

**The Commission on
America's National Interests**

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THE COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

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A Report from The Commission on America's National Interests

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The Report reflects the general policy thrust and judgments reached by the Commission, although not all members of the Commission necessarily subscribe to every finding and recommendation in the Report.

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COMMISSION ON AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIS REPORT of the Commission on America's National Interests focuses on one core issue: what are U.S. national interests in today's world? We hope to encourage a more focused debate on what must become an essential foundation for a successful American foreign policy. We identify the central questions about American interests as precisely as possible. We offer our own best answers. We presume no monopoly of wisdom. Rather, our aim is to catalyze debate about priority U.S. national interests.

Summarized in seven paragraphs, our principal conclusions are:

- **America adrift.** In the wake of the Cold War, the American public's interest in foreign policy has declined sharply and political leaders have been pressed to attend to immediate domestic concerns. After four decades of unusual single-mindedness in containing Soviet Communist expansion, we have seen five years of ad hoc fits and starts. If it continues, this drift will threaten our values, our fortunes, and indeed our lives.

- **Confusion.** The defining feature of American engagement in the world in the years since the Cold War has been confusion. The reasons why are not difficult to identify. For the adult life of almost all Americans today, containment of expansionist Soviet Communism provided the fixed point for the compass of American engagement in the world. In 1989 the Cold War ended in a stunning, almost unimaginable victory that erased from the globe this fixed point. Indeed, most of the coordinates by which Americans got their bearings in the world have now been consigned to history's dustbin: the Berlin Wall, a divided Germany, the Iron Curtain, captive nations of the Warsaw Pact, Communism on the march, and, finally, the Soviet Union.

■ **Opportunities missed and threats emerging.** The absence of purposive leadership in the years since the Cold War has missed one-time-only windows of opportunity to advance American interests and values, opportunities now foregone. Fitful engagement not only permits, but actually invites the emergence of new threats, from loose nuclear weapons-usable material in Russia to assertive Chinese risk taking.

■ **Regrounding American foreign policy on the foundation of solid American national interests.** For the decades ahead, the only sound foundation for a coherent, sustainable American foreign policy is a clear public sense of American national interests. Only a national interest-based foreign policy will provide priorities for American engagement in the world. Only a foreign policy grounded in American national interests will allow America's leaders to explain persuasively how and why specific expenditures of American treasure or blood deserve support from American citizens.

■ **Clarity about the hierarchy of American national interests.** Clarity in thinking about American national interests demands that Americans think harder than was necessary during the Cold War. Then we had the luxury of a clear, simple answer to the question about American national interests. Today we must confront again the central questions: Which regions and issues should Americans care about—for example, Bosnia, Rwanda, Russia, East Asia, or the Persian Gulf, on the one hand, or loose nuclear weapons, opening markets for trade, investment opportunities, or human rights, on the other? Why should we care? How much should we be prepared to pay to address these threats and opportunities?

The Commission identifies four levels of U.S. national interests: vital interests; extremely important interests; just important interests; and less important or secondary interests. This Report states our own best judgment about which specific American national interests are vital, which are extremely important, and which are just important. The sharp contrast between the expansive but vague assertions about vital interests in most discussion today, and the Commission's sparse list will, we suspect, be an issue for debate. The Commission identifies only five vital U.S. national interests today. These are to (1) prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States; (2) prevent the emergence of a hostile

hegemon in Europe or Asia; (3) prevent the emergence of a hostile major power on U.S. borders or in control of the seas; (4) prevent the catastrophic collapse of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and environmental); and (5) ensure the survival of U.S. allies.

■ **Challenges to American national interests in the decade ahead.** Developments around the world pose threats to U.S. interests and present opportunities for advancing Americans' well-being. Because America's resources are limited, U.S. foreign policy must be selective in choosing which issues to address. The proper basis for making such judgments is a lean, hierarchical conception of what U.S. national interests are and are not. Media attention to foreign affairs tends to fixate on issues according to the vividness of a threat, without pausing to ask whether the U.S. interest threatened is really important. Thus second- and third-order issues like Bosnia or Haiti become a consuming focus of U.S. foreign policy to the neglect of issues of higher priority, like China's international role or the unprecedented risks of nuclear proliferation.

Based on its assessment of specific threats to and opportunities for U.S. national interests in the final years of the century, the Commission has identified five cardinal challenges for the next U.S. president:

- to cope with China's entry onto the world stage;
- to prevent loss of control of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons-usable materials, and to contain biological and chemical weapons proliferation;
- to maintain sound strategic partnerships with Japan and the European allies;
- to avoid Russia's collapse into civil war or reversion to authoritarianism; and
- to maintain singular U.S. leadership, military capabilities, and international credibility.

For each of these challenges, and many others, our stated hierarchy of U.S. national interests provides coordinates by which to navigate the uncertain, fast-changing international terrain of the decade ahead.

Vital

Vital national interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Blue Chips

U.S. vital national interests are to:

- 1) Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons attacks on the United States.
- 2) Prevent the emergence of a hostile hegemon in Europe or Asia.
- 3) Prevent the emergence of a hostile major power on U.S. borders or in control of the seas.
- 4) Prevent the catastrophic collapse of major global systems: trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and environmental.
- 5) Ensure the survival of U.S. allies.

Instrumentally, the vital U.S. national interests are to:

Promote singular U.S. leadership, military capabilities, credibility (including reputation for adherence to clear U.S. commitments and even-handedness in dealing with other states), and critical institutions.

National Interests

Extremely Important

Extremely important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Red Chips

U.S. extremely important national interests are to:

- 1) Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of the use of nuclear or biological weapons anywhere.
- 2) Prevent the regional proliferation of NBC weapons and delivery systems.
- 3) Promote the acceptance of international rules of law and mechanisms for resolving disputes peacefully.
- 4) Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, such as the Persian Gulf.
- 5) Protect U.S. friends and allies from significant external aggression.
- 6) Prevent the emergence of a reflexively adversarial major power in Europe or Asia.
- 7) Prevent and, if possible at reasonable cost, end major conflicts in important geographic regions.
- 8) Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies (including information and computers).
- 9) Prevent massive, uncontrolled immigration across U.S. borders.
- 10) Suppress, contain, and combat terrorism, transnational crime, and drugs.
- 11) Prevent genocide.

Instrumentally, the extremely important U.S. national interests are to:

Promote strong U.S.-European and U.S.-Japanese strategic partnerships.

Just Important

Just important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

White Chips

U.S. just important national interests are to:

- 1) Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries as a matter of official government policy.
- 2) Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization.
- 3) Prevent and, if possible at low cost, end conflicts in strategically insignificant geographic regions.
- 4) Protect the lives and well-being of American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations.
- 5) Boost the domestic output of key strategic industries and sectors (where market imperfections may make a deliberate industrial policy rational).
- 6) Prevent the nationalization of U.S.-owned assets abroad.
- 7) Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations.
- 8) Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements.
- 9) Reduce the U.S. illegal alien and drug problems.
- 10) Maximize U.S. GNP growth from international trade and investment.

Instrumentally, the important U.S. national interests are to:

Maintain a strong UN and other regional and functional cooperative mechanisms.

National Interests

Less Important or Secondary

Less important or secondary national interests are conditions that are intrinsically desirable but that have no major effect on the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Translucent Chips

The list of less important or secondary interests is much longer. Less important or secondary U.S. national interests include:

- 1) Balancing bilateral trade deficits.
- 2) Enlarging democracy elsewhere or for its own sake.
- 3) Preserving the territorial integrity or particular political constitution of other states.
- 4) Creating or maintaining democratic governance in other states (e.g., Haiti, Cuba, or Tibet) – apart from massive human rights violations or immigration across U.S. borders.
- 5) Enhancing the exports of specific economic sectors.

I. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

IN TODAY'S world of great global changes and born-again nationalisms that drive the military and economic behavior of states and groups, it is important for the political leaders of the United States to get our national interests right. This will not be automatic or easy, and it will not come from public opinion polls or focus groups. Our leaders will have to define, decide, and persuade the country of our national interests, and then exploit the unique leadership capacities of the United States among the major power centers of the world. At the same time, American leaders of every kind must accept the challenges of building domestic foundations for foreign policy in an America where social stability, public confidence, and a sense of common purpose are in short supply.

Above all, Americans must recognize that the rest of the world includes many powerful states intent on ensuring their own safety and advancing their own national interests, just as we are. The organization of power—the political ordering of the international system—remains an inescapable issue with direct effects on the safety and well-being of all who live in the United States.

■ **What are American national interests today?** Which regions and issues should Americans care about, for example, Bosnia, Rwanda, Russia, East Asia, or the Persian Gulf on the one hand, or loose nuclear weapons, opening markets for trade, investment opportunities, or human rights on the other? Why should we care? How much should we be prepared to pay to address these threats and seize these opportunities?

- Once identified, how should national interests be ranked?
- What is the relationship between national interests, on the one hand, and values or moral purposes, on the other?

- Does the unique U.S. position in the world at century's end imply special constraints or convey special license, or even a moral imperative, in the definition of our interests?
- Are U.S. national interests in the world of the next decade or two mainly defined by the geopolitical and economic realities of a shrinking globe, and thus primarily objective; or instead, are U.S. national interests principally the sum of whatever happens to interest Americans today or over the decade ahead?

The confusion, crosscurrents, and cacophony about America's role in the world today is strikingly reminiscent of two earlier experiences in this century: the years after 1918 and those after 1945. We are experiencing today the third post-war transition of the twentieth century. In the twenty years after 1918, American isolationists forced withdrawal from the world. America's withdrawal undermined the World War I peace settlement in Europe and contributed mightily to the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, and the resumption of war in Europe after what proved to be but a two-decade intermission. After 1945, American leaders were determined to learn and apply those lessons of the interwar period. Individuals who are known now as the "wise men," including Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, Secretaries of State George Marshall and Dean Acheson, and Senator Arthur Vandenberg, fashioned a strategy of thoughtful, deep American engagement in the world in ways they judged vital to America's well-being. As a result, two generations of Americans have enjoyed five decades without world war, in which America experienced the most rapid economic growth in history, and won a great victory in the Cold War.

