



# **MIGHT?** **Makes Right?**

**What should the  
United States do  
with its historically  
unprecedented  
global power?**

Strategies for US National Security

# Is American Empire the Answer?

*Policy analysts examine how the United States should use unprecedented global power*

**T**he end of the Cold War and the events of September 11 make it imperative that the United States develops a new grand strategy.

Yet even after the completion of major combat operations in Iraq, the United States does not have a consistent national security strategy that enjoys the support of the American people and allies and is clear to adversaries and potential adversaries. This situation is markedly different from the Cold War period, when the United States had a clear, coherent, and widely supported strategy that focused on containing and deterring Soviet communist expansion.

The tragic events of 9/11, the increase in transnational terror

threats, and possible threats from regimes that have or are capable of developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) now make it imperative to develop a new national security strategy that enjoys wide support at home and abroad.

To assist in this process, the Stanley Foundation created an independent task force of 25 foreign policy analysts and practitioners representing all points of view on the political and foreign policy spectrum. Over the course of seven sessions from September 2002 to May 2003, they addressed three basic questions:

- What should the United States do with its historically unprecedented global power?

- What is the likely position of the United States in the world 10 to 15 years from now, and how should the United States go about influencing that position?

- How can the United States ensure its own national security while at the same time create a stable, just, and sustainable global system in the 21st century?

The ultimate answer to these questions will have a defining impact on US security in coming years and ideally should be fully confronted in the political debates surrounding the upcoming presidential election in 2004. All of these critical areas of dispute will need to be resolved if the United States is to pursue a truly integrated, coherent, and effective set of

**Cover photo:**  
*A US Marine covers the face of a statue of Saddam Hussein with an American flag before toppling the statue in downtown Baghdad on April 9. Moments later the flag was removed.*

**On the Lookout.**  
*An F-16 fighter pilot on patrol near Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina for a North American Aerospace Defense Command mission.*



PHOTO BY SSGT AMBON D. ALLMON @ UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



international policies over the long term.

Participants credited the Bush administration for producing a national security strategy document that is the first clear, coherent, and comprehensive statement of national security strategy since the end of the Cold War. For the most part, the strategy documents produced by the administrations of the elder Bush and Clinton failed to come to grips with the new challenges of the post-Cold War era.

In particular, the Bush administration is the first one to recognize that the United States is now in a position to fundamentally shape the international order. Whether it decides to shape international institutions in such a way that the United States will not be called on to use its powers of military coercion for every new crisis—or whether it decides that international institutions are little more than obstacles in the way of its ability to exercise its fundamentally benign hegemony—will determine the character of the international system for the foreseeable future.

### The Spread of Free Markets

The one commonality between the current and past US presidents is their focus on the opportunities

offered by the spread of free market economies and free political systems. National security depends less and less on territory and natural resources and more and more on the ability to adapt and integrate into the global economy. Economic issues are increasingly linked to security, and US strategy must take into account this mutually reinforcing dynamic in its dealings with other nations and the World Trade Organization.

Both Clinton and Bush have made the decision to spread free market democracy to promote stability and discourage threats. The basic assumption is that repressive regimes and nonperforming economies can indirectly feed into transnational terrorism, while an open economy that is supported by institutions and backed by enforceable rules tends to increase the welfare of most citizens.

Despite these commonalities, however, the new Bush strategy statements (as well as concrete policies) differ markedly from those of past presidents in the threat and use of military force and economic power and also in their focus on the universal application of US values and norms as the long-term answer to global instabilities.

### Preventive War Strategy

Participants saw both advantages and disadvantages of this “preventive war” strategy.

On the plus side, such a strategy provides a coherent and vigorous response to an existential threat. It leverages America’s military and economic power, ensures that US interests are not subordinated to nations or organizations with differing goals, and it enables the United States to act unilaterally for global ends.

But a preventive war strategy could lead to imperial overstretch or the de facto creation of an American empire that would create an even-

tual backlash against the United States and its allies by rising strategic competitors, participants noted.

