

RISING POWERS

the new global reality



The United States, Pivotal Powers, and the New Global Reality:

A Report of the Stanley Foundation
Working Group on Major Powers

2008

By Nina Hachigian and Mona Sutphen



The
Stanley
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The Evolution of the International Political Order

Signing the Treaty of Westphalia after Terburg

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Painting of Vienna Congress Delegates by Johann Baptist Isabey'

Vienna Congress, held after the Napoleonic Wars in 1814 to decide the reconstruction of Europe. Painting shows the delegates seated around a table. Undated painting by Johann Baptist Isabey. © Bettmann/CORBIS

Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and Woodrow Wilson

British Prime Minister Lloyd George, French Premier Georges Clemenceau, and US President Woodrow Wilson walk together in Paris during negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles, ca. 1919. © Bettmann/CORBIS

Leaders at Yalta Conference

National leaders meet at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, from left to right: English Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Franklin Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS

Uncle Sam by Joe Sharpnack

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About the Project

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has enjoyed primacy in world affairs. Yet the 21st century promises to be characterized by multiple and competing sources of global power. As China, India, Russia, the European Union (EU), Japan, and others gain strength across various dimensions of power—political, military, economic, and cultural, among others—shifting patterns of major power dynamics will become more critical to the future of the international system.

In the fall of 2006, the Stanley Foundation convened a “Working Group on Major Powers,” chaired by Nina Hachigian and Mona Sutphen, coauthors of *The Next American Century* (Simon and Schuster, 2008), to explore and assess how the United States can continue to prosper in an age of multiple major powers; how and if shifting patterns of power—including the diffusion of destructive power to nonstate actors—will affect US interests; what multipolarity means for global security; and how multilateral approaches to global problem solving shed light on, and provide solutions for, the challenges inherent in the new global order.

This report provides both analysis of the dynamics driving the diffusion, redistribution and redefinition of power around the globe, and policy options for how the United States can continue to play a global leadership role in an age of multiple major powers.

About the Authors

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The authors prepared this report at the conclusion of a project that began in fall 2006 and included several roundtable discussions. The report has been informed by the project discussions, and contains their views and recommendations. Project participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, analysis, observations, and conclusions.

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Rise and Shine

Five hundred years of history tell us that when a dominant power is faced with the rapid rise of another nation, things will not go smoothly. Today everyone agrees that China, India, and even Russia are regaining power across many dimensions. What this means for America, though, is the subject of intense debate.

Three schools of thought compete. Some argue that because the United States is still the world's only superpower, with military strength head and shoulders (actually torso, head, and shoulders) above the rest, it has what it needs to keep its citizens safe so long as it retains this primacy. Next are the "offensive realists," who argue that in a future multi polar world, a clash between America and other strong powers is inevitable. Finally, there are those who predict a "clash of civilizations" in which powerful, illiberal regimes like China and Russia will join forces against the liberal West. Beyond these theoretical debates, Americans and their policymakers worry that a world with multiple big powers will reduce America's geopolitical freedom, give solace to its enemies, and reduce the sway of liberal democracy. We disagree with these arguments and offer instead a new paradigm for major power strategy. (We also take issue with the claims that the growing economic might of other powers will undermine American prosperity, but because of space constraints, limit ourselves to security issues here.)

The False Promise of Primacy

It is hard for anyone, let alone our leaders, nurtured as they were on the Cold War, to accept that overwhelming power is no longer the linchpin of US security. After all, it was not supposed to be this complicated. For most of the last five hundred years, the amount of power—especially military power—that a country possessed was the key variable to its security. When nation-states were one another's principal threat, an obsession with relative power made sense.

Today, however, the strategy of primacy cannot deliver. While being the world's only superpower has substantial benefits, a national security strategy based on using and retaining primacy has not made Americans more secure. What has this primacy done for us lately? It has lured our leaders into a war in Iraq whose repercussions will haunt our grandchildren. It has not made Afghanistan a stable, liberal success story. With all its strength, America's power alone cannot stop terrorists or pathogens.

Worse than being ineffective, a strategy of maintaining primacy is outright counterproductive when it comes to managing ties with the aspiring great powers. If America makes primacy the main goal of its national security strategy, then why shouldn't others do the same? America cannot trumpet its desire to dominate the world militarily and then wonder why China is modernizing its armed forces.

