

Strategy Research Project

Rebuilding the City on the Hill

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 22-03-2012		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) OCT 2011 – FEB 2012	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Rebuilding the City on the Hill				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) Brooks, Chad M.				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution: Approved for Public Release Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES None					
14. ABSTRACT The United States remains the preeminent global power of the 21 st century, but faces significant challenges including emerging transnational threats, an unsustainable national economy, and declining ideological influence. Overcoming these challenges will require a fundamental reexamination of American culture and specific policy action by strategic leaders to (1) restore individual resilience, (2) repair a dysfunctional political culture, and (3) leverage a unifying national identity to thrive in an increasingly competitive global environment. Many policy decisions over the last decade have weakened American resilience and undermined trust in political institutions. Allowing further cultural decay risks a prolonged period of declining strategic relevance and eroding standards of living. Rebuilding American culture on the strong foundation of traditional American ideology and vibrant civil society will enable the United States to maintain a position of global leadership, forge new partnerships, and exploit new economic opportunities.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS American culture, Resilience, Identity, Political Culture, Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, Cultural Analysis					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 30	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chad M. Brooks
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

REBUILDING THE CITY ON THE HILL

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Commander Chad M. Brooks

TITLE: Rebuilding the City on the Hill

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 22 March 2012 WORD COUNT: 5,196 PAGES: 30

KEY TERMS: American Culture, Resilience, Identity, Political Culture, Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, Cultural Analysis

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The United States remains the preeminent global power of the 21st century, but faces significant challenges including emerging transnational threats, an unsustainable national economy, and declining ideological influence. Overcoming these challenges will require a fundamental reexamination of American culture and specific policy action by strategic leaders to (1) restore individual resilience, (2) repair a dysfunctional political culture, and (3) leverage a unifying national identity to thrive in an increasingly competitive global environment. Many policy decisions over the last decade have weakened American resilience and undermined trust in political institutions. Allowing further cultural decay risks a prolonged period of declining strategic relevance and eroding standards of living. Rebuilding American culture on the strong foundation of traditional American ideology and vibrant civil society will enable the United States to maintain a position of global leadership, forge new partnerships, and exploit new economic opportunities.

REBUILDING THE CITY ON THE HILL

In speaking tonight of America's traditional values and philosophy of government, we must remember the most distinctive mark of all in the American experience: To a tired and disillusioned world, we've always been a New World and, yes, a shining city on a hill where all things are possible.

—President Ronald Reagan¹

After a decade of war and economic uncertainty, the United States remains the uncontested global superpower. Preserving this preeminence despite emerging transnational threats, an unsustainable national economy, and declining ideological influence will require a fundamental reexamination of American culture. Specifically, the United States must take action to (1) restore individual resilience, (2) repair a dysfunctional political culture, and (3) leverage a unifying national identity to thrive in an increasingly competitive global environment. These steps will best enable Americans to assimilate change, resist external shocks, and trust in the enduring ideological principles of the United States. Allowing further cultural decay risks descending into a prolonged period of declining strategic relevance and diminished standards of living.

American Global Influence

The United States occupied an unprecedented position of military, economic, political, and cultural influence at the end of the 20th century. The “most powerful nation since imperial Rome,” the United States was “stronger than any likely combination of other nations.”² Rooted in American idealism and exceptionalism, U.S. foreign policy sought to expand global markets, safeguard the global commons, and export American political ideology. Ubiquitous media penetration introduced American culture to formerly closed societies. Many Americans considered the end of the 20th century a fulfillment of

President Ronald Reagan's vision of America as a "city on a hill" shining a beacon of hope around the world.

As the 21st century began, U.S. global hegemony facilitated stable new markets that fueled economic growth. Rapid globalization of trade, capital, and labor allowed the emergence of powerful new economies in developing countries and created new interdependencies among nations.³ In some parts of the world, competition for natural resources intensified and wealth disparity increased. Global transportation, financing, and communication technology strengthened transnational criminal and terror organizations that opposed American ideological and cultural influence. Despotism regimes clung to power in the Middle East and North Africa where many perceived the United States as an unwelcomed imperial influence. These tensions erupted through the 9/11 terror attacks, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a global economic crisis.

Despite these challenges in the early 21st century, the United States still exercises unmatched power and influence around the world. However, the global environment has changed to one in which "the traditional applications of national power, both economic and military, have become less effective."⁴ "Prone to cycles of belief in their own decline," many Americans are concerned about an erosion of American primacy.⁵ Some suggest that the United States has lost its edge in education, manufacturing, and industriousness giving way to a culture of "consumption and leisure."⁶ However, the United States is not a "fundamentally weak economy or a decadent society."⁷ Rather than fear decline, the United States must forge a "new narrative about the future of U.S. power" appropriate to the changing global environment.⁸ This narrative involves "consultation, coordination, and even

compromise” through which power is wielded by “setting the agenda, defining the issues, and mobilizing coalitions.”⁹

Articulating this narrative will require strategic leaders to share a thorough and fundamental understanding of American culture. American experience thus far in the 21st century has highlighted the importance of understanding other cultures. Understanding American culture is equally important. American culture is the lens through which the United States frames foreign policy and defines the domestic agenda. Although grounded in founding principles and embodied in social and political institutions, American culture is not static. Rather than a “system of fixed ideas,” culture is “an ongoing conversation about the meaning and value of things members of a society share.”¹⁰ Strategic decision-makers will need to understand and actively participate in this conversation to effectively shape the 21st century American narrative.

