

# The United States as the World's Only Superpower

Gaiko Forum in Washington, D.C.

Peter Brookes, Kurt Campbell,  
and Thomas Donnelly  
Agawa Naoyuki (moderator)

*On Wednesday 13 November 2002, Gaiko Forum held a symposium at the Japanese Information and Culture Center in Washington, D.C. bringing together representatives of diverse perspectives on U.S. foreign policy. Much can be learned from the insider views and rich experience of these professionals closely in touch with the changing political scene at the center of American power.*

**Agawa:** We still are trying to understand what has happened one year after 11 September 2001: What has changed? What has not changed? Are we Japanese and Europeans keeping up with Americans? What is the essence of the national security strategy enunciated by President George W. Bush? Would you call this a decisive era, comparable to the 1945–51 period when the Truman Doctrine was announced and implemented? In short, we would ask: Where are you going, America? Dr. Campbell.

**Campbell:** We often think about the world after 11 September, but let's quickly examine what we believed in Washington to be the primary issues for consideration in U.S. foreign policy and the animating principles of the global environment prior to that. On 10 September, the really important things for the United States to deal with were the so-called "rising threats" associated with certain nations, most of them in Asia—particularly China. There was the notion that great-power politics and great-power rivalry were at the center of what it meant to be a major industrial/industrialized democracy like the United States in the twenty-first century. Conversely, there was also a sense that failing states were really only the concern of minor players on the political scene.

There was also a belief, stated many times, particularly among those on the military side—and I would probably place myself in this category—that the United States faced no significant or serious military threat. Any threats we did face would come to a head a decade or two in the future, and the United States had little thought for threats we were going to face down the road. Associated with this was the idea that in terms of thinking about

defense budgets and innovation, the country had the luxury to “skip a generation”—the famous line in George W. Bush’s “Citadel speech” (September 1999)—that we didn’t need to invest in current capabilities, but had to give some thought to downstream capabilities that might have an impact on, for instance, a situation across the Taiwan Straits. I think there was also a belief, though not stated directly, that the go-go-go, hopelessly optimistic—some would say naïve—atmosphere of the 1990s basically extended as far as the eye could see, and that nothing would really stand in the way of the inexorable process of globalization and improving efficiency.

Also, there was the one issue mentioned in nearly every speech and interaction, and reinforced as the most important in U.S. foreign policy prior to 11 September: missile defense. Missile defense was at the top of the list. The first major emissaries to go abroad from the Bush administration did not do so to talk about alliances or a variety of different issues. No, they discussed missile defense. That was the issue that really animated the initial period of strategic engagement (January 2001 to 11 September).

I think it would be fair to say there was not as much focus on transnational threats: terrorism, the global environment, and the like. It was the major state-to-state competitions that were at the top of the U.S. agenda—Americans really had faith, despite numerous reports from blue-ribbon committees, that the United States was essentially a safe society, and that we were protected by vast seas with friends to the north and south. And so, even though we enjoyed an extraordinarily free society and easy access, we did not face the kind of threats that other states and nations face regularly.

The events of 11 September, however, brought about the most dramatic change in U.S. foreign policy since Pearl Harbor; even more dramatic, in some respects, than the end of the Cold War. We can get into it more as the discussion proceeds, but you might ask yourself: how is that change reflected? Where does one find evidence of such sentiments? And what does it mean for U.S. foreign policy? The best document to explain the American foreign policy apparatus is *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* report published in September of this year (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>). Almost everyone is still struggling to define the fundamentals of this new post-11 September world we’re living in, but its core element is the realization that non-state terrorist groups are potentially linked to rogue regimes. The term “rogue” is now back in fashion. Back in the Clinton administration, certain elements claimed that “rogue states” no longer existed—they were now “misunderstood states” or “states of concern.” Going back to a clear statement that these are rogue states is actually an important and fairly clarifying development. Ultimately, that link, that potential link, to places where weapons of mass destruction—whether nuclear, biological, or otherwise—can fall into the hands of stateless people, against which traditional modes of deterrence and defense do not work, is vitally important. Other nations should be alerted that this is going to be our top priority.

