

17.40 / September 28, 2004 / Stephen Van Evera

AMERICAN INTERESTS AND GRAND STRATEGIES

I. NATIONAL SECURITY GRAND STRATEGIES, COLD WAR ERA (1947-1991)

A. The "Whether to Contain" Debate: Isolation vs. Containment vs. Rollback (1947-1964). The debate turned on four questions:

1. How "cumulative" are industrial resources? Can a conqueror convert these resources into military power, then use them to take more?
Isolationists: "resources are not cumulative--empires bleed their owners."
Rollbackers: "resources are very cumulative--empires strengthen their owners."
2. How easy is conquest? Can the USA to conquer the USSR? Vice versa?
Isolationists: "conquest is very hard"; Rollbackers: "conquest is easy."
3. How aggressive is the USSR? (Is war with the USSR inevitable?)
Isolationists: "The Soviets are moderately aggressive, war is avoidable."
Total Rollbackers: "The Soviets are very aggressive, war is inevitable."
4. Will offensive action against the USSR provoke it or calm it down?
Containers: "offensive policies will provoke Soviet retaliation and war."
Partial Rollbackers: "offensive policies will scare the Soviets into a standdown."

B. The "How to Contain" Debate: Europe First vs. Global Intervention (for example, in Vietnam, Guatemala, Chile, etc.) (1965-1991). Four key questions underlay this debate:

1. Size of Soviet threat to Third World: can the Soviets seize it?
 - a. By direct military intervention?
 - b. By victory of local Marxist proxies?
2. How "cumulative" are Third World resources? Would a Soviet empire in the 3rd World tilt the global balance of power toward the USSR?
 - a. Value of 3rd world military bases?
 - b. Does US economy depend on 3rd world raw materials?
 - c. Domino theory--is it true?
 - d. Credibility theory--are commitments interdependent?
 - e. Does the nuclear revolution make conventional-era cumulatvity arguments obsolete, by making conquest so hard that no Third World gains could position the USSR to conquer the USA?
3. Can US interventions against the 3rd world left succeed?
4. Would independent communist states threaten US security?

II. NATIONAL SECURITY GRAND STRATEGIES, POST-COLD WAR ERA (1989-2001)

A. Seven post-Cold War U.S. grand strategies:

1. **Isolation**: the USA comes home. The game ended in 1991 with the Soviet collapse, we won, its time to celebrate.
2. **Neo-containment Type #1**: the USA contains the new potential Eurasian hegemon (usually now identified as China). The USA would contain the potential hegemon's imperial expansion, and might also try to hamper its economic growth.
3. **Neo-containment Type #2**: the USA contains the world's most crazy or hostile states by limiting their control of special technologies (weapons of mass destruction, or "WMD") or oil resources, using active deterrence and coercion and by lowering US dependence on their products (oil).
4. **Neo-rollback**: the USA wages preventive war against rogue states that pursue WMD such

as Iraq (and perhaps North Korea or Iran), as favored by neoconservatives in the 1990s and by the George W. Bush administration. Framing this strategy is Lieber and Lieber, "Bush National Security Strategy" (assigned).

An extension of this strategy post-9/11/01: limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors--**terrorists**--chiefly by destroying them.

- a. Unilateral vs. multilateral sub-strategy for strategies 2, 3, 4. Bush leans unilateral.
 - b. Threats vs. inducements sub-strategy for strategies 2, 3, 4. Bush leans toward using the big stick to win allies.
5. **Selective pacification**: USA prevents interstate conflict/war in industrial regions (Europe, E. Asia, Persian Gulf). "War elsewhere hurts the USA, so let's prevent it."
 6. **Global pacification**/New World Order: the USA prevents interstate conflict/war everywhere. The US could do this:
 - a. Unilaterally: the USA acts as a global policeman; or
 - b. Multilaterally: the USA acts with allies or in a collective security system.
 7. **U.S. global social engineering/global empire**: the USA takes on the task of preventing civil war, protecting human rights, and spreading democracy and market economics around the world (or in part of the world, such as the Middle East). In short, the USA tells the rest of humanity how to live. The rationale is partly security: "civil wars tend to spread to entangle us" and "democracies seldom fight other democracies, hence the US enjoys more peace in a democratic world." Example: Bill Clinton's policy of "engagement and enlargement" of the zone of democracy. (Questions: is democracy good for everyone? Can the US export it?) Another example: the imperial policy favored by some conservatives today. Can the U.S. pull it off? Will the U.S. benefit by doing it?
- B. Economic Primacy: "We must remain the #1 economy." Questions:
1. What matters more: relative or absolute prosperity?
 2. How can relative prosperity be maximized? By hard-line (trade restrictions, subsidies to US industries, etc.) or soft-line foreign economic policies?

III. SECONDARY INTERESTS AND STRATEGIES, COLD WAR AND POST-COLD WAR ERAS, BEFORE 9/11/01

- A. Human rights: should the U.S. act to protect them? E.g., should it have stopped genocide in Rwanda in 1994? Should it stop the ongoing Darfur genocide in Sudan? See Kaufmann, Cooper, Kristof, Gelb and Rosenthal in your assigned readings.
- B. Environmental interests: preventing global warming, saving the ozone layer, and more. Some fear that human-caused warming could reach catastrophic levels if unchecked. Oceans might quickly rise by several meters. Scores or hundreds of millions made homeless. Would these homeless be driven to anti-western terror? (Oh dear! Maybe this interest isn't secondary!!)
- C. Managing emerging threats to public health, especially emerging diseases. The 1918 flu killed 675,000 Americans--more than World Wars I and II combined. With globalization the danger of similar new mass-killer diseases increases. A scary avian flu is loose in Asia right now! Defeating such diseases requires close international cooperation on public health. Thus they pose a foreign policy problem as well as a public health problem. The danger they pose is an argument for preserving close cooperation with other states.
- E. Economic interests: preserving access to raw materials? defending US overseas investments? promoting free trade/fair trade?
- F. Defending America's cultural/historic kin: Israelis, S. Koreans, Africans, Filipinos.
- G. Miscellaneous: controlling drugs, migrants, terrorists.