A focus on primacy also shifts attention away from the underlying fundamentals of the American economy and society. Preoccupation with America's position can distract our politicians from doing what they can at home to invest in

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America's future well-being. Finally, a focus on primacy sets up an implicit confrontation that will encourage others to frustrate our goals; a goal that we remain the strongest power implies that America ultimately opposes other countries' growth.

Whatever the primacists say, it is not enough that our economy is the largest in the world, our military light-years ahead of the rest, our technology the envy of the globe, and our culture pervasive, if our strategic approach toward other big powers undermines our ability to work with them to fight the true forces of disorder.

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A New Era

Moreover, no matter what offensive realists argue, a clash between rising powers and the dominant power is not inevitable. New technologies and globalization have shaped the world and, with it, great power incentives. There is less room now for leading powers to turn on each other. We live, first, in the nuclear era. These weapons alone pose an overwhelming deterrent to direct military confrontation. In addition, territorial gains do not necessarily improve a country's prospects, eliminating one common reason for past wars between great powers. Commodities markets make conquering for land economically pointless, and it would be nearly impossible to occupy a country and make its knowledge workers productive at the same time.

Further, newly virulent threats profoundly affect great power relations. As we will see, other big powers provide essential help in the battle against the true forces of devastation America faces—such as terrorists and pathogens. The more they and we cooperate on life-or-death matters of security, the higher and more evident become the costs of pointing weapons at each other. A future great power that seeks to become safer by fighting America would also necessarily become less safe by forfeiting its own security cooperation. As political scientist Francis Fukuyama and others have noted, this security interdependence is genuinely new.

Economic interdependence also has grown deeper. Britain and Germany traded heavily before plunging into World War I, but the degree and nature of economic interdependence in the world today is unprecedented. A bad day on the Shanghai stock exchange in February 2007 sent the Dow Jones down 400 points. Not only is the level of worldwide trade (measured as a ratio of exports to gross domestic product [GDP]) nearly twice as high as it was before World War I, but foreign direct investment among today's biggest powers is pervasive; we literally own pieces of each other's economies. Those relationships are much harder to replace than the pre-1914 type of portfolio investing. Interdependence is no guarantee that peace will prevail, but mutual, deep dependence linked to prosperity raises the stakes of any contest.

Even in terms of American values, there is no imminent "clash of civilizations." Liberal powers like Europe, India, and Japan have and will be important partners in spreading our shared ideology, as the backlash against America's misguided methods to bring democracy to Iraq continues to unfold. China and

Russia do not have ideologies to export, even if they wanted to. Today, Beijing’s “Confucius Institutes” teach Mandarin, not Mao. The world’s biggest powers do not all govern their people as we would wish, but they do share consensus that the nation-state is the primary vehicle for organizing international relations; that open markets create prosperity; that most goods and services should flow easily across borders; that many international institutions are worth supporting and reforming; that technology can bring positive change; and that proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorists, and disease must be eradicated.

The Pivotal Powers

We live at an extraordinary moment in history when the strongest powers of the world—China, Europe, India, Japan, and Russia—can align on the issues most critical to American safety, freedom, and prosperity. Rather than worrying about these powers’ relative gains, the United States should focus on renewing itself and take advantage of this moment to work with other powers to solve humanity’s pressing problems. Viewed through a pragmatic lens, the growing strength of the pivotal powers offers opportunities even in the midst of challenges.

We call the five big powers the “pivotal powers” because these powers have the resources to support or thwart US aims, to build the world order or disrupt it. Each has a significant capacity to get others to do what it wants them to do and to resist coercion. Through a combination of key traits—a large educated population, a vibrant economy, abundant natural resources, technological capability, capacity to innovate, military might, supporting infrastructure, cultural cachet, ability to convert resources into power, engagement with the world’s rules and institutions, and ambition to play a major role—these powers, above others, are critical to the future order of the world. We treat the EU as a single power because on global issues—be it climate change or peace in the Middle East—its member countries are more than ever before speaking and acting in unison. Some may argue that other countries, representing other geographies, belong on this list, such as Brazil, South Africa, and Iran. While they are important regional players, these countries do not have the same combination of assets or inclinations to become influential global actors.

Even so, we must remember that no one actually knows which, whether, or how fast any of these pivotal powers will rise. (We avoid the common term “rising powers” for this reason.) Writing today, it seems beyond doubt that China is America’s greatest challenge, its momentum unstoppable.