Culture Analysis Model

Strategic leaders increasingly recognize the importance of understanding culture, but the intricacy of culture is difficult to capture. Simple demographic, religious, or social labels trivialize the variability within and among cultures and can lead to false and superficial stereotypes. Culture develops and is reinforced through shared ideas and experiences over many generations and manifests itself through myriad artistic, linguistic, and ideological expressions. The challenge for strategic leaders is to identify and understand the cultural dimensions that most strongly influence collective behavior. As civil wars over religion, language, or governance demonstrate, disagreement over a single dimension of culture can divide a group with otherwise homogenous cultural expressions; therefore, strategic decisions should be informed by reasonably comprehensive cultural understanding.

The Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP) is one model to help strategic leaders understand culture. Recognizing the inherent complexity of culture, the model identifies three “cultural features or dimensions that drive political and strategic action and behavior.”¹¹ These are identity, political culture, and resilience.¹² According to the model, understanding the origin and interaction of these fundamental cultural dimensions best informs strategy and policy. Importantly, however, the model is not *predictive*. In contrast to the “rational choice theory” by which social scientists attempt to predict human decision-making using commonly assumed behavioral norms, the ACFSP offers only “predictive insights to the seemingly irrational patterns of human thought and behavior.”¹³ In fact, the ACFSP infers that the very concept of “rationality” and its associated behavioral norms are unique expressions of individual cultures.

The ACFSP sets apart “identity” as the most important dimension of culture for strategic decision-making since it “defines [the] existence, purposes, destiny, and, sometimes, fate” of a people.¹⁴ Acknowledging both individual and collective identities, the model emphasizes the social agreement inherent to collective identity as paramount to strategy formulation. Individual identity is generally established by fixed biological factors. In contrast, collective identity is formed by interpretation of shared ideas and experiences. This distinction leads to a central assumption in the ACFSP that collective identity changes in response to new experiences or reinterpretation of historical events.¹⁵ For example, whereas nationalism has been a functional expression of collective identity for centuries, global transportation and communication has facilitated new communities that identify more strongly with shared ideas than shared boundaries.¹⁶

Political culture is a set of shared values and ideas describing how a community should govern itself, make decisions, and pursue collective well-being. Like collective identity, political culture forms through the interpretation of shared experiences and changes in response to new experiences and interpretations. Broad labels like “democracy” or “socialism” fail to capture the important complexities of political cultures that are as unique as the collective identities from which they arise. Political culture is embodied in founding documents, governing institutions, and bureaucratic processes. Each nation perceives and responds to events uniquely according to its own political culture.¹⁷

Resilience in the ACFSP is a “measure of the endurance of [a culture’s] identity and political culture ... to resist, adapt, or succumb to external forces.”¹⁸ Although this definition evokes romantic images of perseverance in the face of danger, it properly captures the reality that enduring cultures assimilate new ideas and interpretations without abandoning the underlying collective identity or political culture. To this end, resilience involves exploiting opportunities as much as resisting disruptive changes. Although the ACFSP references *external* forces, the distinction between external and internal forces of change is increasingly ambiguous due to the rapid transfer of ideas across traditional cultural boundaries. For example, some see “modernization” as an external force imposed by western societies on Arab cultures while others see it as an emerging dimension of collective identity within Arab societies. The distinction depends on cultural perspective.

The interactions among identity, political culture, and resilience within a culture are as important to strategic leaders as the individual dimensions themselves.

Collective identity captures the shared ideas, values, and interpretations from which political culture and resilience emerge. In turn, political culture shapes identity and resilience by influencing or even manipulating the “official” interpretation of history through its messaging, institutions, and created narratives. Finally, resilience determines when and to what extent a culture will modify its identity or political culture in response to new ideas and experiences. Beyond these generalities, the mutual interaction and relative significance of the three cultural dimensions will vary among cultures. Thus, the ACFSP recommends “intense study and analysis” of individual cultures within the prevailing global environment.¹⁹ This analysis begins with defining the significant environmental trends influencing 21st century American culture and strategy.