IV. PRIMARY INTEREST, POST 9/11/01: THWARTING WMD TERROR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES!

- A. How large is the terrorist threat? The 9/11/01 attack showed that the terrorist threat is far larger than most people formerly believed.
- The Al Qaeda terrorists showed great skill and patience--far more than other groups. This group may have the skill to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction.
 - The Al Qaeda attack dramatized Al Qaeda's vast destructive ambitions. Previously terrorism experts had argued that terrorists only want large audiences, not large numbers of dead. Al Qaeda's spokesman, Suleiman Abu Ghaith, has declared Al Qaeda's right to kill 4 million Americans including a million children.
- B. What changes brought this terror threat into being?
- The cost of making weapons of mass destruction has fallen, the expertise needed to make them has spread, and the number of states trying to make them has grown. Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and Libya--all friendly with terrorist groups--have joined the game. There is fear they will supply such weapons to terrorists if they build them.
 - The collapse of the Soviet Union raised the risk of terrorists buying weapons of mass destruction, or the skills or materials to make them, from Russian sellers.
 - Failed states that cannot control their territory, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Congo, and Lebanon (from 1970s-1980s) have grown in number. This has given terrorist groups places to locate.
 - A terrorist organization--Al Qaeda--that commands great wealth has appeared for the first time.
 - Highly skilled terrorist leadership, seen in Bin Laden and his associates, appeared for the first time in Al Qaeda.
 - Arab and Islamic hostility toward the United States rose during the decade before 2001. This gave Al Qaeda a friendly sea in which to swim. The roots of this hostility probably lie in three causes:
 - Saudi Arabia's export of its hateful, xenophobic version of Islam--Wahhabism--throughout the Mideast since 1962.
 - The new private Arab satellite television media that appeared in the 1990s. This new Arab media is much like the new U.S. media of the 1890s, when Pulitzer and Hearst fought for circulation by spreading sensational lies and chauvinism. For example: Al Jazeera, the main satellite news station, aired the claim that 4,000 Jews did not come to work at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, and that no Jews died in its collapse. The Jews did it!!
 - The renewal of Arab-Israeli fighting in September 2000. This fighting is given inflaming coverage by the new Arab satellite TV stations, as is U.S. tacit backing of Israel's settlement of occupied territories.
- C. Why was the terror threat unforeseen?
- There is no powerful agency in Washington that could increase its budget by pointing to the terrorist threat. For example, the military can't address terrorists, and so has little interest in pointing to the danger they pose. There is no "department of counterterror" whose budget depends on public concern about terror and will gladly sound the tocsin when the threat appears.
 - The American press failed to cover the rise of anti-Americanism in the Arab world in the 1990s. This was a striking professional failure.
 - Al Qaeda's capability was invisible until it was demonstrated. The skill of a terrorist group can't be seen in satellite photos.

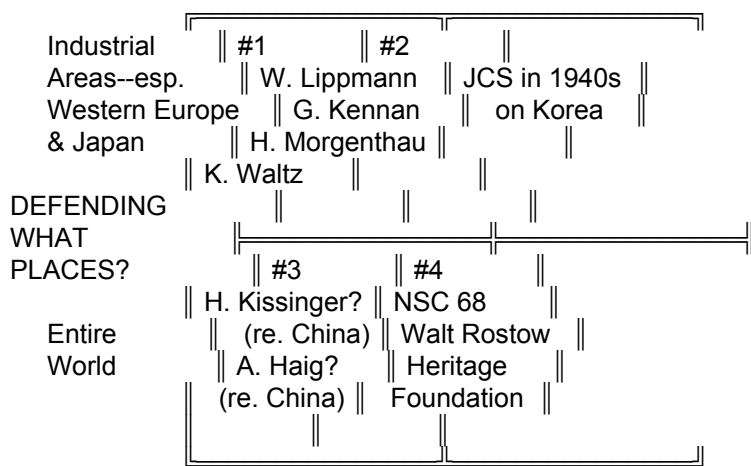
FOUR AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGIES (COLD WAR ERA)

I. ISOLATIONISM

II. CONTAINMENT

DEFENDING AGAINST WHO?

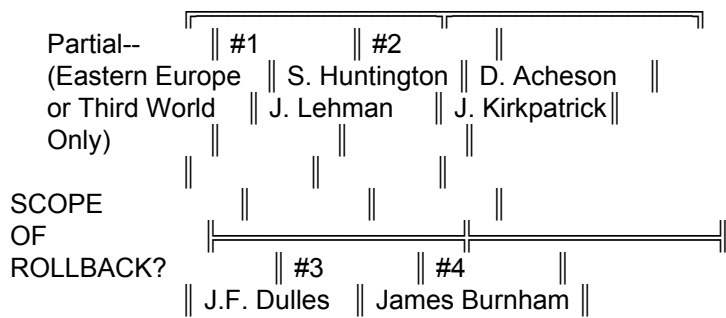
Soviet Union Soviet Union Plus
Other Leftists



III. ROLLBACK

PURPOSE OF ROLLBACK?

Tactical--a Strategic--
threat to use to pursued as a
implement worthwhile goal
Containment in itself



Total--	(Massive Ret.	Louis Johnson	
(Change	Policy)	Nathan Twining	
Soviet	Colin Gray	R. Pipes?	
Regime)	SAC		