A couple of other points in the report are interesting, and potentially sources of concern. Preemption is the one tool in all the toolboxes of U.S.

foreign policy, and has been for many years. I’m not sure highlighting it as much as this report does necessarily sends the right message to all countries, because there is a bit of unease about the United States acting alone. I am more concerned about the report’s impact in terms of our friends and allies than about its implications for rogue nations. The most curious part of the document is the part that asserts the need to sustain American power, which is important, while at the same time constraining other potential challengers, despite other potential developments globally. Interestingly, this represents the victory of a concept born not in the last several months, but basically developed in the Cheney-led Pentagon of the early 1990s. When it was initially conceived, however, the concern was not about sustaining American supremacy in the face of a rising China, though that is clearly the subcontext here.

The concern in 1990 and 1991 was Japan. The specter of a rising Japan, which is hard even to imagine now, was almost inevitably accompanied by a fear that Japan’s economic and commercial might would be translated into military power. Many of us have on our shelves, hopefully gathering dust, a volume by George Friedman and Merideth LeBard called *The Coming War with Japan*. Then, of course, there was reunified Germany. Personally, I find problematic the notion that the United States felt it had to discourage even rising democratic states.

Ultimately, this national security strategy report is the boldest single strategic statement since the X article (“The Sources of Soviet Conduct” by George Kennan, 1947; <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/kennan.html>). It represents a profound transformation of most of the Republican Party. I think all of us appreciate the constructive sparring and clashing of diverse views within the Republican Party. There is not much left of the foreign policy establishment of the Democratic Party—they’re struggling to reestablish their direction. But the really interesting debates are within the Republican Party. One group—your father’s-Oldsmobile-owner, realist, conservative Republicans—believes in trade and general balance-of-power issues. These are people like Scowcroft and Kissinger, who basically inherited the mantle and, indeed, held it during much of the Cold War. They tend to



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be older establishmentarians. Then there is a new group, which one might call the “moralists,” for whom moral and ideological issues are exceedingly important. It is noteworthy how much this latter group has gained in authority and intellectual leverage over the last six or eight months—it is a true tribute to the intensity of their vision and commitment across the board.

The person who has been most influential in this regard is not the vice president but Paul Wolfowitz, who, in single-minded fashion, has made sure that the power of his ideas is heard. He’s one of those individuals, in fact, who have great respect for their government. Much of government is about being polite, knowing when to stop talking about something, but Paul is one of those who will keep on talking, even though the point has been discussed a great deal. I cannot talk about Iraq anymore—Paul, he just keeps talking about Iraq. It’s that sort of determination, that ferocity of purpose and conscience that has been very significant. And his biggest converts in this have been the president himself, who already approaches the world in sort of right-wrong, black-white terms, but also Condoleezza Rice. This document, this National Security document, is not the first of this presidency, it is really the second. The first was Rice’s article that appeared in *Foreign Affairs* in 2000 (January/February), which was basically the classic, realist, conservative blueprint about the nature of the world, imbedded with much of the conventional wisdom I described earlier. (See <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20000101faessay5/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest.html>.) What we’ve seen since then is the revolutionizing effects of both the world and Republican politics on Rice and the president. I think the real issue is this conceptual framework, primarily the result of a small group of people who have been fighting at this for many, many years. Remember, it was in 1991 when Paul Wolfowitz initially came up with the concept of a predominant America. At the time, it was considered shocking and he almost lost his job. Now it is the national strategy of the United States. That’s an indication of what it means to persevere with your ideas and to fight it out: you can win and influence your nation’s policy quite significantly.

**Donnelly:** What has changed is that the United States has become much more self-aware. In the case of the president and, as Kurt said, Condoleezza Rice and especially Paul Wolfowitz, there’s been an essential agreement within the government, although some people are fighting a rear-guard action, so to speak, and seeking to slow the pace of change. Again, though, I find myself fundamentally agreeing with Kurt in stressing that this is a change in self-awareness for the American government and for the Republican Party in particular. Some folks’ instincts were not simply to take a Realpolitick balance-of-power view of the world, but actively to withdraw from the world—to heal and repair American domestic society, to grow our economy, and to let the rest of the world take care of itself.

Today, there is a new willingness to assert American power in the world, which includes military power. Not so much, as Kurt said, to preserve the delicate balance of great powers in the world, but rather to act more

aggressively to preserve the hegemonic status the United States enjoys, to extend the political ideology of individual liberty and democratic capitalism that are the core American political principles, and to try to do so in corners of the world that initially would seem hostile to these ideas.