No historical analogy is precise. But if we reflect on developments since 1990-91, which of the two earlier experiences seems more apt? The first does; the second does not. By 1947, after two years of withdrawal, fatigue, and distraction, the combination of Joseph Stalin's challenge and Harry Truman's response set the course for the next era. In 1996, five years beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union, America remains in limbo.

As the Scriptures warn, "If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will respond to battle?" Leadership from the president himself, and his adminis-

tration, is a necessary condition for constructing any consensus on American national interests. Thus the executive branch bears the lion's share of responsibility for articulating a coherent sense of American interests around which to mobilize support. But with the emergence of a Republican majority in the House of Representatives for the first time in more than a generation, and a Republican majority in the Senate as well, the political breakdown between the Executive and Congress now approaches open warfare.

The costs of the breakdown of relations between the Congress and the Executive can be counted across the foreign policy agenda. In relations with China, an administration that began by insisting that the Chinese government take at least minimal steps towards increasing human rights for Chinese citizens as a condition for renewal of China's Most Favored Nation status flip-flopped at the eleventh hour under pressure from Congress and American business. The same was true with the June 1995 visit by Taiwanese President Lee, who was initially denied a visa by the administration only to be granted one in response to congressional initiative. The costs of divisions in American government that produce zigs and zags in American policy must be measured in the Chinese government's view of American seriousness and steadiness. As China tests American resolve by selling nuclear weapons technology to Pakistan and missiles to Iran and exercising force to expand its sovereignty in the South China Sea and to intimidate Taiwan, its judgment of America's unpredictability creates great risks, including even the risk of war.

Beneath this institutional breakdown is an even more troubling public schizophrenia that seeks withdrawal from the world even as communications, trade, and technology make America the capital of a global village. American television news organizations, print papers and magazines, and philanthropic foundations have all cut back dramatically on things "foreign." Many leftists' conviction that the U.S. is not morally fit to lead in the world combines with some neoconservatives' tendency to believe that the world is not worthy of American efforts. Anxiety about economic insecurities abetted, if not caused, by international competition, foreign imports, and immigration, generates support for calls for America to withdraw and hunker down inside a fortress. Yet most Americans know better. Eighty percent of voters in Republican primaries rejected such a call. A majority recognizes that America's best jobs

depend on trade and that America can compete successfully on level international playing fields. Indeed, polling data consistently find large majorities supporting the proposition that the United States must play a unique leadership role in the world.

What then is to be done? A necessary precondition for doing anything is a renewed sense of American national interests. A broad national understanding of American national interests is a necessary foundation for a steady, sustained American role in the decade ahead. Thus we ask:

- Which American interests are vital, which are extremely important, which are just important, and which are less important or secondary?
- How can Americans think clearly about these issues? By what process or method can we hope to identify American national interests and priorities among them?
- What forces in the world around us will challenge American interests in the decade ahead? Which developments pose the most significant threats to American national interests or provide opportunities to advance American well-being?

It is to these three questions that we now turn.

II. THINKING CLEARLY ABOUT AMERICAN NATIONAL INTERESTS

NATIONAL INTERESTS are the fundamental building blocks in any discussion of foreign policy. The concept is often invoked as if it were beyond the conceptual reach of ordinary Americans. In fact, the concept is used regularly and widely by administration officials, members of Congress, and citizens at large.

But today, Americans have no vivid, shared sense of this nation's interests in the world, no clear ranking of those interests. Many find it difficult to distinguish between America's national interests and whatever interests them personally. Our Commission found chastening the experience of the Council on Foreign Relations' nation-wide, year-long study of national interests involving over 100 of its members.¹ One principal conclusion of that study is: dissensus. Even among "foreign policy elites," there is widespread confusion and little agreement about U.S. interests today. In the end, the Council Study Group's consensus list of putative vital interests includes more than a dozen items, some representing little more than a way of emphasizing that more attention needs to be paid to the issue. Participants in the Council on Foreign Relations Study reached unanimity on only one American vital interest: "to protect U.S. territorial integrity, including prevention of the use of force against U.S. territory."

Thus, this Commission's work began with an effort to be clear about the concepts we are using, to specify the criteria for identifying national interests, and to be explicit about the process by which interests are to be ranked. Thinking clearly about national interests requires making hard choices. One member of the Commission recalled for the group the instructions Army Chief of Staff George Marshall gave America's wartime strategic planners in 1942: They were to identify the Allies' "basic undertakings"—the essential

objectives without which the war would not likely be won. Many initiatives, such as Churchill's call to dispatch light Allied forces to Yugoslavia, failed to make the cut. As Marshall's maxim said: when deciding what to do, one is also deciding what not to do.

In identifying one interest as vital, we are excluding many others. The Council on Foreign Relations' list of vital interests, for example, includes Canada's territorial integrity and prosperity. This Commission disagrees. In our analysis, this item does not even qualify for the "just important" list. If Quebec were to separate from Canada, leaving the United States with two northern neighbors, how would this affect U.S. interests? If the separation were peaceful, probably minimally. If separation produced some immigration, as long as it were legal, again the consequences would be minimal. Separation might create a need to renegotiate NAFTA, but separated from Canada, Quebec would be weaker, making it likely that the U.S. could improve the terms of that trade agreement for Americans.

How did we reach this conclusion? What process do we propose for attempting to think clearly about this difficult issue? With no disrespect for the academic literature on this subject, we nonetheless found the best clues in some uncommonly sensible uses of the concept of national interests in ordinary debate. Thus our starting suggestion is that individuals reflect on the logic of their use of terms like "vital interests" or "just important" in attempting to be clearer and more disciplined. Without presuming in any way to have the last word, therefore, we nonetheless propose ten clues we have drawn primarily from reflection on ordinary debate. Together, these provide a framework and process for answering questions about America's national interests.

First is the necessity for priorities in making a hierarchy of interests: with hard choices among interests of great importance, which is more important than another? We suggest four columns, which we label: vital; extremely important; just important; and less important or secondary. (To take an analogy from the world of gaming, poker players might think of these as blue chips, red chips, white chips, and translucent chips.) A sense of priorities rooted in an established hierarchy of interests and values is central to an interest-based approach to foreign policy.

Second, the Commission insists that we reserve the word “vital” in vital interests for what the dictionary says it means. According to Webster’s dictionary, “vital” means “essential to the existence or continuance of something; indispensable.” Many government officials use the term “vital national interests” as if all national interests were vital. One of the sharpest differences between this Commission’s conclusions and most other discussions of national interests today is our rejection of the “grade inflation” of interests that are just important or secondary to “vital.” While it is understandable that advocates of particular policies will seek to use “vital” to emphasize their position, this concept should be applied only to interests that are indeed strictly indispensable.

Third, we have reflected on the sturdy one-line summary of American vital interests, first formulated by the wise men of the late 1940’s: to “preserve the United States as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values intact.” We endorse and recommend this summary, according to which America’s vital interests include (1) survival as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values; and (2) the conditions required therefor—in current vernacular, to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Fourth, interests exist independently of specific threats to these interests. Many debates commingle interests and threats. This is understandable, since a vivid threat is often needed to remind one of an interest that would otherwise go unnoticed or unattended. But to take one controversial example, America has a vital interest in preserving the natural environment so that American citizens can prosper and thrive. This interest is independent of and separate from the question of whether any current threat—global warming, for example—is real.

Fifth, interests are distinct from policies to protect or advance these interests. Interests are the foundations and starting points for policy prescriptions. But beyond interests, choices about preferred policies require complex analyses of threats and opportunities, options for action, and costs and benefits. An interest-based approach to American foreign policy does not provide a silver bullet for settling policy debates. Instead, it helps focus debates on issues that can be resolved by evidence or analysis. So, for example, in the case of environmen-

tal threats, the appropriate question is not whether a livable environment is a vital American interest. Of course it is. The issues are whether current developments like the alleged global warming threaten a livable environment for Americans, what policy options exist to address those threats, and what the costs and benefits would be of alternative policies, including investments in research in order to better assess the potential threat.

Sixth, interests are not just whatever the current government says they are or what a summary of current public opinion reports. Governments and public opinion can make mistakes. Neither the American nor the British governments or publics recognized the vital interests that were threatened by the rise of Hitler in the 1930s. Beneath current perceptions of interests there lie an objective core of national interests and a hierarchy of objective interests. Our confidence in the existence of this objective core is grounded in the prediction that when a direct threat to genuinely vital interests is identified, actions to protect these vital interests will override other concerns that have previously preoccupied the government or the public.

Seventh, beyond a basic objective core there are further layers of interests—and interpretations of interests—constructed in ways that reflect more subjective choice and creativity. Consider, for example, NATO. In the Commission's analysis, NATO addresses one vital American interest: that there be no hostile hegemon in the European geopolitical center of power (this judgment reflects American experience in World War I and World War II about a condition that is required for U.S. survival). In addition to this vital interest, the United States has several very important interests on the European continent, including sustaining a community with democratic values, developing a sense of responsibility sharing, and thus creating a force multiplier for protecting and advancing American interests abroad (in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, a coalition of the willing and able members of NATO provided the bulk of the Coalition forces). Beyond these interests are other genuinely important (but which we call "just important") interests, including the prevention of mass violence in the European arena, as in Bosnia. NATO constitutes a creative answer to each of the interests above. Once created, there is no real alternative to NATO for addressing these interests in the short or immediate run. Thus, an instrument like NATO, once constructed and main-

tained, is in our view properly referred to as a vital interest. It is a condition that in practice, and at least for the intermediate run, is necessary for preserving other vital interests.

Eighth, interests are separable from, but closely related to, what a nation is prepared to do about those interests. For “vital” national interests, the United States should be prepared to commit itself to fight, even if it has to do so unilaterally and without the assistance of allies. For “extremely important” interests, the United States should be prepared to commit forces to meet threats and to lead a coalition of forces, but only in conjunction with a coalition or allies whose vital interests are threatened. For “just important” interests, the United States should be prepared to participate militarily, on a case-by-case basis, but only if the costs are low or others carry the lion’s share of the burden. These corollaries for responses to threats to interests are consistent with the early U.S. position on Bosnia, according to which the absence of vital interests in Bosnia meant that the United States would not commit American troops to combat on the ground there.