A review of “threatening countries of the recent past” is revealing. In 1988, just twenty years ago, the Soviet Union and Japan were the unquestioned focal points of American fears. By 1993, Germany and Japan were identified as potential threats, but the Soviet Union had vanished. By 1996, Japan had dropped out, but Germany remained. The year 2000 saw dire warnings about China and a newly integrating European Union, but not Germany. In 2005, the EU also dropped out. Now conventional wisdom says China, and increasingly India and Russia, but not Europe or Japan, will rise to challenge America. Yet China, India, and Russia each face a set of hurdles difficult even to enumerate,

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let alone solve. America cannot know the pivotal powers' future growth patterns, and importantly, cannot prevent their rise.

Safety in Numbers

An objective analysis shows that great powers do not inevitably threaten America's fundamental interests. On the contrary, these powers often advance American security (and prosperity). The direst potential threats to American security—when defined as external agents that can take American lives—are a large-scale terrorist incident, particularly with a nuclear weapon, and a deadly pandemic. These threats could directly kill hundreds of thousands of Americans or more on US soil, and could happen in the near term. Pivotal powers actually improve America's security from these clearest present dangers.

Together on Terror

On December 13, 2001, two months and two days after the 9/11 attacks, five men stormed India's capital building during a session of Parliament, killing 7 and wounding 18. The attack sent shock waves throughout India and was aimed, the prime minister later suggested, at decapitating the Indian government. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a hard-line radical Sunni Muslim group based in Lahore, Pakistan, claimed responsibility.

Fast-forward some eighteen months, to a US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia. There, in June 2003, eleven American Muslims, called the "paintball terrorists," after a favorite pastime of theirs, were charged with training with and fighting for LeT. Six of the men eventually pleaded guilty; three were convicted at trial.

From halfway around the globe, the LeT threat entered America's suburbs. Back when the LeT, "Army of the Pure," focused on "liberating Muslims" in the remote mountains of the disputed Kashmir region, it was of little direct concern to Americans. Now, like many other small terror groups, LeT has joined the global jihadist bandwagon, linked with al Qaeda, and has as its chief priority "to train persons to wage war against nonbelievers, and especially the United States."

America's ally in thwarting LeT is an aspiring great power, India. With the third-largest Muslim population in the world, and Pakistan still a key terror hub next door, India has diligently monitored and countered radical Islamic groups for decades. Suddenly, the United States badly needs this expertise. In June 2005, India and the United States signed a ten-year defense pact that promises continued counterterror operations, and a few weeks later, before a joint session of Congress, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pledged to make "common cause" against terrorism.

In fact, all pivotal powers are motivated partners that see the terrorist threat as a very high security priority. Each faces its own terrorist threat: Chechnyans in Russia, Uighurs in China, Islamic extremists in Europe (as we know in the case of the first two, though, counterterrorism has also been used as a cover to target legitimate political activity). Japan is the only country to have suffered a

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deadly chemical terrorist attack. US intelligence and law enforcement agencies have cooperated with their counterparts in every pivotal power to thwart these shared threats. Without British vigilance, US law enforcement may not have known about the foiled August 2006 plot to blow up ten airplanes bound for the United States with liquid bombs. To find a foreign jihadist training in Chechen camps, the United States must rely on Moscow.

Loose Nukes

Stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to terrorists is an urgent goal, perhaps the most urgent goal, of US foreign policy. Every layer of the nonproliferation web requires the assistance of other countries, especially the pivotal powers.

Russia is the cofounder and cochair with the United States of the “Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.” A group of some 50 countries, some of which would have been reluctant to join had it not been for Russia’s participation, seeks to develop a framework in which they can prevent and respond to potential radiological attacks. Russia joined the effort for self-serving reasons (which, other than counterterrorism, include wanting to address concerns that might limit profits in its civilian nuclear power sector), but the results can help all.

China has recently become a member in good standing of the nonproliferation community. Since the mid-1990s, China has greatly improved its domestic control over the flow of sensitive technologies, signed bilateral agreements with the United States, and joined international conventions such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and others, all of which require adherence to specific guidelines on the transfer of nuclear materials. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was instrumental in felling the most notorious nuclear swap meet of our time, run by Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan.

Importantly, China has signed on to a major American antiterrorism program, the Container Security Initiative (CSI), designed to prevent terrorists from smuggling a nuclear weapon into the United States in a shipping container. Because American ports are vulnerable, CSI is aimed at finding WMDs before they are loaded onto ships. Each year, over three million containers leave China’s ports bound for the United States, more than from any other country. US customs officials are now welcomed in the ports of Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Shenzhen.

