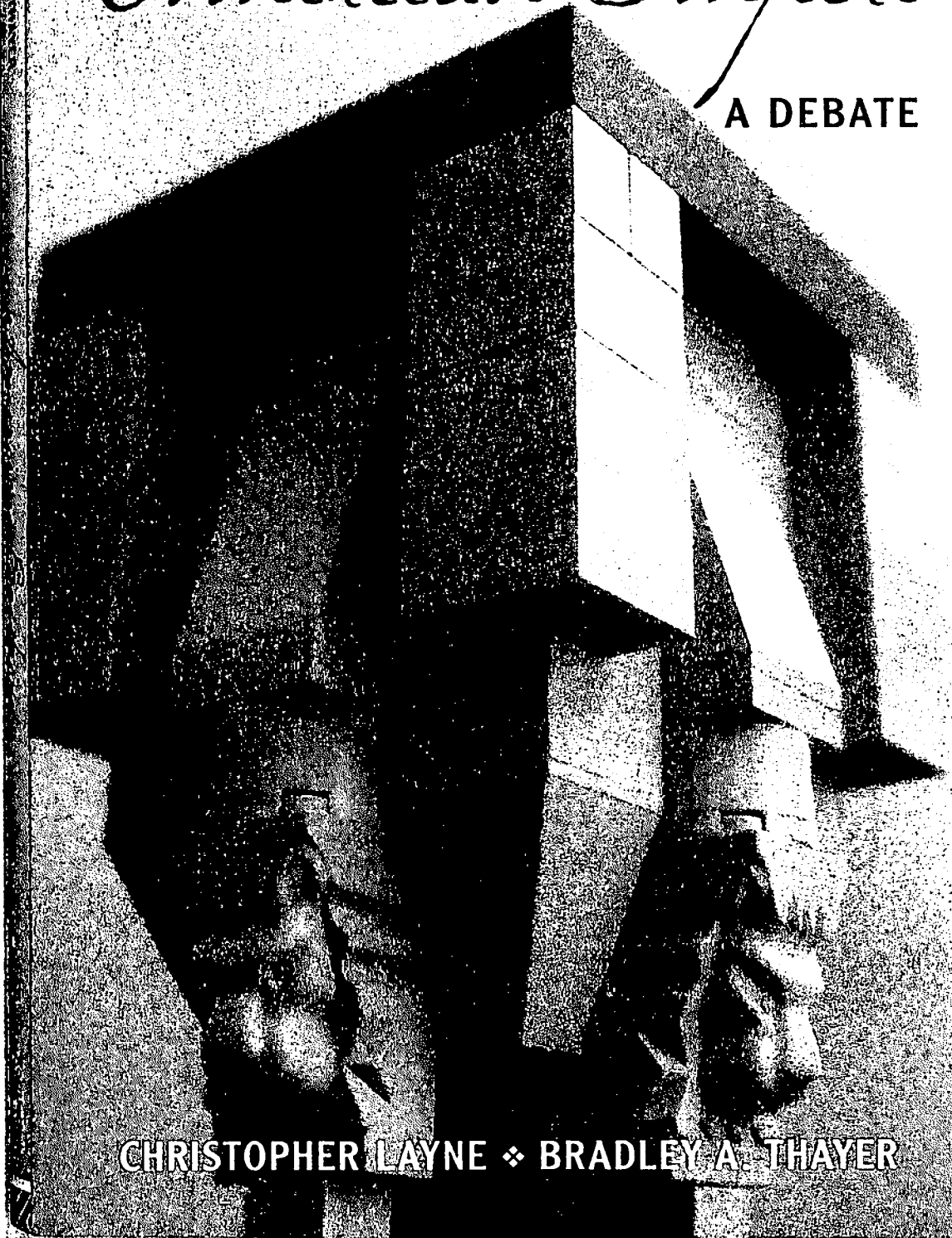


American Empire

A DEBATE



CHRISTOPHER LAYNE ♦ BRADLEY A. THAYER

137. See Layne, "Kant or Cant? The Myth of the Democratic Peace," *International Security*, 19 (2) (Fall 1994), pp. 5-49; Christopher Layne, "Shell Games, Shallow Gains, and the Democratic Peace," *International History Review* 19 (4): 4; Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Politics and Peace," *International Security* 20 (2) (Winter 1996/97): 123-146; David Spiro, "The Insignificance of the Liberal Peace," *International Security* 19 (2) (Fall 1994): 50-86.
138. Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 246.
139. Jeffrey Goldberg, "Breaking Ranks," *The New Yorker*, October 31, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/printables/fact/0510331fa_ct2.
140. Katarina Delacoura, "US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001," *International Affairs* 81 (5): 975.
141. Steven Erlanger, "U.S. and Israelis Are Said to Talk of Hamas Ouster," *New York Times*, February 14, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/international/middleeast/14mideast.html>.
142. Lawrence Freedman, "A Legacy of Failure in the Arab World," *Financial Times*, January 26, 2004, p. 13.
143. On ill-liberal democracies, see Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (6) (November/December 1997): 22-43. For rebuttals to Zakaria, see John Shattuck and J. Brian Atwood, "Why Democrats Trump Autocrats," *Foreign Affairs* 77 (2) (March/April 1998): 167-170; Marc F. Plattner, "Liberalism and Democracy: Can't Have One without the Other," *Foreign Affairs* 77 (2) (March/April 1998): 171-180. On the war-proneness of newly democratizing states, which, in contrast to "mature" democracies, usually are ill-liberal, see Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20 (1) (Summer 1995): 5-38.
144. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Prone to Violence: The Paradox of the Democratic Peace," *The National Interest* 82 (Winter 2005/06): 39.
145. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
146. In February 2005, Goss stated: "Islamic extremists are exploiting the Iraqi conflict to recruit new anti-U.S. jihadists. These jihadists who survive will leave Iraq experienced and focused on acts of urban terrorism. They represent a potential pool of contacts to build transnational terrorist cells, groups and networks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and other countries." Quoted in Dana Priest and Josh White, "War Helps Recruit Terrorists, Hill Told: Intelligence Officials Talk of Growing Insurgency," *Washington Post*, February 17, 2005, p. A1.

Reply to Christopher Layne

The Strength of the American Empire

BRADLEY A. THAYER

During World War I, the French statesman Georges Clemenceau famously defended his right to direct his country's military affairs over the objections of the military. He is often quoted as saying "War is too serious a matter to entrust to military men." I would like to amend that: American grand strategy is too serious a matter to entrust solely to academics, or politicians and policy-makers, or issue-advocates and lobbyists. It is the proper purview of all Americans and is too serious a business to entrust to anyone but them. The spirit that animates this book is that the American people, as well as people in other countries, should understand the costs and benefits of American grand strategy and debate the grand strategic alternatives available to the United States.

This book is an effort to promote understanding of the grand strategy of the United States, its grand strategic options, as well as the benefits and risks associated with them. Layne and I are powerful advocates of alternative grand strategies, but we join each other in recognizing the importance of this debate and in our desire to foster it. We recognize that Americans can and will disagree about the proper role of the United States in international politics and how best to advance and defend the interests of the United States.

