

INNOVATION IN AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY—THE EASY AND THE HARD

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A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

- ✗ Evolutionary pattern of American strategy
 - + *Gradual obsolescence or shock erodes consensus*
 - + *Period of debate (late '40s, early '60s, mid '70s, early '90s, post 9/11)*
 - + *New consensus*
 - + *Adjustment*
- ✗ Now entering a period of debate
 - + *Push and pull, challenge and threat*
 - + *Malleable domestic politics*

Potential for innovation

CONSTRAINTS

✗ Strategic culture and tradition

- + *Intolerance for ambiguity*
- + *Impatience*
- + *Difficulty understanding the impact of culture*
- + *Peculiar national self image*
 - ✗ *Obsessive need to be liked*
 - ✗ *Difficulty understanding that American power is intimidating*

✗ Domestic context

- + *Idea that public opinion shapes strategy*
- + *Intense, vitriolic domestic political conflict fueled by the profusion of information*
- + *National security policy a political cudgel*

EASY OPTIONS

- ✗ A tighter regional shot group
- ✗ Resisting regime change
- ✗ (Re)reliance on stand off military power and coalitions
 - + *The “Libya option”*
 - + *Conventional and counter-terrorism*
- ✗ Slower pace of military advancement
 - + *Little interest in “transformation” despite emerging technological break throughs*
- ✗ Less focus on determining outcomes

HARD OPTIONS

- ✖ Real offshore balancing
 - + *Preventing adverse outcomes rather than shaping positive ones*
- ✖ Loosening conditions for partnerships
- ✖ Tightening conditions for partnerships
 - + *The “partner problem”—flawed assumptions*
- ✖ Serious retrenchment
- ✖ A less state centric strategy
- ✖ An increased focus on nontraditional threats

THE WELL TRAVELED ROAD

- ✗ Likely trajectory—minor adjustment (the easy option) until obsolescence or shock
- ✗ Black swans may change everything
 - ✗ *Major domestic attack*
 - ✗ *Global economic collapse or pandemic*
 - ✗ *High impact technological change*
 - ✗ *Emergence of new hostile ideology*



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