The Changing Global Environment

The United States has been the predominant feature of the global political landscape wielding “unsurpassed global military, economic, and cultural power” since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.²⁰ Although the United States represented only about 5 percent of the global population at the beginning of the 21st century, it “accounted for about a quarter of the world’s economic output, was responsible for nearly half of global military expenditures, and [had] the most extensive cultural and educational soft power resources” of any country.²¹ Despite economic setbacks and the gradual erosion of American political influence, the United States will remain the only global superpower well into the 21st century. With rare exception, foreign governments must consider how the United States will respond to policy decisions. As President Obama noted in his 2012 State of the Union Address, “America remains the one indispensable nation in world affairs.”²²

During this same period, many developing countries have enjoyed considerable economic expansion, open commerce, and technology diffusion. This growth triggered an economic and political power shift toward China, India, and other emerging countries. Although per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in both China and India still lags far behind the United States, the total wealth of these countries is growing quickly due to very large populations and rapid economic development.²³ Regardless of America's global influence, these developing countries will increasingly pursue bi-lateral trade agreements and regional alliances contrary to competing U.S. national interests. Brazil's recent decision to sell development rights for offshore oil reserves to China rather than the United States is just one example.²⁴

Global economic development has further intensified demand for energy. Official U.S. estimates show global marketed energy consumption increasing by 53 percent from 2008 through 2035 with fossil fuels supplying most of this demand.²⁵ Accordingly, American political, economic, and military commitments to maintain free and open access to global energy reserves, safeguard the global commons, and develop new energy resources will continue. Increasing foreign oil dependence by industrialized powers will have several damaging political and economic consequences. Notably, powerful monarchs and dictators who control vast oil reserves in developing nations can monopolize the instruments of power and resist democratic reforms.²⁶

Throughout 2011, however, several autocratic regimes tumbled during "Arab Spring" uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. Common citizens, especially educated and disaffected youth, rose up against their leadership in mass demonstrations. Emboldened through media penetration and social networking, the

protesters demanded an end to autocratic rule, wealth inequality, and economic stagnation. In several cases, the protests led to democratic elections; however, the outcome of this movement remains uncertain, especially in countries like Egypt and Libya, where military forces and conservative religious factions vie for power. Consequently, the United States must forge new diplomatic relationships with emerging governments struggling to redefine their political cultures.

Despite this wave of change, many autocratic regimes remain entrenched in countries like Syria, North Korea, and Iran. Politically isolated and pursuing greater military capability, these regimes may also become unstable within the decade. Political turmoil introduces the risk of failed states and ungoverned spaces, as in Somalia and Yemen, where “terrorists like Al Qaeda, drug cartels, insurgents, and militias of all kinds are finding space to operate.”²⁷ The same ubiquitous communication technology that facilitated the Arab Spring enables transnational trafficking, recruiting, and financing activities underpinning these organizations. Current U.S. defense strategy guidance notes that “with the diffusion of destructive technology, these extremists have the potential to pose catastrophic threats that could directly affect [U.S.] security and prosperity.”²⁸

Undoubtedly, the global environment is extraordinarily dynamic, presenting significant risks and abundant opportunities for the United States. Understanding the limitations of unilateral military and economic power, the United States intends to become “the security partner of choice, pursuing new partnerships with a growing number of nations ... whose interests and viewpoints are merging into a common vision of freedom, stability, and prosperity.”²⁹ Shaping this common vision and creating new

partnerships will demand a comprehensive understanding of American culture within the global strategic environment. Applying the ACFSP, the analysis continues by examining American culture as it affects American global influence in the 21st century.

American Culture Analysis

The ACFSP is presented as a framework to help strategic leaders understand other cultures, but leaders can also apply the model to evaluate and understand their *own* culture. Since all cultures evolve continuously in response to new experiences and interpretations, some deeply held assumptions about one's own culture may be incomplete. For example, American culture is deeply rooted in the revolutionary experience and institutionalization of 18th century enlightenment thinking, but many subsequent formative events have also strongly shaped and influenced that culture.³⁰ Given these experiences, to what degree do Americans still ascribe to the founding principles? How much do Americans trust in the validity and responsiveness of their political institutions? Do Americans feel resilient to transnational threats, globalization, and technology diffusion? More fundamentally, how is the collective American identity evolving in response to demographic changes, ubiquitous information, and assimilation of new ideologies? These important questions allow continuous reframing of one's own culture while formulating strategy for interaction with others.³¹

This cultural self-awareness is critically important for strategic leaders since "policymakers and strategists tend to view situations through their *own* cultural and strategic lens."³² For example, elected leaders must deliberately consider how they represent the collective identity while making strategic decisions on behalf of their constituency. They must also exercise the institutions of political culture with appreciation for the profound reciprocal impacts on collective identity and resilience.³³

To this end, the following sections examine the individual cultural dimensions of identity, political culture, and resilience as they apply to American strategic decision-making within the 21st century global environment.