To advance these goals, in this chapter I would like to respond to Layne's criticisms of the grand strategy of primacy made in chapter 2 and present some final reflections on the grand strategy of offshore balancing versus the grand strategy of primacy. I argue that primacy is the superior grand strategic choice for the United States because it provides the greatest benefit for the United States with the least risk. Furthermore, to abandon the grand strategy of primacy at this time would entail enormous dangers for the United States and its allies.

Why Layne's Critique of American Primacy Is Wrong

Layne levels several major allegations against the grand strategy of primacy, and I want to respond to the two most important: first, that the pursuit of primacy makes the United States less secure; second, that Iraq serves as a test case for the American Empire, and—he submits—it is a test that the United States is failing. Before I reply, I would like to thank Layne for illuminating the risks associated with primacy. Although both of his charges are wrong—in fact, the pursuit of hegemony makes the United States more secure and Iraq reflects some of the best principles of the United States—having Layne present the case against the American Empire helps to advance this vital debate.

Layne does not illuminate the risks associated with his preferred grand strategy of offshore balancing principally because those risks far outweigh any gain. Abandoning primacy in favor of offshore balancing would entail enormous dangers for the United States and its allies. Most importantly, it would cause the United States to abandon its dominant position in favor of inferiority for the first time in a century. Offshore balancing is a radical break with American tradition, statecraft, and policies which have allowed the United States first, to defeat four peer competitors—Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union in World War II and the Cold War; second, by peaceful means, to replace the previously dominant state—Great Britain; and third, to win greater security for the American people and their allies.

U.S. Power Makes the United States More, Not Less, Secure

There is a category of events in life: Things that almost never happen. Included in this are rich people complaining that they have too much money, athletes saying they are too strong, Hollywood stars bemoaning that they receive too much publicity, and countries asserting they have too much power and want less.

Countries want more power to protect their people and their other interests, such as economic growth and allies. Layne is right about a fundamental cause—the anarchy of the international system. But there is a debate among theorists of international relations concerning whether states should adopt a “Goldilocks” strategy—having just enough power, not too little nor too much—or if they should maximize their power to the extent that they are able to do so.¹ Defensive realists like Layne favor a “Goldilocks” strategy for security. Offensive realists, like me, favor maximizing power for security. For the United States, defensive realists are more passive, support a smaller military, and favor reducing its commitments abroad. Offensive realists are more active, support a larger military, and favor using the power of the United States to protect its interests overseas, e.g., by taking the fight to the terrorists in the Middle East rather than waiting for them to come to the United States to attack Americans.

Each country knows it will never be perfectly secure, but that does not detract from the necessity of seeking security. International politics is a dangerous environment in which countries have no choice but to participate. Any involvement—from the extensive involvement of the United States to the narrow activity of Switzerland—in this dangerous realm runs the risk of a backlash. That is simply a fact of life in international politics. The issue is how much participation is right. Thankfully, thus far the United States recognizes it is much better to be involved so that it may shape events, rather than to remain passive, having events shaped by other countries, and then adjusting to what they desire.