We are now embarked not in a war on terrorism per se—you don’t find the United States spending a lot of treasury funds or deploying a lot of soldiers to try to root out the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) or to limit the Irish Republican Army’s activities in Northern Ireland or those of other terrorist groups—it’s really concentrated in the Middle East, or in the greater Middle East, the Islamic world. The political reasoning behind this is that the link that stitches together Al Qaeda, Iraq, and even the Bali bombings is the threat to the American-led international order, if I may use that term, and stems from radical Islam and those Arab dictators, or rogue states as Kurt described them, who are willing to make common cause. It is an alliance of convenience, perhaps, or a shared goal, rather than an alliance in which a central committee meets to plot strategy, but that’s the core political/geopolitical problem the administration is reacting to.

Although the national security strategy is an attempt to make a general theory, it has quickly become apparent that applying it in every case, especially as we’ve seen in regard to North Korea and the stress on preemption, may not be the best medicine. So what lies behind the general theory that we see in the national security strategy is, as Kurt outlined, a shift in strategic priorities. Before 11 September, as Kurt commented, much of the thinking in the administration was concerned with the rise of China as a great power, which hasn’t been abandoned entirely but seems to take a second spot to what we now see as a more pressing threat. Obviously, after 11 September, one that has already claimed a large number of American lives. So again, to peel back the onion a little bit, this is really just a change of strategic priorities within the larger general framework captured in the national security strategy.

I hope we will return to a number of things that Kurt first introduced. One is the question of, or the implicit question of, who will be our strategic partners under this new strategic document. I spent a lot of time in the last couple of months in Europe, and the sense not only of shared strategic goals



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but even of shared political ideology that Americans have taken for granted throughout the Cold War has evaporated entirely. This is true not simply in Germany, but in France and even to a striking degree in Great Britain, a country that Americans are used to thinking of as a strategic partner, especially compared to Japan and our other East Asian allies.

It is an interesting question how our partnerships will be refashioned to meet the challenges of the future, what changes will be required in past relationships, and whether a series of bilateral relationships in East Asia will be the most efficient and sustainable approach to threats that don't originate in a single capital. Again, that may have more tenuous but important links—how are we going to deal collectively with the more diffused threat, or set of threats? Second, we also need to think creatively about Beijing's reaction. Obviously, the Chinese are concerned about Islamic political groups, and clearly they have direct concerns about what's happening inside their own borders. The United States and its allies, of course, have to think about how Islam-inspired terrorism is going to affect Chinese policy over the course of time. Whether we will actually make common cause with China in this is a delicate question. We must balance against that other areas of concern, such as whether we'll have to pay an exorbitant price for doing so.

**Brookes:** One of the fundamental changes since 11 September is that the U.S. is taking steps to address a new security environment. In some ways it is an age of uncertainty, where concerns about weapons of mass destruction, and missiles in the hands of terrorist and non-state groups play a prominent role, but we are also concerned about relations and politics with great powers like China and Russia—we haven't forgotten about that. We are taking a new look at deterrent strategies, which must now take into account “non-deterrables,” those who cannot be deterred, such as terrorists. The traditional concept of deterring does not work against a terrorist enemy whose tactics of destruction include targeting innocents, and who prefers martyrdom to life. A third point is that we have increased our attention to homeland security, something that has been around for a while as an academic concept, but now is being implemented on a very broad scale.

**Agawa:** Thank you very much. I think in general it is difficult for Japanese to understand why the change in strategic vision took place. As I understand it, the change did not happen because of 11 September; the change preceded it, as Dr. Campbell explained, with Mr. Wolfowitz's exploration of strategic ideas back in 1991, which gradually influenced both Rice and Bush. Eleven September and the subsequent war against terrorism are, perhaps, case studies as to how the United States applies this new way of thinking. If so, is it a new modus operandi of United States foreign policy that has developed over the years? Do you have the sense that Americans are again trying to inject a new set of values in the world?

**Donnelly:** The basic power disparity existed well before 11 September. There was an unanswered question since the end of the Cold War: Well,

what are we going to do now? What is the purpose of our power? Simply as an observation, I do not think that question was sufficiently answered by any U.S. leader during the 1990s—not by the Clinton Administration and not by the Republican Congress, either. Neither side made a convincing case, and prior to 11 September, the dominant policy position within the administration was this Realpolitick balance of power. Remember the president's campaign rhetoric about being humble and not being an arrogant power, and so forth; or Condoleezza Rice saying the 82nd Airborne should not escort school children in the Balkans to class? Eleven September had a clarifying effect, and it opened the door through which Paul Wolfowitz walked. Rice underwent a change of heart, and I think Kurt is also right that it appealed in a very elemental way to the president's sense of morality. I do sense a very genuine and deeply held set of core beliefs about right and wrong. The transformation in the president since then has certainly been something that I did not predict, and it does seem quite genuine to me.