Despite these steps, Russian and Chinese counterproliferation efforts are far from perfect. Like their Japanese and European counterparts, Chinese and Russian defense companies still circumvent export control laws to sell illicit items to hostile states such as Iran and Syria.

Partners on Pathogens

Even a terrorist attack with a dirty bomb could not match the destruction of a highly pathogenic virus. During the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918, nearly one

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out of every two deaths in the United States was flu-related. Another flu pandemic “cannot be avoided,” in the words of one expert, and avian virus A (H5N1) could be the strain the global health community has long feared.

When it comes to influenza, China is both the problem and the solution. Healthy wild birds host the influenza virus. Commercial development along their traditional migration routes in Asia means they encounter and infect domestic birds in the farms and parks where they land. With both the largest rural population in the world and the largest poultry industry, China has all the elements of an avian flu incubator. Its efforts, therefore, in preparation, detection, and containment are crucial.

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China tried to conceal the first cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), but the ensuing international outrage, and the devastating financial impact of SARS, seem to have taught at least some PRC officials a lesson. In 2005, American and Chinese officials had meetings to “establish an effective cooperation mechanism” for the avian flu. China cohosted an international avian flu conference in January 2006. It is also building a P4-level laboratory in Wuhan, one of only a few in the world, designed to research highly lethal and rare pathogens. Having a Chinese doctor, Margaret Chan, as the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) will only make it more difficult for Beijing to return to the dark days of denial.

All the necessary ingredients for preventing outbreaks of contagious disease—fewer people living with animals, improved sanitation, sophisticated public health surveillance, more labs, and new drugs, not to mention demands from a growing middle class for an effective response to an outbreak—will improve as emerging economies grow wealthier. In its struggle against pathogens, the United States should hope for strong, wealthy, and capable pivotal powers.

Down the Road

Pivotal powers are just as necessary partners on a range of less immediate threats, such as climate change and the desire of hostile states for nuclear weapons.

All the pivotal powers contribute to the climate crisis with their greenhouse gas emissions. The United States has been the biggest culprit, though China, the world’s fastest-growing polluter, is likely to inherit that mantle soon. In the end, the climate change and its likely devastations can only be mitigated with multi-lateral cooperation. No single country’s actions are enough to avoid disaster.

On Iran and North Korea, the pivotal powers share the goal of keeping nuclear capability out of their hands. Though their priorities and tactics differ, sometimes in fundamental ways, their support is critical to an effective response in both cases.

Pivotal powers, to a one, have close relationships with Tehran. China is Iran’s largest energy customer. India and Iran, who consider each other

“strategic partners,” held a joint naval exercise in 2006, and Russia has been selling billions of dollars of weapons to Tehran for decades. In 2005, European governments provided \$18 billion in government loan guarantees to Tehran. In 2006, Washington sanctioned six Chinese, two Indian, and one Austrian company for providing Iran with weapons technology. Japanese companies stand accused of doing the same.

Despite and because of these troubling ties, the only smart way to address Iran’s nuclear ambitions is through pivotal power buy-in. Japan is using its leverage with Iran behind the scenes and has divested itself of an investment in a major oil field there. The United States has squashed creative, though imperfect, ideas from Russia and Europe because they required direct talks with Tehran. Russia and China have blocked some UN measures against Tehran, but supported others. If the United States could show more flexibility, big power consensus could put Iran in a box with little chance of escape. Similarly in North Korea, no lasting solution is possible without Chinese effort and buy-in.

Of course, their interests and ours will not always align, and disputes will be frequent and sometimes serious. With China and Russia, these conflicts may be magnified by American distrust of opaque, illiberal regimes. Moreover, with their increased influence, pivotal powers do and will challenge American dominance and impinge on the freedom of action the United States has come to enjoy and expect. They will prop up dictators, encourage anti-Americanism, and woo our allies.

Pivotal powers may not support what America wants them to do, but neither are they trying to kill us. Together we can defeat those who are. When it comes to the dire and immediate security threats that can kill Americans where we live—terrorists and viruses—the message is clear. Large, responsible powers are indispensable to the United States. Scotland Yard and Chinese lab workers have American lives in their hands. Alliance against these enemies, as well as proliferators and climate calamity, flows from the broad harmony of self-interest among the world’s largest powers. For the United States, there is safety in numbers.