In contrast to Layne's argument, maximizing the power of the United States aids its ability to defend itself from attacks and to advance its interests. This argument is based on its prodigious economic, ideological, and military power. Due to this power, the United States is able to defeat its enemies the world over, to reassure its allies, and to dissuade states from challenging it. From this power also comes respect and admiration, no matter how grudging it may be at times. These advantages keep the United States, its interests, and its allies secure, and it must strive to maintain its advantages in international politics as long as possible.

Knowing that American hegemony will end someday does not mean that we should welcome or facilitate its demise; rather the reverse. The United States should labor to maintain hegemony as long as possible—just as knowing that you will die someday does not keep you from planning your future and living today. You strive to live as long as possible although you realize that it is inevitable that you will die. Like good health, Americans and most of the world should welcome American primacy and work to preserve it as long as possible.

The value of U.S. power for the country itself as well as for most of the world is demonstrated easily by considering four critical facts about international politics. First, if you doubt that more power is better, just ask the citizens of a country that has been conquered, like the Czech Republic, Poland, Kuwait, or Lebanon; or the citizens of a country facing great peril due to external threats or terrorists, like Colombia, Georgia, Israel, Nepal, or Turkey. These countries would prefer to possess greater power to improve their security. Or query the citizens of a fallen empire. For the British, French, or Russians, having the power to influence the direction of international politics, having the respect and recognition that flows from power, and, most importantly, having the ability to advance and defend their country's interests are elements of power that are missed greatly. In sum, the world looks very different from the perspective of these countries than it does from a powerful and secure United States.

Second, U.S. power protects the United States. That sentence is as genuine and as important a statement about international politics as one can make. International politics is not a game or a sport. There are no “time outs,” there

is no halftime and no rest. It never stops. There is no hiding from threats and dangers in international politics. If there is no diplomatic solution to the threats it confronts, then the conventional and strategic military power of the United States is what protects the country from such threats. Simply by declaring that the United States is going home, thus abandoning its commitments or making half pledges to defend its interests and allies, does not mean that others will respect its wishes to retreat. In fact, to make such a declaration implies weakness and emboldens aggression. In the anarchic world of the animal kingdom, predators prefer to eat the weak rather than confront the strong. The same is true in the anarchic realm of international politics. If the United States is not strong and does not actively protect and advance its interests, other countries will prey upon those interests, and even on the United States itself.

Third, countries want to align themselves with the United States. Far from there being a backlash against the United States, there is worldwide bandwagoning with it. The vast majority of countries in international politics have alliances with the United States. There are approximately 192 countries in the world, ranging from the size of giants like Russia to Lilliputians like Vanuatu. Of that number, you can count with one hand the countries opposed to the United States—China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela. Once the leaders of Cuba and Venezuela change, there is every reason to believe that those countries will be allied with the United States, as they were before their present rulers—Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez—came to power. North Korea will collapse someday, removing that threat, although not without significant danger to the countries in the region. Of these states, only China has the potential power to confront the United States. The potential power of China should not be underestimated, but neither should the formidable power of the United States and its allies.

There is an old saying that you can learn a lot about someone by looking at his friends (or enemies). It may be true about people, but it is certainly true of the United States. Of the 192 countries in existence, a great number, 84, are allied with the United States, and they include almost all of the major economic and military states.

This includes twenty-five members of NATO (excluding the United States—Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom); fourteen major non-NATO allies (Australia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Jordan, New Zealand, Argentina, Bahrain, Philippines, Thailand, Kuwait, Morocco, and Pakistan); nineteen Rio Pact members (excluding Argentina and Venezuela—The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Para-

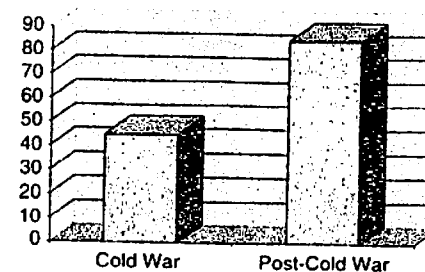


Figure 3.1 Number of U.S. allies.

guay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay); seven Caribbean Regional Security System members (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), and thirteen members of the Iraq coalition who are not captured by the other categories: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Singapore, Tonga, and Ukraine. In addition, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Tunisia are now important U.S. allies.

This is a ratio of almost 17 to 1 (84 to 5) of the countries allied with the United States against those who are opposed to it. And other states may be added to the list of allies. For example, a country like Nigeria is essentially pro-United States although there is no formal security arrangement between those countries. This situation is unprecedented in international politics—never have so many countries been aligned with the dominant state in modern history.