Also, such a strategy may fail to take into account regional differences between areas such as the Persian Gulf and Northeast Asia, or countries as different as Iraq and North Korea. It relies almost exclusively on military instruments and ad hoc “coalitions of the willing” to solve international challenges. It may not fully address the growing threat of failing states and transnational terror groups. It risks creating a new international norm for the use of military force.

Finally, it implies a selective standard for nonproliferation efforts that many other nations are uncomfortable with—namely, by focusing almost solely on “rogue states” in its definition of the WMD threat rather than viewing the weapons themselves as inherently destabilizing. It also stresses the need for prevention or preemption of rogue state WMD holdings while at the same time sharply de-emphasizing the need for universal arms control and disarmament efforts that would include the nuclear arsenals of the United States and its friends and allies.

If these disadvantages are not taken into account in implementing the national security strategy of preventive war, participants agreed, the United States could lose more in the long run than it gains in the short run as a result of specific military actions.

—Excerpted by Loren Keller

### Resources

A full report of the task force, entitled “Winning the Peace in the 21st Century” is available at [reports.stanleyfoundation.org](http://reports.stanleyfoundation.org) or see page 10 to order.



*A preventive war strategy could lead to the de facto creation of an American empire and an eventual backlash....*

## courier

No. 42, Winter 2004 ISSN 1044-5900

The *Courier* is published quarterly by the Stanley Foundation and mailed without charge to interested readers. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the foundation.

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# Defining Democracy Around the Globe

Expert discusses seemingly simple—but highly complicated—concept of democracy

*Picture a country without a written constitution.*

*Then imagine a government whose members of parliament are allowed to moonlight as lawyers and private consultants. And a government that dominates the television airwaves and regulates the press with a strict set of public information laws. And a country that sponsors its own church.*

*Does that sound like a democracy?*

*In fact, it is one: England.*

“There are different forms of democracy for different people,” said Tom Carothers, director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In an interview for the recent *Common Ground* special, “Defining Democracy: A Global Perspective,” Carothers discussed both the traditional American perceptions of democracy and how that concept is faring in other countries.

Many Americans tend to associate particular forms of the American government with democracy itself, Carothers said, but democracy can take on forms that are unorthodox.

“There are certain principles that have to be there if you’re going to call another society or country democratic,” he said. “If you have a government that’s chosen, has real power, respects basic rights, and puts its power up for regular voting by the people, that’s a democracy.”

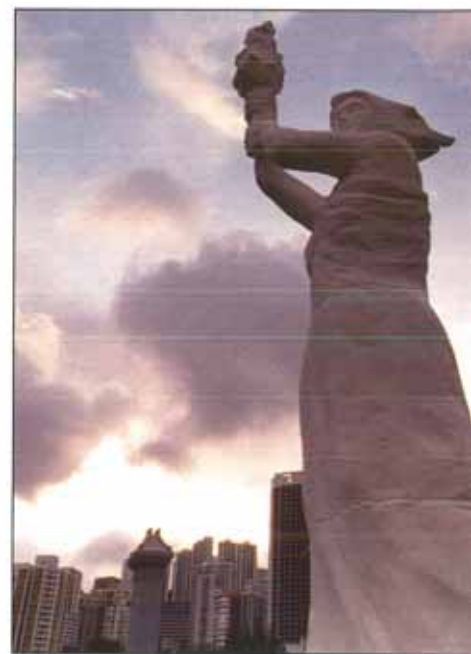
Great Britain, for example, meets all of those criteria—yet is home to the Church of England.

“Americans grow up thinking separation of church and state is fundamental to democracy,” Carothers said. “Well, it’s not, actually. Neither are a lot of other things. So we need to sometimes separate a bit more clearly the underlying basic principles from the particular forms in American life and make sure when we go abroad we’re not mixing up those two things.”