Strategic Collaboration

While the United States needs a specific, nuanced bilateral strategy toward each pivotal power, we suggest here an overarching framework to take most advantage of this convergence. “Strategic collaboration” has four elements:

1. Compounding American strengths.
2. Constructing close relationships with pivotal powers.
3. Collaborating with the pivotal powers to solve global problems.
4. Covering our bets.

Compounding American Strengths

First and foremost, America must put its own house in order. The greatest risks to America’s prosperity and way of life start and end at home. American politicians will tend to lay the blame for problems at the doorstep of another country,

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but there is much America needs to do to build its own capacity to prosper in the future. Rather than creating foreign demons, America must slay those at home. As Jon Stewart has put it, “The only thing that can destroy us is us.”

Several familiar problems need sustained and creative attention, including better educating our children, especially in math and science, so the United States can remain an innovation-rich economy; ensuring our long-term fiscal strength so we continue to attract investment; establishing a better health care system so businesses keep jobs here and workers are freed to be more entrepreneurial; helping workers cope with job churn; and reducing our oil dependency to bring down our trade deficit, address the climate crisis, and pressure pivotal powers to do the same.

Why should the goal be renewing the world order? Because the global institutions and architectures have a strong track record of furthering US interests.

America’s military must also remain strong, but it has to be redesigned to focus on today’s threats and longer-term, indeterminate pivotal power threats. This means, in part, investing more in leapfrog technologies. America’s assets are so great that if our leaders make sensible choices, Americans can remain prosperous and safe no matter the trajectories of the pivotal powers. America’s primary focus needs to be on changing the country it has the power to change.

Constructing Close Relationships

The second element in strategic collaboration is constructing respectful, positive, and stable bilateral relationships with the pivotal powers. America should presume pivotal powers are “with us,” because they usually are. Only when its vital or highly important interests are at stake should it put the constructive nature of pivotal power relationships on the line. In practice, this will mean thinking creatively and flexibly about how to deal with the chronic irritants in big power relations, such as Taiwan and NATO enlargement, for example.

A More Perfect World Order

With a foundation of productive relationships with pivotal powers, America can lead them to use their strength, ideas, and ties to solve serious global problems. This is the third component of strategic collaboration. The United States would realize the promise of this rare historical alignment by embedding pivotal powers deeply in the world order and collaborating with them to strengthen it.

Why should the goal be renewing the world order? Because the global institutions and architectures have a strong track record of furthering US interests. America needs them more than ever to help organize the collective effort to ensure that our children are safe. These institutions reflect and reinforce the “liberal” qualities of rule of law, transparency, accountability, and respect for individual rights that Americans cherish.

We need the WHO to monitor and coordinate the response to outbreaks of Ebola and avian flu. If it had not been for the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the world could have thirty nuclear powers today instead of nine. Without the United Nations, who would have organized elections in war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq?

The world order that America launched in 1945 has delivered many benefits, but it is crumbling. All of its major institutions are embattled. Shoring up the system of institutions, norms, and rules will preserve US power, make life better for Americans today, and create a world in which Americans can thrive even as they share the stage in the decades and centuries to come. How do we get it done?

There are three essential ingredients to solving most world problems: participation of pivotal powers, a system of common rules, and American leadership.

The Core Six. In order for the pivotal powers to collaborate, they need to be able to discuss crises and challenges together. Remarkably, today not a single international organization offers them a forum. The UN Security Council excludes Japan and India; the G-8 excludes India and China; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development excludes India, China, and Russia, as does NATO. The world needs a pivotal power forum to include them all.

It would make the most sense for the pivotal powers—let’s call them the “C-6,” the Core Six—to become the permanent members of the Security Council. But if reform of the Security Council does prove a bridge too far, and to avoid creating a whole new international bureaucracy, the C-6 could instead become an additional forum of the G-8. Over time, if the identity of the world’s most powerful actors shifts, so too should the membership of the C-6.

Each pivotal power wants either more influence, more recognition, or both. By encouraging them to become members of the pivotal power club, America harnesses pivotal power nationalism and pride, but channels it in a productive direction. Pivotal powers are already engaged in the world; the next step is convincing them that with their power comes responsibility for the common good. The forum would allow the established powers America, the EU, and Japan, to help define for their neighbors China, India, and Russia, what being a “responsible stakeholder” means.