As Figure 3.1 demonstrates, it is a big change from the Cold War when most of the countries of the world were aligned either with the United States (approximately forty-five) or the Soviet Union (about twenty-four countries),

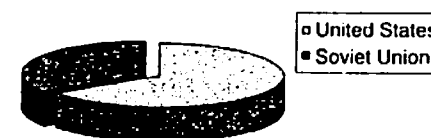


Figure 3.2 Ratio of alliances during the Cold War. 1.8:1 in favor of the United States.

which yields a ratio of 1.8 to 1 of states aligned with the United States to those



Figure 3.3 Ratio of states aligned with the United States to those opposed to it in the post-Cold War period. 17:1 in favor of the United States

of the Soviet Union, as captured by Figure 3.2. Figure 3.3 illuminates the ratio of states aligned with the United States to those opposed to it in the post-Cold War period.

So, while we are entitled to our own opinions about international politics, we are not entitled to our own facts. They must be acknowledged. In the post-Cold War world, the United States is much better off—it is much more powerful and more secure—than was during the Cold War.

What is more, many of the allies of the United States have become more dependent on the United States for their security than during the Cold War. For many years now, most NATO countries have only spent a fraction of their budget on defense, and it is not transparent how they would defend themselves if not for the United States did not. Only six of the twenty-five members of NATO (not counting the United States) are spending 2 percent or more of their GDP on defense, while nineteen spend less than 2 percent. Such a low level of defense spending is possible only because of the security provided by the United States.

The fourth critical fact to consider is that the security provided by the power of the United States creates stability in international politics. That is vitally important for the world, but easily forgotten. Harvard professor Joseph Nye often compares the security provided by the United States to oxygen. If it were taken away, a person would think of nothing else. If the security and stability provided by the United States were taken away, most countries would be much worse off, and arms races, vicious security competition, and wars would result. It would be a world without NATO or other key U.S. alliances. We can imagine easily conflict between traditional rivals like Greece and Turkey, Syria and Israel, India and Pakistan, Taiwan and China, Russia and Georgia, Hungary and Romania, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and an intense arms race between China and Japan. In that world, the breakup of Yugoslavia would have been a far bloodier affair that might have escalated to become another European war. In contrast to what might occur absent U.S. power, we see that the post-Cold War world dominated by the United States is an era of peace and stability.

The United States does not provide security to other countries because it is altruistic. Security for other states is a positive result (what economists call a positive externality) of the United States pursuing its interests. Therefore, it would be a mistake to seek “benevolence” in great power politics. In international politics, states advance their self-interest and, most often, what might appear to be “benevolent” actions are undertaken for other reasons. To assist Pakistani earthquake refugees, for example, is benevolent but also greatly aids the image of the United States in the Muslim world—so self-interest is usually intertwined with a humanitarian impulse.

The lesson here is straightforward: Countries align themselves with the United States because to do so coincides with their interests, and they will con-

tinue to do so only as long as their interests are advanced by working with Uncle Sam. In 1848, the great British statesman Lord Palmerston captured this point best when he said: “We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”²

It is important to know what other countries think of the United States, but, equally, it is a fundamental mistake to worry disproportionately about what the rest of the world thinks. Leaders lead. That may be unpopular at times, indeed, perhaps most of the time. A cost of leadership is that the leader will be criticized for doing too much, or for accomplishing too little. But at the same time, few states would want to replace the leadership of the United States with the leadership of China. The allies of the United States are precisely its allies because to be so serves the interests of these countries. One country does not align itself with another for reasons of sentiment or emotion.

If the United States adopted offshore balancing, many of those allies would terminate their relationship with the United States. They would be forced to increase their own armaments, acquire nuclear weapons, and perhaps ally against the United States, even aiming their nuclear weapons at the United States. In those circumstances, the United States would be far less secure and much worse off than it is now.

That might be the future if the United States changed its grand strategy. To be sure, at present the United States is a great ally. It is rich and powerful, with many allies all over the world. It wields enormous influence in international institutions as well. When a global problem arises, countries turn to the United States to solve it.

When you reflect on all the countries who have been hegemony, the United States is the most accommodating and helpful the world has seen. That is a weighty point and must be emphasized—too frequently, it is not. The United States is so for many reasons, including its democratic ideology, the good-natured qualities of the American people, and geography; and the United States is far away from the Eurasian and African landmasses, which makes it a more attractive ally for a typical country in Eurasia—say, Poland or Turkey—since the United States must be invited in comparison to a great power like Russia. If Warsaw or Ankara were to invite the Russians in, they may never leave, and they might incorporate Poland or Turkey into Russia. There is no danger of that with the United States. And this simple fact alone helps us enormously in our relations with the rest of the world.

The Success of Iraq: An Ally of the United States, Not Its Clone

When we deal with major events in international politics, time is often needed to yield a context one does not see at the time. In military history, for example, many generals and admirals thought they had lost when the reverse was true. Jimmy Doolittle thought he was going to face a court martial immediately after

his raid on Japan in April 1942. He saw the raid as a failure because none of the aircraft survived, all crash-landing in or near China. He did not realize that he had lifted the morale of the entire country during a dark time when there was nothing but defeat. After World War II, the occupations of West Germany and Japan were perceived as confused and muddled affairs. However, we now know the occupations placed Germany and Japan on the path to become the vibrant democracies and economic powerhouses they are now. There is a similar perception of failure in Iraq in the minds of many Americans.