So how are fledgling democracies holding up elsewhere in the world? Carothers provided these snapshots:

## Russia

“Russia experts are bending themselves into pretzels trying to figure out if Russia has become a democracy or not.... They’ve had elections; they’ve elected a president. They have a lot of freedoms. They have political competition, different political parties. But they have a lot of authoritarianism. The president [Vladimir Putin] is very intolerant of opposition. There’s a lot of political manipulation that occurs behind the scenes. The way he’s raising money for the elections coming up in late 2003 is not too pretty and not too democratic. And there’s still a desire on the



**Lady Liberty.** A 33-foot plastic foam replica of the Goddess of Democracy statue, built by pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing, was unveiled in Hong Kong in 1989. The statue in Beijing was destroyed by troops earlier that year.

part of many Russians for the strong hand, the heavy hand.... So Russia presents a very mixed and troubling but still in some ways hopeful picture.”

## South Africa

“Democracy has taken hold, but South Africa has some deep structural problems that are going to plague it for the next 10 or 20 years. Certainly the South African people as a whole have voted clearly and strongly for the African National Congress and support President [Thabo] Mbeki. But they face real economic deterioration. The economic miracle that many hoped for once apartheid ended and the economic isolation of South Africa ended hasn’t really come about. Foreign

...democracy  
can take  
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unorthodox.





◀ **Fiery Protest.** Prodemocracy demonstrators in Hong Kong burn a communist party flag to denounce the Beijing-backed government's tough antisubversion law in July 2003.

Kong is not the boomtown it once was. Shanghai is now the boomtown. When people from Hong Kong travel to Shanghai they see more new buildings there. They see a growing level of income there. In Hong Kong you see unemployment and a certain amount of recession. So they have economic reasons to be unhappy. They're not happy about his political programs.... It doesn't mean they want to be independent again from China, but they would like better governance locally and their economy to do better as well."

#### Serbia

"In America, everyone's a bit cynical about politics and politicians...but it's not a deep alienation from the system. In Serbia and in other places of the former Yugoslavia, you're experiencing other forms of alienation.... These are people who are still not really believing that the system is ever going to produce anything good for them. They don't believe they're part of it and so they're just checking out, politically, and not taking part. So it's a deeper and more troubling trend.

"Serbia doesn't really have an established, inclusive, pluralistic, tolerant form of politics yet. They have political parties running particularly on the right on the nationalist side that are fairly intolerant. People don't have much faith in those who are professedly more democratic, seeing them as rather self-interested. So they just don't feel they have any attractive choices, so they're checking out of the system as a result."

—Loren Keller

**"[China is] reforming gradually on the economic front. They're really not doing so on the political front."**

#### Resources

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investment has not skyrocketed as people hoped it would.

"South Africa faces the same challenges of being a developing country in a globalized international economy that make it hard to compete from the bottom up. A lot of the basic state structures they enjoyed in the 1970s and '80s have been worn pretty thin in that process. So a lot of South Africans are actually not too happy about how things are going. They still certainly believe the South African National Congress is the political force they want to represent them, but they don't really feel it's necessarily producing the kind of goods day-to-day that they hoped for."

#### China

"If China can continue to grow and develop, it will create strong pressure for democratization. Can it do that, though, without cracking and having a moment in which there isn't some kind of real political upheaval? Or the harsh fall of the communist regime producing social protests and maybe even civil conflict? That's pretty unpredictable. And the Chinese leadership is so far very defensive, very worried about any break in its monopoly of political power in the country. Yes, they are reforming gradually on the economic front.

They're really not doing so on the political front. They are avoiding the hard steps that would be necessary. They've come down really hard, for example, on the Falun Gong, a religious group. The reason they did that is it's really big and it was not under the control of the government. It was the only kind of group not controlled by the government that was organizing itself and that scared the Chinese leaders. It's a sign of their political nervousness and their lack of self-confidence politically that they can't even handle essentially a nonpolitical religious group....

"So the pressure is building, but whether there's going to be a straight line and peaceful path between where they are and a kind of established democracy remains pretty questionable."