American Collective Identity

What is the unique collective identity of America? Many Americans reference ideas contained in the founding documents through which the United States, called a “great experiment in democracy,” institutionalized liberal traditions of personal liberty, limited government, free enterprise, capitalism, the rule of law, and inalienable rights.³⁴ Many would further define America as “a nation of immigrants” drawing its strength, creativity, and vibrancy from the ideological diversity of its people who “strive for consensus but tolerate dissent” in a free and open society.³⁵ Still others would define America as a dream for a better future. Historian James Truslow Adams first defined the “American Dream” in 1931 as a “better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank which is the greatest contribution we have as yet made to the thought and welfare of the world.”³⁶

Rooted in these ideas, inspired by this dream, and emboldened by an “exceptional American experience,” Americans have shared a sense of destiny “to spread, either by example (in isolation) or by crusade (in intervention), capitalist democracy” around the world.³⁷ American political leaders have restated this idealism, exceptionalism, and destiny since the end of World War II. In 2005, President George W. Bush boldly declared that “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”³⁸ More recently, President Barack Obama stated that the United States “will advocate for those values that have served

our own country so well. We will stand against violence and intimidation. We will stand for the rights and dignity of all human beings.”³⁹

If American collective identity is thus fundamentally an *idea*, how relevant and coherent is that idea to Americans today? Although leaders may reasonably assume that Americans will continue to espouse and value traditional pillars of their collective identity, “at any given moment, certain attributes wane in importance, making space for others.”⁴⁰ This is particularly important for elected leaders who must constantly gauge the broad interests and perspectives of the American people. For example, broad acceptance of the Patriot Act following the 9/11 terrorist attacks implies that many Americans were willing to curtail some civil liberties to better safeguard the United States against terrorism. However, numerous civil liberties groups have subsequently challenged that the Act codified an unduly intrusive overreaction. This example illustrates that transient, situational-dependent behavior patterns can be misinterpreted as a shift in enduring values and beliefs.

Gauging the intensity and coherence of identity is also critically important to foreign affairs since “change in the strength of ideology determines the fluctuations in U.S. foreign policy.”⁴¹ For example, American identity has been influenced by the generation of global hegemony described above. The U.S. market was so dominant and pervasive that Americans could expect other countries to learn about American culture without having to “reciprocate by learning foreign languages, cultures, and markets.”⁴² However, 2011 Pew Research data indicates that only 49% of Americans now believe their culture is “superior to others,” down from 60% in 2002 and 55% in 2005.⁴³ This decline, consistent across age, gender, and education groups, suggests

an emerging American appreciation for other cultures despite a continuing position of primacy in the world. Further, only 37% of Americans under 30 perceive their culture as superior, implying future popular support of a more inclusive, cooperative American diplomacy.

Even with access to such detailed polling data, strategic decision-makers still struggle to comprehend the multiple facets of American identity and sometimes “find themselves confused, conflicted, bewildered, [and] uncertain.”⁴⁴ Despite extensive research following the Vietnam War, the “degree to which democratic states respond to public opinion remains unclear.”⁴⁵ Some research suggests that at different times, “policy may lead opinion or opinion may lead policy.”⁴⁶ The ability of strategic leaders to understand, shape, or leverage American identity and popular will is strongly influenced by the prevailing political culture.

American Political Culture

American political culture is an extension of America’s historic collective identity. Government institutions and bureaucratic processes embody representative democracy, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, limited government, and other fundamental principles of the American cultural experience. Having endured civil war, social upheaval, economic crisis, and external challenge, American political culture has matured over two centuries and adapted to the changing needs and expectations of the American people.

Although few would challenge the basic system of governance in the United States, many are frustrated by the political culture.⁴⁷ A 2011 Congressional stalemate over increasing the national debt revealed intractable partisan positions on taxation and government spending. Some Congressional leaders had signed a mutual agreement

prohibiting tax increases. Others had offered public commitments to powerful lobbyists to preserve government entitlements and subsidies. American news media displayed the “countdown to bankruptcy” and accused political leaders of grandstanding and brinksmanship that ultimately eroded global confidence in U.S. debt. This example is representative of a broad perception that the American political system has been “captured by money, special interests, a sensationalist media, and ideological attack groups.”⁴⁸

Trust, leadership integrity, and fair consideration of constituent interests are central to the effectiveness of a representative democracy; however, a 2010 Pew Research Center poll showed that only 19% of Americans trusted their government “to do what is right most of the time.”⁴⁹ In October 2011, Gallup reported the Congressional approval rating at an historic low of just 13%.⁵⁰ These polls suggest that most Americans do not currently trust their government or believe that their interests are adequately represented.