**Campbell:** There is always an interesting dance between a president's significant advisors and the president, in terms of where the dominant thinking gets done. You could make a pretty powerful case that in many previous situations it has been the National Security Advisors who play a dramatic role in educating and shaping the worldview of the leaders they serve. I think this is one of the first times in modern history that the reverse has occurred. Fundamentally, I believe it is the President, through his powerful views about right and wrong, who has influenced dramatically how Condi Rice has packaged and conceptualized U.S. foreign policy. Eleven September synthesized many strains in the existing Republican Party agenda into a relatively cohesive package. Now, clearly in all parties there are strains. What we will likely see is relative agreement among two of the three strains in Republican foreign policy. We will only talk about two, but really there are three.

The first is this “moral imperative” strain that is pro-life. It is about a vision; it's about an activist America; it is out there doing good work, and understands and appreciates that this is an historic moment, that you can



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change the world in a dramatic way. Then there's sort of this "internationalist, realist, the-business-of-America-is-business, let's-engage-China" strain. Then there's the third group, which we haven't talked about as much. This is what you might call "nativist Republicans," who are wary of foreign entanglements, worried about spending too much time abroad, and are concerned about overextension. What's fascinating is that the third group has been largely marginalized since Iraq. Those like Armev who spoke up about these concerns have essentially been silenced along with those like Scowcroft and others who have been the internationalist sort. The first group, the moral imperative, has been extraordinarily successful. What happens then, if there is a conflict with Iraq? We often refer to that as the day after, but it is really the decade after. It's going to require an enormous amount of time and energy.

The United States faces three worries right now. The first is the appearance and the perception of American arrogance. Having spent a lot of time overseas in the last couple of months, I know this is undeniable. It is not something, moreover, in which people differentiate between Republicans and Democrats. There is a sense that America, to use an American phrase, is acting too big for its britches. That sentiment is most widely held in Europe, less so in Asia. It is hard to tell because Asians do not come out and address it as openly as French, British, or German commentators might. With just a bit more subtle engagement, I think that can be dealt with. Ironically, some of this anxiety about the United States has resulted not from actions directed abroad but directed internally. The initial desire of the administration was to distance itself from everything the Clinton administration stood for, in an ad hoc, sometimes in an ad homonym way, but some of that was interpreted as being directed internationally.

The second issue is much more worrisome. If you look at the national security strategy report, and at what we've been discussing, you see classic overextension. One of the great things—and one of the troubling things—about great power is the need to understand and appreciate limits. Those limits and the concerns about how to engage internationally, about not being tied down, and about securing resources are not insignificant.

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We are involved in several conflicts right now. I think it's reasonable to ask, is this the time to go after Iraq? Not to say we shouldn't, because I am a strong supporter, but I am not sure we are ready.

The third issue is what Tom was talking about: Every country needs a loyal opposition. Every country needs a strategic opposition that makes the case for a competitive vision. I'm talking about a Democratic vision of foreign policy. I'm a conservative Democrat, but I would actually stand by my earlier statements: I think we are adrift. The role of loyal opposition has fallen to three or four people: Tony Blair, Colin Powell, maybe John McCain. These are people who have different views, subtly different views from the President, and whose voice and views matter in the formulation and execution of American foreign policy. It is that tension which is relatively healthy and leads to good foreign policy. One has to be careful about essentially unchecked perspectives: both Rice and the President share an absolutely total abiding belief and confidence in their abilities to get the job done. As different and as profoundly unique as each of their circumstances, they are both arrogant and believe in the infallibility of their cause—that's dangerous. Having checks and balances intellectually is quite important, I think, in American foreign policy.

**Agawa:** Given what Dr. Campbell termed the three worries, I would like to ask how the United States is going to implement its new strategy in terms of the concrete issues surrounding "the day after," or "the decade after?" How would you apply the change in strategy to concrete issues if there is concern about overextension and arrogance? Also: How would you address the deepening division, as Mr. Donnelly suggested, between Europe and the United States with respect to fundamental political ideology? How would you address these regional disparities and schisms in view of the fact that you have to succeed in keeping the world as safe as possible and as stable as possible?