This should not be a surprise, since much of the American media persistently shows a country of bombings and chaos. Most Americans do not have the time to get their news from other, more objective sources that illuminate the good, the bad, and the ugly in Iraq, rather than just the bad (terrorism) and ugly (corruption). Too frequently, the good—Iraq's liberation and path toward democratic rule—is not emphasized. Countless American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines have complained about the coverage of Iraq by the American media and have argued that such negative coverage ignores the great improvements taking place in Iraq, undermines the support of the American people for the efforts of the military, and aids the insurgency, making the job of the military that much harder. You can find these accounts online, in blogs and other news sources. It takes effort to bypass big media corporations, or, at least, access to the Internet and a bit of time to gain a more accurate impression. But because not everyone has the time, there is a common perception that Iraq is in chaos.

That impression is wholly wrong. Iraq has gone from an authoritarian country to a free country with a constitution. Iraqis are voting in elections for the first time in their lives. More Iraqis participate in the electoral process than Americans. In 90 percent of Iraq, peace and stability reign, and people see the U.S. military as liberators and want to work with the United States as a partner in the region. That is the success of Iraq—and it *is* a success.

To be sure, with economic and political modernization there will be ups and downs. No country has transitioned without profound difficulties from the misrule of a tyrant like Saddam Hussein through liberation to its social and physical reconstruction after generations of horrible abuses and great neglect. But the slope of the curve is positive; Iraq is becoming stronger and more stable every day. Elections are a major indication of progress, and demonstrate that the vast majority of Iraqis support the government. Iraq has about 14 million eligible voters, and 11 million voted in 2005. Its voter participation rate puts the United States to shame. It is common wisdom that the Kurds and Shi'a support the government, but now the majority of Sunnis do as well. For example, voter turnout from the mostly Sunni province of Anbar climbed from 2 percent in the elections of January 30, 2005, when Sunnis were opposed to the government, to 55 percent in the elections of December 2005.

When Iraq is a free and stable country, when its economy flourishes due to its oil wealth, when tourists flock to wonder at the remnants of ancient Babylon, what will those who belittled the Iraqi reconstruction and stabilization efforts say? There will come a day when they have to respond to the facts on the ground and admit that Iraq has been restored to its rightful place in the community of nations and as a leader in the Arab world.

To get to that day, the United States labors to resolve two problems. The first is the insurgency, which is comprised of foreign jihadists who have come to Iraq to fight the United States and the new Iraqi government; criminals who were let loose by Saddam before the invasion in March 2003; and diehard Ba'athists who dream of restoring Saddam Hussein to power and who comprise most of the insurgents. Second, there is the risk of civil war among the three major groups in Iraq: the Shi'a (about 60 percent of Iraq's population), Sunni (between 15 and 20 percent), and Kurds (approximately 17 percent).

The risk of civil war is reduced as long as a large U.S. military force is present in Iraq. Its risk is disappearing as the new Iraqi government finds its strength. The insurgency is a danger the United States confronts now. The insurgency can be defeated and is being defeated by following the classic prescription for doing so—advancing economic, political, and social changes simultaneously with improving the lives of the Iraqi people. Principally, these measures will be done by the Iraqis themselves, not by the United States.

One of the foremost experts on guerrilla warfare, T.E. Lawrence, better known as "Lawrence of Arabia" because he led the Arab guerrilla war against the Ottoman Empire in World War I, famously described fighting an insurgency as "learning how to eat soup with a knife."³ That is, counterinsurgency operations are messy and they take a long time. The Iraqi and American people and their militaries have to understand both points. Fighting the insurgency in Iraq is messy—at times there is great violence, innocent people are hurt or killed, soldiers are killed brutally, and Iraqi governmental forces are targeted by the insurgents. Both the U.S. and Iraqi forces must have the will power to endure this difficult situation.

Prodigious progress is being made. The infrastructure of Iraq is being rebuilt, and life has returned to normal for the vast majority of Iraqis. But progress takes time, just as eating soup with a knife does. Indeed, time is probably the most important factor for counterinsurgencies. Time is necessary to convince the pro-Saddam diehards in the insurgent movement that Saddam and Ba'ath rule are never coming back—the new Iraq is here to stay. Time is necessary to weaken the insurgency gradually and bring its members to realize that their path is a dead end. The new Iraq is passing them by. Every campaign against guerrilla movements takes time—at least a half a decade, and sometimes several decades. The American and Iraqi people must realize that the counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq will take many years, and they must have the will to stick it out, to persevere through the low points in

the campaign against the guerrillas. The insurgency is roughly fixed in size, it is not likely to grow or decline rapidly, and, as history has proven of most insurgencies, they are resilient. Table 3.1 provides important context for the insurgency in Iraq. Historically, major insurgencies averaged a little over thirteen years to resolve.