The C-6 would work on a “pay to play” basis. In exchange for the prestige and influence of being included in the C-6, every power would be expected to solve shared problems and shoulder responsibility for international initiatives. They would be held to account by their peers, and by the rest of the world, for their willingness to participate constructively. Getting the reemerging powers of India, China, and Russia to contribute financially, given their domestic priorities and needs, will be a key challenge. The model should be Bosnia, where America has paid about \$1 billion of the \$5 billion in reconstruction aid, not Iraq, where the proportions are inverted (and the totals stratospheric).

The C-6 has some parallels to the Concert of Europe, when in 1815, after the Napoleonic Wars, the great powers of Europe assembled to create a forum that would solve collectively the serious issues of the day, and were successful at preventing major power war in Europe for several decades. It was essentially the first time nation-states consciously attempted to find an alternative to either the hegemony of one state or the anarchy of each state looking out only

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for itself. Then, as we hope now, vying pivotal powers were able to join together in their collective self-interest.

Agenda-Setting. The C-6 agenda ought to begin with items where pivotal powers have the most common ground. Nonproliferation is one area in need of immediate attention. A reformed NPT could continue to be effective if it had a method to control and eventually remove the weaponizable uranium that is produced in civilian research reactors, yet guarantee that uranium for nuclear power reactors would be available at a reasonable price. If the United States reengages, the pivotal powers could also push to achieve a robust Biological Weapons Convention with a binding verification regime. Genocide in Sudan could not survive a pivotal power push to end it, and with a forum like the C-6, the pivotal powers would have a harder time shifting blame for their inaction from one to the other. The pivotal powers could make a truly reconstructed and stable Afghanistan their joint aim.

Energy is another area ripe with potential for pivotal power cooperation.

Energy is another area ripe with potential for pivotal power cooperation. The nuclear fusion project ITER is a promising model. Every pivotal power is investing in the world's first truly international, large-scale, independent scientific research effort. America, China, Russia, India, Japan, and South Korea will each pay about 9 percent of the construction costs. The EU, as host, will contribute about 45 percent. For the next ten years all these countries will together test the possibility of this nonpolluting, renewable energy source.

A pivotal power forum will not produce instant progress. Disputes over tactics and priorities will scuttle many efforts. With over half the world's population and two-thirds of its GDP among them, however, the combined commitment of the pivotal powers and the United States could make progress on any initiative. Their collective drive could become the fulcrum to move the rest of the world. Stronger pivotal powers that support the existing world order but try to realize their own agenda are far preferable to weak ones that could not assist with current challenges even if they so chose.

At the same time, collaboration is no substitute for US leadership. Pivotal powers will not come together to solve major international problems, in the C-6 or any other forum, and other nations will not join in, unless the world's leading power leads. For example, as long as the United States resists a genuine global solution to the climate crisis, no long-term solution is possible because there is a widespread feeling in the emerging economies that the developed world, "which grew rich while freely spewing carbon," should shoulder much of the responsibility for climate change. US inaction gives China and India a free pass.

A League of Their Own. What if, instead of drawing pivotal powers into the existing world order, the United States continues to hold some at bay? They may become "free radicals" or attempt to construct their own order. The meetings of the newly formed East Asia Summit in December 2005 and 2006, spurred on by China, included Japan, India, and every country in Asia but not the United States, the reigning Pacific power—a development that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. Similarly, despite heavy-handed

efforts by the United States to undermine the International Criminal Court, European leadership brought the court to life anyway. China and Russia, along with the Central Asian republics, but not America, discuss security matters and even conduct large-scale military exercises through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

While these efforts do not have major strategic ramifications now, over time, alternate structures may reduce US influence and give pivotal powers platforms to deny US interests. America should want big powers playing on its team, not forming a league of their own.

Covering Our Bets

The final prong of strategic collaboration recognizes that despite America's best efforts, the future could hold an aggressive pivotal power bent on thwarting vital US goals. Therefore, America must continue to deter other power centers from disrupting the US-led world order, to deny them the ability to harm major US interests, and to ensure the United States is prepared to defend its interests if deterrence fails.

This calls for covering our bets, but the path of hedging is a treacherous one. We thus recommend "selective hedging"—steps designed to allow the United States to retain its diplomatic and military leverage, but not broadly targeted at any one power. The United States should hedge against certain futures, like China attacking Taiwan, not against certain powers per se. Selective hedging includes three elements—better intelligence about pivotal powers, a hub-and-spokes model for US relationships, and a highly capable, forward-deployed military.