This breakdown of trust in American political leadership has two significant consequences. First is a lost opportunity for the political culture to reinforce traditional pillars of collective identity. For example, a 2011 Gallup poll revealed that only 48% of Americans believe the government should “promote traditional values in [American] society,” down from 59% in 2001.⁵¹ Second is a lack of political responsiveness to emerging opportunities. Intense lobbying, open hearings, and the continuous news cycle create an environment in which politicians seek to appease special interests, avoid unpopular decisions, and capture the headline.⁵² As a result, “most government programs are now eternal” and the government “gets frozen into its role as the

perpetual defender of the status quo.”⁵³ While supporting programs that no longer enjoy broad public support, strategic leaders miss opportunities for new investments in alternative fuels, modern infrastructure, and new partnerships for which lobbies do not yet exist.⁵⁴

Bridging this credibility gap in American political culture will first require political leaders with the education and experience to understand these global trends and opportunities themselves. Increasingly for most Americans, “geopolitics is impossibly arcane, and patterns of international trade are difficult to understand.”⁵⁵ In a dynamic global environment, political leaders play a crucial role in responsibly shaping the collective identity by interpreting and explaining the impact of political, economic, and social changes to the American people.⁵⁶ However, American voters appear to be embracing a “simple-minded populism that values popularity and openness as the key measures of legitimacy” for political candidates.⁵⁷ America will need its best and brightest leaders in all disciplines to participate in 21st century government and guide the public discourse.

Some realists will contend that political culture can be separated from public opinion in foreign affairs where ideology becomes merely the “clothing for policy rather than a guide to it.”⁵⁸ This approach values consistency in foreign policy over responsiveness to a prevailing plurality or majority opinion.⁵⁹ History suggests that leaders may indeed craft policy contrary to public opinion for a short time. The Johnson administration famously refused to submit its Vietnam policies to public or Congressional debate, believing that “foreign policy issues were too complex to be left to an indifferent and ignorant public and a divided and unwieldy Congress.”⁶⁰ This

decision ultimately divided the nation and cost Johnson a second presidential term. More recently during the Global War on Terrorism, the Bush administration authorized “enhanced interrogation” techniques widely perceived as torture by many Americans. Following an abuse scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and stalled military tribunals at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, President Obama signed executive order 13491 on January 22, 2009 ensuring “lawful interrogations” of all American-held detainees.⁶¹ These examples suggest that the willingness of political leaders to candidly and realistically describe prevailing threats, risks, and opportunities affects not only policy decisions and re-elections, but also the enduring *resilience* of American culture as defined by the ACFSP.

American Resilience

Resilience is central to American identity and has been a common theme in American political culture. American history is replete with tales of resilience including the first settlers in the New World, the Continental Army at Valley Forge, Western pioneers, and immigrants coming to America with nothing more than their clothes and their dreams. Americans rise to a challenge, persevere through difficulty, and recover from setbacks. In a recent speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy’s inauguration, President Obama lauded “the character of the people [Kennedy] led, our resilience, our fearlessness, our distinctly American ability, revealed time and again throughout history, to defy the odds, to fashion our future, to make the world anew.”⁶²

American resilience was challenged by the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These events exposed individual vulnerabilities to vague yet powerful forces of destruction and prompted creation of new political bureaucracies

committed to protecting Americans. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established in 2002 to pull together disparate federal security and law enforcement agencies, improve information sharing, and better coordinate federal emergency response. This new mission, colloquially described as the security “home game,” included educating and empowering “American citizens to prepare for and respond to potential future terrorist attacks,” and was later broadened by the 2005 “six-point agenda” calling for DHS to “increase overall preparedness, especially for catastrophic events,” increase transportation security, and increase border security.⁶³

Although there have been no major terrorist attacks in the United States over the last decade, critics argue that this response to 9/11 was a costly overreaction that is perpetuating a “climate of fear and powerlessness ... undermining faith in American ideals and fueling political demagoguery.”⁶⁴ The message that terrorism is a persistent threat against which Americans must be protected is incongruous with assurance that citizens should “just go about their daily lives.”⁶⁵ For example, the Homeland Security Advisory System was established in 2002 to “provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts.”⁶⁶ Although the terror level consistently remained “elevated” (yellow) or “high” (orange), DHS never published objective risk criteria for eventually reducing the threat level to “guarded” (blue). The system also provided no specific information about the nature of the threat, recommended preparation, or appropriate public response. Rather than heighten awareness, some argue the system only created an atmosphere of anxiety, helplessness, and suspicion.