The United States is undermining guerrillas and destroying their cohesion by demonstrating the integrity and competence of the new government in Iraq—the new government is working for the people of Iraq, all elements of the Iraqi population, and it is an encouraging sign that the Sunni population is participating in the political process.

In contrast, the insurgents want to take the Iraqi people back to the bad old days of torture, executions, and misery under Saddam Hussein and Ba'ath Party rule. The insurgents murder innocent Iraqis and attack Iraqi and Coalition troops but offer no positive vision for the people of Iraq. They can offer only intimidation, subjugation, and hatred. This malicious message resonates less and less with the Iraqi people and with others in the region. Commentators often speak of “the Arab Street,” popular opinion in the Arab world, and warn that it will erupt against the United States. The assumption is that the Arab Street will always be opposed to the United States and its allies. The evidence does not support that. In December 2005, the Arab Street did erupt, but it did so against Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Over two hundred thousand Jordanians protested his terror attacks in Jordan and Iraq. This shows that Arabs, just as everyone else, are fed up with the senseless killing conducted by the insurgents in Iraq.

In order to understand how to defeat the Iraqi insurgency, it is necessary to understand that it does not operate under a central command, but is fractured and comprised of the jihadists, of whom the terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the most famous before he was killed by U.S. forces in 2006. These jihadists are religious fanatics and are mostly foreigners. There are also criminals, who are secular and who are using the insurgency to promote criminal aims; and Ba'athists, the members of the failed regime of Saddam Hussein who are secular and hate religious forces.

The jihadists and the Ba'athists are the most dangerous. However, they are divided in both their ideologies and goals. Also, they are only rooted in the Sunni population—and thus they are a minority within a minority. These facts about the insurgency mean that the United States and the Iraqi government have enormous advantages in their struggle against it.

There are five critical steps that must be accomplished by the United States and the Iraqi government to defeat the insurgency; and, indeed, the United States and the Iraqi government are accomplishing all of them. Consequently, the insurgency has great weaknesses and will be defeated over time. But it will take time, as Table 3.1 shows. The American and Iraqi people, as well as the people of allied states like Britain and Australia, have to understand

Table 3.1 Major Insurgencies of the 20th Century

Case	Dates	Duration in Years
Afghanistan	1979-1989	10
Angola UNITA	1975-1991	16
Algeria	1954-1962	8
Arab Revolt	1916-1918	2
Argentina	1970-1976	6
Brazil	1968-1971	3
Chinese Revolution	1927-1949	22
Colombia	1964-2006*	42
Cuba I	1898-1902	4
Cuba II	1906-1909	3
Cuba III	1917-1933	16
Cuba IV	1953-1959	6
Cyprus Rebellion	1955-1961	6
Dominican Republic	1916-1924	8
El Salvador	1979-1993	14
Haiti	1915-1934	19
Huk Rebellion	1946-1954	8
Irish Revolution	1916-1921	5
Israel-Palestinian I	1964-1993	29
Israel-Palestinian II	2000-2006*	6
Malaya	1947-1960	13
Mau Mau Rebellion	1952-1963	11
Nicaragua	1926-1933	7
Nicaragua (FSLN)	1974-1979	5
Northern Ireland	1969-1998	29
Peru	1980-2006*	26
Philippines	1899-1916	17
Portuguese Angola	1961-1975	14
Portuguese East Africa	1961-1975	14
Rif Rebellion	1921-1924	3
Second Boer War	1899-1902	3
Spain ETA	1968-2006*	38
Southwest Africa/Namibia	1966-1988	22
Sudan I	1955-1972	17
Sudan II	1983-2005	22
Uruguay	1962-1972	10
Venezuela	1960-1970	10
Vietnam I	1946-1954	8
Vietnam II	1959-1975	16
Average		13.28

* Conflict remains ongoing.

this. Based on history, we may expect that the insurgency will last at least thirteen years. Recognizing that it will take time allows Americans and those who wish the new Iraqi government well to steel themselves for a long, low-intensity struggle.

First, joint offensive operations are weakening the insurgency by killing and capturing its members. This is occurring, and the Iraqis are learning much from the U.S. military and intelligence services. The insurgency is fought increasingly by Iraqis rather than Americans. The Iraqis are developing this capability and growing stronger every day.

Second, the Iraqi military and police forces are getting progressively better, and the responsibility for the security of Iraq is being handed off to them from the U.S. military. The United States is building up the Iraqi military and intelligence forces to take over more responsibility from the United States as soon as possible. As the Iraqis grow in strength, the American military forces will be drawn down gradually. A small number of U.S. forces will continue to work with the Iraqis after the bulk of the U.S. military forces have left. They will be assigned directly to Iraqi units in order to train them. In addition, U.S. forces may be expected to provide logistical support as well as heavy armor forces and air support for combat operations.