#### Hong Kong

"People in Hong Kong are pretty tired of the government they have there because the local person who's been running Hong Kong [Tung Chee-hwa] has proven to be kind of inflexible in certain ways. He's been trying to introduce a new state security law when people in Hong Kong are accustomed to a fair amount of openness and freedom relative to the rest of China.... They're also not happy about his economic policy. Hong





*Angola faces a range of challenges as it moves from severe humanitarian emergency to stability and economic development.*

United Nations

## War-Wearied Angolans Seek Recovery

*Discussion: Can peace be more than the absence of war?*

**T**he devastating 27-year civil war in Angola finally came to an end in April 2002, giving millions of Angolans—including the more than four million displaced by the war—a new chance to lead normal lives.

Yet because the war had been so pervasive and enduring, many Angolans had never experienced anything but war. What kind of

“normal” life can people look forward to? And what will it take to create such conditions?

In October 2003, the Stanley Foundation hosted a discussion of these issues entitled “Strengthening the UN-Angolan Partnership to Help Angola’s Displaced and War-Affected.” The meeting took place in Geneva, where many UN agencies are headquartered, with 30

participants from the government of Angola, Angolan civil society, donor governments, key UN agencies, and the World Bank.

This project was initially undertaken in partnership with Arthur Helton, noted expert on refugees and the internally displaced and president of Strategic Humanitarian Action and Research (SHARE). Tragically, Helton was among



◀ **Health Test.** *An aid worker for Refugees International makes a nutritional assessment at an abandoned clinic in Angola. The clinic is among those under reconstruction in preparation for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.*

those killed in the August 19 attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad. Conference organizers (Refugees International was also a sponsor) decided to proceed as planned and dedicate the meeting to Helton's memory; Roberta Cohen, a friend and fellow expert on displacement, assumed his duties as chair.

The discussions in Geneva focused on the range of challenges involved as Angola moves from severe humanitarian emergency to stability and economic development. Indeed, many Angolans who don't have land even for subsistence farming and can't be reached by road teeter on the brink of survival despite the war's end. Yet others who earn some income from agriculture or petty trading are poised to increase their earnings. And the country has significant income from its mineral wealth, including diamonds, and from oil, which is expected to increase.

### Returning to "Nothing Left"

Participants in the Stanley Foundation conference drew up an agenda for this moment of post-war transition that addresses many of these issues. Many of the Angolans who still confront emergency conditions are those who returned to home communities where nothing was left—no dwellings, subsistence crops, or even safe drinking water.

As the Angolan government, local NGOs, and international agencies confront these gaps, they will have as a guidepost a set of standards developed by the government called the Norms and Regulamento for the

Resettlement of Displaced Persons, which is the most comprehensive legislation on the rights of the displaced anywhere in the world.

The United Nations is likely to remain involved in Angola by helping its government organize its response to humanitarian needs, yet a key UN agency, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), will be phasing out its presence in 2004. The conference highlighted the importance of a smooth "handover" from OCHA to its sister agencies, including a successor to the Emergency Response Fund that has enabled the United Nations to move resources quickly to where they are most urgently needed.

The special needs of women and children were also highlighted in the meeting. It was noted that women are the economic mainstays both of their own families and their communities as a whole. The conference flagged the needs particularly of single heads of household, unaccompanied minors, women, and girls who were forced to live and work under the former rebel forces and former child soldiers.

### AIDS a Growing Despair

HIV/AIDS was also stressed as an urgent problem—one that "could decimate the next two generations just as the war did for the past two," as one participant said. Ironically, the isolation caused by war protected Angola against the spread of the virus. But now increased commerce and migration with regional neighbors make it possible for the disease to spread with the same speed that is devastating other Southern African nations. Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos has himself assumed responsibility for taking the lead on the part of his government, which is a very useful first step, but now massive public education

programs will be needed that are tailored to the different needs of urban and rural populations.

After decades of war, recovery and development in Angola present varied, formidable challenges and will require the commitment and cooperation of all involved—the government, donors, international organizations, and NGOs.