Smarts and Spokes. First, America needs to allocate more resources to all the many forms of intelligence gathering and, more important, analysis, to get a deeper understanding of pivotal power strategic frameworks, priorities, and plans.

Further, as the United States develops active, constructive relations with each pivotal power, and pulls them into the C-6 to solve problems and build the world order anew, it should strive to maintain richer relationships with each pivotal power than those powers have with each other. Relationships with one power would not be directed specifically at balancing other powers, but that would be the ultimate effect. For example, strengthening relations with Japan and India hedges against aggressive Chinese steps. Closer ties with China hedges against misguided actions by Russia and Japan, and so on. A hub-and-spokes approach will reduce the odds of an anti-US coalition forming and ensure allies in the case of an aggressive pivotal power.

A hub-and-spokes model will be extraordinarily hard to pull off. First, if pursued in a heavy-handed way, such efforts will smack of containment and cause more harm than good. When China sees the United States "cheer-leading" Japan's remilitarization, it may respond by modernizing its military more quickly. Second, as America draws closer to one power, others will become nervous.

The final prong of strategic collaboration recognizes that despite America's best efforts, the future could hold an aggressive pivotal power bent on thwarting vital US goals.

Creating a hub-and-spokes model will require persuading the pivotal powers not to gang up against the United States. Theorists argue, and centuries of European history show, that balancing against the dominant power is far more common than bandwagoning with it. Today, nascent arrangements between Russia and China, China and India, and the EU and China, among others, are never openly, but always implicitly, aimed at the United States.

Despite the difficulties, America's blessed geography makes a hub-and-spokes arrangement feasible. Sitting atop one another, the pivotal powers are inherently more threatening to each other than the United States is to them. Despite a warming trend, most of these bilateral relationships are filled with mistrust. Pivotal powers have fought some 18 wars with each other since 1800, not counting those between individual European countries. Moreover, balancing is difficult to coordinate.

Beyond the thick spokes connecting the United States to the pivotal powers are America's connections to small and mid-size nations, especially in big power neighborhoods. While pivotal powers will strive to have political clout in their own backyard, the United States will want to reengage so those trends do not radically reduce its own influence, especially with the US worldwide network of treaty allies.

Being There. Finally, having a highly capable, technologically sophisticated military is the most effective hedge against pivotal power mischief. Constantly improving US military capabilities is essential, and a forward-deployed presence in Asia and Europe remains wise. Fortunately, the US military is generations ahead of the rest. While observers can take one statistic or another out of context to make another's capabilities (usually China's) seem foreboding, by every consequential measure, be it research and development, hardware, power projection, training, logistics, combat experience, information warfare, sustaining troops in theater, or command and control capabilities, the US military has no near rival.

Hedging too aggressively, though, can trap America and pivotal powers in the risky quicksand of the security dilemma. A recent example of the security dilemma in action is ballistic missile defense. China complains that an effective missile defense system will upset the strategic balance and allow the United States to achieve "nuclear blackmail"; Russia, too, is concerned that the system will be upgraded in the future and could one day nullify Moscow's retaliatory capability. China is therefore protecting its deterrent by building up its missile arsenal and developing a submarine-launched ballistic missile capacity. Russia has responded with bellicose diplomacy and threats to withdraw from treaties governing conventional and intermediate nuclear forces in Europe. US observers then portray China's buildup as an arms race and Russia's stance as confrontational, when they are in part a reaction to a defensive US system. Hedging must be tightly paired with the positive messages of strategic collaboration described above, so America does not inadvertently create the future it means to guard against.

Finally, having a highly capable, technologically sophisticated military is the most effective hedge against pivotal power mischief.

No strategy toward big powers will guarantee success in such a complex and fluid international arena, nor will our approach guarantee a world without pivotal power strife. Strategic collaboration, however, stands the best chance of securing a world that supports American interests. Strategic collaboration seeks a balance between maximizing the benefits America can draw from pivotal power relationships and careful hedging against an uncertain future. It focuses American attention on investing at home to give future Americans the best chance for secure and prosperous lives. It deters and prepares for pivotal power aggression, while not encouraging it. It honors their need for recognition by giving them a voice in the future of the world, yet demands responsibility in return. It increases American knowledge about the other powers in case of a future conflict and minimizes chances of misperception. It reduces incentives for pivotal powers to thwart the US agenda. It strengthens the liberal world order that benefits Americans.