Intelligence forces are just as important for combating an insurgency as military forces, and there has been much progress in this realm, although it is largely unnoticed by the world's media. At the time of writing, the Iraqis have two intelligence agencies, the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), to focus on foreign threats such as Iran and Islamic extremists; and the General Security Department (GSD), which is the counterespionage and counterterrorism organization. The INIS and GSD work much like the CIA and FBI in the United States, with one concerned with foreign threats and the other centered on combating espionage and terrorism within the country. The intelligence agencies of the United States, the Iraqi government, and perhaps other allies are infiltrating the insurgency in order to stop it.

Third, the new Iraqi government must root out corruption and work to eliminate local grievances at the grassroots level in order to continue to gain popular support. Additionally, the government has to make economic and political reforms and improvements in the country—from electricity to elections. The good news is that there is great progress on almost every front. The cement holding the guerrillas together has to be destroyed by conveying the message to them and the people that they are holding Iraq back from being the greatest of the Arab countries, as it had been in the past.

Fourth, the new Iraqi government and the U.S. military must maintain the initiative by using guerrilla tactics against the insurgency—reconnaissance, infiltration, hit-and-run tactics, and surprise ambushes to keep the guerrillas off-balance and keep them moving constantly and under threat. This is

occurring as well. The safe havens the guerrillas once had in Fallujah and Ramadi are gone now and will not return.

Fifth, the new government has to demonstrate that those in the guerrilla movement will be welcome if they defect. The best way to accomplish this is through an information campaign that proclaims specific cases of people who were guerrillas, or supported them, but who now support the government. In the past, most successful counterinsurgency campaigns have had similar programs. It is in the government's interest to allow the guerrillas to defect to the government's side without fear of repercussions. In fact, the Iraqis have been effective in this regard. Defectors have appeared on Iraqi television to apologize, to state that they were wrong to engage in terrorism, and to appeal to their former comrades to end their terrorism and join the government.

The United States will be successful in Iraq, and the insurgency will wither away, despite the best efforts of Iran to keep it going. But Americans must understand that an independent and free Iraq will not be a toady or pawn of the United States. The United States may expect to have significant differences with a free Iraq, and this may cause frustration in Washington. When Iraq's interests coincide with those of the United States, Washington may expect to be able to work closely with Baghdad. In other words, we may expect Iraq not to be subservient to the United States, but an ally of it: a major reason for America to have fought to liberate Iraq from tyranny.

Most poignantly, in 2006, U.S. Army Colonel H.R. McMaster, who was a hero in Operation Desert Storm, reflected on his long experience in Iraq as commander of the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment and what he could communicate to the American people to permit them to understand the conditions in Iraq:

I was patrolling after an attack on police recruits. It was a suicide attack immediately after the operation. And I was walking with a small element up the street of Hasan Koy, which previously was a hostile area. I saw an Iraqi coming toward me on crutches, a young man, and I thought, well, this is an insurgent, a terrorist....So I went up to him and started asking him some questions. It turns out he was wounded in that attack where he was waiting in line to be recruited for the Iraqi police. He was now walking on crutches across town to join the Iraqi army so he could defeat these terrorists and bring security to his family.

I guess what people don't get to see is, they don't get to see how resolute and how determined these courageous Iraqis are. And the other thing I wish we could communicate more clearly is the relationships we've developed with people. I mean, we've made lifetime friends among the good Iraqi people. So the Iraqi people you tend to see most on coverage...are the ones...who are conducting attacks against us....But there are so many good people in this country who deserve security and who

are doing everything they can to build a future for their families, their towns and their country.⁴

A major step in remaking the Middle East began with Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a result of the success of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States has been able to foster change in the region from Lebanon to Iraq. The change has been along the following parameters. First, regimes opposed to the interests of the United States are pressured to reform or face the possibility of being removed. Second, the United States should spread democracy in the Middle East if this can be accomplished without hurting existing friendly regimes.⁵ This is part of a larger effort to promote liberal democracy around the world. The more liberal democracies there are in the world, the more congenial for the United States and the easier it is for the United States to maintain its hegemony.

However, I am a good realist, so if there is a tension between democracy and maintaining a pro-American government, then the latter is the right choice for the United States at this time. American decision-makers should keep in mind the Shah of Iran, a U.S. ally, who was undermined by President Carter, when he pushed too hard and too quickly, for democratic reform. The Shah fell and was replaced by a much worse government—the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini. Thirty years later, the United States still grapples with the consequences. Accordingly, what is vitally important is that governments are supportive and respectful of the interests of the United States. Fundamentally, realism should govern the foreign policy of the United States—America's interests first.

Primacy Is the Right Grand Strategy for the United States

There is no viable alternative grand strategy for the United States than primacy. Primacy is the best and most effective means to maintain the security and safety of the United States for the reasons I argued in chapter 1. However, it is also the best because every other grand strategic “alternative” is a chimera and can only weaken the United States, threaten the security and safety of the American people, and introduce great peril for the United States and for other countries.