At stake is the question of whether peace in Angola can be more than merely the absence of war. Fourteen million Angolans are hoping it can—and are counting on their government and the international community to help build a peace with prosperity and health.

—David Shorr



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## The UN on the Ground

# 'Doing Nothing Is Not an Option'

*Forums explore better UN practices in war zones*

In many of the high-profile conflicts of the 1990s—such as those in Somalia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Cambodia—humanitarian agencies became controversial amid charges they were “feeding the conflict,” or at least benefiting one or more warring party.

It is difficult to control the impact of humanitarian action as it ripples through a local society and economy because powerful factors in the conflict environment—the presence of armed elements, acute political and ethnic polarization, the lack of real public safety, or

the struggle over resources in war economies—can convert even the simplest inputs into perverse outputs. And yet aid workers must strive to navigate these currents and bring help to affected populations. Doing nothing is not an option.

In the Stanley Foundation’s “The UN on the Ground” project, nearly 30 experienced humanitarian professionals and diplomats from inside and outside the United Nations wrestled with these challenges in a series of 14 forums held in New York from October 2001 to July 2003.

### Avoiding Spoilers

Their objective was to develop concrete recommendations to address some of the perennial challenges that the UN system regularly confronts when operating in war zones, especially in dealing with nonstate actors (NSAs). The group looked across the wide array of actors on the ground and discussed how best to work with them where possible, and in spite of them when necessary. The essential insight is that humanitarians can improve the way they deliver aid and protect victims by better understanding the nature of—and consequently be more effective in engaging—local actors.



*Village Visit. Aid workers, like these Red Cross delegates interviewing a Burundian family, must base their programs on information from a wide array of sources.*

In the simplest terms, the aim is to avoid or marginalize spoilers who use and abuse local populations and to bolster legitimate interlocutors who contribute to peace, development, and humanitarian capacities. Malevolent armed elements sometimes dominate population and territory, or both, and thus exert unofficial—yet no less effective—control over access by UN and other humanitarian agencies. Some of these entities may be characterized as NSAs, but others may have formal or informal ties with government authorities. The presence of destabilizing armed agents as gatekeepers creates a dilemma between, on the one hand, institutional and moral imperatives to come to the rescue of affected populations



and, on the other hand, the ethical, political, and security needs to avoid feeding the conflict.

At the other end of the spectrum of legitimacy are the natural allies of international aid representatives—local populations and organizations who pursue health and dignity for their compatriots. Here the issue is one of capacity: Do the local authorities or civil society organizations have the wherewithal to serve as effective channels for relief or protection? And since capacity-building is rarely given enough attention and priority, and is actually often misunderstood by humanitarian actors, a cycle of dependency often results.

### Sizing Up the Locals

The project focused on how the effectiveness of humanitarian operations can be bolstered through more systematic assessments of local actors and other aspects of the conflict environment. Participants also looked at the issue from the vantage point of ground-level UN operations as well as from key UN capitals (New York, Geneva, and Rome) from which budgets and political directives originate.

Much of the discussion focused on the critical importance of information and analysis as a basis for humanitarians' key tactical and strategic judgments. Five of the group's eleven recommendations deal with how information is generated, shared, and used for decision making in field operations. The project's final report suggested that aid managers continually size up the local scene by listening to as many local individuals as possible; keep a running record of the actions of key local actors (particularly regarding whether agreements reached by aid agencies are adhered to); prepare rigorously for negotiations with local actors; and invest in leadership, especially with agencies' country-wide directors.

Participants stressed that the objective of aid efforts should be to transfer responsibility for services and infrastructure into local hands once local agencies have developed sufficient capacities. In other words, humanitarians should aim to put themselves out of business.

As field operations and offices struggle with issues of political, social, and economic assessment, the report suggests that humanitarian officials should be able to tap into analytical work by scholars and practitioners. One concrete step would be the establishment of a new program to bring experts out to the field for extended consultations with aid workers on the ground. A special fund could be set up enabling field offices to request recognized local specialists on history and culture to spend one to three weeks with them.