Rather than blocking their rise, the greater challenge for the United States will be coaxing these big powers to pay for and play a constructive role in making it better. Pivotal powers ought to be no more than America's sparring partners. We can knock each other around, but we are not each other's true opponent.

Paying the Piper

Strategic collaboration has costs, as any strategy does. The outcome will be, in the words of Richard Haass, "a little less sovereignty" and a little less control in exchange for a more stable, coherent world. The United States will have to agree to be bound by the same solutions, policies, institutions, and rules it establishes along with the pivotal powers.

There are four types of costs: process costs, policy compromises, harm to pride, and budgetary shifts. Strategic collaboration requires more intense and defter US diplomacy. In some cases, this additional diplomacy will mean the United States cannot act as quickly as it might like. In rare cases when process costs become harmful to US policy preferences, because time is of the essence, the United States will have to weigh the heavy costs associated with acting alone against the costs triggered by the delay.

Strategic collaboration will also mean conceding on US policy preferences, likely more so than in the past. At the very least, we can expect more instances, as in the World Trade Organization, where America is forced to live by its own principles than its preferences. As pivotal powers gain strength, it could be even harder to convince them to take costly actions that benefit the United States disproportionately, such as an International Monetary Fund bailout for Mexico in 1998.

The third kind of cost, to US pride, should theoretically be easy to overcome, but in practice may prove most difficult. A long history of America viewing itself as "exceptional"—different, even superior, to other countries—makes compromise and mea culpas particularly hard.

A final cost is measured directly in dollars. For America to build the right relationships with pivotal powers and solve tough global problems, it will need to

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devote more of its budget to nonmilitary national security spending, both for diplomats and for C-6 initiatives for the common, and American, good. America now spends a paltry 4 percent of its entire national security budget on nondefense, non-homeland-security items.

Now Is the Time

America should waste no time binding pivotal powers to itself and to the world order. The pivotal powers are in most cases still pushing to have more influence in international institutions, not opting out. For some, the period during which they can be successfully pulled into the liberal international order is finite. As Russia expert Coit Blacker laments, “We may be close to the point of no return with Russia.”

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Second, America remains by far the strongest power in the international system. With great tools of persuasion at its disposal, America has disproportionate impact on the solutions or institutions that will result. As America reengages with institutions it has belittled of late, it will be taking a key step toward preserving its own, still huge, leverage within them in the face of growing pivotal power clout. Because institutions and principles have inertia behind them, they could reflect US priorities and values even beyond the time when overwhelming American dominance would sustain them. With a great power alignment, we can make real progress toward a world in which Americans can continue to thrive, whether or not America remains the sole superpower by a gigantic margin.

We recognize that selling strategic collaboration will not be easy. America’s political culture encourages our politicians to find foreign scapegoats for our problems. Also, our system is too often prone to reject international cooperation, even though decade after decade, polling reveals that Americans are inclined to multilateralism. Much of the media, loving a fight because their viewers and readers do, does not tend to contribute to a reasoned discourse about the rise of other nations. If we are not careful, these factors, especially combined with a recession, could easily push Americans into unwarranted, extreme hostility directed at China or the next power du jour. Some Americans are already there.

Positive Sum

While the presidential candidates rail against China the competitor, there is no true race. We are in this world together with the pivotal powers. In many ways, they hold our fate in their hands, and we hold theirs. They cannot conquer us, and we cannot conquer them. America should build relationships that maximize cooperation and stability that benefit all. We have a chance to strike a world-changing deal. Now, while no irreconcilable differences plague its relationships with pivotal powers, America can forge a new positive, proactive concert among them.

It will not be cost-free, but is designed to pay off in a windfall for American peace and prosperity in the decades to come, even in a future when America is not the sole superpower. In today’s world, great powers pose no obstacle to American success. They will even help us, if we are brave enough to let them. There is only one right way to approach pivotal powers in the twenty-first century—draw them near.

Participant List

The following individuals took part in one or more of the meetings and discussions convened under the Stanley Foundation's Task Force on Major Powers initiative, including at Stanford University, November 8-10, 2006, and at Airlie Center, October 25-27, 2007, and in the joint Stanley Foundation Major Powers/After the Unipolar Moment meeting in Singapore on May 31, 2007. Individuals listed here participated in their individual capacity only, and have neither been provided the opportunity to review this report or been consulted regarding its contents.

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