**Donnelly:** I am not sure. I cannot really agree with Kurt Campbell's argument about overextension. We are spending three-and-a-half percent of our gross domestic product on defense, which by historical standards is a really small slice. While our ability to match means to ends is a reasonable question to ask, we've got a long way to go before we are overextended. The difficult aspect of this war is that our adversaries are diffused, but that is also the good news—they are diffused because they are weak. Terrorism is the strategy of the weak. People turn to terrorism because challenging the United States and its allies directly is such a low-percentage proposition. What people like Osama bin Laden want is not martyrdom but power. Figuring out how to deprive him of that may require different approaches, but I think that we should understand this as a classic struggle for power, just with a different kind of opponent.

Kurt did raise the specific question of what comes after Saddam and Iraq. Because the stakes in Iraq are far greater, I hope we don't go through the agony that we went through in the Balkans and that we have not settled to my satisfaction, yet. If we seriously intend to topple Hussein, we are not talking about reconstruction, but construction from nil in this region, or



Symposium in session: (from left) Agawa Naoyuki, Kurt Campbell, Thomas Donnelly, and Peter Brookes

essentially nil. And the stakes for failure, as well as for even limited success will be very high. People will be watching us very closely. The rhetoric coming out of the administration is changing, but, to my mind, hasn't changed fast enough, and they still have a long way to go to satisfactorily answer the question of what happens after Saddam. This is going to be like de-Nazifying, Germany—not quite an effort on that scale, but nearer that than on the Bosnia-Kosovo scale.

**Campbell:** I agree with Tom about this. One measure of overextension is money, and I don't think there is any chance we're going to run into significant constraints on resources and finances. The kind of overextension I was talking about has other aspects. It is hard to choose more than a couple of things on which to focus and be successful, and over the next five to ten years, if I were going to put one thing at the top of the list, it would be to improve our domestic and national effectiveness when it comes to national security. But, recognizing that overextension can have other characteristics, even in the fourteen months since 11 September 2001, we have found that there's been an enormous loss of momentum and not as much tension on the issue nationally as there should be. Clearly, without an intense focus on hard foreign policy problems, you can either lose a sense of mission or have it atrophy altogether. Another aspect of overextension is this: while it's true that in terms of the application of direct military might we have no peer, you can imagine situations where, in a garrison state with substantial troops on the ground to police and promote a democratic Iraq, it could be an extended and dangerous mission that has significant problems associated with it. Take, for example, our response to such problems in Afghanistan—we're not prepared to put any troops very far outside Kabul, for understandable reasons. Of course, it does put some limitations on what you can accomplish for the country as a whole.

The second point has to do with the terms of how we work with our allies to advance American foreign policy interests. Initially, I would have guessed

that the President and this administration would make a major push to use our bilateral partners, formal bilateral partners, and traditional military institutions like NATO. That has not been the case. What we've had, basically, is a series of what we might call "coalitions of the willing," some involving former allies, and some who share U.S. concerns and values on one or more specific issues. I'm not sure that's necessarily a bad thing, by the way, but I do think it moves away from the kind of formal institutionalism that we saw for fifty years during the Cold War and in the first decade following.

**Brookes:** I think forging such coalitions is clearly a national imperative and so is the war on terrorism. And Afghanistan is certainly part of it. We have to ensure that no place on this planet becomes a sanctuary or safe-haven for terrorism such as we saw in Afghanistan. That includes a number of countries out there. Most of the things we are involved with today are national imperatives, including homeland security and the war on terrorism, which could be extended even to Iraq. I'm especially concerned about Iraq because if we don't deal with this issue now, we could soon find ourselves having to deal with North Korea, which is either armed with nuclear weapons, or close to nuclear capability. North Korea severely limits our policy options, so I see dealing with the Iraq problem and working toward solutions as national imperatives in maintaining our security. I'm not sure what Kurt was referring to regarding overextension, but I do believe that allies and friends are critical, not only in the application of U.S. power but also in other phases of international cooperation. If it comes to military action in Iraq, no matter what the outcome, allies, friends, and like-minded nations will be critical. Dealing with international threats shouldn't be the burden only of the United States because many others face the same dangers.

**Agawa:** How do you, each one of you, foresee the future of the alliance relationships that the United States has maintained the past fifty years or so. Given the new national security strategy of the Bush administration, is the essential nature and the vitality of U.S. alliances changing? Or have they already changed, or are they not changing?

**Donnelly:** I would say the content of the U.S. alliances with other powers is going to change, but that we are still in the process of figuring out how. The role of alliances, I believe, is a timeless question of war and strategy.