A large part of what makes primacy such a success is that other countries know where the United States stands, what it will defend, and that it will be involved in disputes, both great and small. Accordingly, other countries have to respect the interests of the United States or face the consequences. Offshore balancing incurs the risks of primacy without its benefits. It pledges that the United States will defend its interests with air power and sea power, but not land power. That is curious because we could defend our interests with land power but choose not to, suggesting our threat to defend is not serious, which weakens our credibility and invites challenges to the interests of the United

States. Offshore balancing increases the probability of conflict for the United States. It raises the danger that the interests of the United States will be challenged not only from foes like China and Iran, but, perversely, also from countries now allied with the United States like Japan and Turkey.

General Douglas MacArthur said that there was no substitute for victory. Just as there is no substitute for victory, there is no alternative for leadership. For if the United States does not provide that leadership to its allies by pledging to use all of its power in their defense, then they will provide their own security. If the United States does not lead the world, another hegemon will rise to replace it. That hegemon will be China. China will then be in a position to dictate to the rest of world, including the United States. The United States would be far less secure in such a world.

This is because, first, the physical security of the United States would be jeopardized. Due to its military superiority, China would have the ability to triumph over the United States in the event of war or an international crisis, like the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The United States would be forced to back down, thus placing China's interests before its own. China would be able to blackmail the United States, to coerce it to do Beijing's bidding. The United States would be relegated to the role of pawn on the international chessboard.

Second, the United States would lose its allies and global influence. As China's power grew, countries would look to Beijing to be their ally in order to gain security and assistance. It will be the case that countries long allied with the United States, such as Australia, will no longer be allies as their interests require them to look to Beijing and away from Washington.

Third, the Chinese economy will dominate the global economy. Worldwide, both countries and businesses will look to China not simply as a market, as they do now, but the economic locomotive of the world's economy, as the lender of last resort, and as the stabilizer of economic exchange and the international trade and monetary regimes. Countries will have to appease China economically or face the consequences of its wrath.

Fourth, Chinese will be the language of diplomacy, trade and commerce, transportation and navigation, the Internet, world sport, and global culture. Additionally, China will dominate science and technology, in all of its forms—the life sciences, bioengineering, computer science, and even space exploration. It will be a great blow to the pride of the United States, greater than Sputnik in 1957, when China travels to the Moon, as they plan to do, and plants the communist flag on Mars, and perhaps other planets in the future.

In sum, the United States will be far less influential and subjected to the role that China, not decision-makers in Washington or the American people, wants it to play. Fundamentally, the security of the United States would be dependent on the decisions made in China. That is the world of the future if the United States does not maintain its primacy.

To abandon its leadership role would be a fundamental mistake of American grand strategy. Indeed, in the great history of the United States, there is no parallel, no previous case, where the United States has made such a titanic grand strategic blunder. It would surpass by far its great mistake of 1812, when the young and ambitious country gambled and declared war against a mighty empire, the British, believing London was too distracted by the tremendous events on the Continent—the formidable military genius of Napoleon and the prodigious threat from the French empire and its allies—to notice while it conquered Canada.

The citizens of the United States cannot pretend that, by weakening ourselves, other countries will be nice and respect its security and interests. To suggest this implies a naïveté and innocence about international politics that would be charming, if only the consequences of such an opinion were not so serious. Throughout its history, the United States has never refrained from acting boldly to secure its interests. It should not be timid now.

Many times in the great history of the United States, the country faced difficult decisions—decisions of confrontation or appeasement—and significant threats—the British, French, Spanish, Germans, Italians, Japanese, and Soviets. It always has recognized those threats and faced them down, to emerge victorious. The United States should have the confidence to do so now against China not simply because to do so maximizes its power and security or ensures it is the dominant voice in the world's affairs, but because it is the last, best hope of humanity.

The United States faces a choice as significant as any in its history: To maintain leadership or to live in a world dominated by the Communist Chinese, the last significant representative of a cruel and failed ideology. A world dominated by the United States, the country Walt Whitman called “essentially the greatest poem,” is far superior for the whole of the world's population than a world controlled by the Communist Chinese.⁶ In this book and in academic settings, we may debate the issues that concern that choice. Intellectually, that is entirely appropriate. But emotionally and instinctually, each of us knows that, should any country be dominant, the United States is the best choice to exercise such power. That recognition alone quite perfectly answers the debate over the American Empire.

Notes

1. The greatest support for offensive realist behavior comes from human evolution. Its expectation of human behaviors is precisely what would be necessary to survive in the human past and is supported by empirical evidence from tribal societies, archaeology, and the behaviors of other animals as documented by ethologists. See Bradley A. Thayer, *Darwin and International Relations: On the Evolutionary Origins of War and Ethnic Conflict* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).
2. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 566.

3. T.E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), p. 193.
4. U.S. Department of Defense, “News Briefing with Col. H.R. McMaster,” transcript, January 27, 2006, available at: <http://defenseink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060127-12385.html>.
5. A thoughtful assessment concerning the ability of the United States to advance democracy in the Middle East is provided by Noah Feldman, *After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
6. Walt Whitman, “Preface to *Leaves of Grass*,” in Mark Van Doren, ed., *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 5.