Ninth, judgments about the hierarchy of American interests often become formally embodied in international commitments, including alliances (NATO and the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty), treaties (NAFTA and the World Trade Organization), the stationing of American troops, and the establishment of bases. The constitutional requirement that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of treaties reflects the Founding Fathers’ judgment about the appropriate constitutional process for identifying U.S. interests in the world beyond its borders. Ratified treaties also communicate the fact that the nation has reached a consensus about an issue’s place in the hierarchy of American interests.

Tenth, the relationship between interests and values is complex and subtle. Henry Kissinger’s *Diplomacy* wrestles with this dichotomy for 900 pages without resolution. Kissinger’s study emphasizes the competition in twentieth century American foreign policy between Woodrow Wilson’s “idealism” and Theodore Roosevelt’s “realism.” Nonetheless, for the purposes at hand, the Commission is more comfortable with an earlier American concept according to which values and interests are less dichotomous poles apart, and more alternative expressions of valuation. The survival and well-being of the United

States is not just an interest in contrast to Americans' values, but also a core value essential to all Americans. Similarly, Americans are not uninterested in human rights in China or Burundi or indeed in the well-being of other individuals with whom they share the globe. But the Declaration of Independence and Constitution assert first and foremost Americans' interest in the idea and ideal that America survive and thrive. Freedom for individuals, democratic government, and conditions that secure life, liberty, and opportunities for happiness are both interests and values. The Founding Fathers believed that America should advance these interests principally by providing a shining example of a city on a hill. This strategy is made more complex by advances in science and technology. In today's global village, all can see, and many can reach out and touch America—to harm as well as to help. Protecting and advancing America's well-being is thus more challenging than in the eighteenth century and requires deeper and more sustained engagement beyond America's shores. But a concept of American national interests that begins with the freedom and prosperity of Americans, and puts Americans' well-being first, reflects the original concept of both values and interests in the American experiment.

Together, these guidelines shaped our deliberations and informed our conclusions about what American national interests are today.

III. WHAT ARE AMERICAN NATIONAL INTERESTS TODAY?

THE TABLE that follows summarizes the Commission's answer to the question: what are American national interests today? A spectrum of American national interests stretches from "vital" interests through "extremely important" and "just important" interests to "less important/secondary" interests. Poker players can think of the vital interests as blue chips, the extremely important as red chips, just important as white chips, and less important as translucent chips.

As noted above, we reserve the use of "vital" interests to the dictionary definition of that term: indispensable for survival. Thus, vital American interests are those, and only those, that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation. "Extremely important" interests are precisely that—no less, but no more. They are interests or conditions that if compromised would severely prejudice, but not strictly imperil, the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance Americans' well-being in a free and secure nation. "Just important" interests are again not irrelevant but also not critical to the survival, or even prosperity, of Americans. Compromise of "just important" interests could, however, have negative consequences for the safeguarding and enhancing of Americans' well-being. Finally, interests listed under "less important" or "secondary" are intrinsically desirable but have no major effect on the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans.

Many readers will find these distinctions uncomfortable. A hierarchy in which restoring democracy in Haiti or stability in Bosnia is "just important," rather than "vital," will appear to some invidious. But any categorization of interests that fails to rank interests in a way that will inescapably offend some

will also fail to provide guidance about which interests are more critical in protecting and advancing America's security and well-being.

This hierarchy of interests is avowedly American-centric. This stated hierarchy of interests distinguishes between Americans and citizens of other countries, as we expect a hierarchy of, for example, Japanese or Indian national interests would give priority to those citizens. Our hierarchy puts American national interests first, as American leaders do when they are being forthright.

In reviewing what others have written—and debating among ourselves how national interests should be characterized, and which are blue chips, which red, and which white—the Commissioners recognize that there exist no natural accounting categories for interests and that the process for distinguishing among higher priority and lower priority interests is complex. Nonetheless, as a first approximation, in assigning interests to columns, we have reduced a complex process of calculation to criteria that can be stated as a single question for each column.

In considering whether an interest is “vital,” the question is: is the preservation of this interest, value, or condition strictly necessary for the United States to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation? Most proposed “vital interests” do not meet this strict test. Consequently, they appear in the other columns of our chart. For example, many would call an interest like human rights in China “vital.” But we observe that massive violations of human rights as a matter of government policy have occurred in every decade of this century in many countries around the world. Such violations are harmful to America's values and in conflict with American efforts to promote norms of human rights internationally. But these violations, including official, massive, systematic ones, do not threaten the survival or the freedom of America.

Still more controversial, we suspect, will be this Commission's unwillingness to consider “preventing genocide” or “preventing the use of nuclear or biological weapons anywhere” as vital national interests for the United States. But when we ask ourselves whether prevention of genocide in Rwanda (as occurred in 1994) or Burundi (as may occur this year or next) or the use of nuclear or biological weapons between India and Pakistan (as may occur in the

years immediately ahead) is strictly necessary for the United States to survive as a free nation with our fundamental institutions and values intact, we believe the answer is clear. Such atrocities, if they occur, have serious consequences for Americans' well-being in a free and secure nation. They do not, however, strictly imperil the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance U.S. survival and freedom and thus are "extremely important" red chips in our hierarchy.

As the table states sparsely, we identify but five vital U.S. national interests in the decade ahead. These are to:

- prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States;
- prevent the emergence of a hostile hegemon in Europe or Asia;
- prevent the emergence of a hostile major power on U.S. borders or in control of the seas;
- prevent catastrophic collapse of major global systems: trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and environmental; and
- ensure the survival of U.S. allies.

In addition to these interests, we recognize "instrumental" interests—that is, acquired stakes in instruments that are themselves strictly necessary to protect or advance the interests stated. In the vital column, we identify but one such instrumental interest: to promote singular U.S. leadership, military capabilities (including the ability to fight and win regional wars in proliferated environments), credibility (including a reputation for adhering to clear U.S. commitments and for fairness in dealing with other states and individuals), and critical institutions (for example, NATO).

Vital

Vital national interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Blue Chips

U.S. vital national interests are to:

- 1) Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons attacks on the United States.
- 2) Prevent the emergence of a hostile hegemon in Europe or Asia.
- 3) Prevent the emergence of a hostile major power on U.S. borders or in control of the seas.
- 4) Prevent the catastrophic collapse of major global systems: trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and environmental.
- 5) Ensure the survival of U.S. allies.

Instrumentally, the vital U.S. national interests are to:

Promote singular U.S. leadership, military capabilities, credibility (including reputation for adherence to clear U.S. commitments and even-handedness in dealing with other states), and critical institutions.

National Interests

Extremely Important

Extremely important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Red Chips

U.S. extremely important national interests are to:

- 1) Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of the use of nuclear or biological weapons anywhere.
- 2) Prevent the regional proliferation of NBC weapons and delivery systems.
- 3) Promote the acceptance of international rules of law and mechanisms for resolving disputes peacefully.
- 4) Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, such as the Persian Gulf.
- 5) Protect U.S. friends and allies from significant external aggression.
- 6) Prevent the emergence of a reflexively adversarial major power in Europe or Asia.
- 7) Prevent and, if possible at reasonable cost, end major conflicts in important geographic regions.
- 8) Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies (including information and computers).
- 9) Prevent massive, uncontrolled immigration across U.S. borders.
- 10) Suppress, contain, and combat terrorism, transnational crime, and drugs.
- 11) Prevent genocide.

Instrumentally, the extremely important U.S. national interests are to:

Promote strong U.S.-European and U.S.-Japanese strategic partnerships.

Just Important

Just important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

White Chips

U.S. just important national interests are to:

- 1) Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries as a matter of official government policy.
- 2) Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization.
- 3) Prevent and, if possible at low cost, end conflicts in strategically insignificant geographic regions.
- 4) Protect the lives and well-being of American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations.
- 5) Boost the domestic output of key strategic industries and sectors (where market imperfections may make a deliberate industrial policy rational).
- 6) Prevent the nationalization of U.S.-owned assets abroad.
- 7) Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations.
- 8) Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements.
- 9) Reduce the U.S. illegal alien and drug problems.
- 10) Maximize U.S. GNP growth from international trade and investment.

Instrumentally, the important U.S. national interests are to:

Maintain a strong UN and other regional and functional cooperative mechanisms.

National Interests

Less Important or Secondary

Less important or secondary national interests are conditions that are intrinsically desirable but that have no major effect on the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Translucent Chips

The list of less important or secondary interests is much longer. Less important or secondary U.S. national interests include:

- 1) Balancing bilateral trade deficits.
- 2) Enlarging democracy elsewhere or for its own sake.
- 3) Preserving the territorial integrity or particular political constitution of other states.
- 4) Creating or maintaining democratic governance in other states (e.g., Haiti, Cuba, or Tibet) – apart from massive human rights violations or immigration across U.S. borders.
- 5) Enhancing the exports of specific economic sectors.

IV. CHALLENGES TO AMERICAN NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE DECADE AHEAD

CHALLENGES TO U.S. national interests come in many forms and flavors. Threats and opportunities are often opposite sides of the same coin. Some are posed by countries or regions of intrinsic geopolitical importance; others arise as global issues driven by technology or ideology. The Commission has identified eleven challenges that will confront leaders of the U.S. government who take office in January 1997. These challenges overlap, reflecting a world that rarely serves up threats in neat packages. Addressing each challenge requires trade-offs with other issues and careful allocations of U.S. resources. But the hierarchical concept of national interests developed in the preceding section provides a useful guide in identifying these trade-offs and making choices about priorities among them. We begin this thought process in the essays which follow:

Regions

East Asia

Russia

Europe and NATO

The Middle East

Functional Issues

Nuclear Futures—U.S. and Worldwide

The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Drugs

International Trade and Investment

Cyberspace and Information Technology

The Global Environment

Instruments

U.S. Military Force Requirements

East Asia: Japan and China

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That no state become a hostile East Asian hegemon.
- That Japan and South Korea survive as free and prosperous states, allied to the United States.