Related to this is the question of allies. I have a hard time seeing how healing our relationship with Europeans can really be done. Europeans strike me as self-referential and focused internally on their own project, so drawing them out in this quest may be very difficult.

The value of an institutional alliance is the ability to build up military partnerships over the long term—through them countries arrive at common practices, and learn how to work together at least at some level. If the alliances are not going to be so much with European nations as with others, that's all well and good, but the United States is responsible for sustaining a global

security structure. I do not think that the ad hoc way in which we have proceeded, where we make up a response to every individual crisis, is the best recipe for success. There should be a logic for institutional relationships with new partners that is directed at reducing frictions and pursuing common military goals. I would say, in fact, especially in East Asia, that the old bilateral way of doing things is going to be hard to sustain over time. As Kurt said, we are facing transnational threats. There is no Politburo that I am aware of giving strategic direction to the enemy in our case today, so the imperative for closer cooperation in meeting their threat is even stronger in this case.

**Campbell:** There was once essential agreement on the elements of U.S. national strategy and where to proceed. The dominating figure in U.S. politics is, as Tom agreed, the President and the people around him—while the Democrats seem essentially bereft of ideas. What I suggested was that there are issues the United States has to be careful about. One of which is the prospect of overextension, which is always a problem for a great power that has enormous opportunities to shape the world. Ultimately, I believe we will move more in the direction of “coalitions of the willing,” that will include more former allies, though increasingly we will no longer operate very much within NATO. We generally tend to work formally with only a couple of states within NATO, and I think we will see the same thing increasingly in Asia as well. Australia has been the most effective at adapting to this new model in Asia, with Japan following not too far behind and basically understanding the role it might play in a variety of different circumstances. There are limits, too—the reason for forming “coalitions of the willing” is because they are ideal instruments for hegemonic states that don’t necessarily want to be tied down in other circumstances. When they decide to go ahead with the coalition, they can say how they are going to move.

Japan is a very interesting bilateral case, and the irony is that when you are asked about bilateral relations, each relationship is different. The U.S.-Japan relationship is entirely different from the U.S.-Korea relationship or, for that matter, from most U.S. formal security ties with Europe—so fundamentally different. The essential characteristic of each, however, is the potential for American military commitment, a security commitment to the safety of the region, in one form or another, which is still a relatively important dynamic in the international order.

**Brookes:** I don’t have much to add to that, other than the fact that alliances will remain, especially in Asia, the bedrock of the security system. Partnerships will increase. One of the things we have to be concerned about, depending on the mission, is making sure the mission drives the coalition and that the coalition doesn’t drive the mission. If we are talking about military operations, we have to be very concerned about actual fighting—we have seen sometimes that military operations by committee, by consensus, undermine their efficiency and effectiveness. So, it is not only that they have to be willing, but they have to be able to contribute, they have to be able to sign up for a specific goal.

**Agawa:** We haven’t really started talking about one set of specific issues that our readers are most interested in—namely East Asia, Japan, and the future of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. As you know, over the past ten years or so, we have spent a large portion of our resources maintaining the existing regime, a large portion of the security arrangement—and the amount of energy that the people in charge of this task expend to maintain it on a daily basis is enormous, as you all know. What you are saying, however, is that things are moving away from rigid, static structures of alliance toward informal coalition-building. Now, back to the East Asian theater: Given this move from alliance to coalitions of the willing. What are the major issues there? We face in East Asia both transnational problems such as terrorism and piracy, as well as the more orthodox problem of “rising threats” posed by some nation-states in the region. How would you deal with the two simultaneously? What do you see for the future of the Japan-U.S. security arrangement in dealing with these problems, old and new?

**Campbell:** The most interesting and important observation about Asia is that for a thousand years every major challenge to peace and stability stemmed from conflicts in Europe. As the situation stands now, one would be hard put to come up with a scenario where a conflict in Europe could spread globally. The case in Asia is quite the reverse—there are currently at least three conflicts that could trigger overnight a challenge to peace and stability that could involve the United States in one way or another. First, the Korean Peninsula is still one of the most dangerous places on the planet, if not the most. Second, the situation in the Taiwan Straits has become increasingly complex. And third, the tense and dangerous nuclear standoff between India and Pakistan. Asia, clearly, is not only the source of tremendous economic and commercial dynamism but also poses very real security threats. There are other questions and concerns. In the short term, I am much less concerned about the rise of China than I am about the decline of Japan. The issue that should animate U.S. foreign policy much more significantly than today, I think, is the economic side.