The Homeland Security Advisory System represented a broad failure to leverage American culture against terrorism in the wake of 9/11. Treating Americans as “helpless targets or potential victims” was inconsistent with American identity, eroded resilience, and dismissed the strength of civil society to resist fear.⁶⁷ Although research suggests the “danger of terrorism is statistically nonexistent ... in most of the United States,” nearly half of Americans still feared that they or a family member would be the physical victim of terrorism as late as 2007.⁶⁸ Some experts believe that the continued reluctance of government officials “to level with” the American people about the real risk of terrorism is “fueling the problem” of unwarranted fear.⁶⁹

More recently, “in some unspoken way, people have recognized that the best counterterrorism policy is resilience.”⁷⁰ Resilience is strengthened by “sound information” rather than “perpetuating the notion that we can prevent all or most forms of risk.”⁷¹ Terrorist attacks in Britain, Spain, Morocco, Turkey, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia have demonstrated that terrorism is not a uniquely American challenge and that “no security regime is foolproof.”⁷² Announcing replacement of the Homeland Security Awareness System in January 2011, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano acknowledged an ideological shift within DHS to “measure our nation's security not just by the borders we strengthen and the laws we enforce but by the strength and resilience of the communities we build.”⁷³

Building resilient communities requires communicating openly and realistically about risks while reinforcing the expectation that the public will participate in its own protection.⁷⁴ The political culture, which “dominates both the creation and interpretation of information about threats,” must remain transparent and accessible to the American

people.⁷⁵ Restricting specific threat information from public discourse precludes “an informed public understanding of the full range of risks ... the limitations of public security and of its costs.”⁷⁶ An informed citizenry leveraging the strength of civil society is an indispensable defense against terrorism. The attacks of 9/11 provide an inspiring example. Once informed by family members via cell phone that three other planes had been hijacked, alert and heroic passengers aboard United Flight 93 overwhelmed their captors and safeguarded Washington from a fourth attack.⁷⁷ President George W. Bush commemorated their heroism at the Flight 93 Memorial dedication in September 2011 by declaring their action “the first counteroffensive of the war on terror.”⁷⁸

In addition to dispelling fear and empowering citizens to participate in their own security, realistic dialog about national security threats will allow the American people to meaningfully participate in urgent cost-risk tradeoff decisions. A decade of war, global financial crises, and burgeoning entitlement spending have conspired to create an “explosion of borrowing” that “portend[s] the deterioration of America’s economic strength.”⁷⁹ During a major defense strategy review in 2011, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said that the “national debt is our greatest national security threat.”⁸⁰ Among the many significant risks of mounting debt and persistent budget deficits is that “flexibility to respond to new dangers is badly constrained.”⁸¹ In the dynamic global environment described earlier, these dangers include not only terrorism, but many others such as a pandemic disease, disruption of global oil supply, or new military action by a close ally. Clearly, restoring the national economy is the next great test of American resilience.

Solving the national debt crisis within the current political culture will be particularly challenging. Experts conclude that there are no individual policy measures that will reverse alarming debt and deficit trajectories. Instead, policymakers must implement a mix of tax increases and balanced cuts to mandatory spending, defense spending, and non-defense discretionary spending. Even with these policies in place, the recovery will be slow and uncertain.⁸² Without the active and informed participation of the American people, political leaders will be unable to frame, articulate, and choose the difficult and potentially unpopular policies that will ensure America's economic future.

Political leaders must evoke the traditional pillars of American identity to restore the national economy. Changes to popular spending programs like Social Security and Medicare will create a sense of injustice and betrayal among many Americans who will need repeated assurance of their own ability to support themselves. Sharply increased taxes will increase tension among many wealthy and middle-class Americans who will need to be convinced that their sacrifice is collective and necessary. Reductions to defense spending and other discretionary programs will evoke fears and anxieties that will need to be calmed with objective threat analysis and appeals to national resilience.

An economic recovery will also require stimulating and sustaining economic growth through a broad mix of education, trade, immigration, and monetary policies to leverage opportunities in the global environment. To succeed, America may not turn inward from fear, but must remain open to the "goods and services, ideas and inventions, and, above all, to the people and cultures" of other nations.⁸³ One risk is that Americans will become "suspicious of the very things [they] have long celebrated –

free markets, trade, immigration, and technological change.”⁸⁴ Resilience, defined by the ACFSP as the *endurance* of identity and political culture, offers the best hope that Americans will resist this cultural shift and demand effective economic policies from their political leaders.

Conclusion

The United States is at a “moment of transition” and a “strategic turning point.”⁸⁵ The United States will remain the most powerful and influential nation in the world for several decades, but faces significant political and economic uncertainty in a rapidly changing global environment. America’s greatest strength is its culture, comprised of collective identity, political culture, and national resilience. Following a generation of U.S. global hegemony in the late 20th century and new emerging threats in the early 21st century, America is challenged to overcome political dysfunction, rebuild trust in the enduring value of American ideology, and resist short-sighted policies that undermine resilience by engendering fear, distrust, and suspicion. Candid, objective public discourse will allow the American people to meaningfully participate in urgent decisions affecting American quality of life, security, and global influence. Facing great challenges in the past, “America has succeeded not because of the ingenuity of its government programs but because of the vigor” and resilience of its society.⁸⁶ This same vigor and resilience are now indispensable for the United States as it navigates the challenges ahead.

Endnotes

¹ Ronald Reagan, “Address to the Nation on the Eve of the Presidential Election,” November 5, 1984, Washington, DC [Transcript]. Available at

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/110584e.htm>. Last accessed March 20, 2012.

² Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, (New York: Norton, 2011), 2.

³ Ibid., 232.

⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2010): 2.

⁶ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 204.

⁷ Ibid., 234.

⁸ Nye, "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," 9.

⁹ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 258.

¹⁰ Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995): 210.

¹¹ Juyal Kim, *Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy*, Strategic Studies Institute Report, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, May 2009), 9.

¹² Ibid., 12. Identity is the "basis for defining identity and its linkage to interests." Political culture is "the structure of power and decision-making." Resilience is the "capacity or ability to resist, adapt, or succumb to external forces."

¹³ Ibid., 13. The ACFSP concludes that "culture is a subjective and emotional entity and process" that eludes predictive analysis. In contrast, the rational choice model assumes that individuals (1) base their decisions on rational criteria, (2) apply rational thinking when making choices, and (3) make choices to optimize their utility – often defined as wealth, status, or happiness.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Compare to the alternate view that collective identity is immutably imbued by significant historical experiences. For context, see Marybeth Ulrich, *American Values, Interests and Purpose: Perspectives on the Roots of American Political and Strategic Culture*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2011) tracing the foundational experience of American independence and the establishment of bedrock American values.

¹⁶ Consider trans-national religious groups, trade organizations, corporations, and virtual communities that shape the identity of their members to complement traditional tribal or national identities.

¹⁷ Jie Chen, *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Policy, Case Studies in U.S. China Policy*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992): 22. Although expressed in terms of the nation-state, this is true

for all communities. Consider that members of virtual communities establish rules of governance which may vary significantly from the rules applicable in their respective nations. On-line auctions, for example, often rely exclusively on customer feedback from other members as the predominant form of governance rather than more punitive or legalistic measures.

¹⁸ Kim, *Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy*, 23.

¹⁹ This may be an area for further development of the ACFSP model. The linkages among identity, political culture, and resilience are inferred by the author. Empirical or historical analysis of various cultures may yield further relational insights. A systems model template with key indicators of culture would be an especially powerful analytical tool.

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Beyond September 11," in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Eugene R. Wittrock and James M. McCormack (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 25.

²¹ Nye, "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," 2.

²² Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," January 24, 2012, Washington, DC [Transcript]. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2012>. Last accessed January 25, 2012.

²³ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 23. See The World Bank data source at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>. Last accessed January 24, 2012. 2010 per capita GDP in current U.S. dollars: United States - \$47,199; India - \$1,475; China - \$4,428.

²⁴ Kelly Hearn, "China gets jump on U.S. for Brazil's oil," *The Washington Times*, January 19, 2012. Notably, President Obama had publicly declared interest in developing Brazilian oil reserves prior to the agreement with China.

²⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Outlook 2011* (Washington, DC: U.S. Energy Information Administration, September 2011), 1-2.

²⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat*, (New York: Picador, 2007), 626.

²⁷ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 5.

²⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012), 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰ For context, see Marybeth Ulrich, *American Values, Interests and Purpose: Perspectives on the Roots of American Political and Strategic Culture*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2011) and Kim, *Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy*, 12. Kim provides a brief listing of significant political and social events in U.S. history.

³¹ These representative questions facilitate intentional analysis of U.S. culture and its role in policymaking.

³² Kim, *Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy*, 9. Emphasis added.

³³ A common example is United States security policy following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Strategic leaders implemented policies that challenged prevailing cultural expectations for privacy, interrogation of prisoners, and unilateral military action.

³⁴ Chen, *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Policy, Case Studies in U.S. China Policy*, 6-7. These founding principles are a sampling of the more comprehensive listing contained in the reference.

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

³⁶ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 237.

³⁷ Ibid., 7

³⁸ George W. Bush, "Second Inaugural Address," January 20, 2005, Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbushsecondinaugural.htm>. Last accessed January 26, 2012.

³⁹ Obama, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," January 24, 2012.

⁴⁰ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 75.

⁴¹ Chen, *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Policy, Case Studies in U.S. China Policy*, 1.

⁴² Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 224. For a more pessimistic perspective on this effect, see Walter A. McDougall, "Can the United States Do Grand Strategy?", *The Telegram* No. 3 (April 2010) in which he postulates that Americans no longer share a genuine exceptionalism, but only a "complacent belief in American exceptionalism [that is] the source of a profligacy, adventurism, disregard for experience, and civic vice" that may undermine traditional American ideology.

⁴³ Pew Research Center, *The American-Western European Values Gap* (Washington, DC: Pew Global Attitudes Project, November 17, 2011): 5-6.

⁴⁴ Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry*, xiii. See also page xiv for discussion of whether generational, religious, or ethnic perspectives may indicate an erosion of collective identity and emergence of divergent communities merely "competing for scarce resources on the same continent."

⁴⁵ Leonard A. Kuznitz, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy, 1949-1979* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 173.