Extremely Important

- That no new nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons capabilities emerge in the region.
- That the Korean Peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea remain free of conflict.
- That China enter the international system without war and on prudential terms that strengthen the emerging order.

Just Important

- That freedom of navigation be sustained throughout the region.
- That China and the other authoritarian regimes in the region grow into more pluralistic polities and move towards greater respect for fundamental human rights.
- That the states of the region continue opening markets to trade and investment.

Over the past several years the United States has told North Korea how it should or should not arm itself, told Japan how it should organize its economy, told China how it should treat its own citizens, and told both China and Singapore how they should treat American citizens. In most of these cases Washington's advice was rejected. The United States lost on the issue or was forced to back down very substantially.

This reflects a shifting balance of power between the United States and East Asia. Paradoxically, the tensions among the East Asian powers themselves and their resistance to regional security cooperation mean that stability in the region will continue to depend on the willingness of the United States to play a leading role in managing the power balance, as we did in the Taiwan Strait crisis of March 1996. The United States has fewer real quarrels with each of the major East Asian nations than they have with each other. The governments and leaderships in almost all the nations of East Asia believe that only the United States can ensure that dangerous imbalances of power in East Asia do not lead to war.

A defining feature of the next quarter century in international politics will be the emergence of the Chinese juggernaut, the world's largest non-status quo power. In *The Economist's* apt metaphor, divas of such proportions never enter the stage without transforming the scene. With over 1.2 billion people, and an economy growing at ten percent a year on a path to overtake the United States as the world's largest economy, China comes onto the international stage with an identity, a history, and presumptions distinct from those of any other state. The Chinese feel acutely an era of what they see as 150 years' humiliation and subordination, dating from the 1842 Treaty of Nanking—an era that is now coming to an end. They look forward to re-establishing what in their eyes is a natural hegemony in Asia. It must be anticipated that they will react strongly to a perceived loss of face in their cultural (or civilizational) area, including Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. China is also trying to act like a world power—albeit an awkward and incomplete one. Beijing has sold missile components (and probably M-11 missiles) to Pakistan and anti-ship missiles to Iran. The Chinese have demanded entry to the World Trade Organization on terms acceptable to none of its members. In a crude and dangerous show of force, they tried to intimidate Taiwan during its presidential election in March 1996.

Despite the uncertainty of their dynastic transition, including the possibility of a massive breakdown of civil society when Deng dies, the Chinese are moving ahead with a military buildup. They have been seizing territory in the South China Sea from Vietnam since they took the Paracel Islands in 1974, but their taking of Mischief Reef in February 1995 from the Philippines marked a disturbing new overreach. It affected our national interest in maintaining free-

dom of navigation, as the sea lines of communication from East Asia to the Persian Gulf pass close by. Our Seventh Fleet uses the route for access to the Gulf, and seventy percent of Japan's oil imports pass through these sea lines. The highly publicized Chinese surface-to-surface missile tests and "live-fire" exercises near Taiwan in 1995 and early 1996 were a worryingly unsophisticated attempt to have an effect on U.S. policy and to intimidate Taiwan as Taiwan's 1996 elections drew closer. Taiwan today is much more democratic, much more capitalistic, and much more deeply embedded in the international system than it was in 1972 at the time of the Nixon-Kissinger opening to China, or 1979, when formal ties were established, or 1982, when certain arms sales to Taiwan were balanced with a reaffirmation of the "One China" policy. On all those occasions, Washington acknowledged China's ultimate claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. Today, however, the weight of the argument for acknowledging the reality of Taiwan's importance as a member of the international system is nearly overwhelming. Handling this issue will require much more skill in both Washington and Beijing than either has demonstrated so far in the mid-1990s.

Both the Chinese and the Japanese have a critical strategic interest in Taiwan, and both look to the United States to handle the matter in a way that maintains strategic stability in East Asia. The Japanese need to feel that with us their security is in strong hands and under wise guidance. In particular, they need to see clearly that we actually have a China policy that serves our national interests (as well as Japan's)—not just our sentimental or commercial or moralistic desires. Furthermore, the U.S. interest in maintaining a strong strategic partnership with Japan must take precedence over politically motivated attempts to extract specific market-opening trade concessions from the Japanese. U.S. national interests are not well served when Washington seeks to use its security partnership with Japan as leverage in hard-fought trade talks.

Some time in 1996 the North Korean "triple crisis"—the economy, the society, and the political regime—could come to the point of collapse. Not only the United States but also Japan, China, and Russia will have extremely important national interests at risk: avoidance of war, no new nuclear weapons capability on the Korean Peninsula. Outcomes of a possible crisis could include mass migration to the South, violent clashes among factions in the North,

North Korean military attacks across the De-Militarized Zone (where we have an infantry division), a South Korean drive into the North to get nuclear installations under control, or some mixture of the above.

Our response to the order being shaped by China is the key issue, the crucial test, for an American national interest-based policy now and for the foreseeable future. The American national interests in China not becoming a world or even a regional military threat and in China entering the global international system on prudential terms serve not only our geopolitical safety and security but also our moral interests in human decency and, ultimately, human freedom. This does not mean a neo-containment policy. The Chinese already claim to believe they are being contained, but this claim is further evidence of their naiveté. U.S. policy should be built around the fuller development of what Gerald Segal calls “an intricate strategy for tying China into the international system.” As William Safire, columnist for *The New York Times*, has said, “America’s dealings with China should be based on public predictions of clear consequences to specific acts and policies. In trade, strict reciprocity; in repression of freedom, retaliation in world organizations and consumer boycotts; in vital interests, mutual respect; in propaganda, the certain trumpet of truth; in a renewal of subtlety, exquisite return subtlety.”

Russia

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That loose Russian nuclear weapons and weapons-usable nuclear material be kept under secure control.
- That the threat of Russian nuclear attacks on the United States be reduced to the minimum.
- That Russia not become a hostile Eurasian hegemon.

Extremely Important

- That Russia not collapse into civil war or revert to authoritarianism.
- That Russian foreign policy remain basically cooperative rather than become reflexively adversarial.
- That Russia not seek to reintegrate the Baltic states or Ukraine by force.

Just Important

- That Russia persist in its transition to pluralism, democracy and a market-based economy.
- That the conflicts on the Russian periphery be resolved peacefully, with human rights protected.

Although Russia is no longer a superpower, it remains the single largest potential challenge to American national interests. First, Moscow still possesses a formidable—if deteriorating—nuclear arsenal capable of causing the United States to disappear. It is one of the great ironic twists of history that, after decades in which we were threatened by Russian strength, today it is the Russian government's weakness that is the problem. Collapsing controls over nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and weapons-usable nuclear materials in Russia pose the greatest potential danger to Americans' physical security today.

Despite its current weakness, Russia is beginning to show some signs of recovery. Its economy is starting to improve and its government has made progress in stabilizing the country. Moscow's foreign policy shows growing assertiveness in pursuit of Russian national objectives. As shown in Chechnya, Russia's conventional military forces, which served as the focal threat to Western policy for four decades, have deteriorated to the point where Russia has proven incapable of invading itself. But over the long term, Russia might again become a serious military threat to Europe, and it is very likely that Russia will be among the twenty-first century's major powers.

U.S. interests would best be served by a stable, democratic, free-market Russia which is comfortable with its current borders, at peace with its neigh-

bors, and a responsible member of a healthy international system. While the United States may hope for and even encourage that kind of evolution, the U.S. approach to Russia must be pragmatic and realistic. It is clear that Russia's transition to democracy and integration into the international system will be rocky at best. Not everything Americans want from Russia will be attainable anytime soon. Under such conditions, the U.S. has to establish well-defined priorities with respect to post-Communist Russia and act accordingly.

The first and overriding objective is to avoid nuclear confrontation with Russia (without sacrificing U.S. interests or principles). Since there are presently no logical causes for such a confrontation, this paramount objective is also the easiest to achieve.

A related priority is to help Russia to establish more secure control over its "loose nukes"—nuclear weapons and especially excess weapons-usable fissile materials. Above all, this requires effective working relationships with the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) and Ministry of Defense and involves providing substantial technical and financial assistance to a nuclear-weapons complex that once targeted the United States. There the challenge is to provide assistance to dismantlement of, and maintenance of control over, Russian nuclear weapons without strengthening Moscow's military machine's capability for mischief. From the perspective of U.S. national interests, there can be little doubt that the more immediate threat is the possibility that some portion of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal will fall into the hands of a rogue state or terrorist group.

A third priority is Russian foreign policy. Because Russia is a serious power whose actions may have a considerable impact upon American interests, Russian foreign policy rather than domestic developments should have priority attention from the United States. It is clear that Washington's ability to shape developments in a country as large, as different, and as proud as Russia is likely to be limited in any event. While it is true that democracies are the most appropriate and the most reliable partners for the United States, we have a demonstrated ability to work closely and effectively with more authoritarian regimes—such as Saudi Arabia—when necessary.

The United States has two basic means at its disposal to promote a benign Russian foreign policy. One is direct contact—engaging Russia in ways that

demonstrate the benefits of nonaggressive behavior. These include Moscow's incorporation into international economic institutions and security structures whenever possible. The second means is the creation of a new European security architecture that includes both an enlarged role for NATO and a special relationship between Russia and NATO. There is obvious tension between these two objectives and some trade-offs are inevitable. However, both "tracks" are important in shaping our relationship with Russia, and it would be a mistake to become preoccupied with one at the expense of the other.

While Russian behavior toward its new neighbors does not engage U.S. interests as deeply as does its behavior toward Western and Central Europe, preserving the independence of Ukraine and the Baltic states and protecting them from aggression, intimidation, and blackmail is very important to America. A threat to their independence would greatly destabilize the situation in Europe, damage U.S.-Russian relations, and create the potential for a truly serious conflict.

The other newly independent states have less geopolitical and symbolic importance to the United States and, in practical terms, there is less that America can do to protect their sovereignty. Nevertheless their importance should not be underestimated. First, many of these countries—particularly in the energy-rich Caspian Basin—are geopolitically significant in their own right. Secondly, if their sovereignty were violated with impunity, it could contribute to a new Russian neo-imperial momentum—with profound international consequences. Finally, Russian aggression against any of these nations, regardless of its size, its distance from the U.S., or its direct relevance to American interests, would impact American opinion. The spillover for all areas of the U.S.-Russian relationship would likely be considerable.