### Battling Turnover

The project also noted that many UN agencies lose crucial institutional memory by failing to capture the insights of key managers before they move on to their next assignments. The report proposed that outgoing country directors, humanitarian coordinators, and resident coordinators be given a four-to-six week sabbatical to draw up a paper documenting their successes, frustrations, and lessons learned.

Participants stressed another issue of human resources management in the UN system relating to the longer-term career path of humanitarians. Because humanitarian response, human rights protection, and sustainable development deals with intricately interwoven issues—and brings together a collection of specialized agencies to do so—it is highly useful for aid workers to have “multidisciplinary” experience with more than one of these agencies. Optimally, a special new humanitarian career track should be created in which personnel would rotate among the agencies rather than spending an

entire career with any one of them. Short of this, it must be made much easier for people to move temporarily to an agency other than their own.

The UN on the Ground report also made recommendations pertaining to the political masters of UN humanitarian action: the member states of the United Nations and their diplomatic representatives. Noting that the UN Security Council often must weigh humanitarian factors as it responds to crises around the world, participants in the project noted the importance of the delegation visits that diplomats on the council make to crisis zones. While the group was supportive of such firsthand investigation, the way they are currently planned and executed gives delegates a barely cursory appreciation of realities on the ground. The project recommends that delegates spend more time in the locations they are visiting and not try to cram too much into one trip. One way to accomplish this might be to split the delegation up into subgroups.

Today's humanitarian responses demand careful analysis of the socioeconomic and political landscapes of war-torn societies. The very best of humanitarian workers have devised their own methods for doing this, and all aid officials are working under intense pressures and demands. But if UN agencies incorporate more rigorous approaches to information into their operational and personnel systems, as urged by the UN on the Ground group, they will certainly reduce unintended consequences and make their programs more sustainable.

—David Shorr

### Resources

A full report entitled “UN on the Ground” is available at [reports.stanleyfoundation.org](http://reports.stanleyfoundation.org) or see page 10 to order.



***...humanitarians should aim to put themselves out of business.***



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### UN on the Ground

A group of experienced humanitarian professionals and diplomats from inside and outside the United Nations met regularly over the period of nearly two years to discuss the challenges that humanitarian agencies confront in war zones. Their report includes 11 practical proposals to boost the effectiveness of such agencies, minimize unintended consequences, and make aid programs more sustainable. 2003 full report.

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# International Editor of the Year Honored

Chinese journalist 'not afraid to walk the line'



Hu Shuli

The winner of *World Press Review's* 2003 International Editor of the Year award never set out to be a journalist.

Hu Shuli, founder and managing editor of the Beijing-based *Caijing* business and finance magazine,

was assigned by the Chinese government in 1978 to study journalism at Chinese People's University and then, after graduating, assigned to work for a national newspaper.

But like the Chinese markets she covers, the communications industry she works in is experiencing a transition toward greater freedom and openness.

"Today is an exciting time to be a journalist," Hu recently told *Common Ground*, the Stanley Foundation's weekly radio program on world affairs. "The government is recognizing the importance of transparency in capital markets. Newspapers and magazines are embracing investigative journalism. More of the public is beginning to view journalism as independent in society."

Government restrictions on the press are loosening, Hu said, but have yet to disappear.

"While the line between what is and isn't permissible has retreated in recent years, there's no doubt it still exists," she said. "We are not afraid to walk the line, even to push it once in awhile, but we are still careful not to cross it."

Hu sees the role of her magazine as that of a watchdog over the country's rapidly developing financial markets.

"Our magazine has done a lot to help develop the market," she said. "We've tried very hard to find out what's wrong and point out not only the positive side but also the negative side."

Hu is the 34th recipient of the *WPR* award, given each year to an editor or editors outside the United States in recognition of enterprise, courage, and leadership in advancing the freedom and responsibility of the press, enhancing human rights, and fostering excellence in journalism.

—Loren Keller

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