What concerns me more than anything else is the rapid and substantial growth of China mingled with anxieties about a Japan struggling to deal with issues of national revitalization. It does seem that there is a quiet, grand bargain between the United States and Japan that goes something like this: As long as Japan provides enormous support for the U.S. war on terrorism, which it has, the United States will, in exchange, say very little publicly and allow Japan to let its economy stagnate. But at a fundamental level that’s just not in the interests of the United States. We need to make the case more directly that the decline and continuing lack of dynamism in Japan is not just an economic issue, it’s a strategic issue.

**Donnelly:** Again, I would agree with much of what Kurt has to say, especially his Clinton administration mea culpa. If Japan turns out to be the functional equivalent of Germany, it has much larger consequences from an American perspective. If Germany decides not to participate in solving the

strategic problems we have, we can, in large measure, live with that. But if Japan, which faces many of the same domestic, political, economic, and other demographic challenges that the Germans face, makes essentially the same choice, that's a much larger problem for the United States. It's also a much larger problem, I would say, for the East Asian region.

Pakistan is a complex problem. It's miraculous that the Musharaf government changed its tune so dramatically after 11 September. The thought of takeover by fundamentalist elements in Pakistan is enough to prevent me sleeping well at night, and the nuclear standoff between India and Pakistan is another problem that is almost too difficult to deal with. Pakistan is a touchy issue in a host of ways, and it has had a great partner/sponsor in Beijing for many of its bad practices over the past decade. We're going to need some help in East Asia, and while I'm bullish on the prospects of signing up some new partners throughout South and Southeast Asia—and Asia more generally—if Japan decides for its own internal reasons that it's not willing to play a central role in these things, or is simply going to finance them to some degree or allow us to operate on our own, that's going to be a problem.

**Brookes:** I'm a little more bullish on Japan than Tom or Kurt, especially politically and security-wise. I don't know if I am smart enough to understand the economics of it all, but I do think there's been some bold leadership there that will allow the government to deal with the economic problems. I'm very encouraged on the security side, as well. I think Japan will make increasing contributions to peace and security in the region, will play a critical role in dealing with the emergence of China and the situation on the Korean peninsula, both as it stands today and where it may go in the future. I would also hope that Japan spreads some of its positive influence into Southeast Asia, especially as concerns Indonesia, which is another major problem. Southeast Asia is very important and we want to ensure that Indonesia's transition to democracy is rapid, solid, and bodes well for the future. But Japan, especially on the security side I think, will be open, transparent, and democratic, and over time its neighbors will come to see it not as a potential threat, but as a potential positive contributor to peace and security. The relationship with the United States will be a much closer and equal partnership as Japan finds ways to contribute to common interests around the world, and I expect Japan will make some sort of contribution if military action is required in Iraq. That's maybe a little more bullish outlook, but economics is obviously a major issue.

**Campbell:** I don't think that anyone would disagree that Japan's role in foreign policy and security policy particularly in the last several years is dramatic and important and a vital new contribution to peace and stability in Asia. At a very bipartisan level the United States is supportive of that. There's just no question about that, which is important: we want to see those trends sustained. A simple schematic, though, gives you a sense of what to think about on the international side. During the 1990s, the Deutsche Bank came out with a sort of global analysis. Roughly speaking,

China's economy during that period grew between 60 and 62 percent, while the United States grew at about 36 percent and Japan between 5 and 6 percent. Such performance is not sustainable, and ultimately, if it continues, will undercut the very things that Peter commends. At the same time we talk about how happy and proud we are that Japan is assuming a greater lead in the world, therefore, some of that leadership needs to be applied to the disposal of bad loans, toward creating the conditions that will allow Japan to seize its tremendous entrepreneurial potential. We all want to see Japan do well, but just saying it's doing a great job on security, and not saying that we're worried about whether its economic issues will be contained, has the potential to stifle the need for the fundamental changes that, I believe, are required in Japan's political context.

**Agawa:** I have always felt that all Americans, regardless whether they are Democrats or Republicans, tend to be very optimistic. How optimistic are you about the future of your foreign policy in the decade to come, given everything you have commented on? If you had to choose one great potential risk, what would you say it is?