Finally, as far as Russia's domestic transition is concerned, America's main interest is how domestic political outcomes affect Moscow's international conduct. While all aspects of Russia's great transition are interconnected, particular emphasis should be put on the establishment of democratic procedures and particularly the strengthening of checks and balances, which are the best bar-

riers to the militarization of Russian society and, ultimately, to an aggressive foreign policy. The political fortunes of particular personalities and the exact status of economic reform are much less important.

Europe and NATO

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That there be no new hegemonic threat to Europe.
- That the European allies survive as free and prosperous states.
- That NATO continue as a powerful political-military alliance.

Extremely Important

- That the Bosnian conflict be settled successfully with NATO and U.S. credibility intact, but at reasonable cost.
- That there emerge a broader strategic partnership with the European allies to protect and advance important U.S. and European interests around the globe.

Just Important

- That the European Union (EU) remain a responsible free trading partner.
- That the expansion of the alliance into East-Central Europe proceed in a way that avoids disruption of Russia's relations with the West or development of a major Russian military threat.

No vital U.S. interest is seriously threatened in Europe today. That is a striking statement about a region of the world over which the United States fought two wars in this century, on which the United States contested the Cold War for almost forty-five years, and in which 100,000 U.S. troops are deployed today. During the earlier eras, vital U.S. interests were seriously at risk: hos-

tile hegemonic powers, first Germany and then the Soviet Union, threatened to dominate the continent. Then, geography mattered more than commerce, and Europe's position across the Atlantic was strategically more crucial than today, when distance and position are less important both militarily and economically. In the earlier era, Europe was relatively much more important to the United States and the global economy than it is today after the economic rise of East Asia.

To say that no vital interest is seriously threatened and that Europe's relative importance to the United States has declined is not to say that Europe is unimportant. If American policy is badly managed or if current trends take a turn for the worse, vital interests could again be challenged:

- The most important potential source of a renewed nuclear threat to the U.S. and of nuclear proliferation—Russia—is located on Europe's edge, if not (as many Russians argue) within it. The way in which European nations, especially Germany, together with the United States, manage Europe's political, economic, and military integration within the EU and NATO will have considerable effect on U.S.-Russian relations.
- There seems no danger of the rise of a hostile hegemonic power in Europe today: Russia is hobbled; post-war Germany has been politically transformed and is the central player in the drive toward greater European integration, as well as a good friend of the United States. Yet, Russia will eventually rebuild its economy and perhaps its military capacity. History suggests that a renewed Russia could again aspire to dominate Europe. Today's policies need to address this danger by supporting, on the one hand, efforts toward political reform in Russia and by building, on the other, strong European security structures to hedge against a renewed Russian threat. A renewed German threat seems far-fetched given the political transformation of Germany, but it cannot be completely ignored by the United States, if only because it is so often mentioned by Germany's neighbors and indeed by Germans themselves. Here, the U.S. policy to support efforts to integrate and even unify Europe is wise both strategically and economically.

- Europe and America remain strongly linked economically, through direct investment, capital markets, and flows of goods and services. A vibrant European economy is extremely important to the U.S. economy. A collapse there could trigger a global collapse that would gravely harm the United States. Although Europe is grappling with vexing structural problems stemming from an overly generous social safety net and demographic shifts, there seems little danger of Europe going into a deep economic decline.

U.S. interests in Europe are more far-reaching than this brief list suggests. The U.S. is unable to achieve most of its vital and very important objectives without help from European nations (and Japan): prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a strong and well-functioning international financial system and market-based international economy, a physical environment in which Americans can thrive, access to energy at affordable prices, and acceptance of international rules of law and dispute resolution. The Europeans are our most important partners across the board, because, unlike Japan, they are politically able to employ military power abroad. This suggests the need for a major transformation in the way the United States and Europe conceive of their strategic partnership. In the earlier eras, the United States entered a partnership with European nations in order to protect vital U.S. interests that were threatened in Europe. Today, as suggested above, the basis for such a partnership has, from the U.S. view, been weakened. There remains, however, a solid foundation for a broader partnership to protect and advance U.S. and European interests around the globe.

This broader partnership has a deep and pervasive cultural dimension; it ought to have both an economic and a security dimension. NATO could provide the basis for a broader security partnership. Although the North Atlantic Treaty appears to restrict NATO's ambit to the territories of the treaty adherents and surrounding waters, NATO has begun to extend its reach under the rubric of the treaty's Article IV, which provides for consultations among NATO members if one feels its interests are threatened. NATO has begun planning for peacekeeping and peacemaking and—more significantly—has deployed three divisions to Bosnia under IFOR. The broader global partnership envisaged here would require reform of NATO by orders of magnitude greater than

any contemplated to date. Command structures would have to be created that could be used, if the allies chose to do so, for distant military operations—for example, in the Gulf or even farther afield. This might be accomplished through the establishment of a major command, parallel to the Supreme Allied Command in Europe (SACEUR), for power projection missions. This command, or some other mechanism, would be based on NATO's current Combined Joint Task Force Structure and charged with planning for future combined allied military capabilities for power projection, much as SACEUR does for the defense of Europe today.

A significantly transformed partnership with Europe for the protection of mutual American and European interests around the globe would imply that the U.S. has a very important interest in the partnership itself. For this reason, vital European interests become important to the United States. This is the chief "interest based" argument for U.S. concern with the stability of the regions near Europe, especially in the geography between Germany and Russia and in the Balkans. The Europeans, especially the Germans, clearly see stability there as vital to their security. Because they care, we must as well.

The nations of Central Europe see NATO enlargement as the best way to ensure the stability of the region and its long-term integration with the rest of Europe. Because of concerns that enlargement would provoke a negative Russian reaction and harm prospects for reform there, many in the West are reluctant to move swiftly toward admitting new members into the alliance. However, there appear to be no viable alternatives for securing Central European nations, at least those closest to the West in geographical and economic terms—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—other than admission into the European Union and NATO. Leaving them to fend for themselves could risk the creation of an insecure geopolitical zone on Germany's eastern frontier. Thus, NATO enlargement is in the U.S. interest, but it will be essential to manage this process in ways that take account of Russian concerns.

Whether any American national interests were at stake in Bosnia before the Dayton Accords were signed and IFOR troops were dispatched is now academic. The Accords and deployment of the American troops have put the credibility of both the United States and NATO on the line. These actions have

thereby created a very important American interest: maintenance of that credibility. Now that the commitment to Bosnia has been made, it must succeed.

Nevertheless, in defining “success” in Bosnia, it is important to give due consideration and priority to other American interests. The first among these is the accomplishment of the mission defined by the Dayton Accords with minimal American casualties in a manner that enhances NATO—or at least does not undermine it. This will require strict observance of the military provisions of the Accords and substantial inducements to the parties to the conflict to resolve their differences amicably. How these differences are resolved in concrete terms—so long as they are resolved peacefully—is subsidiary in terms of U.S. interests.

Improving the prospects for a democratic multi-ethnic Bosnian state, returning refugees, and punishing war criminals are important and commendable objectives. But they have to be measured against other, more fundamental goals such as the security of IFOR troops on the ground, the prevention of renewed combat after IFOR’s departure, NATO’s unity, and relations with Russia.

The Middle East

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That Israel survive as a free and prosperous state.
- That there be no major curtailment in energy supplies to the world.

Extremely Important

- That no state in the region hostile to the United States—especially Iran and Iraq—acquire new or additional WMD capabilities.
- That there be no regional hegemon in the Persian Gulf.
- That the Middle East peace process continue toward success.

- That the United States maintain good relations with the region's moderate Arab regimes and that these regimes survive domestically.

Just Important

- That the states of the region adopt or maintain moderate forms of governance and show growing respect for fundamental human rights.
- That regional terrorism be held in check.

For almost fifty years it has been an article of faith for many Americans that Israel's survival is a vital American national interest. Recent history suggests that access to Middle East petroleum for the U.S. and world markets is also vital. If Iraq or Iran were to move against the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula again, the United States would doubtless mount a major military response as it did in Desert Storm.

Although the Middle East is currently bedeviled by numerous threats, uncertainties, and conflicts, most of these by themselves do not engage vital U.S. interests. The future of Lebanon, Mediterranean security (which is loudly debated in southern Europe), the disintegration of Afghanistan, and even the widely touted Islamic fundamentalism (not to mention more recent Jewish extremism) are by themselves troublesome but secondary. Nonetheless, linkages exist among conflicts in the Middle East. Smaller, less pressing issues, when they are linked with more important interests, can push the United States into taking action that it would otherwise not take. Civil unrest in Bahrain, an internal coup in Qatar, or the incapacitation of the Saudi king could potentially interrupt the flow of oil and thus assume greater significance than each would enjoy as a discrete political phenomenon.

Other issues in the region take on greater importance if they have an impact on either access to petroleum or the Arab-Israeli peace effort. Iran, whose conventional military capability has been recently summarized as "pathetic," has been elevated far beyond its offensive capabilities because it both threatens access to oil on the Arabian Peninsula and supports terrorist opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace effort. Even Sudan, clearly not much of a threat to vital U.S. interests, suddenly attracts attention as a result of its alleged involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and terrorist activity in the Middle East.

Issues of terrorism, Islamic extremism, and political violence are often identified in the press as threats to vital U.S. interests in the Middle East. In fact, it is their linkage to the Arab-Israeli peace effort and to the flow of petroleum that gives them the importance they now enjoy. From an analytic perspective, it is quite helpful to use both Israel and petroleum as filters through which to evaluate the significance to the United States of the array of political issues within the Middle East. Without these vital U.S. interests, other issues in the Middle East would appear far less significant than they currently do.

Nuclear Futures – U.S. and Worldwide

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That the nuclear danger be reduced to the achievable minimum.
- That loose Russian nuclear weapons and weapons-usable fissile material not be acquired by other states or terrorists.
- That the effectiveness of the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent be maintained.

Extremely Important

- That there be no further hostile use of nuclear (or biological) weapons anywhere.