⁴⁷ For discussion, see Nye, "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," 5. Most Americans believe that the United States is the best place to live. Most also express satisfaction with a democratic system of governance and the underlying constitutional framework.

⁴⁸ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 234.

⁴⁹ Nye, "The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective," 5.

⁵⁰ Frank Newport, "Congress' Job Approval Entrenched at Record Low of 13%," Gallup Politics, November 14, 2011. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/150728/Congress-Job-Approval-Entrenched-Record-Low.aspx>. Last accessed January 30, 2012.

⁵¹ Lydia Saad, "Americans Divided on Government Role in Promoting Values," Gallup Politics, November 5, 2011. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149951/Americans-Divided-Gov-Role-Promoting-Values.aspx>. Last accessed January 21, 2012.

⁵² Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, (New York: Norton, 2003), 174.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Notably, the budget stalemate described in this section resulted in Budget Control Act of 2011 that includes "sequestration" budget cuts split evenly across defense and non-defense programs beginning in 2013. This mechanism forces divestiture from legacy programs for the purpose of reducing the national debt. Similar measures may be required to further reduce spending or raise revenue to invest in emerging opportunities.

⁵⁵ Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry*, 138.

⁵⁶ See Friedman, *The World is Flat*, 379.

⁵⁷ Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, 162.

⁵⁸ Chen, *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Policy, Case Studies in U.S. China Policy*, 4.

⁵⁹ For more detail see Kuznitz, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy, 1949-1979*, 16.

⁶⁰ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 158.

⁶¹ Barack Obama, Executive Order 13491, Ensuring Lawful Interrogations, (Washington, DC: Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 16, January 27, 2009), 4,893.

⁶² Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the 50th Anniversary of John F. Kennedy's Inauguration," January 20, 2011, Washington, DC [Transcript]. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/20/remarks-president-50th-anniversary-john-f-kennedys-inauguration>. Last accessed January 31, 2012.

⁶³ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Press Release 030218, *Department of Homeland Security Launches Citizen Preparedness Campaign* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, February 19, 2003). Available at <http://www.ready.gov/press-release/release-030218>. Last accessed January 21, 2012. For details of the 2005 six-point agenda, see U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Department*

Six-point Agenda (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, July 2005). Available at http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0646.shtm. Last accessed January 31, 2012.

⁶⁴ Stephen E. Flynn, "America the Resilient: Defying Terrorism and Mitigating Natural Disasters," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (Mar/Apr 2008): 2

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 3: Homeland Security Advisory System* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, March 11, 2002). Available at http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/gc_1214508631313.shtm. Last accessed February 8, 2012.

⁶⁷ Flynn, "America the Resilient: Defying Terrorism and Mitigating Natural Disasters," 2.

⁶⁸ Benjamin H. Friedman, "Managing Fear: The Politics of Homeland Security," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 126, No.1 (Sep 2011): 83

⁶⁹ Stephen Flynn, *America the Vulnerable: How Our Government is Failing to Protect Us from Terrorism*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 158.

⁷⁰ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 18.

⁷¹ William J. Burns, "Communicating About Threat," in *Terrorizing Ourselves*, ed. Benjamin H. Friedman, Jim Harper, and Christopher A. Preble (Washington, DC: The Cato Institute, 2010): 246.

⁷² Stephen Flynn, "Recalibrating Homeland Security: Mobilizing American Society to Prepare for Disaster," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (May/Jun 2011): 130. For discussion of terror attacks in foreign countries see Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 278.

⁷³ Janet Napolitano, "State of America's Homeland Security Address," January 27, 2011, Washington, DC. Available at: http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/gallery/gc_1254339231433.shtm. Last accessed February 8, 2012.

⁷⁴ Burns, "Communicating About Threat," 253.

⁷⁵ Friedman, "Managing Fear: The Politics of Homeland Security," 89.

⁷⁶ David Ormand, "Developing National Resilience," *RUSI Journal* (August 2011): 17.

⁷⁷ Flynn, "America the Resilient: Defying Terrorism and Mitigating Natural Disasters," 2.

⁷⁸ George W. Bush, "Flight 93 Memorial Dedication Speech," September 10, 2011, Shanksville, PA. Available at: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/noel-sheppard/2011/09/10/george-w-bushs-flight-93-memorial-dedication-speech>. Last accessed February 8, 2012.

⁷⁹ Donald M. Marron, "America in the Red," *National Affairs* No. 3 (Spring 2010): 3.

⁸⁰ Cheryl Pellerin, "Panetta: Budget Cuts will Boost Risk to Nation at War," American Forces Press Service, September 20, 2011. Full article available at: <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65392>. Last accessed February 8, 2012.

⁸¹ Robert D. Hormats, *The Price of Liberty*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), xxi.

⁸² Marron, "America in the Red," 11.

⁸³ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 283.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 61.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012). These descriptions are from the transmittal letters of Barack Obama and Leon Panetta, respectively.

⁸⁶ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 283.