**Campbell:** I'd just like to make two comments. The reason we aren't going after North Korea right now has nothing to do with its nuclear potential, but because of the conventional might with which it holds Seoul hostage. If that might were not in place, and we thought they were doing all of those things, we could take a very different course of action. I do believe we are heading into a situation vis-à-vis North Korea in which a significant schism could develop with our allies. Firm alliance maintenance is important here. This is one of those cases when fissures exist within parties. Realists would argue that engagement is necessary for a variety of reasons—maintaining dominance in the region, establishing a framework for managing some of the consequences of a very dangerous series of developments in North Korea, and so forth. Others—the moralists—are worried that, by engaging, the U.S. would sacrifice its moral clarity. Here I would put myself pretty squarely with the realists. I have no problem engaging anyone. I don't think it sullies you in any way, and in fact, the *raison d'être* of diplomacy is that one has to interact occasionally with despotic and dangerous people, of which North Korea is an eminent example. The United States cannot avoid dealing with the North, as difficult and worrisome as that might be.

Last point: personally, I am profoundly pessimistic. I think the next decade is going to be the hardest in American life. I don't think we are well positioned to handle some of the domestic challenges Peter spoke about. It is only a matter of time before the U.S. is hit domestically in a way that will rock us to our foundations. The dirty little secret about 11 September is that it was a very minor attack, which nearly brought us to our knees. Naturally, the consequences of using a biological or nuclear weapon against an American city would be much greater. As for the Middle East, I commend the game plan that says you cannot let this region, which is so antithetical to U.S. and global values, continue to fester. Essentially that is a wise and appropriate foreign

policy, but, God help us, I'm not sure how one would go about democratizing the Middle East, and I think by trying to do so we may be unlocking demons we really don't know how to address.

**Donnelly:** I'll begin where Kurt ended because, for my part, I am optimistic. I agree with what he said about the ability of bad people to create worse havoc than what we have already seen, but if we can take a step back from that, you will note that the accomplishments of American power and American ideals over the past two-and-a-half centuries are just astounding. There's peace in Europe largely because of American efforts, which is not to say our European friends and allies didn't play a role and didn't take the opportunity to forge a continent at peace and build decent societies, but the triumph of American power and the introduction of genuine democracy across the continent were missing from the European equation prior to 1945. That's what brought the Soviet Union to its knees and why Islamic rejectionists are so angry—they know they are on the wrong side of history. They want to turn the clock back, not just to the nineteenth century, but to the twelfth century, and that's a losing proposition. Many nations in the Islamic world embrace modernity, just as large parts of the Confucian and Buddhist worlds do, looking forward to building a pluralist political society and a decent life for themselves. Yes, there are really dangerous things out there, but I think this country and its allies are on the right side of history. If there are some incredibly ugly bumps in the road before we secure the blessings of liberty for our descendants, well, that's just the nature of the fallen human condition. Absent any alternative that I can see, I'm sticking with liberty and a strong military.

Creating this optimistic future will require partners who are willing to sacrifice and help bear the burden, and I have very strong hopes that Japan will be a full participant. I think the Japanese people have many reasons to want to do that.

**Brookes:** There's an old saying: "If you are a pessimist, you are never disappointed," but I don't want to be a pessimist here. We do have some significant challenges ahead of us in the decades to come. I'm more concerned about terrorism and homeland security than about U.S. relations with other big powers. I worked on Asia for a while at the Pentagon (for eighteen months 2001-2002, under Rumsfeld), and now I've started working on homeland security on the hill and I'm absolutely in awe of the breadth of this question. It includes everything from immigration to customs, to foreign policy, and intelligence—it's incredibly broad. Everyday I learn a tremendous amount and realize how difficult, what a real challenge, this is. I do believe the threat is real.

I spent a lot of time on television and radio today talking about whether the Osama bin Laden tape (broadcast on Al-Jazeera in early November) is authentic; I don't have an answer for you. We have to assume the worst case scenario: this evil genius still exists and is still going to cause us some problems. The intelligence community has been very open about saying publicly

that Al Qaeda reconstituted itself following the Afghanistan offensive. And not just Al Qaeda—that includes others who embrace the same ideology, see us as evil, and want to hurt us. They will attack us overseas; they will attack the interests of other countries, as we saw in Bali; and they want to strike again here in the United States. So, if the Osama bin Laden tape is real, I hope it refocuses the American people. We have a real struggle on our hands and the president was right: we are going to have to endure.

**Agawa:** Well, 220 years ago, Alexander Hamilton in the first of the Federalist Papers spoke about the building of the great empire, the United States. America has indeed built an empire, but I think many people in the world agree it's a benign, optimistic one. I certainly hope that Japan and the United States together can help build a safer world to come. Thank you very much.

### About this Article



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