The enormous destructive potential of nuclear weapons gives them special status in weighing U.S. national interests. As President Eisenhower often said, nuclear weapons pose the only real threat that could destroy the United States. Removing that possibility, or reducing the danger to the strictest minimum, would be a powerful contribution to a safer America and a safer world. A series of important policy issues are involved, including reducing nuclear arsenals and controlling nuclear weapons material.

A number of serious studies and proposals in the last several years have called for continued substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals. No significant

impetus at the U.S. governmental level beyond START II is yet visible, however, and none is likely to appear until the Russian Duma ratifies the START II treaty (as the U.S. Senate has now done). Nevertheless, a bilateral U.S.-Russian reduction to a level of 2,000 warheads, as some Russian analysts have proposed, could be an important next step and should be a high-priority issue for policymakers. Some have argued for multilateral reductions thereafter by the five declared nuclear powers—Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States—to a level in the range of 100 to 200 each.

Key questions include whether it will be possible adequately to verify such reductions and whether the reductions could satisfy the need for stability over the decade-long process that dismantlement would require, while still allowing an appropriate residual role for nuclear weapons as long as they exist.

The role that some have proposed for the declared nuclear-weapons nations is simply to prevent the weapons' use by others. With the end of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the principal additional role that nuclear weapons served for NATO in the past—to deter or defend against a conventional attack—is no longer a necessary part of the future security structure in Europe. Neither is that role necessary for our joint security arrangements with Japan and South Korea.

One important factor bearing on future nuclear policy cited by most of the declared nuclear weapons nations is the status and the observance of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, since Russia explicitly links its policy on deeper nuclear cuts (not to mention START II ratification) to U.S. compliance with a strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty. Questions relating to theater systems and national systems are highly controversial. But clearly there is a strong consensus that the United States has at least an extremely important national interest in developing highly effective theater missile defenses, and in preparing the technological base for a national missile defense. Integrating the wish for effective missile defenses with the need to reduce the nuclear danger to its achievable minimum is one of the paramount challenges for this generation of U.S. national security leaders.

The problem of the undeclared nuclear weapons nations—Israel, India, and Pakistan—is well recognized. In the case of Israel, the underlying impetus for

nuclear weapons status—the mortal threat from its Arab neighbors—may be on the way toward resolution. In the case of India and Pakistan, vital U.S. national interests would not necessarily be threatened by a nuclear conflict between them, should it occur, but there can be no doubt that the United States has an extremely important national interest in maintaining the current taboo on nuclear weapons use.

A future goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons should not be ruled out, but because of issues and challenges as yet unresolved, such elimination cannot at this time be regarded as a practical possibility. The risk that a new nuclear nation may emerge, perhaps undetected, and a lingering concern over breakout following possible radical reversal of policy in Russia or China stand in the way. Britain and France, according to analysts in both countries, still see some number of weapons in the few hundreds (as they now have) as an ultimate security safeguard. Many voices in Russia, taking note of the loss of their central European buffer and the problems of their conventional forces, support retention of a significant nuclear weapons capability. And some analysts in China, though speaking favorably of worldwide complete elimination, point at the same time to the Chinese need to develop a more modern class of weapons—the purpose of their recent nuclear weapons tests—and even to create a more sophisticated doctrine for their forces. At the same time, recognition of the ultimate goal of complete elimination was a key factor in obtaining international commitment to the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995.

Other arguments against complete elimination are frequently advanced. One is that nuclear weapons may be needed as a response to chemical or biological weapons threats or actual attacks, at a time when we have given up possession or use of such weapons. The issue is contentious, and counter-arguments are made that high-tech conventional weapons can adequately meet our needs. A second argument is that elimination of nuclear weapons would simply make the world safe for conventional conflict; supporters point out that the terrible prospective costs of nuclear war played a key role in preventing a military clash between the USSR and the West throughout the Cold War. The counter-argument here is that no cause for such a clash now exists, and that contingencies involving lesser nations can and should be dealt with by lesser means.

As nuclear arsenals are phased down, a particular need will be to maintain the tightest possible control over the weapons being deactivated, the weapons materials being recovered, and indeed overall nuclear materials from whatever sources usable to construct weapons. A recent study has pointed out that the acquisition of fissionable materials is the most difficult step in building such weapons.² Here is an area where the vital national interests of the United States powerfully coincide with those of other nations, under the NPT as well as other nuclear agreements.

The rationale for giving continuing high-priority consideration to efforts to reduce, restrict, and control nuclear weapons connects directly to our vital national interests. The issue clearly deserves a major place on our national policy agenda as well as sustained efforts to build and maintain public understanding and congressional support.

The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That there be no nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons attacks on the United States.
- That there be no major leakage of loose nuclear weapons and weapons-usable fissile material from the former Soviet Union.
- That U.S. military forces be prepared to fight in proliferated environments.

Extremely Important

- That the United States prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of the use of nuclear and biological weapons anywhere.
- That there be no further proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons or long-range missiles to countries hostile to the United States (e.g., Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya).

There is an emerging consensus within the U.S. national security community that the greatest source of direct threat to U.S. national interests stems from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, biological, and chemical—and their delivery systems to hostile states and non-state actors. This view is correct. Because of its geographic position, the United States is highly secure from conventional forms of attack. Only weapons of mass destruction offer U.S. adversaries a powerful means of directly striking at America's cities and populace. Moreover, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses profound challenges to the U.S. government as it seeks to advance or protect other interests in distant regions. With its immense conventional military superiority, the only real threats (at the moment) to U.S. military forces abroad are adversaries equipped with, and prepared to use effectively, nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. These facts force WMD proliferation to the center of any U.S. assessment of the threats to U.S. national interests.

Nuclear and biological weapons are the most dangerous elements of the proliferation problem. Preventing the spread of these items is more important than stopping chemical weapons or ballistic missile proliferation, even though these latter categories pose serious problems themselves. A nuclear or biological device could destroy hundreds of thousands or indeed millions of people; a chemical weapon would kill far fewer, however horrific in its effects, and would not destroy a society or city. Similarly, ballistic missiles are no more deadly than the warheads they carry, and the ballistic missile threat to the continental United States is today quite low. In a regional conflict, ballistic missile attacks can frighten civilian populations, as they did in the 1991 Gulf War. But unless armed with nuclear or biological warheads, the ballistic missile threat is militarily tractable.

Clearly, the highest aim of U.S. national security policy should be to prevent nuclear or biological weapons attacks against American cities and civilians. While the shape of the biological weapons threat is only beginning to emerge, the nuclear threat became familiar in the form of the Soviet strategic nuclear arsenal. The disappearance of the Soviet Union and the accompanying collapse of its command-and-control state presents today a new nuclear challenge. As a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the risks of one or

a dozen nuclear devices being exploded in an American city have, in fact, increased. Today the most serious threat to vital American interests is the threat of loose nuclear weapons and fissile material from the former Soviet Union falling into the hands of pariah states or terrorist or criminal groups. The continuing, convulsive transformation of Russia and the former Soviet Union leaves everything there vulnerable to theft, seizure, or loss. After decades of totalitarian Soviet rule that effectively imprisoned an entire society, including everything of value, Russia has now freed individuals to do virtually whatever they choose. Elimination of all traditional constraints combines with rampant criminalization to threaten chaos. One hundred thousand nuclear weapons and weapons-usable equivalents of highly enriched uranium and plutonium remain scattered across several hundred locations in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Security at most of these facilities is a source of deep concern. The possibility of stealing or buying former Soviet fissile material has transformed the nature of the international nuclear non-proliferation problem, making it possible for all states, and even non-state actors, to circumvent the fissile material choke point. Once fissile material is available, building a simple nuclear weapon is not difficult.

In regional environments, preventing the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons to countries and entities that wish us ill must take priority over controlling proliferation to friendly democratic countries. Iraq is cause for great worry. After five years of the most intense and intrusive inspection of Iraq's facilities, continued disclosures by Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the head of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraq (which supervises the destruction of Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction and missile programs), indicate that the full story is still not known. With respect to Iran, it is very important that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conduct more assertive and specific inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities suspected of being in violation of the NPT. In parallel the United States must maintain a constant dialogue with its European allies, Japan, and Russia to share intelligence data on Iranian nuclear activities. In the case of North Korea, we must cause the North Koreans to comply speedily with the specific terms of the agreement ending their nuclear-weapons program, in light of the rapid deterioration in that country. The threat that a faltering North Korea

could launch a desperate attack on the South still exists. The United States also should seek to prevent Libya from starting production at its new chemical weapons plant; the United States should not rule out the unilateral use of force if all other options fail.

Finally, given the difficulty of preventing WMD proliferation entirely, preparing U.S. forces to fight and prevail against WMD-armed adversaries must be seen as a vital instrumental U.S. national interest. In this respect, the basic premise of the counterproliferation strategy advanced by the Clinton administration is sensible and prudent. The preparation of U.S. forces to fight in proliferated environments involves many different types of military innovations: improved intelligence, revised training procedures for troops, updated military doctrines, improved passive defensive systems, new active defensive systems (including especially theater missile defense), and precision-guided munitions, to name only a few. A robust ability to counter the effects of WMD proliferation is a military imperative for the twenty-first century, and these adaptations and reforms must be continued by the U.S. armed forces. At the same time, however, these military reforms are a poor second-best to preventing WMD proliferation, in all its aspects, in the first place.

Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Drugs

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That terrorist groups be denied access to weapons of mass destruction, most importantly, nuclear and biological weapons.

Extremely Important

- That U.S. vulnerability to all forms of international and domestic terrorism be reduced.
- That the vulnerability of U.S. informational, financial, and military infrastructure to large-scale “cyberterrorism” be reduced.

- That future acts of terrorism be discouraged by not giving in to terrorist demands, by hunting down and bringing to justice individual terrorists, and by ostracizing and punishing state-sponsors of terrorism.
- That transnational crime not threaten American lives, well-being, or wealth.
- That trafficking in illegal drugs be suppressed.

Just Important

- To protect the lives and well-being of individual American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations.

As the most free and open society in the world, the U.S. is also among the most vulnerable to terrorism. Recent events, including the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1995 *Aum Shinrikyo* sect's gas attacks in Japan, and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, suggest a rising tide. The protection of American citizens from traditional forms of terrorist violence is an emotionally compelling interest. It calls for an aggressive, well-coordinated counter-terrorism effort by all U.S. government agencies (giving due regard for fundamental American civil liberties and values). But it also demands a steely approach to terrorist acts while they are in progress. In general, the U.S. interest in discouraging further acts of terrorism by refusing to yield to terrorists' demands should supersede the wish to save the lives of American citizens who are threatened by terrorist bomb threats, hijackings, or hostage takings, however horrific these acts may seem at the moment. As part of its counter-terrorism strategy, the U.S. government should continue to adhere to the fundamental principles that it will make no concessions to terrorist demands, that individual terrorists must be hunted down and brought to justice, and that state sponsors of terrorism will be ostracized and punished. Similarly, states that are at the forefront of the international fight against terrorism deserve the full support of the U.S. government.

There are reasons to believe that terrorism is becoming an even more serious threat to U.S. national interests and an even less tractable problem. In the 1970s and 1980s, most terrorist acts were perpetrated by groups that were

seeking to achieve limited political objectives, draw attention to their causes, and sway domestic or international opinion in their favor. Their preferred techniques were aircraft or ship hijackings, hostage taking, short-warning bombings, and assassination. Because it was politically driven, this type of terrorism tended to be relatively selective and discriminate, which sometimes allowed the terrorist to affect but not permanently alienate public opinion. The past several years, however, have witnessed a series of terrorist acts that do not fit this pattern, but rather are wanton, indiscriminate acts designed not to achieve limited political purposes but to disrupt the social fabric, impede diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes, or avenge perceived past wrongs by killing and maiming as many people as possible. The clearest examples of this new trend are the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the March 1995 nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway, and the April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.³ Because these events may be harbingers of a new trend toward more destructive, less discriminate acts of terrorism, the United States must reexamine the terrorism problem, and U.S. counter-terrorism strategy, on an urgent basis.

The trend toward more wanton terrorist actions is especially alarming in the context of the increasing accessibility of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear and biological weapons. The nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway by an apocalyptic Buddhist cult, Aum Shinrikyo, revealed many things, including the truths that there is no absolute taboo among terrorist groups against weapons of mass destruction, that non-state actors can acquire significant WMD capabilities even in the midst of a society as developed, well-policed, and orderly as Japan, and that urban areas are acutely vulnerable to terrorist WMD attacks. Moreover, chemical weapons like nerve gas are the least deadly weapons of mass destruction. The prospect of nuclear or biological terrorism is almost unimaginably frightening. Whereas traditional forms of terrorism could kill at most a few hundred civilians, nuclear or biological terrorism could potentially kill tens or even hundreds of thousands of civilians.

In the case of WMD terrorism, there is a need to reexamine fundamental U.S. counter-terrorist capabilities. We must stretch to new dimensions of cooperation with allies and friends to identify and destroy terrorist cells before

they can become operational. We must accept the fact that some pariah states or dissident groups will see terrorism as a legitimate form of warfare against a better armed and better organized enemy. It is possible that free societies will be unable to cope with problems of this magnitude unless more intrusive forms of international identification and screening are introduced. Balancing the requirements for tighter controls to find criminals and terrorists without violating the freedoms we take for granted is likely to become a highly contentious subject in the United States in the coming decade.

It should also be noted that the growing U.S. dependence on the Internet and other computer networks may leave the world's financial institutions and military communications systems vulnerable to "cyberterrorism." A hostile state, or even an anti-technology terrorist (such as the Unabomber), might be able to disrupt much of the international financial system with sophisticated computer viruses, wreaking economic havoc. This emerging threat requires that issues of computer and network security be addressed as national security challenges, not just as issues of telecommunications policy.

Finally, on the issues of transnational crime and drug trafficking, it is clear that the United States has extremely important interests in protecting its citizens from the loss of life, health, and property as a result of organized criminal coercion or drug trafficking. As organized crime and drug trafficking become more transnational in character—and there is considerable evidence that this trend is already underway—these issues will inevitably become more important topics for U.S. foreign policy. However, U.S. foreign policy (the subject of this Report) does not necessarily offer the best—and certainly not the sole—means of addressing the larger threats to American society resulting from transnational crime and drug trafficking. Although transnational crime may in some cases enjoy the sponsorship of a particular state, in general it occurs with neither the knowledge nor the approval of other governments. For this reason, the role of diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy is primarily to create the conditions in which international law enforcement—both by U.S. and foreign agencies—can operate more effectively against transnational criminal organizations. In the case of international drug trafficking, it is important to remember that the demand for these drugs is a fundamentally domestic phenomenon. While it is unquestionable that U.S. law enforcement agencies must

make every effort to stop the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, and that strong diplomatic pressure should be exerted on corrupt or acquiescent governments in drug transit states, these measures should be regarded as no more than important adjuncts to a national drug policy that seeks to reduce the domestic demand for drugs as well as the sources of drug supply, be they international or domestic.

International Trade and Investment

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That there be no collapse of the international trade or financial system.

Extremely Important

- That GNP growth from international trade and investment be maximized.

Just Important

- That domestic output of strategic sectors be enhanced.
- That select multi-billion-dollar export contracts from foreign governments be awarded to U.S. firms.
- That there be no nationalization of major U.S.-owned assets abroad.

Less Important/Secondary

- That bilateral trade deficits (e.g., with Japan or China) be in balance.
- That the exports of specific economic sectors (except strategic ones) be artificially enhanced.

Although the United States clearly has a vital national interest in maintaining the highest sustainable rate of growth in per capita GNP and thus

Americans' standard of living, the importance of foreign economic policy in achieving this interest is frequently exaggerated. A mistaken conventional wisdom conceives U.S. economic well-being as a function of how we fare in a global economic struggle with our principal foreign "competitors," especially Japan. This view blames unfair or low-wage foreign competition for the unemployment, dislocation, and real-income stagnation experienced by many Americans since the 1970s. The trade deficit, and particularly the large and persistent bilateral trade imbalance with Japan, is taken as *prima facie* evidence that Americans are being "taken" economically by the same states that have for decades benefited from U.S. military assistance. Striking a xenophobic chord in the American public, these impulses inflame domestic politics and exercise a pernicious influence on American foreign policy.

In fact, the strength of the U.S. economy and the American standard of living are primarily determined by how productive Americans are at home, not by the trade or investment policies of foreign countries. Because the United States exports only about twelve percent of its gross domestic production, raising the amount of U.S. goods that the rest of the world (or any single nation) buys from the United States—even by a large percentage—can have only a marginal impact on overall U.S. well-being. The large U.S. trade deficit, moreover, is not primarily the consequence of unfair foreign competition but of the fact that the U.S. government persists in running a budget deficit that greatly exceeds domestic U.S. savings. The United States has itself to blame for its budget and trade deficits. Vigorous economic competition—whether from foreign or domestic firms—tends to enhance productivity of American firms (and therefore the real sustained growth in American wages) by imposing stiff market discipline. In short, the U.S. government is not serving important, much less vital, U.S. national interests when it seeks to balance the overall U.S. trade deficit—never mind any particular bilateral trade deficit—through coercive foreign economic policy. More often than not it does great harm to more important strategic interests.

In its foreign economic policy, the United States has only one truly vital national interest: the avoidance of the collapse of the international trade or financial systems. Because of the interdependence on connections between the worldwide network of large money-center banks and accumulated payment

obligations, the failure of one large bank anywhere could reverberate throughout the global financial system, triggering the failure of many banks and the simultaneous collapse of multiple markets. Similarly, a collapse of the world trading system akin to the Great Depression would threaten vital U.S. national interests. Although the risk of such a collapse is typically not regarded as high, the Mexican debt crisis of 1994-95 was rightly regarded as just such a threat, and the extraordinary U.S. decision to provide bridge financing to the Mexican government was intended to avert just such an outcome. More ordinarily, the United States must be vigilant in its monetary policies and in promoting prudent international financial regulations.

The list of extremely important and important U.S. national interests related to international trade and investment is somewhat longer. The United States has an extremely important national interest in maximizing GNP growth from trade and investment, which has several important implications for U.S. foreign economic policy. First, the United States must avoid a trade war with its major trading partners, something that could propel the United States into recession if not depression. Second, and as a corollary to the first point, the United States has the opportunity to enhance its GNP growth from trade by continuing its historic policy of seeking lower formal and informal trade and investment barriers worldwide, including through the expansion of free trade areas—NAFTA and, potentially, a trans-Atlantic free trade zone. Lower trade barriers cannot eliminate the U.S. trade deficit (which is determined by the overall U.S. fiscal imbalance), but they can improve the terms of trade, which would mean that U.S. citizens could buy more foreign goods for about the same domestic output.

Whether the United States should have an industrial policy that seeks to boost the output of certain key “strategic” industries has been a controversial and vexing subject for many years. In the view of the Commission, most of the market interventions carried out under the rubric of “industrial policy” are protectionist or porkbarrel politics/spending by another name. The Commission recognizes that some high-value industries and markets can experience significant market imperfections, such as high barriers to entry or major externalities. In principle, it can be in the U.S. national interest to help U.S.-owned firms “capture” these industries so that the economic gains associ-

ated with these imperfections accrue to Americans, not foreigners. The diverse set of industries surrounding the nascent “information revolution” may comprise a truly strategic sector (see below). Except in such specific restricted cases, however, major U.S. national interests are not served by seeking to boost the output of any particular industrial sector.

The United States also has an important interest in preventing the seizure or nationalization of major U.S.-owned assets abroad, which is unacceptable both because it imposes direct and unfair costs on U.S. industry and, over the long run, erodes the norm of capitalist investment abroad. Finally, the United States has important national interests in winning select multi-billion-dollar export contracts from foreign governments, which, unlike most other forms of international economics, are truly zero-sum.

Cyberspace and Information Technology

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Extremely Important

- That the United States maintain a technological lead in key military-related technologies.
- That the United States maintain a lead in the development and application of information technology in the economic arena, where it is needed to provide acceptable levels of employment and income for the American workforce.
- That the United States maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values dominate within our borders and continue to influence positively the cultures of foreign nations.
- That the United States embed in its technology and culture a greater awareness of the vulnerabilities attendant in increased reliance on information systems.

No aspect of America's security is more taken for granted than its dominance in information technology. The direct military benefits of American

technological superiority are relatively well understood, especially after the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Relying extensively on American technology, the U.S. and allied forces were able to identify and destroy Iraq's command, control, communications and information capabilities, leaving the Iraqi leaders substantially blind and unable to communicate effectively with their forces. Allied forces, by contrast, relied on sophisticated observation and communications capabilities to direct and coordinate the deployment of allied forces in direct combat and deployed so-called "smart" weapons to identify and destroy Iraqi targets without placing their own forces at risk. Partly as a result of this informational dominance, a ground war many predicted would take weeks and involve thousands of allied casualties was over in a matter of hours with virtually no allied casualties.

American dominance in information technology also yields important indirect benefits with respect to our military posture. The Internet itself, for example, was designed as a means of creating a decentralized command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) capability robust enough to withstand nuclear or terrorist attack, an objective it has clearly met. American encryption and surveillance technologies allow our intelligence agencies to monitor foreign military activities and identify potential terrorist threats. Our information technology capabilities facilitate combat simulation training beyond that available to other military forces.

Dominance in information technology is also extremely important to America's national interest for two additional, non-military reasons. First, information technology is the engine of economic prosperity in the coming decades. Over half the capital investment in the United States in 1995 was for information technology, and information technology industries are America's fastest growing source of jobs, exports, and economic growth. The application of information technology to manufacturing is increasingly responsible for the dramatic increases in productivity.

Second, America's dominance in information technology, broadly defined, profoundly influences the development of cultures throughout the world, including our own. From CNN to the Internet, Hollywood to Windows '95, American information carriers are teaching the world the language of American culture and showing it world events as seen through American eyes.

Debates about the profundity or vacuity of American popular culture aside, it is better that Iraqis learned about the Persian Gulf War through American CNN than if the reverse, better for Cubans to be watching American movies than vice versa, and better for Microsoft to be located in Redmond, Washington, than in, say, Beijing.

Dominating the development and application of the technologies of the industrial revolution made Great Britain, and later the United States, superpowers for a period spanning more than a century. As Great Britain learned, however, such dominance can be fleeting, and the consequences of falling behind can be devastating. Thus, continued dominance of the development and application of information technology is not just in the short-run military interests of the United States; it is extremely important to its long-run success as the world's only superpower.

Finally, our nation must recognize that with greater reliance upon information systems and technology come greater vulnerabilities and new threats to our national security. Many of our defense information networks that provide us with a dominant military position also provide our adversaries with potential targets of opportunity. Last year the Department of Defense estimated that its "unclassified but sensitive" computer network may have been subject to as many as 250,000 computer attacks, of which sixty-five percent may have been successful.

Furthermore, critical components of our national infrastructure, outside of the traditional defense mission, have become increasingly dependent upon these networks. These components are similarly vulnerable to intrusions that might affect the confidentiality or integrity of information or disrupt the services these networks support. Public utilities, telecommunications, transportation, financial markets and civilian government are all heavily dependent upon networked computers and information systems. Most of these systems rely on the Internet or the public switched networks to operate. America must ensure that as it rushes to connect and obtain the incumbent advantages of efficiency and productivity, it does not create an information infrastructure that is frail and vulnerable.

The Global Environment

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- That a physical environment in which Americans can survive and thrive be preserved.

Extremely Important

- That other states of the world adopt environmental policies and norms consistent with long-term U.S. interests.

The United States has a vital national interest in preventing major changes in the natural environment that would significantly degrade the physical health or economic well-being of American citizens during the next century. This statement is true irrespective of one's judgment as to the likelihood of such a change in the national environment. For example, distinguished environmental scientists have argued for years that overconsumption of fossil fuels and the clearing of the rain forests are behind a nascent global warming trend, which, continued into the future, could shift crop and disease zones, increase storminess, and significantly raise the sea level. Although much debate and uncertainty attends to the validity of these claims, if they are correct, vital U.S. national interests could be imperiled.

In practical terms, coping with such potential but uncertain long-term environmental threats is profoundly difficult. Great uncertainty surrounds the nature of these threats. The long time lags between the causes and effects create a temptation to defer costly corrective measures indefinitely into the future. Moreover, organizing collective action by many states, each of which has an incentive to free-ride on the efforts of the others, is enormously difficult, as both the Bush and Clinton administrations learned in negotiating and seeking to implement the Climate Convention. Yet if the problems of global warming and ozone depletion are really as grave as many environmental scientists say, then the need for strong, enlightened American leadership in this area is pressing and, for all intents and purposes, will be a long-term requirement. This, in

turn, suggests that very high priority must be attached to forging a broad consensus between the scientific and policy communities as to the nature of global warming and related challenges.

There are also a number of lesser environmental threats to U.S. national interests. The United States has an important interest in preventing cross-border pollution that affects, or could affect in the future, the physical health or economic well-being of American citizens, which at the moment is threatened only modestly (and regionally) by effluent emissions in Canada and Mexico. Holding the depletion of global commons (such as fish stocks and rain forests) to sustainable rates and protecting endangered species are also important U.S. national interests, and serious threats to both of these interests currently exist.

U.S. Military Force Requirements

Summary of U.S. National Interests at Stake

Vital

- Protect U.S. people and territory from hostile attack.
- Reduce the nuclear and biological danger to the achievable minimum.
- Prevent the emergence of a hostile hegemon in Europe or Asia.
- Maintain the military capability to successfully prosecute wars in regions in which vital U.S. national interests are likely to be threatened.

To safeguard and advance vital U.S. national interests, the United States maintains singular military forces—second to none. Sizing and shaping our armed forces begins with an understanding of America's interests.

For America's armed forces, the premium Americans put on human life dictates that major, continuing priority be given to technological innovation and excellence. These considerations do not of course tell the whole story. Intricately organized and balanced forces cannot tolerate sudden, radical change of mission without a drop in their effectiveness. Forces designed and maintained to protect and advance vital interests will go far in filling the

nation's needs for use in lesser contingencies, though specific additional provisions may need to be made, for example, to deal with rogue nation challenges to less-than-vital but nevertheless important interests. Policy, program, and budget decisions will need to be made to sustain military forces superior to threats against our vital interests and sufficiently strong to safeguard lesser interests.

The domestic politics of weapons programs and base locations are strongly reflected in the budgetary and program decisions that finally shape the forces. But if interests are indeed vital, and policies to pursue them are well thought out, programs to provide these capabilities should not be subordinated to these other domestic interests and pressures.

The first vital interest-based force requirement is to protect our people and territory from hostile attack. Deterrence of such attack, for which an evident defense capability is a first requirement, is likely to remain the preferred overall security policy. An assured strategic retaliatory capability will undoubtedly remain just as essential.

A second requirement is to reduce the nuclear danger to the United States to the achievable minimum. (The danger from possible biological attack is a less-recognized second concern that should receive increased attention as well.) The size, composition, and condition of our nuclear arsenal and our initiatives to reduce and tightly control the levels of such weapons worldwide, as well as other measures to reduce the nuclear danger, are key parts of our nuclear policy agenda.

To dissuade, deter, and, should it become necessary, oppose the rise of a hostile hegemon in Europe or Asia defines the task for the next vital interest-based force requirement. Russia, Germany, China, and Japan are the nations with the inherent power and potential to rise to such status. For Germany and Japan, non-nuclear weapons powers now and likely to remain so if our policies are successful, the arrangements that embed them in cooperative collective security and commercial undertakings are by far the best courses discernible. Our military force requirement is to maintain whatever it takes to keep them so embedded and non-nuclear.

Russia and China present more demanding policy challenges. With respect to U.S. vital interest-based force requirements, our highest task is to further the

development of the kind of cooperation-based security relationship described earlier. With respect to each country, if a relationship of confrontation is avoided, a U.S. security establishment that avoids threats to each nation's survival but maintains a "correlation of forces" that renders prospectively futile and dangerous any reach for hegemony (in Asia, China over Japan; in Europe, Russia over its Central and Eastern European neighbors) should be our goal. Our overall interest is to see them well tied into the international system of major industrially developed nations.

Continued, carefully balanced reduction of nuclear arsenals can contribute significantly to closing the road to possible hostile hegemony in both areas. In addition, it can contribute to the third vital interest-based force requirement, namely, to protect U.S. territory and people from direct attack. Such future attack by Russia or China seems out of the realm of possibility at the present time, and we wish it to remain so. But the possibility of terrorist attack within the United States or against our forces in the field using such weapons (as well as chemical or biological weapons) cannot be denied. This vulnerability gives added weight to our non-proliferation efforts as an important component of our pursuit of our vital security interests.

In sum, these three sources of force requirements should form the bedrock upon which the unique, singular position of American armed forces is developed and dynamically maintained to ensure our vital security interests in the decades ahead.

¹ Council on Foreign Relations Project on U.S. National Interests After the Cold War, 1994-95.

² Graham T. Allison, Owen R. Cote, Jr., Richard A. Falkenrath, and Steven E. Miller, *Avoiding Nuclear Anarchy: Containing the Threat of Loose Russian Nuclear Weapons and Fissile Material* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996).

³ Other examples include the April 1996 wave of suicide bombings in Israel, and the urban bombings in Sri Lanka.

This Commission on America's National Interests was established by a group of Americans who are convinced that, in the absence of American leadership, citizens will find our fortunes, our values, and indeed our lives threatened as surely as they have ever been. We are concerned that after four decades of extraordinary exertion, the fatigue of many, and distraction of some with special interests, leave American foreign policy passive and without direction in a fast-changing and uncertain world.

The goal of the Commission on America's National Interests is to help focus thinking on one central issue: What are U.S. national interests today? In the short run, we hope to catalyze debate about priority U.S. national interests during this season of presidential and congressional campaigns. We also hope to contribute to a more focused debate about core national interests as an essential foundation for the next era of American foreign policy.

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